Dwelling and Building in Ngamiland, Northern Botswana

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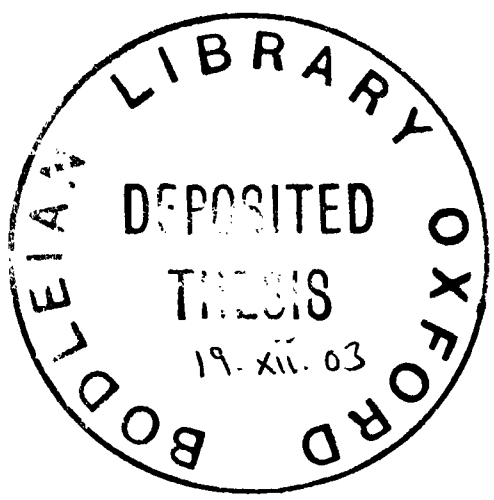
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Thesis abstract

This thesis is an investigation of the ways in which activities of house-building are woven into the histories and biographies of the people of Ngamiland in nothern Botswana. Criticising those approaches in anthropology that have tended to see forms of buildings as the symbolic expressions of (or metaphors for) aspects of social order, the thesis argues that building practices are themselves embedded in the current of social activity - that is, of dwelling - which, over time, is generative of both persons and places. Just as every inhabitant enfolds within his or her person a set of relations with others, which are played out in the manifold tasks of everyday dwelling (including building), so every place (including the buildings found there) embodies a set of relations with other places. The first set of relations, essentially social, are captured by the notion of the taskscape, the second set, essentially material, by the notion of landscape. The thesis seeks to demonstrate the dynamic interplay between taskscape and landscape, or between social and material relations over time.

The thesis argues for several important ways in which this dynamic relationship can be considered anthropologically. The first is the notion of the 'otherplaceness' of dwelling, in which the inherent interconnectedness of the landscape is highlighted, describing the ways in which both personal biographies and the material biographies of places are mutually creative over time. This is extended to investigate the relationship between social and material permanence in the landscape through an analysis of the ways in which building with concrete has affected everyday dwelling. Another key notion is that dwelling involves a wide range of social practices that can be understood as containing both forces of a centrifugal (movement away from a centre) and centripetal (movement toward a centre) nature, being an important aspect of how social practice and homestead form are interrelated over time. This is also extended in the final chapter through an exploration of the ways in which the materiality of the homestead is interwoven with memory, biography and personal history.

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Key to material annotations on plans in this thesis

MB Mud brick i.e. sun-dried clay bricks made from alluvial soil dug at river bank or termitaria.

CB Concrete brick, often denoting a rectilinear *ntlo ya sekgoa* or European-style house, roofed with corrugated iron.

CP Concrete plaster i.e. rectilinear or round house with mud brick walls plastered externally with cement.

LE *Letlhaka*, a water reed widely used for building in the Okavango region.

CS Clay/stick wall combination, mostly used by Mbanderu, Herero and Mbukushu peoples.

Note on Fieldwork Language

From September 1999 to October 2000 my wife and I were based in Maun in Ngamiland, living as guests of the Bojosi family in the compound of Mpho Bojosi in Newtown ward. My fieldwork assistant was Boitlhoko Kgalalo Garebakwena of Wenela ward. All interviews were carried out in Setswana by myself and Boitlhoko whose ear for dialect was of course well tuned. Fieldwork was carried out in the Shorobe Molapo region in November/ December 1999 as guests of Mosaroze Moramenwa of Gweghiri, the maternal grandfather of Boitlhoko. In the Lake Ngami region fieldwork was carried out in March/ April 2000 as guests of Headman Uatumua Unguvauva in Setswana with information gathered on Sembanderu terminology and usage. Most groups in Ngamiland speak Setswana well, but where understanding was limited, additional translation into Setswana was arranged. This occurred several times in Lake Ngami region but never in the Shorobe Molapo region. All indigenous terms presented in the thesis are therefore in Setswana, apart from chapter five, where Sembanderu terms are also presented as part of analysis.

For consistency, group names in this thesis have been given without their common prefixes in spoken language. The prefix Ba-, denoting 'people', I have therefore omitted in favour of the root (i.e. Tswana instead of Batswana), a decision which has also led to my choice of the group names Yei (instead of Wayeyi) and Mbanderu (instead of Ovambanderu). However, I have retained the prefix Se- which denotes language or culture, in order to differentiate group names from language names, and therefore refer to Setswana throughout.

Setswana Glossary

baagisanyi neighbours

badimo ancestors

dikgaba illnesses caused by ancestral displeasure; bad luck

dithupana Small branches (often Mopane) used as horizontal wall strengtheners between the roof supports of a square or circular plan house; the style of house building used by some Mbukushu people that makes use of a double row of such sticks with clay soil infilling

go tlwaela To become used to, or familiar with, something, someone, some task

Kgosi
(pl. dikgosi) Chief; king

kgotla
(pl. makgotla) village meeting area; chief's court

kutlwano harmonious social relations; community

lesaka
(pl. masaka) cattle pen; cattle homestead

lesimo
(pl. masimo) field; homestead near fields location

letlhaka water reeds, *Phragmites australis, P. mauritanus*

lolwapa courtyard fence, often made from vertically woven *letlhaka*; the courtyard space itself; the nuclear family

mahuri rear courtyard

mantlo a sekgoa	houses built according to european custom; use of manufactured materials in walling and/or roofing, especially concrete bricks and corrugated iron
mantlo a setswana	houses built according to Tswana custom; use of natural materials in walling and/or roofing
maphako	vertical roof supports, often made from the stem or straight branch of a Mopane or other relatively termite-resistant tree
masika (sn. lesika)	relatives; kin
matlotla (sn. letlotla)	former dwelling sites
molapo (pl. melapo)	seasonal flood water channel in the Okovango Delta
mophanyane (pl. maphanyane)	immature Mopane tree; scrub-like growth of Mopane that sometimes occurs due to adverse soil conditions to normal growth
motse (pl. metse)	village; home; town
ntlo (pl. mantlo)	house
ntlo ya ditini	house in which the main walling material is drinks cans, mostly placed horizontally with soil mortar between and with the can openings facing the interior
phata	interstice (for example between gate posts); space
tlholego	Nature; natural resources; creation; personal character

Sembanderu Glossary

ekondua rimue	extent of known grazing locations; social landscape
etho	ritual upturned thorn bush located next to the *okuruo* near the cattle pen
etundu	former dwelling site; a burial place
ohambo (pl. ozohambo)	wet season cattle camp
okuruo	ritual fire connected with ancestors located near cattle pen

omuini	family head
ondjeuo onene yo okuruo	house of family head and wife; main house of a homestead where ritual objects are held
ondjeuo jo virumbu	house made according to European custom; using manufactured materials
onganda (pl. ozaonganda)	main homestead; dry season homestead
otjiunda	cattle pen
ozongombe (sn. ongombe)	cattle

Chapter One

Introduction: Developing a Dwelling Approach to Building Practice

Introduction

This introductory chapter sets out to explain how my fieldwork in Ngamiland - both the methodologies used and data obtained - interrelates with the theoretical analysis of this data that I develop through the thesis chapters. It is not a chapter-by-chapter introduction to the thesis but a discussion of how and why the thesis is the way it is, and crucially, why it doesn't approach its material in other ways. In doing so, this chapter involves a detailed discussion of how the approach I have taken relates to the relevant literature - how it both builds upon and departs from other approaches.

Perhaps the question, given that this thesis purports to concern itself with building activity, is just how I conceive of both buildings and building activity anthropologically in the context of this thesis. The first thing to say here is that this thesis is not concerned with studying 'vernacular architecture', which I take as the detailed study of such things as form, style, aesthetics, meaning, tradition, transmission, etc. from a group culture perspective. Just why I have chosen not to deal with buildings and building activity as architecture is central to the approach within this thesis. The main distinction to be made in this sense is between relatively 'mentalistic' approaches to building activity as exemplified by the culture group approach, in which such things as design and discursive meaning are considered, and which continues a tradition within anthropology of group style, and an approach which sees building activity as an integrated dimension of social activity and dwelling in the landscape, rather than something analytically separate. Importantly, as I will

discuss later, this approach to building within the thesis, which emphasises building interrelations within the landscape rather than spatial intrarelations within the house, has arisen from the particularities of doing fieldwork in a region of Africa (Ngamiland) where elaborate building traditions are absent, and where mobility within the landscape is a dominant influence in cultural activity. In this sense, I will need to address the issue of how widely applicable is the approach to building that I have developed in this thesis, or whether it is peculiarly suited to the realities of my own fieldwork area. Before dealing with these themes in detail it is necessary to establish how my own approach to building in this thesis, which can be characterised as a 'dwelling' approach, relates to other anthropological studies of building activity.

Approaches to Building in Africanist Anthropology

Observations and comments on building activity in Africa can of course be found in a large number of monographs and anthropological studies, but relatively few have attempted to analyse indigenous building and use of space as a central concern (notable exceptions include Moore, 1986; Preston-Blier, 1987). Much of the neglect of buildings and building activity within anthropology can be seen as historically enmeshed in the particularities of the development of anthropology in Britain, which saw material culture studies as increasingly peripheral to the analysis of social structure as developed by Durkeim, Radcliffe-Brown, Mauss and Lévi-Strauss (c.f. Beattie 1964; Kuper 1973), but also due to the non-portable nature of houses which left them underrepresented in ethnographic museum collections. Houses themselves were of less interest to anthropologists than the notion of what the house constituted, i.e. a 'household' or nuclear kin unit (see Carsten and Hugh-Jones (eds) 1995). The materiality of the house was subordinated to the way societies were seen to use houses to structure social relations, especially domestic arrangements for individuals during their life course. There is little understanding in such studies of how the house as material culture is an influential dimension of social relations, or indeed just what

the relationship between building and landscape, or indeed building and notions of dwelling. For some social anthropological studies, the house became invisible, a container for social relations rather than an active element.

Carsten and Hugh-Jones (1995) indeed argue that the subordination of the materiality of the house in anthropology was partly connected with the nature of social anthropological fieldwork, whereby 'houses get taken for granted... [i]n time, for both anthropologists and their hosts, much of what houses are and imply becomes something that goes without saying' (1995:4). The authors argue that social analysis of houses should be set within the particular cultural contexts in which they are found. This means paying greater attention to material culture as an approach to studying social structures, and recognising the mutuality of material culture and social life. As they state:

'... the significance of a focus on the house is that it brings together aspects of social life which have previously been ignored or treated separately. Crucially, we would consider architectural features of houses as an aspect of their importance as social units in both life and thought. Rather than seeing in the house the birth of a new analytic type, the anthropological child of alliance and descent, it is this holistic potential of viewing houses 'in the round' which we would emphasise. The relation between building and group is multifaceted and contextually determined, the house's role as a complex idiom for social groupings, as a vehicle to naturalise rank, and as a source of symbolic power being inseparable from the building itself' (1995: 20-21).

The house is a 'process' as well as an artefact, cultural practice being integral to social and familial relationships. However, one of the weaknesses of Carsten and Hugh-Jones's approach is the view that material forms reflect elements of the social reality being studied, rather than being a mutually influential dimension of it. In the passage quoted above the house is an 'idiom', 'a vehicle' and 'a source' for the essentially abstract social concepts of 'social grouping', 'rank' and 'power' - there

is still very little understanding of how buildings are interwoven with social activity over time rather than as abstract symbols and idioms of social relations. This sort of approach was relatively obscured to me in Ngamiland, since building traditions were relatively unelaborate in architectural terms, which meant that the detailed analysis of style from both metaphorical and symbolic perspectives achieved elsewhere (e.g. Preston Blier 1987) was less relevant. Elements of the spatial and socio-semantic approach as suggested by Carsten and Hugh-Jones are important to this thesis, in the way that homesteads and social groupings are mutually interconnected over time, yet it is the lack of a developed notion of materiality or an understanding of how building activity exists in a wider temporal landscape, that limits its applicability to my own research findings.

