

THE ROLE OF OLD WOMEN IN ZULU CULTURE

with special reference to three
tribes in the district of Nkandla

by

MARIANNE BRINDLEY

Submitted to the Faculty of Arts in fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
the department of Anthropology and Development Studies
at the University of Zululand

PROMOTER: Professor J.L.W. de Clercq

OCTOBER 1982

DECLARATION

I, Marianne Brindley, declare that this thesis is my own work, and I accept full responsibility for the statements made herein.

Signed : Marianne Brindley

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is with great pleasure that I wish to pay tribute to the old Zulu women of Nkandla who so selflessly assisted me in this research. I am particularly indebted to 'Granny' Lucy MaMasuku wakwaMtethwa for her wisdom and insight; Elizabethe Bhemisile MaMgwaba wakwaMchunu for her wit, intelligence and compassion; Nomajaha Margaret MaSibiya wakwaDlomo for her candour and vitality; Bagudlile MaDlomo wakwaMbokazi and Zimosile MaSibiya wakwaDladla for their kindness; Ngquthu MaBiyela and her husband Phikinkani Dlamini for their hospitality and friendship; MaNxumalo wakwaKhanyile for her fortitude; and Jamima MaNxumalo wakwaNdlovu, Regina MaNdima wakwaNene and Violet MaThusi wakwaKubheka, the Khanyile Zionist women who gave me much helpful information. Other people who gave unstintingly of their time and energies were Zihluphile MaZungu wakwaMabhayi Sidubhu MaMajola wakwaMnyandu, Buselaphi Sibiya, Nochazela Zulu, Lawrence Bekokwakhe Sibiya, Mr John Mgube, Baba Jotham Ngema, Alfred Nomdweshu Ndima, Emily MaMajola wakwaNdima, Thembekile MaMpungose wakwaDlamini, Ntombintombi MaMtinkhulu wakwaMchunu, and the now deceased Mamini MaZulu wakwaMchunu, Pheleni MaZulu wakwaMchunu, and Bizelweni MaHadebe wakwaMajola.

Special thanks for their kindness are also due to Chief Bhekizwe Biyela; Chief Mandlakayise Dlomo and Chief Mpathesitha Khanyile and their councillors; Mr Ernest Buthelezi, the perceptive blind philosopher at Kwabadala; and the magistrates of Nkandla: Mr E M Vilakazi and his wife, Mr Musa Mtethwa, Mr S King Ndlovu and Mr J P Mghobozi. Officials in the Departments of Agriculture, Education and Pensions helped with statistics, particular thanks being due to Mr E Y Dlamini and Mr G Mgomezulu, while Chief Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi, Chief Executive Officer of the KwaZulu Government, kindly encouraged the research and made it possible for me to interview Princess Magogo.

I am grateful for the hospitality and concern shown me in Mpandleni by Mr and Mrs J H Vorster, Mr and Mrs E Pretorius and Mr Les Vorster; and for the dedicated care offered by Dr E Thalmeier, Dr D Becker and Sister Wanardo of the Nkandla hospital. Olga Sidudla Mchunu willingly wrote a diary of her grandmother; Mr Rodney Barnett voluntarily undertook a field trip to take photographs; and the late Mr Eldred S Ngcobo offered skilled interpreting assistance until stricken by a series of tragedies. For Mrs Florence M Mseleku my redoubtable interpreter I have only the highest praise: for her unswerving friendship and support, her courage in the face of harrassment, and for being so duty-conscious and exact.

Especial thanks are extended to Mrs Zerilda Droskie, the Director of the South African National Council for the Aged, and to the Trustees of the Zerilda Steyn Memorial Trust for their sustained interest and generous assistance which eased the financial burden of the research; and to

Mr R Eriksen of Eriksen Ford for the generous loan of a Cortina for the final year of my fieldwork. Support for the aged people of Nkandla was generously given by donations in kind from Jabula Foods, The Lion Match Company, United Tobacco, Brookes Lemos, Huletts Refineries, EMI Brigades and Lever Brothers. Lesser donations, but still greatly appreciated, were received from: Pick n Pay Wholesalers, Reckitt & Colman, Bakers Biscuits, Brooke Bond Oxo, Seven-Up Southern Hemisphere, Moir's, SA Oil Mills, H Jones, Nestlé, Beacon Sweets, Otto Landsberg and Langeberg Coop. For generous donations of clothing I should like to thank Mrs V Schreiber, Mrs M Wüthrich, Mrs N Hoffman, Mrs M Beguin, Dr B Unterhalter, Mrs E Kopp, Mrs H Craig and Mrs D Joscelyn.

For their enduring patience, encouragement and support I would particularly like to acknowledge my parents, Mr and Mrs E Walther; Jack and Beryl Unterhalter; Stan and Elna Schoeman; Eleanor Kopp and her husband Wally who also spontaneously and cheerfully helped with proof-reading; and my ever-buoyant and reliable typist Mrs Margaret Rebello who has been consistently generous, patient and hard-working. Sincere gratitude is also expressed to Dr Michael Perlman for his skilled advice and care; to Dr E J Furno for his sympathetic help; to Ronnie Oppenheim; and to Ivan MacLennan for his willing assistance on my final field trip; and to Thembalihle Mnyandu of Ngoye for his interest and encouragement. I am also pleased to acknowledge the friendship and gracious offers of assistance when times were difficult of Professor J A R Blacking; the helpful discussions accorded me by Professors W J Argyle, E Preston-Whyte, L Schlemmer and Ms Heather Hughes; and the initial correspondence of Professor E J Krige. Mr John Earle of the Department of Geography and Mr R M Mfeka of the Department of African Languages of the University of the Witwatersrand also rendered valued assistance. The libraries of the University of South Africa and Rand Afrikaans University offered helpful services, as did Mr P Minnaar of Ngoye. I am especially indebted to my promoter Professor J L W de Clercq for his balanced assessments, good humour, impressive knowledge of Zulu culture, and constant humility. He has done much to restore my faith in academia.

Finally I wish to express my deepest gratitude to my husband David, who over a long period has sustained and vitalized the thesis. I regret the long absence necessitated by the research and the considerable financial sacrifice it entailed. For helping me to intensify the focus of the research and for the countless hours he spent proof-reading and correcting, I offer him my enduring thanks.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Old age in preliterate societies	1
1.1.1 Defining old age	2
1.1.2 Evaluation of the literature	4
1.1.3 Ethnographic material on the Zulu	10
1.2 Aim of the present research	12
1.3 Area of research	12
1.4 Research procedure and method	17
1.5 Problems of fieldwork	21
1.6 Terminology and presentation of the material	22
1.7 Theoretical orientations	24
 CHAPTER 2 A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE THREE TRIBES STUDIED IN THE DISTRICT OF NKANDLA	 27
2.1 The Biyela	27
2.2 The Khanyile	29
2.3 The Dlomo	34
 CHAPTER 3 THE OLD WOMAN AND CHILDBIRTH	 37
3.1 Conception	37
3.2 Pregnancy	38
3.2.1 Foetus formation	38
3.2.2 Ante-natal preparations	40
3.2.2.1 Blood-letting	40
3.2.2.2 The maternity covering	41
3.2.2.3 Medicine to aid delivery	42
3.3 Childbirth	44
3.3.1 The maternity hut	44
3.3.2 Characteristics of midwives	45
3.3.3 Parturition	47
3.3.4 Clearing the mouth and shaping the head	49
3.3.5 Severing the cord	50
3.3.6 Inducing sneezing	51
3.3.7 Washing and syringing	51

	<u>Page</u>
3.3.8	Burning of incense and fumigation 52
3.3.9	Disposal of the afterbirth 53
3.3.10	Problems of childbirth 54
3.3.11	Infant mortality 56
3.3.12	Infanticide 57
3.3.13	Examination for abnormalities 58
3.3.14	First food 59
3.4	Seclusion 59
3.5	Celebrations 62
CHAPTER 4	THE OLD WOMAN AND CHILD-NURTURE 64
4.1	Treatment of gastroenteritis 64
4.2	Reducing sexual desire 64
4.3	Expulsion of viruses 65
4.4	Small children's dances 66
4.5	Child-medicines 67
4.6	The old woman as foster-mother 68
4.7	Weaning customs 69
4.8	Removing the first crop of hair 70
4.9	Sleeping arrangements 70
4.10	Folk-tales and lineage history 71
4.11	Training the young 73
4.12	Ear-cutting 75
CHAPTER 5	THE OLD WOMAN AND ADOLESCENCE 79
5.1	Puberty 79
5.1.1	Boy's puberty ceremony 79
5.1.2	Girl's puberty ceremony 82
5.2	Courtship 87
5.2.1	Residing with the grandmother 87
5.2.2	The grandmother as confidante 87
5.3	Preventing pre-marital pregnancies 90
5.3.1	Vaginal examinations as formerly conducted 90
5.3.2	The contemporary situation 93
5.4	The coming-of-age ceremony 95
5.5	Attaching the female headdress 99

	<u>Page</u>
CHAPTER 6	THE OLD WOMAN'S ROLE IN WEDDING CEREMONIAL 101
6.1	Preliminary stages 101
6.2	Departing ceremonies at the bride's home 103
6.2.1	Ritual slaughters preceding the journey 103
6.2.2	Instructing the bride 105
6.2.3	Meat-eating 105
6.2.4	Farewell in the cattle-kraal 106
6.3	Care of the bride 106
6.4	Ceremonies at the groom's home 107
6.4.1	The day of the wedding dances 107
6.4.1.1	Washing the bride 108
6.4.1.2	Participation in the wedding dances 108
6.4.2	The day of slaughtering the beast in honour of the bride 111
6.4.2.1	Guarding the chyme 111
6.4.2.2	Cooking and eating the meat 112
6.4.2.3	Cleansing the bridal hut and gift-giving 113
6.4.2.4	Acceptance of the new wife into the home of the groom 114
6.4.2.5	Parting advice to the bride 116
6.5	Defloration of the bride 116
6.6	Granting the bride permission to eat meat 117
CHAPTER 7	THE OLD WOMAN'S ROLE IN AGRICULTURE 118
7.1	Field allocation and utilization 118
7.2	Practices to enhance crop fertility 120
7.2.1	Seed storage 120
7.2.2	Medicating the seed 121
7.2.3	Overcoming drought 123
7.2.4	Protection against lightning 124
7.2.5	Expelling the blight 125
7.2.6	Care of the crops 126
7.3	Festival of the first-crops 128
7.4	Harvesting 131
7.4.1	Thanksgiving rituals 131
7.4.2	Harvest gifts for the king 134
7.5	Grain storage 134
7.6	Control of the food-supply 136

	<u>Page</u>
CHAPTER 8	138
8.1	138
8.2	141
8.2.1	141
8.2.1.1	142
8.2.1.2	146
8.2.2	149
8.2.3	153
8.2.4	154
8.2.5	157
8.2.5.1	157
8.2.5.2	161
8.3	162
8.3.1	162
8.3.2	173
8.3.3	175
8.3.3.1	175
8.3.3.2	179
8.3.4	182
8.3.5	184
8.3.6	186
8.3.7	188
8.3.8	193
8.4	196
8.5	199
 CHAPTER 9	 202
9.1	202
9.2	203
9.2.1	203
9.2.2	204
9.3	205
9.4	207
9.4.1	211

		<u>Page</u>
9.4.2	The relationship between the mother- and daughter-in-law	213
9.5	Forms of relaxation	215
9.6	Dress, ornamentation and material objects	216
9.7	Views on socio-cultural change	218
9.7.1	Effects of culture contact	220
9.7.2	Migrant labour	223
9.7.3	The old-age pension	225
9.7.4.	Disillusionment with the present system of administration	227
CHAPTER 10	THE OLD WOMAN AND MORTUARY CEREMONIAL	229
10.1	Attitudes to death	229
10.2	Mortuary practices	230
10.2.1	Reasons for the prominent role of old women	230
10.2.2	Attending to the corpse	231
10.2.3	Mourning the deceased	234
10.2.4	Burial	235
10.2.5	Cleansing and strengthening	235
10.2.6	Removing the hair	238
10.2.7	Washing of the spears	239
10.2.8	Removal of the mourning clothes	240
10.3	Bringing home the shade of the deceased	241
10.4	Sending 'home' the very aged	244
CHAPTER 11	CONCLUSIONS	246
11.1	Summary of the roles of old women	246
11.2	Similarities and differences in the three tribes	264
11.3	Interpretation of the roles of old women	265
11.4	Relevance of role-play to menopausal symptoms	269
11.5	Relationship of the roles of old women to Zulu values and symbols	271
11.5.1	Fertility	271
11.5.2	Purity	273
11.5.3	The agnatic group	274
11.5.4	The old woman as mediator between cultural phenomena	276
11.6	Theories of old age	281

		<u>Page</u>
	FIGURE	
Figure 1	A polygamous homestead showing the position of the old woman's house	191
	MAPS	
Map 1	Nkandla in relation to Natal and KwaZulu	287
Map 2	Tribes of the Nkandla district	288
	GLOSSARY	289
	LITERATURE CITED	292
	SUMMARY	I
	OPSONMING	III

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Old age in preliterate societies

Old age is a neglected area of anthropological research despite the widespread interest in the human life-cycle that has characterized much work within the discipline.¹⁾ With the notable exception of the early pioneering work of Simmons,²⁾ the anthropological literature on old age in preliterate cultures is sparse, with little attention having been devoted either to the collection of ethnographic data or to the formulation of gerontological theory. As Clark observes: 'If one is to judge from typical anthropological accounts, the span of years between the achievement of adult status and one's funerary rites is either an ethnographic vacuum or a vast monotonous plateau of invariable behaviour.'³⁾ Maxwell & Silverman hold the same opinion: 'Anthropologists have not, on the whole, shown much interest in ageing. With few exceptions, ethnographic reports seem to mention the aged only in passing, if at all, and then only in the context of quite general statements.'⁴⁾ One of the reasons to which they attribute this neglect is the distaste with which old age is viewed in our culture. The aged tend to suffer from physical or mental disabilities which are unpleasant to contemplate; death is imminent; and the role of the aged in culture is ostensibly less distinctive than that of younger men and women.

We have very few answers from preliterate cultures to such important questions as what the aged do and think, to what extent they are integrated into their culture, and how they cope with the vicissitudes of life. To achieve an ethnological understanding of the position of old women in Zulu culture it is necessary to take cognisance of the data obtained from other cultures and to regard it in the light of

-
- 1) See also Angrosino 1976, p.174
 - 2) Simmons 1945; Simmons 1970
 - 3) Clark 1967, p.55
 - 4) Maxwell & Silverman 1970, p.361

general anthropological theory. However in view of the dearth of ethnographic data and the virtual absence of anthropological hypotheses concerning old women in preliterate cultures, it seems advantageous to broaden the field of enquiry to include certain hypotheses and cross-cultural generalizations that have emerged from gerontology.

1.1.1 Defining old age

The difficulties involved in defining old age have tended to hamper understanding of the concept. Simmons in his cross-cultural study of preliterate cultures says: 'There are no clear-cut biological tests or other acceptable standards to establish just when old age begins or senescence is actually reached.'¹⁾ However despite such problems some effort must

be made to determine the common denominators of ageing. Two contrasting surveys are worth mentioning: the first conducted in the nineteen-sixties is a cross-cultural statistical study on stereotypes of ageing embracing six countries and 1 739 respondents in which it is stated:

'No attempt is made to define old age for the respondent, leaving this to his own subjective assessment as to what constitutes old age.'²⁾ We benefit little from this large-scale survey since the subjects were never asked to define the concept which formed the focus of the investigation. A Norwegian approach is more helpful in that the authors relate old age to 'the degree of senescence, of physical and psychological decline and deterioration leading to disability and incapacity - especially memory deficiency and senility.'³⁾

Although few research workers discuss the physiological criteria of ageing, Clark and Anderson correctly point out that 'In societies where old age is defined in functional terms, it is the onset of biological deterioration (as this

1) Simmons 1970, p.15; see also Linton 1936, p.119

2) Arnhoff et al. 1964, p.44

3) Pihlblad et al. 1972, p.231

affects mobility, strength, or other abilities required in adult work) that signals the end of active adult status. That is, old age is defined by observed changes in physical conditions - and its onset corresponds with the individual's need to restrict his activities substantially.¹⁾ Shock explains how the process of ageing directly correlates with the progressive loss of body cells from the muscles, nervous system and many of the vital organs.²⁾ Most of the debilities of age result from this loss of tissue, as is evident in the wrinkled, flabby skin of the elderly, the decline in ability to exercise and work, loss of strength, memory loss, poor co-ordination and slow reactions. Simmons maintains that preliterate peoples 'generally have far less exact knowledge than moderns concerning the biological and medical aspects of ageing, and so they indulge their fancy much more freely concerning the nature and significance of senescence.'³⁾ His statement can be regarded as an over-generalization, for the present ethnographic material demonstrates that the Zulu people accurately observe the physiological criteria of ageing and clearly recognize that the menopause ushers in old age: a fact well supported by medical studies which associate the menopause with a decrease in oestrogen in the blood-stream, flabbiness and dryness of the vulva, clitoris and vaginal vestibule,⁴⁾ and the removal of growth stimuli to the various generative cells.⁵⁾

However ageing is not merely a physiological process, for its conceptualization is inevitably affected by cultural variants. Much has been written on the chronological definition of old age in industrialized countries, especially America, which determine old age as commencing at approximately sixty-five years for men and sixty-two years for women, a definition strongly influenced by retirement from paid

-
- 1) Clark & Anderson 1967, p.6
 - 2) Shock 1962, pp.100-110
 - 3) Simmons 1946, p.92
 - 4) See also Coleman 1947, p.207
 - 5) See also Johnson 1947, p.209

employment.¹⁾ The criticisms of such a temporal definition of ageing centre first on the fact that it is unrelated to the biological rate of ageing of the individual or of the sexes²⁾ and second that these cultures often fail to provide meaningful roles and institutions for the aged.³⁾ The emptiness and frustration of the later years in such cultures is summarized by Simmons: 'While modern civilization has added more years to life, it tends to leave less life in the years.'⁴⁾

1.1.2 Evaluation of the literature

The notable contribution of Simmons' cross-cultural survey of old age in preliterate cultures is that he convincingly demonstrates the meaningful participation of the aged in important aspects of tribal life. He shows how ageing individuals everywhere become progressively dependent on others for food⁵⁾ the supply of which was often bolstered by food taboo privileges.⁶⁾ Simmons maintains that property rights have provided the aged with considerable power in ensuring that their wants are satisfied.⁷⁾ As old age or physical ailments beset people they relinquish the tasks of maintenance and defence and adopt supervisory and auxiliary roles.⁸⁾ Their security comes to depend less and less upon the manipulation of objects and more upon an adjustment to and manipulation of people.⁹⁾ He found that the most effective means of eliciting the support of others is by rendering essential services to them¹⁰⁾ and one such specialized service particularly associated with old women is

-
- 1) Tuckman & Lorge 1953, pp.489-491; Clark & Anderson 1967, pp.6-8; Cowgill 1972a, p.245
 - 2) See also Clark & Anderson 1967, pp.8, 11, 17
 - 3) See also Parsons 1960, p.173; Orbach 1962, pp.53-57; Clark & Anderson 1967, pp.9-10
 - 4) Simmons 1946, p.72
 - 5) Simmons 1970, pp.34-35
 - 6) Ibid. p.26
 - 7) Ibid. p.36
 - 8) Ibid. p.82
 - 9) Ibid. p.82
 - 10) Ibid. pp.82-83, 88, 177

midwifery.¹⁾

Although Simmons provides useful general insights into the position of the aged, it should be remembered that he based his cross-cultural study on reports that were not always written by trained ethnographers and on fragments of ethnographic data. His methodology poses problems, as Maxwell & Silverman explain: 'Simmons' The Role of the Aged in Primitive Society (1945)... which stands as the first and only large-scale cross-cultural study of ageing, rich as it is in illustrative material, is unfortunately of limited value, largely because of its flawed methodology. In a sample of 71 societies he includes several that are closely related - for example, the Polar Eskimo and the Labrador Eskimo; the Dieri and the Aranda of Australia. The problem with closely related societies, of course, is that, unlike closely related individuals, you don't know whether you are dealing with one case or two. In the absence of careful sampling procedures it is easy for generalizations drawn from the data to be awry. This alone would be enough to make Simmons' conclusions suspect, but in addition, he had coded 240 culture traits in these 71 societies by himself, without providing explicit coding rules for the reader, so that the reliability of his data cannot be known... Finally, there are some errors in the statistical operations employed... which cast doubt on his other procedures.'²⁾ Cowgill criticizes Simmons for producing a miscellany of correlations between ageing and various characteristics of the physical, social and cultural environment.³⁾

The pioneering nature of Simmons' survey needs to be borne in mind, plus the fact that he was aware of shortcomings in his overall methodology:⁴⁾ for instance he mentions how he was hampered by insufficient data.⁵⁾ These facts

-
- 1) Simmons 1970, pp.90-94, 103
 - 2) Maxwell & Silverman 1970, p.362
 - 3) Cowgill 1972b, p.7
 - 4) Simmons 1970, pp.13, 19
 - 5) Ibid. pp.19, 104, 129

notwithstanding, the reader is left with the following information on old women. Whereas old women control property rights among collectors, hunters and fishing peoples, among farmers and herders men have greater rights.¹⁾ Matrilineal descent, communal food-sharing and ownership of land are said to be positively related to the property rights of old women,²⁾ such control being associated with prestige.³⁾ Unlike men, old women do not receive renown as the constancy of the food supply increases.⁴⁾ Whereas old men are influential in politics and law or control secret societies, respect for old women is said to increase most where they themselves have held some authority.⁵⁾ Aged women seldom hold positions of chieftainship, or in law or government⁶⁾ or as council elders,⁷⁾ though there is little information on their participation in public assemblies.⁸⁾ Old women often assume dominant roles in initiation ceremonies which enhance the respect they are accorded.⁹⁾ Whereas old men obtain reflected prestige from the respect attributed to old women, the reverse is not necessarily true.¹⁰⁾ Although old women are referred to as sources of information it is thought they are consulted to a lesser extent than old men.¹¹⁾ Old men are also said to be more active in priestly and ceremonial activities than old women, especially in herding and agricultural economies under patriarchal conditions.¹²⁾ Although aged men have had greater opportunity to marry younger mates than have old women,¹³⁾ where the latter hold important property rights and where polygyny prevails and infant and child betrothals are common, and where aged women

1) Simmons 1970, pp.47, 49

2) Ibid. pp.47-49

3) Ibid. p.80

4) Ibid. pp.79, 81

5) Ibid. p.80

6) Ibid. pp.112, 123

7) Ibid. pp.119

8) Ibid. p.119

9) Ibid. p.130

10) Ibid. p.81

11) Ibid. pp.174-175

12) Ibid. p.175

13) Ibid. pp.177-178, 210-212

could become shamans, it is reported that old women could acquire younger mates, particularly in a centralized political system, but not in patrilineal societies.¹⁾ The domestic authority of old women is greatest amongst matrilineal societies, and peoples who fish and hunt, especially where women have participated in government and owned considerable property;²⁾ and old women have been best cared for in matrilineal, avunculate systems.³⁾

Press & McKool maintain that Simmons' ground-breaking examination of the aged reflects the weakness of his ethnographical source material: that 'by and large, he correlated a hodge podge of variables resulting in many interesting hypothetical points and an overall lack of coherence. Missing is a feeling for the interplay of factors which, in any given society, combine in specified ways to determine the status of the ageing individual...'⁴⁾ Many of Simmons' deductions on the position of old women are problematical by virtue of being too vague or too broad: for instance no distinction is made between patriarchal societies which have a centralized or non-centralized political system. From Simmons' information it can at best be postulated that in preliterate cultures old women have generally held a less favourable position than old men; that they have tended to have greater rights and prestige in hunter-gatherer cultures than among herders and farmers; and that matrilineal organizations mostly favour old women.

In an attempt to clarify the basic assumptions and hypotheses of old age advanced by gerontologists and sociologists and to determine which are culture-bound, a number of cross-cultural studies of old age have emerged, though they have restricted application since they tend to compare Western-industrialized nations.⁵⁾ Cowgill & Holmes by comparing disparate cultures have attempted to identify

1) Simmons 1970, p.211

2) Ibid. p.213

3) Ibid. p.80

4) Press & McKool 1972, p.298

5) Burgess 1960; Shanas 1963; Shanas et al. 1968

characteristics of ageing that are universal in comparison with those which are culturally distinctive.¹⁾ Their findings however are common knowledge: that there are more females than males among the aged and that most of these are widows, that everywhere there is a group of people delineated as old and that they typically assume sedentary and supervisory roles concerned with group maintenance, and that there is usually some form of reciprocal behaviour between the old and their adult children.²⁾ They do not offer substantial insights into the ageing process that could not be deduced from Simmons' original survey. The superficiality of their findings can perhaps be attributed to the absence of comparable basic data and their over-generalized source material. Perhaps as Geertz suggests, the essence of what it means to be human may be revealed most clearly by the cultural peculiarities of a people rather than by itemizing human 'universals'³⁾ which are difficult to evaluate outside the context in which they occur.

A few ethno-gerontological studies have been conducted but they do not deal specifically with the position of old women.⁴⁾ There is no body of literature describing attitudes towards the menopause in different cultures,⁵⁾ and the lives of old women have in general attracted little interest. Two exceptions should be mentioned in the form of unpublished M.A. theses from Panjab University, Chandigarh; unfortunately these potentially promising studies do little to extend knowledge. That of Indra is poorly written and does not illuminate the position of old women in the village of

1) Cowgill 1972b, pp.3-13; Cowgill & Holmes 1972, pp.305-321

2) Cowgill & Holmes 1972, p.321

3) Geertz 1975, p.43

4) Maxwell 1970; D'Souza 1971; Cox & Mberia 1977

5) See also Neugarten et al. 1963, pp.140-141

Rattangarh.¹⁾ The research by Kaur in the town of Batala delineates problems more clearly, but much of the material is shallow, which in part seems to be the result of the research having been conducted over a period of one month.²⁾

Women are receiving greater attention in contemporary ethnographic research in rural areas in Southern Africa,³⁾ though there is a tendency to give them passing mention where their inclusion should be of importance. An M.A. thesis on the position of women in the religious system of the Manala-Ndebele offers the conclusion: 'When she [the Ndebele woman] has reached the menopause and is viewed as a man, her participation and role fulfilment is like that of a man. Then she becomes accepted by her parents-in-law and may handle the ubhutshulo (emblem of authority) of her husband.'⁴⁾ Hambrock does not adequately explore the meaning of the simile that the old woman is viewed like a man, and the bulk of her material tends to emphasize the contrary. Her conclusion is simplistically based on six brief references in which it is said that the old woman may point out the ritual beast,⁵⁾ place beer, meat and tobacco for the ancestors,⁶⁾ enter the cattle-kraal,⁷⁾ and be accepted by her parents-in-law once she passes the menopause.⁸⁾ The religious and other roles of women are superficially described with anthropological generalizations being superimposed rather than providing a clear exposition as to why women perform certain select duties.

South African anthropologists have failed to incorporate the aged adequately in their ethnographies. Two exceptions occur: Myburgh's study on the care of the aged among the

-
- 1) Indra 1963
 - 2) Kaur 1964, p.10
 - 3) See also Gaye 1980
 - 4) Hambrock 1981, p.63
 - 5) Ibid. p.18
 - 6) Ibid. pp.19, 22
 - 7) Ibid. pp.20, 23
 - 8) Ibid. p.56

problems. Most of the early information on Zulu social and cultural life is provided by writers such as travellers, missionaries, traders or military men who often mingled their observations with moral condemnation of the practices of the people concerned.¹⁾ Although there has been a tendency among anthropologists to rely on such material, it should be remembered that the writers were not often well versed in Zulu culture or proficient in the language: their observations should accordingly be treated with the circumspection that we accord modern works. There are of course exceptional contributions such as the tomes written by Bryant which combine human warmth with satisfying ethnography. His 'The Zulu People'²⁾ suggests a dedicated and knowledgeable recorder of Zulu history and custom. Unfortunately the same cannot be said of Kidd's work³⁾ which is rendered almost valueless by his failure to clarify to which Nguni groups his discussions refer. Krige performed the admirable task of coherently ordering the scattered pieces of ethnographic literature on the Zulu people, despite the fact that one might query the validity of certain sources.⁴⁾

Perhaps the most valuable contribution offered by early writers on the Zulu is not that their statements were necessarily correct but that they drew attention to certain important issues; though one may question whether it is possible to write about a monolithic group termed 'the Zulu' in view of the need to determine the extent to which tribal variations exist in relation to a given topic. Much of the literature either is punctuated by unqualified statements concerning the subordination of women⁵⁾ or presents an undifferentiated view of women, such as in Ngubane's treatise on purity and pollution in which the writer fails to recognize and comment satisfactorily on crucial differences between older and younger women.⁶⁾ Evidence from the literature

1) See also Kohler 1933, pp.39-40

2) Bryant 1967

3) Kidd 1904; Kidd 1906

4) Krige 1957

5) Shooter 1857, pp.79-84; Gluckman 1935, pp.260-263;

Wright 1979

6) Ngubane 1977

suggests that Zulu women past the age of child-bearing have a distinctive position in their culture as treasuries of tribal lore and are important in certain ceremonies, but the precise nature and dimensions of their involvement are not clearly explained or understood.

1.2 Aim of the present research

The intention of this thesis is to portray as clearly as possible the main patterns of behaviour and areas of concern among old Zulu women. Attention is devoted to probing the core symbols utilized by old women and the key values which underlie and direct their cultural behaviour. The ceremonies and rituals in which old women have played or continue to play a relevant role, or in which they have become obsolete, are documented. This is felt to be particularly necessary in view of the acculturation that is taking place and rapidly altering the position of elderly women within the society. The research records the customs of old women in three different tribal groups in a single area, namely the magisterial district of Nkandla, in order to establish the extent of tribal similarities and differences, and to determine whether the differences are significant within the general cultural pattern of 'the Zulu people'. Wherever possible the fieldwork findings are related to the literature on the Zulu. Although the specific aim of the research is to provide a composite picture of old age in a preliterate culture with particular reference to women, it is hoped that the ethnographic data may be useful source material to other anthropologists and gerontologists.

1.3 Area of research

Since a fundamental aim of the research was to provide a foundation of data on the socio-cultural life of old Zulu women, an area with as little acculturation as possible was sought within KwaZulu and one which did not share a border with a large population of non-Zulu people. After

undertaking a preliminary trip throughout KwaZulu the magisterial district of Nkandla was selected,¹⁾ this being a largely undeveloped territory with few local employment opportunities except for civil servants in the main village and administrative centre of Mpandleni. The magistracy contains 85 600 Zulu people of whom 62 366 are female and 23 234 male, and of whom 5 122 draw an old age pension. When the local Zulu people speak of Nkandla they refer neither to the magistracy nor to the village but to the primeval forest that dominates the south,²⁾ a lush, dense natural fortress stretching over an area of 2 216 hectares. For the rest the magistracy is characterized by 229 630 hectares of sharply etched hills, covered with Tambootie and Aristida grass and clumps of wattle. It is 1 000 metres above sea-level, has a temperate climate, and receives approximately 600 millimetres of rain annually. Although some rain falls throughout the year, the wet season is the summer which lasts from October to April. Stockowners own an average of nine head of cattle and three goats; the people practise mono-agriculture, and the grain harvest averaging three bags per hectare lasts them from two to four months since most homes plough an average of two hectares.

Although some statistics are available on the number of schools, hospitals, clinics and churches in the area, which it was hoped might provide an indication of the relative acculturation of each tribal area, they have not been used on account of their unreliability. For instance among the Biyela there is said to be no hospital or clinic; however many of the Biyela people studied live within walking distance of the hospital in the village. It is unclear how meaningful and accurate the number of church supporters is. There are old people who have some church affiliation, such as with the Dutch Reformed or American Board Churches, but these two denominations are not mentioned in the statistics. The maximum number of primary schools in any

1) See Map 1, p.287

2) See also Faye 1923, p.29

of the areas under surveillance is four, and in the case of secondary and high schools, one.

Interest in the question of tribal variation led to an initial investigation of the position of old women among the Mpungose, Shezi, Biyela, Khanyile and Dlomo tribes.

However after a year the task of handling five groups was found to be too great and attention was confined to the three which presented the most useful and interesting contrasts.¹⁾ The Mpungose were not further investigated because their genealogy is fairly shallow and the tribe's rulers are descended from Siyunguza who was one of thirteen chiefs selected by the Whites on account of his loyalty to Britain during the Zulu war. They present no distinctively different data. Historically the two most important tribes are the Shezi and the Biyela. The Shezi are the original inhabitants of the Nkandla area and remained unconquered by Shaka.²⁾ They provided protection and a burial place for Cetshwayo and were the guardians of Cetshwayo's grave until 1980 when the remains were removed to Makhosini, the Valley of the Kings. Their chief Sigananda played a prominent part in the Bambatha Rebellion of 1906³⁾ after which much of his extensive land was confiscated.

The Biyela of Mahlayizeni were chosen for further study primarily because they are a direct offshoot of the Zulu clan⁴⁾ and secondarily because they live adjacent to the village of Mpandleni and it was of interest to discover whether this proximity had a particularly acculturating effect on them. Their chief Bhekizwe has refused to allow his tribal area to be proclaimed a betterment area; accordingly the fields still belong to the founder agnatic groups, and thatched rondavel and beehive homes can be seen irregularly dispersed over the hillsides.

The Khanyile were selected because their roots are closely associated with early missionary activity at

1) See Map 2, p.288

2) See also Stuart 1913, p.208

3) See also Bosman 1907, pp.25, 48, 50, 101, 109, 181-122

4) See pp.27-28

Thalaneni¹⁾ and they continue to be a highly Christianized group ruled by a chief who practises the Zionist faith; furthermore their tribal area was proclaimed a betterment scheme in 1968²⁾ and is consequently subdivided into close settlements, grazing, and fields: an alien demographic pattern. Houses are now for the most part built in rows and tend to be rectangular and close to one another but at a distance from their fields. I wished to determine whether this intense mission activity and change of demography had substantially affected the patterns of life of old women. This is also an area into which former inhabitants of White farms have been moved.

The Dlomo were chosen because they are not indigenous to the magistracy:³⁾ they stem from a specialized section of the Nguni family, namely the Lala who predominated in Natal. The Lala people traditionally incised the fifth finger of the left hand of their children and dipped it in cowdung; they also cut (ukugcatshwa) their face and joints as the Dlomo still do to prevent their children having watery eyes or passing faeces indoors. Another distinctive custom⁴⁾ now dispensed with but still practised by members of the Dlomo ruling family at the time of their youth, was that of sleeping with the right forefinger in the rectum: on rising in the morning the people would suck this finger and expectorate towards the sun so that the umunga tree would not become dry. The custom could not be explained further, but nowadays people of Dlomo origin have replaced it by sleeping with their hands folded between their thighs. Their idiosyncrasy causes hilarity among the Khanyile who regard it and the huge earlobes as typical of the 'peculiarities' of their neighbours. Their ukutekela dialect is also distinctive.⁵⁾ Of the three tribes being investigated the Dlomo live farthest from the settlement of Mpandleni in the

1) See pp.30-33

2) Proclamation R196, 1967

3) See pp.34-35

4) See also de B. Webb & Wright 1976, p.118; de B. Webb & Wright 1979, p.130

5) See also Bryant 1965, pp.3, 7, 232-234; de B. Webb & Wright 1976, p.118; de B. Webb & Wright 1979, pp.54-55

Malunga area, a treeless overgrazed landscape which is heavily eroded, though they are supposed to have a planned betterment area. At present resettlement is desultory and incomplete; accordingly although fields are still traditionally allocated to the homestead or agnatic group by the head of the dominant descent group with the approval of the chief, some are now apportioned to married couples. Of the three tribes the Dlomo wear the most traditional dress, many of the women donning large headdresses, hide-skirts and drapes and the young people the distinctive attire that demarcates a particular stage of courtship. Their chief favours the perpetuation of traditional ways.

The Zulu people in the three tribes studied in Nkandla are living at various levels of acculturation and cannot easily be categorized into neat units on the basis of their response to comprehensive culture change, as Vilakazi has done for the Nyuswa and Qadi of Natal.¹⁾ Even among the core of committed Christians in Thalaneni who have long prized education, numerous traditional rites and practices are followed: the men for instance continue to wear a hide-bracelet after conducting a ritual slaughter even though they may conceal this beneath a handkerchief. Likewise the traditionalists do not steadfastly resist change²⁾ since most people act according to traditional ways while incorporating new ideas and procedures into their behavioural repertoire. Vilakazi also mentions a category of people called amagxagxa: the disoriented 'flotsam and jetsam' produced by secular change.³⁾ No such group is singled out by informants and the term is unknown in the three tribes investigated. But if one compares the three tribes studied with others in which research has recently been undertaken an overall impression of conservatism is presented. Among the Mkhwanazi for instance a woman may be a marriage negotiator⁴⁾ - a circumstance unthinkable to

1) Vilakazi 1957, pp.93-101

2) Ibid. p.94

3) Ibid. pp.98-99

4) Nkabinde 1980, p.17

people in the three tribes studied. Furthermore whereas a girl's mother may request a sheep, shawl and knife as part of preliminary marriage gifts (izibizo) in the tribes studied in Nkandla, among the Mkhwamazi these requests include coal stoves, groceries and cutlery.¹⁾

1.4 Research procedure and method

Prior to undertaking fieldwork an attempt was made to read the important works on the Zulu people, leaving lesser studies for later reading. Questions were then formulated to serve as a check on the written material and to see whether further information on a given topic could be elicited. Although the present study derives from original field research, appropriate references to relevant data in the literature are provided, and where suitable some of the written information is incorporated into the text. The purpose of this is to fill in gaps and supply detail in order to establish a coherent picture of old age in respect of women.

Fieldwork was conducted during the period 1979-1982. The standard anthropological field techniques of observation and depth interviewing were utilized and to these were added other techniques that would either provide information of a different kind or serve as a cross-check on the material gained. In an effort to establish the validity of information for a given tribal group interviews were periodically conducted with the chief's ibandla (council-of-men) with whom the basic principles and interpretation of custom previously obtained from individuals were checked. The most valuable oral information came from a core of aged women who, though mostly illiterate, had excellent memories, great powers of concentration and an impressive command of language. Since they comprise the last generation of Zulu-speaking people with first-hand knowledge of such ancient ceremonies as Nomkhubulwana a point was made of gleaning information from them, not out of a romantic nostalgia for the past, nor from a blind pursuit of conjectural history,²⁾

1) Nkabinde 1980, p.26

2) Nadel 1951, p.36; van Velsen 1965, pp.63-64; van Velsen 1967, p.137

but because they grew up at a time when Zulu culture was less fragmented, and because their understanding of the workings of the parent-culture could assist in interpreting certain symbolic clusters.¹⁾ Hunter has stressed that a culture can only be fully understood by taking into account 'its historical context', especially when it 'has undergone revolutionary changes within a generation'.²⁾ Similarly Herskovits mentions the importance from a methodological and theoretical point of view of emphasizing the 'element of cultural tenacity' which 'has tended to be relegated to a minor position' in situations of culture contact.³⁾ On comparing information obtained from these old Zulu women with the available literature and other historical data the accuracy of their recall of history and custom was often astonishing. Understandably not every old woman is a reliable informant nor has clarity of recall; in consequence the material elicited from open-ended depth interviewing was constantly checked with cross-questions and personal descriptions, and the same question was often presented in a different way six months later to the same or different old women, and sometimes to the ibandla or any other informant who might shed light on the subject. The same material was rechecked in all three tribes.

Old people were usually candid: they would say when they did not know something or did not remember clearly. At times they were tested with incorrect information with which good informants either disagreed or insisted that they themselves had never seen or heard of the matter as presented, though they were cognisant of variations between tribes, clans, lineages and homes. As far as possible the information was based on a cross-section of informants of both sexes, particularly those who were old. Sometimes this persistent search for comprehensiveness and meticulous accuracy would exasperate the most intelligent informants.

1) See also Hunter 1934, pp.336-337, 339

2) Ibid. p.337

3) Herskovits 1954, pp.19-20

Others repeatedly would thrash out an issue, observing that my attempts to obtain clarity was proof of sincerity and interest. Discussions and interviews were conducted in Zulu. Selective use of an interpreter was made, first because the respect-language of women differs between clans and necessitates re-learning much vocabulary; second because old women often speak a metaphoric Zulu that sometimes distracts from the main import of the topic under discussion; and third because roles and concepts could be discussed more effectively through an accomplished interpreter, leaving the researcher free to concentrate on refinements of interpretation where necessary. Use was made of a very capable interpreter who developed a keen interest in the research. Being in her sixties made it possible for her to discourse candidly with informants on all matters pertaining to women.

Some anthropologists regard observation as a superior research tool to that of interviewing and discussion. The dangers of oral information and the intrusion of the perceptions of at least two people are well-known and must constantly be monitored, yet observation as a tool has its own shortcomings. As Firth says: 'Social anthropologists are usually said to study a society, a community, a culture. But this is not what they observe. The material for their observation is human activity. They do not even observe social relationships; they infer them from physical acts. The anthropologist as observer is a moving point in a flow of activity. At any one time he has only a limited field of social observation - the people whose acts he can see or hear, or about whose acts he can get description by others who have observed. Rarely does he observe a small group such as a family in total activity over any considerable length of time... Yet his published analyses are full of general statements about what families, lineages, age-sets do, and even about the attitudes and interests of whole societies.'¹⁾ The weaknesses of observation as a technique that became evident in fieldwork were the limitations of time, space, and

1) Firth 1961, p.22

the number of old women that can be observed in a single ceremony, and the fact that an anthropologist will occasionally select behaviour patterns that seem to be significant only to find on later questioning that the participants might have different criteria of relevance. There is the further problem of satiation: that one cannot observe meticulously over a period of days or weeks; and most important, of the need to respect the privacy of the people studied. The anthropologist would like to be ever-present but needs to avoid being intrusive. Observation and depth-interviewing were therefore used as complementary techniques to counter the inherent shortcomings of either method.

In trying to identify the important activities of an old woman in daily life without having to harrass her unduly, use was made of a technique successfully used in an earlier study.¹⁾ An intelligent teenager with a Standard Five education who was living at home with her grandmother was asked to keep a diary of the daily activities and contacts made by her grandmother, an old Biyela lady. The result was an invaluable year's record in Zulu of the grandmother's pursuits, demonstrating how she would preside over child-medicines, approach the ancestors, or enculturate her grandchildren. The diary provided supportive evidence on questions such as the ululating of old women, and also revealed the continued importance of the local peer group in the friendships of old women.

Months of fieldwork were spent on general ethnography, contextualizing the lives of old women and observing complex inter-relationships of different groups of people and their performance of customs which have not been recorded, confronting what other anthropologists have noted: the fact that culture is lived imperfectly,²⁾ yet trying to present as coherent a picture as possible.

1) Walther (Brindley) 1968

2) See also Levine 1968, p.134

Finally, the people who were observed, interviewed, or with whom conversation was shared were always compensated with a small gift; similar items were occasionally given to their neighbours to prevent the arousal of jealousy. The gifts were mainly valued items of utility such as paraffin, soap, candles, good second-hand clothing, blankets, utensils, sugar and tea, and prints of any photographs taken. Since monetary gifts can cause misunderstanding, only the young lady who kept the diary and my interpreter were paid on a daily basis. I never treated people for illnesses, as some anthropologists do, but in cases of real need I would offer lifts, pay medical fees, or take old women to the hospital for treatment. In such ways an attempt was made to compensate both the aged and their families for the trust they showed and the knowledge they imparted.

1.5 Problems of fieldwork

Once the purpose of note-taking in context had been explained to informants, it presented no problems; however use of a dictionary in the field was dispensed with after a day because it bore associations with the Bible and projected a missionary image. Only two refusals were received with respect to interviewing and observation during the entire period of fieldwork, and both occurred within the first week. One was from an old lady who suffered from senile dementia and who believed that I was a missionary. The other was after White security police searched a house following my visit. Throughout the study my intentions were suspected by the Special Branch of the local police and this complicated research. Despite this harassment and the need periodically to re-explain my role it is my belief that the majority of Zulu people trusted me. In the final analysis it was their willing assistance that enabled me to make meaningful and sustained contact in the area, and to participate in important ceremonies and rituals such as childbirth, coming-of-age ceremonies, divinations and mortuary customs. I am confident that the rapport established was sufficiently

meaningful to provide the required degree of accuracy for the collection of reliable information.

However the research had a painful side. Old women who were lucid informants and who had become cherished friends would die, and new contacts had to be sought. In one instance two old ladies died within six months of one another and they were the only people in their area who had participated in the custom of ukukhalela amabele (crying for the sorghum). On another occasion an aged informant would fall ill or have to endure a prolonged stay in hospital. Such events would bring to mind McNeil's words: 'There is a fantasy in our culture that the intellectual heroes of research thrive on the joys of unadulterated data. The hard truth is that most good research (and some that is bad) is gruelling work not much different in its demands from any other labour requiring limitless attention to minutiae. The glamour of research is in the eye of the distant beholder. It is seldom visible to the researcher frustrated by unpredictable human beings who won't stand still long enough to be studied.'¹⁾

1.6 Terminology and presentation of the material

It is a truism in anthropology that all cultures are constantly in a state of change: thus when the term 'traditional' occurs in the thesis it does not refer to a static golden-age but to the culture in which old women were enculturated before comprehensive culture change began to make numerous roles and ceremonies obsolete. The contemporary situation is presented here, though reference is made to earlier practice whenever relevant. Certain terms such as 'tribe' 'cattle-kraal' or 'chief' have been retained when currently used by the people themselves, despite the semantic difficulties they project.²⁾ It is however emphasized that no pejorative or judgemental associations are implied either by their use or by the term 'preliterate'.

1) McNeil 1976, p.147

2) See also Godelier 1977, pp.70-94

When key terms are used in the text the vernacular has been retained on account of the inadequacy and cumbersome nature of suitable translations: a glossary is provided on pages 289-291. Where Zulu terms are used they occur either in the singular or plural form, depending on context, with prefixes adjusted accordingly. Prefixes have however been omitted when reference is made to tribal groups, such as the Biyela, Dlomo and Khanyile, names of people, or in the case of the locative where they become tautologous when used with English. To avoid the plethora of prefixes that occur in Zulu slang, and which might confuse the reader unacquainted with Zulu, standard prefixes and phrases are used in the text. The meaning of Zulu terms is given in the text where a word occurs for the first time.

As has been mentioned, the question of tribal variation is researched. Where the actions of old women concur in all three tribes (Biyela, Dlomo and Khanyile) the tribal names are not mentioned, but wherever distinctive patterns occur these are made explicit and refer to the tribe and not the clan. Within each tribal group certain lineages practise a variation of the custom here reported, or at times do not practise it, and even within lineages different homes may have adapted a custom or dispensed with it. As Firth says: 'The pattern, then, is the main theme, not an identical procedure.'¹⁾

Old age in Zulu culture is fundamentally linked with a physiological change: the attainment of the menopause. It is secondarily associated with the attainment of new roles, the foremost being grandparenthood and in many cases becoming a parent-in-law. The majority of old women had passed the menopause when their first grandchild was born, and this fact gives rise to the often heard statement that 'Ugogo (grandmother) is always an old woman': thus use of the term old woman implies that she is post-menopausal. Although in most cases old women had passed the climacterium when their eldest child married, people do not associate the role of mother-in-law with old age as closely as they do that of

1) Firth 1961, pp.83-84

grandmother. Informants point out that 'a real grandmother no longer menstruates', but nowadays women are bearing children and marrying at a much younger age and such roles are no longer as clearly defined as they used to be. Because Zulu society is patrilineal and patrilocal, unless otherwise stated the paternal grandmother is referred to when 'ugogo' or 'grandmother' is used in the text since the maternal grandmother plays an insignificant role.

The research therefore focuses on the actions performed by women who have passed the menopause and who are in consequence deemed old. In terms of the scope of the study the emphasis has been to describe action-patterns from the perspective of the involvement of old women rather than to provide full descriptions of institutions. And although every effort has been made to be as comprehensive as possible, minor customs and variations have been omitted. The intention has not been to throw light on such well-known themes as the house-property complex or woman-to-woman marriage (which is hardly known in the area), nor to consider what women in general do in Zulu culture, but to examine the actions that are exclusive to women past the age of childbearing. If therefore an old woman and a young woman indulge in the same activity this is not considered relevant, though at times for practical reasons young women perform roles that were customarily reserved for old women. Although the menopause with its association of purity accounts for many of the old woman's actions, particularly in ritual and ceremonial, cognisance need be taken of less well-defined areas in which old women participate on account of their maturity, experience and accumulated skills. Old women are dealt with as a single category unless their actions specifically require a distinction to be made on the basis of criteria such as age or experience.

1.7 Theoretical orientations

During the course of my investigation a number of social anthropologists of varying theoretical persuasions were visited with a view to discussing aspects of the research.

Invariably their interest was not so much in the data or its interpretation, but in what I should be looking for according to their particular theoretical predelictions, my promoter being a notable exception. One such anthropologist who had neither been to Nkandla nor studied in KwaZulu, stated that 'Zulu culture no longer exists, and therefore only change can be studied'. Others, following van Velsen, maintained that this work should be based primarily on the extended case-study method.¹⁾ I did in fact experiment with this method but found that the unit of study became too small and the data it produced inadequate for my purposes, my concern being not so much to emphasize individual variation but rather to determine the underlying principles within which such variation exists. Since no thesis can be all things to all anthropologists it became clear that the best I could do would be to portray the position of old women as accurately as possible according to my aims. In this research, understanding is sought not only of what old women do in Zulu culture, but why they behave as they do in terms of the core symbols and values expressed by their actions. We are still very much at surface-level in our knowledge of Zulu culture: although some useful research has been conducted in indigenous law,²⁾ we have not as yet discovered the forces which lend the culture significance, though Berglund's work is a notable step in this direction.³⁾ Since there is a dearth of knowledge of even the basic cultural facts about old age in Zulu culture the intention has been to provide a foundation on which others may elaborate in various ways. Focusing on the roles played by old women and attempting to determine some of the clusters of significant symbols which order their lives appears to be one way of gaining access to their conceptual world.

It is with humility that this work is presented, since the more deeply I have become involved in Zulu culture the

1) van Velsen 1967, pp.136-149

2) See also Stafford & Franklin 1950; de Clercq 1969 and 1975; Breytenbach 1971

3) Berglund 1976

more awesome is the complexity it has assumed. But as Geertz notes: 'Cultural analysis is intrinsically incomplete. And, worse than that, the more deeply it goes the less complete it is. It is a strange science whose most telling assertions are its most tremulously based, in which to get somewhere with the matter at hand is to intensify the suspicion, both your own and that of others, that you are not quite getting it right. But that, along with plaguing subtle people with obtuse questions, is what being an ethnographer is like.'¹⁾

1) Geertz 1975, p.29

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE THREE TRIBES STUDIED IN
THE DISTRICT OF NKANDLA

The Nkandla magistracy originated in 1881, the first magistrate being appointed by John Dunn; in 1888 it was moved to its present site Mpandleni¹⁾ which signifies 'the bald one' and refers to the treeless hill on which the magistrate's court and village were built. There are seventeen tribal groups in the magistracy, with this study concentrating on the Biyela, Khanyile and Dlomo.

2.1 The Biyela

The Biyela people are important historically for they are an offshoot of the Zulu clan headed by Ndaba, the grandfather of Senzangakhona.²⁾ Ndaba had a son named Khoko³⁾ whose heir, Menziwa,⁴⁾ is the ancestor of the Biyela. In the Mahlayizeni area 'Menziwa' is commonly used as the isithakazelo (praise-name) of the Biyela as an alternative to 'Ntshangase'.⁵⁾ A local version of the origin of the Biyela people that differs somewhat from that found in the literature,⁶⁾ is that Menziwa had a son called Mvundlana who was said to have fought bravely in the battle between the Ndwandwe and the Zulu at Mhlathuze.⁷⁾ But even before this, Mvundlana had a high sense of justice when defending people whom Shaka wanted killed. At the time Menziwa and his son Mvundlana were still using the name of Zulu, but when Shaka wanted to put people to death Mvundlana afforded protection to them by suggesting an alternative form of punishment such as confiscation of their cattle rather than taking their lives, until Shaka in exasperation said: 'You

1) Lugg 1949, p.124

2) See also Bryant 1965, pp.32-39

3) Ibid. pp.39-40

4) Ibid. p.40; de B. Webb & Wright 1976, p.356;
de B. Webb & Wright 1979, pp.210-211

5) See also van Warmelo 1935, p.30; de B. Webb & Wright 1979, pp.208, 211

6) Bryant 1965, pp.39-40

7) See also Cope 1979, p.49

are no longer of the Zulu clan: from now on I am going to call you Biyela (meaning fencing in, hedging in, protecting) because you protect the people whom I want to have killed.' Shaka gave Mvundlana the chieftainship of what is now the Melmoth magisterial district in recognition of his loyalty and military prowess, especially in the battle which caused Zwide to flee from Zululand.

The oldest inhabitants of the Biyela tribe of Mahlayizeni remember their history from four generations back, as from the twins Menziwa and Didi born of MaNdlovu. Menziwa was the first twin to be born and was therefore the senior. The Biyela tribe never killed their twins but believed that they had to be separated, for if they stayed together the one would oppress the other (ukucindezela). Shaka instructed that Didi should go to his mother's side, the Majola tribe in the Nkandla area, and there assume the chieftainship. So Didi went to the home of his mother's brother, Zulu Liyaduma, who was head of the Majola who occupied the land at the time and whose people were the original inhabitants together with other clans such as the Mchunu, Khanyile, Zulu and Mahhayi. They accepted Didi's rule for they had no choice.

Mtiyaqwa ruled next: he was Didi's heir, born of the inkosikazi (principal-wife). When Cetshwayo died and was brought to the Nkandla forest, Mtiyaqwa was one of the men who buried him there. In approximately 1912 Manyala succeeded as the next chief. He had twelve wives and resided at Mahlayizeni near the village of Mpandleni. He was the last born of the principal wife MaNtuli and was chosen to be the successor by his father, Mtiyaqwa. Manyala was considered a very good chief: his people were well treated and his death is still mourned. His principal-wife MaShezi had no son, so Manyala placed Velangaye, the first born son of his sixth wife, in MaShezi's house to succeed as heir. While Velangaye was working as a policeman in Pretoria,

the chief's councillors chose Bagingqi, the principal induna (headman) born of the elder brother of Manyala by MaKhanyile, as regent, but he died. When Velangaye the heir apparent died of illness soon after succession, Bhekizwe was still at school and had to complete his studies. Manyala's ninth wife, MaNgubane, had a son called Mfanizakhe who was chosen by the chief's councillors to take temporary charge of the tribe. However he became jealous of the position and wanted to retain the chieftainship. At the request of the tribe Mzibeni, the brother of Velangaye, was appointed as acting chief even though he belonged to the ikhohlwa (left-hand section); he was selected because of his age and good sense, and ruled well to the end of his term of office. Bhekizwe of MaMadela assumed the chieftainship in 1979. Bhekizwe is a serious-minded chief with a sense of vocation: he worked for two years at the magistrate's court to acquaint himself with modern administration. He matriculated at the Bhokuzulu College for chiefs' sons in Nongoma thus making him one of the most educated of the ruling chiefs. He married his first wife according to customary law and observes the indigenous religion. He has a traditional home at the place of his father and a modern, cement-built house on the main road leading into Mpandleni. He was selected by the chiefs of the Nkandla magistracy to represent them in the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly.

2.2 The Khanyile

The Sikakana originally lived in the Khanyile area: a tree still stands at Amatshenzigasi called 'mboma' and its roots now cover a large stone where the inyanga (medicine-man) Mboma Sikakana used to grind his medicines, the tribe being renowned as medicine-people.¹⁾ The origins of the Khanyile are less clear.²⁾ According to informants Mshinani of the Khanyile was serving Cetshwayo in the

1) See also Bryant 1965, p.230

2) See also Ibid. p.262; de B. Webb & Wright 1979, p.84

regiment of the Nokhenke and was among the people who defected when girls of the Ngcuze regiment, whom they were courting, were obliged to marry men of the older regiment, Dloko. His girlfriend, a Buthelezi, belonged to the Ngcuze and would have been killed if she had refused to select a lover from the older group of men. In consequence Mshinani and his girlfriend crossed the Tugela River to the side where the Whites lived where they would be safe from reprisal. Mshinani's brother, Zwelezikhulu, served the English government and when it allocated land to loyalists after the war of Zibhebhu and Dinizulu, Zwelezikhulu was given land at iSikhalenisebomvu (the place of red ochre). Zwelezikhulu asked his brother Mshinani, who was the first-born from the same mother, to rule in his place. (When the Bambatha rebellion broke out Zulu men like Mshinani Khanyile and Luzindela Dlomo,¹⁾ who had been allotted land as government servants, were asked to select people to help quell the uprising.²⁾ Apart from the Sikakana, who were the indigenous people of Mbizwe, and Mshinani who arrived later, the Shezi, Langa, Xulu and Mchunu were the main clans in the vicinity, but their leaders were izinduna. In contrast to the view of certain historians,³⁾ tribal elders state that much of this area was vacant as a result of the war between Dinizulu and Zibhebhu which led to the dispersal of its people: ukuhlakazeka (the scattering of people).

Reverend Robertson (Zulu enunciation Reverend Robson), who is usually referred to as Nzimela, arrived next. He was an Anglican missionary who resided at KwaMagwaza⁴⁾ but started the mission at Thalaneni. He brought various people to settle at Thalaneni, in particular the Nzuza, Maphumulo, Ziqubu, Magwaza, Mngadi, Ngubane, Ntuli, Mhlongo, Bukhosini, Nsele, Masuku and Simelane. Most of these were Christians

1) See p.35

2) See also Stuart 1913, pp.187; Marks 1970, pp.315-316

3) Marks 1970, pp.128, 211, 337

4) See also Mackenzie 1866

who on arrival built rectangular modern homes with windows and doors. Reverend Robertson aimed at making people repent and become Christians. One such person whom he brought with him was an American negro called Jo Afrikander. Afrikander married an Mhlongo girl who bore two sons and a daughter: William, Moses and Maria. When Jo died MaMhlongo married Ndlovu by whom she also bore two sons and a daughter: George, Duncan and Della. Then when Ndlovu died she married again to Xulu and had a boy by him. The Christians had now grown in number and Reverend Robertson decided that they must have their own chief. They nominated Moses Afrikander because he was considered a true Christian: his father came as a Christian from America and Moses had been baptized when young. Moses married Teyisa Ntuli and they had ten children, one of whom was Norah. At the time the Christians were under the Sikakana clan ruled by Mboma, the great inyanga. When Afrikander was to be registered as chief the White court officials said they could not register him as Afrikander because his people were not indigenous to the area and he had a negro, not a Zulu, name, so the Christians asked Duncan Ndlovu if he could assume his surname. He agreed and Afrikander was consequently renamed Moses Ndlovu when Reverend Roach (recruited to the Mission by Reverend Robertson) went to court to have him registered as a chief. Permission was not requested from George, Duncan's elder brother, because he had by this time left to study for the ministry.

Moses began to rule and during the battle of Itala in the Anglo-Boer war had his men enlisted as scouts for the English. However he had a weakness for women. After he was ordained chief he fell in love with a woman called Joanna who was married to the churchwarden Edmond Mabaso. This love led to child-bearing, and an uproar ensued not only because he had committed adultery with the wife of a churchwarden but because Joanna Ntuli belonged to the same isibongo (clan) as his own wife. Bishop Roach was extremely angry with Moses, said that he was not worthy of being a chief, and dismissed him from the chieftainship and the church.

Roach decided that the chieftainship should be given to a different clan, and Mshinani Khanyile who ruled the Khanyile people at the time was also chosen to be chief of the Christians. Mshinani was a 'heathen' with isicoco (head-ring), ibheshu (skin-buttock covering) and umutsha (loin covering) but he was selected because the Christian chief had sinned.

Mshinani Khanyile had a son, Doni, who became a Christian when he was an ibhungu (post-pubescent boy who has not yet chosen a lover); for a long time he was in love with Norah, the daughter of Moses Afrikander. However he also fell in love with the daughter of Bhukuda Ntenga, and whenever he visited the latter she would prepare food and send her classificatory younger sister to serve it to him. Events took their course and the younger sister fell pregnant. Doni told his father that he wished to take as wife his original Ntenga lover and ignored the one who fell pregnant. But fearing that Norah Afrikander would hear that he had impregnated an Ntenga girl, Doni also requested his father to send two marriage negotiators to Norah. These were accepted by Norah and her parents and Doni also made Norah pregnant. She subsequently bore a girl, married Doni by Christian rites, and ilobolo (cattle paid as bride-price) was paid, but Norah died in the influenza epidemic of 1918. When the marriage negotiators arrived at the Ntenga people, Doni's actual lover rejected him because he had disgraced her by impregnating her classificatory sister; nevertheless the Ntenga insisted that he marry her substitute. The pregnant girl was driven to the Khanyile home for she had discredited her family by taking her classificatory sister's husband. Doni's hut was at his father's residence, but his father expressed his displeasure by forcing him to build his new home with the Ntenga girl outside the premises. Damages were paid for the Ntenga girl whom Doni did not marry according to Christian rites, and ilobolo was allegedly only paid for her a long time afterwards when Norah was already married. The son born of MaNtenga was named Mpathesitha. Doni subsequently married

an Ntombela girl. During the wedding ceremony it was announced that MaNtombela was taking over Norah's home: she would cook in her kitchen, work there, and 'make the place live again' (ukuvusa indlu). MaNtombela gave birth to a boy whom Doni Khanyile named Sogodi, inkosi yamaNgwane - Sogodi, the chief of the Khanyile people, Ngwane being their isithakazelo.

Mpathesitha (meaning to handle privately), the present ruler of the Khanyile people, was born of MaNtenga and was so called because his birth was considered improper, his mother having caused her sister to lose her lover. Some informants maintain that Sogodi is the rightful successor and should claim the chieftainship because his mother MaNtombela, the daughter of the chief at Ntumbeni, was the real wife whereas Mpathesitha was born under circumstances which render him ineligible. They argue that Mpathesitha has no standing because his father abused his wife's sister who by this action lost the man she loved and lowered the dignity of both families. They dismiss the idea that the offspring of such a union can be a chief for, as with his birth, there will be quarrelling among his people. They argue further that his name proves his unsuitability, though he is favoured by the Whites whereas Sogodi has no-one to represent him. Attempts have been made on Mpathesitha's life. Sogodi has officially requested the chieftainship on the basis of the affiliation principle whereby Sogodi's mother was the first and principal-wife of his deceased father, Doni Khanyile, MaNtenga never having married Doni and she being ikhohlwa. Mpathesitha, who has ruled for thirty years, denies the validity of the marriage between Doni and Norah Afrikander because they were married by Christian rites and because according to him no ilobolo was delivered. Contemporary Khanyile life is disturbed by constant allegations of theft, assault and murder: some of the tension stems from this unresolved and simmering feud, some from the effort of the Christians to live a different type of life from their 'heathen' consociates, and some from the fact that this is a planned betterment area

allegedly introduced in the face of opposition from the tribal community.

2.3 The Dlomo

Today the Dlomo people live in the Malunga area of Nkandla. Originally they lived south of the Tugela River at Senge.¹⁾ During that time Shaka's dog had been stolen by the Xhosa, and Shaka and his regiment went to effect its recovery. En route Shaka came across a man called Yedwana Dlomo, and because he was the only member of the Dlomo clan instructed that he should not be harmed.²⁾ On his return Shaka came across several Dlomo people and asked if he could spend the night with them. As a result of this favour they were left untouched by Shaka and many assumed the Dlomo surname. Shaka favoured them because he was the son of MaMhlongo, and this was the isithakazelo used by the Dlomo. Shaka later requested regiments from chief Dlomo kaDlomo, but Dlomo disapproved and only gave him one regiment, with his eldest son of indlunkulu (right-hand section) Makhedama, as leader. Makhedama and his regiment had to go to Shaka's residence to learn how to handle a spear and spent six years there; the Dlomo people who remained behind heard no word of him and thought he had died.