The House as Metaphor and Symbol

The analysis of symbolism and metaphor has been one of the most prominent approaches to investigating building traditions within Africanist anthropology. A major feature is how different levels of settlement organisation have been examined in terms of symbolic dimensions, of the self as well as the group (for instance Griaule and Dieterlen, 1954; Lebeuf, 1961; Levine and Levine 1991; Blier 1987; Prussin 1969). However, such symbolic studies have mostly concentrated upon groups who build relatively complex and elaborate structures, such as the Dogon of Mali (Griaule 1975 [1948]; 1954). One of the most interesting and fully developed of recent symbolic studies, Preston Blier's *Anatomy of Architecture* (1987), is an extended essay on the metaphorical associations of the human body in Batammaliba architecture (a group closely connected to the Dogon in Togo and Benin). Blier offers a tantalisingly similar conclusion to Griaule concerning house design: '[t]he anthropomorphic house image, when viewed from the exterior, thus is conceptualised in a vertical or standing position. When defined by its ground plan, it is conceptualised in a horizontal or prone posture' (1987:121). Blier's exegesis of architecture draws upon 'a series of metaphors, language parallels, and structural complements' (1987:202), which

suggest comparisons between houses and bodies, processes of building and social strength, durability of the kin group etc. As she notes, 'the structure and symbolism of the Batammaliba house reinforces an ideal of psychological balance and completeness...houses convey central features of the Batammaliba view of their own identity and inner strength' (1987:134/5). Another aspect is the ritual participation of the house in notions of health and general well being. 'In this context', writes Blier, 'the anthropomorphic house metaphor not only serves to underscore architecture's grounding in the human, but also makes clear the relationship between the house and the human in the ontology of individual health treatment and problem resolution' (1987:202). The process of appropriation is seen as resulting in an objectification of the collective bodies of its inhabitants, its anthropomorphic properties stemming from an externalisation of the human body as the walls and material features of the home. The house becomes the body of the home and all it involves experientially, just as the human body contains the human spirit. For Bourdieu, in *The Kabyle House* (1990), this containing nature of the house is a set of spatial relations through which external and internal meanings are represented, experienced and made sense of, in the way that the gendered universe is incorporated semantically within the house. However, he also notes how the Kabyle hearth is associated with the belly of a mother, and thereby the navel of the house.

The human body is for Blier the primary metaphor for analysis of Batammaliba buildings, even though she does not widen her scope to look at other aspects of material culture or the temporal landscape. The house as a cultural product both consciously refers to the human body and incorporates social meaning ontologically, cultural production being akin to 'birth'. Blier's conclusion is that the human body is the ultimate model for building, since 'through its identity with both structure (anatomy) and process (interacting systems) [it] offers insight into the interrelated features of architectural form and use' (1987:204). The relationship between the house and society is mediated through the notion of bodies – the house incorporates individuals as

a body incorporates the world; the physical world is animated through the notion of embodiment. This notion is developed this thesis in chapters eight and nine, where I discuss in detail how the composition of the material homestead is temporally related to the composition of the social household. In chapter eight a more direct link is made between house interrelations within the Ngamiland homestead and the orientation of bodies in social contexts, especially the importance of front/back spatial relations. The conclusion is drawn that in the Ngamiland homestead, houses are temporally related to boundaries through front/back relations, in which houses (just like bodies in social contexts) shift in response to the changing presence of other houses. This sort of conclusion has less to do with the sorts of house intra-relations such as architectural body or limb metaphors, as with inter-relations, or how the social body may be thought to be an important orienting force between building elements, rather than in their metaphorical constitution. This inter-relational approach was indeed more particularly apposite in Ngamiland, where the nuclear family 'home' is considered the *lolwapa*, or homestead boundary, which encloses a changing number of sleeping, storage and cooking houses over time in response to need. However, there have been some interesting studies that have examined how the temporal inter-relations between houses may also be involved in symbolic systems involving the way the human life cycle is socially experienced and structured.

Schapera (1943) was one of the earliest ethnographers to describe in detail such social and spatial interrelations as a temporally dynamic force within southern African settlement. His detailed analysis of Tswana settlements such as Mochudi showed how ward organisation within the village was socially determined by hierarchical relationships over time - once the headman had chosen his residence location, spatial organisation of the settlement was mapped in accordance with social proximity to the chief, and yet importantly these spatial and material relationships both produced and reproduced the identified structural relationships within the group. Social identity was thereby

reinforced through the spatiality of dwelling, and social identity was often linguistically expressed in residential terms, since neighbours and others in close dwelling proximity were important to social identity.

The Tswana ward structure as described by Schapera (1943) was one that placed the *kgosi* (chief) at the centre of social and cosmological life, both physically and symbolically. Those living beyond in smaller outlying villages were usually either groups of subsumed non-Tswana peoples occupying land agreed by the tribe, or offshoots from the tribe itself. Mackenzie, in an oft-quoted passage, stated that '[i]n laying out a Bechuana town, the first thing is to ascertain where the chief's courtyard with the public cattle-pen is to be placed. As soon as this is settled the remainder is simple' (Mackenzie, 1971[1871]:367). Reid *et al.* also note that 'the organisation of the settlement into *dikgoro* [wards] was an important aspect of the maintenance of chiefly power, since symbolically the chief was the focus of the settlement and in turn each headman was the focus of his *kgoro*' (1997:375).

Alongside the discussed symbolic importance of 'right' and 'left' in the Tswana Cattle Plan model are the complementary notions of 'front' and 'back' as important orientations of social position, which I examine in chapter eight. Those domestic units and homesteads closest to the central common (front) were associated with parents (heads of household), and those located on the external perimeter (back), the residences of married children. Although historically Tswana ward settlement often encircled a shared central dwelling area, for many years (possibly since the advent of the railroad from South Africa to Zimbabwe constructed in the later 19th century) settlement organisation has increasingly been characterised by linear residence formations, today often relating to tarmac roads. Front/back relations can still be identified in these residential patterns, with front areas closest to the road, and back areas further away or behind. As Frescura points out,

in the context of the individual homestead, front and back have always been of symbolic importance, the parents living in the forecourt or lobe, whilst privacy, cooking and children's areas are located at the rear (Frescura, 1989:161). In chapter eight I examine how front/back relations can be seen at work in the way Maun homesteads change over time, especially in response to boundary changes. With a change in dwelling boundary (such as the introduction of the Land Board plot fence surrounding the homestead), changes in building activity occur in which front/back relations are an influential factor. I identify the dynamic influence of these relations upon building activity as a centrifugal influence, which tends to keep front areas in communication and keep back areas toward the rear boundary. This tendency is often held in tension with other centripetal forces of social interdependence through dwelling, which tends to keep houses in proximal relations through everyday activity. Overall, the central point that is made here is that building interrelations are of central importance to a temporal dwelling perspective upon the homestead, in which the identification of various social forces integral to social practice within the homestead is key.

Another analysis of how buildings are closely related to social practice within the homestead, and also to biography or lifecourse, which is a theme I examine in detail in chapter nine, is developed by Levine and Levine (1991) who argue for an understanding of Gusii (Kenya) building activity based upon a process of visual metaphor production for the various stages of Gusii social life: 'this domestic environment is a design in which each spatial arrangement and utensil is a metaphor, freighted with moral and spiritual significance, that defines the course of a person's life...' (1991:157). What is also presented is the importance of interrelationships between buildings that structure and facilitate relationships between individuals, and between individuals and the group. This notion of spatial relations experienced through social practice is an important notion that I return to in chapters eight and nine, suggesting that building activity within the homestead is an

important dimension of how individuals relate to the family group, and also to the understanding, remembering and expression of such relations over time through biography. It is common practice in many African cultures for the nuclear family compound to contain a number of separate buildings for family members, such as adolescents or unmarried adults. Buildings activity is linked to the shifts in social relations through the life course of persons within the group and indeed are socially recognised as representing such stages, such as the building of a separate sleeping house for an adolescent or elderly relative. Dwelling separation is not simply a spatial manifestation of social rules, but rather is involved in the understanding and experience of such social relations - there is arguably a mutual relationship between the life course and material culture. The practice of dwelling separation through building (spatial) within the homestead, can be seen as a set of social activities that are deeply embedded in the way social relations are understood within the group.

The changing domestic contexts through which both sexes pass during the life course in Gusii society for instance, furnish a good example of how building is not only identified with the life course, but partly constitutive of it, part of its social realisation. Levine and Levine state this as a 'symbolic identity between a person and a house' (1991:158), a dwelling relationship that 'is uniquely important in defining a person's status, not only in the domestic hierarchy, but also in the hierarchy of respect within one's local age and gender group' (1991:163). Buildings, as expressions and realisations of various stages of individual biography, articulate identity not only in space but also in time. The importance of building to biography is something that I explore in detail in chapter nine, in which I suggest how memory, history and biography are all interwoven with dwelling through building activity. Levine and Levine offer the example of young Gusii men in the 1970s who constructed dwellings for themselves in the rural paternal homestead for the stated purpose of having a location for burial should they die. This is a significant example of how building and notions of biography and life course are socially interconnected. However, whilst the

physical demarcation of space in terms of age-set and gender is represented in Gusii architecture, there is no such separate demarcation of religious or symbolic space, which is rather experienced through a transformation of dwelling context. As Levine and Levine state, 'the distinctions of sacred vs. profane and utilitarian vs. symbolic serve not to mark off different spaces and physical objects but different actions and occasions involving the same domestic environment' (1991:166). This example also suggests how spatial relations can be conceived of through social practice.

The mutual relationship between material culture and social relations in this biographical sense necessitates analysis from differing structural positions within a group; both age set, gender and social position all change the building context in which social experience is represented and experienced. In Tswana villages a family occupy a compound, surrounded by a *lolwapa* (boundary or courtyard fence), which is considered the dwelling space. As Paul Oliver states, 'each unit is in effect a room, and the whole compound constitutes the dwelling' (1987:130). Traditionally, the *lolwapa* served to define the domestic space from that beyond it. Within this boundary structures are added or dismantled as family situations occasion, and thus the architectural totality of Tswana compounds is in constant flux, responding to internally determined spatial demands. However, modern investment in durable building materials has considerably altered this historical model, which I explore in detail in chapter five, tracing the relationship between dwelling and durability of building materials. A significant theme in this chapter is the notion of permanence, of how durability of materials may be related to layers of social permanence in the Ngamiland landscape. Interestingly, one conclusion drawn from my own data is that the use of durable materials in building is often connected with social uncertainty and temporary relations to place rather than permanent ones. A sense of temporariness or an uncertainty over social relations to place is thereby often inherent in the use of durable materials, since such materials avoid ongoing social relations within the landscape that are a necessary material aspect of homestead renewal. The

increase in concrete buildings in such rapidly expanding African towns such as Maun are not an index of increasing permanence within the landscape necessarily, but in an important way index its intrinsic social uncertainty, dislocation of activity, and temporary social relations to both kin group and place.

Conclusion

Most anthropological studies of African building practices have been concerned for the most part with how architectural form reflects and reproduces symbolic, cosmological, anthropomorphic and social notions, as well as privileging a view of the house as an artefact to be 'read' by the anthropologist rather than as a part of how social and material relations unfold within the temporal landscape. They have also concentrated upon style and meaning in the built form (e.g. Griaule's cosmological analysis of Dogon compound structure), rather than upon dwelling, an approach which re-focuses attention upon the temporal landscape and how building activity is embedded in the whole range of social activities within it. A dwelling perspective on building does not privilege elaborate or complex architectural traditions, suggesting a move away from the relationship between architecture and mentalistic beliefs, cosmology, symbolism, linguistic metaphor etc. and a refocusing upon the temporal relationship between building activity and social activity in the landscape as a whole. This dwelling approach to building activity has emerged from recent studies that have attempted to examine the relationship between social activity, culture and landscape over time, drawing upon recent phenomenological and practice-based approaches within archaeology as well as anthropology (see following discussion of Casey 1993, 1998; Ingold 1993, 1995; Gosden 1994).

The Experience of Ngamiland

So far I have outlined the significant ways in which anthropology has treated building activity in Africa. In the course of research I have also read a considerable amount of non-African literature related to building, which if anything is probably more architectural in inclination (i.e. focusing upon the exegesis of elaborate building traditions) and less relevant to the argument I am developing here. The lack of a cross-cultural awareness in this introductory chapter is thereby deliberate.

However, it is important to discuss at this point how this developing understanding of building and landscape is directly related to my own fieldwork experience and methodology, rather than solely a theoretical response to the literature. What I want describe here is how I came to think about building in the way I do in this thesis, as a process in which both my training in anthropological literature and direct experience in the field are dialectically related over time. Interestingly, I took three paperbacks with me on fieldwork: Schapera's *Handbook of Tswana Law and Custom*, Dreyfus's *Being-in-the-World*, and a copy of John Clare's poems. Reading each of these books (especially when sick) had some influence upon my understanding of my fieldwork experience. The first showed me how much Tswana society has changed in the last 60 years, the second became increasingly difficult to read the more immersed in everyday African life I became, until I eventually had to pack it away, and yet the third remained readable, relevant and kept me interested in recording the detail of everyday life, farming activity and perceptions of the natural world. In particular my wife and I were sick for some weeks, and it was John Clare who suggested how returning to the labour of fieldwork could be a joy in itself, and how the details of everydayness and dwelling were related to materiality in a way that I might have missed. I began to talk to people about everyday activity at home as well as building practices, and got people to remember buildings, activities and materials used in the past as a way of exploring dwelling in the present.

After spending the first two months with a relatively unstructured set of approaches to fieldwork, I then decided to adopt a fieldwork practice of visiting and informal interview. The initial methodological problem I faced was somewhat insuperable - people's perceptions of me and what I might be doing. Suspicions that I was planning to buy land for development reached the point that people I had never met in the village approached me with offers to sell their homesteads. Apparently some people had seen me pacing-out a plot (I was drawing a plan) and rumour quickly spread. I decided to work with the rumour system and had word spread that I was doing a survey of traditional buildings in Maun for future generations, sponsored by the government, and that I would be visiting as many households as possible to ask questions. All elements of this story were true, and it was the most readily accessible and facilitating one that came to mind. From suspicion, my presence became pigeon-holed and understood immediately, and nearly all villagers welcomed my visits and questions. There were downsides to this approach, such as the prior limitations in people's minds of my questioning and interest in their houses. This was something that I had to face for months afterwards and became an abiding concern - how do I steer conversation away from indigenous notions of tradition and custom, which is what they think I want to know about? I became adept at explaining an interest in the details of a brother-in-law's concrete shelter as professional curiosity. Fortunately, asking questions in Ngamiland, especially about who did what and when, are fair game even for passing strangers to get involved in.

The benefit of this practice became clear in an unexpected way: a person or family group would sit with me and answer factual questions for as long as the formal element of my 'survey' lasted, including a range of data concerning household composition, dates, materials, past practices and biographies, and then break away into various tasks after some time, with which I would get involved informally, continuing conversation about something raised in the interview or after drawing the plan. Drinking often followed, during which neighbours would also get involved in an

extended discussion about building or gathering materials or a disputed date. So, from my informants perspective there was a readily accessible formal and informal element to my presence, the first short bit being 'work' and the rest just socialising. This became an invaluable way of structuring my daily fieldwork practice, a routine into which both my community and I became familiarised, and which allowed both of us ample breathing space. I came to realise that it was not just me who needed a fieldwork practice, it was my community, and they were never very happy until we both settled upon one together.

There are obviously drawbacks and advantages to any fieldwork methodology, and the one that emerged for me contained a strong element of local community influence in terms of day to day fieldwork activity, negotiating my own presence and understandings of my activities. It is important now to discuss how the particularities of this methodology that emerged have been important to the substance and argument of this thesis. Obviously in an important sense the most evident influence has been the quantitative nature of my fieldwork data in the sense that I came back with a large number of homestead interviews, plans and photographs, instead of a small number of very detailed biographies. However, the value of having a fairly wide survey of homesteads to the writing of the thesis became apparent during fieldwork, since only with a relatively large amount of data would trends or patterns emerge, such as the influence of boundaries upon building activity examined in chapter eight. Only with a significant range of data could I explore the role of other places in the material and social composition of the homestead (chapter six), as well as examining how dwelling, building and perceptions of the natural resource base are configured (chapter seven). Indeed, the arguments that are developed throughout these chapters are in an important way related to patterns, tendencies and significances that could only really emerge from a relatively large set of homestead data (some two hundred interviews in more than eighteen distinct areas - see Appendix C).

However, probably the most significant question to ask is just how both fieldwork methodology and data relate to the development of my argument in this thesis. Perhaps the first thing to state is that in Ngamiland building practices are not visually elaborate or decorative. Even those Tswana or other groups who plaster with a mud/cow dung mixture do not tend to paint their houses, mostly since natural soil colours are unavailable in the Kalahari sands that predominate there. What is more, people never referred to any symbolic or metaphorical dimension of houses such as the anthropomorphic house described in well-known ethnographies from West Africa. The only common metaphor concerning houses I identified was when people spoke of the 'death' of a house when it began to fall down. What instead I found was a population who were highly mobile within the landscape, moving and building several times or more within their lives, having complex social and material networks within the region, migrating between sites frequently to work, attend school or merely visit kin. Building practices were integral to this fluidity of social and material relations within the landscape, which could not however be characterised as 'temporary' in any sense. I realised immediately that my thesis would need to examine the fluidity and interconnectivities within the landscape as an integral dimension of what it might mean to dwell. Even to understand how people went about living in a village such as Maun, I quickly realised, one would need to start travelling straight away, to take roads out and away to the many other places that inform each other. Buildings often materially came from other places, or were bought with labour exchanged for cash in some distant town, and most homesteads in any one place were shaped in crucial ways around the wider contexts of kin networks.

This set of social realities in Ngamiland thereby informed much of the argument and approach inherent in this thesis - a de-emphasising of architectural style or form and the placing of building activity in the wider landscape in which social activity was grounded. During fieldwork I needed

to make stark choices in terms of which groups or places to focus upon, and in general decided to strike a balance by examining the experience of two distinct non-Tswana ethnic groups, the Yei and the Mbanderu, both of whom had a considerable presence in Maun where I was based, but who had migrated from regions to the east and west of Maun. I thereby decided that the thesis would include analysis of how these groups experienced and organised dwelling in their agro-pastoral regions and then to focus in upon Maun as a nuclear village to which both populations had migrated, in order to examine homestead form and biography over time. In significant ways, the sets of social realities that opened out during fieldwork became influential not only in the methodology of doing fieldwork, but also in the kind of data that I obtained, the social relationships entered into, choices between options, and ultimately the sorts of arguments that emerged from my fieldwork experience in this thesis.

In brief, certain themes emerged that were particular to the sorts of realities I was identifying in Ngamiland, such as fixity and fluidity in the landscape (chapter three), centrifugal and centripetal forces as a dimension of dwelling (chapters four and nine), permanence and materiality (chapter six), 'otherplaceness' (chapter seven) and buildings and memory (chapters four and ten). One important question that I face is to what extent do the various dimensions of dwelling that I have focussed upon in these chapters build up to create a totality or rounded sense of dwelling in a particular part of the world? This is something that I return to in the conclusion, but this question is possibly useful to open out or at least acknowledge initially. My own sense is that this is a somewhat semantic question: dwelling is often understood as a diverse set of inter-subjective or emotional attachments to, or investment in, a given place - a quality or accumulation of manifestly everyday ways of coping in the world. In particular it is often non-dwelling that seems to help define it in an everyday sense - dwelling can often be thought of as a type of place that can offer ongoing sustenance to human life. In this sense, the physical characteristics of certain places lend

themselves to dwelling, such as rivers, valleys and fertile plains, and other places do not, such as moors, mountains or forests. This domestic sense of dwelling as a historical characteristic of place needs to be put to one side if we are to consider dwelling as a dynamic temporal process, with its own social forces and tensions, and that importantly interrelate with and influence our material relations to place over time. To reach this more pervasive sense of dwelling as a complex and diverse dynamic of social practice within the landscape, we have to put the domestic or 'cottage' sense of dwelling to one side, which contains deeply historical European overtones, and recover in the notion of dwelling something of the socially universal. In the conclusion I return to the question whether my own understanding of dwelling in Ngamiland is really emergent from its own context, or whether it can emerge from it as an anthropological approach. To return to my question, the themes within this thesis do not attempt to build up a comprehensive or rounded understanding of dwelling, in Ngamiland or elsewhere. What the chapters are intended to do is explore some key dynamics or forces of dwelling in Ngamiland as an anthropological approach, and in particular by focussing on building practice I have tried to explore how a dwelling perspective unites the often separated-out notions of space, place, time and materiality.

These emergent themes, closely suggestive as they are of a particular fieldwork experience in a particular region of a particular country in a particular sub-region of Africa, nonetheless are also partly a co-creation of an inherent theoretical understanding of such direct experience, and are thereby discussed in the context of an extant theoretical literature. How the themes that I have identified as emergent from both my methodology and data can be discussed in the light of relevant theoretical literature is thereby the next important focus for this introduction, since in one sense this follows what happens when the ethnographer returns home, attempting to make sense of the maze of trails and disconnected pieces of information brought back. For instance, the question I first needed to ask was how the emergent themes could be examined within the context of an

overarching argument of which each theme was further evidence. Several key texts that I now discuss helped me develop this overall context or argument, the central questions for which were now turning into, what is the relationship between building and dwelling in Ngamiland?, and if we can identify anthropologically something called 'dwelling', is this something applicable to other places, or just here, just this set of fieldwork experiences? The nature of the argument that I present in this thesis certainly raises the possibility of a wider applicability for a dwelling perspective, since at the heart of the argument is both the contention that dwelling is both 'how we are in the world' (in Heidegger's sense of human being), as well as being inseparable from 'what we do in the world', that is, socially and materially involved in the landscape. It is for this reason that, contra Heidegger who argued for dwelling as the precondition for social action, my argument is that how we are (dwelling) and what we do (building) are mutually enabling dimensions, both unfold within each other, so to speak. This thesis is an attempt to show not just how building activity is complexly involved with wider social activity, but with how the crucial dimension of dwelling has been altogether transparent in anthropological analyses of sociality. In this way I have attempted to understand in the following discussion just how my argument concerning a dwelling perspective on building contributes to literature in both anthropology and archaeology as well as fields such as social geography.

A Dwelling Perspective

Since the concepts of 'building' and 'dwelling' linguistically suggest both verb and noun, process and material object, this suggests how important *process* is to any study of the built environment. If in the past those disciplines interested in architecture have been predominantly interested in house form, whereas those disciplines focussing upon social processes have been interested in how houses structure and metaphorically suggest social relations, the common ground between such disciplines has grown in recent years.

Buildings are products of social activity in the landscape. In 1951 Heidegger gave a lecture called "Building Dwelling Thinking" (Heidegger 1993) in which he argued that the reality of engagement in social activity suggests that there is a strong sense in which we already 'dwell' in the landscape. Our engagement in social activities can be seen as being made possible through a prior ontology of our 'dwelling' in the world. Dwelling in the world makes possible the social creation of places, relationships and notions of time. The influence of this well-known piece can be felt (if not always explicitly acknowledged) in much current academic writing, including this thesis. His argument that 'we do not dwell because we have built, but we build and have built because we dwell, that is because we are dwellers' (1993:350), is an important backdrop for all studies on dwelling, and although his notion of dwelling is philosophically quite distinct from that developed in the social sciences since, it remains a key source for enquiries into dwelling and human activity.

The totality of Heidegger's phenomenology reaches into many areas of social thought, yet for present purposes I will explore the notion that everyday involvement in the world, the way people cope with tasks, manipulate technologies ('equipment') and interact with and within environments, is of fundamental importance to dwelling. This allows a broader approach to both discursive and non-discursive aspects of sociality than one rooted in the 'thought' or mental content of a society. This insight is key to understanding temporal social activity in the landscape, since dwelling becomes both a starting point and a product of social activity - a process of social practice rather than teleology. *Dwelling is not an interpretation of the purpose of social life, rather a description of the processes and dynamics of social relations within the landscape.* Heidegger shows how everyday skills involve a unity between activity and things ('equipment'), since useful things are extensions of tasks and not consciously separated out from them. Equipment is defined by its place in a context of use rather than its appearance, and we come to 'understand' the world by using it,

manipulating it (Dreyfus, 1991:64). We are circumspect in our mode of getting around and experiencing the world and not reacting to stimuli. Ongoing skilful coping is not a process involving background mental states rooted in a shared belief system between individuals, but is the very manner in which existence is constituted, rather than evidenced. However, since Heidegger's central concern was with the question of being and dismantling the cognitivist tradition, we gain little empirical insight or notion of how the physical world might be influential to the growth of 'Dasein' (the inquiring being) (Gosden, 1994:114).

If we understand that our 'way of being' is existence, then we can also begin to understand that the manner in which we exist in the world is *dwelling*. If "the world is the house where the mortals dwell" (Heidegger, 1957:13, quoted in Norberg-Schultz, 1980:10) dwelling can be seen as the prerequisite for human involvement in the world and social existence. Since Dasein (being-in-the-world) already dwells within what is available within the world, our normal concept of dwelling, as derivative of building, needs to be rethought. This is Ingold's starting point in his discussion of the human temporal relationship with the physical world (Ingold, 1993; 1995). He quotes Heidegger who asserts that 'to build is in itself already to dwell... only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build' (Heidegger, 1971:148, 146, 160 quoted in Ingold, 1995:68).

From a dwelling perspective, those arguments that assume that building is the prerequisite for acts of dwelling (a building perspective) are continuing the Cartesian philosophical tradition of seeing human intentionality as a product of self-referential mental contents acting upon objects outside of the mind. Rather, dwelling should be seen as the prerequisite for everyday activity as a disclosure of the world and its material forms without an implicit mind:body separation (Dreyfus 1991:58). The building perspective is found in much of the literature on architecture, often manifested in the argument that 'the organisation of space cognitively precedes its material expression; settings and

built environments are thought before they are built' (Rapoport, 1994:48 quoted in Ingold, 1995:70).