So Khabela, also of indlunkulu, but who was Makhedama's younger brother, was chosen as successor to the chief and assumed the chieftainship when his father was ageing. The chief died while Khabela was reigning, but during his reign rumours reached the Dlomo people that Makhedama was alive. He returned and lay concealed, and the people of maKhabeleni no longer favoured the reign of Khabela since Makhedama was the rightful heir. Khabela, sensing that the people wanted to kill him, took some members of the tribe and fled to the umVoti River near Stanger. After initial resistance the area was taken over by the Dlomo and Khabela reigned and died there. Mqhabuli Dlomo then succeeded Khabela: he was

1) See also Bryant 1965, pp. 409, 510-511; de B. Webb & Wright 1979, pp. 219, 229

2) See also Bryant 1965, p.511

the first born son of ikhohlwa because indlunkulu only had daughters. After Khabela's death Mqhabuli entered a leviritic union of which Luzindela was the issue. When Luzindela grew up Mqhabuli was the reigning chief. Luzindela married and asked Mqhabuli for land, but could not be given it because the eldest son of Mqhabuli was due to succeed and Luzindela was the offspring of a type of leviritic union which is not favoured, namely that of a son of a junior house (ikhohlwa) with an indlunkulu wife. This caused a dispute which was ultimately settled in court, the verdict favouring Mqhabuli since he was ruling at the time. However Luzindela worked for the government and was allocated land in Nkandla which had at one time been occupied by the Langa.

Luzindela established himself and then asked Matshana Mchunu, his neighbour, for permission to build. Matshana agreed, and went with him to pay respects to and ask for land from the reigning King Mpande who acceded to their request that Luzindela be allowed to build next to Matshana. However Dlaka Langa, a former induna of Shaka, had built on a hill nearby and was not in favour of Luzindela's people establishing themselves there, so he recruited the Sibiya, Masango and Nxumalo people to fight against Luzindela. Luzindela's people defeated them and Dlaka's men fled to the other side of the Mhlathuze River. Luzindela's people then established themselves in the Malunga area and the Masango and Nxumalo returned and paid respects to Luzindela, though most of the Sibiya went over to Mzinyathi and joined the Sithole.

Luzindela had three sons: Mcondo, Mjantshi and Antoni. Mcondo died without male issue and Mjantshi his younger brother ruled the tribe from 1905-1926 and vicariously bore him a son called Mnengwa through the custom of ukungena (the levirate) which he entered into with the indlunkulu wife of his late brother. Since the custom had formerly been adopted both by his forefather Mqhabuli and by King Mpande, the magistrates agreed that Mnengwa should be the chief since he was the hereditary heir of this section of the Dlomo tribe,

even though Mjantshi had a son called Sifo who was the principal heir to the estate of his father and who made a claim for the chieftainship in 1919. The present chief Mandlakayise was the eldest son of the indlunkulu of chief Mnengwa Khabela; his surname is Dlomo and his isithakazelo is Khabela because the founder's name was Khabela.

CHAPTER 3

THE OLD WOMAN AND CHILDBIRTH

Fertility is a dominant theme of Zulu culture¹⁾ and is of central concern to the people of Nkandla. A grandmother explains: 'What is most important is to bear many children. It doesn't matter if you can't bring them up properly. There is pride in having children.' The cultural position of the old Zulu woman in relation to conception, pregnancy and birth thus warrants investigation.

3.1 Conception

Conception is indicated by a variety of signals. For instance some young wives dream of seeing fields of young mealie-stalks with cobs, while others dream of young pumpkins²⁾ or small calabashes. Women may find themselves dreaming that they are in dirty water as though a river is in flood, whilst one old lady suspects that an umakoti (young wife) has conceived if she dreams of herself swimming: 'If the foetus is to be a boy the river is in flood, but if it will be a girl the water is clear and still.'³⁾

There is a snake embodying a family idlozi (ancestral shade) that is never killed. If it enters the homestead and then departs, and thereafter the umakoti misses her monthly period, Dlomo people acknowledge the snake to be an ancestral shade of the home revealing the woman's pregnancy. Early documents state that this apparition was explained as a 'grandmother' heralding the news.⁴⁾ Dlomo maintain that the snake is a deceased grandfather of the husband's home. Khanyile old people believe that a snake embodies the shade of an old man whereas an old woman is represented by

1) Shooter 1857, p.166; Jeffreys 1951, p.180; Lee 1958, pp.274, 276; Bryant 1966, p.61; Hechter-Schulz 1966, p.518; Tembe 1969, pp.7-8, 19-22; Callaway 1970, pp.224-225; Berglund 1976, pp.45, 111, 179, 254

2) See also Bryant 1967, p.624

3) See also Krige 1957, p.62; Lee 1958, pp.272, 276

4) Wanger n.d., p.129

types of lizard called isicashakazana or intulo:¹⁾ either may appear to herald conception. At times an umakoti may dream of the deceased grandmother, grandfather or great-grandparents of her husband's home and interpret this as a signal that she has conceived.

It is therefore evident that the presence of a deceased old woman may be linked with the first stage of life.

3.2 Pregnancy

3.2.1 Foetus formation

Bryant notes that the ancestors mould the foetus²⁾ and Berglund explains the different roles of the wife's and the husband's ancestors in this process.³⁾ There is no clear evidence of such beliefs in Nkandla but only a much vaguer notion that the ancestral shades are influential in ensuring fertility and in bringing about conception.⁴⁾

Should an umakoti not conceive, her father-in-law may summon the umndeni (local agnatic group), slaughter a goat or beast, enter the cattle-kraal and request a baby from the ancestors, first mentioning by name all the deceased males of the homestead and concluding 'grandmothers and mothers, help us and give us a baby'. Some families mention the deceased old grandmothers by name whereas others treat them generically: 'Oh our women (amakhosikazi akithi) we are pleading, help us; where will you enter if you do not give us a child, because thus you are destroying our home.' An old man explains: 'These amakhosikazi are women who are past the age of child-bearing: they are the real owners of this home.' Old people state that after the ancestors have been approached in this way the umakoti immediately falls pregnant. The ancestors are said to withhold this gift of procreation at times because they require something from the living.

1) See p.187

2) Bryant 1917, p.141

3) Berglund 1976, pp.117, 253

4) See also Bryant 1967, p.610

Normally a goat is slaughtered and the old woman or old man pours its bile at the umsamo (ancestral shrine at rear inside of hut) of the grandmother's house, where the gall-bladder is then hung. The grandmother instructs boys to hang the inanzi (caecum) at the umsamo of this same hut: she will later eat it with the grandfather and pre-pubescent children. The umswani (chyme) is mixed with manure or hidden by boys in a hole in the cattle-kraal, usually on the instruction of the old grandmother. Nowadays because witchcraft is said to be more prevalent, some old women hide the umswani outside the premises at dusk in a pangolin's hole. Some old Dlomo women will give the chyme to the pigs as food. The old grandmother of the home also collects and burns the bones, preferably with impepho (aromatic yellow everlasting plants with tiny flowers: Helichrysum miconiaefolium¹⁾) outside the umsamo end of the cattle-kraal or at the fireplace of the old woman's house, or even inside the cattle-kraal, in order that the smoke may create a pleasant scent for the ancestors, though Dlomo old women tend to give the bones to the dogs.

In general old people do not attribute particular characteristics of foetal formation to paternal or maternal ancestors, though sometimes when a girl is born with masculine features or a baby boy looks effeminate, the women joke: 'Oh the deceased grandmother cut her just in time to make her into a girl'; or: 'the deceased grandfather just managed to make him into a boy' for the sexes are said to favour their own kind and the grandmother is said to have completed her work.

By and large, thoughts of the mechanics of pregnancy, other than that it is 'nature's provision', or of specific ancestors involved in the developmental process, remain rudimentary. There are a few old women, such as a husband's grandmother, who instruct their omakoti that it is essential for sexual intercourse to take place during the early months

1) Berglund 1976, p.399

of pregnancy to strengthen the embryo; however most believe that this is common knowledge or that any woman can impart such information to one who is pregnant.

3.2.2 Ante-natal preparations

In an initial pregnancy an umakoti is sometimes frightened by the sensation of the first signs of life stirring within her, in which case, among the Biyela and Khanyile, she may seek out her paternal grandmother or, if she does not have one, her mother-in-law or sister-in-law, and among the Dlomo a friend, who tells her to rejoice as the movement is that of her baby; alternatively during the third or fourth month the umakoti may approach a trusted old woman from outside the family to verify her pregnancy. But in general women tend to conceal their pregnancy because they fear that others might try to bewitch them and cause them to miscarry or die in childbirth. Young wives nowadays consult nurses and doctors to verify a pregnancy, and, often with the approval of the old women, attend the clinic as from the sixth month to ensure that the foetus is positioned well.

However, many of the traditional observances required of a pregnant woman¹⁾ persist and are reinforced by the injunctions of old women. For instance, the grandmother of the husband or his mother or other older women will tell the umakoti to sit straight or the embryo will not position itself correctly; and she must refrain from poking her head in and out of the hut door lest her baby or afterbirth emerge and retract during delivery. The old woman thus continues to assist those who are younger in preparation for delivery largely on account of her reliability, knowledge and experience.

3.2.2.1 Blood-letting

Experienced old women would normally undertake blood-letting, which is performed to reduce the swelling attributed to the

1) De Jager 1937, p.14; Krige 1957, pp.62-64; Bryant 1967, pp.611-612

surplus blood in the expectant woman and also to minimise haemorrhage during delivery. The process, ukuphehla, may be repeated two or three times during gestation, usually in the third and fifth months, or it may be performed in the eighth month.¹⁾

The Khanyile old lady will take the umakoti to a river, break off a piece of sharp insikane sedge grass, roll it around her finger, and then with a circular twisting motion scrape around the expectant woman's vulva until it bleeds and the young wife feels dizzy. The Dlomo may also use sharp white insengetsha (a species of felspar or granitic rock²⁾), while the Biyela simply use a piece of glass to make deft cuts. The river water lessens the pain and washes away the blood that could be used for witchcraft.

The practice of ukuphehla has fallen into desuetude, some say because it led to miscarriages, others because doctors 'have a safer method with medicines' and because nowadays daughters-in-law are reluctant to open their legs in front of their mothers-in-law, preferring not to deliver at home. Old women believe that the cessation of ukuphehla is the main reason why confinements have become more difficult nowadays.

3.2.2.2 The maternity covering

When an umakoti is a few months pregnant with her first child a maternity covering (Biyela, Khanyile: ingcayi; Dlomo: isicwayo) is made for her from a duiker skin. Once the hide has been prepared and decorated, the Dlomo ugogo (grandmother) smears it with red ochre mixed with the fat of a goat, ox or sheep, although Khanyile and Biyela mothers-in-law do not use red ochre. When the Dlomo umakoti returns from her natal home to have her hair around her inkehli (headdress) trimmed by shaving (ukuphuca) ugogo tells the mother-in-law to invite the women members of the home to the ceremony of pulling down the maternity covering of the young

1) See also Krige 1957, p.65

2) Doke et al. 1958, p.271

wife (ukwehliswa kwesichwayo sikamakoti). Among the Dlomo the covering has only been tied over the breasts prior to this time. On this day a spot is chosen (such as next to the house of ugogo) where there is enough sunshine to warm the foetus and cause it to move in the stomach. When the foetus begins to move ugogo rubs both breasts and then the whole stomach of the umakoti with red ochre and fat. Ugogo then washes her hands, picks up the isicwayo, and handles it as though it is a baby, kissing it and then passing it on to the other women who likewise handle it as an infant and kiss it until finally ugogo gives the covering to the umakoti who places it over her stomach. The Biyela and Khanyile ugogo simply puts the ingcayi on the breasts to hide the stomach and then kisses the umakoti in the house of ugogo.

Dlomo maintain that the ideal person to dress the umakoti in this mantle is umuntu omdala, an old person, particularly the husband's grandmother. Ugogo is regarded as the most senior and closest to the ancestors who will accede to her wishes that all should fare well with the foetus until confinement. Among Biyela and Khanyile the mother-in-law tends to perform these duties. The covering is worn out of respect since the in-laws would otherwise have to look at a bare stomach, and a duiker skin is chosen because people want the baby to be born with the swiftness of a duiker. Old women recall how quick their childbirth was when they wore these maternity coverings.

Because of the scarcity of duikers nowadays, the skin of a goat tends to be substituted. When a goat is slaughtered for the maternity covering ugogo may request the ancestors to grant the umakoti a safe confinement. However such maternity coverings are becoming rare with the widespread use of Western dress and even the occasional maternity dress.

3.2.2.3 Medicine to aid delivery

Towards the sixth or seventh month the mother-in-law of the homestead approaches an old woman of the husband's umndeni to obtain a secret medicine known as isihlambezo. The function of this medicine is to loosen the foetus in the womb

to ease the process of delivery¹⁾ and to ensure sound foetal growth. Usually there are certain old women renowned for their knowledge of effective ingredients, but if none is available an old woman would go to an inyanga for the required mixture. For instance the isihlambezo ingredients used by one lady are: the roots of insikane (sedge grass), ugobo (Gunnera perpensa²⁾ - also known as uklenya), and isiphukushwane, the bark of umthombe and the sand of a mole-hill. She cuts these up, boils them and instructs the umakoti to sip the mixture with a calabash spoon as from the sixth month until the day of confinement whenever she feels thirsty; she may also use the potion to syringe herself.

The mother-in-law or, if she is deceased, one of the old wives of the same homestead (ikhaya) usually fetches this medicine and boils it in any medium-sized clay pot in her own home or that of the umakoti but in the presence of the pregnant woman, and covers the pot with an udengezi (potsherd) in the case of the Dlomo, though Biyela and Khanyile mothers-in-law use iselwa (a calabash), umcengezi (a clay lid), or nowadays a cloth as covering. The mother-in-law takes cowdung and seals this tight-fitting lid to the pot, leaving a small aperture from which to pour. It is closed in this way to avoid anyone looking into, or leaving his or her shadow on the medicine. The consequence of neglecting this precaution is exposure to witchcraft or a mentally deranged child of whom it is said that isihlambezo sakhe seqiwa yigundwane (his isihlambezo medicine was jumped over by a rat). The old woman then places the clay-pot at the ancestral shrine (umsamo) in the house of the umakoti. The old lady may also fetch ibomvu (red ochre), mix this with a little water, and either smear the entire pot with it or use it as paint to draw straight lines on the surface of the pot, decorating the lid with red dots.³⁾

1) See also Krige 1957, p.63

2) Bryant 1966, p.58

3) See also Bryant 1967, p.611

3.3 Childbirth

In present day Nkandla most women give birth to their babies in the hospital or at a clinic, their reasons being that it is safer should complications arise, that in the clinical environment they are protected from people who might use items connected with parturition for witchcraft and thus harm them or their infant, and that the clinic and hospital staff will scold them if difficulties in connection with the birth arise and allegedly even refuse to treat a sick child that was born at home. Although hospital maternity care deprives old women of an important role they generally grant their umakoti the freedom to decide where they wish to deliver, their prime concern being the safety of the baby. However home deliveries, in which old women play a prominent role, still occur, either because a woman prefers to be in the company of those she knows and trusts, or because she believes the ancestors will guard over and assist her delivery at home, or because of alleged indifference on the part of the nurses in maternity departments.

Attention will now be focussed on the participation of old women in births that occur in the traditional setting. It should however be noted that the sequence of activities is not always rigidly adhered to: not only are there variations between homes but the order may be subject to the whims of old women, to their knowledge, and to the availability of certain substances. Yet whatever the order, certain duties are performed by old women at childbirth.

3.3.1 The maternity hut

Some writers claim that the choice of maternity hut depends on whether the expectant wife is still under the control of her mother-in-law¹⁾ but in Nkandla old people regard this as irrelevant. Old women in all three tribes emphasise that there is only one correct maternity hut and that is indlu yakwagogo (the house of grandmother); this is the husband's mother's house, though that of the husband's grandmother

1) Walk 1928, pp.47, 105; De Jager 1937, pp.17-18;
Krige 1957, pp.64-65

would assume priority if she were alive. If the father-in-law is still alive a woman cannot be confined in her mother-in-law's house because the birth process is said to pollute the house and she could not show her father-in-law such disrespect and furthermore weaken him to the extent that having been in contact with her 'dirt' he would be the first to be killed in war. In cases where the father-in-law is still alive the house of ukhulukhulu (the great-grandmother) tends to be chosen (even if she is deceased) or the kitchen, or if the woman has borne children before, she may be granted permission to use her own hut. The operative factor in the choice of the old woman's house thus appears to be connected with the pollution of birth or the fact that most women by the time they are mothers-in-law have passed the menopause and no longer have sexual relations. The grandmother's house is the maternity house because ugogo is pure, the ancestors are there and no man will be affected by this pollution.

3.3.2 Characteristics of midwives

Krige states: 'Childbirth among the Zulus is the concern of women alone; only women are in attendance... The midwives are always the old women of the kraal who are past child-bearing age themselves and will thus both be free from being harmed by contact with the patient and have the necessary experience in dealing with cases.'¹⁾

All my principal informants in their eighties continue to assist in delivering babies at home, particularly for their affinal kinswomen. But observation and interviewing raised the question whether in fact it is correct to state that the position of midwife is only assumed by women who are past child-bearing age. People reason that knowledge and skill have always been the criteria determining selection.

When the contractions increase in frequency the mother-in-law summons a few of the married women particularly of the umuzi (homestead) and umndeni²⁾ with whom she is on good

1) Krige 1957, p.64; see also Holden 1963, p.168; Bryant 1967, p.612

2) See also De Jager 1937, p.18

terms. Preference is given to older women but the omakoti are invited to come and learn. Any woman of the umndeni who is not called knows that she is suspected of witchcraft, but the number must be restricted because too many orders confuse the umakoti. Usually the young wives observe and run errands while the old women attend to the woman in labour. Normally two women known to be expert midwives perform the delivery: often these are trustworthy old relatives. In a conservative home where I observed a childbirth, experienced omakoti acted as midwives with the old mother of the home observing and commenting on the proceedings. When labour became prolonged the old mother would assist by beating the thatch and calling on the ancestors, or by inserting her hands in the vagina to determine the progress of birth.

The evidence by elderly women that in the past the criteria of selection of midwives was in fact experience and skill raises the question of the relevance attached to the purity of the old woman as opposed to that of a young woman in the matter of childbirth. In these tribes there is no belief that harm will befall a woman handling one who is giving birth, for childbirth only defiles men. The major fear is that if the blood or placenta are tampered with, the woman giving birth, or her child, might die or she might never conceive again. Apart from their superior knowledge, the reason why old women predominate in the proceedings of childbirth thus appears to be that on account of the purity associated with their post-menopausal state they are less likely, through the practice of witchcraft, to endanger the one giving birth.

The mother-in-law must be present at parturition for she is preeminently responsible for watching over the proceedings; even if she is away from home at the time she must be sent for. Although she may assist in the delivery she is primarily a supervisor of the puerperal procedures. One of her main duties is to ensure that none of the other women present practise any witchcraft against her daughter-in-law, and it is believed that she will fulfil this duty not only because this is her son's wife but

because she has a vested interest in the pleasure of seeing her own grandchild. The mother-in-law may also handle the umakoti. De Jager's information that the mother-in-law must be absent since she may not see the genitals of her daughter-in-law¹⁾ seems dubious and is hotly disputed by old informants who argue that there can be no inhlonipho (respect) between these two women 'with the same bodies' at this time because a woman giving birth is between life and death and 'all that is wanted is the baby'.

3.3.3 Parturition

There is no difference in the birth proceedings of women of different status such as a commoner and a chief's principal wife. It has been said that in former times confinement might be announced by the appearance of an old woman as a spirit-snake known as umabibini.²⁾ However confirmation of this could not be obtained in the three tribes.

When labour pains begin, the mother-in-law calmly instructs the gestating woman to remain seated, and sends a child either to the old lady or to the inyanga previously consulted³⁾ to fetch inembe, a herbal remedy promoting rapid delivery.⁴⁾ The inembe of one old lady is that of ground and boiled indlebe kathekwane and imbilikicane which once it is drunk is said to cause the uterus to contract. As soon as the medicine arrives the mother-in-law gives it to the expectant woman to drink. Some Biyela only use inembe if labour proves difficult, since it hastens delivery; other old women simply instruct the umakoti to drink it; and with others the instruction is more elaborate as the expectant woman must take an iselwa spoon, drink inembe with it, then pass the spoon in a circle around her waist and from there proceed to the door of the hut. With her back

1) De Jager 1937, p.18

2) Wanger n.d., p.59; Krige 1957, p.65

3) See pp.42-43

4) See also Bryant 1966, p.64

facing outside she then kneels as in childbirth, passes the spoon through her legs from her right to her left hand, and finally throws it outside the birth-hut where it is left until the post-partum period when anyone can retrieve it. Some old Khanyile women mix both isihlambezo¹⁾ and inembe together so that the woman drinks the most powerful mixture possible. A woman of the umndeni such as the husband's mother or sister used to syringe her with some of the isihlambezo, though nowadays, with access to Western syringes, she does so herself. The mother-in-law or a midwife then inverts the potsherd which may have been used as a lid²⁾ so that it contains burning charcoal with another type of inembe on top. The mother-in-law instructs the mother-to-be to kneel astride the potsherd so that the smoke ascends between her legs and into the vagina: this ensures that the foetus will begin to move up and down vigorously. The sherd is then removed from beneath her. Some Biyela old women only smoke the woman in this way if labour is prolonged and instead of inembe they place izinyamazane (medicine from wild animals) on the charcoal. The mother-in-law dips her hands in the isihlambezo mixture (a few use water), rubs them together and smears the medicine over the expectant woman's stomach; the two old midwives, who will be touching her, follow suit.

When the parturient woman wants to push she kneels on the ground, thighs astride, with heels touching her buttocks.³⁾ One old lady kneels in front of and facing her, the other behind her.⁴⁾ When pushing commences the old lady in the front ensures that her knees are touching those of the woman in labour to support her and to prevent her from slipping; at the same time she holds the parturient's stomach on either side, firmly massaging it and guiding her. The old lady's neck or shoulders are used to support the tumescent woman. The old woman at the rear ties a blanket or the pregnant woman's turban around the top of the abdomen above the foetus.

1) See pp.42-43

2) See p.43

3) See also Tyrrell 1971, p.11

4) See also Bryant 1967, p.626

When the confining woman starts pushing, the old lady pulls the turban tight from the rear and the resultant pressure on the abdomen helps to force the foetus down. The old lady at the rear places either knee in the small of the back of the parturient woman, exerting pressure to give support.¹⁾

Quite often the labour presents no problem, the baby emerging without the need for turban-tying or knee-to-back support and with only one old midwife in attendance, who tends to be the mother-in-law. Should the old woman find her supporting role too strenuous, a younger woman can fulfil it while the old woman instructs.

3.3.4 Clearing the mouth and shaping the head

When the baby is projected from its mother onto the ground and turns face upwards, it is left there until the afterbirth follows; then the mother-in-law or any one of the nearby old ladies raises its head in her left hand and with the right hand index finger removes the mucus from its mouth 'so that its voice is clear'. Old women generally regard the task of receiving the baby at birth as unpleasant particularly when it is covered with vernix - which being considered the husband's sperm is attributed to the continuance of coitus in the late stages of pregnancy. A mother-in-law may scold, spit on or slap an umakoti with such a baby.

Another task of the old woman is to 'correct' the baby's head should it be thought unshapely due to a woman pressing her thighs together out of fear during the birth. The Biyela infant's grandmother takes an ukhezo (calabash spoon) and passes it over the baby's head in a ladling motion from back to front but without touching it, or among Khanyile dabs the head with a small dry iselwa. The Dlomo grandmother takes unground imithombo yamabele (sprouted sorghum-malt) and pats this on the baby's head: the malt sticks to the latter. Then she takes earth dug out by a mole and applies it to the

1) See also Tyrrell 1971, p.9

sprouted malt. And finally with a calabash spoon she dishes out to each woman with a ladling motion saying: 'Mother, here is your food.' These substances remain there until they drop off; within a short time, it is believed, the disproportioned head will be rectified. Dlomo old women tend to perform this after the baby has been washed whilst Biyela and Khanyile tend to do so once the cord has been cut: the sequence is not considered very important.

3.3.5 Severing the cord

The old woman supports the infant until the placenta is expelled. After the emergence of the afterbirth the infant's grandmother¹⁾ or an experienced person of the homestead cuts the umbilical cord about five centimetres away from the baby. Old women perform such tasks because the omakoti are said to lack the necessary knowledge; however an old Khanyile lady maintained that a woman past the menopause is the correct person to cut the cord because she is clean: a younger woman would have to have abstained from sexual intercourse or the baby would develop sores that would not heal or close. Although the use of a pair of scissors, razor-blade or knife is increasing as the means by which the cord is severed, there are old Biyela and Khanyile women who continue to use a sharp part of the traditional reed (umhlanga: Phragmites communis²⁾) or (umbaga - Khanyile; ubaga - Biyela) the stalk of the tambootie grass³⁾ deftly split, the pith having been removed. Dlomo only use umbaga. The mother-in-law formerly tied the cord after severance with a sinew, though today a thread of cotton or hessian is used.

Either on this or the next day the mother-in-law burns some of the reed and grinds it into ash on an udengezi, mixes this with the fatty part of milk-curds or cream, and applies it to the base of the navel on the infant's abdomen to accelerate

1) See also Jali 1950, p.17

2) Bews 1919-23, p.458

3) Doke & Vilakazi 1953, p.25

the healing of the stump, though in a few homes umbhemiso powder is used. The mother-in-law either applies this unction herself or instructs the umakoti to do so until the stump falls off. Among the Dlomo the application consisting of the roots of ubukhwebezana (lantana salvifolia shrub¹⁾) and the stem of a pumpkin from the previous year is ground into a powder with blackjacks and mixed with the fatty part of milk-curds; this tends to be applied to the abdomen once the cord has dropped off.

3.3.6 Inducing sneezing

Once the infant's mouth is cleared and the cord has been severed, the mother-in-law who is the ugogo of the baby induces sneezing by applying a little umbhemiso (a powdered medicine obtained with the other medicines from the old woman or an inyanga²⁾) to each of the infant's nostrils. The baby is made to sneeze because while enceinte its mother may have walked over the spot where an inyanga had treated an abnormal placenta. Should the cord and placenta reveal no contamination the sneezing is nevertheless induced because it has become customary to do so. Should the placenta be abnormal the women say: ubhamile - it is unusual, and this or a bluish tinted umbilicus indicate that the child is possessed by a spirit known as indawe, which will cause it to grow up to become an isangoma (diviner). If the umbhemiso is not applied such a spirit will oppress the baby and it may die. Nowadays when a baby has been born in hospital and old women do not know what its placenta looked like they will apply the umbhemiso on its return home.

3.3.7 Washing and syringing

In former days the infant was said to be washed by the old midwives in medicated water serving as intelezi (a protective charm³⁾), a shallow hole being made in the ground at the umsamo which served as a basin. The placenta and umbilical cord were thereafter buried in this cavity.⁴⁾ With some Biyela and Khanyile the mother-in-law nowadays continues to dig a basin in the maternity-hut in the earthen floor of the

1) Doke et al. 1958, p.144

2) See p.43

3) See also Krige 1957, pp.65, 329

4) De Jager 1937, p.19; Krige 1957, p.66; Brabant 1967, pp.613, 627

umsamo and washes the baby there in cold water to make it cry and prove that it really is alive. Thereafter the baby is washed at this spot until it can walk. The Dlomo mother-in-law no longer washes the baby at umsamo but in a potsherd, and empties the water outside the premises in a private place for fear of witchcraft.

After the infant has been washed the Khanyile mother-in-law boils the remainder of the iphehlwa (fat of milk-curd) to clean it; the liquid part that rises is removed and the yellowish remainder is used as fat for smearing the body. Among the Dlomo the mother-in-law mixes powdered red ochre with water and smears the baby from head to foot in the clay¹⁾ so that it will 'grow up very quickly'. Biyela old women regard the baby as being too young for such treatment.

The grandmother syringes (ukuchatha) the baby's lower bowel by placing a tiny hollow reed in the rectum and squirting part of the isihlambezo through it from the mouth.²⁾ The aim is to clean the insides and expel the meconium (ijengesi), the black fluid found in the newborn infant.

3.3.8 Burning of incense and fumigation

An old Biyela and Khanyile woman of the home, if there is one, usually the mother-in-law, burns some impepho with charcoal to fumigate the birth-hut at any time during childbirth to bring the ancestors to protect the proceedings. The Dlomo grandmother does likewise but burns the impepho in the potsherd with which the isihlambezo was covered.

Medicines made from the parts of wild animals (izinyamazane) similar to those described by Krige³⁾ are fetched by a child from the old woman or inyanga consulted previously.⁴⁾ All the necessary wild animals and their parts such as skin and bones must be incorporated lest the

1) See also Bryant 1967, p.613; Tyrrell 1971, p.12

2) See also Jali 1950, p.17

3) Krige 1957, pp.66-67

4) See p.43

baby become mentally defective. The baby will also be fumigated with these substances to protect it from a person who uses izinyamazane with the intention of causing its death.

The mother-in-law places the medicinal powder on burning charcoal in a potsherd and the infant is enveloped in the smoke to strengthen it. The infant's grandmother holds the baby and passes it from one side of the rising smoke to the other and back again in such a manner that it may inhale the smoke. The remainder of the izinyamazane powder may be knotted in a cloth by the baby's grandmother and tied around its neck.

After the smoking the Dlomo mother-in-law mixes some of the black izinyamazane powder with red ochre and a little water to form a paste and paints one line from the bridge of the infant's nose over the cranium to the nape of its neck and another over its skull from one ear to the other; this is done to protect the child from being startled and from the izinyamazane of vindictive people which could result in its death. Biyela and Khanyile old women do not add red ochre to the izinyamazane.

Old women claim that nowadays if babies attend the clinic and sit on the same scale to be weighed, the one that has not been smoked with izinyamazane will die.

3.3.9 Disposal of the afterbirth

In former days the afterbirth was buried in a hole at the umsamo of the grandmother's house or, among some Biyela, between the fireplace and door of the grandmother's house. Some Biyela and Khanyile mothers-in-law continue to bury the afterbirth in the confinement house because it will then not be used for witchcraft, and the ancestors by their proximity will also bless the child; others bury it in a donga or swamp where it can be easily concealed. The disposal is undertaken at dusk on the day of parturition, and because the mother is weak it is usually the task of the mother-in-law. These precautions are taken for fear of witchcraft: carelessness could enable a malicious person to use the substances to prevent the umakoti from conceiving again, or

even to cause the death of the mother or her baby. It is believed that nowadays izinyanga connive with those who incinerate placentas at the hospital and hereby have access to this potent umuthi (medicine).

3.3.10 Problems of childbirth

In the three tribes most birth problems concern the placenta; very few concern the emergence of the baby. However, should labour prove difficult, among the Dlomo an old woman of the home could instruct the husband of the umakoti to go to his hut and sit there in a blanket having removed his umncwado (pubic covering) and placed it at the umsamo so that the ancestors would assist in the birth. (The idea is that just as his penis is released to its full length from the confines of the umncwado, so should his umakoti find release.) Should the infant not emerge, an expert old woman would insert her hand into the woman's vagina to see if the embryo is in a suitable position and if necessary turn it around to prevent a breach birth. Failing this she would use a reed, a sharpened piece of iron, or ugaba (the upper section of a maize or grass stalk) as a knife and cut the woman's vagina to assist the baby's exit. Should the birth continue to prove difficult an isangoma is consulted and if she (or he) declares that the ancestral shades are causing the problem the baby will appear at that moment because having heard their request the ancestral shades release it. The ancestors are believed to trust the living to make appropriate gestures in due course. There are old women who have never had to resort to an isangoma at birth because they maintain their isihlambezo is effective.

Should the afterbirth remain lodged the old woman of the homestead, who is ugogo among the Dlomo, leaves the confinement house and knocks on its wall with an umgogo (crossbar for closing entrance to cattle-kraal). She moves in an anti-clockwise direction requesting assistance from the ancestors: Yelekelelani, musani ukwenza amanyala ngengane yomuntu; ayiphumelele kahle (Please help, don't create a disgusting situation with somebody's child; let it go through freely!)

Then she throws the crossbar over the hut, making certain that it does not touch the building. The umgogo is chosen because it is associated with the ancestors. The cattle-kraal is regarded as the 'house' of the ancestors and the umgogo is its door. Confinement is eased because of the belief that as it falls on the other side of the hut so the baby emerges, the door to the vagina having been opened.

If all these methods fail the men of the homestead are told to go into the yard to scold the ancestors.¹⁾ Amongst some Biyela the grandmother of the home, usually the husband's mother, will walk out of the confinement-hut and beat both her hands on the thatch of grandmother's hut saying:

Ngicela uxolo nosizo, nina bogogo (I beg pardon and pity, o grandmothers [i.e. ancestors].) Some Khanyile old women nowadays take the parturient woman's petticoat or pantie, roll it up, and knock the outside walls of the maternity-hut with this, calling out the stereotyped - Hoye, hoye, hoye, (Oh dear! oh dear!) and remonstrating 'What are you doing? Why do you let this child die?' beseeching the ancestors for help.²⁾ All old women believe that the instant the ancestors are thus beckoned the afterbirth will emerge.

Women all fear a lodged afterbirth for there is little they can do about it. The midwives will press the woman's abdomen and if the life of the child is in jeopardy they decide to cut the navel-cord and an old woman affixes a piece of wood to the severed end. This weight is left outside the vagina to prevent the placental cord from receding, or among the Dlomo it may be trampled into the ground lest it recoil into the womb. If all such attempts fail an accomplished old midwife is called. She rubs cow-fat on one or both hands (modern old women wash their hands with soap and water), inserts her hands into the vagina, sees if she can loosen any hardness and attachment inside, and tries to ease out the afterbirth. As a last resort the ailing woman is taken to the hospital in the hope of saving her life.

1) See also Bryant 1967, p.612

2) See also De Jager 1937, p.18

McCord and Douglas write: 'Zulu women will not help in a difficult birth until past childbearing years because of a belief that their future children will then be stillborn.'¹⁾ It is true that if a baby is stillborn the omakoti will be chased away and the dead baby is hidden from young wives to prevent them fearing such a birth for themselves. But women in the three tribes consider it very rare for a young woman to have the knowledge required of a midwife, let alone that of a specialist: for only older women are said to have the expertise. Particularly in former times there were a few experienced women who were considered expert midwives and who would check the position of the embryo, if need be cut the vagina, or even try to dislodge a fixed placenta by inserting their hands. But they were usually old and achieved their reputation by having acquired this knowledge over the years. Such a woman did not have to be past the menopause or related to the parturient one to assume this role. Even today women maintain that no young person would have the knowledge to deal with such cases, and that even among the older women there would only be one in each neighbourhood renowned for this ability and whom the mother-in-law would summon in times of difficulty.

3.3.11 Infant mortality

Should the infant die in childbirth the Dlomo baby's grandmother digs a hole outside the premises behind the indlunkulu (great-house). Dlomo old women explain that they choose this place for burial because it is not frequented and in former days there was a fear that people might interfere with the corpse if it was buried far away. Some old Biyela women bury the infant among other graves outside the home; others bury it behind the wall of the birth-hut; whereas others dig the grave outside the premises in the veld where it will not be seen. Among some Biyela the husband's grandmother helps to bury the infant. Khanyile grandmothers may also bury the baby outside the premises though there are

1) McCord & Douglas 1957, p.6

traditionalists who still bury such a child in a river bank. The reason given for this is that a child who dies at birth is said to have no flesh or spirit but is just water: inyama yakhe kuthiwa ingamanzi; it cannot therefore be buried in the cemetery. There is the belief that an old woman should handle such a baby because it is a corpse: she is immune from pollution whereas a younger woman will be susceptible to misfortune such as the death of her child or husband. It should be noted however that a number of old women have never had such maternity deaths in their homes and they are unsure of the correct procedure to be followed either with regard to the infant or its mother.

3.3.12 Infanticide

The people all maintain that euthanasia was not and is not practised on infants born with abnormalities. Such children are allowed to live but tend to die in time (it is recorded that death may be the result of neglect¹⁾). The only type of infanticide that persisted in the area until a generation ago was the killing of one of a pair of twins²⁾ because of the belief that twins bring bad luck and would either both become ill or one of the parents would die: the father in particular might be the first to be struck in war.³⁾ When the infant's mother was in seclusion and taking her daily bath in the river, an old woman 'because she is brave' and usually the child's grandmother, suffocated the twin that emerged second, this child being considered the younger of the two. The suffocation was performed by squeezing the throat.⁴⁾ The mother-in-law buried the infant close to the doorway of the house.⁵⁾

The mother on returning would inquire after her baby and always received the euphemistic reply 'Wendile - she

1) Carbutt 1880, pp.13-14; McCord & Douglas 1957, p.14

2) See also Shooter 1857, pp.88-89

3) See also Bryant 1967, p.641

4) See also Ibid. p.640

5) See also Ibid. p.640

(or he) has gone to marry.' She was also warned that neither she nor her husband may cry, lest the remaining twin might die.

Old women however point out that even in the olden times in certain izibongo (clans) a mother-in-law might suggest that the umakoti should take one of the twins to her mother's family, this only being revealed when a twin became engaged. Some people with the Biyela surname however never killed their twins.

3.3.13 Examination for abnormalities

Prior to the baby's emergence the old women and others present have assisted the woman in travail by providing exclamations of support such as 'Be steady, my child!' or 'Push down your neck, and PUSH!'

As soon as the baby emerges these observations are transferred to the infant. The infant's grandmother examines the baby for physical defects, and on finding it normal exclaims: 'Women rejoice with me, all her parts are normal.' Some children are born with an additional finger (umhlaza) which in some homes is left untouched for it is considered 'lucky'; in other homes it is amputated by the mother-in-law, particularly if it hangs limply. A hare-lip or missing ear or nose is attributed to the persistence of sexual intercourse when the head of the foetus was facing downwards. In former days if a baby was born without a rectum its grandmother would take a stick and bore the hole by twirling (ukuphehla) and rubbing it gently at the appropriate place.

Nowadays if the genitals are not in order the infant may be taken to a medical doctor. At Nkandla hospital the doctor testifies to the acute observation of old women who may arrive with their daughter-in-law and her child to report that the vagina is not quite open or that some other part of its anatomy is 'not quite right'. Old women remark that in their youth they never witnessed as many children growing up with abnormalities such as blindness or muteness.

3.3.14 First food

The mother-in-law or an experienced old woman gives the Khanyile infant its first food usually in the form of incumbe. She takes finely ground and sifted mealies, makes them into a good moist powder, and cooks them with water to form a porridge.¹⁾ This should be thin enough for the infant to drink and is cupped into its mouth with the bent right index finger of the old woman. Dlomo old women agree that the very first meal of an infant used to be incumbe and that it was fed to the infant by its ugogo who would use the iselwa spoon which had been used for sipping the isihlambezo mixture.²⁾ If the incumbe was not ready, diluted amasi (milk-curd) from the children's calabash might be given to the infant by its grandmother. Biyela usually only give the baby incumbe after a few days if the mother lacks milk. The old women also instruct the umakoti how to prepare her breasts for giving milk by massaging the nipples.

3.4 Seclusion

In the three tribes under surveillance it is the mother-in-law who is responsible for the recuperating mother and child, who makes decisions in the hut of seclusion and looks after the mother during the first few days after childbirth. She is the one who usually places grass on the floor of the hut on which her daughter-in-law must sit naked, though nowadays a sack is sometimes used, the new mother resting the upper part of her body on a sleeping-mat made by herself during pregnancy. The mother-in-law facilitates feeding by encouraging the mother to massage the nipples and to give the baby practice in sucking. Particularly with a woman's first baby the mother-in-law will sleep with the baby in the hut lest the convalescing woman lie on her infant through fatigue and smother it. The mother-in-law is spoken of as old, even if not past child-bearing age, and must give the

1) See also Bryant 1967, pp.613-614; Jali 1950, p.17; Krige 1957, p.66.

2) See p.43

new mother several post-partum instructions. For instance, if the parturient woman had to be cut or her flesh was torn during childbirth she instructs her to sit with her heels pressed against the vagina so that the flesh will sew together. She tells the umakoti to place the baby on her back so that the navel-cord will heal and drop off quickly, and advises her to feed the child on both breasts lest the baby looks to one side only.

During this isolation period, because the mother is weak, the baby's grandmother washes it daily, sometimes adding impepho to the water, and applies the paste used at its birth¹⁾ to the umbilical stump until the cord drops off. The old lady also syringes it daily and may either add some impepho to the water or the juice of the incena aloe among some Dlomo. She may also smoke the baby with izinyamazane now and again, particularly if it cries much or is often startled, though some Biyela only smoke it once after birth. Some old women occasionally smoke it with impepho in the evenings to induce the ancestors to protect the baby. If the baby is ill or not very strong and its body feels hot, the grandmother or mother smears it with red ochre as part of the daily routine. Nowadays this tends to be replaced by baby powder.

Formerly only the old midwives handled the secluded mother's food and utensils.²⁾ If the husband's grandmother, or more usually the mother-in-law, is still strong enough to grind she prepares the food for the new mother because the person doing so should be 'pure' i.e. she must not menstruate or have coitus with a man. Nowadays the rule is often relaxed and any trusted woman may perform this duty.

An old woman such as the mother-in-law is considered to be the correct person to look after the umakoti in seclusion because she can advise the young mother on all there is to know about maternity. If she is deceased the groom's grandmother or father's sister, or in certain homes one of

1) See pp.50-51

2) Krige 1957, p.68

her own husband's brothers wives, might substitute, although frequently the most senior woman dominates. The old woman's post-menopausal purity also seems relevant because it is said to facilitate the healing of the navel cord. The umakoti and her baby will become strong because their nurse is pure; a young wife on the other hand might sleep with her husband during this time or menstruate. The old woman's purity is also associated with trustworthiness: the blood of the umakoti is susceptible to witchcraft and could be mishandled by the person caring for her; by contrast the husband's grandmother or his mother is trusted not to use it for witchcraft because she is 'clean'. She is also considered reliable because she wishes to promote the umndeni and because she does not get distracted in her duties.

The new mother enters seclusion after childbirth because her blood defiles. Compared to ordinary blood, menstrual blood is regarded as filth, and accordingly a woman emitting such is considered unclean and unfit to mix with people. (In former times during her menstrual period a woman remained indoors for eight days during which time she did not handle the food of men.) However the pollution of the post-partum period, as of birth, does not affect other women but endangers men by weakening them and subjecting them to all kinds of dangers. Accordingly no man, including the father of the baby, enters the seclusion-hut.¹⁾ It is recorded that formerly a father had to absent himself from his homestead during the puerperal period,²⁾ and prior to the feast in honour of the ancestors and the baby he was not supposed to set eyes on the latter without producing a gift for the old women of the homestead,³⁾ but such information is not available in the three tribes.

When the stump of the baby's umbilical cord sloughs off, usually about the fourth day after birth, it is incumbent upon the old woman to dispose of it. The Khanyile

1) See also De Jager 1937, p.21; Krige 1957, p.69

2) Aitchison 1918, p.674

3) Ibid. pp.674-675

mother-in-law drops the stump in the cavity in the umsamo which contains the placenta, and covers the hole with soil. The cord is buried in the umsamo of the confinement-but because the ancestors are believed to live there and will thus protect the child.¹⁾ Sometimes the cord is said to have vanished because the husband's ancestors have taken it away. The Dlomo mother-in-law, or in her absence an old grandmother of the home, takes the dried piece of navel, wraps it in a small cloth, and pushes it into the thatch above the umsamo where it is left to disintegrate. The intention is to inform the ancestral shades that this is their child in the knowledge that they will bless it, the navel cord being part of the flesh of the baby just as the placenta is part of the flesh of the umakoti. Even if the child is born in hospital the Dlomo mother-in-law will fetch the stump of the umbilical cord and place it above the shrine at home. Among the Biyela in the case of a first child the mother-in-law instructs the mother to bury the navel cord anywhere in the veld or in a swampy place near the river where it is well hidden to prevent witchcraft.²⁾ Thereafter the mother is familiar with the procedure. Among the Dlomo the umakoti hides the soiled grass of the post-partum period in the thatching of her own or her mother-in-law's kitchen; the mother-in-law assists by opening up the thatch for her. Among the Biyela and Khanyile this grass is usually scattered or burnt in the veld by the umakoti, who in the case of her first baby tends to be supervised by her mother-in-law.

3.5 Celebrations

Formerly when the umakoti emerged from seclusion beer was brewed for the child's mother-in-law and for the old women who had assisted the parturient mother.³⁾ Today they may be given money as thanks. Some old women regard the occasion as one that brings happiness to the ancestral shades.

1) See also Tembe 1969, pp.11-12

2) See also Jali 1950, p.18

3) See also Wanger n.d., p.113; Krige 1957, p.69; Bryant 1967, p.613

Shortly after seclusion a small celebration to introduce the new arrival to the ancestors is customarily held. A goat is slaughtered for thanksgiving and its skin used to make an imbeleko (baby's carrying-skin). The goat is reported to the ancestors and its caecum, which is the meat for the ancestors, is hung at the umsamo of the grandmother's house and will at a later date be cooked by the grandmother who will eat it together with the grandfather and pre-pubescent children. In her hut the grandmother or grandfather anoints the baby with some of the goat's bile and empties the remainder at the umsamo and hangs the gall-bladder around the baby's neck: all this is done to protect the baby and to bestow on it ancestral blessings. The gall-bladder remains hanging around the baby's neck until it has become tattered, at which time among the Dlomo the mother-in-law will dig it into the floor at the back of the umsamo or among the Khanyile it is either burnt by the grandmother with impepho in the house of ugogo, which is regarded as the ancestors' house, or as with the Biyela it is inflated and hung at the umsamo of the birth hut.

Variations occur between imindeni; with some Biyela, for instance, the old woman does not hang the gall-bladder around the baby's neck but only at the umsamo. The pouring of the bile is intended to call the ancestors to lick the baby and look after it well. Among the Biyela and Khanyile the grandmother burns the bones of the sacrificial goat with impepho at her fireplace to create an aroma for the ancestors to inform them that the imbeleko ceremony has been performed. Dlomo women give the bones to the dogs to eat. The chyme is taken by the grandmother and mixed with manure in the cattle-kraal because it is dangerous for witchcraft.

The old woman thus has crucial roles to play with regard to instructing and assisting the new mother and affording protection for her child.

CHAPTER 4

THE OLD WOMAN AND CHILD-NURTURE4.1 Treatment of gastroenteritis

Gastroenteritis or a sunken fontanelle is usually ascribed to inyoni - Biyela isishozi (a negative force derived from the mother's contact with a place that was struck by lightning).¹⁾ To counteract its debilitating effect the baby's grandmother, because she is experienced in syringing, may administer a cleansing treatment called ukulahla (to throw away, lose) at a spot struck by lightning. A hole is dug in the lightning-spot at the bottom of which the grandmother or expert places grass from the thatch above the doorway of every house (ikhothama) in the homestead to which the baby belongs. The grandmother lights it, holds the baby, and gives it an enema (ukuchatha), forcibly blowing medicated water through a reed and making certain that the excreta falls into the prepared hole, thus quenching the fire. The fire must be extinguished because it symbolizes the lightning force which is being driven out of the baby. Variations in this practice may occur. For instance, some old people do not use grass or fire but mix the sand from a lightning spot with medicated water and syringe the baby over a hole anywhere in the homestead. All old women will however wash the excreta off the baby with the liquid, which must fall into the hole,²⁾ and afterwards throw the syringing reed and baby's waist-band into the hole. While the grandmother fills in the hole the mother must head straight for home with the baby and never look back lest the sickness return.

4.2 Reducing sexual desire

Old women partly attribute the present high incidence of illegitimacy to the fact that the operation of ukunconca is no longer performed on the young. Once a child begins

1) See also Ngubane 1977, p.29; Jali 1950, p.18

2) See also Jali 1950, pp.18-19

to walk, a woman who has the knowledge and experience and is usually old, fetches a piece of umuzi (fibre used in mat-making) grass, flattens one side and ties a knot at the end. The old woman syringes the child with medicine and before this fluid is expelled induces rectal bleeding (ukunconca/ukugweba) by inserting the knotted grass-stalk in its rectum and twirling it (ukuphehla).¹⁾ The medicine and blood are dispelled together, the aim being to lessen the sexual instinct by removing hot blood which would encourage the boy or girl to become too 'hot' or 'fast' with the opposite sex. Old women say that rectal bleeding is performed on a young child because it is less painful at an early stage. An older child would also resist the treatment. The process is usually performed twice on a little girl to reduce her wish to play with her genitals but with a boy it is only done once for if it were repeated his craving for the opposite sex would die. When treating a little boy the woman must be particularly careful not to interfere with what Biyela and Khanyile term umthambo wokuzala and the Dlomo umnqanga (the vein of birth), the fibrous tissue running along the underside of the penis, because his wellbeing and future sexuality lies here.

4.3 Expulsion of viruses

The custom of umshophi to exorcise children's diseases²⁾ is obsolete in these tribes. Dlomo and Khanyile women and men questioned had never heard the word, although similar practices prevailed in all three tribes. The umshophi custom was observed when certain viruses had to be expelled, particularly isimungumungwane (measles, rash) and umkhuhlane (fever, influenza, colds). The descriptions

1) See also Schoeman 1940, p.9; Krige 1957, pp.67-68

2) Carbutt 1880, pp.11-12; Krige 1957, pp.71-72

given are remarkably similar to the account rendered by Bryant.¹⁾ Sometimes at the outset the girls due to assist in the ceremony would spend the night in the veld, but usually they set out from an old woman's house. On arriving at the homes where the children were ill the girls, who may be dressed in the leaves of the umsenge tree²⁾ (Cussonia spicata³⁾), would remove the grass strings of umvithi (Eragrostis plana grass⁴⁾) that had been tied around the children's waists and necks, and jump over them as they lay on the ground at the entrance to the homestead or cattle-kraal. They would then proceed quietly to discard the strings in or across the river so that the disease would depart elsewhere. Bryant refers to the girls resting in the huts of old or very old women and also receiving food at the river from very old women. Biyela old women maintain that they did not eat during this time, though they might go to an old woman's house to round off the ceremony; they believe that such rashes have become fatal since these traditions have been abandoned.

4.4 Small children's dances

In parts of KwaZulu certain dances occur that are unknown in the tribes investigated in the Nkandla district, but which contain overtones of the values of health and fertility projected by the umshophi custom in that the children are dressed with the leaves of the umsenge tree⁵⁾ which the people associate with fertility and renewal.⁶⁾ Schoeman records that the old women of one neighbourhood take the initiative in planning a dance for the small children of three to five years.⁷⁾ A homestead is chosen on the basis of its respectability, the number of children of the requisite age-group present, and the number of aged women resident.⁸⁾ On the appointed day the old women come together and while

1) Bryant 1967, pp.662-664

2) See also Scriba 1948, p.9

3) Doke et al. 1958, p.271

4) Ibid. p.314

5) Schoeman 1970, p.53

6) Ibid. p.56; Krige 1968, p.177

7) Schoeman 1970, pp.52-53

8) Ibid. pp.52-53

enjoying beer, they observe, correct, encourage and at times join the small children in dances that are said to demonstrate their acquaintance with Zulu culture.¹⁾ At the conclusion of the dancing the old women partake of a goat and the children eat chickens.²⁾

4.5 Child-medicines

In each area certain old women are regarded as experts on child-illness. When babies are ill elderly women are usually to be found in attendance administering medicines. For ordinary coughs a popular cure is mixing umhlonyane (African wormwood;³⁾ Artemisia afra⁴⁾, iboza (Moschosma riparia shrub⁵⁾), blue-gum leaves and some of the umsuzwane (Lippia asperifolia shrub⁶⁾). These are boiled and the baby is steamed over the infusion and given a portion to drink. Measles, mumps and whooping cough are also treated by old women. Most rely on time-honoured Zulu remedies and are paid after treatment according to the gravity of the illness. They may also appeal to the ancestors on behalf of a stricken grandchild.⁷⁾ Although they do not have to be past the age of child-bearing, the old tend to be consulted because they have acquired considerable medical knowledge over the years. Despite the tendency of some daughters-in-law to take their ailing children to hospital for treatment, by-passing the cures of their mothers-in-law even when they know a home remedy for an illness, the specialist knowledge of old women continues to be made use of. The recorded diary of an old Biyela lady reveals that throughout the year she not only administers folk-remedies to her grandchildren, frequently by way of enemas with varying medical properties, but that

-
- 1) Schoeman 1970, pp.53-55
 - 2) Ibid. p.57
 - 3) Doke et al. 1958, p.110.
 - 4) Bryant 1966, p.53
 - 5) Ibid. p.35
 - 6) Ibid. p.55
 - 7) See p.173

she is in constant demand by other mothers in the area when they are about to deliver or when their children fall ill. Observations among old women in other tribes confirm the findings of the diary.

4.6 The old woman as foster-mother

Secretion of milk following sucking at the breast of a woman other than a nursing mother and even of an old woman (lactatio serotina) is as well known in Africa as elsewhere.¹⁾ Elderly women of Nkandla recall that until very recently the old woman as wet-nurse was commonplace. All agree that substitute lactation should not be performed by a woman unless she is old and has passed the menopause. It is one of the duties of a paternal or maternal grandmother because she is regarded as being of 'the same blood' as the baby. There is also the belief that a young woman's breasts should be kept for her own children since a strong bond is formed between a mother and her suckling child, and a woman who gives suck to another's baby will never have another of her own. Thus if the mother dies the infant is looked after by the oldest woman in the homestead with the husband's mother being specified as the first choice.²⁾ This old woman was employed as wet-nurse if a young wife fell pregnant prematurely - that is, before her previous child had been weaned, because of the belief that a woman cannot breastfeed at this time because her milk is impure. The old woman would also serve as a temporary mother if the lactating mother had to visit a friend or journey to a distant store.

Nowadays one rarely finds old women acting as wet-nurses, although one Dlomo grandmother gives suck to her grandchild because she has more milk than its mother. The tendency is for people to bottlefeed or to give the child incumbe. There

-
- 1) Livingstone 1857, p.126; Bartels 1888, pp.79-81; Ploss & Bartels 1927, pp.223-226; Gatti 1933, pp.67-71; Culwick & Culwick 1936, pp.19-24; Leith-Ross 1939, p.209; Junod 1966, pp.50-51; Bryant 1967, p.631
 2) See also Shooter 1857, p.88

are also cases of stranded families bringing babies without mothers or grandmothers to the hospital to be cared for.

4.7 Weaning customs

Over the years the method of weaning a Zulu child has changed little.¹⁾ It takes place at the husband's home on the advice of the mother-in-law when the child is sufficiently old for its mother to resume sexual intercourse and have another baby.²⁾ An old woman, the infant's grandmother, smears the juice of umhlaba (Aloe ferox³⁾) which in its green and succulent stage is called by some Khanyile inhlaba, onto the mother's areolae to discourage sucking.⁴⁾ The mother-in-law tears a little piece out of the child's carrying-skin (imbeleko), takes a fly and a piece of imfingo tuber (cycad: Stangeria paradoxa⁵⁾), instructs the mother to express some of her breast-milk onto it, and wraps the contents in the piece of skin to form a square. A cord made from the carrying-skin secures this little pouch around the child's neck as a necklet. It is thought that this will 'tie the child's heart and prevent it from thinking of the breast'. Khanyile omit the imfingo from the contents of the pouch but for the rest proceed similarly.

Medical personnel trained in Western concepts and methods tend to decry such procedures and substances utilized by old women and to discountenance the idea of using them in a paramedical capacity. A Zulu Clinic Sister at Nkandla remarks: 'The granny weans the child too early and gives it enemas and not enough milk, therefore it can't resist disease.' Despite such opinions, the continuing importance to child-health of the ageing Zulu woman is acknowledged by an experienced White medical practitioner at Nqutu: 'The much maligned... crafty, humorous and obstinate grandmothers are

1) See also Krige 1957, p.73

2) See also Samuelson 1929, p.347; De Jager 1937, p.24

3) Mayr 1907, p.395

4) See also De Jager 1937, p.24; Gerstner 1939, p.132; Bryant 1967, p.633

5) Bryant 1967, p.633

occasionally the strongest allies that we [doctors] have. If you can win a grandmother; if, taking a slow pinch of snuff, she smiles and agrees, there is not much that can go wrong thereafter.¹⁾

4.8 Removing the first crop of hair

The grandmother removes the first crop of hair from the child once it can walk because it is thought that it would be weakened should this be done earlier. Among the Dlomo she uses her teeth; the Biyela pluck out the tufts with the fingers,²⁾ and Khanyile use a piece of iron or nowadays a bottle or knife. The Dlomo and Khanyile grandmothers place the hair at the umsamo as was done with the navel-cord³⁾ to inform the ancestors that this is the first hair of their child. Some old Biyela women also place a little girl's hair in the roof of the umsamo, though there are grandmothers who remove it when she marries so that she does not remain fixated to her natal home. Others place the girl's hair in the veld and it burns away with the grass in a veld-fire. Such people believe that a girl's hair must be buried outside the premises because intombazana ifanele ukuphuma iyokogana ingabuye ikhumbule ekhaya - a girl must go out for good to marry and not want to return and remember her home. All Biyela and most Khanyile grandmothers insert the hair of a boy into the cowdung next to the impundu (gate-post of the cattle-kraal) so that he will not leave his home for good when he goes to find employment. Customs concerning the removal of the hair may vary according to izibongo.

4.9 Sleeping arrangements

Once a child is weaned, the baby lives with its grandmother because its mother will go to her husband's ilawu (private hut) to have another child.⁴⁾ Only if the baby cries

1) Barker 1962, p.184

2) See also Myburgh 1944, p.188

3) See p.62

4) See also Reader 1954a, p.13

incessantly does it accompany its mother to the ilawu. After a short while the baby grows accustomed to its grandmother, and whatever she eats she shares with the child.

Little girls usually sleep with their grandmother on the left side of her hut and little boys on the right side if the hut is viewed from the doorway. An old couple sleep apart, the old man in his hut, the old lady in hers. When a married son is away from home the old woman tends to sleep on the right-hand side of the hut with some of the older children while others sleep on the left together with their mother. The umakoti sleeps in this house for safety's sake and because her husband, who is usually away at work, fears her infidelity. However in some cases because of burglaries the umakoti may sleep in her own house together with older girls who would be expected to report any misdemeanour to the grandmother.

4.10 Folk-tales and lineage history

The fact that the old woman and young child live together helps to engender mutual concern and an affection that makes ugogo 'the most loved'. In this environment 'it is natural for an old woman to tell the children folk-tales to develop their minds.' Younger women may tell such stories but ugogo excels.¹⁾ The old adage persists that such tales should be told at night when everyone is present, for if folk-tales are related in the day the narrator will grow horns.²⁾ However most people, including the aged, no longer adhere to this belief: they point out that school children are expected to relate folk-tales told them by their grandmothers at any time during school-hours, and do so without coming to harm. Old women recall that as children they would never go to sleep without their grandmothers telling them a folk-tale, but that today because of the influence of schools they do so less often and people are tending to forget them. The diary of an old

1) See also Krige 1957, p.363

2) Stuart 1926, p.70; du Toit 1976, p.49

Biyela lady¹⁾ reveals that she narrated them on four occasions during the year when she was feeling particularly happy. The old woman defines a folk-tale as 'any silly story that has no head or tail'. She tells a tale for its pleasure and educational value and because children always pose a question after hearing it. By relating these tales expressively the old woman revitalizes tradition and enculturates the young.²⁾

A number of folk-tales feature old women as main characters. One example is as follows:

There were two sisters, the elder humble and the younger proud. The time came for them to marry. Because the younger one always tried to get better things for herself, she went out first. On her way she met an old woman sitting at the road side who asked her where she was going. She replied that she was going to marry a wealthy man, Mambakamquba. So the old woman said: "I must give you tips on how to make yourself attractive and acceptable even though you're young and beautiful; but first you must lick the secretions from my eyes." The girl said: "That I'll never do, you are very forward." So the old woman replied: "All right, pass on." The girl went and on the way she had to cross a river. There she met a man carrying a pitcher on his head. The man was not walking well and asked her to be kind enough to lend him a hand; she refused saying she was going to the home of a rich man whom she would marry. On arriving at the home she entered unannounced, stating that she was going to marry its head and be the new bride. She was shown a hut and went in and waited, unaware that he was a snake and that the limping man who was carrying the pitcher was really the homestead-head. When she saw this snake the girl started screaming and ran out as it began to beat and chase her out of the homestead. She returned home, having failed, and her older sister left later. She met the same old woman who repeated her offer of advice which went together with licking her secretions. The girl acceded to her request and in return received all the advice she required to be a success. The older sister also met the limping man carrying the pitcher and she helped him when he asked her to. And so she was successful.'

It should be noted that different versions of the same folk-tale circulate in Nkandla, but that their essence is the same. Informants interpret this tale as meaning

1) See p.20

2) See also Reader 1954a, p.13; Bascom 1965, pp.297-298

that if a younger person listens to the advice of an old woman she will be fortunate; once an old woman has expressed something it will happen in the way she predicted since an old woman is all-knowing.¹⁾ Other tales such as that of Chakijana (the small weasel) who cooks and eats an old woman, emphasize the mental degeneration of old women and the cunning of the weasel who reflects the opposite of approved behaviour.²⁾

Biyela, Dlomo and much Khanyile lineage history tends to be conveyed casually. The narrator is usually an old man, and sometimes a very old woman with a retentive memory such as the father's wife or sister. A few Khanyile imindeni formalize this instruction into a narrative designed to acquaint the children with their ancestry and to demonstrate the close relationship of families who share one grandfather (umndeni). A prime intention is to indicate to children their nearest kinsmen so that should their father die, they will know whom to turn to for help.

4.11 Training the young

The old Zulu woman invariably considers her most important contribution to the young to be that of educator: 'I am the one who gives advice, and I teach by sending children on errands, showing them things, and telling them what to do. I speak and am listened to. I am the key of the home.' Although old women take particular care in rearing the first-born child because a pattern is set for those that follow, daughters-in-law are also considered as children and fall under the authority of their mothers-in-law. They are constantly advised on methods of child-rearing and their behaviour is monitored by the old woman who, for instance, may see to it that on entering the doorway the umakoti crawls on bended knee.

Mothers are respected as teachers of children.³⁾ However, because the mother is preoccupied with chores,⁴⁾

1) See also Oosthuizen 1977, pp.75-76

2) See also Ibid. p.86

3) See also Vilakazi 1965, p.124; Graafland 1977, pp.8-9

4) See also Bryant 1967, pp.178, 186

the grandmother assumes great significance in enculturating the child.¹⁾ She teaches the growing girl to grind, cook, fetch wood, weed, cut grass, make mats, thatch and present food respectfully. Although guided repetition proves sound teaching, children are expected to be attentive and if they have been shown how to smear a hut once they should not expect to be told again. The grandmother also supervises the child-nurse (umzanyana), a girl of pre-school or school age²⁾ who, while the mother is away, spends her time with the baby, comforting it, playing with it and controlling its behaviour.³⁾ Grandmothers are thus considered to be influential teachers and advisers of the young.⁴⁾ There is a cultural stereotype that although an old man can also educate, because he is hard-hearted he does not teach much. Some old men however say that like the old women they must look after and enculturate the boys. Where there is no man in the home, the grandmother assumes many of his functions.

There is no time formally set aside for teaching the young about their duties towards old people. As in mastering so many other cultural norms they acquire these through precept, participation and guidance. They learn by assisting the aged in their daily tasks and are taught to be considerate of their needs. The first-born child is particularly regarded as 'grandmother's child' and is responsible for fetching firewood and water for her, smearing her hut and attending to her requests.

Although parents, and particularly fathers, are essentially the disciplinarians of children,⁵⁾ discipline is regarded as the responsibility of every old person, and the exercise of authority follows rules of seniority. Should a child be disobedient then 'the right teacher is to use a stick at such a time'. But should a mother or father intend punishing a child and it runs for protection to its

1) See also du Toit 1976, pp.4-5

2) See also Bryant 1967, p.633

3) See also Ibid. p.186; Graafland 1977, pp.30-31

4) See also Reader 1954a, p.13

5) See also Vilakazi 1965, pp.126-127

grandmother, neither may touch it.¹⁾ Likewise the child will receive sanctuary if it runs into grandmother's house for this is the abode of the ancestors. If the father or mother persists and thrashes the child in the presence of the grandmother, the old woman has the right to take a stick and beat her son or daughter-in-law, though the latter out of respect for the ancestors to whom she is a stranger may not express anger within her husband's premises.

Nowadays some daughters-in-law consider injunctions regarding the protective rights of the aged as old-fashioned and disobey them. In such cases if there is no adult son at home the aged have to resign themselves to the flouting of customary behaviour, but it militates against good understanding within the home. The same is true of discipline in general which is weakening under the influence of acculturation.

4.12 Ear-cutting

The ear-cutting ceremony, which occurs between the ages of three and seven and advances a child's cultural responsibility and position, has lost much of its importance. The accompanying sacrifice, feasting, dancing, seclusion and thanksgiving mentioned in the literature,²⁾ are absent in both memory and practice in the three tribes. According to Krige 'The person to pierce the ears of a child may be a man or a woman (past child-bearing age), and is chosen for his dexterity at the work as also for his general experience and wisdom. He is one of the older people and must be someone whose wounds or hurts have always healed quickly.'³⁾ Such was the choice in the past, and Biyela and Khanyile old people recall that although the ideal person to perform the operation used to be either an experienced old woman or old man, in fact a skilled person of any age might do so.⁴⁾

1) See also Vilakazi 1965, p.126

2) Mahlobo & Krige 1934, pp.160-165

3) Krige 1957, p.83; see also De Jager 1937, pp.33-34

4) See also Tyrrell 1971, p.21

Mahlobo & Krige state that 'Anyone who is allowed to dress wounds or perform any operations must, of course, be "clean", so for the officiator the rules of continence at this time are particularly strict.'¹⁾ The cutter must abstain from sexual intercourse until after the operation²⁾ and may not be menstruating at the time. These injunctions are irrelevant to most old women. Old women who are addicted to snuff refrain from sniffing on the morning when they are to operate lest this enlarge the sores, for snuff is believed to contain a poison (isihlungu) similar to the venom of a snake. Ear-cutting used often to be done by the Biyela or Khanyile specialist at the entrance to the cattle-kraal,³⁾ in which case one of the large horizontal gate-poles (umgogo) was laid on the ground at the entrance. The old woman would rub the child's ear-lobe warm, and when it felt soft would flatten the lobe on the pole and cut it with a razor, a piece of iron or a sharp knife. She might use ingcino, the glutinous bulb of a lily (Scilla rigidifolia⁴⁾) as a paste, smearing it on the wound to prevent the flesh from growing together again. She would then smear the upright poles of the entrance to the cattle-kraal with the blood to accelerate the healing of the wounds. Alternatively she would operate outside the premises and place a sorghum stalk behind the ear-lobe as a support. While cutting, the old woman would chew the inside of the root of isiqunga, tambootie-grass (Andropogon marginatus⁵⁾), some Khanyile also using ikhathazo (Alepidea amatybica⁶⁾), and spit this on the cut ears to prevent pain and swelling. The upper part of the stem holding the

1) Mahlobo & Krige 1934, p.161

2) Ibid. p.161

3) Ibid. p.162

4) Doke & Vilakazi 1953, p.236

5) Bryant 1966, p.30

6) Doke et al. 1958, p.130

sorghum (ugaba lwamabele) would be broken into two pieces to form the ear-plugs.¹⁾ This stem is smooth and its availability is one of the reasons why ear-cutting would occur on a winter's morning, the other being that the cold air facilitated healing. The old woman would say to the child while cutting: 'When you're asked to do something don't refuse, because you will get sores on your ears.' And should a child afterwards complain of aching ears or swellings, an adult would solemnly explain: 'That's because you don't obey willingly and go promptly about your errands.'

Whereas it is recorded that children formerly had to spend the night prior to the operation sleeping with the officiator or some other old person,²⁾ in the three tribes they spend the night at their own homes, which at this age means with the grandmother in her house. Nowadays the operation tends to consist of the cutter simply sitting or standing in an unspecified place, telling the child not to move or cry, taking the ear-lobe in her hand, and piercing it with a thorn, needle or pin. Although it has been written that all women except those past child-bearing age are excluded as spectators at the operation,³⁾ there is no clear evidence of this in the tribes investigated in Nkandla. Old people state that there were no restrictions other than that the operator should not be distracted.

Formerly ear-cutting was said to enable a child to listen and understand⁴⁾ and taught children obedience to older people.⁵⁾ Old people remember that a child who was not cut was scorned and by way of idiom likened to a dog who foolishly follows people when they go to the veld to defecate. When asked why she cut the ears of children, one expert old lady replied: 'It's traditional, and comes from the Very High One who said a Zulu must cut his ears... However nowadays everybody imitates the White people.'

-
- 1) See also Mahlobo & Krige 1934, pp.162-163; De Jager 1937, p.34
 - 2) Mahlobo & Krige 1934, p.161
 - 3) Ibid. p.162
 - 4) Ibid. p.163
 - 5) See also De Jager 1937, p.33

Old women remark that although ear-piercing continues to be the practice of certain izibongo the modern generation has lost its good sense by abandoning traditional customs, and since the practice of ear-cutting has been rescinded children have become insolent because their ears have not been opened to listen to their elders and respect their words and teachings. They are disobedient and no longer believe all they are told.

CHAPTER 5

THE OLD WOMAN AND ADOLESCENCE5.1 Puberty5.1.1 Boy's puberty ceremony

With one or two exceptions, notably among the Zulu isibongo, the boy's puberty ceremony has become obsolete. An old Khanyile lady recalls that when Christianity was introduced the clergy disapproved of the boys 'taking the cattle out to the veld' and would not confirm those who defied their orders; in this way the puberty ceremonial gradually died out.¹⁾ Old people remark that they no longer know whether a boy has reached puberty or not: all they hear is that a certain boy has made a girl pregnant. They maintain that because boys are nowadays so much in the presence of girls at school they perpetually have girls on their minds and this causes them to mature earlier than they used to.

On attaining puberty a boy is said to dream of having sexual intercourse with a girl and thereupon discharges his first nocturnal emission. But, confided a male diviner, 'there is a secret: the young boy in fact dreams of having coitus with an old woman, and the meaning is that she is an ancestral shade, here to bless him and indicate that he has grown up. This is a matter for rejoicing.' This observation was confirmed by other old men who added that the boy need not necessarily know who the old woman is.²⁾ Since young boys tend to sleep with their grandmothers, who are usually early risers, the old woman may be one of the first adults to perceive her grandson's maturation when according to cultural prescription she notices that the boys and cattle are missing³⁾ and notifies his father. At this time the grandmother will usually appropriate the boy's sleeping-mat.

1) See also Krige 1957, pp.99-100

2) See also Tyrrell 1971, p.95

3) See also Kohler 1933, p.9; Krige 1957, p.88

When the boy's comrades have subjected him to a number of strengthening procedures in the veld and bring their cattle home, the boy's grandmother stamps the bulbs of indawo (Cyperus esculentus¹⁾) and grinds ujiba²⁾ (the red variety of sorghum) in her kitchen, though among the Dlomo she invariably uses her own hut. The grandmother must be past the menopause so that she is pure and will not contaminate the ingredients and thus weaken the boy. With the Dlomo she adds a little water to the indawo and cooks the ujiba separately to form small balls which she gives to the boy's father together with sliced aloe leaf (inhlabi: a smaller species of umhlaba³⁾). After the boy has swallowed these in the cattle-kraal he proceeds to his grandmother's house where she has stamped and ground umqalothi (Strychnos henningsii⁴⁾). The old woman mixes this powder in a wooden spoon with soot from the roof, whereupon the boy dips the spoon containing the powders into amasi and eats it. On attaining puberty the boy must take this first spoonful of amasi in the prescribed way or, it is thought, he will in future be weakened when he eats milk-curd.

The initiate usually proceeds from the cattle-kraal to the grandmother's house, which she has smeared with cowdung in readiness while the boys were out herding. However some Biyela and Khanyile require that the boy sleep in the private hut of the boys. The use of these huts and their smearing by a woman who no longer menstruates is said to be associated with symbolic cleanliness.⁵⁾ A goat is slaughtered for the boy in honour of the occasion but in all three tribes only the gall-bladder is ritually important. Among the Khanyile it is poured on the boy's feet and on the back of his hands and among the Dlomo it is poured on the boy's right toe and forefinger by his grandmother, grandfather or father. The remainder of the liquid is

-
- 1) Bryant 1966, p.62
 - 2) See also Bryant 1967, p.655
 - 3) Gerstner 1939, p.131
 - 4) Bryant 1966, p.32
 - 5) See also Krige 1957, p.91

disposed of in the cattle-kraal, and the gall-bladder is inflated and hung in the old woman's hut; however the Biyela grandmother usually empties the bile at the umsamo of her hut to show the ancestors that one of their sons has matured and to thank them accordingly. Some Biyela and Dlomo do not consider the caecum important and simply cook it with the rest of the meat, but other Biyela and Khanyile set it aside for the ancestral shades in the sacred part of the old woman's hut, and she and the old man together with pre-pubescent children will later consume it.¹⁾ The old woman also burns the bones with impepho in the fireplace of her house, though the Dlomo people consider them ritually unimportant. In some homes ugogo mixes the chyme with manure in the cattle-kraal, it being susceptible to witchcraft that could prevent the boy from obtaining a lover or from having children. Other old people do not consider the chyme important at a boy's puberty and leave its disposal to the young men.

The uncertain treatment of the caecum and the fact that the goat does not remain at the umsamo overnight raises the question of the degree of involvement of the ancestral shades in the boy's puberty ceremonial. Old people in general express their uncertainty on this issue, saying that puberty is really a natural event, that the ancestors are not addressed and that it is merely a celebration for the boy and his age-mates. But the view of the old mother of chief Dlomo should not be ignored: namely, that the ancestors are onlookers when a boy reaches puberty; they eat the bile from his anointed finger and toe and nod their heads with approval that everything in his development is going well.

Krige states that 'While the initiate is confined in his hut, old men enter and also very old women (who... are considered to be same as men, having no ritual uncleanness)'; they express their joy that the boy is now a person and offer advice as to how he should behave in order to be an asset to the homestead.²⁾ Old Biyela and Khanyile

1) See also Mahlobo & Krige 1934, p.176

2) Krige 1957, p.93

women and classificatory mothers of the umndeni also enter and warn the boy that he has now grown up and must not mishandle girls sexually lest he incur liability.

5.1.2 Girl's puberty ceremony

Only one old Biyela lady recognized the ancient word udwa¹⁾ as signifying a girl's puberty ceremony: she had not heard it since the days of her grandmother. Ukuthomba (the passage of the first discharge) is now in use.²⁾

The grandmother and amaqhikiza (post-pubescent girls who have lovers) are responsible for organizing the activities centring on the girl's attainment of the menarche. The old woman is in charge because she is considered reliable and not prone to witchcraft. A menstruating girl or woman is considered particularly vulnerable for should a person steal some of the girl's menstrual blood or the chyme of the goat slaughtered to honour the occasion, it is believed that the girl might not bear children or will be the victim of some other misfortune. The safety of the grandmother's house therefore provides the best setting: it is considered a protection against witchcraft because the ancestral shades guard it, and is preferred to that of the mother since the latter sleeps with the girl's father in her own hut. If the grandmother is deceased her duties may be performed by the girl's mother, for trustworthiness is the essential quality of the person guarding the girl. The grandmother is however regarded as the correct person to supervise the girl's menarche because 'the mother is still a child and knows nothing'. Modern teenagers who have undergone the puberty ceremony state that ugogo is the only person experienced in Zulu custom, therefore she alone should be responsible for the girl in seclusion.

When a girl reaches puberty she informs her grandmother, if she has one, or tells her elder sister, coevals or

1) Wanger n.d., p.43

2) See also Krige 1957, pp.87-88; Bryant 1967, p.655

mother¹⁾ that she is bleeding but not hurt, whereupon she is told that she has reached puberty and must repair to her grandmother's house. The grandmother takes a sleeping-mat and tells her granddaughter to recline on it at the umsamo. She also gives her a blanket and orders her to wrap herself in it; in some izibongo she sits behind a screen. One of the principal responsibilities of the grandmother towards the secluded girl is to make her strengthening medicine. The old woman extracts indawo tubers²⁾ from a river bank or swamp and returns to her house where she peels, stamps and grinds them. She boils a little water in a potsherd and mixes in the indawo together with ground sorghum or maize. She then provides the girl with a stick or two with which to eat this bitter substance that is usually made into two balls. Some old women insist that the red ujiba variety of sorghum must be used,³⁾ but others, particularly among the Dlomo and some Biyela, insist that ujiba is only used at a boy's attainment of puberty, and prefer ground maize.

The grandmother is said to be present while the girl is isolated because her hut is being used: she continues to sleep here together with the initiate and some of the girls. But the real reason why the grandmother must be present at this time, and sleep on the male side of her hut with the pubescent girl while the other girls sleep on the female side, is so that she can guard her granddaughter from possible witchcraft from the other girls or even from boys who may try to enter the house of seclusion. She is there to rebuke the boys for trying to touch the girl because if they succeed and force the girl to talk she will thereafter become an incessant talker. Although it is the old woman's duty to remain in the seclusion hut, when the noise becomes too great or the obscene puberty songs are being sung some

1) See also Lugg 1907, p.116; De Jager 1937, p.36; Krige 1957, p.100; Bryant 1967, p.647

2) See p.80

3) See also Krige 1957, p.100; Bryant 1967, p.647

old women leave the house saying that they cannot tolerate the commotion; others though not joining in the singing of these erotic songs¹⁾ may refresh the memories of the girls should they forget the words, many of which concern anal intercourse.

The grandmother will also tell the pubescent girl of the polluting aspects of menstrual blood, in consequence of which during her period she may not traverse a field lest the crops perish, or eat amasi lest the cattle become thin and die. She advises her on types of soft-leaved plants such as the everlasting ubhongabhonga and inkondlwane to use as pads should her period begin when she is away from home (though nowadays cloth tends to be used). A few Khanyile grandmothers warn the initiate against full sexual intercourse that could result in pregnancy, and teach her directly or via the amaghekiza (post-pubescent girls who have lovers), who in turn deliver the instructions to the initiate. Should the initiate put questions which the girls cannot answer these are referred to the grandmother in an informal manner. In some homes the girls invent a pretext for seeing 'ugogo'. They might invite her over because at the time they happen to be grinding snuff (which she greatly likes), or they make sure that they encounter her in the courtyard. Traditionally their only source of information is the grandmother or, if she lacks the knowledge, some other old woman.

Early on the morning of the eighth day²⁾ the girl's companions leave the grandmother's hut and race the initiate to the izibuko (ford) to strengthen her.³⁾ They gather wood and carry this to the outside of the grandmother's hut, and the old woman shares the wood with the other women of the homestead, though nowadays old women complain that the girls sometimes selfishly take the wood to their own homes. While the girls are at the river the grandmother smears the floor of the seclusion-hut with cowdung. She does so because the place where the initiate has been sitting is susceptible

1) See also Wanger n.d., p.99

2) See also MacDonald 1890, p.118; Wanger n.d., p.100; Kohler 1933, p.12

3) MacDonald 1890, p.118; Kohler 1933, pp.12-13

to witchcraft which could cause the girl to become barren or die. Even the remains of the cowdung which she has been smearing she carefully conceals, such as by scattering it in the veld. The old woman is regarded as the only person who can fully protect the girl from witchcraft.

The old woman next takes possession of the blanket and soiled sleeping-mat which the girl used in isolation. Some old women wash the soiled items then use them again. Others regard the blood flow as too small to bother with. The Dlomo grandmother washes the mat with moistened inkondlwane which she then buries in an anthill; where inkondlwane has been spread on the sleeping-mat, such as in some traditional Khanyile homes, the old woman collects and burns the soft leaves outside and may throw the ashes into the river to prevent them being used for witchcraft. Where pads made of cloth or an old blanket are used the old woman instructs the girl to leave them on a potsherd at the umsamo: she will then hide them in a safe place such as a hole in the veld where they will not be disturbed by witches. Because the girl may not continue wearing garments she wore when in seclusion, she tends to make use of her grandmother's belongings during this time. The grandmother receives the sleeping-mat which she instructed the initiate to make and finish during seclusion, lest she never make or complete one throughout her life. The girl is also given this task to strengthen her hands and induce her to work willingly.

To mark the end of seclusion a goat is slaughtered for the initiate.¹⁾ The grandmother usually cooks it to prevent bewitchment. She places the caecum at her umsamo and will later, as in the boy's puberty ceremony, eat it together with the grandfather and the young children of the homestead. The Biyela grandmother pours bile at her umsamo and among the Dlomo and Khanyile the girl's grandmother or grandfather anoints the girl with the bile. Then in all three tribes the grandmother inflates and attaches the gall-bladder to the girl's head, after which she may hang it at the umsamo

1) See also Krige 1968, p.173

of her hut; thereafter she burns it with impepho at her fireplace in order to give the ancestors a feast. The old Khanyile woman also pours some of the bile at the umsamo and reports to the ancestral shades that the child has now matured. The old woman gathers the bones and usually burns them with impepho at the fireplace in her hut or next to the cattle-kraal where the meat has been cooked, though in some Dlomo homes the bones are given to the dogs in the old woman's house. As in the boy's puberty ceremony, a further duty of the old woman in connection with the goat is that of carefully mixing the chyme with the manure in the cattle-kraal lest it be tampered with for witchcraft. The meat is eaten in the old woman's hut, but because the initiate and her coevals may not partake of her puberty goat, another may be slaughtered for this purpose. In Dlomo and some Biyela homes the caecum is not treated specially but simply cooked with the insides of the goat. In some Biyela homes the bile is thrown out and the gall-bladder given to the dogs, and although the grandmother burns the bones in the fireplace of her hut, she does not use impepho. Such Biyela families also have young men and not the old woman mixing the chyme into the manure: they regard this goat as unrelated to the ancestors since they believe that puberty is principally a matter that concerns young people.

Despite the fact that old women do not spontaneously attribute the choice of the grandmother's hut to its association with the ancestors, with few exceptions they are unanimous that as in the boy's puberty ceremony, the ancestors are observing the occasion, as is evident in the pouring of bile and hanging of the caecum in the old woman's house. Although a few old people may attribute a girl's failure to reach the menarche to witchcraft, and will accordingly consult a diviner, most old women tend to discuss the matter with their husbands who will request ancestral assistance that this necessary landmark of the girl's developmental cycle be attained. Alternatively the old woman will go to the outskirts of her umsamo and plead with the deceased grandmothers of the home: 'MaKhumalo and

Mambokazi, this girl will be nothing if you do not help her, for all the others have reached this stage.'

Girls' puberty ceremonies persist unevenly in all three tribes of Nkandla, some homesteads following traditional ceremonial, others, particularly among the Christians, dispensing with it or observing it in attenuated form. The role of old women in puberty ceremonial has been adversely affected by socio-cultural changes in that they are often ignored and seclusion is gradually being phased out. An old woman comments: 'Today I would say the ceremonial of puberty is finished, because I see amatshitshi (post-pubescent girls who have not received permission to choose lovers) without having heard when they reached puberty.¹⁾ And at school they have no time to learn of these things: that's why they get pregnant now. These modern girls have no foundation of the facts of life.'

5.2 Courtship

5.2.1 Residing with the grandmother

Boys and girls sleep in their grandmother's house,²⁾ though when boys mature physically they are given a separate boys' hut. Amahikiza used to sleep in their grandmother's house until they married though nowadays this no longer always happens. As compared to a youth, a girl should only accept one lover at a time;³⁾ if she has several lovers the grandmother should report her to her mother. However old women are finding it increasingly difficult to lodge such a complaint because mothers tend to take umbrage when their children are criticized.

5.2.2 The grandmother as confidante

When an itshitshi is attracted to a boy she confides in the amahikiza of the family who discuss the matter in the presence of the grandmother with whom they sleep, and she

1) See also Wanger n.d., p.99; Krige 1957, p.101

2) See pp. 70-71

3) See also Krige 1957, pp.105; Krige 1968, p.174

tells them whether she favours the proposed match. Although some grandmothers have no objection to virtually any suitor, rather seeing their role as helping their granddaughters 'find the right way', most state that formerly they would advise against a match if the boy's family were very poor or notorious for witchcraft. The parents of the girl are not informed of their daughter's emotional ties: grandmother alone is central to the web of secrecy spun around a teenage love affair. The unique quality of the grandmother's relationship is illustrated by the behaviour of a youth wooing a girl. Should he see her mother he will run away from her, whereas on meeting her grandmother he will run towards her and inquire as to the whereabouts of the girls. She confides that they are collecting wood or busy weeding and communicates all that he wishes to know concerning the state of his love affair; she also tells him what the girl thinks of him, for she has heard her talk. For her trouble the boy gives the old woman snuff, which pleases her immensely. Thus apart from the amaghikiza the only prominent person in the life of a courting girl is her grandmother. The grandmother of a boy plays a similar role in the courting process: her grandson feels free with her, seeks her advice, and approaches her with requests for money with which to buy the required gifts that will bring the old woman another daughter-in-law.

At the conclusion of the ceremony in which the girl selects her lover, the boy jubilantly returns home, tells his grandmother that he has won a girl, and places the string of white beads with which he has been presented round his grandmother's neck; she then ululates (ukukikiza). Even if the necklace is presented at some later date the old woman is still the recipient because she is said to be in love with all the boys and is 'the receiver of all secrets'. The young man now hoists a white handkerchief on a pole at the outside of the umsamo of the cattle-kraal in front of the grandmother's house to confirm that he has a lover (ugomile).

This handkerchief is taken down on the day of umbongo (thanking) after a ceremony on the mountain in which the young man thanks the girl for choosing him.¹⁾ The ceremony is kept secret from the girl's parents who ostensibly know nothing of the machinations, but grandmother is involved to such an extent that she gives her granddaughter tea, sugar, or her own handwork such as sleeping-mats for the occasion. Beer is secretly brewed in grandmother's house, one of her big beer-pots being used, and on the night prior to the umbongo ceremony the girls conceal this at a chosen place on the hillside. Throughout the next day the old woman may be found inventing excuses for the girls' absence, and on their return she receives a gift of snuff which the boy has sent. After the umbongo ceremony the youth's grandmother is given the handkerchief from the flagpole. She receives this because the grandmother is umniniwenhlanhla - the owner of luck. Among some Khanyile and Biyela she wears this as a turban, though among others and the Dlomo it is customarily stored in a box at her umsamo for the ancestors to bless. When the amachikiza arrange a time for the young couple to be inducted as fully-fledged lovers, both the boy's and girl's grandmothers are the only adults who know of this first night of love-making.²⁾ The boy's grandmother usually advises him how to overpower his sweetheart and achieve ukuhlobonga (external intercourse between the thighs), while the grandmother of the girl stresses that she must struggle free.

When some time later the girl and her coevals visit the boy's home to present gifts to his family, the boy's grandmother is given a beer-strainer or sleeping-mat. On this occasion there is ululating and beer-drinking, and the old women scrutinize the girl's buttocks, breasts and body to certify her virginity and to see that she is exercising the muscular control required for ukuhlobonga.³⁾

A custom which is now virtually obsolete used to occur when the grandmother of the home, suspecting that her

1) See also Krige 1957, p.123; de Clercq 1975, p.185

2) See also Vilakazi 1965, p.53

3) See also Krige 1968, p.174

granddaughters who are amatshitshi are clandestinely having ukuhlobonga, asks them to be seated in her hut and places izinkobe (boiled maize grains) on their thighs close to the genitals. The old woman would then say: 'The one who has never had external sexual intercourse with a man must eat the izinkobe, but the girl who has had ukuhlobonga must not eat them.' Any girl who, having indulged in ukuhlobonga, tried to deceive the old woman by eating the maize grains would reputedly waste away, but the one who had not done so would grow increasingly fat, stoutness being an index of health and beauty.

Many modern teenagers, particularly among the Dlomo and the Biyela of Mahlayizeni, continue to be taught the traditional manner of courting, though old women say that adolescents no longer follow correct procedure, nor do they display the reserve and restraint of their predecessors. The old woman is becoming increasingly irrelevant to a courtship system influenced by Western civilization and in some areas she has become redundant. But where traditional patterns are still followed old women are proud of the strings of beads which they have obtained from their grandsons, even though they rarely wear them with their Western attire.

5.3 Preventing pre-marital pregnancies

5.3.1 Vaginal examinations as formerly conducted

Schoeman reports that prior to the king granting regiments the freedom to marry he would order the old women of the tribe to examine the equivalent age-grade of girls to verify their virginity. Those who had been deflowered were spat upon by the old women and made to marry old men.¹⁾ Such information was not available from the three tribes.

Old Biyela informants have no first-hand knowledge or experience of vaginal examinations, though a few recall that their mothers had been examined; however among the Dlomo and Khanyile there are old women who were themselves examined as young women and who have in the past conducted vaginal

1) Schoeman 1940, p.12

examinations. The ensuing account presents their evidence.

Adolescent girls who had recognized lovers with whom they indulged in intercrural intercourse used regularly to be examined by the old women and mothers of the isigodi (part of a tribal area) as a means of preventing pregnancies.¹⁾ To this end the induna (headman) or chief issued instructions that these girls and their mothers should assemble at a certain place on a pre-arranged day. The old women would preside over the investigation on account of their being fully cognisant of the cultural criteria of virginity. There were however certain old women who excelled in such examinations, who were asked to examine the girls and teach other women the necessary criteria. They would instruct the girls to lie down on their backs. Among the Khanyile a very old post-menopausal woman who no longer indulged in sexual relations would also be lying prostrate, her vagina being said to exemplify that of 'a pure virgin'. An old informant explains that 'When you examine a real virgin, there is a small piece which rises out of the membrane inside the vagina: this iso (eye) is upright and whitish, almost transparent 'like glass', and indicates that it has not been disturbed through sexual intercourse. Water poured over it does not enter but merely rolls down the side. With an iqhikiza who permits her lover vaginal entrance the water penetrates the vagina because she has had full intercourse and the membrane is no longer there.'

The description concurs with that recorded by Kohler among Natal Zulu fifty years ago when he wrote: 'It is the custom to inspect the marriageable girls (izintombi) as to their physical virginity. This inspection is carried out once a month, or otherwise merely after certain occasions, especially after all feasts at which gatherings of young folk are the rule... The old women of a kraal inspect their girls "as to whether the eye is still there". By the "eye" they mean the hymeneal ring or reflex of the hymen. When

1) See also Berglund 1976, p.332

they have satisfied themselves by inspection that the "eye" is still intact, they conclude therefrom that cohabitation per vaginam has not yet taken place and that therefore the girl is still "whole" and "full".¹⁾ These notions concerning anatomical indices of virginity still prevail among Khanyile and Dlomo people, even though examinations have fallen into desuetude.

Most old women make no claims as to the infallibility of their observations,²⁾ rather regarding them as warnings to the young to control their sexual passions. Old Khanyile women recognize the possibility of pregnancy with an intact and firm hymen, and in such cases maintain that the young man has been 'playing around the vulval area' and a sperm has entered;³⁾ the Dlomo tend to attribute this to the use of umuthi. One Khanyile informant insists that with very old women the 'eye' grows again. The hospital doctor at Nkandla verifies that the vaginas of older Zulu women virtually close, sometimes reducing to a mere finger's size, with the result that it can only be detected from the atrophied surrounding tissue that the old woman has borne children. Other authorities confirm such rigidity in the vaginal tissue of elderly women and refer to a folkloric belief in America that 'After seven years of chastity a woman becomes a virgin again.'⁴⁾ Despite this closure, the doctor at Nkandla and old women of the Dlomo tribe are reluctant to compare such a vagina to that of a virgin.

The inspection proceeds with each of the old women examining the girls in turn by lifting the labia (izindebe) with the first two fingers of each hand. The old women move from girl to girl conducting their examination and when they find a virgin, then among the Khanyile a married woman who is breastfeeding is asked to squeeze a few drops of her breast-milk onto this girl's genitals to signify her virginity. When the women find one who has had full sexual intercourse no milk is expressed onto her. Among the Dlomo the old women praise and kiss the virgin saying 'Umhlophe qwa!

1) Kohler 1933, pp.38-39; see also Krige 1968, p.174

2) See also Kohler 1933, pp.39-40

3) See also Schoeman 1940, p.13

4) Knopf 1975, p.104

- she is pure white!' With the non-virgin one old woman spits in disgust;¹⁾ the others follow suit, calling her a dog and scolding her amaqhikiza for not looking after her properly. If on examination a girl reveals a slightly 'leaning eye' this indicates that she is permitting her lover to tamper with her genitals. In this event a child is usually sent to the river to fetch ibhuma (bulrush: Cyperus sp.²⁾). One of the old women stamps the stalk below the cattail and with her hands squeezes its juice onto the genitals of the girl.³⁾ Then she warns 'Now don't make the same mistake again. If you stop letting the boy play around your vulva, the eye will rise again.'

The old women investigate in groups and periodically disputes arise. Some say 'This girl is a virgin but not a full one: the male does not penetrate but plays alongside the vagina (ukugudla).' Others urge 'But compare this one with that.' Eventually they reach agreement regarding the state of the girl, but in any unresolved dispute the old mother of the chief has the final say. During the examination the girls' mothers stand by in groups to guard against injustice. One girl is finally selected and displayed to the others as a paragon of virginity. The old women are not remunerated for their services, for they are regarded as the eyes of the chief.

5.3.2 The contemporary situation

In present-day Nkandla it is still considered morally wrong for a young man to impregnate an adolescent girl, and the rendering of goats and cattle as a penalty continues. When a girl falls pregnant it is the grandmother who first ascertains whether she is enceinte and inquires who is responsible. Once she and the girl's mother have verified the pregnancy, the grandmother does not usually inform the head of the homestead or the girl's father, for their home has been disgraced. Rather she advises the girl to report

1) See also Berglund 1976, p.332

2) Bryant 1966, p.61

3) See also Krige 1968, p.174

the matter to her lover's home. Once the grandmother on the boy's side is satisfied that the girl is pregnant she kisses the girl, thereby indicating that another umakoti will be joining them and that the family is growing. The old woman then reports the matter to the head of the home or father of the boy who sends an ox in reparation to the girl's guardian. The grandmother cannot take up the matter on behalf of the home because her power is limited to its confines. Should her husband be deceased, the father or a brother of the deceased's umndeni would pursue the matter. In cases where a child is born out of wedlock the maternal grandmother plays an important role in child-care since the child remains with and is reared by her.

Old women recall that when they were teenagers if any person questioned a girl's virginity, she could insist on a vaginal examination. Among the Dlomo cases still occur in which the girl who has suffered such an aspersion reports the matter to her grandmother who then informs her husband or son. It is the duty of the women of both families to examine such a girl. Apart from a few such cases vaginal examinations at the instigation of the chief or headman no longer occur in these tribes. Chiefs no longer consider it desirable to have the girls of their tribe examined by old women. Whereas the practice used to prevent illegitimacy, it is now thought to reveal the low moral fibre of the girls because it is believed that 'three-quarters of the girls are no longer virgins'. The examinations are also unsuccessful because many of the girls, fearing exposure, have been known to run away on such occasions.

Old people are concerned about the spread of illegitimacy and claim that old women used to teach the amaqhikiza what they didn't know. 'It was a sort of law from the chief or headman, that all women should keep an eye on them and teach, but nowadays the girls have no control and sometimes even before she's taught she's pregnant. Everything is upside down. Before children can be seen to be people they have already done this "thing".' Young men similarly maintain: 'It's because the old women no longer teach the amaqhikiza.'

the amaghikiza teach the girls on their own, and many of them do not know how to teach properly because they have already become pregnant themselves.' The dramatic rise in illegitimacy is attributed to two factors: a) that periodic examinations are no longer conducted by the old women; and b) that ukuhlobonga is not practised anymore. Old informants also blame school education in which nobody teaches girls how to have external sexual relations, and the fact that grandmothers no longer supervise whether a girl has been correctly taught. However some old women state that when they offer young people such advice they no longer take it.

5.4 The coming-of-age ceremony

A father gives his daughter an umemulo (coming-of-age ceremony) so that the ancestors may grant her good fortune, health, a husband and children. The girl is usually fully grown and ready for marriage, her parents taking it for granted that she is still a virgin: she is described as 'white as the caul of the ox' that she will wear for the occasion.

The girl enters seclusion in her grandmother's house, whether or not the latter is still alive, and remains there for a week or longer depending on her father's capacity to slaughter goats for her, and on the custom of different families. Most Khanyile people have only a short seclusion period of a day or two and old women will attribute an alleged laziness of the Biyela tribe to the fact that they enter seclusion for an unnecessarily long time. Throughout this period of seclusion the grandmother should sit with the girl, who is behind a screen, to ensure that no-one takes a piece of the girl's sleeping-mat for purposes of witchcraft, which could render the girl barren or unable to find a husband, or inflict other misfortunes such as illness on her. While in seclusion the girl and her age-mates sing umemulo songs¹⁾ and the old woman may teach songs that have been forgotten.

1) See also Krige 1968, pp.186-190, 192-195

Among the Biyela and Khanyile people the girl must not wash herself with water or it is believed that it will rain heavily (this injunction was maintained even in the 1980 drought); instead her grandmother applies fat and then rubs her body with moistened umcaba (boiled maize ground into a fine powder), the process being known as ukuphaqula. The resultant body dirt is placed in a potsherd and the old woman disposes of it in the veld. Among the Khanyile the old woman may mix the dirt with the manure of the cattle-kraal on account of the belief that no-one would enter the cattle-kraal because the ancestors reside there.

Although it need not be the exclusive duty of the old woman to smear the hut with cowdung at the end of seclusion, the grandmother usually does so because she can be trusted not to practise witchcraft. Similarly, although the mother may do so, the grandmother usually burns the grass that has been spread on the floor and that could be used for witchcraft. The reasons for choosing the old woman are that she is considered to be clean, the ancestors are close to her, and she is reliable. Furthermore she no longer has many duties in the home to distract her and is regarded as being even more conscientious than the mother, because this is the child born of her son.

Red ochre is applied to the faces of the girls, particularly when they and the one who is due to undergo the coming-of-age ceremony go to ask for presents (ukucimela). The ochre is believed to bring luck and to ensure a smooth skin; it is prepared by the girl's grandmother in a potsherd and must be guarded for it too can be utilized for witchcraft. Among the Dlomo the old grandmother takes the fat of the caecum of the goat slaughtered for the occasion and smokes this together with impepho at her shrine to report to the ancestors that they are celebrating their daughter's coming-of-age and to announce that this is their food.

An ox is slaughtered for the umemulo ceremony, and its umhlwehlwe (caul) is taken by the grandmother, sometimes washed clean of blood (the water being carefully disposed of)

and hung at the shrine of her hut overnight. On the following morning the grandmother dresses the girl in an isidwaba (married woman's hide-skirt). Among the Dlomo the father's sister normally performs this duty and in some Biyela homes older mothers may do so, these women being considered both trustworthy and experienced in the art of rolling the top of the skirt so that it reaches to the middle of the knees. When the girl is dressed, her father arranges the umhlwehlwe as a cape over her shoulders and attaches the gall-bladder of the slaughtered goat to her head and that of the ox to her right arm as a bracelet, though in some homes the grandmother attaches the gall-bladder of the goat to the girl's head.

At the end of the ceremony the grandmother or the girl herself removes the hide-skirt and the grandmother takes the umhlwehlwe from her granddaughter and carefully hides it out of sight at the umsamo in her hut. The grandmother burns the bones of the goat and ox with impepho in or just outside the cattle-kraal because the ancestors are present there, or in the fireplace of her hut, depending on where the meat was cooked. She also mixes the chyme with the manure in the cattle-kraal to prevent witchcraft.

When the neighbours and relatives have departed, the grandmother removes the umhlwehlwe from her shrine and proceeds to the kitchen or to her hut. There she washes the umhlwehlwe and carefully disposes of the water outside the premises. She then cuts the umhlwehlwe into small pieces and fries or boils it in a pot; no-one may interfere with either fire or pot. When the umhlwehlwe is crispy the old Biyela woman eats it, together with other old women of the umndeni, though I have seen a Biyela grandmother who had no aged contemporaries share it with young children of the home, insisting that they eat it in front of her so that no pieces could disappear. It is considered dangerous for a younger woman to partake of the umhlwehlwe for this could 'block her birth passage' and she might become infertile. The old woman is said to be eating the insila of the girl.

Old Khanyile women either eat the cooked umhlwehlwe or

give it to the dogs or to young children. The Dlomo grandmother does not wash the umhlwehlwe after it has been worn but boils and eats it with other old women of the home. Despite a certain distaste for eating the umhlwehlwe because it is said to contain 'another person's filth' the old women are proud of being allotted something for themselves because it indicates their social importance. They consider eating the umhlwehlwe as being another method of washing the girl whereby they are paving the way for her to obtain a husband and helping the home to obtain cattle. The umhlwehlwe is regarded as the blanket of the ancestors which enfolded the girl: old women are thus closely allied to this supernatural activity of blessing and purifying. The liquid fat that has been removed while the umhlwehlwe was cooking is retained and used by the Biyela and Khanyile people for softening either the girl's hide-skirt or riems for the cattle of the homestead. Because of the fear of witchcraft, no other person except the grandmother has access to this fat, which is kept at her umsamo. But among the Dlomo the left-over liquid fat and water is eaten with maize porridge to make it more palatable.

The final concern of the old woman in connection with her granddaughter's umemulo is to cook the caecum of the slaughtered goat and, with some Biyela and Khanyile, of the ox that was placed at her ancestral shrine; she eats these with the old man and young children of the home. She also burns the gall-bladders with impepho at the fireplace of her hut.

Although there are homes that have not performed the ceremony, particularly since they could not afford it, the umemulo ceremony is flourishing in all three areas in Nkandla and as the diary of my aged Biyela informant indicates, the old woman may specifically be invited to come and ululate at an umemulo of a daughter of the umndeni and to cook and eat the caul when there is no closer elderly relative to do so.

5.5 Attaching the female headdress

Formerly adolescent girls of the same age from the same district had their izicholo (topknots) sewn on in groups by a female expert of any age to symbolize their maturity and readiness for marriage.¹⁾ The time-honoured practice known in all three tribes continues to be perpetuated among the Dlomo people in the case of the construction of a girl's first isicholo. The girl's grandmother provides the expert with the blood of the beast slaughtered for the occasion which she has mixed in a potsherd with red ochre and a little water. The expert smears the topknot with the mixture and later applies a second coating of tallow (or iphehlwa among some Khanyile) with insoyi - pure red ochre from the ground.²⁾ The old woman prepares the mixture because she is responsible to the ancestors of the home and must therefore handle the blood of the beast. Informants state that it would be impossible for a younger woman to touch this because 'it is the blood of the ancestors'. Furthermore ukukhehla (to sew on the topknot) cannot be performed without this blood because the application 'puts the ancestors into her being'. An exception is the Biyela people who tend to mix water or fat with the red ochre rather than using blood.

The grandmother or mother of the girl, because they are trusted members of the home, take the hair which the expert has shaved from the rim of the girl's head and hide it in an antheap, under a large stone or in a hole, to protect her from harm. If the father can afford it he slaughters a goat and an ox for the occasion and the grandmother among the Dlomo anoints the girl on her right forefinger with the bile. The remainder of the bile is poured at the umsamo of the grandmother's hut and the old woman affixes the goat's gall-bladder to the girl's new topknot. The caecum is hung at the umsamo of the old woman's hut and will later be eaten by the grandmother, grandfather and young children. Among the Biyela and Khanyile the grandmother burns the bones with impepho, though the Dlomo consider them unimportant.

1) See also De Jager 1937, p.44

2) Ibid. p.44

Nowadays Dlomo girls tend to have their headdresses attached when preparing for marriage after their ilobolo has been paid. This initial isicholo is a natural one made of the girl's own hair, but when she marries she can buy a russet-coloured cone either from a local female expert or from the store. Chief Dlomo's wives continue to wear the conical headdresses: the chief's mother was an expert and sewed the headdress of her eldest daughter, but since her other two daughters were Christians they did not follow the practice. Virtually no Biyela or Khanyile women wear the high headdress except on festive occasions such as weddings, for the headdress is considered unfashionable and unchristian. Head-scarves are universally worn by married women out of respect for the home and the shades of its ancestors. Some old women dispensed with their topknots permanently when they shaved their hair at their husband's death; others did so when they accepted Christianity. They allow their daughters-in-law this same freedom but first brew beer and inform the ancestral shades.

CHAPTER 6

THE OLD WOMAN'S ROLE IN WEDDING CEREMONIAL6.1 Preliminary stages

Nowadays if a young man wishes to marry he may declare his intention to his grandmother who in turn informs his father. If the match is approved, the father selects two reliable men to act as abakhongi (go-betweens) to negotiate the marriage. No woman, no matter what her age or rank, could assume this role.¹⁾ The grandmother of the girl is well aware of the intended visit by the negotiators: they arrive early one morning, address the home, and are ignored. On the second or subsequent visit the old woman customarily scolds the people of the home for turning away visitors. Gift-giving which promotes marital relationships between the two lineage groups take place but does not involve old women directly.²⁾ However when the ilobolo cattle are delivered to the bride's home and a goat is slaughtered in acknowledgement, the umkhongi returns to the home of the groom and presents the grandmother with its gall-bladder. She may either hang it at her umsamo or burn it at the fireplace of her house together with impepho, and she may report to the ancestors that the cattle have been transferred to the home of the wife and have been accepted. Although there are some Biyela and Khanyile grooms or negotiators who burn the gall-bladder themselves, this is usually considered to be the old woman's duty because she is 'a living ancestor of the home' and this is one of the first means of uniting the ancestors of both parties. The gall-bladder is believed to contain an ancestral presence: should it be tampered with by a malicious person

-
- 1) See also Krige 1957, p.126; Nkabinde 1980, p.17
 2) See also Braatvedt 1927, p.553; Kohler 1933, pp.52-54;
 De Jager 1937, pp.58-59; Reader 1954b, pp.73-75;
 Vilakazi 1963, pp.63-64

CHAPTER 6

THE OLD WOMAN'S ROLE IN WEDDING CEREMONIAL6.1 Preliminary stages

Nowadays if a young man wishes to marry he may declare his intention to his grandmother who in turn informs his father. If the match is approved, the father selects two reliable men to act as abakhongi (go-betweens) to negotiate the marriage. No woman, no matter what her age or rank, could assume this role.¹⁾ The grandmother of the girl is well aware of the intended visit by the negotiators: they arrive early one morning, address the home, and are ignored. On the second or subsequent visit the old woman customarily scolds the people of the home for turning away visitors. Gift-giving which promotes marital relationships between the two lineage groups take place but does not involve old women directly.²⁾ However when the ilobolo cattle are delivered to the bride's home and a goat is slaughtered in acknowledgement, the umkhongi returns to the home of the groom and presents the grandmother with its gall-bladder. She may either hang it at her umsamo or burn it at the fireplace of her house together with impepho, and she may report to the ancestors that the cattle have been transferred to the home of the wife and have been accepted. Although there are some Biyela and Khanyile grooms or negotiators who burn the gall-bladder themselves, this is usually considered to be the old woman's duty because she is 'a living ancestor of the home' and this is one of the first means of uniting the ancestors of both parties. The gall-bladder is believed to contain an ancestral presence: should it be tampered with by a malicious person

-
- 1) See also Krige 1957, p.126; Mkabinde 1980, p.17
 2) See also Braatvedt 1927, p.553; Kohler 1933, pp.52-54;
 De Jager 1937, pp.58-59; Reader 1954b, pp.73-75;
 Vilakazi 1963, pp.63-64

the ancestors could be robbed of their power, or the death of the groom or the barrenness of his wife might result; it should therefore be handled circumspectly.

At the time when the negotiators partake of the goat slaughtered at the girl's home, married women who are her relatives and neighbours greet the mediators, and the oldest woman of the home, who usually is the girl's grandmother, asks them for snuff: 'Ake nisishiyeleni'. The negotiator presents a container of snuff called ugingqwayo to the girl's grandmother who shares it with the old women of both the lineage and the neighbourhood ¹⁾ and will also frequently sprinkle some at her umsamo for the deceased members of the home. The gift will be reciprocated and the container is refilled with the ground leaf of tobacco and aloe which is usually given to the old women on the groom's side. This snuff 'is especially for the amadlozi: it's for those who are deceased and those who are present [i.e. the aged]; when the two families are brought together they must be given snuff and grandmother should distribute it'. Snuff is regarded as the food of the ancestors and would traditionally only be used by diviners and the aged; however because some homes have few old people omakoti also tend to partake. Although the giving of snuff is an institutionalized form of behaviour on the occasion of the transfer of the ilobolo cattle, it should be emphasized that snuff-giving to the old woman is an ongoing part of the process of courtship and marriage transactions.

The bride and her coevals periodically bring various types of imibondo, especially gifts of beer, to her in-laws to foster friendship. ²⁾ However none of the elders in the three tribes of Nkandla have heard of the umbondo mentioned by Wanger specifically destined for 'any of the older people of the bridegroom's home' who are ill; ³⁾ such

1) See also Wanger n.d. p.116; Plant 1905 p.35

2) See also Kohler 1933, pp.63-66; Reader 1954b, p.82; Krige 1957, pp.132-134

3) Wanger n.d., p.116

a gift of beer and food is nowadays offered should a person related to the groom, irrespective of age, fall ill or die.¹⁾

The bride-to-be visits her close relatives, especially the brothers and sisters of her father, mother and grandparents, to request wedding gifts from them.²⁾ If the family has the means, a goat is slaughtered to honour the visiting girl. Among the Dlomo the grandmother of the home anoints the girl with the goat's bile and empties the remainder at her umsamo where the ancestors reside; she then attaches the gall-bladder to the girl's isicholo.³⁾

6.2 Departing ceremonies at the bride's home

6.2.1 Ritual slaughters preceding the journey

Two days before the departure of the bride a goat is slaughtered and placed overnight in the shrine of the grandmother's hut as a repast for the deceased, to report to them that a daughter is going out to build another home and to ask them to accompany her. The grandmother usually sleeps in the hut to guard the meat. Either the old man or more usually the old woman of the home, who is the bride's grandmother, anoints the bride with the gall of this goat and disposes of the left-over liquid at her umsamo; the grandmother also washes, inflates and hangs the gall-bladder at her umsamo in anticipation of attaching it to the veil of the bride when she departs. The caecum is also hung at the shrine of this hut and after the ceremonial will be cooked by the old woman and shared with the old man and pre-pubescent children of the home. Among the Biyela and Khanyile the grandmother usually burns the bones of this goat with impepho at the fireplace of her house for the ancestors to enjoy.

1) See also Reader 1954b, p.82

2) See also Vilakazi 1963, p.70

3) See also Ibid. p.70

The following morning, while the cattle are still in the cattle-kraal, the father of the bride asks her to view the umncamo (food before a journey) ox or cow which is to be slaughtered for her.¹⁾ It is customary for the bride's grandmother to attend to the pots in which this meat will be cooked. If she is strong enough she places the logs and pots in position, usually outside the umsamo of the cattle-kraal in front of her hut, and kindles the fire; the men add the water and meat. If she is physically weak she will invariably delegate the work to young girls of the home under her supervision. The principal duty of the old woman is to remain at the cooking-pots until the meat is ready, to prevent it being stolen for purposes of bewitching the bride. She also performs this role because she is regarded as an idlozi of the home, whereas the mother of the bride is still a stranger. Despite the fact that the grandmother is usually said to perform this duty some informants maintain that the woman who cooks the meat need not be past the age of child-bearing, though she should be a close kinswoman.

At one wedding a woman in mourning attended to the cooking-pots because she was the father's sister: as there was no grandmother alive in the home she was considered the appropriate surviving relative. Other old women maintain that the woman in question should have declined because even though she had passed the menopause her state of pollution would bring the bride bad luck. Although some old people regard the killing of this ox merely as a feast which provides the bride with food,²⁾ the ritual implications are clear,³⁾ and indicate why an old woman usually attends to the cooking-pots. Should the slaughter of the umncamo be omitted the ancestors are said to make the bride ill or childless since she left home unannounced in the manner of a dog. Furthermore the goat that precedes this slaughter announces that the umncamo is to be killed. The umncamo 'sleeps' at the umsamo of the old woman's house.

1) See also Krige 1957, p.135; De Jager 1937, p.64

2) See also Nkabinde 1980, p.38

3) See also de Clercq 1975, pp.266-267

overnight, and among the Biyela and Khanyile the caecum of the umncamo beast is placed at the umsamo of the old woman's hut and will later be eaten by the grandmother, grandfather and young children. Among traditionalists the grandmother burns the bones at the fireplace of her hut or in the cattle-kraal together with impepho, though people of the Dlomo tribe consider the bones unimportant.

6.2.2 Instructing the bride

On this umncamo day married women bid the bride farewell in the house of her grandmother, though if she is deceased the house of the bride's mother ¹⁾ is considered acceptable. Throughout the day old and married women who are neighbours and relatives of the bride's mother and father arrive. They kneel before the bride, quietly counsel her as to her future behaviour, and present her with a gift such as an eating-mat, beer-strainer or woven spoon. ²⁾ The women then sit down, old women to the right of the door, the remainder with the omakoti on the left. The bride is exhorted to be respectful, patient, obedient, and to work well for her in-laws, thereby bringing credit to her natal home. ³⁾ Respect for the aged may be incorporated in the advice given to her but is not necessarily mentioned. It has been recorded that old women warn the bride of future hardships. ⁴⁾ Although all married women render advice, that offered by old women is regarded as superior because it is impartial and 'because old women are usually the ones who are patient enough to give good and detailed guidance'.

6.2.3 Meat-eating

In the afternoon the married women partake of the cooked usu (first stomach), itwane (fourth stomach), amathumbu (entrails)

1) See also Asmus 1939, p.185

2) See also Hoernlé 1925, p.487

3) See also Hoernlé 1925, p.487; Reader 1954b, p.86;

Krige 1957, p.136

4) Krige 1957, p.136

and umlenze (leg) of the umncamo beast. The procedure typically followed is for the married women late in the afternoon to seat themselves in the veld in two or more approximately circular groups representing separate districts. The old women gravitate towards the inside of each circle nearest the meat-platter, the younger married women behind. In the one group the oldest woman cuts and issues the meat; in the other group - representative of the district of the bride - the inkosikazi, who is also the eldest woman of the bride's homestead, tends to make the division. In both groups the old women obtain the first pieces, after which the meat is distributed in any order with the older passing to the younger.

6.2.4 Farewell in the cattle-kraal

That night the father leads his daughter out of the hut in which she has been residing and into the rear of the cattle-kraal as the members of the umndeni, including the father's sisters and old women who have married into the isibongo and who having past the menopause are said to be like men, solemnly sing the ihubo (clan-hymn), the old women standing in the umsamo part of the cattle-kraal. The father then notifies the ancestors of the bride's departure.

6.3 Care of the bride

Old women who are still mobile proceed with the umthimba (bridal party) to the home of the groom. The very old remain behind, as does the mother of the bride.¹⁾ Normally two or three reliable women who are paternally or maternally related to the bride are chosen by her grandmother and mother to carry the bride's personal provisions to the wedding at the groom's residence. Several are chosen because they must constantly consult with one another concerning procedure.

1) See also Braatvedt 1927, p.558; Bryant 1967, p.560

The women entrusted with guarding the food and kist of the bride work for her throughout the wedding ceremony, remaining close to her, advising her, and protecting her from witchcraft. They are usually two old women of the home, but if there are no old women available then reliable relatives or neighbours may perform this service. Most informants maintain that a very old woman is the most suitable person to guard the bride, for she is dignified and responsible. A senior woman such as the father's mother, mother's mother, mother's sister or father's sister usually fills this role. Among the Dlomo the bride's grandmother, whether paternal or maternal, is chosen to guard the key to the kist which contains all the personal effects of the bride and as such harbours potent material for witchcraft. This old woman is considered very trustworthy and strict as regards loaning out the key.

6.4 Ceremonies at the groom's home

Reader records that the Makhanya bridal party approaches the home of the groom, leaving the bride, a few of her coevals and some older women in the veld. The bridal party announces itself with a song to which the old women of the groom's home respond by ululating and shouting their pleasure at receiving a new wife.¹⁾ Such greetings also occur in the three tribes studied in Nkandla and may include a reminder to the bride of her future obligations, but the responses are not confined to old women.

6.4.1 The day of the wedding dances

In homes where custom is adhered to, when the day of the wedding dances is imminent adolescent girls ask their grandmothers to obtain their grandfather's or father's permission for them to attend, for, should a daughter of the home receive injury at any such public event, the grandmother would be blamed if permission had not been granted. There

1) Reader 1954b, p.87; see also Braatvedt 1927, p.557; Kohler 1933, p.76; Bryant 1967, p.545

is however a growing tendency for girls to do as they please.

6.4.1.1 Washing the bride

Early on the morning of the day of the wedding dances the bridal party moves into the veld beyond the entrance to the groom's home, often encamping at a ford or bush.¹⁾ The bride wearing a blanket and red headdress sits on her kist under a black umbrella. The kinswomen entrusted with her care sit next to her, ensuring that she receives only food which derives from her home and which is kept in a separate dish lest it be utilized for witchcraft. The Biyela and Dlomo old woman whose particular duty it is to watch over the bride, usually her grandmother, grinds boiled mealie-grains and walks to a hidden place with this powder (umcaba) to 'wash' the bride. (Water is not used by her throughout the wedding day lest it cause heavy rain.) She smears the bride's body with fat and then rubs the grain powder over it until the bride looks polished and clean. The old kinswoman buries the body dirt carefully, often in an anthill or pangolin's hole, to prevent it being stolen and used for witchcraft. Among some Biyela and Khanyile, if the groom's home is in close proximity, ukuphaqula may also occur on the day of umncamo prior to the bride's farewell in the cattle-kraal. This method of cleansing is said by Khanyile to prevent war from breaking out at the bride's wedding.

6.4.1.2 Participation in the wedding dances

On the day of the wedding dances (udwendwe) old women make their way to join the wedding as spectators. In the early afternoon a woman who tends to be old and who represents the bride's party, leads a column of women,²⁾ each carrying a grass broom or stick in her right hand, in an anti-clockwise

1) See also Plant 1905, p.37; Braatvedt 1927, p.557; De Jager 1937, p.68; Asmus 1939, p.187; Bryant 1967, p.547
 2) See also Plant 1905, p.38; Bryant 1967, p.547

direction round and then into the cattle-kraal to introduce the bride to the groom's home and its ancestral shades, though among some Khanyile the women do not enter the cattle-kraal.¹⁾ An igagu, a woman who is a natural leader, extols the virtues of the bride and periodically exclaims: 'Here is our daughter, our lovely girl: treat her well!' The group of women representing the bride usually comprises paternal kinswomen and senior wives of the umndeni, though neighbours of the bride's home may also participate. At some weddings these women are all post-menopausal but this fact is explained as being coincidental. Usually there is a range of ages, but since elderly women have more authority they are prominent in announcing the bride.

As the bridal party moves through the routine of wedding dances, the older women who are relatives or neighbours associated with this group run from side to side ululating in front of the dancing lines. The grass brooms they carry (as opposed to spears) symbolize the sweeping away of all dirt such as quarrelling and war. Their ululations are interspersed with high-pitched cries of 'Kabi! Kabi!' as they praise the virtues of the bride. One of them calls out: 'We have brought our girl, our lovely-looking girl! Our white, beautiful girl!' Another exclaims: 'Wothi wabonani wena mfazi ongazalanga! What shall you say you beheld, you barren woman. Just look at us!' implying that such women will never enjoy the going-out or coming-in of a bride and the subsequent rise in status that a mother-in-law enjoys.

Although younger wives also ululate, it is the ululations and responses of the few old women that are particularly noticeable and that have been singled out by earlier writers.²⁾ Kohler, for instance, records that old women 'work themselves into ecstasies' when praising the qualities of the bride to the detriment of those of the groom.³⁾ Reader records how

1) See also De Jager 1937, p.71

2) Shooter 1857, p.76; Drummond 1875, p.117

3) Kohler 1933, pp.80-82

old women of both parties, 'casting aside some of their modesty... rush about with a certain abandon' ululating and praising the bride.¹⁾ Samuelson states that old women carrying assegais with mealie-cobs on them to symbolize prosperity and good fortune, dance among the girls.²⁾ Ululating is appropriate to old women because it is a way of applauding the ancestors for the happiness of the occasion: on the side of the bride it signifies the pleasure of giving away a virgin, on that of the groom for receiving her into their midst. Young wives must respect the ancestors and in-laws of the groom's home and therefore cannot behave so freely, particularly when the bride and groom's ancestors are praised.

In the three tribes the classificatory mothers and old women associated with the groom quietly look on from the groom's side of the dancing arena for most of the afternoon, though they come out and ululate when the ikhetho (party of the groom) dances, and extol the son who has brought them an umakoti. There is a dance in which the Biyela and Khanyile bride dances with a matchet (isingindi) amidst her coevals then kneels in front of her mother-in-law saying: 'I will respect', whereupon the mother-in-law feigns to snatch it away or tries to touch her. The Dlomo bride likewise kneels before her mother-in-law without either isingindi or utterance and the mother-in-law pretends to catch her.³⁾ Braatvedt mentions a similar custom in which the bride approaches her mother-in-law, asks to be received by her, confesses her weaknesses, requests her mother-in-law to teach her well and reminds her that the treatment she receives as a young wife will be reciprocated in her old age.⁴⁾

1) Reader 1954b, p.90

2) Samuelson 1974, p.116; see also Bryant 1967, p.549

3) See also De Jager 1937, p.73

4) Braatvedt 1927, p.559; see also Plant 1905, p.39; Bryant 1967, pp.549-550

6.4.2 The day of slaughtering the beast in honour of the bride

The day of the wedding dances, which is characterized by dancing and beer drinking, is followed by a day of slaughtering and ceremonial meat-eating. This day is known as usuku lomqholiso - after the beast slaughtered in honour of the bride. Old and married women of the bridal party sit in the bridal hut and one of the bride's senior kinswomen and trusted advisers is positioned next to her at the shrine near her presents and kist, periodically advising and conferring with her. Should the groom's party require anything they approach her. In contrast to that of the previous day the atmosphere is restful as the old women sit quietly. Their vigilant guard against witchcraft or any untoward occurrences and their advice on procedure are their main contributions.

6.4.2.1 Guarding the chyme

The ceremonial surrounding the death of the umqholiso beast is of principal concern to the bride and her age-mates;¹⁾ however one of the senior kinswomen who is responsible for the protection of the bride proceeds to the cattle-kraal to scrutinize the handling of the insides of the umqholiso, in particular its stomach contents (umswani), older women from the groom's side also attending and observing. The go-between who skins the beast may not puncture the first or fourth stomach nor allow any particle of chyme to fall out of these, since if obtained by a witch or wizard it could be used to prevent the bride from child-bearing.²⁾

-
- 1) See also Plant 1905, p.40; Braatvedt 1927, p.560; De Jager 1937, pp.75,79; Asmus 1939, pp.191-192; Krige 1957, pp.148-149; Bryant 1967, p.552
 2) See also Plant 1905, p.40; De Jager 1937, p.81; Reader 1954b, p.94; Bryant 1967, p.553

The bride's mother's sister is often the one to consult an old woman of the groom's home or the mother-in-law as to the side of the cattle-kraal in which the chyme should be buried. It is a general rule that an old person is approached when people wish to know what to do and the one who is consulted is often regarded as 'the director of the home'. The mother's sister usually pours paraffin and Jeyes Fluid over the chyme and cowdung which covers it. The paraffin is sprinkled out of respect for the other cattle who on returning to the cattle-kraal would smell the dung and be distressed by it, and it nullifies any evil effects intended by a witch or wizard. The old kinswoman of the bride usually attends to the disposal of the chyme because the young are regarded as too careless for such work.¹⁾

6.4.2.2 Cooking and eating the meat

Among the Dlomo the senior trusted kinswomen of the bride cook half of the first stomach and entrails of the umqholiso beast for the women of the umthimba. The grandmother of the groom cooks the other half for the women of the ikhetho. In the other two tribes the mother-in-law cooks the entrails and first stomach for the women of the groom's party, whilst the close kinswomen who have been guarding the bride cook the same parts of the inkomo kayise (beast of the father of the bride) for the women of the umthimba. Considerable emphasis is placed on separate cooking pots and separate consumption by the women of the bride's and groom's parties. The caecum of the umqholiso may be brought to the bride's natal home by the returning umthimba where it will be eaten by the old women together with any old men of the home, though the Biyela tend to regard it as unimportant. In some homes the old woman burns the bones of the umqholiso as a preventive against witchcraft, in other homes anyone does so. The backbone of the umqholiso is burnt by the grandmother of the bride, usually with impepho for it is highly susceptible to witchcraft. The gall-bladder of the umqholiso, as with all the other bladders which the bride has

1) See also De Jager 1937, p.81

been wearing,¹⁾ will be brought to the bride's home where her paternal grandmother will burn them on charcoal with impepho at the fireplace in her hut. As the smoke rises the Dlomo grandmother may inform the ancestors that the girl has been taken to her new home and that she has been instructed to behave well. The bile of the umqholiso is normally poured in a line in front of the bride at the threshold of her hut and the go-between tries to squirt some on her. The bride customarily jumps over the line, the act being variously associated with losing her virginity, introducing and welcoming her to the ancestors of her husband and his umndeni, and the legalization of her marriage. It is apparent that the umqholiso is signalling a number of factors. It is not a true sacrificial beast because, for instance, even though the aged may consume the caecum, meat is not set aside for the ancestors²⁾ nor have they been praised on this occasion. This explains why it is not considered essential for a post-menopausal woman to assist with the cooking of the meat. Dlomo insist that the women must be old but qualify this by saying that younger women are busy on this day. The selection of an old woman thus appears to be not so much for reasons of ceremonial purity but for her reliability in safeguarding the food and in protecting the bride from misfortune.

6.4.2.3 Cleansing the bridal hut and gift-giving

Older women as guardians of the bride prepare the house for occupation by the bridal couple. A close kinswoman of the bride removes the grass from the floor of the bridal hut and carefully sets it alight outside the premises because of its potential for witchcraft. Another of the reliable women who guarded her sweeps the floor of the bridal hut with a handbroom, while a close relative smears the floor with cowdung. The woman who does the smearing is usually the bride's mother's or father's sister, or mother's mother, a

1) See p.103

2) See also Reader 1954b, pp.94-95

mature if not elderly person. Meanwhile in the cattle-kraal the bride and her companions present the gifts they have brought for the members of the groom's family. The old women regarded as classificatory mothers of the umadeni of the groom are given sleeping-mats and sometimes beer-strainers,¹⁾ and after holding up their gifts and ululating they often draw applause with a stately dance. Among certain Khanyile the bride spreads a large sleeping-mat at the place where the groom's party is seated and this is given to the groom's grandmother at the close of the presentation.

6.4.2.4 Acceptance of the new wife into the home of the groom

Among the Dlomo when the bridal party is preparing to leave, the groom's paternal grandmother will stand outside the sacred part of the cattle-kraal, adorn herself in the bride's wedding apparel, and sing her own nuptial song. Together with the mother-in-law she smears the bride's shoulders with fat from the home, saying 'Thamba lugongolo! Get soft, log!' thereby imprinting on the bride the need to become a gentle and calm woman in the home. Meanwhile the bride's companions come with their fat and try to smear it in the mouth of both women. The grandmother and mother-in-law place a baby boy on the bride's back and smear the baby with fat. Among the Biyela and Khanyile traditionalists this ceremony may occur a day or two after that of umgholiso, when the girls of the umthimba are preparing to return home. The mother-in-law or paternal grandmother of the groom's home stands outside the door of the bridal house with a baby on her back and says: 'Ngizogcoba umakoti - I have come to smear the young wife', or she sings: 'You have come where you are going to get tired' and other old women chorus: 'You have left your own home'. As the bride kneels, the old woman smears the back of the umakoti with fat emanating from the groom's home and thereafter places the baby on the back of the umakoti.²⁾ The grandmother's action is said to give the girl good fortune in child-bearing, and a baby boy is chosen because a male is preferred

1) See also Reader 1954b, p.95; Krige 1957, p.152

2) See also Bryant 1949, p.556; Krige 1957, p.153

as a first-born: he will increase the home as compared with a girl who will marry and leave for another.

The Dlomo and Khanyile bride then dashes to the entrance of the cattle-kraal, though she should at first be prevented by girls of the ikhetho. In the cattle-kraal Biyela and Khanyile members of the umndeni, including the grandmothers, are gathered; they take the baby to them and they kiss the child. In all three tribes the girls of the umthimba pinch the baby to make it cry, whereupon among the Biyela the umakoti runs with it to her house; she should be prevented by the girls of the ikhetho, and a friendly scuffle is likely to ensue as the girls of the two sides try to claim the baby. The Dlomo bride proceeds to the outside of the cattle-kraal where the bride gives the baby to the groom to kiss before she kisses it. On her return from the cattle-kraal among some Biyela the grandmother kneels in front of the doorway and the umakoti dabs fat from her own home on the old woman's face (though some do so earlier in the manner of the Dlomo), whereupon she feigns to drop down dead. The other old women then sing: 'Mother is dead, mother is dead.' Among some Biyela one of the maidens of the umthimba removes the fat from the bride and pastes it with a knife on an upright pillar of the cattle-kraal entrance (impundu),¹⁾ which the mother-in-law removes and preserves carefully because it contains the insila of the bride. Among the Khanyile the grandmother is not usually greased but after the baby has been taken to the cattle-kraal she may pretend to thrash the umakoti with a small stick, saying: 'Where are you going with my son's child?' The Dlomo mother-in-law also feigns death at this stage and must be resuscitated by a gift such as a beer strainer. Informants state that this feigned death tests the bride's sympathy, for if she cares for the old woman she will come to her aid and help her up.