To take a dwelling perspective on the landscape and on material culture is to see the generation of form not as a systematic series of realisations of cognitive blueprints, but as a product of our everyday social involvement within the landscape, which is learned and reproduced in an often non-discursive way, as sets of embodied skills for instance. The background familiarity that underlies our coping and our intentionality is made up not of a plurality of subjective belief systems, but of tacit agreements about acting and judging how to be human (since a culture always takes its interpretation as human nature (Dreyfus, 1991:26)). The way in which we relate to built forms is through our 'manipulation of equipment' (Dreyfus, 1991:62) (as a tool is unconsciously used), in the Heideggerian sense, since we use buildings (the spaces of buildings) in our everyday activity within the environment. The use of space is integral to the way that Dasein ("being there") is 'always already' socialised into social practice, rather than the expression of a system of mental states and beliefs (Ibid. p.144).

Authors since Heidegger have seen his insights into everyday practice and involvement ('being-in-the-world') as a chance to integrate previously reified separations in western thought, such as 'objectivism' and 'subjectivism'. Indeed, Heidegger can be seen as an important prerequisite to Bourdieu's development of the concept of 'practice' and '*habitus*', which were fundamental to his break with structuralist notions of subject and object, seen by Bourdieu as 'the fallacy of the rule' (Bourdieu 1977).

Heidegger's notion of dwelling was an ontological explication of the conditions of possibility for human activity. Although he doesn't widen his scope to think about human activity within the

wider context of the animal world, his phenomenological approach has influenced others to do so. Indeed, his notion of dwelling as 'the manner in which we humans are on the earth' (1993:349) does now strike us as peculiarly anthropocentric, claiming for itself 'the basic character of human being' (1993:350). Indeed Heidegger's notion of dwelling seems to be applicable not only to human beings but to the Being of any animal. For dwelling to be a useful notion anthropologically, rather than remaining a somewhat distant question of Being, we need to establish just what the relationship is between dwelling and sociality. Perhaps one of the key directions in which dwelling can become useful anthropologically is contained in Heidegger's subsidiary comment: 'building is not merely a means and a way toward dwelling - to build is in itself already to dwell' (1993:348). For me, this notion challenges many anthropological assumptions concerning social activity, the nature of landscape, and even materiality. This subsidiary to Heidegger's key theme of Being forms a backdrop to this thesis, in that it opens enquiry anthropologically into the way material culture embodies dwelling as process - and as such into the nature of place, temporality and social practice.

The concepts of place, permanence, materiality, memory and the temporality of landscape, which are of central interest to me in this thesis, are mutually related dimensions of social experience, and cannot be considered in isolation from one another. However, since social practice is fundamentally a process that develops over time, and since buildings and places are temporal, biographical sites of social meaning, the notion of time in anthropology should be the starting point for discussion. Ideas about time have recently been put forward as important theoretical concerns in archaeological thought (Ingold, 1993; Gosden, 1994), especially with regard to social and material processes over time, rather than *in the past*. These studies emphasise the mutuality of material culture and society over time as constraining and enabling forces, a concept which draws on Husserl's (and later Bourdieu's) notion of a dynamic rather than linear notion of historical

causality. Building is a social practice that reproduces notions of social time, and also produces such time, since material culture can be seen to exert an important influence in the development of social practice. Investment in durable materials and labour for instance, is a social production of notions of time, consisting of a set of practices that are both produced by our (mostly unthought) social attitudes toward house, lifetime, lineage, and society amongst other things. The social activities that shape the material structures of life shape the environment in which such attitudes toward time will be produced in future. The circularity of this interpretation is made possible by a dynamic concept of historical forces, derived from Marx, and also Husserl.

Time unfolds in space as does space in time, and studies of space, especially in geography, have not been unaffected by a shifting philosophical ground, since all concepts of space should be grounded in social relations. Yet, since social relations cannot exist in isolation from material relations, much geographical writing concerning space has often missed the fact that physical surroundings are an active force in the socialisation process, not just the raw material with which 'agents' of social change carry out material projects in the landscape. The fact that space, as Harvey (1989) points out, is related to social practices and material objects, means that changing socio-economic practices within capitalism for instance produce new forms of space/time.

Space is an important dimension of the built environment, but perhaps no more so than the spatiality and spatial relationships between other material objects. The Tswana word for space, *phata*, is in fact closer in meaning to 'interstice' than the relatively abstract notion of space. For this reason, in chapter eight, I discuss the dynamics of interstices between homesteads as an important dimension of dwelling. Interiors and exteriors are social perceptions of space derived from a socially interpreted concept of the threshold, of the mutual exclusivity of being both inside and outside. However, such linguistic opposition is not a direct translation of social experience, as

structural analysis for the most part considered. For instance, Bourdieu (1977) showed how the Kabyle house interior is linguistically something the female enters and the male leaves - social ideas of gender, space and place are developed through language, but especially through practice. Yet to take a dwelling perspective is to argue that we are in many ways always already 'interior' in our dwelling relation to the landscape and to places, and that linguistic analysis should rather be considered heuristic in the way it suggests an understanding of the social experience of place. Indeed the temporal relationship between place and dwelling is one of the major foci of this thesis. Is place anterior or posterior to dwelling? Is place emergent from dwelling or can place be thought of as prior? Place can arguably be thought of as a sense of location in the world, and whilst spatial and temporal fixity is often understood as integral to place, spatial fluidity in the way that places influence social activity and temporal fluidity in the way places move, transform or emerge in the landscape, are crucial to a dwelling perspective.

Building is often a domestication of space - as in the 'house', but not every domestic space is a building, for instance caves or shade trees. And what of the 'architectural' forms created by non-human animals? Whilst a detailed examination of this is beyond this thesis, distinctions conventionally made between cultural and genetic transmission of technological processes between human and non-human animals such as building seem increasingly unconvincing. What we should instead be concentrating on are the way skills are 'developmentally incorporated into the modus operandi of the body.. through practice and experience in an environment' (Ingold 1997:113). Social or personal spaces are appropriated through involved practice, and children learn how to move within society (and through time) spatially by observing and replicating the activities of other members of society. The ability to manipulate and act within social space is an aspect of our everyday skills in the world. Moreover, *habitus* structures how we cope in a new environment. Building in a peri-urban area in Africa for instance is varied and complex, yet *habitus* can be seen

at work, structuring the everyday practices of coping and the material, spatial relationships. Place is complexly involved in how such skills gained in environments are fluid within the landscape, how they interact with new environments and establish new practices over time (Morton, C. 2002).

Time and Temporality

Some of the most important themes in this thesis centre around notions of 'permanence' in the landscape as well as the temporal dimension of social practice. Since one of my central arguments concerns an understanding of place as a process of dwelling, I need to make clear just how I distinguish or make connections between social time and temporality. In order to do this I will need to return to some basic understandings of the social nature of time and the inherent temporality of practice and material relations. I need to establish just what I mean when I argue that building practice is involved with social notions of time, as with senses of permanence, and what I mean by the unfolding of temporal relations as an integral dimension of involved social practice through building. If I am to argue that building is both a product and process of dwelling, then a developed understanding of time and temporality and their relationship to materiality will be crucial.

A classic early account of how both society and the physical environment are involved in the experience of the passage of time is *The Nuer* (Evans-Pritchard 1940). Evans-Pritchard considered that both 'ecological' and 'structural' time could be considered 'social' in some way. The former he saw as a set of socio-cultural responses to the seasonally changing environment, which determined residence, activity and social institutions, the latter involving a recognition of the social distance between individuals, seen as a 'thickness' of time and space between people in the structural sense. The importance of Evans-Pritchard's account at the time was to reveal how time for the Nuer was both 'concrete, immanent and process-linked, rather than being abstract,

homogeneous and transcendent' (Gell 1992:17). The micro-level of ecological time involving the daily and seasonal cycles is here understood as set within the macro level of political units organised by lineage, clan etc. Evans-Pritchard regarded structural time as motionless since 'the perception of time is no more than the movement of persons, often as groups, through the structure' (Evans-Pritchard 1940:107).

Time is also often mapped spatially in terms of the social memory of temporal flow. As Thornton noted with regard to the Iraqw of Tanzania, '..there is an ordering of narrative about the past that is not based on time... it is based on the relations of space… sequence is a spatial phenomenon as well as a temporal phenomenon' (1980:182). I return to this understanding of the spatiality of memory in chapter nine, where I argue that it is things rather than spaces that may orient memory - not just heuristically but in the way that persons and homesteads are re-membered and re-collected in the mind. Memory is more likely to be material than spatial, since space is arguably a relatively abstract relation between places or things experienced. Evans-Pritchard also explores how the spatial relations between places are integral to memory, describing how Nuer residence is split into dry season (*cieng*) and wet season (*wec*). For the Nuer he argues, the former is seen as village life, suggesting permanence, whereas the latter is described as cattle camp life, being temporary. However, John Burton (1980) has argued that Evans-Pritchard's interpretation should be questioned here. He argues that the Atuot consider their wet season cattle camps as permanent settlements, since there is a higher population as well as a greater 'moral density' (Burton, 1980:275). He argues that 'it would perhaps make better sense to speak of cultivation camps and cattle villages' (loc. cit.). The variation that Evans-Pritchard interpreted as a distinction between permanence and temporariness is more a feature of variable land fertility than reflecting indigenous ideas about landscape and time. Both permanence and temporariness are important temporal dimensions to social and material life, affecting how investments in labour and resources are

allocated, and how future time is structured. Cattle camps are locations of memory for the Nuer, since camp locations are used to remember particular years (Evans-Pritchard 1940), not just because they are variable and temporary annual features, but because of their importance as places of ritual and social activity, which are integral to a notion of the temporality of social institutions. I return to this important insight in several of the chapters, especially in chapter five where I discuss in detail how durability of building materials relates to notions of social permanence in the landscape, arguing that contrary to some assumptions, material durability is often an index of uncertainty over social relations to place rather than social permanence in the landscape.

Another understanding of temporality important to this thesis is contained in Bourdieu's development of the notion of *habitus*, a dynamic notion of cyclical historicity and social reproduction derived from Marx, and drawing on Husserl's phenomenological analysis. Bourdieu's motivation for doing this was to make a break from objectivism (in the form of structuralism), since 'phenomenological analysis is.. more attentive than objectivism to the temporality of action' (Bourdieu 1977:9). His argument centres around the fact that structuralism ignored notions of time in social practices through a concentration on social rules rather than the temporal reality of social practice. This was an especially 'pernicious' approach, he argued, for practices such as gifting, where 'their temporal structure, direction and rhythm are *constitutive* of their meaning' (1977:9 emphasis in original). Lévi-Strauss's consideration of time, for instance, centred on how societies were able to annul time and its effects, and time was seen as a by-product of model building with data that was shorn of its temporality, i.e. myth, kinship, ritual. Phenomenology showed that for social practice to be seen in its practically truthful state, time had to be re-introduced into the theoretical way that practice was represented, since temporality was crucial to its structure.

The *habitus*, as a system of lasting transposable cultural dispositions which integrates past experiences within the current matrix of perceptions and actions, can be seen as a working through of Husserl's notion of time-consciousness within a practice-based, Heideggerian view of everyday Being rather than knowing. Heidegger does not turn his critical attention to temporality in any great detail, but sees social time as essentially a 'thrown' or 'fallen' condition of existence, in many ways Heidegger's assumptions about temporality fit with a Husserlian oscillation between past and future potentialities within a dynamically conceived 'present'. Husserl's model envisaged a temporal 'presentness' that encompassed both past and future, where history was not a chain of causal antecedents, but a combination of 'retensions' of the past in the present and 'protensions' of the future in the present, a theory that enables man to be the mediator of temporal relationships, in a similar manner to the changed:changing dialectic of Husserl's internal time consciousness. Temporality is recovered as a constitutive part of present Being, and draws together past practice (unconsciously learned) as well as structuring the strategies and potentialities of future social practice.

Materiality

Material practices and social practices are of course mutually involved in everyday life - it is hard to imagine social life without material culture or of having material relations without sociality. Given this, it is sometimes perplexing how much anthropological writing ignores how mutually interrelated materiality and social relations are, and that it is only relatively recently that analysis has acknowledged how material forms are involved in producing and reproducing the social world. In social anthropological studies, buildings have often been seen as a crucial arena for the interplay between spatiality and social life, since the spatial and material processes of the domestic sphere have often been interpreted as representations of social beliefs and ideas of the inhabitants (Bourdieu 1977; Moore 1986; Preston Blier 1987). The possibility of the material world exerting

an influence upon sociality rather than being irrelevant to or simply reflecting it (often assumed in social anthropological analyses) is at the heart of this thesis.