The ceremony entreats the ancestors to give the umakoti a baby, and the smearing with fat emanating from the two homes joins both the living and dead of the two imindeni: the ancestors are believed to be infused in that fat which is derived from the cattle of the two lineage groups,

1) See also Ludlow 1882, pp.176-177

accordingly the smearing imbues her with the ancestors of both sides.¹⁾

6.4.2.5 Parting advice to the bride

When the bridal party is about to depart, the bride kneels outside the premises and women of the umthimba bid her farewell with brief advice. Old women urge her to work hard, reminding her that if she looks after the old people she will be respected and blessed by the ancestors and she will bear children, but if she neglects the aged misfortune will befall her.

6.5 Defloration of the bride

Among traditionalists the bridal couple consummate their marriage on the second night following the wedding feast,²⁾ though with Khanyile consummation can occur on the same night. On the following morning the umakoti rolls the upper sleeping-mat, or nowadays the sheet wrapped in a sleeping-mat, and places it at the doorway of her hut for her husband's paternal grandmother or mother-in-law to remove and inspect. Among the Dlomo the young bride sits in her isidwaba on the left side outer edge of the umsamo (as viewed from the door of her hut) and if she is a virgin the groom requests his mother to come and see the umakoti 'who is naked'. The mother-in-law calls the grandmother and together they enter, smear red ochre on her head, and kiss her. Because of the shame and ill-feeling that was generated if the bride had lost her virginity, among the Dlomo the bride used to be examined by old women from both homes on the day of udwendwe, and if women of the umthimba knew that she had lost her virginity they would secretly insert some umhlwehlwe into the vagina to render it white on examination. However if an old woman from the groom's side discovered this she would stamp on the bride's vagina, applying pressure and rubbing it with a twisting motion of her foot until the fat slipped out. Although it is now common for the bride not to be a virgin, the custom of the groom's grandmother removing the sleeping-mat persists, old

1) See also Myburgh 1944, p.83

2) See also Herman & Kirby 1970, p.191

women often feeling sad or angry but helpless about the premature loss of virginity.

6.6 Granting the bride permission to eat meat

A few days after the wedding, if the groom's home has livestock, a beast is slaughtered and the grandmother places a piece of its meat on a meat-platter or eating-mat (the Biyela tend to use cowdung instead of meat¹⁾). The umakoti is called to the old woman's house and is given a basin of water in which to wash her hands, after which the grandmother instructs the young wife to cut the meat in half. The umakoti is now at liberty to eat meat in her husband's home.

1) See also Braatvedt 1927, p.563

CHAPTER 7

THE OLD WOMAN'S ROLE IN AGRICULTURE

Most women are active in the fields until their strength wanes, after which time they remain at home, look after the grandchildren, and occupy themselves with handwork. Although the ageing woman ceases work of her own accord, this rarely coincides with the menopause, which occurs at a younger age. However as a wife's capacity for physical labour declines, she attains increasing authority over the economic activities of her husband's home.

7.1 Field allocation and utilization

Vegetable, maize and sorghum fields belong to each umninimuzi (homestead-head). Usufruct rights to land are sanctioned by the chief and the head of the dominant descent group,¹⁾ and people not of the patrilineage refer to the fields by the name of the umninimuzi. These fields are apportioned to and named after the different wives in the home, who are their nominal owners within the ikhaya,²⁾ for legally the fields belong to the umninimuzi. Although old women state that they now have 'rights to the fields' and can decide which to allocate to a bride, such allocation in fact remains the prerogative of the umninimuzi who in consultation with his old wife usually assigns a field to a bride either before or immediately after her marriage. On the death of the umninimuzi the old woman of the home plays a more prominent role in the distribution when in conjunction with her eldest son, who takes over his father's position, she assumes control of the fields.

The oldest woman has a separate field, and when ploughing, planting or weeding of the main fields begins her field is the first to be worked by the omakoti because she is

1) See also Reader 1966, p.65; Preston-Whyte & Sibisi 1975, p.293

2) See also Krige 1957, p.189

considered 'the mother of the family'. Most elderly women no longer work in the fields when they have daughters-in-law to perform this labour for them. The field of the old woman is the particular responsibility of the principal-wife who is usually married to her first son. But others may help and the old woman may brew beer to reward the omakoti for their labours particularly with regard to hoeing and weeding. Although it is the duty of younger wives to work voluntarily for the old mother-in-law, the degree to which they do often depends on the respect they have for her.

The order of working the main fields of the different wives of the home is determined by seniority in marriage. According to custom the first field to be worked is usually that of the grandmother, whether she is alive or dead, though if the head of the home has a field this is ploughed first, followed by that of the grandmother and then any other. Some homes do not give preference to the fields of deceased old women: they merely remember that the field being planted used to belong to a particular woman. On the death of the old mother-in-law the umakoti who was specially attached to her house, and who worked her field and cared for her, i.e. the first wife of her eldest son, inherits her field.

Whereas men may own crop-yielding fields, fields are said 'to belong to the woman not the man'. However old men and often old women traditionally enjoyed the prerogative of planting tobacco-fields.¹⁾ Fertile men and women are prohibited from planting or walking through such fields lest they become 'unlucky': they might, for instance, be hated without reason or not obtain a lover and the tobacco would become tasteless. Snuff made from such leaves is sometimes referred to as: impugumpuqu ugwayi wesalukazi, the powdery tobacco of the old woman, because it is regarded as useless. When tobacco is growing the owner often gives the discoloured leaves to an old woman for snuff because they lack the

1) See also Krige 1957, p.190

astringency of good leaves, but ugogo enjoys them nonetheless. The belief also persists that if adults who are still fertile plant tobacco it becomes unpleasant and bitter, and misfortune in the form of barrenness may be inflicted on the planter. Because old women no longer conceive or desire children they may and do plant such fields. Tobacco-growth and child-bearing are consequently viewed in opposition: there is the belief expressed in the saying kughuma ugwayi kufekela inzalo: 'if your tobacco prospers you do not get children'; conversely if the tobacco does not flourish possibilities of child-bearing increase.

7.2 Practices to enhance crop fertility

Ceremonies aimed at increasing the fertility of crops are still performed and old women continue to be involved in them. For instance, to inaugurate a new plough the traditionalist Biyela and Khanyile umninimuzi slaughters a goat and pours its bile on the whole plough, or on the ploughshare only, while he briefly thanks the ancestors for having provided the means for its purchase and invokes them to look after it and let it provide a good yield; the inflated bladder may then be hung at the umsamo of the old woman's hut. The old man could delegate this work to an old but not a young wife (for the latter is considered a stranger in the home and has therefore no dealings with the ancestors), in which case in some homes the old woman out of respect for the shades will silently perform the action. Some Biyela hang the caecum and gall-bladder at the umsamo of the old woman's hut while the old woman burns the bones with impepho, but others only consider the bile of ritual significance. In all three tribes the riems used for the ploughing oxen are also placed at the umsamo of the old woman's house for the ancestors to bless so that a good crop may ensue.

7.2.1 Seed storage

Seed is traditionally stored in the hut of the grandmother. Mealies are strung across the roof in rows near the umsamo

and a number of sheaves of sorghum and sweet-cane, and among the Biyela and Khanyile different kinds of vegetable seed, may be attached to the inside roof. All the fields of the home are represented in this seed. The ancestors are believed to lick the seed, thus blessing it and granting a good yield. Informants maintain that maize kept in the storehouses has little resistance compared with that stored in the old woman's house, for even after a period of drought followed by rain the latter seed will sprout. Some attribute this hardiness to ancestral protection but also to the smoke in the house which acts as a preservative, particularly against weevils. Old women stress the importance of storing the seed of the home in their houses not only because they can discern good quality but because some omakoti tend to sell their maize and even their seed for cash, with the result that they are left with nothing when the planting season arrives.

7.2.2 Medicating the seed

If there has been severe hail damage to the crops, or if the harvest has been bad, then prior to the new planting season the ruling Dlomo family employs the ukusukula custom to prevent further destruction. The grandmother of each homestead in the area brings a sample of different kinds of seed such as bean, pumpkin, marrow, melon, maize and sorghum from each umakoti to the house of the grandmother in the chief's residence. Here the mother of the chief grinds the different seeds and, while sprinkling them with a watery consistency of ground medicines prepared by an inyanga, moulds the mixture into a large dough called isinkwa (bread). In order to do this the chief's mother, like the other women who bring their seed, must have passed the menopause for the medicines are considered powerful and would be weakened by the menstrual blood of a fertile woman. After the dough has been sun-dried and divided into the appropriate number of pieces the old women return home with one portion for each umakoti who adds it to her seed when planting, though the 'bread' as such is not interfered with and is kept for future

use.

Very few Khanyile still practise the ukusukula custom: the chief is a Zionist, the seed is prayed for in church, and an old woman plays no part in the ritual. There are however old Khanyile women who recall that in former times each married woman brought her seed to the mother of the chief who ground and mixed it into a dough in her house, the master-seed being stored at the umsamo of each old woman's house. Among the Biyela ukusukula is dependent on the custom of imizi. For instance in the home of the chief his mother brews beer which the men then sprinkle on the medicines she has ground.

People who practise ukusukula usually do so secretly because the process is believed to affect the yield of others adversely.¹⁾ If a person who has practised the custom walks through another's field it is thought the crop will perish: such people are thus said to have an affinity with witches. Conversely a good yield is generally attributed to the wielding of secret medicines rather than to hard work, efficient agricultural techniques, or fertile soil. Ukusukula is frowned on by some because although part of the umuthi may be the umhlwehlwe of an ox, which imparts the power of the ancestors into the seed, it is alleged that in certain areas the umhlwehlwe is that of an old person who has been killed for this purpose, and such a yield will cause sickness. A few old Christian women mix the seed of the home in their hut and request a good harvest both of the ancestors and God.

Berglund reports a fertility rite involving an old woman in the Nqutu district which appears to be of the ukusukula type. A herdboy brings the old woman a wet stone daubed red, through which a hole has been bored. She pours seed through this hole into a lid containing water, then blows medicine onto the seed. This treated maize is added to the seed-basket.²⁾ People of the three tribes of Nkandla do not consider this a Zulu custom: as Berglund himself suggests, it could well be an imported Sotho

1) See also Krige 1957, p.193

2) Berglund 1976, p.358

tradition.¹⁾

7.2.3 Overcoming drought

Some elderly women witnessed the ceremony of beseeching rain from Nomkhubulwana, the goddess of fertility,²⁾ during a period of drought when they were young girls. They spent the previous night in an old woman's house after which, donned intransvestite dress, they went to herd cattle on a mountain and sang obscene songs. With seed representing the different homes the girls also planted a field in honour of Nomkhubulwana. At the conclusion of this ceremony the girls ate in the old woman's house from which they set out. This house is chosen because it is regarded as old and pure and one which caters for all types of ceremonies; it is regarded as blessed and will make people fortunate.

Another method of breaking the drought used to occur among the Dlomo. The grandmother of the home would break a branch from the umsenge cabbage tree, enter a river, place two stones on the river-bed, then strike the water with the branch, shouting: 'Aline! - let there be rain!' She would then lift the branch into the air so that the water would spray over her. Finally she would weigh the branch down in the water with stones obtained from the side of the river and place two stones from the river onto the bank. The stones from the bank are thought to bring heat into the river; those from the river convey wetness to the outside air. Although Biyela and Khanyile regard the umsenge as a rain-tree and follow a similar custom, this role is not specifically associated with post-menopausal women.

Such methods of procuring rain and the concomitant role-play of old women no longer occur among the three tribes in Nkandla. Informants argue that because people are now followers of Christianity they are ignoring African custom

1) Berglund 1976, p.362

2) See also Krige 1957, p.197; Berglund 1976, p.71

and consequently are experiencing more periods of drought than formerly.

7.2.4 Protection against lightning

People continue to recognize the traditional categories of sonorous male thunder accompanied by lightning and the highly dangerous female forked and crackling lightning that follows in the New Year and 'spits like a woman'. No informants or diviners had heard of old women being likened to the intense heat and drought that follows a violent storm, as is reported by Berglund,¹⁾ though the Biyela may figuratively refer to a quiet soaking rain as selina elezalukazana (the rain of the little old women).

In the early Spring an inyanga magically protects homes from the dangers of lightning by treating reeds or sticks of one-and-a-half metres in length with a variety of protective agents. These medicated rods called izikhonkwane or abafana (boys) are usually of umthulwa, synonymously called umviyo (wild medlar tree: Vangueria infausta,²⁾) or umqandane (Royenavillosa³⁾). Among the Dlomo they are only stored at the umsamo of the grandmother's house but with Biyela and Khanyile they may be stored at the shrine of each hut. When the weather threatens, the old woman inserts them in the roof over the doorway of each house at positions that have been predetermined by the inyanga; after the storm she should fetch them inside again because the sun causes the medicine on them to lose its strength.

The work of protecting the home particularly rests with an old woman who has passed the age of child-bearing or, failing such, a pre-pubescent boy or girl,⁴⁾ for should a fertile woman touch the medicated rods it is generally believed they would lose their power. Custom as to who

-
- 1) Berglund 1976, p.38
 - 2) Doke & Vilakazi 1953, p.837
 - 3) Bryant 1966, p.38
 - 4) See also Krige 1957, p.316

should protect the home and the manner of doing so varies according to the preference of different izinyanga. For instance some izinyanga instruct the old woman to sit at the doorway of her hut and sweep out ukukhanya kombani (the light of the lightning) when it comes through the doorway. With others the old woman is advised to block the doorway with her handbroom to achieve the same end. The inyanga may also leave some intelezi in an old clay-pot outside the umsamo of the cattle-kraal. In this event when a storm is brewing the old woman takes a handbroom, dips it in the intelezi, and sprays this onto the houses, into the air and into the cattle-kraal expostulating: 'Emuva! emuva! kumnikazi walo! - Back! back! to the person who sent you! [i.e. the witch or wizard].' If neither the old man nor the old woman of the house is present a pre-pubescent child may perform this action. Although old women who follow the custom often use any broom for ukuchela (spraying the medicine), some state that it should be the one in use in the grandmother's hut, for the broom of an umakoti would be weak because it sweeps the house of a child-bearer. There are some old women who do not believe in the efficacy of lightning-sticks and who do not use them in their homes; others experiment with new devices such as burning a small piece of tyre. Formerly they used a species of veld daisy (uhlambahloshane (Gerbera kraussii¹⁾) in the grandmother's hut during a storm; a few erect European-type lightning conductors but without any ceremony or significant role-play by old women.

7.2.5 Expelling the blight

Another custom known to old informants that is said to have fallen into desuetude because Christian ministers disapproved of the obscene language involved, is that called ukukhalela amabele (crying for the sorghum). It was resorted to if the maize or sorghum plants showed signs of withering as a result of being attacked by the isihlava (mealie stalk-borer) alternatively called isifohlofohlo

1) Doke & Vilakazi 1953, pp.316-317

(ufohlo: dried up object). The ceremony was organized at district level and occurred in a manner similar to that described by Bryant¹⁾ and Krige.²⁾ During the night preceding the ceremony the girls involved would assemble in the hut of an old woman.³⁾ The following day they would pull out those parts of the maize and sorghum plants that had been afflicted by the blight while singing obscene songs or shouting: 'Maye! Amabele! - Oh! Sorghum!' Some of these would be made into bundles and thrown into a river so that the disease would be transported elsewhere. But among the Dlomo and Khanyile a number of the affected tassels would be plaited into ropes and worn around the girls' waists. These were then taken to be tied around the central horizontal pole which stretches across the roof of the old woman's house so that the fire from the house could kill the larvae in the stems. Among the Dlomo the old woman of each home would thereafter take a fish which she had stored in the roof of her umsamo from the previous year and cut it into pieces. One piece she would burn in her field and the others she would distribute to be burnt by each person whose field had been harmed so that the smell would kill the larvae breeding there. Among some Khanyile the girls partake of a meal in the old woman's hut at the conclusion of the ceremony.

7.2.6 Care of the crops

Mixed planting is practised with the result that pumpkins, potatoes, cow-peas and gourds grow in between the maize. Wives are expected to apply themselves of their own accord to their labour in the fields. Ultimately the old man of the home has the greatest authority in disciplining erring omakoti, but usually the old mother of the home on observing slackness will reprimand her daughters-in-law and

1) Bryant 1967, p.667

2) Krige 1957, p.200

3) See also Ibid. p.200

ensure that their work is carried out correctly, though some old women prefer to leave such control to their sons. In general, because agriculture is the particular domain of women, it is considered the old woman's duty to inspect the fields and advise an umakoti how to thin out plants or, if she has the ability, to do so herself. She must also ensure that people do not cross the fields of the home for they might exercise witchcraft and cause the plants to rot.

Among the Dlomo when the cobs are on the stalks the old woman carries isikhomakhoma (tree fern: Cyathea dregei¹⁾) branches to her house where she breaks them into small pieces. She then goes to the fields and places a stick of this fern in between the cob and the stalk to engender huge cobs. She repeats this process on various plants of the field and if she is strong enough will also attend to those of the young wives, or instruct them to do so. She performs this duty because she is old and experienced. Among the Khanyile the old woman uses uphandosi (pseudarthria hookeri shrub²⁾) to cause the stalks in the field to bear cobs, but if she is deceased each umakoti treats her own field. Among the Biyela fields are tended individually, sometimes with isikhomakhoma and isidikili (Lasiosiphon sp.³⁾), though the new generation of adults is abandoning the custom. The Dlomo old woman may also remove the white hairs from her genitals and place them in the midst of sweet potatoes to keep out omagendane (small crickets⁴⁾) which bore into them and are said to leave them hollow and sour.

When the ears of sorghum are ripe, but prior to the field reaching full maturity, an old Biyela and Khanyile woman who has passed the menopause enters the field for a number of days in succession and places some cut dry grass in one or two heaps. She adds green grass, then the leaves of umzilanyoni (Croton sylvaticum⁵⁾), and among the Khanyile

-
- 1) Gerstner 1939, p.316
 - 2) Doke et al. 1958, p.241
 - 3) Bryant 1966, p.55
 - 4) Doke & Vilakazi 1953, p.476
 - 5) Bryant 1966, p.68

a piece of old puff-adder skin, and sets fire to the heap so that the smoke covers the entire field like a mist. The green grass is used to slow down the burning process; the umzilanyoni, which is poisonous and avoided by birds,¹⁾ is said to make the birds forget the field (ukuzila meaning to fast or avoid); whilst the puff-adder is regarded as being lazy and remaining in one place for a long time. There are a number of prescriptions which the actor must obey to ensure the success of the ceremony. She may not talk while she is in the field or it is said the birds will become numberless - hence the old woman is the appropriate person to perform the ceremony for she has sufficient self-control to remain silent and she does not have sexual intercourse or menstruate which would cause the birds to devour the sorghum rapaciously until only the stalks remained. This custom persists, although any person who has a field may conduct it among the Dlomo, and the ujiba variety of sorghum which is disliked by the birds tends to be planted nowadays.

7.3 Festival of the first-crops

Ceremonies permitting consumption of the first crops were traditionally inaugurated by the Zulu king.²⁾ Lugg records that in Natal the sacred articles used on this occasion, such as earthenware pots, were secreted in the sacred section of the chief's mother's hut, the great-house of the homestead,³⁾ and in the first ceremony that concerns the fortification of the chief (Ukunyathela⁴⁾) the Funze slaughter a sacrificial sheep that is only eaten by old women.⁵⁾

1) See also Bryant 1966, p.68

2) Gardiner 1836, p.96; Kliek 1876, pp.134-135; Willoughby 1928, p.237; Gluckman 1938, pp.25, 31; Krige 1957, p.249

3) Lugg 1929, pp.358-359, 364

4) Krige 1957, p.249

5) Lugg 1929, p.369

The Dlomo ruling family perpetuate the ukweshwama festival of purification from the first-crops. When the old mother of the chief ascertains that the crops are ready for consumption she tells izinsizwa (young men who have lovers) to steal some mealies, sweet-cane, pumpkin, vegetable marrow, pig melon and ripe vegetables. A special inyanga experienced in the preparation of these substances is in attendance at the chief's residence. The old woman places a large pot at the entrance to the cattle-kraal; the inyanga cuts up and places the crops in the pot but leaves aside an uncut rod of sweet-cane and two cobs. He adds medicated water to the vegetables which are then boiled by the old woman. When the mixture is cooked she places the pot in her umsamo overnight.

The next morning the chief and his mother go to the cattle-kraal entrance where she places the pot and he tastes each substance. First he dips an uselwa spoon into the bitter liquid, takes a mouthful, and squirts it towards the sun, this ukuchinsa uselwa (to spurt out the calabash) being the name of the ceremony. Thereafter he chews a piece of vegetable, spits it towards the sun, and bites and swallows some, repeating the process with all the vegetables including uselwa. He then takes a mealie-cob, eats a portion and hits one knee after the other with it, repeating the ancient formula Dolo qina! (Knee get strong!) He replaces the cob in the pot, and does the same with a piece of cooked sweet-cane. All males and then females of the family perform the same ceremony of strengthening their knees. The chief then takes the uncooked rod of sweet-cane and stands next to the gate of the cattle-kraal. The bull is let out, but before it exits the chief taps it twice on the backbone and throws the stalk of sweet-cane on the ground between the poles at the entrance to the cattle-kraal; the other cattle then step over it and finally young boys eat it. The chief treats the bull in this manner because

it is believed to be of the same intanga (age-grade or category) as he is. The old woman then roasts the two cobs that were set aside on an open fire in her hut and gives both to the chief to eat. This ceremony must take place on a Saturday so that the day following will be a Sunday when people do no work, for should they work on this day it is believed that a hailstorm would break out. The medicated mixture that remains is kept at the umsamo in the old woman's hut because she is said to be 'a living ancestor'. It is stored for members of the umndeni who may be away in the city. Members of the umndeni come to drink a little of the mixture in the chief's mother's hut and are then free to consume their own crops. Should people eat their first crops without having participated in the ceremony it is thought that the chief would become extremely weak. The chief is the only person who performs the ukuchinsa uselwa, other families in the district merely practising the 'strengthening of the knees', with the old mother of the home being involved in boiling the mixture.

Among the Biyela the old mother of the chief stamps medicines such as uzondle, umathanjana, ithethe (Polygala oppositifolia¹⁾) and uthangazana (Cucumis hirsutus²⁾) - the last named now being virtually extinct in the district. She chops all the different fresh vegetable produce and boils this in a pot in her hut. In other homes where the custom is still observed the old woman who has passed the menopause fetches ingredients similar to those used in the chief's home and including the runner of a calabash, the stalk of a mealie which bears no cob, and iphuzi (a species of pumpkin). She stamps and boils them in a pot. The umnumzana (head of the homestead) is the first to be strengthened, followed by males and sometimes females; he dips his fingers into the pot and sucks the liquid off them, then takes out several items with which to hit his knees saying: 'Dolo qina!' This

1) Bryant 1966, p.27

2) Ibid. pp.21, 49

occurs in the house of the grandmother: an old lady explains that her intention is to make the younger generation strong. Khanyile families who still follow the custom ask the old woman to cook the medicines, arguing that she is the most suitable person to perform this duty because she is pure and does not sleep with a man. In many wards among the Biyela and Khanyile the entire ukweshwama ceremony has now died out, some elderly people never having practised it.

7.4 Harvesting

Since the crops on the old woman's field are the first to ripen, the order of harvesting follows that of ploughing, planting and weeding. The old woman's field is the first to be reaped by one or more of the omakoti, usually the wife of the eldest son.

7.4.1 Thanksgiving rituals

Some old women still perpetuate the time-honoured practice of setting aside a token of the food reaped for the ancestral shades of the home. When a large pile of cobs has been harvested and unsheathed and is about to be carried to the homestead the old mother of the home takes two cobs and places them under the pile of mealie-husks in the field, some addressing the deceased females of the home who used to work the fields: 'Nakhu okwenu makhosikazi - take, this is yours, women' or more generically: 'Nakhoke okwenu, bogogo nobabamkhulu nobaba, nomama: gayani-ke, niphuze nathi. Siyabonga ukudla enisiphe khona - this is yours, grandmothers, grandfathers, fathers, mothers: brew and drink [beer] with us. We are thankful for the food you have given us.' The oldest woman of the home usually performs the rite in her field on behalf of all in the home and she must be past child-bearing age to address the shades. Although omakoti may imitate her actions in their fields, they may not address the

ancestors. Among the Dlomo the old woman places a good and a rotten cob under the husks to provide the ancestors with the ingredients of their beer, and invariably she repeats this thanksgiving in all the fields; however if she is deceased an umakoti may perform the rite though she may not utter even the generic names of those she is thanking. Some old Christian women in the Khanyile district leave a few unsheathed cobs in their fields, ostensibly out of pity for the mice and birds who in consequence are said not to trouble them, but in fact the cobs are directed towards the ancestors 'who must never be forgotten because they look after us'.

After the sorghum has been harvested a flat area outside the homestead is traditionally smeared for its drying and threshing, which is variously done by young men and women at night when there is no wind. Early the following morning the women winnow while old women, who are said to have the patience for this work, remove the chaff from the sorghum grains with amashayelo (wild tea bush: Athrixia phylicoides¹⁾) handbrooms made of twigs. The good sorghum is heaped and they sweep the grain that has gone astray, or that still has chaff attached to it, away from the heap in a line that must not be crossed by anyone, for it would prevent the wind required for winnowing from coming. Among the Dlomo, as the old women are busy separating the chaff from the grains those younger set fire to the stamped sorghum-stalks, and as they do so the old women one at a time intone: 'We maluhelu woza uzothatha amakhoba - hey old lady come and take the chaff.' Maluhelu is regarded as a generic name depicting all the deceased old women who used to help in winnowing and who on this day are assisting by bringing a gentle breeze. In all three tribes the 'untidy grain', in which there is still some chaff, is used to make the malt for the thanksgiving beer.

The old woman of the home either prepares the malt for the beer herself, because the younger generation are said to

1) Doke & Vilakazi 1953, pp.732, 735

allow the grains to soak far too long and become rotten, or supervises the omakoti concerning the quantities required and the various stages of beer-brewing. Customarily, once the beer has fermented to a porridge-like consistency and additional malt has been added to it, the old woman of the home places a small offering for the shades behind the pots (umva kwembiza) of unstrained beer in her kitchen. Some Khanyile old women tend to place a pot of strained beer at the umsamo of their huts behind a bigger pot of beer, but most old people maintain that such women are in error for beer should only be placed at the umsamo when a ritual slaughter occurs; at harvest the shades have already been thanked by placing a cob under the husks in the field.

Variations based on offerings of beer on ritual occasions persist: for instance when the beer ferments and additional malt has been added to it, some old women of the Biyela tribe place a small udengezi of cold water behind the pots in the kitchen and say: 'Nina makhosikazi alapha ekhaya esenagoduka nanka amanzi enu hlambani ningoni ukudla - You old women of the home, here is water, wash yourselves and don't spoil the food.' They believe that if this is not done the shades will enter the beer and render it tasteless. When the beer is ready to be strained the old woman removes the water and discards it anywhere outside. When the beer has been strained a bigger potful is placed at the umsamo of her house and she utters: 'Sibonga ukuvuna - we are thankful for the harvest' or 'Nampu-ke utshwala benu, phuzani - Here is your beer, drink.' This pot of ancestral beer belongs only to the homestead and may not be drunk by any outsider or young wife. Similarly a married daughter may not partake for she now belongs to another home. Children who have not reached puberty and old women married into the home who have passed the age of child-bearing and are nicknamed 'men' may drink it once all the other beer has been consumed by a convivial gathering of people who come to celebrate the harvest. Certain Christian old women do not place a pot of beer for the ancestors but retain the custom of organizing a beer-feast of sorghum, even if they themselves do not partake of it.

7.4.2 Harvest gifts for the king

It has been recorded that formerly at harvest an induna in the vicinity of the royal homestead would propose that the king's subjects send a gift of beer to him as a gesture of goodwill. Elderly women accompanying the bearers formed an advance party and ululated on arrival at the royal residence to signify the delivery of the beer.¹⁾ Although the people of the three tribes studied have no knowledge of this custom, some Dlomo people still present beer to their chief at harvest and it is customary that when such a ceremony or an umbondo or wedding takes place an old woman carrying a stick is in the lead, ululating. Among the Khanyile, old people recall that they used to bring beer to their chief as a mark of respect.

7.5 Grain storage

In a number of Dlomo homes the traditional grain-pits (imigodi yesangcobe) continue to be used for storage purposes. They are dug in the cattle-kraal by a man and smeared with cowdung by small girls. When the large bulbous hole is dry the old mother of the home throws grass into it and young girls spread this around the base. The old woman then thrusts in a torch of dry grass to kindle a fire. This fumigation dries the pit and prevents the maize or sorghum, which is stored in separate pits, from rotting; it also prevents white ants from entering. The next day the old woman places her hand in the pit to ascertain whether the temperature has cooled, waiting until a fly enters for this is an indication that air is circulating inside. She instructs young girls to sweep up the ash: they pass this to her and she hands it on to others to discard outside the premises. In some homes on the following day the old woman gives the young girls a flat grass-mat she has woven. She unwinds it and passes it down to them, advising them how to place it firmly on the base of the pit so that the maize will not become damp. Shelled maize or sorghum grains are then

1) Krige 1957, p.202

poured into the pit by the old woman and daughters of the home. When the hole is full the old woman closes the mouth with a large stone. She is then brought clay from a gully which she kneads and packs tightly in any holes or crevices; she also renders the stone-lid airtight by smearing it with cowdung. The smearing resembles that used for the pot containing medicine for speedy delivery.¹⁾ She finally covers the lid, which should be at ground level, with a heap of cowdung and places a second stone on top to mark the spot and to prevent cattle from trampling on the lid.

Old Biyela and Khanyile women recall how as young girls they used to dig and smear the grain-pits in a manner similar to the Dlomo and under the supervision of an old woman, usually the grandmother of the home. She is said to have the requisite knowledge for supervising the construction of such a pit so that it will not collapse under the weight of the cattle or be prone to water-seepage; and although her post-menopausal state is not emphasized an elderly woman is said to have the right to enter the cattle-kraal. A pre-pubertal girl usually dug and lined the pits because the person had to be naked for this work, and no woman was allowed to undress in front of her affines which included the ancestral shades in the cattle-kraal. The custom of constructing the pits has now largely been abandoned, partly because young people dislike the resultant taste and partly because the harvest is no longer good enough to warrant such storage.

However in preparation for storing maize on the cob the old woman may still observe the custom of placing a flat mat on the base of each storehouse (ingolobane) unless she lacks the strength, in which case she will supervise the work. The mat serves as a precaution against grain loss, for when children climb into the storehouses to fetch maize-cobs the grains tend to fall through the flooring planks onto the ground. Although some Biyela do not consider it necessary

1) See p.43

for an old woman to perform this task, most people regard it as her duty both because her knowledge of how to ensure a tight-fitting cover for the base is regarded as superior to that of others and because she is careful and will prevent wastage. When the yield has been consumed the grains that have been rubbed off the cobs and remain at the base of the storehouse will be collected by the old woman and used to brew beer, a pot of which is placed umva kwembiza.¹⁾ These grains are usually referred to as umuwa kagogo (grandmother's grains that have fallen).

7.6 Control of the food-supply

Each old woman has a separate barn that used to be situated behind her house on the outskirts of the premises, but because of its vulnerability to theft, which has become widespread, it is now usually placed centrally in front of her house above the cattle-kraal.²⁾ The mother-in-law directs the wife of her eldest son to sort the cobs and fill her storehouse with them. The produce of the old woman's fields is mainly intended to guard against shortage of food in the home: accordingly each umakoti uses food from her own storehouse while the barn of the old mother is consumed only at a time of scarcity. Most people follow this pattern, though if an old woman has only one daughter-in-law or if the latter is still new to the home there may be a single storehouse which falls under the jurisdiction of the old woman. Similarly when the omakoti have exhausted their stores it is the old mother-in-law who authorizes them to make use of the cobs from her barn. Should the umninimuza also have a separate barn then the old woman's is the penultimate one to be used and that of the old man is set aside for times of want since the man is the owner of the homestead and all its assets belong to him. But even in such cases the old woman is responsible for both her own barn and that of her husband; and although the old woman informs her husband of a shortage

1) See pp. 165-166

2) See p.191

of food in the home the old man usually leaves such matters to her discretion, for men do not greatly concern themselves with the fields and crops: they are satisfied merely to receive their food.

Because of her seniority the old woman is in charge of all matters in the home that pertain to the distribution and consumption of food, and she authorizes gifts of food to outsiders. Omakoti who follow established procedure consult their mother-in-law each day with regard to the food they should prepare, but the degree of control exercised by the old woman varies considerably. In one polygamous household the old woman daily decides on the type of food and quantities that each wife will cook; in other households the different omakoti may cook as they please except for the one who is specifically assigned to care for the old mother and must ask her advice as to what food should be prepared.

In general each woman is responsible for the affairs of her family unless she is still under the direct control of her mother-in-law. The umakoti usually cooks one pot of food: she serves the old man first, then her mother-in-law, then her husband, then finally she and the children will eat. If there is no aged male present then the old woman is served first. The old woman need only receive food from the umakoti who specifically cares for her, but in many cases the other omakoti also provide her with cooked food from their barns and the grandmother shares this with her grandchildren.

A child or daughter-in-law brings the old woman's meal to her in her hut where she eats alone or with her grandchildren or with other old women if they are present; she may also eat in the company of her husband but from a separate bowl. Just as a woman is released from toiling in her fields in her old age, so too is she only obliged to cook for her old husband if she has no daughter-in-law to assist her. Once they are elderly, although women become more sedentary, they have attained a position of economic power and control.

CHAPTER 8

OTHER ROLES OF OLD WOMEN

To indicate their elevated position on attaining old age, old women frequently equate themselves with men. The effect of this concept is examined with reference to the roles of old women in marriage, law and religion.

8.1 Effects of old age on conjugal relationships

The belief prevails that sexual desire terminates with the menopause which in turn marks the onset of old age.¹⁾ Once a woman's menstrual flow has permanently ceased she informs her husband directly or indirectly that she no longer wishes him to visit her for sexual purposes. Some men become aware of the change in a wife's condition by the fact that she no longer says they cannot sleep together because she is menstruating; others notice that their wives have lost interest in coitus.

The cultural tenet that sexual indifference accompanies the menopause can result in conflict between the old wife and her husband. When the old woman remains in her husband's homestead, as tends to be the case with monogamous unions, this imbalance of sexual desire becomes a major source of tension. At times the friction becomes so intense that a husband will take a stick and beat his old wife because of her refusal to cohabit: an old man explains that it is natural that he must have sexual relations for his 'heart and blood are still active'.

An old woman usually sleeps with her grandchildren²⁾ so if her husband's sexual demands persist she sometimes directs him to take another wife. Old women reflect how as young wives they could never imagine themselves willingly allowing their husbands to take a second wife, but now that they are old they become so tired of their husband's sexual demands that they themselves suggest a co-wife. However, the invariable outcome of the old man's remarriage is that the old wife becomes jealous and strives to deprive the

1) See pp.204-205

2) See p.87

young wife of her husband's affections. In some cases the old woman's desire for coitus is thereby reawakened.

Should the tensions between a married couple become intolerable then the customary solution is for the husband to build his wife a separate home near his own. Divorce is regarded as a new phenomenon introduced by the Whites.¹⁾ According to tradition a wife could return to her natal home if she was cruelly treated, but very few women who have borne children resort to this drastic step for they now belong to their husband's agnatic group with whom they would have to leave their children and possessions.²⁾ The return of a married woman would also often cause unpleasantness amongst her relatives, her brother's wife in particular resenting her presence. Whereas some young wives who are unhappily married nowadays leave to find work in the towns, this option is not open to old women. They prefer to have a separate homestead built near to that of their husband for they have grown accustomed to running their own homes. Should the husband be a polygynist, no undue tension would result from his wife's post-menopausal sexual abstinence for he would tend to have several wives of different ages.

The menopause and the consequent diminution of sexual interest on the part of the woman is regarded as nature's provision: the woman is unafraid for she is now elevated to a position of authority and esteem in the homestead, particularly in the case of the principal-wife (inkosikazi enkulu) who is regarded as the nucleus of the family and whose first-born son is heir to his father's homestead. The post-climacteric period can also be marked by tranquillity when it coincides with the old mother, particularly of ikhohlwa,³⁾ forming a new homestead with her eldest son and his family in which she assumes considerable authority and independence. Holleman points out:⁴⁾

1) See also Gluckman 1950, p.180; Bryant 1967, p.601; Breytenbach 1971, p.246

2) See also Stafford & Franklin 1950, p.139

3) See also de Clercq 1975, p.79

4) Holleman 1940, p.38

'in a newly-established homestead preference places the mother as the first inhabitant of the great-hut (indlunkulu) because the Zulu consider it desirable that an old and experienced woman should keep an eye on the younger households. It happens that this grandmother is as a rule past her time of child-bearing; hereby she at all times has access to the cattle-kraal where menstruating women never enter. Moreover she no longer, through periods of uncleanness, forms a dangerous element in the home, and therefore can freely communicate with the ancestral shades.' de Clercq's fieldwork indicates that among the Nzuza such a wife only considers leaving the main homestead with her eldest son once her productive years have ended;¹⁾ however in the three tribes studied in Nkandla this may occur at any time subject to the approval of the husband.

The majority of elderly women live as widows, usually with their sons' families. There is however a tendency among old Christian Khanyile women to live in nuclear households with any of their offspring who desire to stay with them. Although the levirate (ukungena) is recognized as serving two purposes: that of perpetuating the patrilineage²⁾ and that of providing the widow affiliated to the patrilineage and her offspring with companionship and support,³⁾ both the levirate and remarriage are considered inappropriate for an old woman, primarily because these institutions regulate sexual intercourse and the production and protection of children, and the old woman is no longer capable of bearing children. Men find the idea of entering such a union with an old woman unattractive, likening the old woman to a man; women resist it because they no longer desire coitus, because there is often jealousy among co-wives, and because they enjoy the the authority and leisure of being the most senior elder in the homestead. The old

1) de Clercq 1969, p.59

2) See also Stafford & Franklin 1950, pp.119-120;
de Clercq 1975, p.390

3) See also Breytenbach 1971, pp.268-269; de Clercq
1975, pp.390, 394

women encountered in the three tribes were either still married to their first husband or, more frequently, widowed and living in the homestead of their former husband with their sons and daughters-in-law.

8.2 The legal position of the old woman

8.2.1 Increased authority within her husband's agnatic group

Old women are quick to mention the increased authority they achieve on reaching the menopause when being classified as men they can voice an opinion on matters in the home. Old women can sit and drink with men in one hut, which they could never do previously, and can teach and advise the younger members of the family to live according to the traditions of their father. However, the old woman must exercise restraint in her behaviour: this is particularly evident in her relationship with her daughter-in-law.

Although it is the duty of an umakoti to respect and defer to her old mother-in-law,¹⁾ tensions between them can arise, particularly from the custom of a married son who is a migrant labourer sending his mother part of his monthly wage and stipulating the sum destined for herself, his wife, and his children's schooling. Husbands reason that younger women are often unable to use the money to the best advantage, so the smaller sum is given to the umakoti and the bigger share to the husband's mother. One reason why the umakoti sometimes fails to make good use of the money is her fear that once her husband is wealthy he will take another wife. If the umakoti does not approve of the amount of money her mother-in-law gives her, she sometimes refers to her insultingly as 'a woman who came in the night' or as her co-wife: implying that the mother has sexual relations with her son. These accusations are regarded as very serious offences against an old woman and need to be cleansed by a beast. Minor offences must be paid for in money, but insults that have to be cleansed by a goat or

1) See pp.213-215

beast are those that may affect the ancestral shades, thus bringing sickness or bad luck: the son for instance may lose his job or be stabbed. On her part if the mother-in-law, even if she is past child-bearing age, swears at the umakoti then she must offer a beast to cleanse the home of her husband.

The process by which a woman is integrated into her husband's umndeni is regarded as a gradual one beginning at marriage. The slaughtering of the goat preceding the umncamo beast at the home of the bride¹⁾ is taken as clear evidence that the woman is departing from her natal home and leaving her umndeni; the slaughtering of the umqholiso beast that follows at the home of the groom welcomes the bride into the umndeni of her husband, and the ceremonial pouring of its bile in front of her shows that she has become a member of this home.²⁾ As the umakoti lives and grows in her husband's home the rules of inhlonipho towards her affines lessen, although they never end completely towards her seniors.³⁾ Although a married woman retains the name of the isibongo into which she was born, and does not sever ties completely with her natal umndeni,⁴⁾ old men and old women in all three tribes are adamant that by the time a woman is old, although she nominally belongs to two imindeni her real membership and greater relationship is with that of her husband by virtue of her offspring. The children that she has given birth to make her part of this umndeni. Because she is regarded as the source of a new umndeni the old woman has powers in relation to it, but as will be seen these powers only extend over her own children and their wives and offspring.

8.2.1.1 Settling disputes concerning the home

Old women are conscious of their responsibility to promote harmony within the home. The old mother always insists that

-
- 1) See p.103
 - 2) See p.113
 - 3) See pp.175-181
 - 4) See pp.184-186

there should be no fighting or noise in the home for disharmony is offensive not only to the living but to the dead. Even when grandchildren are quarrelling old women of the home call out 'Umsindo' (Noise) and the children are expected to quieten. The mother-in-law is also expected to maintain peace among her sons' wives. Accordingly when her daughters-in-law argue, such as when one may accuse the other of taking her firewood, she calls them together to discuss the matter and tries to settle the disagreement amicably without notifying their respective husbands. She will report only a serious argument to her own husband. Likewise she has the power to settle disputes between her sons and their wives, and will only refer such to her husband - or if he is deceased to her husband's brother or her eldest son - if she fails to effect a reconciliation. On the occasion on which one brother struck another, his old mother asked him whether he had any powers to strike anybody from his home and whether he knew that she had the right to penalize him for this action, whereupon he begged forgiveness. Although in some homes the father does so, the mother also has the power of settling disputes between her sons. When a quarrel broke out between two sons their old mother separated them and later apologised to the ancestors for the disharmony in her home.

One old widow has all problems between members of the home brought to her, and if she instructs the disputants to put an end to their differences they invariably obey her. If they ignore her commands her final pronouncement to her sons and daughters-in-law is that if they will not listen they should give her another home. Although there are homes in which the old father settles all domestic discord, even such as occurs among the omakoti, normally homestead disputes should first be reported to the old woman for as long as her faculties are intact. The old woman is thus often likened to a man because all the complaints of the home are first brought to her. If the old woman's husband is alive he frequently consults her about family disputes; after his death the eldest son of the principal-wife assumes

the position of head of the home, but he remains under the guidance of his mother who will offer him suggestions and discuss matters with him.

If the umninimuzi is deceased, his old wife has the power of summoning the ibandla lomuzi (informal court of the home) because its members are 'abantu bakhe - her people', though in some families she will report a misunderstanding to her eldest son who might request his father's brother to summon it. In this court, if her husband is deceased, the old mother of the home has the power of cross-questioning, controlling and even of judging a case, particularly when the quarrel is between her sons; she may however summon it and then allow her son to conduct the proceedings, and merely proffer judgement. The old woman, particularly if she is intelligent, is normally a member of the ibandla lomuzi¹⁾ for she is aware of all the relationships in the home since its members confide in her; furthermore there is no need for her to show inhlonipho to its men since they are all her own biological children, this court sometimes being referred to as umndeni wesisu (the lineage of the stomach). Breytenbach writes similarly that among the Usuthu-Zulu, women who have passed the fertile period, especially old married women, are frequently appointed as members of this court.²⁾ And in the three tribes of Nkandla, where there has been friction among the women of the home the old mother, provided that she is honest and fair, is asked to be present because she is thought to have more knowledge than men of matters concerning the women of the home.

That the old woman plays a pivotal role in sustaining harmonious relationships within the home is substantiated by Holleman. He affirms that any disagreement of a serious nature between the junior wives of the home should be arbitrated by the old woman in the great-hut. Even in

1) See also de Clercq 1969, p.124; de Clercq 1975, p.101
 2) Breytenbach 1971, p.95

differences between the women of the home and the head of the home himself, the inkosikazi enkulu is the mouthpiece between the parties since a wife may not approach her husband with a complaint or request but must turn to his mother.¹⁾ Holleman adds:²⁾ 'The greatest supervision over the whole home rests with the homestead-head and over female concerns with the principal-wife.'

If an old woman is unintelligent this is regarded as unfortunate, and the wife of the heir may be summoned to guide her, but the old woman is nevertheless included in the proceedings because she is said to be an idlozi and the ancestral shades would become angry if she were left out. It should however be understood that the considerable powers accorded the old woman only relate to misunderstandings that occur within the homestead. If for instance an umakoti is insulted by an outsider or has been seduced, the mother-in-law will acquaint herself with the facts and convey her findings to her husband, or if he be deceased, to her eldest son or her husband's brother, and although she may join in discussion with the men of the home she will not act on the decision taken, for legally because she is a woman she cannot represent the home.

Likewise in a polygynous home the old mother is still called upon to settle disputes between adult sons, sons and their wives, and daughters-in-law. Particularly when the head of the home is deceased and the home consists of three or more houses, the case is referred to the uyise wabantu (father of the people) who is regarded as the peacemaker and 'overlooker of the umuzi' and who together with his mother is invested with the power of mediating disputes, especially those which occur between married women. The uyise wabantu is the eldest son born of his father's third wife, and among the Dlomo and some Khanyile the fifth wife; his house, called inqadi or iqadi, is in the indlunkulu section of the homestead. Although he assumes considerable power in this regard once the head of the home is deceased,³⁾ he often initially settles disputes under the guidance of older people, particularly his father and mother. Most family disputes are discussed and finalized by the uyise wabantu and his mother. But if the uyise wabantu

1) Holleman 1940, p.35

2) Ibid. p.40

3) See also Bryant 1923, p.50

and his old mother cannot settle the quarrel, the old mother of the home, inkosikazi enkulu, may be called into the discussion, and if she fails to find a solution then the matter is referred to the ibandla lomuzi, or the ibandla lomndeni (informal court of the patrilineage). As discussions with the elders revealed, the old mother is the most powerful instrument in keeping peace in the family. One of them maintained: 'This fact is hidden because should it be known then ill-feeling would arise among her own children. If the old woman feels an umakoti should not pay a penalty, she will not; and if she feels she should, she will. Other members of the umndeni are called to settle such a dispute because if the old mother were openly to pronounce her opinion the omakoti would hate her and would be suspicious of her. The elders discuss privately with the old woman and she offers her viewpoint, and when they meet with the remainder of the ibandla lomndeni and the matter is discussed openly, then the head of the home and his brother who are handling the case ask the old mother for her ideas on the matter in hand. Here she states her opinion briefly, for the results have already been arrived at in secret and the men will pronounce the final decision. Should the umakoti lose the case, the old woman will not show joy at having inflicted punishment; she will just behave normally towards her.' Provided that she is honest and fair, the old woman plays this influential role both in ruling families and ordinary families that are large.

8.2.1.2 Influencing disputes of the patrilineage

If there is misunderstanding between members of the ikhohlwa and indlunkulu sections, or an unresolved quarrel between a husband and wife, then the matter is referred to the ibandla lomndeni. Cases in which omakoti are involved may also be settled by this court because a young wife is brought into the home or umndeni by means of its cattle. There are times when the old mother of the home notices things that are irregular, such as when sons who have built their own homes no longer

intervisit; if she fails to effect a reconciliation between them she will report the matter to her husband and he will summon an ibandla lomndeni, or if he is deceased the heir of a monogamous home, or in a polygynous home the uyise wabantu will summon it. This ibandla lomndeni is sometimes referred to as ibandla lesende (the informal court of the testicles) since it pertains to family matters concerning the various wives of one man. Unlike the ibandla lesisu or lomuzi, which deals with misunderstandings of one woman's offspring and in which the adjudicatory powers of the old mother are considerable, in the ibandla lomndeni she has less freedom and plays a less prominent role for it is dominated by the adult male descendants of one grandfather or even great-grandfather by different mothers. But it should be noted that unlike a younger woman she does have the right to attend this court, particularly in her post-menopausal years.¹⁾

According to protocol an old woman does not have the power to summon or control such a meeting of the umndeni, nor should she attend it uninvited; she may not cross-question and may only speak when instructed to do so. The old woman must show respectful behaviour in this informal court because different 'izisu' (stomachs, wombs) are concerned; when the ibandla lomndeni gathers, the old woman usually moves to the left-hand or female side of the hut to show respect. When the old mother is asked for her opinion on a certain issue she either sits or kneels respectfully to speak, whereas men remain seated. It is noteworthy that the discussion occurs in indlu yakwagogo (the house of grandmother) and that the old woman plays an important role in giving evidence by clarifying the position of disputing parties or in providing familial insights.²⁾ Old men state that the old woman is normally called to join the discussion because she is very useful to them on account of her experience and knowledge of family matters, especially when

1) See also de Clercq 1969, pp.121, 144; de Clercq 1975, p.71

2) See also de Clercq 1975, pp.71, 97

there is wrangling among agnates. She is often consulted on matters of patrilineal history and may be requested to attend for this specific purpose. The extent of her contribution to the ibandla depends on her ability, on the nature of the case, and on the amount of information that is required of her. Intelligent women tend to frequent such council meetings: they are valued, and some voice their opinions freely. But although some enjoy this greater freedom of speech and action, others feel inhibited by it. Just as a man who is very old or whose reasoning is faulty no longer attends the ibandla, so too a woman who is senile is no longer consulted on matters of the home or patrilineage.

There are old women who compare themselves to men because they may attend and speak in the ibandla lomndeni. Indeed their presence and the deference accorded them are indicative of their heightened position of respect and authority. Such women will state: 'I can enter and remain in the ibandla lomndeni because I am halfway to being a man.' In reality some old widows enter any council of their husband's agnatic group without being called to it. They regard this as their right on account of their age. If they know something about the matter in question they speak on the issue without being asked. On the other hand aged men maintain that whilst old women are regarded as enjoying a position of authority, they are not like men: a woman's word is considered inferior; it is never viewed as being like that of a man even though she is old. Others argue that whereas it is true that a woman who is old is said to be like a man because once she passes the menopausal stage she joins in the family discussions, the privilege of being called to the ibandla is conferred by age but does not essentially alter her position. She cannot enter the ibandla lomndeni as she pleases. As far as family matters are concerned her position may be like that of a man, but when it comes to 'outside' matters which revolve around patrilineal group rights she cannot assume the role of a man. An old woman accurately sums up her legal position: 'I am still a woman in the rights I have. I may only

exercise the privilege of settling disputes of the umuzi and assume a leading role in the absence of any male.'

8.2.2 Unchanged status beyond her husband's patrilineage

If a legal matter remains unsolved by members of the patrilineal council or between such councils or people of different izibongo, it is taken on appeal to the ibandla lenduna (formal court of the headman). In one case an old woman was called to give evidence to the ibandla lenduna because her adolescent granddaughter had quarrelled with a girl from another home and the argument could not be settled between the families. In another case a grandchild was stealing her grandmother's pension money. The ibandla lomndeni failed to settle the matter to the satisfaction of the old woman, so she instructed her heir to take her to the induna.

If an old woman is the oldest member of the umuzi and her eldest son is absent, she appoints a male representative, who is a patrilineal kinsman of her husband, to refer the matter on her behalf to the ibandla lenduna. An old woman may not report a matter to this court in person. Even if an old widow is insulted, such as by impeachment of her chastity, and the matter is not settled out of court by production of a beast, she does not have the right as plaintiff of going to the ibandla lenduna of her own accord but must first report to the elder sons, and if necessary grandsons, of the ibandla lomndeni. Legally even if there is no male of her husband's umndeni, or if he is inept or she is alone, the old woman may still not approach the induna with her case but must find a distant male representative to act as guardian, though in practice certain izinduna waive the rule. The old woman may likewise only attend the highest court of appeal in the indigenous system, the ibandla lomnumzana (formal court of the chief), if she is involved in a case or has come to give evidence as witness or accused. In both instances, unlike a man, she must be accompanied by a male guardian¹⁾ such as her husband, heir, husband's

1) See also Stafford & Franklin 1950, pp.61, 93; de Clercq 1969, p.143; Breytenbach 1971, pp.211-212; de Clercq 1975, pp.121, 143-144

brother or another of her sons; her natal home cannot represent her in this capacity. On arrival at the ibandla the old woman must stand outside the group until she is called in, whereupon she sits or kneels, her shoulders covered with a shawl out of deference. Unlike a man, the old woman does not have the privilege of talking freely in these public courts: she may only speak when spoken to, and if she does not know something she says so. While giving evidence she remains seated (as do males), though some old women kneel respectfully. The induna or inkosi (chief) may however grant her the right to cross-question or provide information or to suggest what compensation she desires, which is then evaluated in accordance with the law.

In the system of indigenous law the most common legal cases involving old women directly, and for which they have to attend the ibandla lenduna or ibandla lomnumzana to give evidence, concern the inkomo yengquthu (beast of the female organ). What may occur is that a son and heir will deprive the old mother of all her livestock, including the ingquthu beast, to meet his ilobolo obligations. In almost all such instances the old woman wins the case because this beast is unequivocally hers.¹⁾ Tribal elders stress that the ingquthu belongs to the mother and is given her as a token of thanksgiving for bearing and rearing her daughter; it is presented when a daughter loses her virginity for the first time, either before, or ideally at marriage.²⁾

Nowadays cases are occasionally heard in the formal courts concerning women who have been insulted, although a woman may not report her own case. A particularly unseemly form of swearing between women, young or old, is: 'Uyisifebe! - You are a harlot!' Likewise being called a witch is a form of blasphemy that rarely passes unchallenged. Most forms of insult are settled out of court on production of a beast.

1) See also Stafford & Franklin 1950, pp.60, 89, 151, 163; Seymour 1960, pp.228-229; Breytenbach 1971, p.131

2) See also Breytenbach 1971, pp.131, 208

But if the penalty is not forthcoming then the head of the umuzi usually takes the matter to the ibandla lenduna. The old woman must be present at the meeting. If she wins the case she can claim damages in cash or if the insult is considered serious, a beast. Should the defendant refuse payment, the old woman has access first to the ibandla lomnumzana and finally to the magistrate's court.

If cattle spoil the fields belonging to the old woman and no compensation is forthcoming, then a male representative, either her husband or son, will claim damages from the owner of the cattle on her behalf at the ibandla lenduna or, if this is unsuccessful, at the ibandla lomnumzana. One such case which was referred to the ibandla lomnumzana concerned an old woman who had been given R200 to buy cattle for a certain family. When the cattle were not forthcoming and the family suspected that she had squandered the money, they appropriated the cattle belonging to her co-wife. The matter was brought before the ibandla lomnumzana who adjudged that she must refund the money in cash or kind, and charged her R20 for the case. In this particular instance an exception was made - this old widow had no son and her husband had no brothers so she was allowed to attend the court on her own.

Age-seniority is associated with authority in legal matters, for knowledge is based on a long acquaintance with life and an ability to recall circumstances and customs that prevailed in the past. But in law age is subordinate to sex and rank: a young male has greater authority than an old woman in the council because although he must usually take orders from an older person the old woman is a legal minor; similarly a young person of the ruling family has more authority than an old male who is a commoner. The old mother of a chief cannot take part in the ibandla lomnumzana, nor can she convene a case or preside at a

hearing, because she is a woman. As with other women she may attend only if she is involved in the case or has been invited to participate in the discussion. Yet respect is accorded her whether or not she is past child-bearing age, for she was a chief's principal-wife. The status of an old woman who is an isangoma is also in legal terms no higher as a witness than that of an ordinary old woman; a female isangoma who has accused somebody brought before the formal courts must still be assisted by a guardian.

The chief's mother provides a legal service to the women of the tribe. Women and girls are sometimes ignorant of the law, for if anything goes wrong in their homes they do not ask one of the family members to help them out of their difficulty but go straight to the chief's residence. A woman cannot approach the chief, and especially not in anger, thus she will go to the chief's mother. Armed with her evidence, and without a guardian, such a woman will insist on speaking to the umnumzana face to face. This constitutes a breach of protocol and in such instances she is referred to his old mother who will consider the matter from all sides and may proffer advice. On the other hand if a woman is being maltreated, such as by repeatedly being thrashed by her husband, and has reported the matter to his umndeni to no avail, she now approaches the chief through his mother. The old woman weighs up the evidence and should she decide that the return of the umakoti will exacerbate the situation she will approach the chief on behalf of the woman. Chiefs are however wary of manipulation of the situation by the women who are bypassing the induna (headman) and approaching the chief's mother because they know she is close to him and can influence him. The role of the chief's mother in such matters is in part determined by her status, to which certain responsibilities and duties are attached, and in part by her personality: if she evinces intelligence, honesty and reliability women will consult her.

8.2.3 Changes in the indigenous legal system

It should be noted that old women, in common with all the tribespeople, no longer enjoy the same degree of protection of their rights that they were accustomed to in the past. Many men work away from home, others have lost interest in tribal matters and do not assemble when called, fathers have waning influence in their homes, the chief has been divested of meaningful authority, and alcoholism which is prevalent among chiefs and men leads at times to the disintegration of court hearings. In addition the power of appeal, or direct application to the magistrate's court, has reduced the effectiveness of the chiefs' courts as a means of social control.¹⁾

Since the magistrate's court follows common-law procedure, litigants are usually the only people present apart from court personnel. As with the indigenous system, old women only attend cases in which they are directly concerned. In the commissioner's court civil cases are dealt with. If the parties involved are Black, customary law is applied: accordingly an old woman who is involved in a case might be accompanied by a guardian, though if the old woman is a widow and without an heir or relative from her husband's umndeni she must be accompanied by the local induna. The one exception is that a woman may bring to the commissioner's court an action against a man who has seduced her; common law may then be applied and the need for a guardian is dispensed with. The magistrate's court deals with criminal cases and a guardian need not accompany a woman to this court.

Virtually the only cases for which old women are brought to the magistrate's court concern charges of growing, possessing or dealing in dagga. These cases, although few in number, cause considerable ill-feeling because dagga-usage is traditional to Zulu culture²⁾ and accordingly is not

1) See also Stafford & Franklin 1950, p.44; de Clercq 1969, pp.146-147, 155-157, 160-162; Breytenbach 1971, pp.114-118, 286

2) See also Braatvedt 1949, p.134; Movsowitz 1954, p.69; du Toit 1975, pp.96-97

viewed as a criminal activity by old women or by the people as a whole.

8.2.4 Rights of ownership and inheritance

Women, whether old or young, are legal minors, and men consistently state that 'according to Zulu law women are inferior'. They explain that women do not own property apart from the ingquthu beast, and that when they marry they find all that they require ready for use in their new home. Old women concur that they 'have nothing in this home' and that which they brought with them on arrival belongs to their husbands. In practice a woman owns livestock, though this is regarded as house-property which ultimately falls under the jurisdiction of her husband and is inherited by her eldest son or may be used by her sons for their ilobolo payments. Even the goats and cattle she may earn from bartering or selling her own handwork, or that her father may have given her as a gift, can be used by her husband, though he should consult her about the matter. Although some women are known to refuse to accede to such requests, their behaviour is considered strange and unlawful because all that they have is regarded as belonging to their husbands.

The idea of joint possession is prominent in the minds of old women for they argue that if their livestock did not belong to both spouses, husbands would not have to come to an arrangement with their wives regarding their use. In general husbands consult their wives if they desire to use some of their livestock, and old women regard the giving of such as a form of reciprocity since their husbands should help them when they need something. An old lady whose husband wanted to sell one of her oxen replied that he must first provide her with his reasons, even though she conceded that she could not in fact prevent him from selling what was his. But should the old woman find the request for use of the offspring of the ingquthu unacceptable then her

husband cannot touch these particular cattle, and if he should obtain them by force the old woman can report him to the chief.

Ultimately every beast in the home belongs to the male head and contributes to his wealth and status. Old women believe that the cattle and sheep they have acquired raise their esteem in their affinal home on account of the increased prestige these bring to their husbands; men admire their wives' ability to accumulate livestock for this reason and because they like a thrifty wife. Only close acquaintances are aware which cattle result from a wife's industry since all cattle are in the husband's name. Sometimes the details of the cattle-arrangements between spouses are not disclosed even to members of the umndeni. This practice may lead to problems at the death of the umninimuzi and the woman may in such circumstances be deprived of her cattle.

Whereas a man has considerable rights over his property, within the law of primogeniture a woman may not inherit and has no ultimate power to apportion her property to anyone. An old widow's position is no different from that of a younger woman in that she does not have the right to bequeath either her own or her husband's property: this devolves on her eldest son who is the general heir¹⁾ and in whose umuzi she will live. An old man summarizes the basic rule of patrimonial inheritance as it affects old women: 'The eldest son inherits his father's possessions, including his wife.' The old widow is usually consulted by her eldest son on matters concerning the cattle of the deceased father, but although this son is the general heir he does not have unlimited rights, and if for instance he uses his mother's cattle for ilobolo payments, then the wife obtained by those cattle must go to live in her mother-in-law's house and assist the old woman in all her labours. Thus according to customary law all that the old woman has worked for or

1) See also Stafford & Franklin 1950, pp.79-80; Krige 1957, p.180

possesses is inherited as house-property by her husband, or his successor¹⁾ the first-born son, or if he be dead, the next eldest son. The exception is the ingquthu cow and its offspring that will belong to the last-born son²⁾ among the Biyela and Khanyile. Among the Dlomo the old woman must, while still alive, bequeath the ingquthu to her youngest son if she does not wish it to go to her eldest. Many old women consider it wise to do so in the presence of others for when this is done privately disputes tend to arise after her death. Some women state that they give the youngest son one of the izingquthu out of kindness. And when other old women are questioned as to why the youngest male inherits these cattle they reply that it is because he is the favourite of the mother and father and accordingly is one of the 'great people' of the umuzi, though the first-born is beloved because through him a woman realised her capacity for motherhood. When an aged woman reaches a stage of senility all her belongings may devolve on her eldest son and his wife.

In polygynous homes the first wife married (inkosikazi) is the successor to the old woman and inherits all her artefacts except those which belong to the second-wife (ikhohlwa) and left-hand side of the home, because the left may leave and establish its own umuzi.³⁾ Should the main house (indlunkulu) representing the first wife bear no children, then depending on whether there are four or six co-wives, the third or fifth wife of the right-hand side, known as inqadi,⁴⁾ assumes the role of first wife and inherits since she is linked with the first on the right-hand side and substitutes for her.

In most cases the wife who looks after and serves her mother-in-law in her old age inherits all her possessions such as pots, sleeping-mats and hide-skirts, she being the wife of a woman's eldest son. Even with Christian Khanyile

1) See also Stafford & Franklin 1950, p.83; Krige 1957, p.177

2) See also Breytenbach 1971, pp.131, 218

3) See p.139

4) See p.145

the son and daughter-in-law who live with the aged woman in a nuclear household normally inherit her belongings. However favouritism shown by the old woman towards the umakoti who looks after her frequently causes misunderstandings and quarrels between offspring. Some old women believe that their possessions should be divided equally among the omakoti of the home to prevent friction. They believe it is more diplomatic for the old woman to give the umakoti who cares for her a private gift rather than allowing her to be sole inheritrix. Nowadays a number of inheritance procedures are observed. At times the umndeni decides who shall inherit the estate of the deceased umninimuzi. Wills are being made by educated Christians, and a number of old women bequeath their goats and fowls to offspring whom they favour or consider the luckiest among their children in successfully propagating animals. Men voice their disapproval of such practice saying that it confirms the soundness of their reasoning in not allowing a woman's name to be attached to her belongings, because a female is capricious and gives useless children cattle and livestock. As a result the offspring will fight over her possessions. Such quarrelling is deplored by older people who say that these women have forgotten Zulu custom according to which even a fowl belongs to a man.

However just as an old woman has no real assets (with the exception of the inguthu) so has she no liabilities. Legally an old woman, like any woman, cannot owe anything to anyone. She cannot incur any liabilities, and the general heir to the umuzi or umndeni must pay any debt she might incur. The old widow is therefore not responsible for ilobolodebts as these fall within the domain of the general heir.

8.2.5 Informal social control

8.2.5.1 Witchcraft

Although the practice of witchcraft is illegal according to

customary¹⁾ and statutory law,²⁾ it continues to permeate people's lives and the fear of it remains deep-rooted. Whenever it is mentioned people lower their voices and the atmosphere grows tense. Even old women who are sceptical of certain customs remain fearful of witchcraft. They admit that they are afraid of the ostracism that comes from being regarded as a witch or becoming the object of witchcraft. They believe that there has been an increase in witchcraft because nowadays a witch or wizard is left living³⁾ whereas formerly he was killed. Other women are of the opinion that previously there were not so many izinyanga but they are now so numerous that witchcraft has increased and become a business.