One important set of recent understandings about the role of the material world has been developed by the social geographer, Harvey, who has argued that material forms are central to the unfolding of social relations, and that 'neither time nor space can be assigned objective meanings independently of material processes, and it is only through investigation of the latter that we can properly ground our concepts in the former' (Harvey 1989:204). From this perspective, social reproduction is mediated by the sorts of material processes that determine how both time and space are objectively constituted. Temporal cultural relativism is not a matter of spatial or temporal variations in 'knowing' about the world, but is constitutive of the distinctive materiality of society, since differing modes of production and social formations 'embody a distinctive bundle of time and space practices and concepts' (Harvey 1992:204). What is important is how society 'becomes' (how thought and reality are two sides of the same coin so to speak), how materiality is involved in the reproduction of social being over time, producing time and space, transforming and being transformed by our activity in the world. The necessarily dynamic view of history needed for this argument is found in Marx's concept of history as well as Husserl's notion of temporal tension, which strongly influenced both Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' and Gosden's (1994) notion of a 'social ontology'.

Gosden (1994) develops the notion of a dynamic historicity as discussed earlier, integrating it with an understanding of material processes in his discussion of long-term transformations in the landscape, formulating a theory of 'social ontology' that adapts Marx's idea of material and social processes of transformation over time. Just as *habitus* conceptually helped to break down the object – subject dichotomy for Bourdieu, social ontology involves the mutual making of people

and things over time. The landscape is constantly being remodelled by human activity, and it forms the arena in which socialisation takes place, the transformed world is also a transforming one. Subjects are not agents who operate in a one-sided relationship with the material world, there is mutuality in the way physical surroundings are influential upon society and vice versa. This insight underlies much of my discussion in chapters two, three and four, in which a relatively regional scale of dwelling is examined.

Although archaeological and anthropological theory increasingly sees material and social processes as interwoven over time, much of the geographical literature on time has foregrounded human agency and seen time as a constraint on individual action in space (for instance, Hägerstrand 1981). Recent geographers have focussed on action as being central to social time and space in geography, yet are still centrally concerned with human agency rather than the mutual influence between the material and the social. For instance, Werlen states that: 'I maintain that a given form of society and the spatial pattern of concrete results of action (material artefacts), produced by its members, are wholly derived from the conscious objectives of individual agents' (1993:18). Werlen somewhat rightly finds *habitus* a difficult concept when considering society and space, since 'what Bourdieu calls *habitus* is part of the mental world and should not be localised in the social world or the social space' (Ibid. p.155). However, in Werlen's view materiality only becomes meaningful in the performance of actions by agents with certain intentions under specific social conditions, which lacks any sense of immersion in the physical world, artefacts simply 'contributing to the physical differentiation of social phenomena' (Ibid. p.201).

The concept of social ontology emphasises that people are always socialised into spatial and temporal patterns of activity within a socially transformed and transforming landscape or physical environment. This system of reference helps develop notions of time and space since it 'forms' us

as we act to form it: 'our social being derives from the structure of our acts as these extend over space and through time' (Gosden 1994:80). Social ontology avoids the problems implicit in Husserl's phenomenology, which tended toward abstraction from the world (the 'transcendental ego'), a point that Werlen sees as a criticism of *habitus*. However, *habitus* is really a corporeal concept rather than a mental one – the body is the centre of learned practice, which Bourdieu called 'Hexis', the embodiment of *habitus*. The notion of the body as the source of spatial gesture and thereby as dwelling orientation is something that I turn to in chapter eight in particular, where I argue that culturally circumscribed understandings of bodily comportment are important to understanding material forces within the homestead - especially the social importance of front and back in both building (spatial) relations as well as in social situations.

However, a criticism of *habitus* based on the lack of recognition of material culture as an influential dimension of social life can still be seen as valid. Bourdieu's later work on distinction and the social field discusses material culture as a set of strategies of consumption produced by the *habitus*, but Bourdieu never fully develops a notion of materiality or mutuality between material and social forms.

Place or Space?

Agnew, in his article "The Devaluation of Place in Social Science" (Agnew 1989), gives an account of why 'place' as a concept has been largely missing from social research until recent years. He traces the genealogy of social research into the 19th century, to show that 'place' was effectively conceptually conflated with 'community'. The dichotomization of 'community' and 'society' at this time was central to the wider notion that 'community' evolved into 'society', and that through this evolutionary process 'place' was irrelevant, since it was a feature of the now transformed notion of 'community'. The work of recent authors has involved an attempt to marry

both geographical and sociological "imaginations" which have previously exemplified the Cartesian split between studying the world and studying society.

Of more interest than place to most writers has been the understanding of socio-spatial relations in the landscape. An early approach that deals with materiality in the understanding of space is Simmel's argument (see Spykman 1964) that relatively fixed objects (such as buildings or monuments) are involved in the creation of a spatial nexus for social activities (involved in the creation of place). The spatially defined location of the immobile material object became a socially significant pivot of human interactions, spatial fixations 'which result from the creation of a focal point for the reciprocities within the group' (Spykman 1964:152), over time acquiring symbolic content. However, Simmel also argued that social space was a 'subjective mental category' and those spatial demarcations within places were simply expressions of social processes, with no mutual influence upon society. 'The border', he argues, 'is not a spatial fact with sociological consequences, but a sociological fact that expresses itself in spatial form' (quoted in Spykman 1964:148). Hilda Kuper also recognised that certain places were pivotal, immobile, material elements that were structured by, and helped structure, social activities in the landscape. Her analysis of sites of authority in Swaziland however overlooked the materiality of buildings and meeting areas, which she understood as 'specific pieces of space' (Kuper, H. 1972:411). She argued that 'there is a condensation of values in particular sites, and transactions that constitute the totality of social life may be spatially mapped with specific sites expressing relatively durable structured interests and related values' (Kuper, H. 1972:421). This can be compared to Ingold's argument that 'the forms people build, whether in the imagination or on the ground, arise within the current of their involved activity, in the specific relational contexts of their practical engagement with their surroundings' (Ingold 1995:78). A detailed concept of the relationship

between place and space that recognises the importance of material forms in the generation of social notions of space is needed.

Whilst space, and especially socio-spatiality, has been the main concern for social theorists in the past, recent writing has sought to reintroduce place as an important notion. As Tilley has noted, '[w]ithout places there can be no spaces, and the former have primary ontological significance as centres of bodily activity, human significance and emotional attachment' (1994:15). However, the focus in much of the literature on place has often been on how symbolic forms arise or on how people actively go about changing their material environment instead of how both the material and social dimensions are in a state of mutual transformation and being. Also, if social relations have little meaning outside of material relations, the same applies to spatial relations. In other words, the practices through which sociality is produced and reproduced cannot meaningfully be separated from people's use of space, which implies material relations. Throughout this thesis I choose to foreground place and material relations, and to implicitly ask the question, what is space? It is perhaps surprising that in a thesis professing concern with building practices, that spatiality is devalued conceptually. The problem with the notion of space is perhaps a lack of specificity when used in much anthropological analysis, and indeed a good deal of slippage in the way its meanings are presented. In this thesis I try to avoid non-specific understandings of spatiality, and confine its analysis to the relations between things or persons in given contexts.

Rather than theorising space, a central concern in this thesis is an examination of a developing notion of place as a dynamic dimension of dwelling - place as process of dwelling, and thereby a bringing together of time and space through dwelling. The becoming of a place always involves appropriating and transforming the physical environment through naming and physical manipulation, including building. But places are not inert manifestations of human social

relations, 'not simply a passive mirror that dispassionately reflects the human endeavour, but the medium, the gesturing, through which we are' (Richardson 1989:143). The transformational process central to the becoming of a place is also inseparable from the reproduction and transformation of society in time and space. That is, societies exist in a state of mutual influence with places. Places are characterised by the ceaseless flux of human social practices (and the experiences of such practices) in time and space. Place is spatial in as much as it is temporally constituted in terms of human tasks in the landscape over time, and temporal in as much as these activities both produce and reproduce spatial structures in the material flow of social life.

The question of place or space is something recently examined in detail by Casey (1996), who attempts to invert the notion of the generality of space and the particularity of place, to ask whether we should instead examine on a more fundamental level the 'placial' nature of landscape. Philosophically, his starting point is the notion that perception of space, as primary to experience, is always already 'emplaced' or locational. Knowledge of place then, he argues, is not a consequence of perception, but an ingredient of perception itself. With the whole body involved in perception, 'not only is the sensuous senseful, it is also placed' (1996:19) - there is an ongoing dialectic between perception and place. In a social ontological sense, social activity not only *takes* place but is *of* place, is in a sense constituted by place. This universal notion of placeness as a constitutive element of senseful perception and social interaction has been important in my development of a notion of place as process of dwelling in this thesis. Although Casey focuses upon a theoretical exploration of the body as the site of emplaced experience, his developed notion of places that 'gather things in their midst' (1996:24) shows how materiality is also integral to his notion of placeness in which perception is embedded. The important point for this thesis is Casey's argument that 'a place is more an event than a thing to be assimilated to known categories' (1996:26). In other words, we should focus more on *emplacement* and the processes of place,

rather than location. Indeed, part of the dynamism of place, argues Casey, is its inherent temporality - movement within and between places in the landscape is at the heart of what placeness means. This is especially important in my own developed notion of 'otherplaceness' in chapter six, which encapsulates how the analysis of place inevitably involves other places and times in their mutual interlocking in the social landscape.

Casey's philosophical enquiry brings us a developed notion of emplacement as a fundamental dimension of perception, and of place as a universal or general term more normally attributed to space. But as already mentioned, we learn little in detail about the influence of place, its traits, features and forms, upon either perception itself or more generally upon social and material relations. However, other writing on place has tried to get to grips with just this sort of question. In 1984, Pred argued that those developing structuration theories (such as Giddens and Bourdieu) had ignored the centrality of 'place' as a context within which structuration occurred, failing to 'conceptualise the means by which the everyday shaping and reproduction of self and society come to be expressed as specific structure-influenced and structure-influencing practices occurring at particular locations in time and space' (1984:281). The becoming of place and the material and social activities within a place can be seen as the everyday unfolding of *habitus*, he argued. In *Place, Practice and Structure* (1986), Pred attempts to show how field enclosure (*enskifte*) occurred in a locality in southern Sweden during the period 1750 to 1850, from the perspective of land-holding peasants. In doing so he examines the prevailing culture of power relations, the dialectics of practice and structure in a particular physical setting, as well as the historically specific interplay of social and spatial structuring (Pred 1986:3). Pred's human geography approach attempts to combine 'structuration' theory and time-geography (as developed by Hägerstrand) in order to conceptualise 'place' as a historically contingent process. Much of the analysis is taken up with the time-geography notions of 'path' and 'project' concerning how

individuals structure their everyday activities, and thereby contribute to 'structuration' processes. The intersection of individual paths and projects in space and time 'perpetually spell out' (1986:10) the material continuity of 'structuration' processes, and 'place' is unfolded on a daily basis by individuals involved in their tasks. 'Place is therefore synonymous with structuration, or structuring', he argues, 'processes whereby the reproduction of social and cultural forms, the formation of biographies and the transformation of nature ceaselessly become one another' (Ibid. p.11).

Although Pred's analysis has been important to my own understanding of place, one weakness is the absence of a developed notion of mutuality between the landscape upon which the identified social and political forces are acted out by individuals and the society whose activities constitute the agency of material change. The spatial rearrangement of the landscape involved the replacement of scattered farming strips with consolidated holdings, seen by Pred as a modification of daily paths and power relations between individuals, constituting a 'significantly altered sense of place, structure of feeling and other elements of consciousness held by village residents' (Ibid. p.197). Whilst he argues that '[p]reviously structured space both constrains and enables the reproduction of social practices and social structure' (Ibid. p.198), he does not examine in detail how material forms in the landscape exert a structuring influence over time. Although the notion of place-as-process developed by Pred is one that I build upon throughout this thesis, my own approach introduces material processes at the core of analysis, how people transform and are transformed by places in the stream of social life. The place-as-process understood by Pred was a theatre or arena for human agency (individual plans and projects) in which social reproduction is temporally grounded. Throughout the chapters of this thesis I extend this processual notion of place to include material processes as an influential dimension of social life, arguing that notions

such as structuration, *habitus*, or social reproduction cannot be detached from a developed notion of materiality and material relations to place, especially the built environment.

Alongside place, another notion that runs throughout this thesis is that of taskscape, described by Ingold as 'the entire ensemble of tasks, in their mutual interlocking' (1993:158). The concept of taskscape can be seen as an attempt to develop a dwelling perspective within the context of actual historical change within the landscape, and to explore social and material mutuality in the shaping of landscape. Since going about tasks is the way in which we dwell, the activities of everyday skills in the environment, there should be no meaningful distinction between technical and social activity. The taskscape is an array of interrelated activities in the same way that landscape is an array of interrelated features, and the temporality of tasks, or labour, is socially constituted (loc. cit.). The passage of time is our movement through the taskscape as we engage in the activities of dwelling. Yet it is more than this, it is also our engagement with *each other's* activities of dwelling, since we exist in continual practical relations with other people and attentive engagement with one another is the mechanism of sociality. The forms of the taskscape are produced through the physical resonance of the material and social activities in a place, not through a cultural design for dwelling enacted against a backdrop of the physical world.

The taskscape is not culture, in the same way that landscape is not nature. Ingold conceives of the landscape as a pattern of activities 'collapsed' into an array of physical features, the embodiment of the taskscape. Yet it is not thereby a product of design upon a surface, but an ongoing, mutually incorporating realisation of continual human activity. Yet the notion of the material form as a 'collapsed act' (that Ingold borrows from George Herbert Mead) does not emphasise enough the ongoing influence of such traits and features in social reproduction. Taking the notion of habitus, social acts do not collapse so much as have consequences for future actions. In a sense then there

is already a socially reproductive dimension of social activity that has consequences within the landscape, that is transformed rather than collapsed or congealed (Ingold 1993:162). Taskscape is a concept explored in detail throughout this thesis (especially chapters three, four and seven) on differing scales. In particular I examine how the notion of taskscape is applicable not only to an understanding of the temporal landscape, but also at the relatively smaller scale of village and homestead.

I have treated the discussion of time and space/place separately in this introduction since I have wanted to explore some aspects of anthropological approaches to both temporality and spatiality, and how such understandings relate to the notion of dwelling developed here. Time and space are of course mutually interrelated aspects of social practice, and in this thesis in particular are brought together in a processual understanding of dwelling, which this introduction has attempted to outline. I have thereby argued for the foregrounding of the notion of place-as-process of dwelling as a way of bringing together both time and space as well as the influence of the material or physical world. Rather than place being a relatively static product of social activity, I want to suggest how the materiality of place is influential in the transformation of the temporal landscape and also in social reproduction.

Conclusion

I have attempted in this chapter to work through many of the crucial themes that are to be developed throughout this thesis, which necessarily draws upon a diverse, extensive and multi-disciplinary literature. I have tried to both survey some of the key themes that are relevant to my argument throughout the thesis, and to develop how my argument both draws upon this literature and seeks to extend it in the light of my own fieldwork and analysis. This section has discussed the key themes of time and temporality, space, materiality and place that run through the thesis as a

whole, and which are returned to frequently within the chapters. Whilst I was familiar with some of this literature before fieldwork, the approach that I have taken with my data only emerged towards the end of fieldwork as I began to reflect on the eclectic body of information as a totality. This chapter has attempted to lay the theoretical foundations for an answer to a central question that I have posed myself: what is the relationship between building activity and the notion of dwelling in Ngamiland?

On one level, the thesis is structured to explore this relationship on the basis of scale. Chapter two is an anthropological history of aspects of settlement in Botswana, especially Ngamiland, in the colonial period, examining in detail the conflict between indigenous fluidity and colonial fixity within the landscape over time. The next two chapters (three and four) examine the dynamics of two differing social landscapes within Ngamiland (Shorobe and Lake Ngami regions) and how both building activity and settlement form are temporally related to social activity. The second section (chapters five, six and seven) examines the materiality of place, the interconnectedness of places in the landscape and the dynamic social and material pathways between them. This section mainly focuses upon the settlement of Maun and its surrounding area, and introduces the notion of *place as process of dwelling* rather than product. The third section (chapters eight and nine) analyses dwelling on the scale of the homestead, examining how the forms and materials of the homestead are intimately related to the temporality of family biography, memory and the activities of the household. In the following chapter I focus in particular upon the settlement experience of Tswana groups in the colonial period, examining indigenous practices of nucleation, movement and attitudes to materiality as well as responses to colonialism. I then focus upon the Tswana (the Tawana kingdom) of Ngamiland, to examine how chieftaincy, settlement practice, mobility and attitudes to materiality were interwoven with aspects of power in the colonial period. This chapter provides both a historical and regional introduction to Ngamiland and Botswana, as well as

introducing some key themes such as scales of dwelling, the relation between social activity and the temporal landscape, and attitudes to materiality.

Chapter Two

Peoples and Places

Botswana is a land-locked country of southern Africa (Figure 2.1), which gained independence from Britain in 1966, having previously existed as the colonial 'protectorate' of Bechuanaland. To the west and north-west lies Namibia, the north-east Zambia, and the east Zimbabwe. A multi-party democracy that has enjoyed both political stability and successful economic development (mostly through the cattle industry and diamond and other mineral extraction), Botswana has moved from one of the world's poorest countries at Independence to one of Africa's wealthiest. The country has long been dominated by the Tswana kingdoms that comprise its administrative regions, and has successfully incorporated other groups as BaTswana - today a national rather than ethnic identity. National identity is strongly promoted above ethnic identity, which the government in particular strongly frowns upon, pointing out with good reason how ethnicity and conflict are interwoven across Africa. I hope that my own discussion of cultural practices associated with differing ethnic groups in this thesis will be understood from the positive perspective of diversity rather than divisiveness.

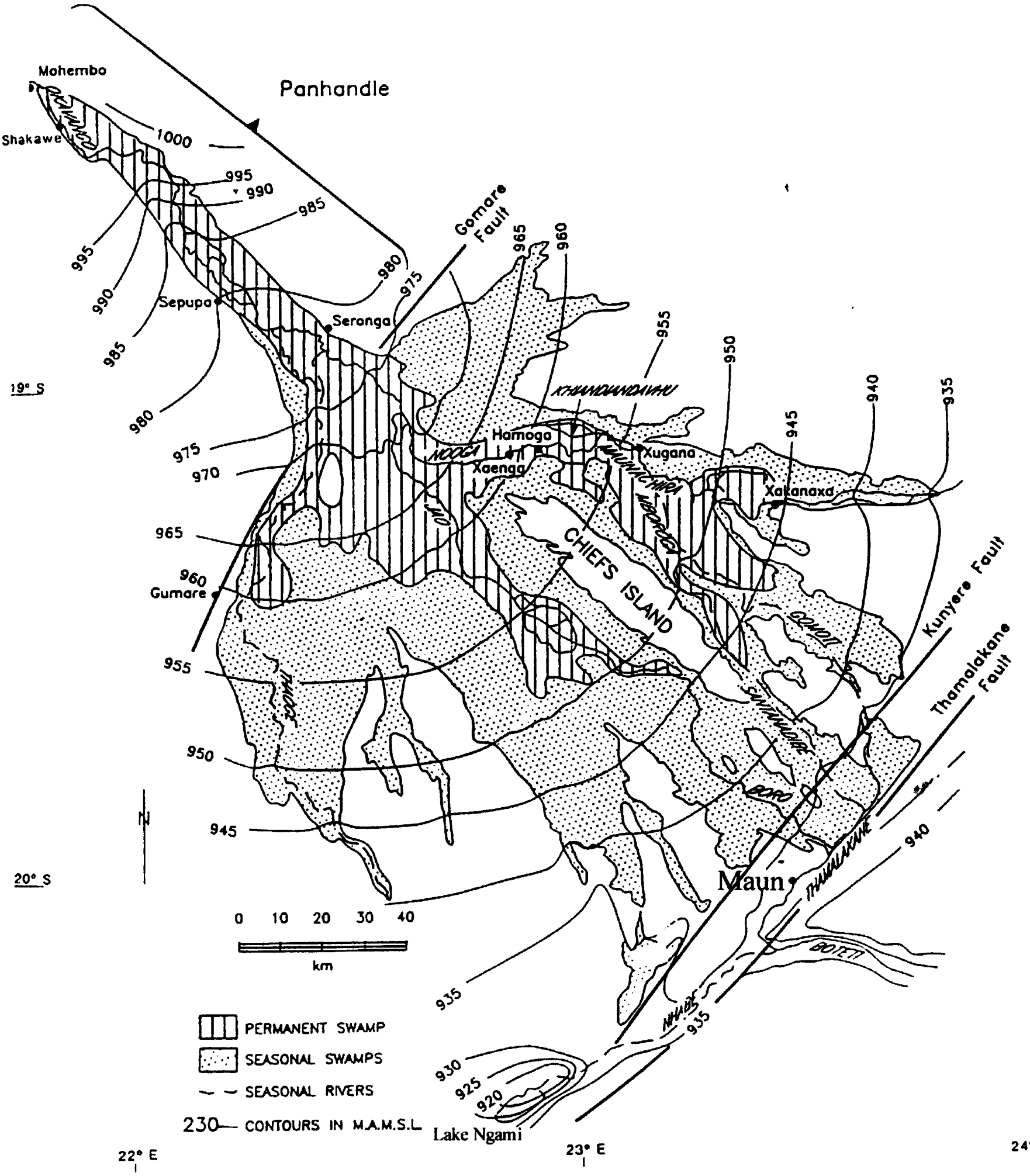
This thesis is concerned with Ngamiland which is also known as North Western District of Botswana, and at 109,000 square kilometres in area contains the world's largest RAMSAR[1] site, the Okavango Delta (Figure 2.2). The Okavango delta is formed by the Okavango river which enters Botswana from Angola via the Caprivi Strip and spreads fan-like across the flat Kalahari

[1] The Convention on Wetlands (www.ramsar.org), signed in Ramsar, Iran, in 1971, is an intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for national action and international co-operation for the conservation and use of wetlands and their resources. There are currently 130 Contracting Parties to the Convention, with 1140 wetland sites, totalling 91.7 million hectares.



Figure 2.1 Political map of Botswana, showing districts and major settlements

Source: Magellan Geographix Santa Barbara CA. 1992



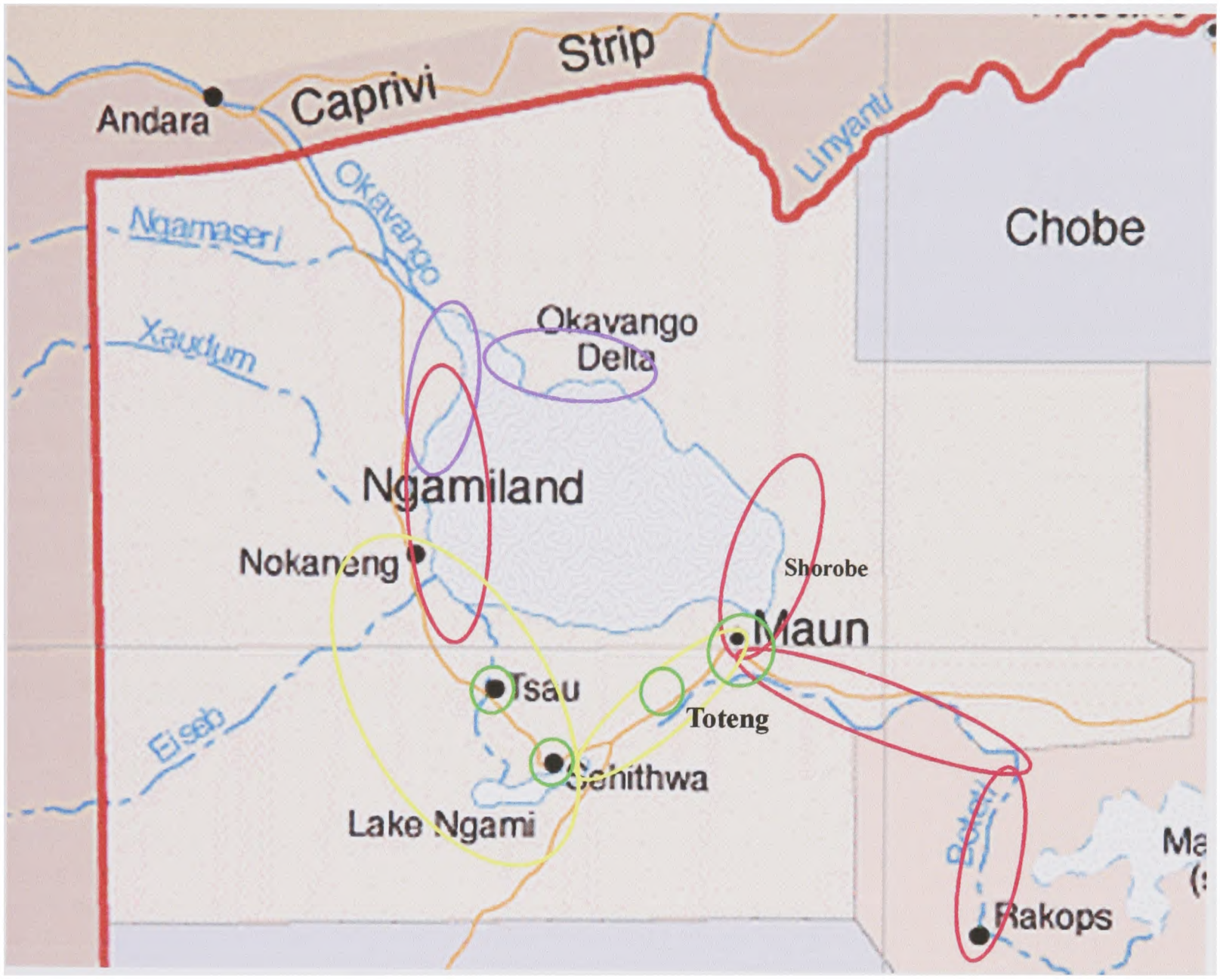
Okavango Delta Region

Figure 2.2 Contour map of the Okavango Delta system, including major fault lines and seasonal flooding areas.