Because a woman usually practises witchcraft within the environs of her home and can choose her time more discreetly, this renders her powerful and difficult to detect; she also tends to favour the method of poisoning the food of her victim. If a man detects that his wife is a witch because, for instance, she refuses to cleanse herself after a funeral or people meet with misfortune after visiting her, then even if she is old the correct procedure today as formerly, is for him to discuss the matter with his umndeni and expel her from his home. Even if he dies before she does, she may not return or claim anything from the home. She forfeits everything including her children, whether or not she is of child-bearing age. Her son who is heir to the home is also entitled to expel her since she hereby loses her rights in the umndeni. Many people believe that because women know that they will be expelled from their affinal homes or will be compelled to live in a separate home if they are found guilty of witchcraft, the threat of this punishment acts as a deterrent; but others maintain that nowadays more women than men practise witchcraft because this threat is no longer fearsome.

1) See also Krige 1957, p.225

2) Act 3 of 1957

3) See also van Nieuwenhuijsen 1960, p.19

Informants stress that in former times witchcraft was the prerogative of old people but that today young people also practise it, though a fertile witch abstains from touching umuthi during her menses, at which time it is thought to lose its effectiveness. The aged, who are believed to harbour the secrets of black magic, teach the young which herbs to use when their own death is imminent. An old sorcerer will hand over these powers on his death-bed to another elder in the family, usually his old wife; and it is said that an old witch when about to die will even teach the art openly within her family. It is believed that a propensity towards witchcraft runs in families, the children becoming infused with evil thoughts and habits. Normally however only one child, the heir, adopts the practice. Certain old parents instruct only their sons in witchcraft because of the fear that the daughters might marry into a family who reject the art, thus losing their new home. Witchcraft is thus patrilineally inherited in certain families.

The idea that witchcraft could be used between grandmother, mother and child is ridiculed for it is said that a woman does not bewitch her consanguineal children but bewitches others. People stress that ultimately knowledge of witchcraft and malicious intent, rather than the age of the person, are the decisive factors determining whether a person practises witchcraft or not. But because witchcraft is a powerful form of knowledge it should be handled by the elders, not by the young, and a person who desires strong umuthi, whether for good or evil purposes, approaches an old person since the elders possess the monopoly of knowledge. Old women are said to have a knowledge of powerful imithi that may either heal or destroy. The power to heal is thought to be derived from the ancestors, but an evil person may use herbs intended for healing which because of her wickedness will have a harmful effect. Witchcraft is regarded as an abuse of these powers: thus if an old woman should indulge in malpractices such as killing or maiming, the ancestors will

deprive her of her healing powers and render her curative herbs ineffectual. Despite this sanction there are old women who continue to bewitch others. They rationalise that witchcraft is an art to be proud of and do not divulge their knowledge.

There is a belief that if you are bewitched by an old man and an old woman the witchcraft of the old woman is stronger. Among the Dlomo it is believed that an old woman will even carry her umuthi in her fingernail to which she has easy access. Because she is loved and trusted by people she has a position of great power, and because she no longer menstruates her umuthi is never weakened. It is generally considered easier to bewitch a woman who is menstruating because her blood is fresh and running compared to one who is old and whose blood-flow has stopped. An old woman is sometimes likened to a girl who has not yet reached puberty: even if people try to bewitch her the umuthi does not work because 'the blood is not flowing'. Old women are thus believed to be very resistant. There is a belief that if you try to wipe out a whole homestead all the inhabitants will die but the old woman will survive, and that the only person who can bewitch an old woman is another old woman.

Witchcraft has been ascribed to a pre-scientific explanation of life and hence of misfortune,¹⁾ and to a world-view in which goodness, as with all things in nature, is in limited supply,²⁾ to tensions within the social structure,³⁾ and to anxiety.⁴⁾ In the three tribes studied some old people attribute the source of witchcraft to feelings of inadequacy, ambition, hatred and suppressed rage or jealousy. One might add that witchcraft provides people with an explanation of untoward occurrences and with an outlet for aggression in a culture that sets a premium on respectful behaviour and harmonious relationships. Witchcraft

1) See also Evans-Pritchard 1937, pp.107, 113; Marwick 1948, p.115; Mbatha 1955, p.18

2) Foster 1965, pp.293-315

3) Krige 1947, pp.17-20; Levine 1962, pp.39-45; Ngubane 1977, pp.44-45

4) See also Marwick 1948, pp.115-129

5) See also Evans-Pritchard 1937, pp.107-112; Krige 1947, pp.8, 17, 20; Gluckman 1970, pp.324-326

accusations involving old women mainly occur between mother- and daughter-in-law, a relationship which calls for obedience and diligence from the younger, particularly in observing the customary rules of the home, and benevolent restraint from the older woman.¹⁾

8.2.5.2 Praises of old women

A more positive form of self-expression and outlet for social control occurs among some elderly women who intone their own izibongo (praise-poems). These praises can be a subtle form of criticism of the way other people are conducting themselves, or a means by which an old woman can make known her feelings without mentioning names, and in a form which is not answered. Although all old women do not compose such izibongo for themselves, those that do are usually intelligent and perceptive; they are amused by the fact that people actually enjoy the izibongo and request their recitation, particularly during beer-drinks, and will join in the chanting and clapping even though they themselves may be the butt of the criticism.

One such praise-poem is directed at neighbouring omakoti who are indulging in illicit relationships while their husbands are away at work. The old lady explains that by reciting these praises she is inviting the young wives of the home to think about the meaning of her words. Young wives roam the countryside until nightfall instead of respecting their husbands. The witch refers to the old lady herself, and she considers it a form of self-defence to mention in public that she is cognisant of the fact that others maliciously accuse her of being a witch.

<u>Ukhalimela! Ukhalimela! Ukhalimela!</u>	Oh harlot! harlot! harlot!
<u>Ngabulala bani?</u>	Whom did I kill?
<u>Hamba,umthakathi uyaziwa!</u>	Go away, a witch is well known!
<u>eMbizane, membese!</u>	Cover him at the Mbiza stream!
<u>eMadiyana, membese!</u>	Warm him at the Matiyane river!
<u>uNonkelenge, membese!</u>	Cover him at the Nonkelenge river!

1) See pp.213-215

Such izibongo not only influence public opinion but are a means of personal release and self-defence in a legal and social system in which women are provided with few outlets for their feelings.

8.3 The role of the old woman in ritual

Ceremonial purity is associated with the menopause and is also implied in the simile that the old woman is 'like a man'. The literature on the Zulu supports this symbolic association: 'very old women... are considered to be the same as men, having no ritual uncleanness.'¹⁾ Because of their post-menopausal condition old women may approach the ancestors, and it is the nature of this involvement in the ritual aspect of the culture that warrants investigation.

8.3.1 The ritual slaughter

Sacrifices are conducted primarily to thank ancestral shades for blessings received, such as the birth of a child; to ask for assistance, as in the illness of a member of the family; or to scold the shades for making the lives of their descendants difficult.²⁾ An isangoma may also determine that a sacrifice is the necessary form of appeasement for the ancestors if for instance a home has been struck by lightning. Sometimes a sacrifice may be offered to an old ancestress if one of her mortuary rituals was not well conducted. A beast might have to be slaughtered for the deceased grandmother, and the ancestors are told for whom it is intended.

The officiator at such a sacrifice (umphathi womsebenzi) is the direct male patrilineal descendant and thus the living senior of the home (umnikazi wekhaya - the owner of the home)³⁾; if he is absent or deceased his eldest adult son undertakes his duties under the instruction of his old mother, otherwise a lineage senior such as the father's brother may substitute. An old woman may not officiate

1) Krige 1957, p.93

2) See also Ibid. p.289; Berglund 1976, pp.220-222

3) See also Krige 1957, p.290

at a sacrifice. If she is widowed and she regards her son as unsuitable, she must approach a male of the umndeni, usually a brother of her husband or some other close kinsman, present her plan and return home to tell the members to prepare for the slaughter. Even the mother of the chief as a woman cannot perform this task.

According to custom a goat should first be slaughtered, then on the following day a head of cattle. The goat is of great importance because it must report the sacrifice to the ancestors and symbolically it brings all the deceased kin together. Merely to slaughter an ox or cow is insufficient for this is only the sign of apology for wrongdoing, or a sign of gratitude as, for instance, in obtaining sought-after employment. Nowadays if trouble should arise a family sometimes slaughters a goat for the shades, but if the problem is solved an ox would be sacrificed to thank them; only wealthy people continue to be able to slaughter both a goat and a beast for every ritual killing.

As from the outset of a ritual slaughter the omakoti of the home who are still capable of child-bearing should only walk on the outskirts of the premises behind the houses, whereas old women are not restricted and may walk in front of the houses and in the centre of the homestead; they may also enter the house in which the sacrificial meat is kept.¹⁾ This privilege is not granted to the omakoti because an ancestral animal is involved and the ancestors are gathered for the occasion, and is particularly observed when the ancestors are praised prior to the beast being slaughtered. The omakoti either wear a white band on their forehead or cover their faces and shoulders with a cloth in respect; Christians wear a diagonal band from one shoulder and cover their shoulders with shawls.

Krige states that 'Women cannot be priests at a sacrifice, but an old woman beyond child-bearing age is in Zulu society regarded as a "man", and very often such a woman is asked to call upon the spirits at a sacrifice because she knew those who are dead and they will therefore be more inclined to listen to her prayers.'²⁾ Although the connotations of a priest are misleading, it is true that if

1) See also Raum 1973, p.21

2) Krige 1957, p.290

the father of the home is deceased or there is no senior agnatic male present, or there is no son, or the heir is inarticulate or even in his thirties or forties and hence too young to approach the ancestors, then the old woman may herself address them. Some informants state that the person who addresses the shades must be 'clean' and 'cool' and therefore abstain from sexual intercourse on the night preceding the sacrifice.¹⁾ Berglund maintains that if an old woman is to invoke the shades she is automatically assumed to be sexually "cool"; like others who perform this role she would abstain from beer and the warmth of a fire on the night prior to the slaughter.²⁾ In the three tribes investigated old women who speak at sacrifices do not follow such injunctions and neither they nor old men consider them relevant, there being no need for an old woman to be purified since by virtue of her post-menopausal state she is considered 'clean'.

On the first day of the sacrifice the ancestors are briefly summoned, usually at the umsamo of indlu yakwagogo when the offering of a goat is reported to them, and if the old woman is the sole senior surviving relative she tends to address the shades generically: 'You people of Nzuza, this sacrifice is your food; we are conducting it to ask you to watch over our child who is ill and to let him recover.' Although a woman may not mention her husband's name or that of his kinsmen, in a few homes the men allow her to do so by virtue of the mother's extreme longevity or if the issue is of great consequence, as occurred prior to a court case where one son was to be tried for murder by stabbing. After the goat has been reported, the Dlomo umnikazi wekhaya, or if he be deceased ugogo, removes some of its hair by rubbing the animal with the right hand from the head towards the middle of the spine and down the right and left forelegs; then from the middle of the spine to the rear and down both hind legs, which he then places on an

1) See also Krige 1957, pp.290-291; Berglund 1976, p.225
 2) Berglund 1976, p.243

udengezi. He also inserts some impepho into the nostrils of the goat for it to sniff. Once the goat has been stabbed and skinned, the old man or woman places the hair together with amanoni (pieces of fat) from the inanzi and incense (impepho) on a potsherd containing burning charcoal at the umsamo. The aroma attracts the ancestors who then partake of the offering.¹⁾ A senior wife of the home may perform this rite if she has passed the menopause and she may invite the shades with the words 'here is your food'. There are variations between homes on the nature of these burnt-offerings. Some Khanyile do not use the tufts of hair of the goat but the old mother of the home burns amanoni cut from the inanzi, heart and lungs with impepho at the umsamo of her house, or she burns the impepho on its own, sometimes mixed into a small ball with umhlwehlwe on which bile is sprinkled. Similar patterns occur among the Biyela, some old women only burning impepho at the umsamo once the beast has been brought there for the ancestors to feast on.

An offering of beer is set aside for the ancestors. If a goat is the only animal slaughtered for a sacrifice this beer is usually placed in indlu yakwagogo prior to the meat being stored there for the shades to feast on overnight. Usually however the beer accompanies the placement of the beast for the ancestral repast because the goat merely announces the main sacrificial item. Prior to the ritual each married woman makes beer. The old mother of the home either prepares the malt for the beer herself, or more usually instructs the omakoti to do so, since they too are entrusted with its brewing. When the first stage of fermentation is reached, the old woman and each umakoti add malt to the thickened sediment of beer and each places a potful called umva kwembiza (behind the [beer] pots) in her kitchen so that the shades will not spoil the beer through not being informed why there has been brewing. As the old woman places her pot she says: 'Here is your food, now don't spoil

1) See also Bryant 1920, p.47; Wanger 1926, p.19; Mahlobo & Krige 1934, pp.176, 295; Krige 1957, p.294

ours.' This beer will later only be drunk by old people because it has been touched by the ancestors and is therefore considered watery. After fermentation the beer is strained and the old mother of the home either fills a pot from the beer of each umakoti as well as her own, or only uses her own beer and places it for the ancestors on the floor at the umsamo of indlu yakwagogo, respectfully uttering: 'Nab'obenu - Here is yours [i.e. beer].' In some homes the men who cut up the meat of the ox will drink this beer that was placed at umsamo and the old woman joins them, whilst in others this beer is also considered ancestral and will only be drunk by old women and old men at the conclusion of the ritual. The latter is particularly the case among some Biyela if water instead of beer is placed in the potsherd in the kitchen, or if, as some Khanyile do, a smaller pot is placed behind a larger one at the umsamo of the old woman's house. In the ruling family the ancestors are referred to as amakhosi (chiefs) so the old mother of the home respectfully places the pot on an eating-mat at the umsamo of her hut and covers it with a woven-lid (imbenge).

In some families the old woman of the home also sprinkles snuff loosely at the umsamo or places a small tin of it next to the pot of beer for the enjoyment of the ancestors, particularly if the one who is being honoured was a snuff-taker while alive.¹⁾

The inanzi of the goat is pierced with a stick and hung from the roof over the umsamo of the old woman's house for the ancestors to 'lick' because they are believed to reside in this sacred area and to enter this meat. The men finally place the meat of the goat in its skin at the umsamo of indlu yakwagogo for the ancestors to feast on overnight. The old woman of the home sleeps in the house containing the meat because she is pure and said to be an ancestor, though the old man or pre-pubertal boys may also sleep there.

1) See also Krige 1957, p.295

On the following morning the goat is cooked in indlu yakwagogo. The old mother of the home kindles and stokes the fire and guards the meat, making sure that no-one interferes with it. In a few homes, which tend to be exceptions, she may even turn and handle this meat, but usually she acts in a supervisory capacity over the izinsizwa because she is a woman and should not touch the meat which the ancestors have entered. The goat's meat is only to be consumed by members of the umndeni. The older married women normally eat it in indlu yakwagogo and the married men in the house of the head of the home or of the wife second in seniority, such as the principal-wife of the eldest son. Young men eat in the cattle-kraal and the omakoti in any house that has not contained the ritual meat; there are however Khanyile families in which the umndeni including the old women partake of the goat in indlu yakwagogo, and a few in which the young wives are allowed to eat here with the old women because it is argued, the beast for the shades and the pot of ancestral beer have not yet been placed in the house. Seating arrangement is based on seniority and the old woman frequents the men's side.

Later in the day on which the goat is cooked and eaten the second stage of the ritual proceeds with the slaughtering of one of the cattle. But prior to this the umninimuza walks inside or around the cattle-kraal while the cattle are present and praises the ancestors, though if it is a small ritual slaughter the ancestors are praised on the day of slaughtering the goat. He addresses the shades by mentioning their praise or regimental names starting with those of greatest seniority and rank, in particular the male heads of the home, thus beginning with the great-grandfather, then the grandfather, and he includes his own father and his father's brothers. An old woman is rarely singled out among the shades unless the sacrifice is being conducted in her honour. However the deceased indlunkulu of chief Dlomo is mentioned because she used to attend to such rituals with her husband and gave people food.¹⁾ Normally the old women who were married to a man's father and his father's brothers are mentioned corporately, or a reference may sometimes be made

1) See also Krige 1957, p.293

to all the senior deceased married women¹⁾ asking them to be present at the feast. Primarily it is the male ancestors who are being called, and the invocation contains a message to inform everyone who is regarded as an ancestor. Whereas the old man may mention the praises of the deceased which were uttered when they used to ukugiya (mime their heroic especially military achievements), a deceased woman, young or old, has no praises because she has not fought battles: she may merely be included in the list of shades referred to as 'Inkosikazi kaBanibani - wife of So-and-so' and mention is made of the fact that this food is offered to her. In some homes while the umninimuzi is reporting to the ancestors the omakoti may not even remain in their huts but must go out and fetch water because they may not hear the praises of the home, though the old mother of the home because she is old and considered ancestral, at such time either kneels outside the umsamo of the cattle-kraal or remains quietly in her hut. Should the old wife be substituting for the head of the home she kneels or bows outside the cattle-kraal adjacent to the umsamo section but despite her great age is not permitted to utter the praises of her husband or his kinsmen; she will merely address them generically, humbly announcing the offering of their descendants.

Although the old mother of the home, if she is the most senior woman, may contribute to the discussion concerning which beast is to be slaughtered for the shades, she may not make the decision. The goat and sacrificial beast are both stabbed by the officiator, or another man who is adept and sexually clean, with ceremonial spears which are permanently stored for this purpose in the umsamo part of the roof of indlu yakwagogo.²⁾ As with the goat, the beast 'sleeps' in indlu yakwagogo overnight and the old mother of the home,³⁾ or young boys, or the old man will sleep there lest some of it be stolen or utilized for witchcraft. Great

1) See also Berglund 1976, p.231

2) See also Krige 1957, p.40

3) See also Berglund 1976, p.238

care must also be taken of the umswani of both sacrificial goat and beast lest a witch or wizard use them to bring disaster to the home. Hence the mother of the home, because she is old and pure, prior to the cooking of the goat and later of the beast, separately smears the stomach contents into the dung in the cattle-kraal, or buries them in a hole within the cattle-kraal over which she usually sprinkles paraffin or Jeyes Fluid to nullify their effectiveness for witchcraft and to mask the scent of the beast that died lest it cause the others to mourn and bellow for it. The old woman may either dispose of the umswani herself or she may supervise its disposal by the izinsizwa of the home. She then washes her hands with water which for safety's sake she also usually disposes of inside the cattle-kraal. The old woman is also responsible for removing the umswani of the inanzi: some roll this into a little ball which they keep at the umsamo for an inyanga to use as umuthi; others mix it in the manure of the cattle-kraal. It is widely regarded as prophylactic medicine, but it is also highly susceptible to witchcraft because of the ancestral essence contained in it.

On the same day the old man, or if he is deceased the old woman, pours the goat's bile at the umsamo of indlu yakwa-gogo where the bladder is hung once it has been washed and inflated, though some homes prefer the umninimuzi to attach it to his head or lapel; and so that it will not be stolen for witchcraft the old woman may later burn it in her hut with or without impepho depending on preference. The gall-bladder of the beast slaughtered is not the concern of the old woman and is usually worn by the umnikazi wekhaya as a bracelet. Although Berglund reports that bracelets made of the hide of a sacrificial beast may be worn by old women married into the clan,¹⁾ virtually all old women and men interviewed are adamant that a woman never wears a hide-bracelet (isiphandla): these wristlets are worn solely by a male such as the head of the home or his sons, in particular

1) Berglund 1976, p.239

the eldest. The meat of the beast is cooked either in or just outside the cattle-kraal, usually adjacent to the umsamo section where the ancestors are said to relish the aroma of the rising smoke. In a few exceptional homes, on account of her state of purity the old woman may handle and cook the meat of the beast; whether or not they do so old women generally claim this as one of their newly-attained prerogatives. In general only men handle and cook the meat of the ancestors. What the old mother of the home does is to clean the cooking-pots, pour in the water and make, kindle and stoke the fire; then the izinsizwa put in the pieces of meat and turn and cook them under her watchful eye. If she is of an advanced age and finds the work too onerous the old mother may instruct the children to wash the pots and fetch water and ask the izinsizwa to help her with the fire. The old mother is said to be 'cooking the meat' because she is there busying herself with the cooking pots, checking whether there is too little water and ensuring by her supervision that the meat is cooked properly. She is also on guard lest anyone interferes with the meat or endangers the family by practising witchcraft on it.

On account of her purity and the fact that she no longer fears the ancestors but serves them, the oldest wife of the home smears the floor of indlu yakwagogo with cowdung, though if she is too frail she may request any young daughter of the umuzi to do this for her. The old woman smears indlu yakwagogo prior to the goat being reported in it, as a token of respect to the shades who should find a clean abode in which to partake of the feast. She again smears it when the carcass of the ox or cow is removed from this house and is being prepared for cooking, or at the end of the entire ritual proceedings once the beast has been eaten so as to remove its blood and the ancestral presence, since wives of child-bearing age are not permitted to enter the house where the deceased elders have assembled to eat unless it has been cleansed.

Neighbouring men, but not women of any age, may join the umndeni in the eating of the beast. The old women

generally eat the beast in indlu yakwagogo, the men eat in house of the umninimuzi, and the omakoti in a separate hut. Women who are still child-bearing may not enter the hut of the mother of the home because this is the 'highest' hut: it belongs to 'an ancestor' and here the ritual meat has been kept. But in some homes all the married women congregate in indlu yakwagogo to partake of the beast. Those who allow the omakoti this privilege argue that the house has been smeared and the ancestral presence has thereby been removed. In such cases the old women sit on the right or male side of the hut in order of seniority in marriage; omakoti sit on the left or female side out of respect for the men's side. The two age-groups eat from separate trays, the oldest woman usually cutting and dividing the meat into portions.

When the women have eaten their meat the old grandmothers summon the omakoti and in single file with the old woman to the fore, they kneel or stand bowed outside the hut where the men are sitting; any old woman, or in some homes all the women in unison, will say: 'We are very grateful Zungu because you have done this ritual slaughter for your old people.' One man responds: 'We too join you in giving our thanks because this food is not only ours, it is for the great ones [the shades].' The women then return to their respective huts where they will drink beer. In some imizi nowadays a boy of the home is subsequently sent to call the married women to the men's hut where there is a large pot of beer. The omakoti, and then the grandmothers who are seated on the men's side, partake. One of the men will then begin to sing and dance and all join in; old women but not omakoti will ululate so that the ancestors will hear and rejoice for it indicates that people are remembering them with gratitude. In former times no umakoti was ever permitted to drink beer, and old women drank separately in indlu yakwagogo.

Among the Biyela and Khanyile the old mother temporarily stores the bones of the sacrificial goat and beast on a meat-platter at her umsamo; thereafter she burns them in the fireplace of her house or the umsamo part of the cattle-kraal¹⁾ as a protection from witchcraft which could counter-

1) See also Wanger 1926, p.20

act the protective powers of the ancestors over their descendants. In some isibongo she adds impepho to create a pleasing aroma for the shades. The ash is inconsequential and not specifically treated. Dlomo old women tend not to burn the bones of the goat but sprinkle some with paraffin, and give others circumspectly to their dogs in the cattle-kraal; they regard these as more susceptible to witchcraft than those of the beast because the ancestors have entered them, and argue that since male outsiders can partake of the beast they have easy access to these bones; there is thus no point in treating them against use by witches.

The old woman or old man of the home drinks the beer that was set aside for the ancestral shades once all the other beer has been drunk. Little children and males of the home are sometimes also accorded this privilege, but women who are still capable of child-bearing: i.e. wives and married daughters, as well as neighbours (all of whom are considered outsiders), may not do so because beer is regarded as the food of the ancestors. It is believed that if fertile women drank this beer the ancestors would enter them and stop their capacity for procreating. Most people argue that the same rule applies to a fertile man as to an umakoti and that its consumption can even lead to insanity among men, but in homes where men are allowed to partake of the ritual beer this danger is obviated by the belief that the men are of this home and these are their ancestors who have 'licked' it: they will therefore be unaffected.

The old people of the home may also use the snuff that was set aside for the shades. Some time after the ritual the inanzi of the goat that was set aside for the shades will be the final portion of the ritual meat to be eaten by the old women and old men of the home, and by children who have not yet reached puberty, for if an umakoti eats the inanzi it is believed the shades will prevent her from child-bearing.¹⁾ An old lady explains that she eats this meat because she is 'half an idlozi'.

1) See also Mahlobo & Krige 1934, p.176; Krige 1957, p.295; Ngubane 1977, pp.54, 123

8.3.2 Minor ritual acts

The manner and circumstances in which the ancestors are approached is determined either by the customs of the home or by an isangoma. Thus in certain homes the old woman will remind the occupants that it is customary to express gratitude to the ancestors for giving them children by slaughtering a goat, placing beer, or burning incense for the shades, though nowadays with the prevailing poverty they may only slaughter a chicken or brew beer. Similarly if a son or daughter of the home has survived some trouble such as a road accident or being accosted by gangsters, the old woman may suggest that a white goat be slaughtered to thank the shades. Old women maintain that 'many wrong things happen and the shades punish in various ways, but especially by making a person ill'. Old women regard it as a sign of esteem when the young wives report matters to them. If there is an old man in the home the adult sons tend to report matters to him but if he has died the old wife may take the place of the father.

On one occasion when a granddaughter was ill and her mother had decided to take her to Johannesburg for treatment, a chicken was killed and its blood spilt at a spot on the premises where the shades are addressed; it was then roasted as provision (umphako) for the journey. The daughter-in-law gave the old mother of the home its neck and wing as is customary before a journey, and she hung these at her umsamo for the ancestors so that they would protect the mother and child. The old lady then knelt on the premises, sprinkled snuff on the ground where the blood had been spilt, and appealed directly to the shades for help: 'Keep guard over my child so that she can succeed in her journey and so that the sickness may move away from her. Even the grandmothers, the grandfathers, the great-grandparents come together and help.' The old woman later ate the neck and wing, the wing in particular being regarded as her portion, some say because it is associated with flying and will thus prevent the person from going away for good. Old women commonly ask the ancestors of their husband's umndeni to grant their sons a safe journey and stay, and at such times

will usually burn a little impepho on charcoal so that the ancestors will protect them.

Old women keep the ancestral shades content by periodically having beer brewed for them. When it is ready the old woman pours a little of the beer into a small pot which she places at the umsamo saying: 'I am thankful for my life in this home'. The ritual beer that is set aside for the ancestors is called umva kwembiza (behind the pots) and customarily only old people should drink it. Thus, as is usual in such cases, this beer will be consumed last of all by old men or old women who have passed the age of child-bearing. Even if it is not a ritual brewing then, unless beer is brewed to reward a work-party, the old woman usually places a small pot of the beer at the umsamo and elderly people of the home will drink it. Although old women may drink the beer set aside for the ancestors, no-one mentioned this fact when likening an old woman to a man. In a ritual beer-drink old women tend to drink beer in the company of younger women, though on such occasions the gathering of men (ibandla) will sometimes invite an old woman to drink beer with them.

Many old women sprinkle snuff at the umsamo of their huts or place a tin of it there for the benefit of the deceased whenever they grind for themselves. When a child in a certain home was ill an old lady placed a tin of snuff at the umsamo of her house saying: 'Nanku ugwayi bafowethu nabafowethukazi, bhemani nonke! - Here is your tobacco my brothers and sisters (literally, female brothers i.e. women who married into the home): have a sniff all of you!'

Old women also keep the ancestors verbally informed about the affairs of the home, particularly if the umninimuza is deceased. They will privately advise the shades of new acquaintances or inform them that the insizwa or the umuza has brought baby-clothing for the child that was conceived illegitimately, and the old woman will have such clothing placed at her umsamo overnight for the inspection and blessing of the shades before it is brought to the girl's home. In the diary that was kept of an old Biyela widow she publicly

addressed her husband's shades fourteen times in the course of the year on behalf of some member of the home. Respectfully bowing outside the umsamo section of the cattle-kraal she three times asked for their help concerning illness in the family, and four times asked them to guard over different members of the home employed in the cities; she appealed for their protection for a daughter-in-law who was to set out on a journey and for the court-case of a grandson; she also sought their forbearance because the adult heir lacked the means to slaughter a goat they had requested, and asked them to assist him in obtaining the necessary money. She informed them of a beer-drink in their honour, told them of the isidikli and ingouthu cattle that were leaving the umuzi to pay damages for a girl who had been impregnated by one of her grandsons, and advised them of the state of negotiations concerning the illegitimate child of the home. Finally she asked them to be patient at the postponement of the umemulo they had wanted, a letter having been written to inform the father of the request. Even among educated Christians the old mother of the umuzi or umndeni, of the father's or mother's side, sustains such contact with the ancestral shades on behalf of the family when there is no senior surviving male to do so.

8.3.3 Relationship of the old woman to her husband's ancestors

8.3.3.1 The institution of respect

Such ritual activities as have been described above raise certain questions as regards the relationship of the old woman not only to her husband's ancestors but to the living members of his agnatic group. It would seem that the degree and manner in which an old wife may approach her husband and his agnates as ancestral shades is an extension of the institution of inhlonipho (respectful restraint). The essence of this institution as it affects a married woman is that she may not mention or approach her affinal seniors as an equal, the injunction persisting after their demise, particularly with regard to her husband's father, husband's father's brothers, husband's father's father and even her husband's mother.

Callaway alleged that 'old women are called men, and no longer act as women, nor observe the customs of hlonipha in relation to men.'¹⁾ There is support for this statement in the behaviour and words of a number of old women. Some say that an old woman's position is equivalent to that of her husband and she is his partner. They call each other by their ordinary names and even send one another on errands. Such old women will liken themselves to men, saying that the grandmother and grandfather are 'on the same level'. On one occasion a very old woman of the Dlomo tribe visited the chief's residence and seated herself with the men to the right of the door. When asked whether it was appropriate for her to do so, she replied that she sat on the male side because she was now a man and as an old woman she no longer respected any place, not even the cattle-kraal. In similar vein an old Biyela lady claims that she is allowed to mention the names of the ancestors exactly as they are and that she mentions every name whether the person is an ancestor or not.

The respectful behaviour evinced by old women and their attitudes as to the conduct expected of them encompasses a wide spectrum. An old woman enjoys greater freedom of speech than one who is fertile and will at times politely but firmly take issue with her husband in public. The old woman is said to be 'free in everything she discusses with her husband, for there is no partition now', yet old women generally believe that a respectful old wife should speak her mind in private. Should there be no resolution of an argument in which an old wife and her husband take opposing viewpoints then the old woman normally either walks away clicking her disagreement or sits in stony silence allowing her husband the final say.

Although there is variation in the respect-behaviour of old women, the majority of aged men and women concur that even when past the age of child-bearing a woman should continue to respect the people she respected when young and in much the same way, both in word and deed. Most old

1) Callaway 1970, p.440

women believe that there is no difference in their respect-behaviour now as compared to their younger days, particularly with regard to the inhlonipho of speech. Old men emphasize that a father-in-law's name is 'never to be touched by a woman, no matter how old she is', nor are the names of his brothers¹⁾ for should they do so some misfortune will befall them or their children. It is also considered difficult for an old woman to mention the name of her husband's grandfather or great-grandfather for they were the owners of the home. And inhlonipho encompasses a woman's husband and his brothers, particularly those who are older. She is not allowed to mention the name of her husband's mother, but the grandmother who bore his mother and her mother's brother she may mention.

Councillors argue that the respect of an old woman does not alter from when she was younger, and there is only a slight change such as that she can now enter the house where the ritual meat is kept in indlu yakwagogo. The old mother of the Dlomo chief is adamant that a woman respects until she dies, and this attitude does not change. She must respect everybody in her husband's lineage, even the children. This old lady regards those women who no longer respect because they are old as being 'lost', for she says a wife must bow before all the brothers of her husband. Even in her case, as the mother of the chief, she bears in mind that she was not born in this home and must respect to the end of her days. 'I remain bound' is how she phrases her position. It is thus in keeping that although this old lady will sit on the men's side of the hut, she often does so in a kneeling position. She observes that she must particularly revere the names of her husband's father and words which have an affinity to them, and in conversation she never uses the word for boy because the father of the reigning chief was named uMfanawomuzi, boy of the home; instead she uses umkhapsheya as the respect form.

Respect persists in action. An old woman should bow when addressing older men, particularly her husband's

1) See also Breytenbach 1971, p.203

brothers. No woman may stand erect in front of a male,¹⁾ and even in her old age should bend before a younger man when speaking to him. Many old women continue to do so; the fact that all do not evince such patterns is attributed to stubbornness or is viewed as a sign of the times. A few women when they are old take a tub of water, undress, and wash their body on the premises outside their hut. Other old women remark that such behaviour would not have been tolerated formerly and maintain that these old women are only behaving in this manner because the times are modern. They argue that an old woman in deed and word should continue to respect the premises because she knows that her husband's deceased people are present and see her. The inhlonipho of dress is not as strict for the old woman as it was when she was an umakoti, although she should still wear some token such as a shawl, blanket or head-scarf.

It thus appears that the oft-heard phrase that old women resemble men should not be taken too literally or categorically. The respect-behaviour of old women nowadays reflects a greater freedom of dress, action and speech than that of fertile women, and a greater tolerance of behaviour, but it is modified by traditional restraints that have become ingrained. It seems that the release of old women from respect-behaviour and speech is not as complete as Callaway and after him Ngubane²⁾ suggested, nor as some women declare; and it particularly does not apply to members of the ascending generation of the husband's agnatic group nor to the old woman in her role as daughter-in-law. The apparent freedom from respect by certain old women may stem from the fact that the old woman is now one of the living seniors of the home in relation to the children among whom she lives, the number of people whom she previously had to respect in daily life having been diminished by death. But whatever they might say or even believe no old women were found using the personal names of their husbands or their affinal kinsmen; they would use their isibongo or regiment name

1) See also Raum 1973, p.13

2) Ngubane 1977, p.54

or a phrase such as ubaba wekhaya (father of the home). The fact that old women still pay respect is further apparent in their relationship to their husband's ancestors, as is exemplified in the next section.

8.3.3.2 Approaching the ancestral shades

Where the old woman is the only old person staying with her children or grandchildren and any incident happens that necessitates communication with the amadlozi, she can call for assistance from the deceased elders of the family. But although the old woman has the right to invoke the shades if there is no suitable kinsman or kinswoman, she may only approach them in certain ways. An old wife is not allowed to call the ancestors by their individual names, particularly not those of her husband's father and his brothers, but must use a generic term like 'Oh grandfathers and grandmothers', and she must continue to respect her husband by calling him by his isibongo, ibutho (regiment) or isithakazelo. This is general practice.

At a feast the owners of the home tend to be the first mentioned; the grandmothers might then be included and sometimes the deceased mothers and co-wives, and in cases of illness the ancestor who is said to have inflicted the illness is first addressed; thereafter the members of the umndeni from eldest to youngest are referred to, though some begin with the generation of their husband and his brothers, referring to them by the generic term obaba (fathers) and then referring back to the ascending generations by saying 'Pass on the prayer to the other older ones.' An old woman should not address the ancestors personally because they are older than she is and in relation to them she is in the position of a daughter-in-law. She must even respect the deceased old women by using their natal izibongo.

An old woman, like a man, has the right to admonish (ukukhuza) the deceased elders, or apologise to them (ukushweleza) or appeal to them for help; but no old wife may mime the heroic exploits (ukugiya) of her deceased

husband or praise the shades (ukuthetha amadlozi¹⁾ or ukubonga) for she must respect the old people of the home. Informants were unequivocal in stating that the ancestors are greeted with respect, praised and thanked by males or daughters of the home, who may mention their fathers' praises,²⁾ but not by old wives of the home who may not even 'touch' (ukuphatha) i.e. mention the names of the male ancestors of her husband.

No old wife may address the ancestors in the cattle-kraal because she may not mention the names of the dead owners there. Only a male, or a daughter born of the home even if she is married elsewhere, may speak in the cattle-kraal. But like the old man, the old wife either addresses the ancestors at the umsamo of indlu yakwagogo or in some izibongo outside the umsamo part of the cattle-kraal. When someone is sick the old man goes to the umsamo at indlu yakwagogo and apologises to the guardians, or he speaks outside the umsamo of the cattle-kraal. In the absence of their husbands old women will likewise appease the amadlozi when there is illness in the home. One old lady addresses the deceased women at the umsamo of her hut but enters the premises to address the deceased males. People in all three tribes regard such separate treatment of male and female ancestors as highly irregular. According to the ibandla of chief Biyela the old woman may speak outside the cattle-kraal as would the male owners, whereas in chief Dlomo's home the old wife may only speak at her umsamo because she is a stranger to the umuzi and respects its ancestors; she cannot therefore speak in the premises at the cattle-kraal. Although a woman does not usually address the ancestors when her husband is alive, if there is trouble, especially when one of the omakoti or children is ill, some very old wives burn incense at the umsamo of their hut and call on the amadlozi.

When an old woman's husband is still alive he is responsible for communicating with the amadlozi. If the head of the home is deceased, his eldest son - provided that he is

1) See also Doke & Vilakazi 1953, p.792; Berglund 1973, p.40; Hammond-Tooke 1978, pp.140-141

2) See also Berglund 1976, p.225

old enough and sufficiently articulate - does so, otherwise in some homes a male lineage senior will substitute, whereas in others the old grandmother of the home is next in line. If the ritual requires that a specific ancestor be appeased or thanked and there are no suitable male relatives of a man's umndeni alive or available, then the husband's sister is called to her natal home for this purpose. If she is unavailable or deceased or no longer remembers the praises of her father and brothers, the eldest married daughter would be asked, for she can mention her father and grandfather by name since she is of the home. Even among Christian Khanyile an elderly sister or daughter of the home is called to address the ancestors if the wife is young and therefore does not as yet have the power to do so; it is however very rare that she would do so if she were still child-bearing, because a 'clean' person must communicate with them.

Although a man is usually the official praiser (imbongi) of the chief and his ancestors, if the men cannot memorise the praises then a woman can do so. But in order to utter the praises of her natal home she must be an elderly woman born of the former chief's family. A woman cannot praise the family into which she has married. This woman must have passed the stage of child-bearing because the ancestral shades might prevent her from bearing children. She must also be a competent speaker. Like her male counterpart the old female praiser may only praise and enumerate the deeds of the deceased chiefs, not the reigning chief. And a woman is never amongst the ancestors praised, whether she be a daughter or wife.

Men and women agree that an old woman can address the ancestral shades because she is like a man, she is considered to be an idlozi, and she is 'clean'. She may do so provided there is no person present who has preferential right, in particular no older person of her husband's agnatic group. A very old woman may address her husband's ancestors until she is almost senile, or if her husband is senile his old wife can substitute for him. Old women maintain that she is allowed to address the shades at the home

where she married and can be called to the place where she was born if there is no old man in that home, for instance if no ritual such as ukubuyisa has been performed there since the umninimuza died and he has indicated such by causing sickness. To a large degree situational selection determines whether an elderly wife or daughter of the home addresses the ancestors. In practice, when an old widow is the oldest person in the home and umndeni, and particularly if her adult sons are absent, she tends to be the one who approaches her husband's ancestral shades on behalf of the family on all matters. Many people argue that she is preferred to a daughter of the home because her long residence and commitment to the family have brought her closer to the umndeni. And even when an adult son is present he may be heard asking his aged mother to pray to the deceased elders on behalf of the family since she is the one who has lived in the home for a long time and personally knows those who have passed away and how best to approach them.

Despite this enhanced ritual role it should be remembered that rules of respect regulate the manner in which the old wife may approach the ancestors, and it is imperative at such times that she should cover her shoulders and kneel or bow to honour her husband's parents. An old wife sums up her ritual position: 'I am allowed to address the ancestral shades but I am not allowed to mention their names, only to apologize if there is any wrath. I cannot simply speak here because I am not of this home. I am not allowed even to mention the respect names of the amadlozi. I still have to respect. I respect as before. I have not changed.'

8.3.4 The old woman as semi-ancestral

An old woman knows that the ancestors are pleased with her if nothing untoward happens in the home, if all her daughters are married, her sons have wives, if they have children and all is peaceful. Some people are of the opinion that the ancestors do not get angry with a woman who has grown old because she is an idlozi. Yet old women, and even old men, must continue to conduct themselves with decorum to earn

ancestral favour. If an old woman is a gossip or troublesome then the ancestors of her husband's home may cause her to break a limb or become ill. An old woman also draws the wrath of the deceased elders if she swears or quarrels with the omakoti or practises witchcraft. Such behaviour necessitates an apology to prevent misfortune in the home.

Old women take their ritual role seriously and see themselves as intermediaries between the living and the dead. The old woman is a servant of the ancestors who conveys messages to those who are younger. As such she considers herself important. She ensures the perpetuation of tradition and instructs younger people how to behave. An old lady says: 'As far as I know I'm the only one here who is acceptable to the ancestors, because I am old.'

Old people see themselves as semi-ancestral¹⁾ because they are permitted to address the shades. This quasi-ancestral quality makes it possible for them to bring misfortune or good fortune to others. They are therefore circumspect in what they say to a child or younger person. That the words of aged people have the power of a curse is apparent in the belief that what a young person predicts rarely materializes, but should an old woman for instance be annoyed by an umakoti and threaten that if she is insolent she will never get a baby, it is believed that the woman will not conceive until the ancestral shades have been appeased. Lack of courtesy towards an old person is thought to bring bad luck to the offender whereas an old woman's blessings bestow prosperity. An old person's wishes must therefore be respected. If an old woman asks for anything this should be given her in the knowledge that the person who flouts the wishes of an ancestor will become unlucky.

Opinions differ as to whether an old person should be called idlozi directly.²⁾ Some old women regard it as permissible: they consider the term a pleasing exaggeration indicative of their heightened importance. However others consider it disrespectful because they dislike being reminded

1) See also Berglund 1973, p.40

2) See also Berglund 1976, p.89

that they are on the threshold of death. Some people only liken a person to an idlozi when he or she is of such an advanced age that he has to be dragged into the sun on a skin. They maintain that you cannot address an elderly person as an idlozi directly, but that with advancing age he or she resembles one. They point out that the aged are respected as ancestral shades but only become such after death; and that although a living person who is old may be referred to as an idlozi, if one dreams of an old person it is not regarded as a message from the shades but just as an ordinary dream about another living person.

8.3.5 Identification with the husband's lineage

Old women closely identify themselves with their husband's umndeni. They repeatedly state that their conjugal home is where they belong and become amadlozi, and that when the ancestors of their husbands' umndeni are addressed, then as deceased women of the home they will be mentioned. Likewise on asking old women whether the ancestors they pray to are of their own or their husband's lineage they reply categorically that they do not refer to the shades of their natal umndeni because they are no longer in touch with them; some even aver that old women have no contact with their former lineage and are only members of the umndeni into which they married. Old people of both sexes insist that when a woman marries she is regarded as having left her home and having bade farewell to the ancestors there; thereafter she belongs to the ancestors of her conjugal home.¹⁾ After her marriage her name is never mentioned as an ancestor in the umndeni where she was born.

In this respect the umbeka feast that is transferred at marriage is considered important, for it bids farewell on behalf of the bride to the ancestors of her natal umndeni and signifies that she is no longer theirs; it is also an introduction to the amadlozi of the new umndeni to which she is coming, and ritually unites both the ancestors and lineages of the umakoti and umkhwenyane (groom). The umbeka is of great ritual significance for it

1) See p.142

is usually transferred at marriage with the pronouncement of the fertility formula: 'May you sleep being two, may you wake being three' and it is believed that without its transfer a wife will not conceive. A harmonious relationship should therefore exist between the living and deceased members of the two agnatic groups, but the husband's ancestors dominate his home. After marriage the ancestors of the woman's home are said to have ended their guardianship over her. Only conception is influenced by both sets of shades, and only izangoma are said to be controlled by the amadlozi of both sides.

Despite this strong identification with their husband's umndeni old women still have an obligation to assist members of their original umndeni whenever possible. If the distance is not too great, married women return to their natal homes for feasts or for a ritual slaughter, though they rarely remain for long. When gifts are presented at weddings to members of their original lineage, they are among the recipients. If people at her natal home are in difficulty the old woman may be requested to come and help them, or as the sole surviving relative she may be asked by the young to advise them on the customs of the home. Old women acknowledge these services between a married daughter and the home of her father and brother but consider them less important than their commitments to their conjugal home. When asked whether the break with their natal homes was perhaps not as great as they emphasized, because for instance they retain the isibongo of their place of birth and must perform the final act of cleansing from the death of the husband there, old women while agreeing with the facts re-emphasized the degree of their incorporation into their husband's agnatic group with a counter example that after marriage they wear mourning for their in-laws but not for their biological parents and siblings. The manner in which they view the issue is that a married woman is no longer a shade of her old home but certain things sometimes occur there that call for her attention; in addition her natal home is regarded as the place to which events in her married

life are reported.

It might at first seem anomolous that an old woman is increasingly incorporated into her husband's lineage and finally is integrated into its lineage ancestry but that she retains the isibongo of her natal home. The situation is not contradictory if one bears in mind, first as Faye argues, that 'it would be incestuous for a woman to have the same isibongo as her husband';¹⁾ second that by maintaining links with her natal home a woman is afforded protection from maltreatment or neglect in old age by the people of an alien isibongo into which she has married, and has a place of refuge should she prove to be barren and accordingly be rejected by her husband's family; and thirdly that marriage is regarded as an alliance between agnatic groups and its viability is palpably demonstrated by addressing a woman by her maiden name.

8.3.6 Omens associated with old women

People of the three tribes studied disagree with Callaway when he says that 'the Ithongo [shade] of an old woman is supposed to be malicious and spiteful; that of the infant is pure and beneficent.'²⁾ The shades of infants play a minor part in the religious system: with few exceptions people claim that infants and children do not automatically become amadlozi; they argue that when the ancestors are referred to only the grandmothers and grandfathers are mentioned and they are the ones whose shades have been ceremonially brought back home (ukubuyisa) to guard members of the family and to prevent illness. Diviners confirm that an old woman's shade can bring good news, good luck and much that is positive: so a mishap may be divined as being caused by a spiteful person who may be old, but negative qualities are not solely associated with old women

1) Faye 1923, p. 101

2) Callaway 1970, p.176

or their shades,¹⁾ for ancestors generally display the behavioural characteristics associated with them when alive.

That the shades of old women have a propensity towards bringing good fortune is further substantiated by the omens which represent them. No evil omens are solely associated with old women in the tribes studied nor is there any knowledge of umsenene, a large brown snake,²⁾ or of umabibini,³⁾ said to represent an old woman. The majority of informants were adamant that snakes represent men;⁴⁾ all people emphasize however, that different izibongo and imindeni have different ancestral apparitions. A few informants maintained that an old woman ancestor can be seen in the form of an inkambaphansi ('blind-worm') or usungulo (a harmless, blind snake) but most regard such as snakes associated with women and used in love-potions. The isicashakazana (tree ghecko) is said to embody the idlozi of an old woman and brings good fortune:⁵⁾ as such it is never killed because it is believed to be the personification of the grandmother. Old people recall that in former times a goat would be slaughtered to please the old ancestress when this omen appeared. Dlomo associate the isicashakazana with the grandmother, and its appearance signifies the coming of some form of good luck: it has a white band on the head similar to that traditionally worn by a woman, whereas the intulo (a species of lizard) has a larger body and no white line but is still regarded as representing the shade of an old woman. Some Dlomo people believe that when the isicashakazana is a paternal grandmother it comes straight into the husband's house and when it is the maternal grandmother it slithers along the wall or enters the house of the wife. Isicashakazana is also referred to by the synonyms isalukazi (old woman), inkosikazi, or umkhwekazi, mother-in-law.

Particularly among the Biyela the shade of an old woman may also appear in the form of a crab, which enters indlu yakwagogo, walks along the propinquent

1) See also Callaway 1872, p.181; Ngubane 1977, p.55

2) Krige 1957, p.285

3) Gordon 1880, pp.101, 103

4) See also Ngubane 1977, p.50

5) See also Bryant 1917, p.140; Bryant 1920, p.45; Callaway 1970, pp.215-218

side of the wall and goes to its umsamo: it is not permissible to kill such a creature. Some Khanyile and Dlomo similarly regard the umcimbithwa (large green grasshopper) or inyendle (the house cricket) as a sign of good luck: if the former alights on you or enters your hut it symbolizes old people as ancestors. The visitation of a praying-mantis (isithwalambiza) is generally regarded by all three tribes as an aged ancestor that signifies good fortune. The shade of an old man generally appears as a brown praying-mantis and that of an old woman as a green mantis. Either is said to herald such good fortune that beer should be brewed to honour the visit to the home, and a small pot of beer which may be placed at umsamo will afterwards only be drunk by an old woman or an old man.

8.3.7 The house of grandmother

Just as an old woman after her death continues to exist as a shade to her offspring so too is her house never destroyed but remains a symbol of the unity and regeneration of her husband's patrilineage.¹⁾ Even while the old woman is alive this house is of crucial importance to the home and may be called indlu yamadlozi (the house of the ancestral shades) because the sacrificial meat, gall-bladders and beer are placed at its ancestral shrine. The sacred character of this house is further visible in that specific parts of the ritual animals are attached to it: for instance the bushy part of the ox or cow's tail (ishoba) is hung at the umsamo so that the ancestors will strengthen the remaining cattle and cause them to multiply. The jaws and collar-bone of the sacrificial goat are inserted inside the roof over the doorway of the house; in some homes one collar-bone of the beast ritually slaughtered is also placed there or outside on the roof, the other being burnt by ugogo when she incinerates the bones. The ukhanda, upper skull and horns of the goat, are inserted over the doorway or on the inside or outside of the roof. The skull and horns of the beast are attached to the

1) See also de Clercq 1969, p.66

outside of the roof of indlu yakwagogo or to the fence of the cattle-kraal, both these areas being associated with the shades. The display of these items informs the ancestors that a ritual has been performed in their honour, hence they will be well disposed to protect the umuzi; they are also a signal to other people that the members of the family honour their forefathers. The sacred coil of the nation, inkatha yamadlozi (the circle of the ancestral shades), symbolizing the unity of the nation and containing the essence of kings, was also formerly stored in the old mother's house.¹⁾ Indlu yakwagogo is where people lie when they are ill and where izangoma come to divine. The house is regarded as the core of the umuzi, hence people who do not respect it or who exercise witchcraft there are believed to be able to annihilate the entire umuzi. It is a pure house, inhabited only by ugogo and her grandchildren, and is one in which sexual intercourse does not take place.

Not only are the ancestral rituals held in grandmother's house but when a man leaves home for the first time to gain employment he invariably spends his last night in this house to obtain good luck. The same procedure is usually followed prior to all his trips to work in the city, and in the morning when he is about to depart the son will bring his luggage and provisions to indlu yakwagogo. Here the old mother will burn some impepho in front of him and in some homes he must touch it with both feet so that the shades will accompany and protect him. On his return from employment he again usually spends his first night sleeping with his luggage in this house so that the ancestors will once again bless him. Even if her husband is alive, the sons of the old mother meet in her house every morning, talk and drink tea there. It is the place where the umndeni meets for all occasions. This then is the most important house. Even when other huts in the umuzi show signs of acculturation and take the form of rondavels, the one house that invariably remains the traditional beehive is indlu yakwagogo because this is regarded as

1) Krige 1957, p.243

indlu yesiZulu - 'the true Zulu house'.

Krige writes that in a typical homestead 'the chief wife or inkosikazi occupies the indlunkulu or chief hut, which is situated at the top end of the kraal exactly opposite the main entrance. Not only is the eldest son of this hut the chief heir and his father's successor, but it has an important position in religious matters.'¹⁾ It should be made clear that an umuzi often has two houses that may be referred to as indlunkulu: the house of the principal-wife married to the heir, and the house of grandmother (indlu yakwagogo) whose husband, or if he be deceased his son, is head of the home, and whose house, when viewed from the entrance, stands in the twelve o'clock position. Sometimes there are two beehive huts either one behind the other or adjacent to one another: one may belong to the deceased great-grandmother who was the eldest of the wives and in whose house the ancestors are now said to live, and the other is the indlunkulu of the grandmother i.e. the mother of the heir. The accompanying diagram²⁾ illustrates the pivotal position of the houses of the grandmother and great-grandmother; it also indicates the one o'clock position of the house of the principal-wife of the heir and the eleven o'clock position of the principal-wife or ikhohlwa. It must be emphasized that variations occur as to the placement and number of houses, kitchens and storehouses and that these are often influenced by the quality of human relationships in the home; however the twelve o'clock positioning of indlu yakwagogo, even if she be deceased, and of ingolobane yakwagogo is always fixed.

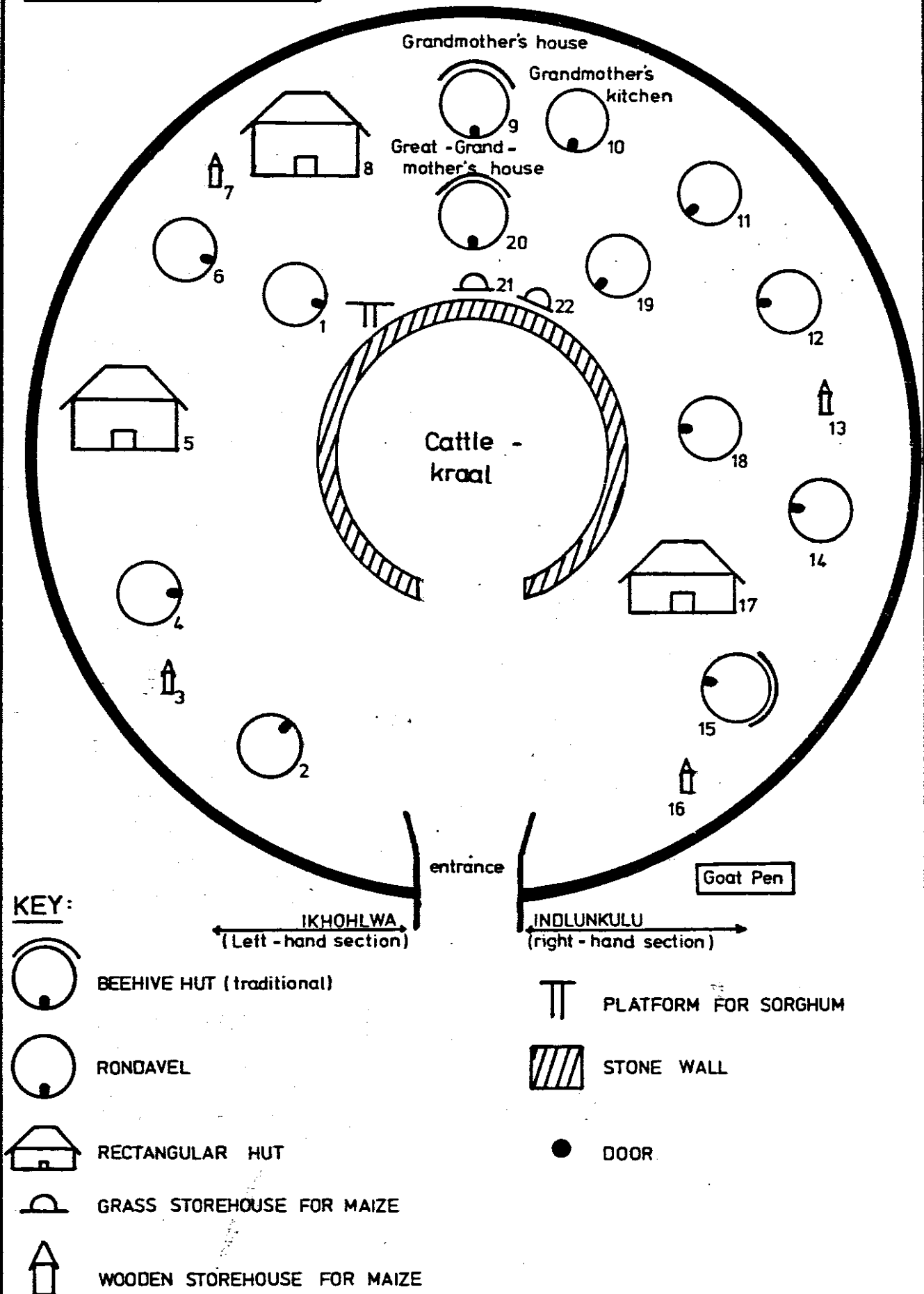
On her demise the indlunkulu of the old mother of the home may be used by the principal-wife of the heir who assumes the duties performed by ugogo, or it may be used as a hut for cooking by the principal-wife whose children might eat there, or as a temporary hut (ixhiba) for storing beer. Sometimes the house is simply left standing because this is where the old mother used to stay; it is the respected shrine where rituals take place and will also be used as the maternity hut. Should the great-grandmother's house

1) Krige 1957, p.40

2) See Figure 1, p.191

Figure 1

A POLYGYNOUS HOMESTEAD SHOWING THE POSITION OF THE OLD WOMAN'S HOUSE



NOTES TO FIGURE 1

Key to numbering of structures within the umuzi as viewed from the entrance:

Left-hand section: (ikhohlwa)

- 1 House of principal-wife of this section
- 2 House of second eldest wife of this section
- 3 Second eldest wife's storehouse
- 4 Second eldest wife's kitchen
- 5 Boys' private house
- 6 Principal-wife's kitchen
- 7 Principal-wife's storehouse
- 8 Husband's private house

Right-hand section: (indlunkulu)

- 9 Grandmother's house (indlu yakwagogo)
- 10 Grandmother's kitchen
- 11 Grandfather's house
- 12 Principal-wife's kitchen
- 13 Principal-wife's storehouse
- 14 Boys' private house
- 15 Second eldest wife's kitchen
- 16 Second eldest wife's storehouse
- 17 Husband's private house
- 18 House of second eldest wife of this section
- 19 Principal-wife's house
- 20 Great-grandmother's house; she is deceased
- 21 Grandmother's storehouse
- 22 Grandfather's storehouse

- i This homestead has reached its full cycle in that the owner's other wives have left to form separate homes in the neighbourhood with their eldest sons and their wives. The principal-wife (inkosikazi enkulu) remains as grandmother to the home and her eldest son is the only adult son in the umuzi and has married four wives.
- ii The inkosikazi enkulu (also referred to as indlunkulu) is head of the great-house or right-hand section; the second wife married is head of the ikhohlwa section.
- iii Most of the hut-types are modern and are rondavel or rectangular in shape; the only house that should be built according to Zulu custom is that of the great-grandmother and it must be positioned nearest the top of the cattle-kraal for this is the place of communion with the ancestral shades. The house of the grandmother is also in the twelve o'clock position and when it is the most senior house of the umuzi is invariably beehive in shape.

fall into such disrepair that it can no longer be renovated, or if the whole umuzi moves or a new hut is built in her memory, then two or three of the wattle withies (izintingo) of her old beehive hut are removed and attached to the inside roof or some part of the new grandmother's hut so that the amadlozi will recognize the place and the deceased old woman will know that her presence has not been forgotten. The old woman's house is not demolished but is maintained as the indlunkulu for her offspring.¹⁾ Thus there is always a hut built especially for the mother of the owner of the home, a special house. Its shrine is greatly respected and if her house is not perpetuated when she is dead the old mother will ask her children as an ancestor: 'Where has my house gone?'

8.3.8 Divination and the old woman

Bryant maintains that ninety per cent of izangoma were female.²⁾ van Nieuwenhuijsen provides a psychosomatic explanation for this sexual disparity, namely, that the role affords Zulu women a means of escaping tensions and conflict-situations, nowadays particularly caused by the migrant labour system.³⁾ Among the three tribes studied some izangoma attribute this 'preponderance to the 'weak position' of women, arguing that divining not only provides them with a creative outlet but a rise in status; one isangoma offers a cultural explanation related to the position of old women and to the notion of purity with which they are intimately linked. In his opinion women past child-bearing age are the 'correct' people to become izangoma. He maintains that originally all izangoma were old women and that it is only nowadays that young women are assuming the position; that is why it is common that when a young woman is possessed by the amadlozi and becomes an isangoma she

1) See also de Clercq 1969, p.66

2) Bryant 1920, p.48; see also van Nieuwenhuijsen 1974, p.18; Berglund 1976, pp.136; Ngubane 1977, p.102;

3) van Nieuwenhuijsen 1960, pp.21-23

becomes sterile, because the ancestral shades want an older person. This also explains why young izangoma cannot be totally committed: they would transform into old people.

Likewise an isangoma should not have sexual intercourse. Even in former times when a married woman became an isangoma if she was the only wife she is said to have requested her husband to take another wife because she may no longer have sexual contact with him. Young izangoma mention this dilemma: when they have completed their training they no longer desire the opposite sex, though some go against their inclination so that they can have children. Barren women are thought to make suitable izangoma: they do not bear children 'since the shades are sitting on their womb'. Thus the amadlozi are said to regard this profession as a gift to a 'clean' person, and the old woman is clean because she is past child-bearing. Divining is less suitable for an old man because men marry and have children until they die: a man's fertility is infinite. Because the old woman no longer menstruates and no longer has sexual intercourse and children, she is regarded as pure. Other izangoma affirm that in the past old women were the main izangoma on account of their purity.

Berglund states that when an ithwasa (novice possessed by the shades, apprentice-diviner) is being inducted, an old woman or pre-pubescent child, because of their sexual purity, prepares food for the novice.¹⁾ A variation of this custom is found in the training of an ithwasa among the Dlomo where the novice must eat her food in the presence of other novitiates or with an old woman because she is 'clean'. In the initiation of one ithwasa an old woman, usually the mother-in-law of her tutor, made the necklace, bracelets and headdress for the ceremony in which the ithwasa was to depart as an isangoma. This old woman also hid the umuthi which, if the ithwasa is possessed by a real idlozi and not by madness, she will correctly locate and detect. The old mother of the home in which the novice is learning her skills

1) Berglund 1976, p.159

may share snuff with the ithwasa because the old woman no longer has coitus, just as an ithwasa may not have sexual intercourse. The old woman may instruct the ithwasa to behave in a manner that she thinks is right, advising her for instance that she should not sit on a sheepskin because a sheep is feeble-minded. In one home in which a middle-aged daughter-in-law was an isangoma and tutor to two novices living in the umuzi, the old mother-in-law prepared the goatskin for the drum that one of the newly-inducted izangoma was about to take home with her, and the beast's tail which the ithwasa would use at her home when divining (ukubhula). When the ithwasa left this umuzi, in which she had been tutored for a year, the tutor asked her aged mother-in-law to ululate at her departure. The old woman instructed her younger son and other daughter-in-law to accompany the novitiate and her party to her home because it is customary that 'the father should see the beast that is to be paid to his wife'. The old woman also melted some fat and scraped soot off a pot in the fireplace of her hut, mixed it, and smeared the isidwaba which the ithwasa wore at her departure. The mother of the home said that she could provide such assistance because she is 'clean', i.e. she is past the age of child-bearing: she no longer has sexual intercourse or menstruates,¹⁾ and because she is knowledgeable.

Mainly old men and old women ancestors instruct a person to become an isangoma.²⁾ If she is unmarried the amadlozi of a woman's parents tend to enter her, but once she is married those of her husband's side predominate, though both may be relevant. The young shades are believed to bring luck but do not enter a person or turn her into an isangoma, for it is the old shades who come to teach important divination procedures and inspire izangoma. A number of izangoma emphasize that old women are in the forefront of their visions because 'zinamandla kakhulu izalukazi! - old women have tremendous power!'

1) See also Berglund 1976, pp.174, 179

2) See also Kohler 1941, p.18

Although an isangoma gains respect both within the patrilineage and beyond it, if a woman becomes an isangoma, even when old, her ritual status in the umuzi is not more elevated than that of her husband. The only difference is that her husband is dependent on her for advice because she talks with the unseen, and her knowledge of customs is deemed to surpass that of others. However, the profession of isangoma does not affect the rules pertaining to kinship, sex or seniority when the family shades are approached, and in homes where there is an old widow and an umakoti who is an isangoma the old widow is the one who communicates with the ancestral shades of her husband's family. Similarly a man can speak to the ancestors even though young, but a woman isangoma, whatever her age, is regarded as a person who came to her husband's umuzi by marriage and is bound to respect the old people of his home and their names.