Source: McCarthy, T.S. 1993

sands until it dissipates in a number of smaller rivers to the south. Of the huge volume of water that enters the delta swamp system from the Okavango river, only a tiny percentage remains to flow into the Thamalakane, Boteti and Lake Ngami systems to the south, with over 90% lost to evaporation. Perhaps half of the delta is permanently flooded, with the rest receiving seasonal flooding some five or six months (June/July) after the rains have gone - a testament to the almost negligible gradient over which the delta flows.

Ngamiland, of all regions of Botswana, is particularly culturally diverse (Figure 2.3). It is likely that numerous groups have lived in the region over time, especially gatherer-hunter peoples such as the San, a fact that is the focus of much current archaeological and anthropological research (see Reid *et al.* 1998). Of the Bantu groups with which I am concerned in this thesis, little is suggested from oral histories before the 18th century when significant migrations to the region took place, especially by matrilineal central African peoples. One of the earliest and today most numerous groups of Ngamiland are the **Yei** (Wayeyi, Bayei, Bayeyi), who first began to migrate from DiYei in southern Zambia along the water courses linking the Chobe and Okavango systems perhaps before 1750 (Tlou 1985:12). The Yei were a predominantly fishing and farming people (Larson 1988, 1992), who used dug-out boats (*mekoro*) and practised flood-recession agruiculture (see chapter four). Over a considerably long period, Yei groups gradually settled Lake Ngami (it was then relatively full of water), as well as western Ngamiland founding settlements at Nokaneng, Gumare and Seronga. Other groups moved south along the Boteti river towards Tsienyane (Rakops). These migrations into Ngamiland were occasioned by conflict between the Yei and the Lozi empire in Zambia from the early 18th century onwards. Of those Yei groups who occasionally migrated south through the Chobe and eastern Okavango system, some eventually settled in the seasonally flooded areas close to **Shorobe** (chapter four). Here they kept cattle and farmed the seasonal floodplains, and came into constant contact with the Tawana and British colonial



Key

Yei

Mbukushu

Mbanderu/Herero

Tswana (Tawana)

Figure 2.3 Geographical distribution of groups in Ngamiland discussed in this thesis.

Note: This map only refers to those major groupings discussed in this thesis, and is intended solely as a rough guide to their settlement distribution in the region. (See also John Bock's map of the distribution of Delta peoples at http://www.mindspring.com/~okavango/map2.html)

administration based at Maun. Pressure was put on these Yei inhabitants to move to Shorobe village itself, which many responded to, although many either kept homesteads on the islands in the floodplains, returned to farm the floodplains after the rains or even eventually moved back. Shorobe village itself has a Tawana headman or Chief's Representative (*kgosana*), but this sort of nucleated village life away from the water channels is still unfavoured by many Yei, who keep a homestead in Shorobe for schoolchildren and access to goods and services, but who remain scattered throughout the *melapo* (sing. *molapo*) or river channels, of the area to the west of the Thamalakane fault. Whereas the western Yei far from the Tawana had retained important aspects of Yei identity, those in Shorobe argued Sutherland 'do not remember their original tribal clan names or totems because they had been dominated so long by the Tawana who discouraged them from practising their own customs' (1984)

The Lozi expansions also affected the **Mbukushu** peoples living in Zambia, forcing them to move westwards toward the Caprivi strip. Subsequent splits and migrations meant that many Mbukushu are now found in various parts of southern central Africa. Significant numbers however did not come into the northern delta areas of Sepopa and Shakawe until the later 19th century (Tlou 1985:14), and in 1970 4,000 Mbukushu were resettled as refugees from the colonial war in Angola (Larson 1971, 1979). According to Ngamiland's historian, Tlou, 'the Yei and Mbukushu migrations were probably the most significant historical events in Ngamiland prior to the Tawana period' (1985:15). Unlike the other Okavango peoples, the Mbukushu have been the subject of several detailed ethnographic studies (especially Larson 1970, 1977, 1980). The interconnecting rivers and swamps of the Okavango, Chobe and Zambezi systems meant that Ngamiland was physically and socially bound-up with the matrilineal peoples of central Africa. It was only later that the centralised, cattle-keeping, patrilineal Tswana group, the Tawana, were to emerge from the south and eventually incorporate Ngamiland into a southern African kingdom. Ngamiland

continues this historical dual orientation or set of identities to this day, and as such retains a unique identity within Botswana in the way it is regarded. For many it is the homeland of people who say *ta* rather than *tla* - referring to the regional dialect.

The Tswana group known as the **Tawana** (Batawana) arrived in Ngamiland around 1800, settling at the Kwebe Hills to the south-east of Lake Ngami. The Tawana group are named after the leader Tawana who seceded from the Tswana group the Ngwato (capital at Serowe) after a succession dispute. Tawana was the son of the Ngwato king's first wife, and had been designated heir by the king but not by the tribe, since his mother was not considered the *mohumagadi* (main wife) – the one regarded by the Ngwato as suitable to produce an heir to the throne (Tlou 1985:38). The Ngwato eventually acknowledged Tawana and his followers as an independent Kingdom after a failed attack in 1810, and the Tawana have remained in Ngamiland ever since. As a centralised polity the Tawana moved with their chiefs to a succession of places (see chapter three), with cattle-keeping and dry-land farming (agro-pastoralism) their main activities. The fact that they were cattle-keepers meant that they never inhabited the Okavango delta region itself due to tsetse-fly and the fear of Malaria, and have settled mostly to the west and south of the delta. The success with which other Tswana kingdoms incorporated other groups within their polity was never fully reproduced in Ngamiland by the Tawana, who found dispersed peoples such as the Yei living in independent settlements without any centralised political organisation, termed by Tlou as 'stateless societies' (1985:15). The issue of incorporation, or rather, control, became more of an issue as the colonial administration tried to raise sufficient taxes in the region to finance itself, and successive Tawana chiefs were castigated as weak in their control over both Tawana and other groups (see chapter three).

Members of non-Tswana groups, especially the Yei, often became *batlhanka* or servants of Tawana families, living alongside them and doing everyday domestic work. Tlou argues that this system often benefited Yei *batlhanka* through milk and the gaining of a herd through *mafisa* (cattle lending). Motlaloso argues however that 'the Yei maintain that the Tawana used clientship to steal and dispossess the Yei of their cattle [since] if a Yei client died the Tawana patron would take all the cattle including those that belonged to the deceased' (1994:9). He also argues that many Yei see the loss of Yei language 'as attributable to the serfdom which the Tawana subjected them to. They maintain that most of them resided at the back of the Tawana compound and were not allowed to speak Yei' (1994:11). The Yei were only officially given full recognition in 1949 after unrest, and past relations between Tawana and other groups such as the Yei are still a somewhat incendiary issue that finds current manifestation in Yei calls for representation in the House of Chiefs with their own leader rather than the Tawana *Kgosi*.

By 1915 the Tawana had settled in **Maun** on the Thamalakane river to the south of the Okavango Delta. After promising the colonial administration that here was a location of some permanence to equal that of other Tswana groups, the Tawana as a whole became almost immediately dissatisfied with it on account of cattle disease, and pressure upon the chief to move began to grow by 1920. The colonial administration refused a series of requests for a move, which continued well into the 1940s (chapter three), based upon the dissatisfaction of the majority of Tawana cattle-keepers with the area, who instead lived at their cattle posts scattered throughout the area. When it was realised that the Tawana chiefs could persuade neither Tswana nor other groups (such as the Herero/Mbanderu or Yei) to settle in major villages for tax collection, the administration began to pursue a policy of selective tsetse eradication, which had significant success in concentrating populations. With the continuation of tsetse control Maun gradually regained a population, and after Independence (1966) migration to Maun increased dramatically as Okavango Delta peoples

such as the Mbukushu, Yei and Subiya (eastern Okavango group originally excluded from the Tawana Tribal Reserve by the colonial administration) came in search of cash employment, trade and especially access to schools and the hospital. Today Maun is a rapidly growing and urbanising centre for both commerce and the tourism industry, but many of its inhabitants still live on the margins of the cash economy and move frequently between farming areas and village sites.

In 1896/7 and 1904/5 another important series of migrations into Ngamiland took place. These were by Herero (Ovaherero) and **Mbanderu** (Ovambanderu) peoples fleeing (mostly without their cattle) from German colonial aggression in Namibia. Both Mbanderu and Herero are closely related pastoral groups whose fluidity of movement within the landscape is linked with movement of herds to new grazing. Like the central African groups encountered by the Tawana, the Mbanderu had no centralised polity, but rather a double descent system of patri- and matriclan. The patriclan (*otuzo*) is basically a kin-based religious system closely associated with ancestral spirits, with the matriclan (*omaanda*) associated with marriage and identity. According to Kandapaera (1992:28) the Tawana allowed the Mbanderu to settle the Lake Ngami region (**Sehitwa**-Thololamoro area) subject to their acceptance of Tswana overlordship and colonial taxation policies (Hut Tax). Since they had no or few cattle after both wars and rinderpest, they worked as servants (*batlhanka*) for Tawana in return for gradually building up their own herds through *mafisa*, a system of lending beasts for another's use (such as milking, offspring etc). Continued poor relations with the Tawana led to continuing Mbanderu migrations, especially to Chobe in 1918, and later to Rakops (Tsienyane) and Ghanzi districts further south.

The **Lake Ngami** region however has remained the main area for Mbanderu pastoral activity, with homestead locations entirely encircling the now mostly dry lake bed. When Livingstone visited the Lake in 1849 the lake was a vast stretch of fresh water, approximately 80 kilometres long by 40

wide. By the turn of the twentieth century, the lake had begun to dry considerably, and by the 1920s hardly any water remained. Geomorphologists increasingly believe that the gradual drying of the western tributaries of the Okavango delta has been the result of a gradual shift in flow eastwards, possibly caused by earthquakes and the shifting of numerous fault lines across the system that form part of the great East African rift system of faults. Whilst Lake Ngami is now largely a historical lake, it still occasionally receives enough rainwater during the wet season (Nov-March) to have shallow waters in some areas.

I hope that in conjunction with the set of maps, this brief introduction to locations and populations discussed in this thesis will provide a useful orientation and guide for the reader unfamiliar with the region. I have chosen to highlight names that are specifically referred to or otherwise discussed in this thesis, and this introduction is not intended as a comprehensive ethnographic or geographical survey of the region, which is covered well in a variety of sources, especially Tlou (1985), as well as a range of interesting B.A. dissertations held at the University of Botswana.

Chapter Three

Fixity and Fluidity: Dwelling and Settlement in Colonial Botswana

Introduction

This chapter explores an approach to anthropological history using archival and published evidence relating to Tswana and British colonial relations in the context of settlement movement and sedentism. It is intended not only to help provide a context for some of the subsequent chapters in this thesis by discussing the development of the social landscape in Ngamiland, but as a distinct approach to understanding historical material from a dwelling perspective on landscape (Ingold 1993). Settlement sedentism was a widespread colonial practice; related to administrative and political control (especially taxation) as well as economic development (often directly related to the former). For the Tswana in Botswana (Bechuanaland) both political organisation and settlement were nucleated, centred upon the Chief and his village. Such nucleation was often forced upon the population through the Chief's headmen, with farming (field) and cattle-keeping (cattle post) activities often some distance away. An important argument in this chapter is that such nucleation was not linked to permanence or sedentism in the landscape, and indeed large villages centred around the Chief often moved over time. For the colonial administration, Tswana settlement practices centred upon a strong Chief appeared to coincide with colonial concerns with stability, control and development through 'indirect rule'. However, as this chapter explores, archival evidence suggests a continuing conflict between Tswana fluidity and colonial fixity in the landscape, especially in Ngamiland. Conflict is also evident between indigenous and colonial notions of 'land', and a case study from Palapye is examined in the context of anthropological understandings of the nature of gifting and the leasing of land by Chiefs from an indigenous perspective. An important theme in this chapter is the notion of permanence within the landscape,

and how both indigenous and colonial practices were related to differing notions of the relationship between social permanence and landscape over time. Colonial sedentism was crucially related to investment in durable buildings and infrastructure, whereas Tswana social permanence was contrarily directed related to the fluidity of dwelling in the landscape, since Chiefs were often expected to found new villages and find new grazing and ploughing land when resources became exhausted. The role of Chief as pioneer within the landscape has been given little attention thus far in Africanist literature. Fluidity within the landscape cannot be equated with temporariness of social relations to place, or fixity or durability with permanence.