8.4 The old woman and cattle

On questioning old women whether there is any difference in what they are allowed to do now that they have passed the menopause, a common reply is that as young women they were not allowed to pray to the ancestors nor were they allowed to enter the cattle-kraal but now they are old they may do so. Krige similarly states: 'The true position is that married women do not enter the cattle-kraal of their husband's house until after they are past child-bearing age; and even then would almost never do so. On the other hand daughters of the house, whether married or not, can and do enter the cattle-kraal.'¹⁾ Such statements are difficult to equate with the fact that married women, regardless of whether they are past the age of child-bearing, must receive authorization to enter the cattle-kraal by means of a simple ceremony. Should any woman enter the cattle-kraal without this restriction having been formally removed, she will have to pay a penalty and will be subject

1) Krige 1978, letter; see also Wanger 1926, p.18

to ancestral anger which may bring misfortune. In some imindeni this permission is granted soon after marriage when, for instance, she has returned home to have her hair trimmed (ukuphuca), but with others the privilege tends to be obtained only when she has borne a child.

A female elder of the home, usually the mother-in-law, instructs the umakoti to brew beer for the occasion of her entrance into the cattle-kraal (ukungeniswa) which is granted by the head of the home. On the appointed day men and women of the umndeni seat themselves inside the cattle-kraal at its umsamo. The umakoti places a clay-pot of beer in front of them, stirs, strains and serves it to them, and then also partakes. In some imindeni a goat or beast is ritually slaughtered for the occasion. In certain agnatic groups all the omakoti receive permission simultaneously whereas in others if a woman marries into the home after the other young wives had been granted permission she automatically qualifies for entrance, no further ceremonial being necessary.

After this ceremony all are free to enter the cattle-kraal so that they can fetch cowdung for smearing. The reason given for allowing a wife from another isibongo entrance into the cattle-kraal is a pragmatic one: namely, to relieve her of the burden of having to find someone suitable, such as a daughter of the home, to fetch cowdung for her.¹⁾ Should an old woman never have been granted this right of admission into the cattle-kraal she could not enter, therefore entering the cattle-kraal is not specifically related to attainment of the menopause; on the other hand if a woman is in her fertile years, then even though the special ceremony has been performed she cannot enter the cattle-kraal shortly after giving birth or whilst menstruating because her blood will affect the cattle adversely.

1) See also Werner 1921, p.36

On the basis of such evidence it appears that entrance into the cattle-kraal is not directly related to attainment of the menopause. Old people in all three tribes were adamant that even in former times any woman who entered a home by marriage had to undergo the ceremonial act of preparing beer for members of the umndeni to drink in the cattle-kraal. As with addressing the ancestors¹⁾ these elders conclude: 'Old women brag about nothing when they say they no longer respect the cattle-kraal, for they will remain omakoti in relation to these ancestors until they die.' It is therefore clear that a married woman may enter the cattle-kraal to perform certain duties subject to her not menstruating. And it is this restriction that relates to the purity of a post-menopausal woman, namely that provided the ceremony granting her permission has been performed she now has perpetual access, as does a man.

As with entering the cattle-kraal, a woman may not eat amasi at her conjugal home until authorized to do so. The removal of this restriction varies with izibongo but tends to occur when an umakoti returns to her natal home about a month after marriage to have the rim of hair below her headdress trimmed (this normally being performed by an old woman) or after the birth of her first child. Such permission tends to be given within a year of marriage, but in a few izibongo and imindeni a woman formerly might only be granted this privilege when she received the ingquthu beast on the occasion of her first daughter's marriage. The consumption of amasi is restricted to patrilineal relatives of both sexes within their own umuzi.²⁾ A young or old wife can never eat amasi at another umuzi where she did not obtain the ceremonial permission to do so after marriage, but even a man is restricted to its consumption within the umndeni whose cattle he shares. If a woman at any time eats amasi on a visit to her natal home

1) See pp.180-182

2) See also Raum 1973, p.19

then she must wait till the following day before eating it at her husband's home because she would be mixing both sets of cattle. One of the liberties old women enjoy is that they may consume amasi at any time compared to younger women who must abstain during their menstrual period¹⁾ since their blood might cause the cattle to weaken and die. This prerogative is of particular importance in times of food scarcity and as such is valued by old women, for amasi is virtually the only food available during a famine, and omakoti experience a degree of hardship by being unable to partake during their menstrual period.

There is therefore considerable substance in the statement that old women may now enter the cattle-kraal and eat milk-curd at all times, as do men. The restrictions that are removed with old age pertain to the state of purity attained by aged women: i.e. they may go into the cattle-kraal and eat amasi at any time compared to the prohibition during menstruation which prevented them.

8.5 Enhanced freedom of old women

The freedom that comes with the menopause is particularly mentioned by aged women with regard to entry into the cattle-kraal. They also derive pleasure from the fact that an old woman is allowed to talk loudly and to instruct and is considered as being 'on the same level' as a man. When there is a feast at home they may now walk within the premises and when an animal is slaughtered certain parts are exclusively reserved for the old woman as an elder. For instance the accessory lobe of the liver (impundu) is customarily the perquisite of old women because if a young person eats it he or she will become forgetful. Another piece of flesh that is particularly assigned to old women is the inanzi of a goat that has been ritually slaughtered. Child-bearing women never consume this part because of the belief that the ancestors enter those who eat it and by

1) See also Raum 1973, p.25

'sitting on their womb' prevent further pregnancies. The tail of a goat is also usually reserved for old women since they are thought to be no longer sexually inclined; it is said that younger women who eat it will become exciteable and be sexually aroused by any man.

It is clear that the simile likening an old woman to a man enhances her position in the culture despite a certain amount of marital friction engendered on account of the sexual disinclination which the concept implies. Particularly if she is widowed, and the most senior person in the umuzi or umndeni, the old woman attains a position of esteem. She has enhanced legal powers within the umndeni of her husband, and her symbolic purity enables her to communicate with the ancestral shades of her husband's agnatic group whose interests she has promoted over the years, while her house is the dwelling in which the shades predominantly congregate. When an old woman occasionally takes liberties her behaviour is rationalized on the basis of the veneration she achieves by virtue of her seniority, semi-ancestral position and being likened to a man.

It should however be remembered that although she enjoys greater freedom her position does not alter with regard to her husband's deceased seniors whom she is always bound to respect; similarly her role does not alter with regard to customs which preserve the identity of her husband's patrilineage. The limitations of this figure of speech are seen in that an old woman cannot freely attend the ibandla lenduna or ibandla lomnumzana, for she remains a woman who cannot represent a lineage, nor can she approach the ancestors in identical manner to a man. But she is respected because she has built a home for a man, looked after his family, and endured years of hardship as a young wife.

We may therefore conclude that the old woman is likened to a man because she does not bear children, no longer menstruates, and is thought to have no further sexual desire for a male; as such she is permitted to participate

in certain activities that define manhood, particularly decision-making, instruction, controlling the actions of members of the umuzi and communicating with the ancestral shades of her husband's agnatic group. By performing such roles as an elder she is accorded the dignity of a man, though her position is in many respects still that of a subordinate.

CHAPTER 9

FURTHER PERSPECTIVES ON OLD AGE

Old people recognize that physical decline is a natural phenomenon: as a person ages the blood is said to become weaker and the skin no longer fine and smooth. Physical powers are believed to diminish on account of serious illness, a hard life, and advanced age.

9.1 Factors believed to defer old age

There exists a belief that frequent pregnancies are health-giving and delay the onset of old age, while women who have few children will reach the menopause sooner and grow old more rapidly. An old woman who has had children is thought to look healthier than one who has had none because the fertile one had intervals of nine months when she did not menstruate. The woman who has many children is said to have her blood preserved, whereas the blood of the childless woman is wasted monthly. It is also believed that if people fulfil their sexual desires at the appropriate stage of life they will acquire physical strength. A wife is said to extend her youthfulness if she has frequent sexual intercourse leading to several pregnancies; by contrast a post-pubescent girl who has not yet selected a lover (itshitshi), and even one who has chosen a lover (iqhikiza) but indulges in full sexual intercourse, is said to become weak.

Sexual relations outside marriage are considered unlawful and lead to physical weakness but when sexual relations occur within marriage and both sets of ancestral shades come together, they yield greater strength because the sexual act has been sanctioned by both the dead and the living. A monogamist and his wife are thought to age more quickly than a polygynist who is considered well cared for sexually. Some old people consider longevity a gift from the ancestors; others believe old age can be attained by observing custom and showing respect, though sufficient good food is also considered important.

9.2 Characteristics of old age

The definition of old age centres on changed physiological conditions. Both sexes recognize wrinkles on the face and neck, sagging of the skin, backache and spinal curvature, lack of strength, shakiness, incontinence, slowness, a stiffening of the joints, weakening in the knees and a corresponding lack of mobility as signs of ageing. Some old people consider forgetfulness, short-sightedness, absence of keen hearing and the falling out of teeth and pubic and under-arm hair as indices. A number view grey hair as a sign of old age; others attribute it to anxiety or believe it is hereditary. Ainhum (dactylolysis spontanea¹⁾) is also generally regarded as an index of ageing, particularly among women of certain izibongo.²⁾ In this physiological condition the little toe gradually assumes a position at right angles to the foot, constricts at the base, and may ultimately drop off or be amputated when it becomes too painful, since it is prone to get caught in the grass. In certain izibongo there is a saying: 'Useguze kwaze kwanqandeka izinyawo - she is so old that her toes have been pushed aside.' Such characteristics are however of secondary importance to the essential criterion of old age which is the menopause.

9.2.1 Cultural acceptance of the menopause

Women in all three tribes accept the menopause (ukuvaloka ifindo or akasayesikhathini - termination of the female discharges) as a natural fact of life. All maintain that its attainment derives from the natural ageing of the body and is not caused by the ancestors, though a woman's contact with the ancestral world becomes stronger when she has entered this stage. There is no ceremony attached to the menopause and not much discussion of it: women often confide in close female friends about the unusual character of their

1) Digiovanni & Fallat 1977, p.401

2) See also Tunstall 1974, p.2410; Stephenson 1975, p.404

menses at this time and receive confirmation that they have entered the menopause. They may also tell their peers that they are now old.

During the climacterium the Zulu woman continues life as usual: she is considered neither vulnerable nor symbolically dangerous to others. Although a few old women may complain of fatigue at the time of the climacteric, the majority do not mention any associated physiological or psychological disorders. They recognize that the menstrual flow does not automatically terminate overnight but that a weakening in its volume and a period of irregularity precedes its final cessation. Most old women accept the menopause with equanimity believing that they have accomplished their aim in bearing children and that they have reached 'the time to be old'. All old women interviewed attained the menopause between the ages of forty-five and fifty-five. Only a few were concerned when their fertility ended because they thought they had not borne sufficient children.

Customarily there is no ideal number of children: a woman continues to bear children until she reaches the menopause. But many women maintain that they are tired of giving birth, and some post-menopausal women express relief at no longer having to clean their discharges; others view grandparenthood as a continuation of motherhood. This acceptance of the menopause as part of the life of a healthy woman contrasts with the anxiety felt by a younger woman experiencing menstrual irregularity or whose menstrual flow may have ceased prematurely. The younger woman is deemed temporarily ill and must consult an isangoma to determine the cause.

9.2.2 Sexual coolness on reaching the menopause

The cultural belief is not only that the menopause marks the onset of old age, but that it terminates sexual desire. The desire for coitus is thought to stay with a woman who still menstruates because 'her blood is hot, and blood causes the craving for sex'. Old people say that if a fertile

woman even talks with other women about sexual intercourse her instinct is aroused, whereas when a woman reaches the menopause her instinct cools because she is now 'like a child'. In general old women do not have sexual intercourse and no longer desire to bear children. As has been stated¹⁾ at this age sex is only considered appropriate for a man because despite his white hair, his stoop and general decrepitude, a man does not grow old in desire: his perennial sexuality is proverbial. Although the persistence of the male sexual appetite and the decline of that of the female is a common cause of frustration among aged couples,²⁾ old women joke amongst themselves and mock the 'animal-like' craving of men, particularly as in old age their erections are considered small and weak. But not all old women lose sexual interest when they reach the menopause, and people are conscious of the fact that sexual response varies according to one's constitution, some women remaining sexually active even when old. For this reason, prior to vaginal examinations, there was always careful deliberation when selecting an old woman to exemplify virginity³⁾ because of the need to be absolutely certain that she refrained from coitus. A few women dislike reaching the menopause and having to abstain from coitus, but they are regarded as exceptional. Most claim that 'an old woman should not talk about lovers because she is past that stage; it's not nice'.

9.3 Reactions to ageing

Although the menopause is accepted with equanimity, most elderly people admit that old age has come as a shock to them because it is so unpleasant. Physical handicaps are regarded as the most negative feature of old age for both male and female in the three tribes studied. They constitute the greatest source of frustration, imposing limitations on the ability of the aged to do the work at which they were adept in their maturity and contributing to a feeling of

1) See p.138

2) See pp.138-139

3) See p.91

helplessness and loneliness. Old women become too weak to carry their washing to the river, where they were accustomed to meeting others, or to perform the chores which fill in time, though the majority try to keep active by occupying themselves with handwork, especially the making of sleeping-mats. Old people who are able to undertake some form of activity are considered better off than those who are unable to move or to preoccupy themselves at all. When work-parties are organized, such as for taking manure out of the cattle-kraal to fertilize the fields, old women will often share in the communal beer-drink. They become lonely when they remain at home on their own. Those who have become immobile are obliged to remain almost entirely in the company of their children and daughters-in-law.

Old people are conscious of their diminishing social networks and become depressed at the loss through death of their peers with whom they have shared experiences. Although some old people voluntarily segregate themselves from their neighbours, and others lose touch with their natal homes, those who are accustomed to socialize generally continue to do so until physical disability or increasing decrepitude destroy their interest in society itself and they spend virtually all their time with their immediate family. Of those who remain active few attend weddings and feasts because they say they have seen it all before or lack the energy to do so. In general the physical deterioration that accompanies old age causes people to experience a gap between their desires and their ability to fulfil them.

Three proverbs are frequently used to illustrate that people are rendered superfluous with advancing age:¹⁾

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <u>Guga sithebe kade wawudlela</u> | - Grow old eating-mat, for a long time you have been eaten from |
| <u>Guga gqoko kade wawudlela</u> | - Grow old meat-platter, you have served for a long time |
| <u>Insika isidliwe ngumuhlwa</u> | - The central pillar (of the hut) has been eaten by white ants. |

1) See also Nyembezi 1963, pp.156-157

The old person is likened to a valuable artefact which, having lost its utility, is discarded. The ineffectuality of those who are senile is further exemplified in phrases that compare an old person to a parcel, a stone or a child - all unable to help themselves. Formerly prior to a hunt (inqina) in all three tribes the oldest woman of an umuzi placed different kinds of buck-droppings and umphendulo leaves under her sleeping-mat and rested on it until the first buck had been killed. She played this role in the expectation that the weakness and helplessness associated with her age would be imparted to the buck, the men then being able to effect an easy kill. Krige tells of a hunting invocation unknown among the tribes studied, but of similar intent.¹⁾ Old people value a long life, but senility with its associations of redundancy is feared.

Most old people feel ambivalent about their age: they enjoy being able to rest from their labours and being served by those who are younger, but dislike the physical and mental pain that accompanies their physiological decline. Most accept that the time has come for them to die and say they would not like to live their lives again. By and large they are content, provided that those to whose care they are entrusted are considerate towards them.

9.4 Care of the aged

The considerable amount of strength and effort that is required to obtain firewood and water, to grow food and to a lesser extent to cook meals, makes the elderly dependent on younger and stronger members of the society. Omakoti maintain that the greatest difficulty faced by old people in rural areas is to obtain these essentials. Myburgh has demonstrated the importance of various caring roles within the extended family among the 'Bantu' people of South Africa.²⁾ In the three Zulu tribes studied in Nkandla the majority of old people are cared for by the families of their

1) Krige 1957, p.204

2) Myburgh 1959, pp.55-118

sons, and the aged are conscious of certain principal caring roles that affect the quality of life of the ageing woman.

The duties of a wife do not alter fundamentally with age: work and companionship are expected of her but she has reached a stage when she may ask others to do her work even to the extent of cleaning the house of her husband. The aged wife's work thus becomes predominantly organizational. It is the duty of a husband to support his wife and see that her needs are fulfilled.¹⁾ In some homes husbands have since marriage assisted their wives with certain tasks such as working the fields even though there is no fixed rule with regard to the degree of practical assistance they should offer. But a husband is expected to ensure that his wife is cared for in her old age and this duty is customarily assigned to the daughter-in-law and her offspring.

Most of the work of caring for the old woman, particularly as regards fetching water and firewood, washing her clothes and preparing her food, falls to the daughter-in-law. It is primarily the duty of the principal-wife of the eldest son to care for his aged parents, though this role may also specifically be assigned to the youngest daughter-in-law. If an umakoti refuses to help her mother-in-law, the old woman may report the matter to her husband, if alive, or to her son, and he will order her to attend to the old woman's needs. On one occasion a son gave his mother his plate of food when he felt she was being neglected by his wife: he did so to prevent the anger of the ancestral shades; on another occasion he declined to eat until his mother had been served. Misfortune is thought to befall those who neglect the aged: children who do not assist them might not get married or bear children. An isangoma will divine that the ancestral shades have turned their backs on them in anger, for an old woman is cherished by the living and the dead because she keeps peace in the family. Care of the aged thus has supernatural sanction.

1) See also Breytenbach 1971, p.204

The grandchildren should also look after the aged. Usually one specific grandchild is assigned the care of a grandparent and is sometimes referred to as isethulo, though the word is obsolescent. The eldest granddaughter invariably performs this duty from an early age; whereas other grandchildren merely sleep with their grandmother this girl is expected to remain and look after her until marriage. The isethulo is the first-born child of every house of the homestead; traditionally, particularly in polygynous homes this child was given to the inkosikazi enkulu;¹⁾ her ilobolo, should she be a girl, would be taken by the heir of indlunkulu. There is also the version that the eldest child was only selected as isethulo if the ilobolo cattle of the son of indlunkulu are paid for by the cattle of that house.

When her husband dies, the aged widow usually lives in her own hut in the umuzi of her eldest son, and her sons help to provide her with the necessities of life, but if her sons do not look after her she has recourse to her daughter's home. Breytenbach reports similarly for the Usuthu-Zulu that an important part of the duties of married offspring is to care for and support their aged parents.²⁾ Although there is a distinct advantage in bearing sons because of the services rendered by their wives, some old women claim that sons and daughters 'are the same', for if a daughter is good-hearted she will give her first child to care for her mother.

There are other options available to the aged widow. The husband's younger brother should care for his deceased brother's widow, though his older brother could do so. All grandchildren of the home are regarded as belonging to the old woman; if their parents are deceased and there are no other kinsmen they should assume the responsibility of caring for the elderly. An old woman's natal kin can enforce such care on the members of a husband's patrilineage. Aged co-wives are not expected to provide mutual care nor do they normally do so. Old people are adamant that the close consanguineal relatives who will inherit are duty-bound to look after the aged; distant relatives should also help, then the chief, and nowadays the Government.

1) See also de Clercq 1975, p.255

2) Breytenbach 1971, p.243

Paternal or maternal relatives should, and normally do, assist a kinless old person. Old women claim that a person can rarely say that she has no relatives, for members of the isibongo should help. If there is no definite aid forthcoming from kinsfolk an old widow can ask for a neighbour's child to assist her, but should such be refused her, or if the child is unwilling, she will have to try to cope on her own. Neighbours might help by freely providing the old widow with milk or amasi, but a caring role is not expected of those who are unrelated, this being entirely dependent on their personal generosity.

A number of arrangements may be made by the umndeni to ensure the care of an old wife who was barren. A kinsman of her husband's umndeni and his wife may be appointed to look after her, otherwise children of the umndeni must do so. If for instance the first wife has no children, one of the brothers responsible for that house will look after her. The ukuzalisa (to cause to bear children) custom which takes various forms is designed to deal with the problem. When an umakoti is barren one of her husband's brothers who is married with children gives this wife one of his sons to live with her. When he is an adult this son continues to be part of her house and the barren woman does all she can to help him, as for instance by paying his ilobolo. The son's wife looks after this classificatory mother when she is old. Alternatively a polygynist will request a co-wife to designate a boy or girl to look after a barren aged woman.

Another method by which a barren wife is assured of support in her old age arises from the custom of a woman's sister substituting for her as legitimate procreatress. In such cases the sister bears children and the first son is given to the barren wife; when the boy marries he lives on his surrogate mother's premises and his umakoti belongs to the barren wife who hereby has children. The barren woman's house is the great-house (indlunkulu) and her sister who gives her the child is the ikhohlwa. Christians do not practise the sororate and regard it as indecent. But even among traditionalists instances

are occurring of women refusing to give up their biological children to others for the benefit of the agnatic group, and the disputes that ensue may eventually be brought to the ibandla lomnumzana.

If an aged couple have no offspring and help is not readily forthcoming, an elderly husband may provide his aged wife with a help-woman who is usually a relative or neighbour. She is rewarded with a beast or gift such as a metre of material. Old people maintain that according to Zulu tradition no payment is made for this assistance, though nowadays help-women tend to charge for their services.

The legal structure continues to bolster the rights of the aged to be cared for. If an old woman who is being neglected complains but meets with no satisfaction, she may take the matter to the ibandla lomndeni of her husband or, if no steps are taken, to the ibandla lenduna or her natal home. A few such cases are beginning to appear in the ibandla lomnumzana which is empowered to insist on the care of the aged, though in the experience of one such ibandla if an old woman is on her own and her children have deserted her, she either manages alone, her condition not being reported to the formal courts,¹⁾ or she goes to her natal relatives. One ibandla had had no case of neglect of the aged: this was attributed to the law, respect, and fear of the ancestral shades. Old people who have been neglected or deserted by offspring who have left for the towns are still exceptions in the three tribes, and although an old age-home has been built in the Nkandla magistracy it contains not a single local occupant and exists as an anomalous island in the district.

9.4.1 Fulfilment in old age

Of the various factors that lead to a satisfying old age, the most fundamental is said to be good human relationships. Old women who help their daughters-in-law, children and neighbours as much as they can, who are good-humoured,

1) See also de Clercq 1975, p.366

considerate and honest are invariably well cared-for. But in every neighbourhood there are a few old women eking out an existence entirely on their own, or with minimal assistance, because they are cantankerous or unfriendly. Their neighbours believe that the pain and solitude suffered by these old women is largely self-inflicted. They fail to appreciate the services rendered by others and do not converse pleasantly, with the result that they become increasingly isolated. Kin and neighbours may help them sporadically but do so out of fear of public censure rather than a feeling of goodwill. Even when such old women have relatives and live adjacent to their son's homestead they live a solitary existence for they are invariably not on good terms with their families either.

By contrast neighbours of all ages visit old women who are kindly and sociable. Such old women invariably keep abreast of the thinking of the young, even if at times they find this a little confusing with the impact of the ideas of a foreign culture. They accept good-naturedly the mimicry of their actions by the young and display a sense of humour even towards their own incontinence. They will accept and deliver criticism without animosity. And although it is regarded as traditional that omakoti work for their mothers-in-law without desiring reciprocation, and sons reinforce this behaviour, such old women will try to assist members of the family, for example by sweeping their own huts, cooking the occasional meal, or generally displaying a caring attitude. Old women who are content are conscious of the fact that they must not show favouritism and must exercise tolerance, particularly with regard to their daughters-in-law. They refrain from criticism if they feel it will aggravate a tense situation. Such old women retain an active interest in the lives of other people and are frequently found tending a sick child at a neighbouring home, assisting at a confinement, or caring for the dying.

9.4.2 The relationship between the mother- and daughter-in-law

Because residence is patrilocal and the old woman lives in her husband's extended family with her daughter-in-law principally responsible for her daily care, the tenor of this relationship particular affects her contentment in old age. Many relationships of mutual tenderness and care exist between aged mothers- and daughters-in-law; on the other hand there are homes in which they disagree. A variety of causes may precipitate disharmony between them. One is a clash of personalities: there are omakoti who beat their aged mothers-in-law and refuse to serve them with food, either because these old women dislike their daughters-in-law or vice-versa. There are homes in which both parties tend to be indiscreet. The umakoti rebels against a mother-in-law whom she considers too authoritarian or who sides with her son in disputes, or the old woman disapproves of the disrespectful conduct of the young wife. In such cases the potential tension in the relationship of the young wife and the old mother of the agnatic group comes to the fore.

Young wives articulate the behavioural attributes of mothers-in-law to which they react most strongly: they dislike those who, often when intoxicated, indulge in gossip about their daughters-in-law and grandchildren. They bitterly resent favouritism or a domineering attitude. On the other hand they value a helpful mother-in-law with whom they can leave their baby when they go out, and they respect a generous mother-in-law who on telling her daughter-in-law that she does not like a particular foodstuff gives her the money to purchase her preference.

To a large extent the relationship of mother- and daughter-in-law is governed by the ability of each to accept the rules of behaviour that define their dyadic relationship. A new wife is regarded as a stranger and is subject to the control and guidance of her mother-in-law who acquaints her with the pattern of life she must adopt in her new home.¹⁾

1) See also De Jager 1937, pp.99-101; Krige 1957, p.155

She should accept the authority that is invested in her mother-in-law, and observe the customs of the home into which she marries whether she approves of them or not. For instance, in some imindeni no woman married into the home may wear shoes on the premises for she would be treading on the ancestors. The mother-in-law will insist that the umakoti observes this custom, even if she finds the rule irksome, for it teaches her to accept that which she dislikes. As de Clercq's study of the abakwaMzimela has also shown,¹⁾ the mother-in-law must not only teach the young wife the domestic and caring duties which she must evince towards her husband and children, but must ensure that she displays the necessary respect to her father-in-law such as by bowing before him, not looking in his eyes, never addressing him first or uttering his surname, and not entering his hut until she has been granted permission to do so, and even then respecting the side on which he sleeps. The mother-in-law should approach her husband on behalf of her daughter-in-law if for instance the umakoti wishes to consult an isangoma or visit her natal home. In addition the mother-in-law should assist her daughter-in-law in childbirth, care for the growing children of the umakoti, and participate in the necessary rites that lead to their successful maturation.

The mother-in-law should treat the umakoti as her own daughter, just as the latter should regard the old woman as her mother. The two must strive to be on good terms with one another in order to achieve peace and unity within the home. Gradually, as the umakoti shows a willingness to obey, the number of restrictions and the rigidity with which they may be imposed on her will lessen, and when she bears children and in time receives a hut of her own her behaviour will become more relaxed.²⁾ As the umakoti matures she is still required to be hard-working and to show deference and conformity of behaviour as well as thoughtfulness towards others;³⁾ but in old age when her sons have married⁴⁾ she

1) de Clercq 1975, pp.305-306

2) See also Kohler 1933, pp.89-96; De Jager 1937, pp.98-101; de Clercq 1975, p.307

3) See also Krige 1953, pp.32-33

4) See also De Jager 1937, pp.101-102

achieves a measure of authority, influence and independence. The degree to which an old woman can enjoy her augmented power depends to a large extent on her ability to live peaceably with her daughter-in-law.¹⁾ Their relationship is a crucial determinant of the tenor of life of a woman in her old age.

9.5 Forms of relaxation

Aged women in all three tribes maintain that now they are old and can relax from work their major form of recreation is beer-drinking. Particularly after the harvest when sorghum is plentiful, men and married women of the neighbourhood gather for a communal drink and enjoy the companionship and conversation it affords. Where traditional custom is still observed the women are given their own house in which to drink, though the old woman nowadays grants the omakoti permission to drink, and she herself usually drinks with the married women. Often men gather for a social beer-drink called an ibandla. Old women are sometimes invited to join them but very few do so. A change in beer-drinking patterns has taken place in that formerly the sexes were separated whereas nowadays they often gather in the same house. The men usually sit to the right of the doorway and the women to the left, with the older women and men sitting near the door and the younger near the umsamo. There is no order of priority in drinking and individuals partake as they feel inclined. A young wife who attends a beer-drink should return home after a few hours whereas an old woman may come and go as she pleases.

In all three tribes there are no specific songs, games or other forms of recreation unique to old women. Old women regard games as being somewhat childish - they prefer the conviviality of a beer-drink - though many occupy their time with some form of handwork such as weaving. For the most part the elderly sit and rest: they chat and may reminisce or discuss their dreams. Old women remark how the content of their dreams has changed with ageing. When they were young they used to dream of having a baby or being near their

1) See also Reader 1966, p.139

husbands; now they dream about seeing those who have died: their deceased husband, their co-wives, the mother of their husband, and in some cases his father's brothers.

Much of their time is spent with their grandchildren, and old women repeatedly mention the pleasure they derive from their offspring, particularly when they have borne children. When chatting with them some old people may narrate folk-tales and lineage histories: the men at times recreate hunting or battle-scenes; yet such forms of passing the time are not as common as they used to be. Some old people enjoy smoking cannabis sativa. Old women are traditionally inveterate snuff-takers, though the habit is not confined to the aged.

Most old people keep in touch with social events through information passed on to them by their children and grandchildren, and by neighbours who visit them. Members of the extended family, and more particularly the nuclear family, form the most important social networks for old women. As has been seen, they have specific roles to play in puberty, coming-of-age and wedding ceremonies as well as ritual occasions within the family. Old Christian women frequently attend church and prayer meetings or weekly meetings of the Mothers' Union, and often play a leading role on account of their age.

9.6 Dress, ornamentation and material objects

Although Krige records that old women and men used to wear an isiphuku or large cloak,¹⁾ informants of all three tribes maintain that all ages and sexes might wear one. Like other adult women, the old today wear long calf-length dresses or smocks of any colour, with two faded or torn garments frequently being worn one over the other. All old women continue wearing headscarves or woollen caps; very few still wear the traditional isicholo and those who do, no longer take pride in brightening it with red ochre. Respectful dress continues to be observed. Whereas an umakoti wears a

1) Krige 1957, p.373

diagonal band slung from her right shoulder to the left side of the waist in deference to her in-laws, an older woman covers her shoulders with a shawl or drape knotted in front when she has married sons. She must wear this covering when she sees any of her husband's kin, especially his brothers, father and father's brothers, or her son-in-law.

Müller records¹⁾ that old women principally wore necklaces of beads or bulbs known as umgexo wendawochatha. Old people do not recall any specific form of ornamentation being associated with the aged.²⁾ Although old women are not forbidden to wear ornamentation, virtually all have removed their earplugs (iziqhaza), some feeling inclined to do so while still of child-bearing years. A few old women can still be seen wearing their post-natal belt of imizi grass studded with beads (isifociya) to hold the stomach in and to use as a strap to bring recalcitrant children to order; some may also wear the string of white beads which was given to their grandson by his girlfriend.³⁾ Old women stress that ornamentation is mainly for the young and that the only distinctive object the elderly use is a walking-stick, which is not for decoration but for balance. Perhaps the most significant aspect of their dress is its drabness, and this fading interest in beautification may coincide with the declining interest in the reproductive powers of the ageing woman.

Krige records that old women formerly used a snuff-holder called injadu or ivithi, which was made from the paunch of an ox.⁴⁾ In all three tribes none of the old people questioned had heard of the word injadu used in this way, but rather: injasa - a spoon made from bovine horn and used as an ostentatious means of sniffing snuff. On the other hand old people in all three tribes use the word ivithi for a snuff-holder. It could be made from the beast's paunch or from

1) Müller 1917-18, p.854

2) See also Mayr 1907, p.638

3) See p.88

4) Krige 1957, p.400

the skin of a weasel (uchakide) or from sheep's wool sewn into a little pouch, the snuff being sniffed from its opening. Some old people used to soften a small piece of ox or goat hide in water, rub it with fat, knead it and place it in a snuff container so that it resembled a powder-puff. They maintain that using hide was economical because the skin conserved the snuff, only a small quantity being required to give pleasure; but they claim that old people were not the sole users of this 'snuff-puff' in the past. One old lady explained why this ivithi may have been associated with old women, for an old man or old woman when no longer able to hold snuff to the nostrils because of the trembling of age, would place the ivithi skin against the nostrils to sniff. There are other material objects such as cooking utensils which belong to old women but since these are not distinctively associated with old age their inclusion is not relevant to this study.

9.7 Views on socio-cultural change

It may be alleged that the emic view of life in old age provided in this section contains elements typical of reminiscence: particularly in presenting a rosier view of the past and containing adverse judgements on the behaviour of the young. However it should be noted that aged informants have experienced considerable and abrupt cultural upheaval within their life-times. Changes in agriculture, schooling, the economy, increasing industrialisation, accelerated migratory labour, have ushered in patterns of life significantly different from those in which the aged were enculturated. Confusion has arisen at these new sets of values and insecurity is widespread. The critical stance adopted by most old people must therefore be balanced against the genuinely unsettling nature of the experiences they have had to undergo.

The most frequent topic of conversation among old people in all three tribes is culture change. The aged speak of how they and their forefathers were born and grew up in the

area, how some of the hills are called by the names of their grandfathers, and how the ecology has changed: erosion has formed dongas and the long grass used for thatching has largely been superseded by a short grass that the cattle dislike. Whereas their fathers had a hundred or more cattle, and their husbands had sixty or seventy, they now have few, if any. There is not much amasi now because there are not many cattle and they do not give much milk, especially in winter.

Old people believe that no aspect of society has remained immune from culture contact: Zulu culture has altered drastically for 'everything which comes in contact with White people alters'. The structure of houses is changing and ilobolo can be paid in money now. The formal courts no longer constitute a council of elders. Formerly middle-aged men were warriors who were considered too young to attend the ibandla, this honour being reserved for the heads of homes; nowadays however young married men attend the ibandla and the chiefs tend to curtail the freedom of expression that used to prevail in it: they dominate the proceedings to a greater extent and follow the clipped procedure of the magistrate's court. Customs are said to be disappearing because people no longer keep all the traditions: women nowadays even eat fish, or the meat ritually slaughtered by imindeni of which they are outsiders. There are few official praisers (izimbongi) and young men and women no longer conscientiously spend time preparing marriage dances, nor do they dress in the traditional way except on festive occasions; rather, say the old, the izinsizwa of today are typified by the wearing of trousers and by being drunk.

Many of the aged consider people nowadays to be less mentally and physically resistant. They do not recall mental illnesses among young people. They claim that illness has become more prevalent today and that the number of early deaths has increased. There is a suspicion that the younger generation's lack of resistance to illness is the result of their being too much in contact with Whites. Others attribute the increase in illness and early mortality to

poverty and diet, particularly citing the inclusion of salt and sugar. Most old people persist with the Zulu tradition of having two meals a day: a mid-morning breakfast of soft-porridge without milk (though nowadays some add sugar and drink milk-tea) and a midday meal of dry-porridge with some vegetable such as pumpkin, wild spinach, potatoes, cabbage, beans, or a relish such as chillis and tomatoes. Beef is a rarity but chickens are reared and eaten fairly frequently: some eat one a week. The foods most enjoyed by old women and men are traditional: milk-curd, meat and sorghum beer.

9.7.1 Effects of culture contact

The following overview of the major changes that have occurred in Zulu culture is derived from views expressed by elderly informants. They consider respect to be the fundamental principle on which their culture was based, and find it strange that now most people are Christians respect 'is coming to an end'. It is a matter of deep concern to them that the forces of change have undermined this underlying value, as evinced in the escalation of illegitimacy, disobedience, drunkenness and killings - problems repeatedly mentioned in this order of priority.

Many old people relate the heightened incidence of illegitimacy to a decline in respect, with young people failing to exercise control over their emotions and behaviour. Old women recall that giving birth in the olden times was something very wonderful: the baby and the mother were cherished, unlike today when childbirth has become 'a plaything'. They express concern at the fact that young men who impregnate girls can desert to the cities, yet the girls have intercourse with them without thinking of the future care and support of the child.

The aged are aware that the younger generation no longer value their knowledge and do not wish to learn about the past. Parents fail to teach their children about life and depend on the schools to perform this duty, although schools provide no moral training. The elderly regret the

fact that children today know little of the customs pertaining to their homes and families: some do not even know their ihubo. When a beast is slaughtered the young are not always sure of the correct parts to apportion to different people and often do not consult the aged in this regard. They reflect that although they are still glad to see their grandchildren, and those who attend school still serve them when they are at home, there is no longer as much openness and jocularly in the grandmother-grandchild relationship: whereas this used to be interspersed with advice, adolescents now tend to label such advice as old-fashioned and some argue that they can find out all they need to know from books. The aura surrounding old people has diminished, and with it their authority. Children are no longer afraid to be scolded whereas formerly there was unquestioning obedience and a belief in ancestral retribution for wrongdoing. So there is growing concern about the insolence of the children. The elders talk of this as a revolution. They are pained that their grandchildren will lie to them and perform favours unwillingly. And although they realize the necessity of schooling, the aged refer to Western-industrial education as the major source of disruption in the enculturation of the young. They sum up the situation with the words: lafa elihle kakhulu, the beautiful world is fading.

Drunkenness is another source of concern to the old: traditionally drinking began in the afternoon after people had finished eating and completed their chores. Nowadays however young wives who formerly did not partake of beer go out to drink before the old have received their morning porridge; omakoti will stay out until midnight and return home singing and creating a noise, or will drink from morning to night without eating or attending to their work.¹⁾ Old women are perturbed about the level of drinking and by the

1) See also Clarke & Ngobese 1975, p.33

fact that pure sorghum beer is no longer the sole alcoholic beverage since people now drink spirits or dangerous concoctions in which sugar and other substances are added to the beer. They believe drinking is often the source of sexual promiscuity.

Consternation is expressed at the emergence of suicide among the young and the fact that people no longer settle their differences by discussion and stick-fights but by costly court-cases or violence. Knives and guns are increasingly being used to settle disagreements and make for insecurity in the neighbourhood. Theft has also become prevalent and this together with a growing economic individualism causes tension between neighbours. Old people notice the lack of enthusiasm with which younger women approach their tasks, and observe that whereas they used to be the first to hoe their fields, now they wait for oxen and ploughs, and if none are available no fields will be worked. Young wives prefer to pay to have their maize ground at the local mill and want to buy ready-made mealie-meal.

The elderly note that a sense of concern for others is disappearing: that people no longer care much about a stranger who comes to their homes, nor does the stranger thank them when he leaves. They agree that the quality of care varies from one home to the next, and that although the aged are still cared for, the degree of solicitude that was customary is now lacking. As respect and care diminish so is there a shift in attitude towards ageing and an attempt by some at disguising its symptoms. Some old Christian Khanyile women no longer want children to call them 'Granny' but 'Sister' or 'Aunty'. And whereas formerly people never attempted to disguise the physical signs of ageing, today some use hair-dye and face-cream and the grandchildren encourage it. Most old people disapprove of these innovations, believing that they should retain their dignity as elders by accepting physiological change. However it is noteworthy that although still in an incipient stage, external physical indices of old age are beginning to assume priority over the time-honoured criterion of the menopause,

and this is consistent with the diminishing importance of ceremonial purity in the culture.

9.7.2 Migrant labour

Economists point out that KwaZulu has become increasingly dependent upon the modern sector of the South African economy, which is both spatially and politically differentiated from KwaZulu.¹⁾ Although there are various historical reasons why men in particular migrated to the cities,²⁾ the migratory labour system has become an intrinsic part of the contemporary rural economic system, and its major cause is rural poverty. In 1977 the gross domestic per capita income generated within KwaZulu was estimated as R106.³⁾ Nattrass has shown that during the 1936 to 1970 period the number of men who migrated from KwaZulu increased by nearly 300%⁴⁾ with the result that 51% of males have found work outside the region, leaving a residue of one man to three women in the rural areas.⁵⁾ Lenta has demonstrated that real per capita income from agriculture in KwaZulu is declining,⁶⁾ that in the 1971-73 period the average KwaZulu household produced approximately one-third of its needs,⁷⁾ and that there is a chronic and deteriorating food shortage in the area.⁸⁾

The aged in the three tribes studied maintain that poverty is the sole cause of migratory labour, but that even that has changed in nature. Whereas formerly sons would take turns in going out to work so that some would remain to look after the home and attend to the cattle and ploughing, nowadays they no longer make such plans. Nor do they obtain their father's permission but go to the cities of their own accord. There are homes in all three tribes in which the sons never return from their places of employment,⁹⁾ whereupon

1) Nattrass 1977, p.26

2) See also Schapera 1928, pp.178-188

3) BENSO 1980

4) Nattrass 1977, p.26

5) Ibid. p.27

6) Lenta 1978, p.31

7) Ibid. p.34

8) Ibid. p.34

9) See also Clarke & Ngobese 1975, p.32

their old father, mother, young wives and children must subsist from the old-age pension and produce from the land. Often when mother- and daughter-in-law are the only adults in the home they become drawn together in a common plight, but their poor clothing, few possessions and numerous children signify the weight of poverty, loneliness and neglect. Old women do not always prefer this close association with their daughters-in-law, pointing out that the more distant relationship that formerly prevailed between them heightened the respect of the umakoti for the old woman.

Migrant labour poses particular physical problems for the aged, for old women must look after the cattle, burn fire-breaks, and be responsible for all the day-to-day decisions and running of the home, which they often find burdensome. The strain on family life and on the care and position of the aged is most acute when not only a son but his young wife goes to live and work in the town, leaving the grandchildren in the country, the umuzi thus lacking a middle generation. Since there is then no-one to plough, payment must be made to outsiders and the financial strain increases. When the old couple are both still alive and in good health, draw a pension and have only one baby to care for, and when the son supports the home and arranges for water and firewood to be provided, the arrangement is workable. But when adult children fail to send money to their aged mother to support children, or leave numerous small grandchildren in her care, old women feel that unfair demands are being made on them. Although some manage to cope with the situation, the signs of strain are evident, not necessarily in lack of nourishment but in a breakdown in the emotional and authority structure of the family, with side-effects such as juvenile delinquency.¹⁾ The aged notice the lack of parental support, particularly of the father, in disciplining children. The literature on the rural areas, as well as the comments of social workers, indicate that these alternate generation households are families at risk in that the children tend to suffer from neglect or malnutrition on account of grandparental

1) See also Clarke & Ngobese 1975, p.39

ineffectuality.¹⁾ Equally serious is the problem of the old widow who is left to cope with physical and mental exigencies for which she no longer has the stamina or cultural training. In one such home, albeit an exception, the grandmother who is supposed to care for her four small grandchildren spends her time drinking in the neighbourhood while the children sit listlessly around the embers of a fire. From her pension she buys them mealie-meal, their only food as they have no cattle.

9.7.3 The old-age pension

All women over the age of sixty, and men over the age of sixty-five, who earn less than R120 per annum qualify for a State pension; the Means Test is however so difficult to effect in a rural economy that it is rarely applied. In 1981-82 the pension received was R80 drawn bi-monthly at approved pension centres such as stores throughout the Nkandla district. Middle-aged women regard the pension as an innovation to be looked forward to in old age, but considerable dissatisfaction and confusion prevails among people from fifty to sixty-four years who feel they ought to receive a pension.

Two main problems emerge:-- first that of possible inaccurate registration of birth among this generation of women, since this usually needs to be calculated from a historical event, and second that the pension is based on a chronological definition of old age which is not only arbitrary in our Western-industrial culture but functionally meaningless to Zulu culture. It is evident that the root of the dissatisfaction lies in a clash of cultural criteria concerning the onset of old age, which for Zulu women coincides with the menopause. There are a few old people who do not draw a pension and some who do not want one because they believe it shortens their lives. But most old people welcome it and regard it as their just desert because it has been 'paid for by their husbands in tax'. People of all ages are of the opinion that the pension assists the

1) See also Barker 1972, pp.8-10

economic wellbeing of the aged. It is particularly valued in times of need, especially during the winter when old people struggle for food: it helps prevent deprivation and enables the aged to buy vegetables which are out of season. Only a minority of pensioners hoard their money even when they are hungry.

Some social workers who operate in KwaZulu are of the opinion that the old-age pension has a negative effect on people's relationship with their kin or on their incentive to work. Although there are incidents of children who use the pension of their elderly grandparents for their own benefit, such instances are often indicative of the general tenor of relationships that prevails in the home. For example, one elderly woman is incapacitated and has arranged for her daughter-in-law to collect her pension for her. The umakoti spends half of this pension at the bottle-store on pension day. The old woman and her enfeebled husband are afraid to take punitive action for they feel too dependent on their daughter-in-law, whose one daughter fetches firewood and water for them and helps them in other ways. The daughter-in-law occasionally cooks and washes for the old couple. The husband of the umakoti is a migratory labourer and therefore unable to rectify the situation.

The pension increases the dependence of the umakoti and her children on the old woman, and this enhances her status. Although old people regard their pension as their own, and will often buy themselves a personal treat with it, they continue to observe the principle of mutual aid and will also share part of it with the family in times of need. Most old people spend their pension on food, clothing, and school fees, books and uniforms for their grandchildren, particularly those who are helpers in their house. And although poverty is a source of worry to most of the aged, there is minimal criticism concerning the amount of pension received: the prevailing opinion is that without it many would be destitute. Yet unless both man and wife are alive and eligible to receive a pension old people do not find that it meets the

cost of living, and they note with particular concern the effect of inflation on their income.

Pension day has stimulated considerable home-industry and entrepreneurship in Nkandla. People flock to the depots with their wares, ranging from sleeping-mats and hand-brooms to home-made smocks, chairs and food. The large number of people gathering in one place on one day is advantageous in providing the community with a sales outlet and the old with a variety of goods, but it does not mean that the goods are sold at an economical price to the aged. There are no cheap nutritious foods available for them to purchase and they receive no transport subsidies.

Pensioners are exempt from all forms of taxation except the General Sales Tax, and they have managed to attract a degree of sympathy from officialdom in that pay-out teams drive to various points in the district, but even this system causes problems. Many old people still have to walk great distances to the depots or have to pay as much as R5 for the taxi fare. Then they must queue from early morning, often in inclement weather, to draw their money at some unspecified time of day when the van arrives, thereafter allowing themselves enough time to make their purchases and return home before sunset. Sometimes the pension team runs short of money, with the result that pensioners spend the following week trying to locate them at another depot. There is alleged corruption in that certain civil servants who make the pay-outs shortchange the pensioners, particularly if an old person fails to fetch his or her pension on the collection date. Another problem is that most old people are illiterate and are thus unaware of the monetary value of notes being paid out to them.

9.7.4 Disillusionment with the present system of administration

Old people frequently complain that under the homeland policy merchandise has become dearer and services are less efficient. They are angered by the alleged lack of concern and respect shown to them by Black civil servants who may keep them waiting for hours in queues while they hold

lengthy discussions with one another, and then tell them to return on another day. They bemoan the fact of there being fewer jobs and less money since the Whites left the area, and express concern at talk of Independence which they believe will generate greater problems. Many old women claim that as the administration has been handed over to Black people it has become ineffective and poverty has ensued.

CHAPTER 10

THE OLD WOMAN AND MORTUARY CEREMONIAL10.1 Attitudes to death

Old women think about death a great deal but rarely indulge in spontaneous discussion of it, and many are loath to speak of it at all. Dedicated Christians claim to have a more positive attitude towards death than those who hold traditional beliefs: some feel they have lived long enough and wish to go and stay with God in a state free of the physical debilities of old age where they will experience perfect happiness. There are however also traditionalists who do not fear death because they regard it as a natural part of life. Such old women express concern that they might continue living until they become senile and so prove a burden to others.

The idea of death comes to these women as a release and they express pity for those who still have to endure the hardships of life. Because the true nature of death is unknown it generally evokes fear among old women and old men; yet they invariably add the corollary that if death has to come it is preferable for the old to die before the young. A belief exists that a person who dies young has not completed the various stages of life.¹⁾ The old would also rather predecease their children so that they will be buried by them and be spared the pain of having to live alone. The aged fear losing the vital support and care provided by the young, the threat posed by their deaths to the continuation of the lineage, and the fact that they would not be remembered as ancestral shades. Christianity causes a feeling of insecurity in all but convinced Christians, and even traditionalist old women who accept death express doubts about their existence in the after-life because they have been told that the ancestral shades are 'but a word'. So in general the aged are no longer certain whether they will become ancestral shades when they die.

1) See also Bryant 1967, p.699; Berglund 1976, p.79

Old women think that some people die naturally, others from witchcraft, and others as a result of the anger of the ancestral shades. There are old Christian women who attribute the deaths of their consociates to illness, old age, or psychosomatic causes: worry about families or material welfare. However among all except committed Christians there is a prevailing idea that apart from those who die of extreme age, any individual's death is caused by the evil intention of another expressed through the medium of witchcraft.¹⁾

10.2 Mortuary practices

10.2.1 Reasons for the prominent role of old women

Many women are afraid to visit the sick because they fear the contagion of death. Nevertheless whether traditionalist or Christian old women associate themselves strongly with people who are sick or dying. Aged women full of anguish administer day and night to sick children and adults. An eighty-year-old Biyela lady sat in a neighbouring umuzi for several weeks with the aged wife of her deceased husband's brother who languished half-paralysed from a stroke before she eventually died. The tenacity and concern of those who care for the sick and dying is manifest, despite the fact that this role is culturally assigned to old women, and the fear of being labelled a witch also induces a caring attitude.

Old women play an important role in mortuary ceremonial which men say is 'the secret and duty of old women'. An umakoti goes to the graveside but is not allowed near the corpse; it is believed that because her blood is 'hot' she will be rendered weak and may attract misfortune: she may become infertile or her husband will cease to love her. Old women are therefore considered the appropriate people to handle the sick, the dying and the deceased: because they are rendered immune from death's pollution by virtue of having passed the menopause, and by the fact that they no longer indulge in sexual intercourse, they will not be contaminated, nor will they misuse any of the insila (body-

1) See also Krige 1957, p.160

dirt) of the ailing person for witchcraft which could be used to annihilate the umndeni. Furthermore they are regarded as having the necessary courage to face death since they have been seasoned by the passage of time.

10.2.2 Attending to the corpse

Formerly when old women observed that a person had ceased to breathe, at the instant of death, one old woman would close the eyes and mouth while other old women would attend to the removal of the isidwaba and position the body so that it would remain in a sitting position when it stiffened, some holding or standing at the front and some assisting at the rear. Old women were present at any death, though when a man died he is said by some to have been arranged in a sitting position by the men, who also removed his ibeshu (the hide covering his buttocks). The body was secured in the upright position with a large rope made of any type of grass; if none was available then old women in the deceased person's hut would make it. One of the old women such as the mother of the home or the father's sister washed the face of the deceased and might say: 'Please guard us well when you're there [i.e. in the other world].'¹⁾ The corpse was wrapped in a cowhide if a man, and in an isiphuku if a woman, and placed on a sleeping-mat at the side of the hut where the deceased was accustomed to sleep, with its back leaning against the wall. It was then covered with the sleeping-blanket used by the deceased when alive, and hidden from view behind a screen which consisted of an undecorated sleeping-mat also belonging to the deceased.

Old women of the umuzi or umndeni of the deceased, and who are the nearest kin, still attend to the sick and dying. If the ailing person belongs to the same homestead the old women will remain with him or her until she dies; if she is a neighbour, they will pay intermittent visits and be called when the person has died. As soon as the old women perceive a cessation of breathing, then of movement, they begin to wail,

1) See also Ludlow 1882, pp.181-182

and if there are men present they leave the house. Since the advent of Christianity corpses are no longer placed in a sitting position, therefore some of the old women straighten the body and limbs of a corpse of either sex before these become cold, and place each arm and hand alongside the body or on the abdomen. One of these old kinswomen such as the mother of the home quickly closes the eyes and mouth of the deceased lest these harden while open, for such a corpse is deemed unpleasant to look at. To close the eyes the old woman either dips her right hand in cold water and shuts both the lids simultaneously by stroking the flesh downwards; or she places her two thumbs on both eyelids and hereby moves the skin of the lids down; or she shuts one after the other. She then closes the mouth by placing the right palm below the lower jaw and pushing it upwards. A cloth is tied around the jaw to keep it closed if this was not achieved on expiry.

The old mother of the home, who is sometimes idiomatically referred to as 'the owner of the dead body', or other elderly women paternally related to the deceased and usually of the umuzi, now washes the corpse with a cloth and water, whether it be male or female. Whereas formerly an old woman appears only to have washed the face of the deceased,¹⁾ nowadays a diversity of practices occurs. In some imindeni only the face, arms and feet of the deceased are washed because the rest of the body was washed while the person was alive but ill, whereas in others the old women of the umndeni wash the back and front of the body with a cloth dipped in soap and water; in others two to four old women of the deceased's family wash all except the back of the body. In all cases the attendants should be elderly members of the umndeni, or if none are available they should be reliable close maternal or paternal relatives (izihlobo). The old woman who washes the corpse, secretly throws away the sullied water in the grass outside the premises to prevent it being used for witchcraft by enemies of the family.

If the oldest and most senior woman of the homestead (inkosikazi) died then traditionally an old woman placed all

1) See also Krige 1957, p.160

the types of seed used by the umuzi for planting in the cupped hands of the deceased.¹⁾ This action might be accompanied by a verbal request to her for food on account of the belief that because 'she is the owner of food' she might take all of it to the grave with her and the family would be faced with starvation. This custom was only practised with an aged inkosikazi. In a few homes the custom persists in slightly adapted form: when any married woman dies seed is placed in her right hand; prior to the corpse being taken to the cemetery one of the deceased's old female attendants will remove the seed and throw it away privately or place it at the umsamo where it will be eaten by fowls. If the deceased was troublesome, an old woman still sometimes cuts a piece of the isidwaba, or her petticoat if she is a Christian, and pushes this into the mouth of the deceased woman where it remains; she is then instructed not to come back and worry them when she is dead.

The old women dress the corpse in its former clothes from which the buttons have been removed, because the clothes or gowns used for burial should have no ornamentation and the cadaver itself should be without earrings or bracelets; similarly if the deceased's sleeping-mat is to be buried with her or him, the decorative wool must be removed from it. A blanket is wrapped around the corpse. Among Christians a white sheet is made to form the shroud: this may be prepared by any woman, though an outsider would have to be closely guarded. Since it should not be sewn, holes are made through which strips of the fabric are threaded by one of the old women. A strong blanket is placed under and around the corpse, though the four corners are left loose to facilitate lifting. Coffins are now widely used if the family can afford them, and in such cases, when the corpse has been prepared, men of the home place it in the coffin which is standing on a sleeping-mat, and the old mother will add the cloth with which it has been washed.

Old women mention 'honourable' and 'dishonourable' ways of dying. They prefer death to be peaceful and welcome an

1) See also Berglund 1976, p.368

attitude of acceptance or resignation, but note that some people curse or become angry just before death, while practising witches or wizards often reveal information about their art at this moment. They note that nowadays if a man or woman has committed adultery he or she may announce it.

The last words uttered by a person are considered prophetic and may even be written down because it is believed the person often foresees that which 'earthly people' cannot know, and misfortune will befall those who ignore the wishes of the dying. The reactions of the people attending the dying person are also pertinent. It is considered unseemly for someone to weep audibly prior to the actual moment of death: such people are scolded, especially if they do so in front of the dying person who may thereby lose hope.

10.2.3 Mourning the deceased

A person who dies is laid out in his or her own hut. As viewed from the entrance, a man is placed on the right, or male side, and a woman on the left, or female side; a child is laid out in its mother's hut. All the old women of the umndeni and those who are paternally and maternally related to the deceased remain in the hut together with the chief mourner. Except among Christians, who sing hymns, there is wailing whenever married women or men of the umndeni and neighbourhood briefly enter to pass condolences or pronounce formulae like: 'Asazi ukuthi sizothini ngoba lisilahlele icala, lisilahle sonke kanye nomhlaba - We don't know what we have come here to say because we have lost the case: we have all lost the case, even the world.' Whereas traditionally only old women entered the house of death before burial, and omakoti, particularly those who were breast-feeding or pregnant, as well as young people and children, did not lest they be contaminated by its pollution and become fearful at the sight of a corpse, nowadays younger women will sometimes enter to visit the corpse, a practice that amazes the elderly.

10.2.4 Burial

According to tradition the head of the home (umninimuzi) is buried under the fence at the umsamo of the cattle-kraal; an old woman, like any woman, is buried outside the premises at the back of her house.¹⁾ This still tends to occur, though many Khanyile prefer to bury their dead in a cemetery. The grave is dug by men; originally it was round and took the form of a beehive, though nowadays it is rectangular. When men of the umndeni take the corpse out of the doorway of the house (umsamo exits are unknown²⁾) the women start wailing and only cease when the corpse reaches the grave. Only men carry a corpse to the grave, whether it be that of a man or woman, and they are followed by old women carrying sleeping-mats which are deposited at the graveside. Older women sit next to the grave at the feet of the corpse in front of the omakoti, the men standing separately. In funerals where tradition is still observed one of the men of the umndeni places those belongings which are to accompany the deceased in an alcove which has been dug for the corpse prior to its burial by the men. The old mother of the home is influential in deciding which of these would be kept for re-use after cleansing and which would be buried.

10.2.5 Cleansing and strengthening

While the burial is in progress the old mother of the home smears the hut that contained the corpse, for until this is done omakoti and children remain debarred from entering it. The old woman entrusted with the smearing must be 'pure', honest and reliable, and is usually the old mother of the umuzi or umndeni, or the eldest sister of the home.

After the burial the mourners and particularly the members of the umndeni and other relatives (izihlobo) wash their entire bodies at the river, though some people who are not related to the deceased or have experienced numerous

1) See also Lugg 1907, p.117

2) See also Krige 1957, p.162; Berglund 1976, pp.364-365

deaths only wash their hands and feet or faces. Nowadays all return to the umuzi of the deceased where a beast or goat has been slaughtered so that the mourners, and particularly those who handled the corpse, can 'wash their hands' in its chyme and purify themselves from the bad shadow (isithunzi) of the corpse. In anticipation of their return the old mother of the umuzi or umndeni, or the eldest sister of the home, has placed a basin of chyme and bile and a basin of water at the entrance to the umuzi, and scrutinizes each person who washes his or her hands in these before entering the premises. The remainder is kept by the old woman in her hut for use by members of the umndeni who were unable to attend, after which she will discard these fluids secretly in the veld or cattle-kraal to avoid them being used for witchcraft. Christians who regard this practice as heathen will neither wash their hands in the chyme nor partake of food from the slaughtered beast.

It is thought that people need to be purified and strengthened at this time, for death and the grief which accompanies it renders close relatives weak and susceptible to witchcraft. A goat called imbuzi yokusula izandla (the goat to wash the hands) is usually slaughtered on the day following the burial among the Biyela and Dlomo, with the intention of removing the defilement of those who washed the corpse and interred it. The old mother of the home handles the bile and chyme in a similar way to the above and guards it from misuse, and this goat will only be eaten by members of the umndeni.

Members of the umndeni are especially weakened by death and must be strengthened by the old mother of the umuzi stamping certain amakhubalo (medicinal plants) such as ingwavuma and umlulama (Turraea heterophylla¹⁾) obtained from an inyanga, mixing them with water and stirring until the preparation froths, then giving them to members of the umndeni as a purgative; in some imindeni the mixture is prepared by the old man of the home. They will vomit with it to cleanse themselves from the defilement of death, usually on the day

1) Bryant 1966, p.66

after the burial among the Biyela. Among the Dlomo and Khanyile the umndeni does not normally vomit with amakhubalo on the day following the burial but the old mother of the home prepares the mixture for the day following the eating of imbuzi yamakhubalo so that this will remove the amakhubalo and the goat that was eaten, and thus strengthen them.

If a man has died then on this day after the burial a goat called imbuzi yamakhubalo (the goat of medicines) is slaughtered. Among the Dlomo an inyanga cuts small pieces of flesh from it and cooks them in a pot at the entrance to the cattle-kraal together with the amakhubalo in the presence of the old mother of the home who is past child-bearing age and who ensures that no witchcraft is exercised. When the meat is ready the old woman summons the members of the agnatic group to partake of it. The men are invited first, then the principal mourner, whether she be the mother or wife, and then the other women. The bitter amakhubalo are intended to fortify them all together, including the cattle, sheep and goats. The rest of the meat may now be eaten.

In all three tribes on this day, boys pile imigoqo from the neighbourhood across the entrance to the cattle-kraal, for these poles represent the cattle that graze together. The old mother proceeds to the gate of the cattle-kraal with the widow; she places cowdung on the imigoqo and instructs the widow to position one foot on the cowdung and to wash her arms and then her legs using some of the amakhubalo liquid, and then among the Dlomo the milk obtained from the cattle so that this splashes onto the cowdung. Among some Biyela some of this cowdung emanates from that left over after the hut of the deceased was smeared. Among the Dlomo the widow is given a broom which the inyanga has made from the long root of intolwane (Elephantorrhiza burchellii¹⁾). The old woman stands at the side of the widow as she holds the handle of the broom and dips the frayed end in the amakhubalo. The cattle are driven out of the cattle-kraal and as they exit one by one over the imigoqo containing

1) Bryant 1966; p.39

the 'dirt' of the widow, the widow sprays them so they will be strengthened. Among the Biyela the widow throws some of the amakhubalo mixture at the cattle as they exit, whereas among the Khanyile she jumps over the imigogo. The custom of washing with cowdung is not practised if a man has lost his wife: the old mother will however spray the cattle for the widower. This ceremony is associated with the removal of the blanket in which the widow's head and body have been totally covered since the death of her husband, but among the Khanyile it is associated with shaving her hair and normally enables her to leave the hut of mourning. The ceremony is to ensure that when the widow passes through the veld the cattle will not be adversely affected.

On this day one of the old women who has been in the house of the deceased smears this house again; the other huts in the umuzi are freshly smeared at this time with some of the amakhubalo sometimes being added to the cowdung, but since they do not form the focus of defilement the omakoti may attend to them.

10.2.6 Removing the hair

On the second or third day after the burial the members of the umndeni have their hair shaved off to prevent misfortune, because hair is regarded as insila and a new growth is now required. The widow has her hair shaved at a river by the old mother of the home, otherwise by an old woman of the umndeni. The old woman either carefully hides this hair in an anthill or swampy place or it may be hidden in the grass of the veld, it also being highly susceptible to witchcraft. The widows of the deceased have their hair completely shaved off, though other wives of the umuzi who are not married to the deceased only shave their hair below the rim of their headdresses or remove a few tufts as a token of mourning. A goat is slaughtered on this day if the deceased was a man; the old mother of the home instructs the widow that she may now leave the house of mourning.

10.2.7 Washing of the spears

Death ushers in a corpus of taboos indicative of a period of abnormality. Old women for instance instruct their sons and the omakoti to abstain from sexual intercourse; work ceases and children may not sing or make a noise. Such strictures are at their most intense on the day of death when kin are even forbidden to speak or partake of sustenance, but when three to six months have expired after the death of a married man, and one month after the death of a married woman, these taboos are lifted for all the umndeni except the widow by means of a purification ceremony named ihlambo which traditionally involves a hunt. Although old women play no particular role in the hunt or the sharpening of the men's spears in preparation for it, they will join in the ihubo that the men sing in the cattle-kraal before setting out, 'thus breaking the silence of death'. The ihubo is however not sung at the ihlambo of a woman, even if she was old. On the return from the hunt the old women ululate and the wild animal is cooked and eaten¹⁾ while a goat and later a beast is ritually slaughtered for the occasion. Only the agnatic group partake of the ihlambo goat and beast, and all its members including married daughters should be present no matter how far away they live.

While the ihlambo beast is being skinned in the cattle-kraal, the umninimuzi or the old mother of the home takes its gall-bladder and sprinkles its bile onto all the belongings of the deceased: all his or her good clothes and possessions, plus the ornaments and buttons and the blanket used to carry the corpse, are thus purified by the old woman, unless these were thrown into the grave or hidden on the day of burial by an old woman of the home.

The ihlambo marks the end of mourning for the umndeni. Nowadays the wearing of a black armband or a square of material on the left arm signifying bereavement has become prevalent. During the ihlambo members of the umndeni remove

1) See also Krige 1957, p.167

their mourning bands in indlu yakwagogo. The old mother takes these insignia and carefully disposes of them, usually by burning in the winter or burying them in a hole or antheap if it is summer. Because of the belief that if these are burnt in summer this will encourage thunder, lightning and storms, many homes only have mourning bands removed in winter; others who prefer not to burn them at all rather hide them in a swampy place. After the ihlambo, ornaments may once again be worn, and adults may again indulge in sexual intercourse and resume such normal activities as working, intervisiting and attending weddings. All the members of the umndeni except the widow or widower are now free from the restrictions of death.

Whereas a widower could begin courting one or two months after the death of his wife, a widow, whether young or old, used to have a mourning period of approximately three years. She had to shave her hair and wear an idwishi (skin turban) and an isiphuku on her shoulders. After the first year her special mourning dress (ingwazi) could be dispensed with; in the second year she could let her hair grow and comb it out; in the third her isicholo was remade but not smeared with clay; and in the fourth it was again smeared with red ochre. Although some widows mourn in black for a year, with others the time period has been reduced to six months or, if a husband was very old, even to three months. The principal mourners for an old widow are her sons, grandchildren and her husband's agnatic group. Isililo (lamentations) are conducted for an old woman, especially one who was 'useful in word or deed', because she was responsible for all the duties in the family. An old woman is said to be principally mourned by her daughter-in-law who dons a black turban or band, but she does not enter seclusion and does not have to observe any particular restrictions. She normally only mourns for a month when she is released by the 'goat to remove the mourning clothes' ceremony.

10.2.8 Removal of the mourning clothes

After about a year has elapsed following the death of a

husband or first-born son, the widow returns to her natal home to be cleansed by a beast or goat: imbuzi yokugeza amadodakazi, the goat that washes the daughters. She returns with it to her husband's home, where it is slaughtered. There the old woman takes a basin of chyme and bile, and one of water, and 'the daughters' of the home accompany her outside the premises. Each first washes her hands with chyme and bile and then with water. The isidwaba worn by a widow in mourning was formerly used by the old woman who was the mother-in-law;¹⁾ nowadays these black mourning clothes tend to be discarded in a hole or burnt by an old woman of the home.

10.3 Bringing home the shade of the deceased

The ritual of ukubuyisa: to bring home the shade of the deceased to look after the descendants of the home, usually takes place a year or two after death and after the widow has removed her mourning clothes. Krige states: 'There is never an ukubuyisa for a woman, for it is only the male ancestors that are important, and while people may be remiss in holding the ukubuyisa of an ordinary man, they will always be very particular about "bringing home" the kraal head, for it is he who will look after the whole village in death as in life.'²⁾ Old informants and izangoma in the three tribes insist that the ukubuyisa ritual was, and is, frequently performed for an old woman. It is especially done for an old woman who was intelligent and who 'had the words of a man': thus not every old woman's shade is brought back home. In the past the ukubuyisa was particularly performed for the inkosikazi, this being arranged by the umndeni. Old women explain that whereas there has always been an ukubuyisa for an old woman, for a young woman there is only the cleansing ceremony (isidlo), for when no cleansing ceremony is performed the deceased may cause trouble as a shade. The ukubuyisa is not performed for an umakoti who dies because like an unmarried person she will not be supplicated to or thanked as

1) See also Bryant 1967, p.707

2) Krige 1957, p.169

a shade. When the ancestors are invoked, only those for whom the 'coming-home' ritual has been performed are referred to. When an old woman dies she becomes an idlozi but is not considered a 'strong' one, but once this ritual has taken place she is considered powerful.

The emphasis of the ritual, which is performed by a person's offspring, is to bring the shade home to look after the children of the home, to bless them, and to prevent illness. Nowadays the opinion of most people except the elders is that a woman's shade may be brought home, but the izangoma state that this would in fact not occur before that shade was deemed to be old. In one home ukubuyisa was performed for the grandmother in consequence of an incident in the cattle-kraal when the cattle began bullying a cow until she jumped over the fence and later came back. After the incident representatives of the home went to consult an isangoma who said that the shade of the deceased grandmother wanted to be brought back home. The old man of the home apologized to the ancestors for not having performed the ritual for the old mother of the home.

Although the position of old women is elevated by this ritual, only one ox is usually slaughtered as part of the woman's mortuary ceremonies, as compared to several in the case of a man. Considerable variation as to the number of cattle slaughtered for a man who dies exists in all three tribes, but the figure with regard to an old woman remains constant. The first animal slaughtered in connection with the death of a man is called ingcuba: it is killed on the day of the burial to drive an old man's shade away, and he is buried in its hide; the meat used to be buried next to the grave, though nowadays tends to be eaten. The second is termed ukugeza izandla (to wash the hands); the third amakhubalo (strengthening with medicines); the fourth ukugunda (shaving the hair); the fifth, the beast at ihlambo (removing the tokens of mourning, except those of the widow); and the sixth ukubuyisa. Traditionally at the death of a woman only a goat termed ukugeza izandla was slaughtered to wash the hands, and only one beast would be killed in honour

of a very old woman who died. This would be for her ukubuyisa and the ritual would be performed at her conjugal home where she is an ancestral shade. Many homes slaughter an animal at the ihlambo of a woman who died; those that fail to do so argue that this is not traditional since the umndeni need not be cleansed if a woman dies.

1)

Christians also conduct the ukubuyisa, which includes a church ritual and which they refer to as isibusiso (a blessing), in which an old woman may be found either purchasing the candles to be used or removing them after the service. But in the traditional ukubuyisa ritual which is still practised, the old mother of the home performs her normal ritual duties. She places a pot of beer for the ancestral shades, burns incense, and supervises the burial of the stomach contents, the cooking of the meat and the burning of the bones; and later she eats the caecum and drinks the ritual beer.²⁾

If an old woman, or man, dies and is buried away from home virtually the same ritual is performed but it is called ukulandwa ngomlahlankosi - to bring home the shade of the deceased by means of the umlahlankosi tree. Should an old woman complain as an ancestor that she does not know the new home to which her family has moved, some people bring home her shade by this ritual. One of the old men, or a son of the deceased, takes a branch of umphafa or umlahlankosi (Zizyphus mucronata³⁾) and either enters the house where the corpse had lain or visits the grave, and places a branch on the spot saying: 'Sobanibani sikulandile ukuthi uhambe nathi uye ekhaya - So-and-so we have come to fetch you to go with us to your home.' The old man then drags the branch out of the house or cemetery, but as he does so he must not turn around or talk to anyone because he is symbolically carrying a dead man. On the journey home, even if it be a long one, he informs the shade as to their progress. When he arrives at the entrance to the umuzi the men who remained at home meet him with a goat. The shade of the deceased,

1) See also Sundkler 1976, p.269

2) See pp.164-166, 169, 171-172

3) Bryant 1966, p.50

which is in the branch, is constantly addressed as it is taken inside to the umsamo where the old woman has placed a small pot of beer in readiness; it will finally be buried at the entrance or umsamo of the cattle-kraal, or if it is associated with a deceased old woman is buried outside the premises; though among the Dlomo it is placed in an anthill by the old mother of the home. Like the ukubuyisa the ritual takes the form of a sacrifice involving the slaughter of a goat and a beast, with the old woman performing her customary ritual duties. By this means the shade of a woman past child-bearing age could be ritually brought home to look after her descendants.

10.4 Sending 'home' the very aged

The death of a very old woman or man is usually referred to as ugodukile. Early writers on the Zulu, as among other peoples, noted that once the aged became senile their lives were terminated in various ways.¹⁾ Very old Zulu men were put to death by the king's regiments²⁾ whilst very old women were thrown in dongas, buried alive in pangolin holes, or thrown into crocodile-infested rivers.³⁾ Nowadays mention of such customs invariably meets with incredulous laughter and vigorous denial by Zulu people of all ages. They argue that cowards, thieves and wizards were killed, but not the aged. They react to these early recorded accounts of ukugoduka with the words: 'Akukaze kwenzeké lokho KwaZulu - it has never happened in KwaZulu. We have never heard of the killing of old people; only lepers were killed by men of the umndeni who secretly hid the corpse in the veld.' Rather, they explain, if a person was very old and 'dead in all but body' then a beast would be slaughtered to provide her or him with food as a final provision on her way to the ancestors, this ritual being known as ukugoduka. This provision (umphelekezelo: to accompany) was made when kinsfolk felt that death would be a merciful release to an extremely old

1) Sartori 1895, pp.125-130; Koty 1934; Tyler 1971, p.211; Simmons 1970, pp.225-228

2) Stuart & Malcolm 1950, p.30

3) Samuelson 1929, pp.37-38; Samuelson 1974, pp.123-128

person, or when the aged person herself had a premonition of death or wanted to die; then people surmised that the ancestors were wanting ukugoduka to be performed.

In this simple ritual a member of the umndeni gives the old person a piece of roasted liver or other meat to eat, after which the gall-bladder may be inflated and hung on the neck of the sick person or at the umsamo; old people claim that if 'fate plays its part', the old person eats the liver and dies the same day. There are elders who admit that in their experience the old person did not always die after this ritual had been performed, though some may have died of suggestion its purpose being to assist a person to make the transition from this world to the next.

Whilst earlier records acknowledge the custom of ukugoduka,¹⁾ which still prevails sporadically in the three tribes studied in Nkandla, it is clear that the premeditated termination of the lives of decrepit old people also occurred in this area in the distant past, and a few old women detailed experiences of helpless aged who were left to die of exposure or from wild animals during the lives of their grandparents. There is either no mourning at the death of such a very old person²⁾ or just token mourning, by the women in particular, because the death was anticipated and even wanted, and it was taken for granted that the old person would be at rest. Whatever version of ukugoduka informants hold, they are unanimous that the ukubuyisa ritual was and still is performed for an old person.³⁾

1) Myburgh 1959, pp.14-15

2) See also Krige 1957, p.160

3) See also Berglund 1976, p.80

CHAPTER 11

CONCLUSIONS

11.1 Summary of the roles of old women

Nadel has argued that a person or actor in a given cultural role displays certain standardized action-patterns,¹⁾ and although there are difficulties in classifying such institutional behaviour,²⁾ certain broad categories can be identified in most cultures.³⁾ Blacking stresses that these classificatory categories may be ethnocentric and that it is crucial to obtain actors' models: that is, the individual's view of the important roles he or she plays.⁴⁾ The ensuing summary of the principal modes of conduct of old Zulu women is based on both an etic and emic analysis.

It has been seen that an old woman exercises considerable legal authority, although her legal powers are restricted to matters that can be settled informally or that occur within her conjugal home and her husband's patrilineage.⁵⁾ She has a partial share in the rights of her husband's agnatic group in that she upholds the honour and dignity of its members and may take action in cases of seduction, swearing and insult; however should the offender be unwilling to settle the matter amicably she has no right to take him to the ibandla at the level of the induna or umnumzana. An old woman, like any other woman, no matter what her age or rank, does not have the right to take or argue a case outside the kinship group.⁶⁾ She thus remains a legal minor beyond the confines of her husband's patrilineage. The fact that the pattern of inheritance follows the patriline, that a woman may not act as a litigant in the formal courts without a guardian, has no assets apart from the ingouthu and its

1) Nadel 1951, pp.93, 107, 115

2) Ibid. pp.129-133

3) Ibid. pp.133-136

4) Blacking n.d. pp.108, 110

5) See pp.141-149

6) See pp.149-152

offspring, and is not liable for debts incurred by herself or members of her husband's agnatic group, indicate that rights of ownership are associated with the patrilineage, in which a woman has a minimal share.¹⁾ There is thus no ostensible difference in the legal position of a young and older woman: both are protected legal minors with no powers of representation. However the latter, on account of her age and proven good conduct, achieves an augmented position of authority within her husband's agnatic group and her personal rights are protected; where they are not, then like any woman she may approach the mother of the chief to appeal for justice.²⁾

Douglas emphasizes the link between power and form in culture:³⁾ where the social system is 'well-articulated' there will be 'articulate powers vested in the points of authority'; but where the social order is 'ill-articulated' there will be 'inarticulate powers vested in those who are a source of social disorder'.⁴⁾ In other words where positions of authority are explicitly recognized there are explicit external powers, but where people hold ambiguous roles they are credited with powers that are socially disapproved of. The present material supports much of Douglas' general argument in the sense that old women hold a position of authority within the homestead and as such contain the power to bless and curse or settle disputes among their sons and their wives. They also legally contribute towards the maintenance of harmony within the agnatic group, but because patriarchal positions are held by men, and wives remain outsiders to the agnatic group, and in addition, are the source of sub-lineage formation hereby threatening its unity, they can also be regarded as a source of social 'disorder' and this is expressed in their alleged propensity towards utilizing the power of witchcraft. Where the evidence from

1) See pp.154-157

2) See p.152

3) Douglas 1966, p.118

4) Ibid. p.120

the three tribes does not accord with Douglas' general proposition is that such powers are not considered by Zulu people to be uncontrolled and unconscious.¹⁾ It would seem that the ascription of greater power in witchcraft to old women²⁾ is a corollary to the legal power wielded by men in a system in which women remain perpetual minors, and it is the post-menopausal state of old women that provides them with immunity against being bewitched. The underlying reason for the continued minority status of a Zulu woman, even though old, is that legal rights revolve around the rights of agnatic groups, and only men can represent such groups in a patrilineal society. Despite this, the woman, like the man, becomes increasingly involved in the legal process with advancing age and her position of authority and legal influence within the agnatic group increases until she becomes senile.

The old Zulu woman has traditionally been regarded as a repository of cultural knowledge and skills and an important source of advice. Because of the correlation between expertise and chronological age she often takes charge of certain events or is the one whose skills are most sought after. Accordingly an old woman is consulted to verify a young woman's pregnancy; it is an old woman who either harbours the secrets of the medicine for speedy delivery or will procure these on behalf of a younger married woman; and the mother-in-law or an old woman dictates the course of action when labour begins.³⁾

Old women are in the forefront as specialists concerning the ailments of children.⁴⁾ Although child health is not the exclusive preserve of elderly women, and a woman need not have passed the menopause to be regarded as an expert in this field since knowledge is accumulated over the years, old women are often asked to assist in the healing of the young. In the delicate operations performed to ensure the correct development children, such as inducing rectal bleeding to inhibit a child's sexual desire, the responsibility tends to rest with

1) Douglas 1966, pp.120, 123

2) See pp.159-160

3) See pp.40, 42-43, 45-46

4) See pp.67-68

elderly women.¹⁾ The considerable influence formerly exercised by old women as examiners of the genitalia of girls and instructors in sexual relations has been noted.²⁾

Aged women are also consulted on historical or cultural technicalities. They pride themselves on their role as instructors in the homestead stating that their 'pupils' range from the young wives to young children.³⁾ They are among the married women who offer advice to the bride with regard to behaviour befitting a married woman.⁴⁾ Although in practice all old women are not equally wise, and some are rarely consulted, nevertheless because of their seniority and the fact that they are considered semi-ancestral, and because experience has value in preliterate cultures, they are traditionally considered to have attained the pinnacle of wisdom in culture. Closely linked with the enculturating and caring roles played by old women are custodial roles evincing the reliable behaviour that is typically associated with them. Because of their sense of responsibility and propriety old women are not only the guardians and transmitters of tradition but protect the descendants of their husband's agnatic group from birth until death from potential evil.

Thus the knowledge and skills of old Zulu women, and the esteem in which these attributes are held, not only enable them to continue participating meaningfully in cultural life but provide them with a position of prominence and respect that is particularly noticeable in the ceremonies that delineate the important stages of the human life-cycle.

On reaching the menopause a woman does not enter any specifically new or distinctive kinship relationships, yet old age and the role of grandmother are closely identified. The kinship term ugogo (grandmother) is widely used with reference to a woman who has past the age of child-bearing; it is also employed as an affectionate euphemism for isalukazi (old woman). Although the menopause does not usher in the role of grandmother, old age and grandmotherhood are

1) See pp.64-65

2) See pp.89-93

3) See pp.73-75, 84, 88

4) See pp.105, 116

virtually synonymous. A grandmother is believed to have certain qualities which enable her to play an important role in the formative years, particularly towards her sons' children among whom she resides. On account of her ceremonial purity, which is conferred on her by the menopause, she is present and active at the birth of her grandchild,¹⁾ during the puerperal period²⁾ and in the imbeleko thanking ritual by which the infant is introduced to its forefathers.³⁾ Likewise on account of her purity, she participates in the puberty ceremonies of her male and female grandchildren.⁴⁾ She performs various services at the coming-of-age ceremony of her granddaughter, protects her from witchcraft, and fosters contact between the girl and her ancestors.⁵⁾ The inclusion of the grandmother in the final ceremony of maturation prior to marriage - that of donning the headdress denoting womanhood⁶⁾ - reveals the importance of her continued relationship with young people. Finally when her granddaughter leaves for marriage the old grandmother performs various ritual services to inform the ancestors of the bride's departure and to endow her with their blessings.⁷⁾

The knowledge and experience of age provide the grandmother with an important educative role in imbuing her grandchildren with the values that give order and meaning to cultural life, such as those relating to the concept of ubuntu (humanity), respect, hospitality, sharing and decorum. However although she will chide an erring child her role is not that of disciplinarian but rather of teacher, encourager and comforter, and when parents threaten to punish a child she, because of her age and semi-ancestral nature, will offer it a place of sanctuary.⁸⁾ This partnership of old and young continues as the child grows and becomes more responsible. It is particularly evident in the way the grandmother

-
- 1) See p.46
 - 2) See pp.47-62
 - 3) See pp.62-63
 - 4) See pp.80-86
 - 5) See pp.95-98
 - 6) See pp.99-100
 - 7) See pp.103-106
 - 8) See pp.74-75

regulates the adolescent's entrance to courtship: she acts as trusted adviser and the most intimate love-affairs are discussed with her.¹⁾

The reason underlying the warmth and closeness that typifies the grandmother-grandchild relationship in Zulu culture appears to be the absence of disciplinary authority. Nadel postulates that the 'friendly equality' of intermittent generations is linked to patterns of family authority.²⁾ Apple tested the hypothesis from ethnological reports of 75 cultures³⁾ and obtained confirmatory results: 'that formality between grandparents and grandchildren is related to association of grandparents with family authority, while the indulgent, close and warm relationship is fostered by dissociation of grandparents from family authority.'⁴⁾ Support for this hypothesis can be found in the fact that Zulu grandfathers who are closely identified with patriarchal authority do not share the same intimate and indulgent relationship with their grandchildren as do grandmothers who, by virtue of the kinship system, can never be completely identified with their husband's agnatic group. Radcliffe-Brown maintains that in African cultures the relation between parents and children is usually one of 'superordination and subordination', that parents are responsible for the control and education of their children and that children are obliged to restrain their behaviour in the presence of their parents: they may not discuss sexual matters with them and should control their levity; whereas between alternate generations there is a much freer relationship.⁵⁾ Traditionall this was true of the Zulu people, among whom the parent-child relationship was typified by obedience and control and the grandmother-grandchild relationship by laxity and friendship.

Apple found that the amount of parental authority over

1) See pp.87-90

2) Nadel 1951, pp.234-236

3) Apple 1954, pp.13-17, 19; Apple 1956, p.657

4) Apple 1956, p.662

5) Radcliffe-Brown 1950, pp.27-30

children had little effect on the grandparent-grandchild relationship,¹⁾ though her thesis raises reservations concerning the representativeness of her sample in which five out of the seventy-five cultures are from Southern Africa,²⁾ that among these she has chosen two examples from the Nguni group (Zulu and Swazi) whilst consciously only selecting the Tswana as representing the Sotho group,³⁾ and that her information on each culture tends to be based on a single source.⁴⁾ Fisher Brown⁵⁾ suggests that the relaxed and indulgent relationship that typifies Hehe grandmothers in Tanganyika (Tanzania) minimizes friction between mothers and daughters since grandmothers offer granddaughters an outlet for their tensions and are a source of information on sexual matters, which may not be discussed by mothers. Both Nadel and Radcliffe-Brown propose that the 'joking relationship' of familiarity and privileged disrespect among grandparents and grandchildren could be influenced by the fact that they are separated by age and that both are on the borderline of social usefulness, with grandchildren entering into and grandparents withdrawing from full social participation.⁶⁾ It is however questionable whether the particularly close relationship that exists between Zulu grandmothers and their grandchildren is related to a position of marginal cultural usefulness, since the old woman attains important new cultural roles on attaining the menopause and acquires greater cultural influence with advancing age until she eventually becomes an ancestor.

The patrilineal kinship system also influences the fact that the Zulu paternal grandmother, as against the maternal, plays a larger part in her grandchildren's lives. The maternal grandmother shares a similar relationship of relaxed friendship with her grandchildren, but because of patrilocal residence and the patrilineal system she has less contact and identification with her daughter's offspring than she has with those of her son. Reader, in his analysis of the reciprocal

1) Apple 1956, p.662

2) Apple 1954, p.24

3) Ibid. p.77

4) Ibid. pp.129-138

5) Fisher Brown 1935, pp.92-93

6) Nadel 1951, p.235; Radcliffe-Brown 1952, pp.96-97

relationship between grandparents and grandchildren among the Makhanya, likewise argues that the paternal grandchild, especially a son, provides great joy to his grandparents and receives every kindness from them because 'he is the living descendant and representative of themselves. Just as the son's sons are closer to a grandparent than are the son's daughters, so all the children of a son are closer than all the children of a daughter. The latter are the offspring of another lineage: they cannot inherit their maternal grandfather's property, nor do they represent his name.'¹⁾

A woman spends most of her post-menopausal years as a mother-in-law and performs numerous important roles in the life of the family in this capacity, but with the exception of those few activities which are based on her ceremonial purity and which often have ritual and agnatic overtones, this role tends to be associated with maturity rather than with old age. This holds true despite the fact that the majority of old women affirm that their mothers-in-law had passed the age of child-bearing when they arrived at their conjugal homes as brides.

As has been seen, mothers-in-law have pervasive rights and duties with regard to their daughters-in-law.²⁾ It is the prerogative of a mother-in-law to instruct a daughter-in-law in the ways of her husband's home and to supervise the domestic arrangements within it.³⁾ A mother-in-law has the right to be respected and obeyed - as is symbolically portrayed at the time of the wedding when the bride dances up to her mother-in-law, kneels before her and offers a pledge of respect ⁴⁾ - but the mother-in-law also has duties to perform for the young wives. She must be present and active at the confinement and post-partum seclusion of her daughter-in-law to ensure that no witchcraft is practised which could endanger the life of the young wife or her baby.⁵⁾ She plays a prominent part in assisting and advising her daughter-in-law

1) Reader 1954a, p.8

2) See pp.213-214

3) See pp.126-127, 136-137

4) See p.110

5) See pp.45-47, 59-62

in the timing and execution of the customary method of weaning, and must care for the child of her daughter-in-law while the latter is busy at her daily tasks.¹⁾ The mother-in-law is responsible for keeping young wives on good terms and settling any disputes which may arise between them.²⁾ She is also influential in the ceremonials and rituals that ensure the fertility of their fields.³⁾

The role of mother-in-law thus affords the ageing woman considerable authority and power while releasing her from routine work. It enhances her identification with her husband's agnatic group and provides her with help and care in her old age.⁴⁾ However it is not a role closely associated with an old woman's ceremonial purity because it focuses more on assisting and guiding the daughter-in-law to be a productive member of the homestead.

A further important role in which a wife spends many of her adult years is that of mother. She is gradually granted greater decision-making powers and as she becomes the most senior woman in the home, and in polygamous families if she is also the principal-wife, she comes to be regarded as the mother of the homestead. In this role she is consulted in kinship and legal matters concerning the agnatic group, particularly by her sons, and continues to exercise control over domestic concerns.⁵⁾ Once again, no explicit correlation can be made between old age and being the mother of the homestead, although such a woman is usually old. The menopause does not inaugurate the role of being the mother of the homestead but augments it with ceremonial and ritual dimensions. She is the only woman of the homestead who is entrusted with preparing sustenance for the ancestral shades,⁶⁾ thus engendering their continued goodwill towards members of the agnatic group, and hers is the house which forms a focal meeting-place for the shades.⁷⁾ She sits with the dying and deceased, and attends to the corpse,⁸⁾ and by various ritual acts helps to sustain the contact between

1) See pp.69, 73-74.

2) See pp.143, 145

3) See p.121

4) See p.208

5) See pp.141-148

6) See pp.164-169

7) See pp.188-190

8) See pp.230-234

the deceased and their descendants.

As a wife ages, she may behave more freely towards her husband, and if she has acquired daughters-in-law her duties towards him with respect to working the fields, cleaning the home, fetching water and firewood, cooking and serving, cease. Although such duties do not automatically terminate with the climacterium, since a woman tends to assume the role of mother-in-law at this time, her work load is greatly reduced for the old wife is considered to have performed her share of physical toil for her husband.¹⁾ However the climacterium directly affects the nature of the woman's conjugal relationship. The cultural premise that a woman's sexual desire wanes with the menopause, whereas her husband's sexual needs remain unchanged in old age, leads to some friction in monogamous marriages. However where a woman is married to a polygynist the tension tends to dissipate, particularly if she moves out of her husband's homestead together with her eldest son and his wife and children to form a new homestead in which she wields considerable authority.²⁾

Most elderly wives are widows who live singly in the homestead of their eldest son. When there are other close patrilineal kinsmen of her husband living in the same homestead or neighbourhood no great role shifts occur for the old widow, particularly in ritual matters; however in such cases where the widow becomes the most senior person she may assume considerable new powers, especially in settling domestic disputes and in approaching the ancestral shades, and together with her son, will effectively run the home.

A leviritic union could afford protection to elderly widows who since marriage have been under the guardianship of their husband's agnatic group, but it is never entered into because old women maintain that they are cared for in the homes of their sons and hereby enjoy greater freedom of behaviour than they would otherwise achieve.³⁾ The same rationale is advanced for the absence of remarriage among elderly widows, though the amazement with which the idea of the remarriage of old women is usually met is indicative of the overriding association of sexuality and fertility with the

1) See pp.137, 208

2) See pp.138-140

3) See p.140

institution of marriage. It can therefore be argued that cultural imperatives related to the concept of fertility induce old women to accept the role of widowhood, allied to their enhanced position of authority within the homestead.

According to Smith Blau the acceptability of widowhood could also be influenced by another factor, namely, that it is a widespread status among aged women. She found that in America the prevalence of widows affects their friendship patterns in that 'widowhood tends to exert a detrimental effect on friendships in those structural contexts where it is relatively rare, but not in those where it becomes more prevalent.'¹⁾ She argues that since people tend to associate with others of their own age, sex and class, so the proportion of widows will affect the continuance or severance of friendships in old age.²⁾ In the three tribes studied in Nkandla widowhood is prevalent among old women; it could therefore be argued that the friendships of old women are not adversely affected by being widows: aged women mainly lament the loneliness that ensues from the death of their peers - a factor of diminishing numbers that does not however result in diminished status since widowhood remains the predominant marital status among old women.

As has been seen, an old woman who has daughters-in-law is no longer expected to cook for herself and her husband or to work in the fields. As she finds her strength waning she ceases such work of her own accord and remains at home looking after the grandchildren and attending to less physically taxing matters.³⁾ However, although released from work, old women consider it honourable to remain productive members of the home, and most continue with handwork for as long as they are able.

The considerable economic control and responsibility accorded the old woman is manifest in the influence she exercises in the distribution of fields to the various young wives of the homestead. Her position of power in the home is

1) Smith Blau 1961, p.433

2) Ibid. pp.438-439

3) See p.118

augmented in that when there is a shortage she directs the distribution of food from her storehouse, and she controls food used both externally for gift-giving and internally for daily consumption.¹⁾ A shift in emphasis thus occurs from woman as worker to old woman as organizer of the production, distribution and consumption of the food of the home, and this together with the rites she enacts on account of her ceremonial purity affords her a position of economic pre-eminence.²⁾

Although accumulated wisdom and knowledge, kinship relations and seniority account for the enhanced influence of ageing women in their husband's agnatic group, the involvement of old women in certain ceremonial events, both within the agnatic group and the neighbourhood, is primarily determined by their attainment of the menopause and its consequent state of symbolic purity.

In the agricultural ceremonies held to control the natural elements or to promote the fertility of the crop, the old woman plays a significant role. In ceremonies aimed at breaking the drought or expelling the blight the hut of an old woman was a suitably clean gathering area because of its association with ceremonial purity,³⁾ then during the festival of the first-crops the old mother prepares the strengthening mixture.⁴⁾ It thus appears that on account of her state of infertility and supposed asexuality the old woman provides a neutral and safe environment by means of which the powerful forces of nature can be harnessed.

This symbolic immunity also provides old women with important roles with regard to the members of her husband's agnatic group. Traditionally only women past child-bearing age have acted as midwives ushering the infant into the world and assisting its growth.⁵⁾ They would handle and bury an infant who died at birth and administer euthanasia to a second-born twin. The house of an old woman provided the necessary state of symbolic cleanliness not only for childbirth to take place or for a girl to reside in on attaining the menarche but as an uncontaminated meeting-place for girls about to enact the ceremony of expelling the infectious

1) See pp.136-137

2) See pp.118-137

3) See pp.123, 125-126

4) See pp.129

5) See pp.45-46, 64-65, 67-68

diseases of children.¹⁾ On account of their ceremonial cleanliness and skill old women could also act as operators in the ear-cutting ceremony that advanced a child's cultural responsibility.²⁾ Old women traditionally care for the sick and dying and, being rendered immune from death's pollution, prepare the corpse for interment.³⁾

This protective power of the post-menopausal state was formerly much in evidence. When the Zulu army was about to mobilize, the warriors would first return home to receive the protection of their ancestral shades.⁴⁾ Stuart records a custom that is similarly related by elders in the three tribes of an old woman who stands outside the gate of the cattle-kraal. As each warrior made his exit she would flick him on the calf-muscle with a broom to protect him from danger.⁵⁾

The old woman is regarded as pure since she has ceased to menstruate and to have sexual relations; her chronological age and particularly her state of cleanness closely identify her with the ancestral shades. This quasi-ancestral character of a woman who has passed the age of child-bearing enables her to perform important ritual services for her husband's agnatic group prior to becoming an ancestress herself. The duties of the old mother of the home at a ritual sacrifice are clearly an extension of her role of serving the elders of her husband's family and providing for their contentment. Hence, as has been shown, she prepares a burnt offering, places snuff and a pot of beer at the shrine of her hut for their repast, and invites them to partake of it. She remains with the sacrificial meat, supervises its cooking, and guards it from being tampered with for witchcraft.⁶⁾

Although the most senior patrilineal male descendant usually officiates at a ritual slaughter and addresses the ancestors, should no suitable male be available then an old woman who is past child-bearing age, and preferably one who is born in the agnatic group, otherwise the old mother of the

1) See pp.44-45, 65-66, 82

2) See pp.75-76

3) See pp.230-233

4) Krige 1957, p.267

5) Stuart 1913, p.87

6) See pp.164-172

home, may do so, though she will observe certain restrictions in behaviour.¹⁾ The ancestral shades need not always be approached by means of a full ritual slaughter: contact can be made with them by utilizing isolated elements of ritual, and old women, on account of their age, sustain a considerable amount of contact with their husband's ancestors by such minor ritual acts. For instance, old women will from time to time organize beer to be brewed and place a pot at the ancestral shrine of their house for the enjoyment of the shades and to assure them that they are being remembered.²⁾ A widespread expression of thanksgiving is at the harvest when the old woman of the home supervises or prepares the malt for the beer which is brewed for the ancestors. Only women past the menopause, men, and children who have not reached puberty may touch this pot and drink its contents.³⁾ Use of the gall-bladder and its bile is indicative of ancestral activity, and it is noteworthy that the old mother of the home particularly handles the gall-bladder of a goat ritually slaughtered to mark the successive stages of social maturation of a grandchild until a bride departs for marriage, as well as at ritual sacrifices.

Through the performance of such acts, whether for rites of passage or in ritual slaughters instigated by diviners, the old woman sustains harmonious contact between the deceased and living members of her husband's agnatic group, ensuring its propagation and wellbeing. The semi-ancestral quality of the old mother of the home lends authority to her position in that her words attain the power of a curse or blessing.⁴⁾ Her enhanced position in her husband's agnatic group is further apparent in that traditionally the ceremony of ukubuyisa, which follows the pattern of a full ritual slaughter and which was performed to bring home the shades of deceased males, was also performed for old mothers in their husbands' home (particularly for principal-wives) so that they would return to look after the family they had served for so long.⁵⁾ The old woman thus becomes an important ancestral shade in

1) See pp.162-164, 179-182

2) See pp.173-174

3) See pp.132-133, 172, 174

4) See p.183

5) See pp.241-243

her conjugal home, and her continued existence in the life of her husband's family is symbolized by the fact that her house is not demolished at her demise but is the sacred abode of the ancestors and the focus of considerable ritual activity within the home. The house of the grandmother is central to the ritual slaughter not only because it harbours the ritual objects and because the old woman is regarded as semi-ancestral and ceremonially clean, but because the ancestral shades of the home are believed to dwell there. The old woman's house acts as a focal area in other rituals: thus the maternity-hut is ideally the great-house of the grandmother. At puberty the grandmother's house is the one selected for seclusion in the case of a girl, and it may also be chosen at a boy's puberty ceremony. Her house is central to the girl's coming-of-age ceremony, and at the time of her marriage the bride is seated at the ancestral shrine of her grandmother's house. The old woman's shade thus joins the honoured group of deceased grandmothers of the agnatic group who will be supplicated in times of need and thanked in times of joy and prosperity. And although a shade tends to manifest the behavioural attributes the person had when alive, that of an old woman is frequently associated with good fortune. These facts are in contradiction to the statements by Gluckman that 'The inferior position of women is... institutionalized in Zulu religion. Female ancestors are of little, if any, importance, though the spirits of old women, which appear... as lizards, are regarded as troublesome... and of course she has no place among the spirits of her husband's patrilineal group.'¹)

The attainment of the menopause thus marks a watershed in the life of a woman. It provides her with extensive ritual activities which accord her the honour and duty of providing the shades with sustenance. She attains an elevated position in the culture because she hosts the deceased forbears in her house and achieves close identification with them through her advanced age, sexual abstinence, and by partaking of the

1) Gluckman 1935, pp.262-263

caecum which they have feasted on and permeated with their presence. Ultimately, perhaps the greatest triumph of the old woman is that death does not threaten her with annihilation, but rather through death and the ritual of bringing home her shade she attains her highest status, namely that of being incorporated with the ancestors of her husband's agnatic group with whom she will guide the destinies of her living descendants.

Although the presence of mature and old women at the head of royal military establishments is noted in early documents,¹⁾ the evidence suggests that these women attained the position by real or putative consanguineal or affinal relationship to the king and by possessing extraordinary personality; old people in the tribes investigated know nothing of these female rulers. Although an aged Zulu woman could not become king or chieftainess, because this office is reserved for male representatives of the ruling agnatic group, the old woman who bears the political leader is drawn into the political process in that by virtue of her symbolic purity she provides the necessary safeguard for ceremonies of national importance to be effected. The house of the mother of the Zulu king was a focal area enabling the performance of certain national rituals and ceremonies associated with the exercise of public authority, such as for the strengthening ceremonies which accompanied consumption of the first crops.²⁾ The important politico-legal role played by the old mother of the chief, particularly with regard to the problems and rights of women, need also be recognized.

Since Zulu women, no matter what their age or rank, cannot assume political or legal leadership of the tribe or agnatic group, it may too readily be assumed that they play an insignificant political role. It appears that too narrow a view of political activity, focusing on the tribal level and official representatives of the formalized political authority, has led to neglect of the political influence of women, particularly those who are old. Radcliffe-Brown

1) Drummond 1875, p.70; Bryant 1965, pp.49-51, 124

2) See p.128

states that 'In seeking to define the political structure in a simple society, we have to look for a territorial community which is united by the rule of law. By that is meant a community throughout which public sentiment is concerned either with the application of direct or indirect penal sanctions to any of its own members who offend in a certain way, or with the settlement of disputes and the provision of just satisfaction for injuries within the community itself.' ¹⁾ Among the Zulu such sets of relations between territorial groups not only occur at the tribal level but at the level of agnatic groups, and even with regard to the smallest political unit, that of the homestead. It should also be borne in mind, as Gluckman noted when discussing the hierarchical political arrangement of Zulu culture, that as the political groups become smaller the ties of community and kinship grow stronger. ²⁾

There is a suggestion of old women enacting a socio-political role in times past, particularly when they headed a group of women bringing beer from a homestead as tribute to the Zulu king, or a chief, the old women announcing its arrival by ululating. ³⁾ However the socio-political role of old women is most clearly expressed at weddings. The role of old women as senior representatives of the groups of the bride and groom is already visible in the receipt of snuff associated with the delivery of the ilobolo cattle and as recipients of wedding gifts. ⁴⁾ The fact that old women guard the bride from any untoward actions, specifically witchcraft, further indicates their identification with the agnatic group whose rights and assets they protect. ⁵⁾ When old women are questioned as to their roles at weddings, they invariably reply: 'We just ululate'. And indeed throughout the extensive wedding dances of the bride and her coevals the old women of the bridal group run to and fro in front of their dancing lines ululating. They are few in number,

1) Radcliffe-Brown 1940, p.xviii

2) Gluckman 1940, p.39

3) See p.134

4) See pp.102, 114

5) See pp.106-108, 111-113

but their strategic position, their raised handbrooms, their high-pitched trills, and the content of their exclamations coupled with their seniority,¹⁾ draw attention to them as representatives of the bridal group, which incorporates the deceased and the living. This behaviour assures the agnatic group of the bridegroom that they are bringing them a productive member, and in so doing are promoting positive ties between the groups. Also noteworthy is the fact that the day of the wedding feast which follows that of the dances marks the severance of ties between the bride and her coevals with the slaughter of the umgholiso beast. The old women of the bridal group no longer ululate for they are not relevant to these proceedings which focus on the bride and her departure from her age-set.²⁾ The separate identities of the two agnatic groups is emphasized in that the women and old women of the two groups continue to remain apart, have their meat cooked in distinct pots, and eat separately.³⁾ By contrast the women of the bridegroom's agnatic group signal the arrival of the bride by ululating⁴⁾ but thereafter, apart from taunts emphasizing the alien character of the bride, have less need to impress their corporateness, particularly since the spatial environment in which the wedding is taking place is that of the groom's agnatic group.

The interpretation that emerges from these intentional action-patterns is that ululations are a female expression of pleasure, and that they signal socio-political unity as well as the prosperity of the agnatic group. When only old women ululate, such as on the dancing arena when the ancestors of both sides are praised or at a granddaughter's coming-of-age ceremony, ululations also appear as a form of ritual communication whereby the ancestors are informed of a joyous occasion concerning one of their descendants. It is significant that there are no ululations during mortuary ceremonies.

1) See pp.109-110

2) See p.111

3) See p.112

4) See p.107

11.2 Similarities and differences in the three tribes

This study on the position of women past the age of child-bearing conducted among the Biyela, Dlomo and Khanyile tribes has revealed few fundamental differences between them on a tribal basis, although the Dlomo have certain distinctive customs perhaps related to their divergent Lala origin, and the Khanyile show the greatest degree of modernization in religion, housing, schooling and agriculture. In all three tribes the status of the old woman is high, particularly where she is part of a more traditionally-orientated agnatic group; however the substance of old age is very much the same for all elderly people. It seems therefore that in the Nkandla district one may justifiably regard its Zulu people as a generic group, for the modes of conduct of old women in the three tribes are much the same though not identical. Where a practice fails to be observed in one tribe there is generally another custom of similar import displaying the same underlying principles at work. But despite these similarities, variations of tribes, clans, lineages, homes and individuals must be borne in mind, as well as the variable impact of acculturation.

Although the Biyela live closest to the village of Mpandleni, traditional childbirths, coming-of-age ceremonies, ancestral rituals, weddings and deaths all occur in the homesteads closest to the village. Likewise these flourish among the Dlomo, although they tend at times to conduct more elaborate ceremonies than the other tribes. Although old women display similar action-patterns among the Khanyile, the intense missionary activity in this area and the presence of a Christian chief who is not particularly desirous of perpetuating traditions results in more sporadic observance of traditional practices, but the customs persist and in the last few years are said to be regaining some of their lost validity.

All three tribes and the old women living in them are being affected by the forces of acculturation. The old are finding that the knowledge and skills they have acquired over the years are being rendered obsolete by new demands and

school education. Grandmothers have not traditionally been the disciplinarians of grandchildren but with the working father absent, and sometimes the mother as well, they are foisted into a role for which they are culturally unprepared. The presence of hospitals and the appearance of clinics, with their largely negative attitudes to traditional medical knowledge, influence the young to favour Western medical services. Where a home has adopted Christianity to the exclusion of ancestor worship some old women have experienced severe ritual role loss, although even among Christians a certain amount of token behaviour may be exercised to acknowledge their seniority. Ancestor worship however continues as the viable religion and the old woman continues to play an effective role in ritual sacrifices.

The old woman has retained considerable authority in economic matters and her State old-age pension is an innovation that often helps the old woman and the family to subsist, and bolsters her care from those who benefit from it. However the old woman has lost a number of ceremonial roles in agriculture and other aspects of the culture. For instance the weakened position of the old woman in the ear-piercing ceremony is symptomatic not only of the attenuation of institutions that have lost their effectiveness but also of the waning influence of the concept of ceremonial purity. The tenacity of the basic values that typify the culture is notable, but elements that reinforced one another are at times missing, or extraneous elements are inserted. For example fertility remains firmly embedded as a value but the controls on fertility have largely disappeared, resulting in further role loss by old women. The old woman however continues to play an important role in maintaining harmony among the living, as she does in sustaining positive relations with the deceased; by so doing she aligns herself with a basic tenet of Zulu culture - the promotion of human relationships.

11.3 Interpretation of the roles of old women

It is evident that the principal modes of conduct of old Zulu women involve a cluster of roles that are, using Warren's

terminology,¹⁾ supplementary: that is compatible and culturally reinforcing. These are as mother-in-law, paternal grandmother, teacher, examiner, carer, law promoter, trustee, ancestral intermediary, agricultural supervisor, ceremonial expert, representative of female concerns, and respected living senior. Another such cluster is: agnatic group representative on female concerns, ceremonial actor, ritual actor, mother-in-law, mother of the home, grandmother, teacher, examiner, law maintainer, agricultural supervisor, carer, trustee, respected senior. Following Warren's argument,²⁾ where there is such a high level of consensus and integration of institutional behaviour the individual will experience little social disorganization; furthermore where there exists consensus of conception of roles, where roles are clearly defined, where there is continuity in role sequence, and there exists a high proportion of ascribed roles which also reasonably fulfil cultural needs, the individual is likely to experience cultural satisfaction. These useful indices clearly pertain to the position of old Zulu women who share their basic expectations of old age with other members of the culture. The role-play of old women is distinctive, but in old age they do not relinquish their former interest in fertility, rather promoting this in others, while increasingly becoming drawn into their husband's agnatic group. In old age they are released from the physical labours and chores of their younger years in accordance with their declining physical power, but the majority of roles they enact provide them with a high degree of continuity, equanimity and personal fulfilment.

There are however two sets of incompatible cultural roles to which old women are subjected and which have some bearing on ascribed versus achieved status. Linton made the enduring distinction that: 'Ascribed statuses are assigned to individuals without reference to their innate differences or abilities. They can be predicted and trained for from the

1) Warren 1958, p.186

2) Ibid. pp.186-190

moment of birth' whereas 'achieved statuses are... those requiring special qualities... They are not assigned to individuals from birth but are left open to be filled through competition and individual effort.'¹⁾ According to this distinction it could be argued that the role cluster of wife, mother, mother-in-law is fundamentally ascribed in Zulu culture since virtually all women enter such roles. Yet the role cluster involves incompatible modes of conduct and evidence of social disorganization, for a widespread stereotype centres on the tension between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, witchcraft accusations between them being commonplace.

It seems strange that the role of mother-in-law should involve an old woman in a situation of stress when because of her length of service to the home, her seniority, her purity and her heightened status in old age she is in such a dominant position over her daughter-in-law. The explanation may be found on two different levels: first that although the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law have both entered culturally ascribed roles, the successful enactment of these entails a considerable amount of achieved behaviour. Where the two women live in harmony they accept their respective roles, with the older woman showing consideration and exercising restraint by not exploiting her position of dominance and the younger accepting her position of subordination and trying to please the older by working well for her and obeying the prescriptions of the home. Frequently two such women describe their harmonious relationship in terms of their personal determination to sustain peace in the home. Potential discord is thus related to the inability of individuals to adapt to the demands imposed on them by these roles.

The dilemma is heightened in cases where the old woman is a widow and effectively rules the homestead in conjunction with her son, who is also the daughter-in-law's husband; again, although their respective spheres of action are clearly outlined, a delicate balance has to be achieved in executing the respective roles and accepting the limitations they may impose.

1) Linton 1936, p.115

The other factor which appears to strain this relationship is that both women are alien to the agnatic group in which they reside. Both are wives who came from an alien group and as such are suspected and have continually to prove their worthiness. As Ngubane says: 'While a woman on the one hand represents her own lineage and forms a bridge between it and the lineage of her affines, 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 this sense she is a threat to the continued unity of the corporate group.'¹⁾ The old woman as mother-in-law is in this sense as uniquely alien as every other wife in the home; in addition by promoting the interest of all her daughters-in-law and their children she is promoting her own lineage in which she stands in the apical position while simultaneously she is promoting rival lineages, and the question of favouritism, or even of equal treatment, is a potential source of discontent. Since both women are expected to live in accord and sustain the harmony and wellbeing of the agnatic group without having official or direct recourse to the legal system, the alternative in which they may express their suppressed tensions is witchcraft.

The other set of incompatible roles to which an ageing woman is subject is that of old wife, ceremonial actor. In her continued role of wife, a husband expects sexual satisfaction from her, whereas in her shift to the powerful roles based on her newly-acquired symbolic purity, she experiences disorganization in the conflicting demands made on her. In some instances the old wife suppresses her commitment to the ideal of purity for the sake of her continued relationship with her husband; in others where a woman accepts her new role-shift but her husband does not, there is friction. The situation is usually resolved either by the old wife moving off to form a new homestead with her eldest son, or by the husband having recourse to a

1) Ngubane 1977, p.91

younger wife. Both these alternatives are effected most easily in the case of a polygynist.

Despite certain incompatibilities, a survey of the roles enacted by old Zulu women reveals a high degree of integration both in relation to other old women and to ego's past and future life.

11.4 Relevance of role-play to menopausal symptoms

As has been indicated, with the menopause the old woman attains a higher status and greater diversity and influence in her activities, particularly for as long as she remains a useful member of the community. The majority of Zulu women accept the menopause with equanimity provided that it occurs at the culturally prescribed time of life, namely, the mid-forties to mid-fifties. They also present an accurate clinical picture of the way the climacteric occurs. However apart from the occasional mention of fatigue they rarely evince the menopausal symptoms such as depression or 'hot flushes' that manifest themselves among Western women.¹⁾

A number of hypotheses concerning the menopause emerge. First, that the need for sexual intercourse can be culturally conditioned. As has been demonstrated, among the Zulu coitus is associated with fertility and old women state categorically that once a woman can no longer bear children she has no more sexual desire. With few exceptions old women maintain that they abstain from coitus. Second, the so-called menopausal symptoms do not appear to be universal but could be linked with certain states of anxiety. Although unanimity on the aetiology of the menopause is lacking, data are available that describe the menopause from a psychosomatic angle, according to which 'the central feature of the menopause is anxiety with its accompanying tension which leads via the hypothalamus to more or less frequent bombardment of the over-sensitive sympathetic system with disturbing nerve impulses.'²⁾ The climacteric is thus

1) Greenhill 1946, p.790; Coleman 1947, pp.208-209
Skultans 1970, pp.647-648; Llewellyn-Jones 1978, pp.267-268
2) Hoskins 1944, p.605

associated with anxiety, the strain triggering off vasomotor instability that manifests itself in such physiological changes as 'hot flushes'.¹⁾

A further hypothesis which may be advanced is that because the climacteric is basically a physiological process²⁾ it need not provoke anxiety if a woman is provided with meaningful roles that provide her with a high degree of self-worth.³⁾ A medical practitioner writes: 'Women you see for symptoms at this age often will be those mothers who have found little other interest up to this point than their children',⁴⁾ who now have attained adulthood and are leaving home to live elsewhere.⁵⁾ Becker rhetorically asks: 'Why does a woman who to all appearances has led a satisfying life suddenly break down at the menopause and decide that her life is not worth living?... Women become depressed at the menopause because... they do not have enough reasons for satisfying action, and when they lose the one apparent reason upon which they predicated their lives - their femininity - their whole active world caves in... Menopausal depression is the consequence of confining woman to a too narrow range of life choices and opportunities... We create menopausal depression by not seeing to it that women in their forties are armed with more than just one justification for their lives.'⁶⁾

Evidence from the three Zulu tribes indicates that although fertility is very much the essence of womanhood, the culture provides the ageing woman with new, highly-valued roles. The absence of analogous menopausal symptoms among Zulu women can perhaps thus be attributed to the redefinition of the position of old women in Zulu culture both by the provision of meaningful roles and by closely aligning her to the dominant cultural values.

-
- 1) See also Hoskins 1944, p.609; Johnson 1947, pp.209-210; Novak 1975, p.709; Llewellyn-Jones 1978, p.267
 - 2) Greenhill 1946, pp.787, 791
 - 3) See also Hoskins 1944, pp.605-607; Foltz 1947, p.212; Llewellyn-Jones 1978, pp.268-269
 - 4) Foltz 1947, p.213
 - 5) See also Hoskins 1944, p.606
 - 6) Becker 1963, pp.355, 358-359

11.5 Relationship of the roles of old women to Zulu values and symbols

The roles enacted by aged Zulu women express certain values which lend coherence to Zulu culture; these concepts are invariably articulated in symbols.

11.5.1 Fertility

An examination of the roles enacted by old women reveals a primary concern with fertility and the fostering of life and human wellbeing: this is evinced by the distinctive involvement of the old woman in childbirth, enculturation, at puberty, a girl's coming-of-age ceremony, marriage and even at death. Fertility appears as a primary value in Zulu life and thought, and the notion dominates the major ceremonies through which an individual graduates. Significantly the onset of fertility is publicly celebrated in the puberty ceremony but its cessation at the menopause receives no such public pronouncement.

In her role-play the old woman utilizes certain substances which by their repeated symbolic usage in specific contexts not only affirms their association with fertility, and culturally reinforces the importance of this concept to Zulu thought and life, but also continues to offer the post-menopausal woman a continuing role in propagating life. For instance, red ochre appears as a fertility symbol in that it is smeared by the mother-in-law or an old woman of the home around the pot containing the medicine for speedy delivery.¹⁾ An old woman would totally cover the newly-born infant in red ochre to promote its growth.²⁾ After the baby has been smoked to protect it from the harmful effects of wild animals, some of the protective izinyamazane powder may be mixed with red ochre and painted on the infant's head.³⁾ Throughout the puerperium red ochre is used and appears to be associated with life, growth, protection and strengthening. The colour red appears to be significant. For instance when a boy reaches puberty he should eat the red variety of sorghum known as ujiba.⁴⁾ Ngubane considers red as a colour of

1) See p.43

2) See p.52

3) See p.53

4) See p.80

'transformation and transition',¹⁾ an interpretation which may have some validity but fails to account for the absence of redness in Zulu mortuary ceremonial when the deceased becomes a shade. Rather it seems, as Berglund has stated, 'Red, the colour of blood, and frequently related to menstruation and pregnancy, as a symbol plays an important role in fertility and pregnancy.'²⁾

Hair is another symbol closely associated with fertility, and specifically with the values of life and health.³⁾ A woman is traditionally allowed to grow her hair into a topknot to indicate her social maturity and readiness for marriage;⁴⁾ she has to shave her head when she is newly widowed but in her second year of mourning she was formerly permitted to grow her hair, and finally at the end of her mourning period, in the fourth year, could once more smear it with red ochre.⁵⁾ It is significant that an old woman traditionally smears red ochre and blood into the hair of a marriageable woman, thereby signalling a relationship between these culture traits, the woman, and the concepts of life and fertility.

Although the male's contribution to procreation is culturally acknowledged,⁶⁾ fertility and propagation are ascribed to females, who are explicitly linked with the life-process with children being the material expression of their fertility and barrenness being attributed to the sterility of the female. So too, traditionally the coming-of-age ceremony is only performed for a girl, and its primary intention is for the ancestors to bless her with children. During the wedding ceremonial the association of fertility and womanhood is explicit as old women mock those who are barren and cannot produce a bride, and guard the bride from witches who might endanger her fertility.⁷⁾

Fertility thus appears to be a particularly female concept; it stands in distinction to another fundamental Zulu value especially associated with old women, namely that of purity.

-
- 1) Ngubane 1977, p.156
 - 2) Berglund 1976, p.356
 - 3) See also Berglund 1976, p.132
 - 4) See p.99
 - 5) See pp.238, 240
 - 6) See pp.39-40
 - 7) See pp.108-109, 111-113

11.5.2 Purity

The old woman is considered pure because she is no longer in direct contact with polluting substances, firstly her own menstrual blood, and secondly sexual secretions. The importance of the concept of purity and its close identification with old women is apparent in the major role old women play at death, and the weakening contagion that is believed to be endemic to it: the old woman, by being sexually 'cool', contains the necessary immunity to contain the potentially harmful powers emanating from human extinction. In addition her purity inhibits her from indulging in anti-social actions: accordingly she plays responsible roles during important cultural events within her husband's agnatic group such as birth, puberty and coming-of-age ceremonies. The house of the old mother of the home appears as an important symbol of purity on account of its dissociation with sexual emissions and its association with the shades¹⁾ whose benevolent interest and power ensure the perpetuation of the lineage. This house is conceptually linked with purity because in it only the grandmother and her grandchildren sleep.

The purity that is associated with the ancestors is closely linked with whiteness. The ox caul that is worn by a girl at her coming-of-age ceremony is regarded as the blanket of the ancestors and is white;²⁾ the ancestors themselves are considered to be white and whiteness is regarded as their particular colour.³⁾ Whiteness is however also linked with the purity associated with virginity.⁴⁾ The 'eye' of the hymen is described as white by the old women who have conducted vaginal examinations,⁵⁾ an association which is reinforced by the bride when she places a string of white beads down the umgholiso beast signifying her virginity. Reinforcement of the association is found in that old women praise their virginal bride by singing of her whiteness,⁶⁾

1) See pp.188-189

2) See pp.95-97

3) See also Berglund 1976, pp.90, 144, 167, 371

4) See also Schoeman 1975; Reich 1967, p.25

5) See p.91

6) See p.109

and formerly should a bride's chastity have been suspect, old women representing her agnatic group would at times insert white fat into her vagina to feign virginity.

Purity thus appears to be a concept associated with the ancestral shades of a particular agnatic group whose living essence is epitomized by its females in their role as bridal virgins.

11.5.3 The agnatic group

The values of fertility and purity appear to be the cornerstones of Zulu culture and are crucial to a conceptual understanding of the position of the old woman within it. These values are clearly linked to the patrilineal kinship system. It has become accepted anthropological dogma since the times of Radcliffe-Brown that kinship lays the foundation for other institutions in preliterate societies,¹⁾ with Fortes for instance indicating how ancestor worship is an extension of a unilineal descent system which emphasizes filial piety, seniority and patriarchal authority.²⁾ Even notable Marxists such as Godelier affirm that in preliterate cultures kinship relations function as relations of production because they dominate the social structure.³⁾ Among the Zulu the conceptual demarcation of the agnatic group determines the particular articulation of the concepts of fertility and purity and ultimately the position of the old woman.

Among the three tribes studied in Nkandla there is a close identification between members of the agnatic group and their cattle. Puerperal activities show a preponderance of traits related to the cattle-complex in the use of cowdung, the umgogo and milk-curd, all used to promote the healthy life of the infant. The head of the homestead is symbolically represented by the bull of the herd: early each morning the homestead-head antecedes the bull in relieving

1) Radcliffe-Brown 1952, pp.18, 29

2) Fortes 1960, pp.16-20, 33, 38; Fortes 1965, pp.122-124, 131-140

3) Godelier 1977, p.123

himself in the cattle-kraal in order to strengthen his symbolic counterpart. A boy, and not a girl, announces his attainment of puberty by driving the cattle out of the cattle-kraal (thus symbolically identifying his physical maturity in association with the cattle), and he is administered strengthening medicines inside the cattle-kraal by an agnatic senior.

The link between the cattle-kraal and the agnatic group is also manifested by important enculturative ceremonies such as ear-cutting which occur within it. The bride takes leave of her agnatic group, including the ancestors and is introduced to her husband's ancestors in the cattle-kraal of his home. The unification of the two agnatic groups is symbolically achieved by the transference of the umbeka beast, which will later be ritually killed. The cattle of the homestead and their agnatic counterparts must be strengthened and purified against the power of the new crop. And finally, at the death of a male agnate the cattle of the homestead must be fortified against the weakening effects of his death; traditionally if he was the head of the home he would be buried wrapped in an ox-hide.

Sansom argues that for ecological reasons 'The Nguni kraal is pre-eminently a cattle-herding and milk-producing corporation that cannot be conceived apart from cattle. The corporateness of kraals and their unity is manifest in practices that relate to the management of herds and in the rules that govern the consumption of milk. For Nguni, the cattle-byre is itself the architectural centre of kraal life, an exclusive structure private to kraal members. Nguni belief made the herd of a kraal distinctive, decreeing that it was mystically dangerous for cattle held by one kraal to approach the byre of another local group... Taboos on the drinking of milk dictated that only kinsmen who shared the same patronym (isibongo) and a few of their blood kin could drink milk from the kraal herd... Rules of exogamy corresponded with rules governing consumption of milk for they specified the same kin: Nguni

can drink the milk of those whose daughters they cannot marry. The kraal herd fed the men for whom it supplied bridewealth. Commensality of milk could be extended to outsiders only if they accepted brotherhood with kraal-members...¹⁾ Cattle are thus subject to the same principles of social behaviour as is the kinship group, chief among which is to sustain a sense of corporate identity among its members, as forbidden entrance into another cattle-kraal shows. It is noteworthy that this common kinship is signalled by sharing of milk from the same herd, the whiteness of milk suggesting, as in the discussion above, an association with purity. The cattle are bounded by the cattle-kraal, identified as the symbolic representation of the agnatic group, and both are allied to the value of purity.

The identity of the agnatic group is thus sustained by physical and cognitive boundaries which emphasize that outside influences weaken and pollute it. Because the ancestors form part of the agnatic group, and whiteness is a symbol of its unity, it appears not only that the value of purity pertains to the agnatic group but that since according to patrilineal principles men are its representatives, purity is closely identified with maleness.

11.5.4 The old woman as mediator between cultural phenomena

The Zulu woman may be seen as a symbol of fertility. Such a symbolic association would explain why a woman who has passed the menopause and can no longer bear children is said to be 'like a man': she no longer menstruates, is attributed with the value of purity, identifies herself with her husband's ancestral shades and applies herself to maintaining the harmony of his agnatic group and ensuring its perpetuation. Old women are proud to be equated with men and enjoy their position of enhanced authority and freedom of speech and action. Yet the equation is deceptive for certain restrictions remain, largely pertaining to a wife's

1) Sansom 1974, pp.164-165

continued status as an outsider to her husband's agnatic group, whose unity and purity is preserved and symbolized in particular by taboos concerning the ancestors, cows' milk and the cattle-kraal. Some of the freedoms that are granted an old woman are that at ritual feasts she is permitted to walk within the premises of the homestead and may enter the house containing the sacred meat as do men. But she may not officiate at a ritual slaughter or touch the meat of the ancestors, she may not address them within the cattle-kraal for she is an agnatic outsider, nor may she praise them or pronounce their names. She respects them as a woman but particularly as an outsider to the umndeni, and her ritual duties are customary to women, namely in providing the ancestors with sustenance. The taboos concerning women and the cattle-kraal may to a large extent be seen as taboos symbolically preserving the identity of the agnatic group. This explains why a woman may not enter the cattle-kraal without the required ceremonial permission. The basis of the argument does not change in respect of those Zulu people who argue that an old woman by virtue of having passed the menopause has access to the cattle-kraal, since by that time she has served her husband's agnatic group for many years and is virtually considered a member of it.¹⁾ The restrictions removed with old age pertain to her state of being post-menopausal and hence clean: thus she may now enter the cattle-kraal and eat milk-curd at all times as do men.

It has also been seen that the old woman has enhanced legal powers within the agnatic group of her husband and may even voice an opinion and judge disputes arising in the home, but these freedoms more commonly are influenced by her age, seniority and long term acceptance within her husband's agnatic group. She needs to be invited to attend or speak in the informal agnatic court and must be accompanied by a guardian in the formal courts because she remains a legal minor. The old woman is therefore unlike a man in that she may not represent the agnatic group ritually, politically or legally, or inherit its corporate possessions.

1) See pp.142, 184-186, 198

The fact that an old woman is likened to a man but is not identical to a man appears to be a crucial factor in uncovering the logic and interrelationships of an important corpus of Zulu conceptual structures. For by being equated with a man the old woman mediates between certain fundamental oppositions which categorize and underpin Zulu cultural life, especially those between male and female; and with her semi-ancestral attributes the old woman further mediates between the ancestral shades and the living. In the first instance the old woman is still a female who having born children concerns herself with female matters such as childbirth and child-care, and as she handles red substances and associates herself with the blood of females she promotes the fertility which forms the life-spring of the group. Her identification with womanhood is observable in her circular womb-like hut and the fact that it is positioned on the periphery of the homestead, which has spatial associations with femaleness.¹⁾ The old woman is considered in charge of the fields of the home and she has a barn which traditionally was situated on the outside of the home, for this is the sphere of wives.²⁾

Like other women she is buried outside the circular circumference of the home, eats the stomach and entrails of slaughtered cattle, and sits on a sleeping-mat; and like other kinswomen she receives a sleeping-mat as an appropriate gift during wedding ceremonies. In relation to men the old woman, qua woman, is considered to be ignorant and junior in rank and tends to act submissively and sits with the other women to the left of a house. In relation to men she is considered to be weak and retains an association with potential discord and danger in the power attributed to her as a witch.

But the old woman straddles the opposition between female and male by involvement in and identification with male categories as well as female. She handles white substances, is regarded as a senior of the home, and is

1) See also Berglund 1976, p.110; Ngubane 1977, p.85

2) Kuper 1980, p.8

considered as a senior in relation to females, for when only women are present in a hut she will sit to the right or towards the centre, thus identifying herself as relatively closer to males and the agnatic group than other women. Unlike the younger wives she is brought back as an ancestral shade to continue caring for her husband's home. The old woman, like a man, is associated with protecting the offspring of the agnatic group and maintaining harmony amongst them. She is regarded as a source of knowledge and wisdom, intelligence being associated with masculinity and seniority. The old woman will spit like a man to indicate her legal authority in condemning a girl who has lost her virginity. Although she may be physically weak the old woman has attributes of strength associated with her semi-ancestral and non-polluted condition. Like a man she has power, for her seniority and augmented position of authority affords her influence over an increasing number of people. Because she is likened to a male she may express various attitudes of dominance previously denied her, such as voicing her opinion and relaxing the respectful behaviour customarily required of her, provided that in doing so she does not trespass on the preserve of agnates. The situation of her house at the upper end of the homestead also aligns her with maleness, seniority and dominance.

A cluster of oppositions that counterpoint the sacred and profane are also relevant to the roles of the old woman: the primary association that the old woman shares with other living descendants is that she too is alive, and that in relation to the ancestral shades is a junior and should assume a submissive nature; furthermore it is considered honourable for an old woman, like other living members, to undertake some kind of work for the home although hers is token labour. But by contrast there is a clear weighting of characteristics associating the old woman with the deceased ancestral shades. Like the ancestors the old woman is no longer reproductive, but although sexually quiescent, concerns herself with the perpetuation of the agnatic group. Because she no longer menstruates or ostensibly indulges in

sexual intercourse she resembles the shades and is considered pure and cool, coldness being associated with death and heat with sexual passion in particular. She identifies with the ancestors by eating the caecum, drinking their beer and sleeping in their hut, as well as handling the gall-bladder of the goat (though significantly not usually that of the ox) and the chyme, which are closely identified with their essence. Like the ancestral shades the old woman is considered to be wise and knowledgeable in the ways of the forefathers. A further symbolic identification is found in the dress of old women which lacks resemblance to other living members by its absence of ornamentation, its drabness and customary disuse of the female headdress, removal of decoration being one of the distinctive characteristics of a corpse. The old woman also resembles the ancestral shades in that she assumes a dominant role in relation to the living, her anger has the power of a curse, her blessings bring good fortune, and her state of coolness affords her protection from being bewitched.

The patrilineally exogamous kinship system which characterises Zulu culture influences the economic, political, legal and ritual aspects of people's lives. The agnatic group is the core of the social structure, is symbolized by cattle, and kept cognitively intact by being related to the concept of purity, a value closely associated with ancestors and maleness. This concept emphasizes both the distinctiveness of the agnatic group and the alien presence of pre-menopausal married women within it who are identified with the value of fertility. As has been seen, by being equated with a man the old woman mediates between the dichotomies of fertility and purity and hence between female and male and between different agnatic groups. By being conceptualized as semi-ancestral she links the ancestral shades with the living. She is thus ascribed a position of great symbolic power by her identification with the two most powerful categories that order Zulu life, namely ancestors and males, while by nature being associated with fertility and females. The old woman thus mediates, in Lévi-Strauss' terms, between cultural

oppositions both horizontally between the sexes and agnatic groups and vertically between the deceased and the living.¹⁾ In so doing she cognitively unites these different conceptual categories. Significantly, the house of an old mother is never closed or demolished at her demise, for it is the symbolic embodiment of the regeneration of the agnatic group through the power of woman, and remains under the benign influence of the ancestral shades.

11.6 Theories of old age

Existing theories of senescence have to a large extent been formulated by gerontologists in the context of American culture, and their validity not only within America but cross-culturally is still being debated. There is at present discussion as to whether the aged should be regarded as a quasi-minority group²⁾ since they demonstrate minority group reactions such as hypersensitivity and are discriminated against by younger members of the culture who stereotype their behaviour. Clearly both the quasi-minority theory and the subculture theory,³⁾ postulating that the aged form an independent sub-group, pertain to a particular culture, and are unsupported by the present material which reveals the integrated role of aged women within Zulu culture.

One of the theories currently being debated in social gerontology and one which deals with the total ageing process rather than with a section of it,⁴⁾ postulates that ageing involves a process of disengagement from culture. Cumming & Henry hypothesize that normal ageing involves a mutual withdrawal or disengagement between the ageing person and others, and that the culture gradually prepares the individual for the ultimate disengagement wrought by death.⁵⁾ The

1) Lévi-Strauss 1968, p.142

2) Barron 1953, pp.477-481; Barron 1961, pp.55-68

3) Rose 1965, pp.3-16

4) Baumert 1962, pp.415-424; Nimkoff 1962, pp.405-414; Townsend 1964, pp.159-161; Rosenmayr 1972, pp.187-192

5) Cumming & Henry 1961; Cumming 1963, pp.377-385; Rose 1964, pp.46-47

disengagement theory suggests that there is a biological basis for reduction of interest or involvement in the environment, that since death is inevitable so is disengagement, and that an old person plays fewer roles of less importance and variety than a younger person because of a process of personal withdrawal and a withdrawal of integrating pressures from within the culture. So disengagement 'reflects a triple withdrawal - a loss of roles, a limitation of social contacts and relationships, and a much smaller commitment to social norms and values'.¹⁾

The theory of disengagement continues to arouse controversy and widespread misinterpretation. Rose, who clarifies the basic issues of the theory, also pinpoints its functionalist assumptions and weaknesses. He argues that 'since death must soon come to an older person, both society and the older person himself prepare for it sociologically and psychologically, so that when it comes the individual has divested himself of life's functions and associations and is ready for it. In this way, the death of an older person is not disruptive to the equilibrium of a society... because death is a universal fact, the social and psychological disengagement of the elderly must be a universal fact.'²⁾

Rose discusses three major criticisms of the Cumming & Henry treatise.³⁾ He first points out that several styles of ageing are possible, disengagement not being a characteristic of old age but rather of certain types of people who throughout their lives evince limited social involvement.⁴⁾ This observation receives some support in Cumming & Henry's separate papers of 1963.⁵⁾ The second criticism challenges the authors on their value judgement concerning the desirability of disengagement for older people when it has been demonstrated that the engaged elderly have

1) Friis et al. 1968, p.5

2) Rose 1964, p.47

3) Ibid. pp.46-50

4) Ibid. pp.47-48

5) Cumming 1963, pp.377-379

greater expressed life satisfaction than the disengaged.¹⁾ The third criticism is that the disengagement theory is itself bound to another theory: namely, functionalism.²⁾ Rose criticizes the approach for ignoring historical changes that mark American society, for minimizing cross-cultural variations, and for assuming the necessity of equilibrium as a basis for the functioning of culture.³⁾ Others argue that the disengagement theory is based on insufficient supporting evidence because, for instance, while old people might lose certain of their family relationships, such as a spouse or sibling, contacts with children do not decline; that insufficient attention may have been devoted to replacements, substitutions and forms of compensation when old age involves a loss of role or relationship, and that there is evidence indicating that old people dislike loss of roles and do not take the initiative in disengaging.⁴⁾

But what is the evidence from preliterate cultures? Shelton argues that the Nsukka Ibo of Eastern Nigeria manifest neither psycho-senility, indolence nor disengagement from their culture.⁵⁾ 'Ageing among the Ibo is neither withdrawal of the ageing individual from his culture, nor any sort of rejection of the ageing individual by the culture.'⁶⁾ From their cross-cultural study Cowgill & Holmes also conclude that 'disengagement is not characteristic of the aged in primitive or agrarian societies.'⁷⁾ Such anthropologists appear to confirm the ethnocentrism of the disengagement theory. Yet the ethnographic material on old Zulu women in Nkandla suggests that the issue is more complex and that it may be unwise to regard the disengagement theory as culture-bound and inapplicable to preliterate cultures.

1) Rose 1964, p.48; Pressey & Simcoe 1950, p.174

2) Rose 1964, pp.46-50

3) Ibid. pp.49-50

4) Friis et al. 1968, pp.5-6

5) Shelton 1965, pp.20-23, 48

6) Ibid. p.20

7) Cowgill & Holmes 1972, p.323

There is some supporting evidence that Zulu culture prepares the ageing woman for the final disengagement of death: this is achieved not so much through a loss of roles but a change of roles emphasizing different cultural values. As has been seen, on attaining the menopause the Zulu woman is defined as old and loses her role as a fertile mother who continues to propagate the agnatic group. Her actions are particularly directed towards maintaining the wellbeing of her husband's agnatic group, and this she achieves by being aligned to the ancestral shades who share with her the value of purity. The semi-ancestral role of the old woman with its focus on communicating with those who are deceased and who influence the lives of the living,¹⁾ directs the ageing woman's thoughts towards death, assists her acceptance of it, and by heightening her consciousness of spiritual beings and their powers, invites a form of disengagement.

Although old Zulu people accept ageing as a natural part of life they feel disconcerted at the physical degeneration and incapacity that accompanies it, and dejected that they are no longer able to work or live as they desire.²⁾ The hampered mobility of the aged restricts their ability to visit friends, and longevity has a negative side-effect in that most of their peers are deceased, both of which can heighten the sense of loneliness.³⁾ The fact that old women who are not kinsfolk rarely frequent coming-of-age ceremonies and weddings in their area and express a lack of interest in doing so, though they evince increased involvement in mortuary ceremonials, further reflects a withdrawal from life.

On the other hand evidence indicating the continued participation and engagement of old women in Zulu culture is substantial, to the extent that a more accurate term to describe the process might be re-engagement. An examination of the roles of old Zulu women indicates first an increase in

1) See pp.183
 2) See pp.205-207
 3) See pp.206-207

the number of roles they enact after the climacteric, second that these roles are related to the process of ageing, and third that with increasing age the status of the actors rises to the point of veneration. Although social contacts are limited by advancing age, there is a distinct broadening of the spheres of influence of old women within the agnatic group, as is particularly reflected in the kinship roles of grandmother, mother and mother-in-law. The hypothesis that with advancing years the commitment to social norms and values lessens, is unsupported in that old Zulu women not only maintain tradition, guard protocol and settle disputes, but through their roles and the culture traits they utilize continue to concern themselves with and express fundamental cultural values. The re-engagement of the old Zulu woman is achieved by a cultural redefinition of her position on attaining the menopause. This transposes her from one category of core values to another. By being ascribed with the highly valued attributes of maleness and ancestorhood she gains prestige and integration within the culture, to some extent at the expense of close identification with other women and her contemporaries.

Cumming and her collaborators formulated three hypotheses to describe the psycho-social changes inherent in the ageing process: namely, a lessening in the rate and variety of interaction, the perception of decreased social life-space, and a greater self-absorption coupled with a freer state.¹⁾ If these behaviour patterns are viewed on an engagement-disengagement continuum it could perhaps be argued that the old Zulu woman no longer interacts as vitally in the social sphere in that she does not attend as many public events as in her younger years, that she contemplates death, and evinces a freedom from constraints particularly with regard to respect-behaviour. But as the foregoing material demonstrates, such a description does not reflect the real position of the ageing woman whose life reveals some elements of disengagement but an overwhelming

1) Cumming et al. 1959, pp.23-35; Cumming 1963, p.382

emphasis on becoming re-engaged in the culture in meaningful ways.

It therefore appears that the ageing process may be characterized by the interplay of disengagement, engagement and re-engagement processes depending on the inter-relatedness of the aged with the major values and institutions of a culture and with their former roles. Clark emphasizes that 'values are among the most tenacious of sentiments. They are the building blocks not only of self-esteem, but also of the very definition of reality.'¹⁾ In her analysis of the attitudes of a group of American aged she found that old age presented individuals with dramatic cultural discontinuity, demanding a shift in orientation away from the basic values of American culture such as achievement, success, movement, competitiveness, competence and control.²⁾ And she concluded that 'where the ageing individual is released from earlier adult roles without either real or symbolic interrelationships upon which to build self-esteem, he [or she] often suffers a serious, stress-ridden discontinuity.'³⁾

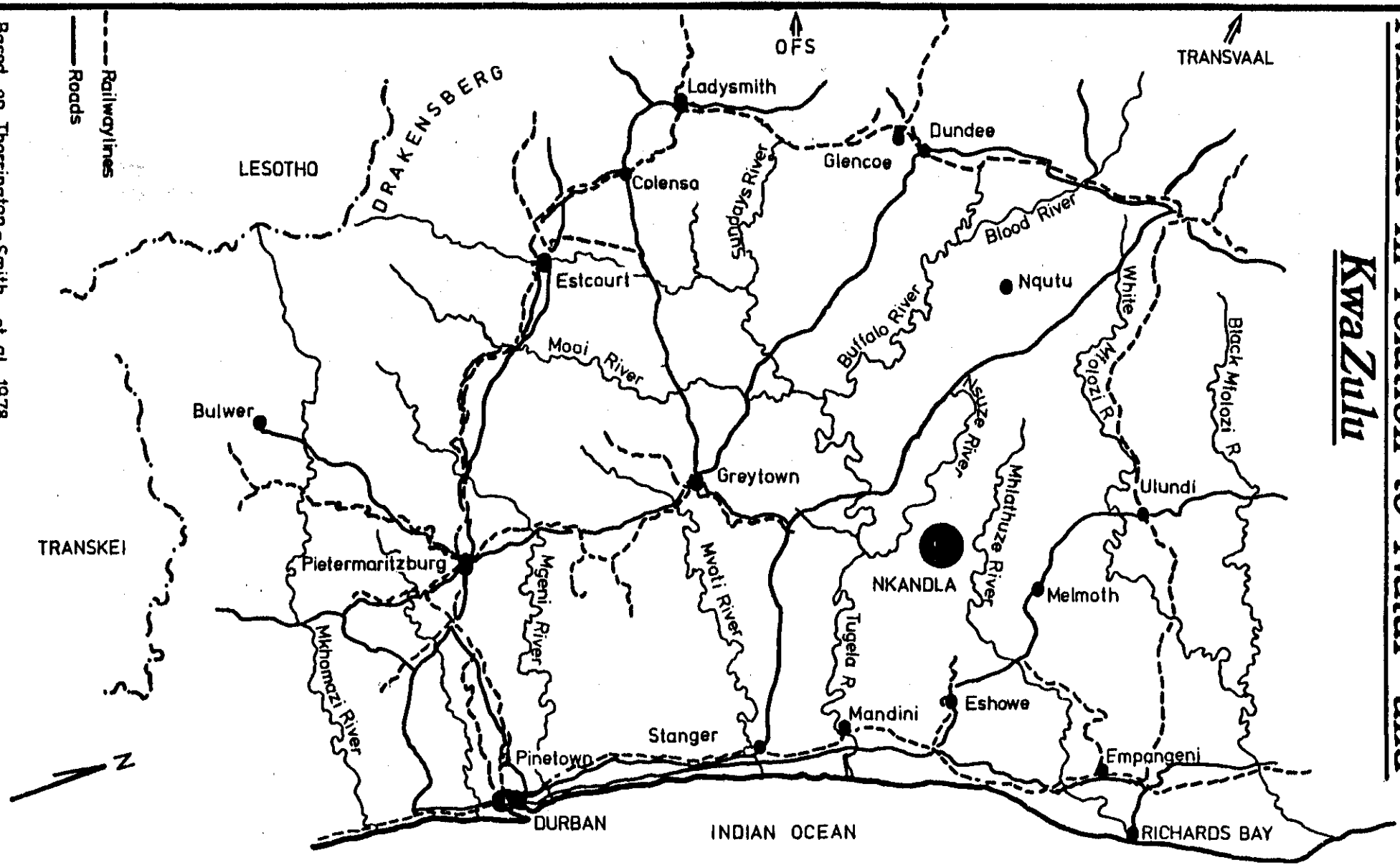
This research conducted in Nkandla indicates that the aged Zulu woman is intimately identified with the two fundamental values that structure Zulu life-patterns: namely, fertility and purity. Once she has passed the climacteric she sustains her lifelong interest in fertility by promoting the fertility of younger women, while her interests and activities diversify as she aligns herself with the ancestral shades and with the symbolic purity of the agnatic group. By the roles she plays and the values she represents the old woman thus forms a tangible part of cultural reality: attainment of the menopause has both redefined and increased her engagement in the culture.

1) Clark 1967, p.62

2) Ibid. pp.61-62

3) Ibid. p.63

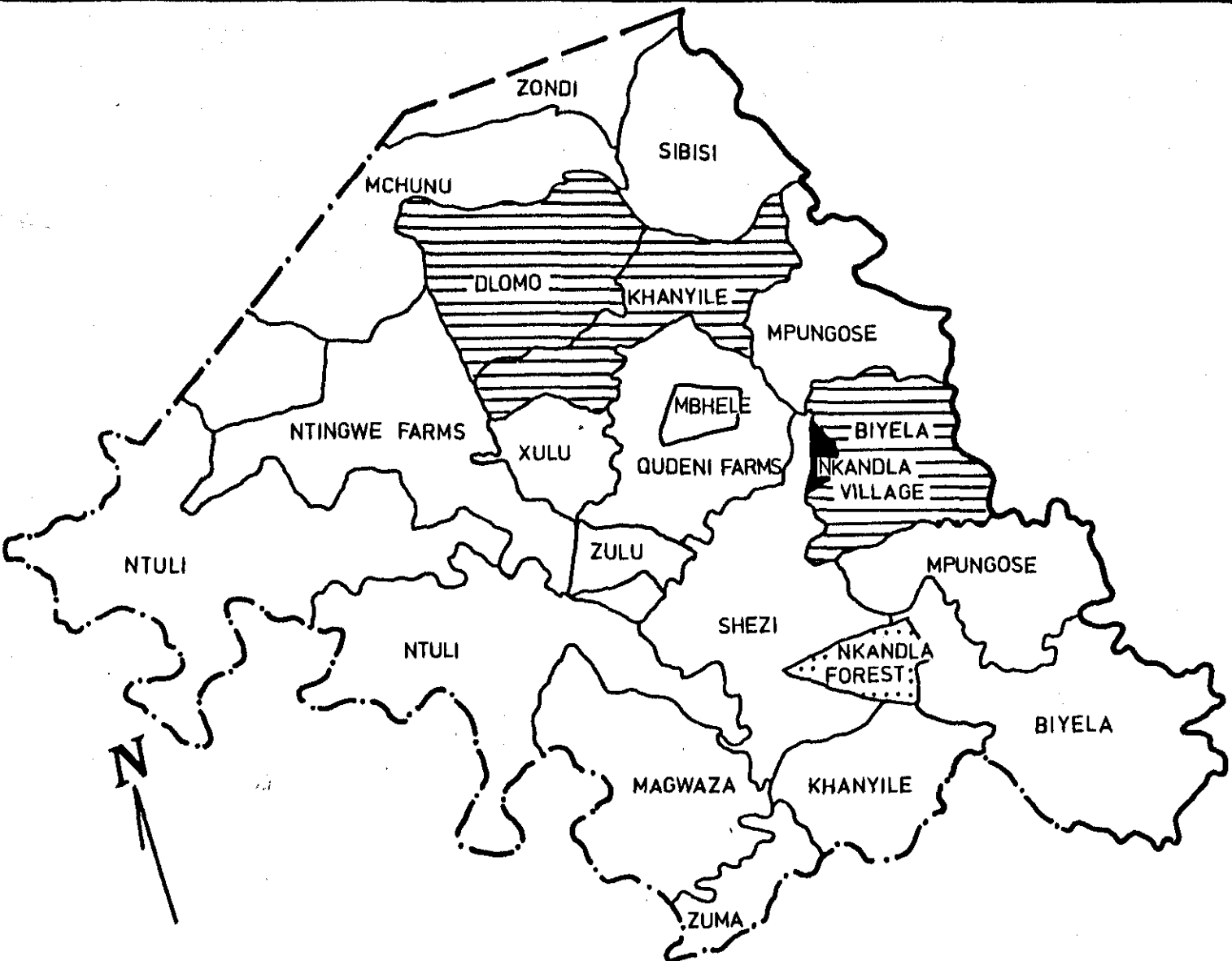
Map I
Nkandla in relation to Natal and
KwaZulu



Based on Thorington-Smith et al. 1978

Map 2

Tribes of the NKANDLA District



Based on Dept. of Co-operation & Development - 1980

GLOSSARY

The following words are arranged in alphabetical order of noun-stems or verb-roots. Only words and phrases which occur frequently in the text are listed. Words that are used only in the singular, plural or infinitive are reflected as such in the glossary.

<u>angoma</u> (sing. <u>is-</u> ; pl. <u>iz-</u>)	:	diviner
<u>bandla</u> (sing. <u>i-</u> ; pl. <u>ama-</u>)	:	council of men; also gathering of married men
<u>beleko</u> (sing. <u>im-</u> ; pl. <u>izim-</u>)	:	baby's carrying-skin
<u>bomvu</u> (<u>i-</u>)	:	red ochre
<u>bondo</u> (sing. <u>um-</u> ; pl. <u>imi-</u>)	:	gift, especially of beer, from a bride to her affines
<u>bongo</u> (sing. <u>isi-</u> ; pl. <u>izi-</u>)	:	clan; praise
<u>buyisa</u> (<u>uku-</u>)	:	ritual of bringing home the shade of the deceased
<u>caba</u> (sing. <u>um-</u> ; pl. <u>imi-</u>)	:	boiled maize ground into a fine powder
<u>cholo</u> (sing. <u>isi-</u> ; pl. <u>izi-</u>)	:	topknot, married woman's headdress
<u>dengezi</u> (sing. <u>u-</u> ; pl. <u>izina-</u>)	:	potsherd
<u>dlozi</u> (sing. <u>i-</u> ; pl. <u>ama-</u>)	:	ancestral shade
<u>duna</u> (sing. <u>in-</u> ; pl. <u>izin-</u>)	:	headman
<u>dwaba</u> (sing. <u>isi-</u> ; pl. <u>izi-</u>)	:	married woman's hide-skirt
<u>dwendwe</u> (sing. <u>u-</u> ; pl. <u>izin-</u>)	:	day of the wedding dances
<u>giya</u> (<u>uku-</u>)	:	to mime the heroic, especially military, achievements of a man
<u>godi</u> (sing. <u>isi-</u> ; pl. <u>izi-</u>)	:	ward; part of a tribal area under the jurisdiction of an <u>induna</u>
<u>gogo</u> (sing. <u>u-</u> ; pl. <u>o-</u>)	:	grandmother
<u>goqo</u> (sing. <u>um-</u> ; pl. <u>imi-</u>)	:	crossbar for closing entrance to cattle-kraal
<u>hlaba</u> (sing. <u>um-</u> ; pl. <u>imi-</u>)	:	aloe
<u>hlabezo</u> (sing. <u>isi-</u> ; pl. <u>izi-</u>):	:	medicine to ensure sound foetal growth and facilitate parturition by loosening the embryo
<u>hlobonga</u> (<u>uku-</u>)	:	to have sexual intercourse between the thighs
<u>hlonipho</u> (<u>in-</u>)	:	respectful restraint

<u>hlwehlwe</u> (sing. <u>um-</u> ; pl. <u>imi-</u>)	:	caul; network of adipose tissue covering the viscera and forming part of the peritoneum
<u>hubo</u> (sing. <u>i-</u> ; pl. <u>ama-</u>)	:	clan-hymn
<u>khaya</u> (sing. <u>i-</u> ; pl. <u>ama-</u>)	:	homestead
<u>khetho</u> (sing. <u>i-</u> ; pl. <u>ama-</u>)	:	groom's entourage
<u>khezo</u> (sing. <u>u-</u> ; pl. <u>izin-</u>)	:	calabash spoon
<u>khohlwa</u> (sing. <u>i-</u> ; pl. <u>ama-</u>)	:	left-hand section of homestead and family
<u>khongi</u> (sing. <u>um-</u> ; pl. <u>aba-</u>)	:	go-between, marriage negotiator
<u>khubalo</u> (sing. <u>i-</u> ; pl. <u>ama-</u>)	:	medicinal plants
<u>kobe</u> (<u>izin-</u>)	:	boiled maize grains
<u>lawu</u> (sing. <u>i-</u> ; pl. <u>ama-</u>)	:	private hut of a male
<u>lobolo</u> (sing. <u>i-</u> ; pl. <u>ama-</u>)	:	cattle paid as bride-price
<u>makoti</u> (sing. <u>u-</u> ; pl. <u>o-</u>)	:	young wife
<u>memulo</u> (sing. <u>u-</u> ; pl. <u>i-</u>)	:	coming-of-age ceremony
<u>mpepho</u> (<u>i-</u>)	:	aromatic everlasting plants with tiny yellow flowers
<u>mpundu</u> (sing. <u>i-</u> ; pl. <u>izi-</u>)	:	gatepost of cattle-kraal; accessory lobe of a beast's liver
<u>nanzi</u> (sing. <u>i-</u> ; pl. <u>izi-</u>)	:	third stomach, caecum
<u>ncamo</u> (sing. <u>um-</u> ; pl. <u>imi-</u>)	:	food before a journey; ox or cow slaughtered prior to a bride's departure from home
<u>ncumbe</u> (sing. <u>i-</u> ; pl. <u>izi-</u>)	:	thin soft porridge made of ground mealie-grains and water
<u>ndeni</u> (sing. <u>um-</u> ; pl. <u>imi-</u>)	:	agnatic group; specifically the descendants of one grandfather
<u>ndlunkulu</u> (sing. <u>i-</u> ; pl. <u>izi-</u>)	:	right-hand section or great-house or principal-wife
<u>nembe</u> (sing. <u>i-</u> ; pl. <u>izi-</u>)	:	medicine to promote rapid delivery
<u>ngquthu</u> (sing. <u>i-</u> ; pl. <u>izi-</u>)	:	ox or cow given to a mother in acknowledgement of child-rearing, at the time when her daughter loses her virginity
<u>ninimuza</u> (sing. <u>um-</u> ; pl. <u>aba-</u>)	:	homestead-head

<u>nkehli</u> (sing. <u>i-</u> ; pl. <u>izi-</u>)	:	married woman's headdress
<u>nkosikazi</u> (sing. <u>i-</u> ; pl. <u>ama-</u>)	:	respectful term for a married woman, particularly of senior age or rank and often being the principal-wife
<u>ngolobane</u> (sing. <u>i-</u> ; pl. <u>izi-</u>)	:	storehouse
<u>nsizwa</u> (sing. <u>i-</u> ; pl. <u>izi-</u>)	:	young man who has a lover
<u>ntelezi</u> (sing. <u>i-</u> ; pl. <u>izi-</u>)	:	a protective charm
<u>numzana</u> (sing. <u>um-</u> ; pl. <u>aba-</u>)	:	head of a homestead; also chief
<u>nyamazane</u> (sing. <u>i-</u> ; pl. <u>izi-</u>)	:	medicine from wild animals
<u>nyanga</u> (sing. <u>i-</u> ; pl. <u>izi-</u>)	:	medicine-man; herbalist
<u>phaqula</u> (<u>uku-</u>)	:	rubbing the body with moist <u>umcaba</u>
<u>phehla</u> (<u>uku-</u>)	:	to bore a hole by a revolving movement, twirling
<u>phehlwa</u> (sing. <u>i-</u> ; pl. <u>ama-</u>)	:	fatty part of milk-curd (<u>amasi</u>)
<u>phuku</u> (sing. <u>isi-</u> ; pl. <u>izi-</u>)	:	skin blanket used as a cloak; kaross
<u>qhikiza</u> (sing. <u>i-</u> ; pl. <u>ama-</u>)	:	post-pubescent girl who has a lover
<u>qholiso</u> (sing. <u>um-</u> ; pl. <u>imi-</u>)	:	beast slaughtered at the groom's home in honour of the bride
<u>samo</u> (<u>um-</u>)	:	ancestral shrine at rear inside of hut, particularly that belonging to the grandmother; may also refer to the sacred part of the cattle-kraal
<u>selwa</u> (sing. <u>i-</u> ; pl. <u>ama-</u>)	:	calabash
<u>si</u> (<u>ama-</u>)	:	milk-curd
<u>sila</u> (sing. <u>in-</u> ; pl. <u>izin-</u>)	:	body-dirt
<u>su</u> (sing. <u>u-</u> ; pl. <u>izin-</u>)	:	first stomach; paunch
<u>swani</u> (sing. <u>um-</u> ; pl. <u>imi-</u>)	:	stomach-contents; chyme
<u>thakazelo</u> (sing. <u>isi-</u> ; pl. <u>izi-</u>)	:	praise-name, particularly one pertaining to a clan
<u>thi</u> (sing. <u>umu-</u> ; pl. <u>imi-</u>)	:	medicine
<u>thimba</u> (sing. <u>um-</u> ; pl. <u>imi-</u>)	:	bridal party
<u>thwasa</u> (sing. <u>i-</u> ; pl. <u>ama-</u>)	:	apprentice-diviner
<u>tshitshi</u> (sing. <u>i-</u> ; pl. <u>ama-</u>)	:	post-pubescent girl who has not received permission to choose a lover
<u>twane</u> (sing. <u>i-</u> ; pl. <u>ama-</u>)	:	fourth stomach
<u>zi</u> (sing. <u>umu-</u> ; pl. <u>imi-</u>)	:	homestead; grass for mat-making

LITERATURE CITED

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|------|--|
| Aitchison, S.G.G. | 1918 | <u>Native Child Life</u> , South African Journal of Science Vol. XV, pp.674-679 |
| Angrosino, M.V. | 1976 | <u>Anthropology and the Aged</u> , Gerontologist Vol. XVI, pp.174-180 |
| Apple, D.D. | 1954 | <u>Grandparents and Grandchildren</u> , Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts |
| Apple, D. | 1956 | <u>The Social Structure of Grandparenthood</u> , American Anthropologist Vol. LVIII, pp.656-663 |
| Arnhoff, F.N., Leon, H.V. & Lorge, I. | 1964 | <u>Cross-Cultural Acceptance of Stereotypes towards Aging</u> , Journal of Social Psychology Vol. LXIII, pp.41-58 |
| Asmus, G. | 1939 | <u>Die Zulu</u> , Essener, Essen |
| Barker, A. | 1962 | <u>The Man Next to Me</u> , Fontana, London |
| Barker, A. | 1972 | <u>Physic and Protocol among the Zulus</u> , Institute for the Study of Man in Africa, Johannesburg |
| Barron, M.L. | 1953 | <u>Minority Group Characteristics of the Aged in American Society</u> , Journal of Gerontology Vol. VIII, pp.477-482 |
| Barron, M.L. | 1961 | <u>The Aging American</u> , Crowell, New York |
| Bartels, M. | 1888 | <u>Die Spät-Laktation der Kafferfrauen</u> , Zeitschrift für Ethnologie Vol. XX, pp.79-82 |
| Bascom, W.R. | 1965 | <u>Four Functions of Folklore in Dundes, A. (ed.): The Study of Folklore</u> , Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs |

- | | | |
|-------------------|---------|--|
| Baumert, G. | 1962 | <u>Changes in the Family and the Position of Older Persons in Germany</u> in Tibbitts, C. & Donahue, W. (eds): <u>Social and Psychological Aspects of Aging</u> , Columbia University, New York |
| Becker, E. | 1963 | <u>Social Science and Psychiatry</u> , Antioch Review Vol. XXIII, pp.353-365 |
| BENSO | 1980 | <u>Statistical Survey of Black Development</u> , Bureau for Economic Research, Cooperation and Development, Pretoria |
| Berglund, A.I. | 1973 | <u>Communion with the Shades in Traditional Zulu Society</u> , Missionalia Vol. V, pp.39-41 |
| Berglund, A.I. | 1976 | <u>Zulu Thought-Patterns and Symbolism</u> , Hurst, London |
| Bews, J.W. | 1919-23 | <u>List of Zulu Plant Names</u> , Annals of the Natal Museum Vol. IV, pp.455-467 |
| Blacking, J. | n.d. | <u>The Power of Ideas in Social Change in Riches</u> , D. (ed.): <u>The Conceptualisation and Explanation of Processes of Social Change</u> , Queen's University Papers in Social Anthropology Vol. III, Belfast |
| Bosman, W. | 1907 | <u>The Natal Rebellion of 1906</u> , Longmans Green, London |
| Braatvedt, H.P. | 1927 | <u>Zulu Marriage Customs and Ceremonies</u> , South African Journal of Science Vol. XXIV, pp.553-565 |
| Braatvedt, H.P. | 1949 | <u>Roaming Zululand with a Native Commissioner</u> , Shuter & Shooter, Pietermaritzburg |
| Breytenbach, W.J. | 1971 | <u>Die Familiereg van die Usuthu-Zulu van Nongoma</u> , M.A. thesis, University of Pretoria, Pretoria |
| Bryant, A.T. | 1917 | <u>The Zulu Cult of the Dead</u> , Man Vol. XVII, pp.140-145 |

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|------|---|
| Bryant, A.T. | 1920 | <u>The Religion of the Zulus,</u>
<u>Native Teachers' Journal</u>
Vol. I, pp.44-50 |
| Bryant, A.T. | 1923 | <u>The Zulu Family and State</u>
<u>Organization, Bantu Studies</u>
Vol. II, pp.47-51 |
| Bryant, A.T. | 1965 | <u>Olden Times in Zululand and</u>
<u>Natal, Struik, Cape Town</u> |
| Bryant, A.T. | 1966 | <u>Zulu Medicine and Medicine-Men,</u>
<u>Struik, Cape Town</u> |
| Bryant, A.T. | 1967 | <u>The Zulu People, Shuter &</u>
<u>Shooter, Pietermaritzburg</u> |
| Burgess, E.W. (ed.) | 1960 | <u>Aging in Western Societies,</u>
<u>University of Chicago,</u>
<u>Chicago</u> |
| Callaway, H. | 1872 | <u>On Divination and Analogous</u>
<u>Phenomena among the Natives of</u>
<u>Natal, Journal of the</u>
<u>Anthropological Institute</u>
Vol. I, pp.163-185 |
| Callaway, H. | 1970 | <u>The Religious System of the</u>
<u>Amazulu, Struik, Cape Town</u> |
| Carbutt, H.L. | 1880 | <u>Some Minor Superstitions and</u>
<u>Customs of the Zulus, Connected</u>
<u>with Children, Folk-Lore</u>
<u>Journal Vol. II, pp.10-15</u> |
| Clark, M. | 1967 | <u>The Anthropology of Aging, a</u>
<u>New Area for Studies of</u>
<u>Culture and Personality, The</u>
<u>Gerontologist Vol. VII,</u>
<u>pp.55-64</u> |
| Clark, M. & Anderson,
B.G. | 1967 | <u>Culture and Aging, Thomas,</u>
<u>Springfield</u> |
| Clarke, L. & Ngobese,
J. | 1975 | <u>Women Without Men, Institute</u>
<u>for Black Research, Durban</u> |
| Coleman, F.D. | 1947 | <u>The Menopause, Kentucky</u>
<u>Medical Journal Vol. XLV,</u>
<u>pp.207-209</u> |
| Cope, A.T. (ed.) | 1979 | <u>The Black People by Fuze,</u>
<u>M.M., Killie Campbell</u>
<u>Africana Library, Durban</u> |

- | | | |
|---|-------|--|
| Cowgill, D.O. | 1972a | <u>Aging in American Society</u> , in Cowgill, D.O. & Holmes, L.D. (eds): <u>Aging and Modernization</u> , Appleton-Century-Crofts, New York |
| Cowgill, D.O. | 1972b | <u>A Theory of Aging in Cross-Cultural Perspective</u> in Cowgill, D.O. & Holmes, L.D. (eds): <u>Aging and Modernization</u> , Appleton-Century-Crofts, New York |
| Cowgill, D.O. & Holmes, L.D. (eds) | 1972 | <u>Aging and Modernization</u> , Appleton-Century-Crofts, New York |
| Cox, F.M. & Mberia, N. | 1977 | <u>Aging in a Changing Village Society</u> , International Federation on Ageing, Washington D.C. |
| Culwick, A.T. & Culwick, G.M. | 1936 | <u>Fostermothers in Ulanga</u> , Tanganyika Notes and Records Vol. I, pp.19-24 |
| Cumming, E. | 1963 | <u>Further Thoughts on the Theory of Disengagement</u> , International Social Science Vol. XV, pp.377-393 |
| Cumming, E., Dean, L.R., Newell, D.S. & McCaffrey, I. | 1959 | <u>Disengagement - A Tentative Theory of Aging</u> , Sociometry Vol. XXIII, pp.23-35 |
| Cumming, E. & Henry, W.E. | 1961 | <u>Growing Old: The Process of Disengagement</u> , Basic Books, New York |
| de B. Webb, C. & Wright, J.B. (eds) | 1976 | <u>The James Stuart Archive</u> Vol. I, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg |
| de B. Webb, C. & Wright, J.B. (eds) | 1979 | <u>The James Stuart Archive</u> Vol. II, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg |
| de Clercq, J.L.W. | 1969 | <u>Die Politieke en Judisiële Organisasie van die abakwaNzuza van Mtunzini</u> , M.A. dissertation, University of Pretoria, Pretoria |

- | | | |
|--|------|--|
| de Clercq, J.L.W. | 1975 | <u>Die Familie-, Erf-, en Opvolgingsreg van die abakwaMzimela, met verwysing na Prosesregtelike Aspekte</u> , D.Phil. thesis, University of Pretoria, Pretoria |
| De Jager, L.T. | 1937 | <u>Die Geboorte van n Zulu Meidjie, haar Opvoeding tot Vrou en Moeder, en die Seremonies voor en gedurende die Huwelik</u> , M.A. dissertation, University of Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch |
| Digiovanni, J.E. & Fallat, L.M. | 1977 | <u>Ainhum</u> , Journal of the American Podiatry Association Vol LXVII, pp.401-405 |
| Doke, C.M., Malcolm, D.Mck. & Sikakana, J.M.A. | 1958 | <u>English and Zulu Dictionary</u> , University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg |
| Doke, C.M. & Vilakazi, B.W. | 1953 | <u>Zulu - English Dictionary</u> , University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg |
| Douglas, M. | 1966 | <u>Purity and Danger</u> , Penguin, Harmondsworth |
| Drummond, W.H. (ed.) | 1875 | <u>Among the Zulus and Amatongas</u> by Leslie, D., Macmillan, London |
| D'Souza, V.S. | 1971 | <u>Changes in Social Structure and Changing Roles of Older People in India</u> , Sociology and Social Research Vol. LV, pp.297-304 |
| du Toit, B.M. | 1975 | <u>Dagga: The History and Ethnographic Setting of Cannabis sativa in Southern Africa</u> , in Rubin, V. (ed.): <u>Cannabis and Culture</u> , Mouton, The Hague |
| + du Toit, B.M. | 1976 | <u>Content and Context of Zulu Folk-Narratives</u> , University of Florida, Gainesville |

- | | | |
|---|------|--|
| Evans-Pritchard,
E.E. | 1937 | <u>Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic
among the Azande, O.U.P.,
London</u> |
| Faye, C. | 1923 | <u>Zulu References, n.p.,
Pietermaritzburg</u> |
| Firth, R. | 1961 | <u>Elements of Social Organization,
Watts, London</u> |
| Fisher-Brown, E. | 1935 | <u>Hehe Grandmothers, Royal
Anthropological Institute
Vol. LXV, pp.83-96</u> |
| Foltz, L.M. | 1947 | <u>Psychiatric Aspects of
Menopause, Kentucky Medical
Journal Vol. XLV, pp.212-213</u> |
| Fortes, M. | 1960 | <u>Oedipus and Job in West
African Religion in Leslie, C.
(ed.): <u>Anthropology of Folk
Religion</u>, Vintage, New York</u> |
| Fortes, M. | 1965 | <u>Some Reflections on Ancestor
Worship in Africa in Fortes,
M. & Dieterlen, G. (eds):
<u>African Systems of Thought</u>,
O.U.P., London</u> |
| Foster, G.M. | 1965 | <u>Peasant Society and the
Image of Limited Good,
American Anthropologist
Vol. LXVII, pp.293-315</u> |
| Friis, H., Townsend, P.
& Shanas, E. | 1968 | <u>Old People in Three Industrial
Societies: An Introduction
in Shanas, E., Townsend, P.,
Wedderburn, D., Friis, H.,
Milhøj, P., Stehouwer, J.:
<u>Old People in Three Industrial
Societies</u>, Routledge, London</u> |
| Fuller, C.E. | 1972 | <u>Aging among Southern African
Bantu in Cowgill, D.O. &
Holmes, L.D. (eds): <u>Aging
and Modernization</u>, Appleton-
Century-Crofts, New York</u> |
| Gardiner, A.F. | 1966 | <u>Narrative of a Journey to the
Zoolu Country in South Africa,
Struik, Cape Town</u> |
| Gatti, A. | 1933 | <u>Hidden Africa, Hutchinson,
London</u> |

- | | | |
|-----------------|------|--|
| Gaye, J. | 1980 | <u>Basotho Women's Options</u> ,
Ph.D. thesis, University of
Cambridge, Cambridge |
| Geertz, C. | 1975 | <u>The Interpretation of
Cultures</u> , Hutchinson, London |
| Gerstner, J. | 1939 | <u>A Preliminary Check List of
Zulu Names of Plants</u> , Bantu
Studies Vol. XIII, pp.49-64,
131-149, 307-326 |
| Gluckman, M. | 1935 | <u>Zulu Women in Hoecultural
Ritual</u> , Bantu Studies Vol.
IX, pp.255-271 |
| Gluckman, M. | 1938 | <u>Social Aspects of First Fruits
Ceremonies among the South-
Eastern Bantu, Africa</u>
Vol. XI, pp.25-41 |
| Gluckman, M. | 1940 | <u>The Kingdom of the Zulu of
South Africa in Fortes, M. &
Evans-Pritchard, E.E. (eds):
African Political Systems</u> ,
O.U.P., London |
| Gluckman, M. | 1950 | <u>Kinship and Marriage among
the Lozi of Northern Rhodesia
and the Zulu of Natal in
Radcliffe-Brown, A.R. &
Forde, D. (eds): African
Systems of Kinship and
Marriage</u> , O.U.P., London |
| Gluckman, M. | 1970 | <u>The Logic of African Science
and Witchcraft in Marwick, M.
(ed.): Witchcraft and
Sorcery</u> , Penguin, Harmondsworth |
| Godelier, M. | 1977 | <u>Perspectives in Marxist
Anthropology</u> , University of
Cambridge, Cambridge |
| Gordon, W.R. | 1880 | <u>Words about Spirits</u> , Folk-
Lore Journal Vol. II,
pp.101-103 |
| Graafland, E.G. | 1977 | <u>Enculturation and Motherhood
among the Natal Nguni</u> , B.A.
Honours dissertation,
University of South Africa,
Pretoria |

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|------|--|
| Greenhill, M.H. | 1946 | <u>A Psychosomatic Evaluation of the Psychiatric and Endocrinological Factors in the Menopause</u> , Southern Medical Journal Vol. XXXIX, pp.786-794 |
| Hambrock, R.S. | 1981 | <u>Die Vrou in die Religie onder die Manala-Ndebele</u> , M.A. verhandeling, Universiteit van Suid-Afrika, Pretoria |
| Hammond-Tooke, W.D. | 1978 | <u>Do the South-Eastern Bantu Worship Their Ancestors?</u> in Argyle, J. & Preston-Whyte, E. (eds.): <u>Social System and Tradition in Southern Africa</u> , O.U.P., Cape Town |
| Hechter-Schulz, K. | 1966 | <u>Fertility Dolls</u> , Anthropos Vol. LXI, pp.516-528 |
| Herman, L. & Kirby, P.R. (eds) | 1970 | <u>Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa by Isaacs, N.</u> , Struik, Cape Town |
| Herskovits, M.J. | 1954 | <u>Some Problems of Method in Ethnography</u> in Spencer, R.F. (ed.): <u>Method and Perspective in Anthropology</u> , University of Minnesota, Minneapolis |
| Hoernlé, A.W. | 1925 | <u>The Importance of the Sib in the Marriage Ceremonies of the South-Eastern Bantu</u> , South African Journal of Science Vol. XXII, pp.481-492 |
| Holden, W.C. | 1963 | <u>The Past and Future of the Kaffir Races</u> , Struik, Cape Town |
| Holleman, J.F. | 1940 | <u>Die Twee-eenheidsbeginsel in die Sosiale en Politieke Samelewing van die Zulu</u> , Bantu Studies Vol. XIV, pp.31-75 |
| Holleman, J.F. | 1941 | <u>Die Zulu Isigodi</u> , Bantu Studies Vol. XV, pp.91-118, 245-276 |
| Hoskins, R.G. | 1944 | <u>The Psychological Treatment of the Menopause</u> , Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism Vol. IV, pp.605-610 |

- | | | |
|------------------|------|--|
| Hunter, M. | 1934 | <u>Methods of Study of Culture Contact, Africa</u>
Vol. VII, pp.335-350 |
| Indra, R. | 1963 | <u>Problems of the Old Women in a Village</u> , M.A. thesis, University of Panjab, Chandigarh |
| Jali, E.C. | 1950 | <u>Bantu Customs in Relation to Disease and Health in the Bantu</u> , The Leech
Vol. XXI, pp.17-22 |
| Jeffreys, M.D.W. | 1951 | <u>Lobolo is Child-Price</u> , African Studies Vol. X, pp.145-182 |
| Johnson, W.O. | 1947 | <u>Menopause from the Viewpoint of the Gynecologist</u> , Kentucky Medical Journal
Vol. XLV, pp.209-212 |
| Junod, H.A. | 1966 | <u>The Life of a South African Tribe</u> Vol. I, University Books, New York |
| Kaur, G. | 1964 | <u>The Problems of Aged Women in Batala</u> , M.A. thesis, University of Panjab, Chandigarh |
| Kidd, D. | 1904 | <u>The Essential Kafir</u> , Adam & Charles Black, London |
| Kidd, D. | 1906 | <u>Savage Childhood</u> , Adam & Charles Black, London |
| Knopf, O. | 1975 | <u>Successful Aging</u> , Viking, New York |
| Kohler, M. | 1933 | <u>Marriage Customs in Southern Natal</u> , Government Printer, Pretoria |
| Kohler, M. | 1941 | <u>The Izangoma Diviners</u> , Government Printer, Pretoria |
| Koty, J. | 1934 | <u>Die Behandlung der Alten und Kranken bei den Naturvölkern</u> , Hirschfeld, Stuttgart |

- | | | |
|------------------|------|--|
| Krige, E.J. | 1953 | <u>Some Aspects of the Educational Pattern of the Bantu, Theoria Vol. V, pp.29-35</u> |
| Krige, E.J. | 1957 | <u>The Social System of the Zulus, Shuter & Shooter, Pietermaritzburg</u> |
| Krige, E.J. | 1968 | <u>Girls' Puberty Songs and their Relation to Fertility, Health, Morality and Religion among the Zulu, Africa Vol. XXXVIII, pp.173-198</u> |
| Krige, J.D. | 1947 | <u>The Social Function of Witchcraft, Theoria n.v., pp.8-21</u> |
| Kück, H. | 1876 | <u>Umkosi WokwaZulu: The Annual Festival of the Zulus, South African Folk-Lore Journal Vol I, pp.134-139</u> |
| Kuper, A. | 1980 | <u>Symbolic Dimensions of the Southern Bantu Homestead, Africa Vol. L, pp.8-23</u> |
| Lee, S.G. | 1958 | <u>Social Influences in Zulu Dreaming, Journal of Social Psychology Vol. XLVII, pp.265-283</u> |
| Leith-Ross, S. | 1939 | <u>African Women, Faber, London</u> |
| Lenta, G. | 1978 | <u>Development or Stagnation? University of Natal, Durban</u> |
| Levine, D.N. | 1968 | <u>The Flexibility of Traditional Culture, Journal of Social Issues Vol. XXIV, pp.129-141</u> |
| LeVine, R.A. | 1962 | <u>Witchcraft and Co-Wife Proximity in Southwestern Kenya, Ethnology n.v., pp.39-45</u> |
| Lévi-Strauss, C. | 1968 | <u>Structural Anthropology, Allan Lane, London</u> |
| Linton, R. | 1936 | <u>The Study of Man, Appleton-Century-Crofts, New York</u> |
| Livingstone, D. | 1857 | <u>Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa, Murray, London</u> |

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|------|--|
| Llewellyn-Jones, D. | 1978 | <u>Fundamentals of Obstetrics and Gynaecology Vol. II,</u>
Faber, London |
| Ludlow, W.R. | 1882 | <u>Zululand and Cetewayo,</u>
Simpkin Marshall, London |
| Lugg, H.C. | 1907 | <u>Notes on some Puberty and other Customs of the Natives of Natal and Zululand, Man</u>
Vol. VII, pp.115-119 |
| Lugg, H.C. | 1929 | <u>Agricultural Ceremonies in Natal and Zululand, Bantu Studies Vol. III,</u> pp.357-383 |
| Lugg, H.C. | 1949 | <u>Historic Natal and Zululand,</u>
Shuter & Shooter,
Pietermaritzburg |
| MacDonald, J. | 1890 | <u>Manners, Customs, Superstitions and Religions of South African Tribes, Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute Vol. XX,</u> pp.113-140 |
| Mackenzie, A. (ed.) | 1866 | <u>Mission Life among the Zulu Kafirs, Deighton Bell,</u>
Cambridge |
| Mahlobo, G.W.K. &
Krige, E.J. | 1934 | <u>Transition from Childhood to Adulthood amongst the Zulus, Bantu Studies Vol. VIII,</u> pp.157-191 |
| Marks, S. | 1970 | <u>Reluctant Rebellion, O.U.P.,</u>
London |
| Marwick, M.G. | 1948 | <u>African Witchcraft and Anxiety Load, Theoria, n.v.,</u>
pp.115-129 |
| Maxwell, R.J. | 1970 | <u>The Changing Status of Elders in a Polynesian Society, Aging & Human Development Vol. I,</u>
pp.137-146 |
| Maxwell, R.J. &
Silverman, P. | 1970 | <u>Information and Esteem: Cultural Considerations in the Treatment of the Aged, Aging & Human Development Vol. I,</u> pp.361-392 |
| Mayr, Fr. | 1907 | <u>The Zulu Kafirs of Natal, Anthropos Vol. II,</u> pp.392-399,
633-643 |

- | | | |
|---|---------|--|
| Mbatha, P. | 1955 | <u>Witchcraft and Ancestor-Worship, The Net August, pp.18-20</u> |
| McCord, J.B. & Douglas, J.S. | 1957 | <u>My Patients Were Zulus, Panther, London</u> |
| McNeil, E.B. | 1976 | <u>Hooked on Research in Fader, D. & McNeil, E.G.: Hooked on Books, Pergamon, London</u> |
| Movsowitz, I. | 1954 | <u>The Dagga Problem in South Africa, Inyanga Vol. IX, pp.67-70</u> |
| Müller, Ä. | 1917-18 | <u>Zur Materiellen Kultur der Kaffern, Anthropos Vol. XII-XIII, pp.852-858</u> |
| Myburgh, A.C. | 1944 | <u>EzakwaZulu, n.p., Pretoria</u> |
| Myburgh, A.C. | 1959 | <u>Die Posisie en Versorging van Bejaardes onder die Bantoe in die Unie van Suid-Afrika, Government Printer, Pretoria</u> |
| Nadel, S.F. | 1951 | <u>The Foundations of Social Anthropology, Cohen & West, London</u> |
| Nattrass, J. | 1977 | <u>Migrant Labour and Underdevelopment, University of Natal, Durban</u> |
| Neugarten, B.L., Wood, V., Kraines, R.J. & Loomis, B. | 1963 | <u>Women's Attitudes Toward the Menopause, Vita Humana Vol. VI, pp.140-151</u> |
| Ngubane, H. | 1977 | <u>Body and Mind in Zulu Medicine, Academic, London</u> |
| Nimkoff, M.F. | 1962 | <u>Changing Family Relationships of Older People in the United States during the last Fifty Years in Tibbitts, C. & Donahue, W. (eds): Social and Psychological Aspects of Aging, University of Columbia, New York</u> |

- Nkabinde, L.E. 1980 Ilobolo Institution in Culture Change with Special Reference to AbaKwa-Mkhwanazi People, B.A. Honours dissertation, University of Zululand, KwaDlangezwa
- Novak, E.R. 1975 Textbook of Gynecology, Williams & Wilkins, Baltimore
- Nyembezi, C.L.S. 1963 Zulu Proverbs, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
- Oosthuizen, M. 1977 A Study of the Structure of Zulu Folktales with Special Reference to the Stuart Collection, M.A. thesis, University of Natal, Durban
- Orbach, H.L. 1962 Normative Aspects of Retirement in Tibbitts, C. & Donahue, W. (eds): Social and Psychological Aspects of Aging, University of Columbia, New York
- Parsons, T. 1960 Toward a Healthy Maturity, Journal of Health and Human Behaviour Vol. I, pp.163-173
- Pihlblad, C.T., Beverfelt, E. & Helland, H. 1972 Status and Role of the Aged in Norwegian Society in Cowgill, D.O. & Holmes, I.D. (eds): Aging and Modernization, Appleton-Century-Crofts, New York
- Plant, R. 1905 The Zulu in Three Tenses, Davis, Pietermaritzburg
- Ploss, H., Bartels, M. & Bartels, P. 1927 Das Weib in der Natur-und Volkerkunde Vol. III, Neufeld & Henius, Berlin
- Press, I. & McKool, M. 1972 Social Structure and Status of the Aged, International Journal of Aging and Human Development Vol. III, pp.297-306
- Pressey, S.L. & Simcoe, E. 1950 Case Study Comparisons of Successful and Problem Old People, Journal of Gerontology Vol. V, pp.168-175
- Preston-Whyte, E. & Sibisi, H. 1975 Ethnographic Oddity or Ecological Sense? Nyuswa-Zulu Descent Groups and Land Allocation, African Studies Vol. XXXIV, pp.283-316

- Radcliffe-Brown, A.R. 1940 Preface in Fortes, M. & Evans-Pritchard, E.E. (eds): African Political Systems, O.U.P., London
- Radcliffe-Brown, A.R. 1950 Introduction in Radcliffe-Brown, A.R. & Forde, D. (eds): African Systems of Kinship and Marriage, O.U.P., London
- Radcliffe-Brown, A.R. 1952 Structure and Function in Primitive Society, Cohen & West, London
- Raum, O.F. 1973 The Social Functions of Avoidances and Taboos among the Zulu, De Gruyter, Berlin
- Reader, D.H. 1954a Makhanya Kinship Rights and Obligations, University of Cape Town, Cape Town
- Reader, D.H. 1954b Marriage Among the Makhanya, Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie Vol. XLVII, pp.69-107
- Reader, D.H. 1966 Zulu Tribe in Transition, University of Manchester, Manchester
- Reich, N.A. 1967 Cultural and Status Symbolism in the Traditional Dress of the Nguni Women of South Africa, M.A. dissertation, Colorado State University, Fort Collins
- Rose, A.M. 1964 A Current Theoretical Issue in Social Gerontology, Gerontologist Vol. IV, pp.46-50
- Rose, A.M. 1965 The Subculture of the Aging in Rose, A.M. & Peterson, W.A. (eds): Older People and Their Social World, Davis, Philadelphia
- Rosenmayr, L. 1972 The Elderly in Austrian Society in Cowgill, D.O. & Holmes, L.D. (eds): Aging and Modernization, Appleton-Century-Crofts, New York

- | | | |
|-------------------|------|---|
| Samuelson, L.H. | 1974 | <u>Zululand, its Traditions, Legends, Customs and Folk-Lore</u> , Griggs, Durban |
| Samuelson, R.C.A. | 1929 | <u>Long, Long Ago</u> , Knox, Durban |
| Sansom, B. | 1974 | <u>Traditional Economic Systems in Hammond-Tooke, W.D. (ed.): The Bantu-speaking Peoples of Southern Africa</u> , Routledge, London |
| Sartori, P. | 1895 | <u>Die Sitte der Alten-und Krankentötung</u> , Globus Vol. LXVII, pp.125-130 |
| Sayce, R.U. | 1926 | <u>Lightning Charms from Natal</u> , Man Vol. XXVI, pp.69-70 |
| Schapera, I. | 1928 | <u>Economic Changes in South African Native Life</u> , Africa Vol. I, pp.170-188 |
| Schoeman, H. | 1975 | <u>The Zulu</u> , Purnell, Cape Town |
| Schoeman, H.S. | 1970 | <u>Spel in die Kultuur van Sekere Natalse Nguni</u> , D. Litt. et Phil. thesis, University of South Africa, Pretoria |
| Schoeman, P.J. | 1940 | <u>Gevalle van Onwettige Bevrugting by die Zoeloe</u> , Annale van die Universiteit van Stellenbosch Vol. XVII, B, I |
| Scriba, F. | 1948 | <u>Die Naturerscheinungen im Glauben der Zulu</u> , Die Eiche Vol. III, pp.1-13 |
| Seymour, S.M. | 1960 | <u>Native Law in South Africa</u> , Juta, Cape Town |
| Shanas, E. | 1963 | <u>Some Observations on Cross-National Surveys of Aging</u> , Gerontologist Vol. III, pp.7-9 |

- Shanas, E. Townsend, P., 1968 Old People in Three
Wedderburn, D., Friis, Industrial Societies,
H., Milhøj, P., Routledge, London
Stehouwer, J.
- Shelton, A.J. 1965 Ibo Aging and Eldership:
Notes for Gerontologists
and Others, Gerontologist
Vol. V, pp.20-23, 48
- Shock, N.W. 1962 The Physiology of Aging,
Scientific American
Vol. CCVI, pp.100-110
- Shooter, J. 1857 The Kafirs of Natal and
The Zulu Country,
Stanford, London
- Simmons, L.W. 1945 A Prospectus for Field-
Research in the Position and
Treatment of the Aged in
Primitive and Other
Societies, American
Anthropologist Vol. XLVII,
pp.433-438
- Simmons, L.W. 1946 Attitudes Toward Aging and
the Aged: Primitive
Societies, Journal of
Gerontology Vol. I,
pp.72-95
- Simmons, L.W. 1970 The Role of the Aged in
Primitive Society, Archon,
n.p.
- Skultans, V. 1970 The Symbolic Significance
of Menstruation and the
Menopause, Man Vol. V,
pp.639-651
- Smith-Blau, Z. 1961 Structural Constraints on
Friendships in Old Age,
American Sociological
Review Vol. XXVI, pp.429-439
- Spencer, P. 1965 The Samburu: A Study of
Gerontocracy in a Nomadic
Tribe, Routledge & Kegan
Paul, London
- Stafford, W.G. & 1950 Principles of Native Law
Franklin, E. and the Natal Code, Shuter
& Shooter, Pietermaritzburg

- Stephenson, I. 1975 Ainhum (Dactylolysis Spontanea): Report of a Case, North Carolina Medical Journal Vol. XXXVI, pp.404-405
- Stuart, J. 1913 A History of the Zulu Rebellion 1906, Macmillan, London
- Stuart, J. 1926 uVusezakiti, Longmans, London
- Stuart, J. & Malcolm, D.Mck.(eds) 1950 The Diary of Henry Francis Fynn, Shuter & Shooter, Pietermaritzburg
- Sundkler, B. 1976 Zulu Zion, O.U.P., London
- Tembe, B.R. 1969 Dependence of the Dead on the Living in Zulu Religious Belief, B.A. Honours dissertation, University of South Africa, Pretoria
- Thorrington-Smith, Rosenberg & McCrystal 1978 Towards a Plan for KwaZulu Vol.II, Thorrington-Smith, Rosenberg & McCrystal, Pietermaritzburg
- Townsend, P. 1964 The Place of Older People in Different Societies, Lancet, n.v., pp.159-161
- Tuckman, J. & Lorge, I. 1953 'When Aging Begins' and Stereotypes about Aging, Journal of Gerontology Vol. VIII, pp.489-492
- Tunstall, M. 1974 An Investigation into the Prevalence and Geographical Distribution of Ainhum in the Tsolo District of the Transkei, South African Medical Journal Vol. XLVIII, pp.2409-2411
- Tyler, J. 1971 Forty Years among the Zulu, Struik, Cape Town
- Tyrrell, B. 1971 Suspicion is my Name, Gothic Printing, Cape Town
- van Nieuwenhuijsen, J.W. 1960 The Witch-doctor Institution in a Zulu Tribe, The Valley Trust Annual Report, n.v., pp.16-25
- van Nieuwenhuijsen J.W. 1974 Diviners and their Ancestor Spirits, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam

- | | | |
|---------------------------|------|---|
| van Velsen, J. | 1965 | <u>History or Nostalgia?</u>
<u>African Studies Vol. XXIV,</u>
pp.63-66 |
| van Velsen, J. | 1967 | <u>The Extended-case Method</u>
<u>and Situational Analysis</u>
<u>in Epstein, A.L. (ed.):</u>
<u>The Craft of Social</u>
<u>Anthropology, Tavistock,</u>
<u>London</u> |
| van Warmelo, N.J. | 1935 | <u>A Preliminary Survey of</u>
<u>the Bantu Tribes of South</u>
<u>Africa, Government Printer,</u>
<u>Pretoria</u> |
| Vilakazi, A. | 1957 | <u>A Reserve from Within,</u>
<u>African Studies Vol. XVI,</u>
pp.93-101 |
| Vilakazi, A. | 1965 | <u>Zulu Transformations,</u>
<u>University of Natal,</u>
<u>Pietermaritzburg</u> |
| Walk, L. | 1928 | <u>Die ersten Lebensjahre des</u>
<u>Kindes in Sudafrica,</u>
<u>Anthropos Vol. XXIII,</u>
pp.38-109 |
| Walther, M.
(Brindley) | 1968 | <u>Patterns of Life in Domestic</u>
<u>Service, B.A. Honours</u>
<u>dissertation, University of the</u>
<u>Witwatersrand, Johannesburg</u> |
| Wanger, W. (ed.) | n.d. | <u>The Collector, Mission</u>
<u>Press, Mariannhill</u> |
| Wanger, W. | 1926 | <u>Totenkult (Ahnenkult) bei</u>
<u>den zulusprechenden Völkern,</u>
<u>Innsbrucker Jahrbuch für</u>
<u>Volkerkunde und Sprachwissen-</u>
<u>schaft Vol. I, pp.10-21</u> |
| Warren, R.W. | 1958 | <u>Social Disorganization and</u>
<u>the Interrelationship of</u>
<u>Cultural Roles in Stein,</u>
<u>H.D. & Cloward, R.A. (eds):</u>
<u>Social Perspectives on</u>
<u>Behaviour, Free Press,</u>
<u>Glencoe</u> |
| Werner, A. | 1921 | <u>Some Notes on Zulu Religious</u>
<u>Ideas, Folk-lore Vol. XXXII,</u>
pp.28-44 |

- | | | |
|--------------------------|------|--|
| Willoughby, W.C. | 1928 | <u>The Soul of the Bantu</u> , Negro Universities Press, Westport, Connecticut |
| Wright, J.B. | 1970 | <u>Men's Control of Women's Labour in the Zulu Kingdom</u> , Working Paper, Department of African Studies, University of Natal, Durban |
| Republic of South Africa | | Act 3 of 1957 |
| Republic of South Africa | | Map of Tribes and Tribal Areas in KwaZulu and Adjacent Districts, 1980, Department of Co-operation and Development |
| Republic of South Africa | | Proclamation R196 of 1967 |

SUMMARY

Although the Zulu people recognize both physiological decay and the menopause as signs of ageing, the cultural weighting singles out the latter as the diacritical sign of old age. On attaining the menopause the old woman attains a higher status and greater influence and diversity in her activities for as long as she remains a useful member of the community.

Both old and young are keenly aware of the position of physical dependency which advanced age tends to inflict. Care for the aged is thus recognized as a necessity: it is institutionalized and bolstered by supernatural sanctions which if flouted may threaten the wellbeing of the agnatic group. The direct maintenance needs of the old woman are provided for and in return she acts as the educator and protector of the young, a position based on seniority and experience, and one which affords her authority and prestige. A satisfying old age is largely deemed to be dependent on the provision of physical needs, positive human relationships, and a position of esteem in the society.

The death of peers invariably causes loneliness and a withdrawal from life, but the redefinition of the old woman's position, likening her to a man and considering her as semi-ancestral, re-engages her in the cultural process: she is linked to the core values of the culture by her association with purity and her promotion of fertility. She is also sought after as an expert on tradition, and is regarded as a source of wisdom and cultural skills.

The particular focus of interest of the aged woman concerns the perpetuation of life in the agnatic group, and she guards and promotes the developmental cycle of each of its members, playing a prominent role in the events of birth, puberty, coming-of-age, marriage and death. Her counsel is respected and her house is a haven for the living and deceased. Preservation of harmonious relationships is a basic tenet of Zulu law and culture and the old woman is influential in effecting such, both with regard to the living and their deceased forbears. A long and useful life,

II

though not senility, remains a goal to be achieved through living with dignity and proper observance of custom, even though old people generally do not consider old age to be the most desirable time of life.

Christianity, education, mechanization, a Western-industrial economy and the media are now promoting an individualistic, scientific and forward-looking approach to life which is undermining the traditionally secure position of the aged. However for the most part the culture still remains orientated towards the past and to values which coincide with the needs and disposition of the elderly.

OPSOMMING

Alhoewel die Zulu volk fisiologiese agteruitgang sowel as die menopause erken as tekens van veroudering, word laasgenoemde deur die kulturele ingesteldheid uitgesonder as die diakritiese teken van die ouderdom.

Wanneer die bejaarde vrou die menopause bereik, verkry sy 'n hoër status en groter invloed en verskeidenheid in haar bedrywighede so lank as wat sy 'n nuttige lid van die gemeenskap bly.

Oud sowel as jonk is diep bewus van die posisie van fisiese afhanklikheid wat gevorderde ouderdom neig om mee te bring. Versorging van die oues van dae word dus erken as 'n noodsaaklikheid: dit is 'n vaste instelling in die kultuur en word gesteun deur bonatuurlike sanksies wat die welvaart van die agnatiegroep kan bedreig indien dit veronagsaam word. Die bejaarde vrou word voorsien van haar onmiddellike onderhoudsbehoeftes en in ruil tree sy op as opvoeder en beskermmer van die jeug, 'n posisie wat op ouderdom en ondervinding gebaseer is, en haar gesag en aansien verskaf. 'n Bevredigende oudag word grotendeels beskou as afhanklik van die voorsiening van fisiese behoeftes, positiewe menslike verhoudinge, en 'n posisie van aansien in die gemeenskap.

Die dood van portuurs bring altyd eensaamheid en 'n ontrekking aan die lewe mee, maar die herbepaling van die bejaarde vrou se posisie, waardeur sy met 'n man vergelyk word en beskou word as semi-voorvaderlik, herverbind haar met die kulturele proses: sy word gekoppel aan die kernwaardes van die kultuur deur 'n assosiasie met reinheid en die bevordering van vrugbaarheid. Sy is ook gesog as 'n deskundige op die gebied van tradisie, en word beskou as 'n bron van wysheid en kulturele vaardighede.

Die bejaarde vrou is veral ingestel op die bestendiging van die lewe van die agnatiegroep, en sy beskerm en bevorder die ontwikkelingsiklus van elke lid van die groep. Sy speel 'n vername rol in gebeurtenisse soos geboorte, puberteit, mondigwording, huwelik en dood. Haar raad word eerbiedig en haar huis is 'n toevlugsoord vir die lewendes sowel as die afgestorwenes. Die bewaring van harmonieuse verhoudinge is 'n grondbeginsel van die Zulu-reg en-kultuur

en die bejaarde vrou speel n invloedryke rol in die totstandbrenging daarvan met betrekking tot die lewendes sowel as hulle afgestorwe voorsate. n Lang en nuttige lewe, maar nie seniliteit nie, bly n doel wat bereik kan word deur n waardige lewe te lei en n behoorlike inagneming van gebruik, alhoewel bejaarde mense oor die algemeen nie die ouderdom beskou as die begeerlikste lewenstydperk nie.

Die Christendom, die opvoeding, meganisasie, n Westerse-industriële ekonomie en die media bevorder nou n individualistiese, wetenskaplike en toekomsgerigte benadering tot die lewe wat die tradisionele, beveiligde posisie van die bejaardes ondermyn. Die kultuur is egter grotendeels steeds ingestel op die verlede en op die waardes wat saamval met die behoeftes en ingesteldheid van die oues van dae.