Settlement and Power

Colonialism in its most general sense is a process in which a society experiences aspects of domination through the agency of another society, which manifests itself in alterations in both intra- and inter-social and material relations. Colonialism is necessarily associated with aspects of domination or power, since it is most often understood as being a formalised project of foreign resource exploitation, or aggregation of territory for politically expedient reasons. Botswana has most often been classified historically as falling into the latter category - the British establishing a protectorate over the region to prevent German expansion from South West Africa. On Independence in 1966 little colonial investment or exploitation of resources had taken place in Botswana. The policy of 'Indirect Rule' meant that chiefly authority was backed by colonial force as a means of control and power, with the proviso that recalcitrant Chiefs would be removed and replaced. In 1906 this policy came to fruition with the arrest and detention of Sekgoma the Tawana Chief, who was replaced in 1906 by Mathiba - a direct intervention in *bogosi* or kingship by the British administration.

Colonialism is increasingly being acknowledged as a diverse set of processes and agencies that are nowhere uniform in the way they are experienced or manifested. In the past many studies of responses to colonialism have sought to highlight culture change as a set of external impositions rather than a more complex temporal process in which agency is more fluid and uncertain. As Reid *et al.* argue 'such changes are more generally the product of a dialectical relationship between donor and recipient communities, involving complex processes of selection and recontextualisation of meanings and forms' (1997:372). This more fluid process certainly applies to the sort of limited colonial interventions experienced in Botswana, but obviously does not exclude the idea of much more vigorous forms of colonial experience elsewhere. In particular, this theme of continuity over colonial imposition has been highlighted by Reid et al. in their investigation of early 20th century settlement sites in south-eastern Botswana, where 'continuity of settlement layout, gradual change in architecture and the fluctuating location of churches were all elements of a material discourse over power, authority and religion' (1997:389). It is important to begin to see dimensions of continuity as equally significant responses to colonialism as change, since it has much to do with the negotiation of power and authority within a constantly transforming social landscape.

One important arena of negotiating power and authority is that of settlement. 'Traditional' forms of Tswana settlement nucleation were identified as favourable by colonial administrators to facilitate tax collection, population control, trade and the exercise of law. However many Chiefs also continued to coerce their populations into settling in the nuclear village, as a way of consolidating their own power. Chiefs were active in promoting nucleated settlement and not dispersed groups at farm lands, since centralisation facilitated Chiefly authority through the main *kgotla* and by having headmen close at hand. Whilst early 19th century Tswana groups already inhabiting the present day regions of modern Botswana already favoured nucleated villages, the Kgatla, whilst still living in the Transvaal, preferred separate villages for group sections until 1871. When they eventually

moved to their present day location in Botswana, however, due to Boer encroachment and exploitation, they adopted a centralised pattern, not least because the Chief feared the possibility of attack from the Kwena tribe, part of whose land they had moved into (Schapera 1970:85).

Consolidation of settlement meant consolidation of power through a spatially mapped hierarchical set of relationships, and it was essentially the same expediency of spatial power upon which 'indirect rule' was promoted and administered by the British. However, the cultural understanding of Tswana nucleation that 'indirect rule' was based upon could arguably be said to be a reified version of the indigenous experience, certainly in the socio-spatial experience of the landscape, since the fluid relationship between nuclear settlement and location within the landscape became a set of relatively atemporal mapped boundaries as understood by the administration. Furthermore, the notion of the Chief to the colonial mind was a far more autocratic and non-consensus seeking figure than experienced by many Tswana people whose many sayings highlight not only the religious and social power of the Chief, but also the popular root and nature of power. Chiefs were never solely empowered by birthright, but by the consensus of the tribe through influential headmen. In reality, Tswana society was far more egalitarian and consensus-seeking than the colonial government wished to acknowledge, and in Ngamiland the Chief was virtually abandoned by his people when he found himself helpless in persuading the administration to move.

R.M.K. Silitshena (1979) has argued that the historical existence of nucleated settlements amongst the Tswana was an aspect of Chiefly control over the movements of his subject peoples and their material lives. He thereby anticipated much of Gulbrandsen's (1993) argument concerning the centralising practices of the Tswana *dikgosi* (chiefs) and their importance in the creation of nucleated capitals that incorporated a socio-spatial hierarchy centred on the Chief. Schapera, in his volume concerning land tenure in the Bechuanaland Protectorate (1943), summarised the

arguments made for nucleation by Chiefs and colonial commentators alike, arguing that although in general nucleation was integral to the practice of Chiefly control, not all Chiefs favoured it. He cited the example of Chief Khama of the Ngwato, already cited, who 'abandoned the policy of having all my people about me in one large town' (BNA RC5/11 Khama to H.C. 5.9.1901). This was probably an exception based on recent political and ecological circumstances as already discussed however, as the Ngwaketse Chief Bathoen II pointed out:

'It is the desire of the Chief and tribe to have permanent villages where people can make good homes and improve their individual dwellings and the surroundings of the whole village. It is not permissible for any man to let his home fall to pieces while he lives out at his lands or cattle posts. Everybody is allowed and expected to go out to plough, weed and reap his lands, just as he is expected to attend to his cattle, but he should never neglect his home' (Schapera 1943:270-1)

In 1931 the Principal Medical Officer of the colonial Native Advisory Council made several recommendations that overturned previous colonial assumptions concerning the perceived benefits of centralised native settlement. He argued that 'several obstacles to agricultural and pastoral development are directly associated with the [Chiefly] rule that people may not live at their fields or cattle posts, but must have their permanent homes in a town or other recognised settlement' (Schapera 1943:267). He recommended decentralisation as a policy, since greater nutritional intake occurred during periods of settlement at the agricultural locations, and sanitary conditions in towns were poor. Schapera notes that 'on the whole, the two most forceful arguments against the continued existence of towns are that they promote malnutrition, and that they hinder the adoption of more efficient farming methods' (1943:273). However, many Chiefs were vocally opposed to such proposals, arguing that the scattering of populations to farming areas would deny the Tswana any future opportunity for economic and social development, since European infrastructures

necessitated some degree of centralisation of resources, such as education and health. Chiefly notions of modernity and material development became associated with nucleation, bringing together in a single concept of place (that of the nuclear village) both continuity of settlement practices and chiefly authority and material development. After the establishment of the Independence Government in 1966 Chiefly controls over settlement practices were removed in favour of Land Boards, controls which, Silitshena argues, were crucial to the social existence of large villages. He cites the case of Tswana peoples living in South Africa (such as the Rolong) whose nucleated settlements of the 19th century had disappeared due to the dispersal of people to their farmlands after the Chief's powers had diminished following direct colonial administration.

Nucleation or village-based settlement was a socio-spatial model of power through settlement favoured both by Tswana Chiefs and colonial administration, but which ultimately contained important types of resistance by tribal members. The historical record contains numerous instances of chiefly coercion of their own population as central to the exercise of social control and political hierarchy. Both place and power are importantly linked in the Tswana social landscape through chiefly identity. New chiefs would move to new locations, with the heir cutting the first branch in a ceremony known as *sebetlela*, which was a formal recognition of his status and was frequently used as evidence for inheritance. In the Tawana dispute between Sekgoma and Mathiba, the colonial administration used the evidence of *sebetlela* performed by Mathiba in their decision to depose Sekgoma (Schapera 1994 [1938]:196). As will be discussed later, Chiefs could also reassert authority through relocating to places associated with powerful or popular ancestors. The association between villages and Chiefly authority was not merely symbolic, it was built into the very materiality of place. As Schapera states: 'the disposition of the wards and homesteads throughout the whole town is settled by a system of delegated authority, with the Chief as the ultimate source of control' (1994 [1938]:197). Importantly, such delegated power and control was

often lineage based, and new Chiefs needed to reassert political lineage alliances both socially and spatially within their villages. Moving location and rebuilding new wards to reflect these new alliances and political hierarchies were extremely important to the nature of indigenous power, since spatial and social relations were closely interwoven dimensions of authority. The temporality of dwelling relations both within and between wards was of everyday importance due to the importance of collective activity, patrilineal connections and the sets of social relations related to cattle herds. Chiefs were not just the symbolic centre of everyday life, they were practically engaged at the centre of socio-economic life, in which cattle played a central role. Village structures centred around the maintenance of Chiefly control of cattle and social alliances were a powerful force for fluidity of settlement within the landscape, operating on symbolic, religious and economic levels. The colonial augmentation of the arbitrary authority of Chiefs was seen as an opportunity to subjugate rival political factions in the interests of stability and development. Whilst centralised power and nuclear settlement formed a close alliance with colonial Chiefs, the arguably equally important relationship between power and fluidity remained a problem for Chiefs.

Alongside the colonial desire for nucleated, sedentary populations were important internal practices of consolidation, which became more evident from the late nineteenth century onwards as some tribal polities gained strength (such as the Ngwaketse), beginning to incorporate other immigrant groups. An important dimension of territorial consolidation was the use of boundary settlements that were fluid over time in the way they consolidated power at the centre through exerting control at the political periphery. As Gulbrandsen has pointed out (1993:565) the major threat to Tswana states in the late nineteenth century was not raiding or warfare, but territorial protection and consolidation. The continuing need to protect borders led to the establishment of a number of provincial villages to afford just such security along territorial boundaries. Gulbrandsen sees the creation of such settlements along tribal boundaries as a process of reaffirming political control at

the centre, as well as controlling incoming settlers arriving at the periphery. An example of this process is the creation of Mokgomane, a border settlement initiated by Chief Seepapitso of the Ngwaketse in 1913. In the *Political Annals of a Tswana Tribe*, (Schapera's translated version of the *Kgotla* (tribal council) minutes from the Ngwaketse 1910-17) the record relating to November 1913 states: 'The well at Mokgomane is now completed, and those who are going to live there can start cutting wood for their huts after the ploughing is done' (1947a: (13.11.1913)).

What is of immediate interest in this record is that wood was to be cut for building in Kanye before leaving for Mokgomane, 42 miles distant. Building resources must have been known to be limited or poor at the new site so as to necessitate the cutting and transporting of building materials. Seepapitso had recently decided to send people from Kanye to Mokgomane to 'watch over the boundary' (1947a: (28.10.1913)). However, in April 1914 we read that: 'some time ago I named the people who should go to live with Selerio at Mokgomane, but they have not yet gone. I say that since they have nothing to delay them they must go' (1947a: (10.4.1914)). Selerio Kgopo was a headman of the Manare ward at Kanye who had been asked to take charge of the new border village, along with family groups from his and other wards. Whilst these people in theory had nothing, such as ploughing, to stop them moving, it indicates how tensions and potential resistance to settlement control was often evident.

Whilst Reid et al. point out important aspects of architectural continuity in Tswana settlement throughout the colonial period, highlighting how indigenous contexts were important to the complex negotiations of power and cultural interaction over time, they do not address how settlement movement and power issues were also complexly interwoven. In short, their focus upon settlement sites as evidence of responses to colonialism does not sufficiently allow for a temporal view of the Tswana social landscape. Nor do they explore how attitudes toward the materiality of

buildings were important to indigenous notions of modernity, movement and power. As I have already stated, settlement fluidity has been insufficiently understood as an important area in which responses to colonialism were negotiated. In a sense we can characterise the relationship between power and settlement in the Tswana context in both spatial and temporal dimensions, with the spatial manifesting itself as the nuclear or centralised village system, and the temporal manifesting itself in a wider set of locative meanings and activities within the social landscape. Attitudes to materiality were often complex, as is discussed below, and became increasingly central to the debate between Chiefs and colonial administration over control of settlement movement. Only rarely in the archival record do direct exchanges emerge on how authority and the materiality of settlement was negotiated between Chiefs and the colonial administration. One example is a record of a conversation between the Assistant Resident Commissioner (ARC) and Dibolaen (D), the Tawana Acting Chief, in 1935 (BNA S420/10):

D: I have considered the matter of a tribal office and find that I have no place for the keeping of correspondence and the collection of Hut tax as well as other tribal administration papers.

ARC: If the tribe and Chief would build a decent hut and put in a decent floor of, say, Mopane blocks, the Government would assist by providing the doors, windows, chairs and a table. That would be a fair contribution from both sides.

D: It is unfortunate, but at Maun a hut can only stand for one year on account of white ants. It would be necessary to build with bricks.

ARC: Burnt bricks? Can any of your people make bricks?

D: Some Batawana can make bricks.

ARC: Can they make the bricks themselves?

D: Yes, but they will expect to be paid.

ARC: I know, but that will be their contribution to a tribal undertaking which is really their own work and which they should undertake solely. The Government is only promising financial assistance because of the depression prevailing in Ngamiland.

D: What would the tribe be expected to provide?

ARC: A decent sized hut and the tribe would have to provide the grass and all other requirements and erect the building and put in the floor. Have you got a builder?

D: There are some black builders, but others are white men. I do not know however whether they would agree to be just instructed to do the work.

ARC: But it will be for tribal benefit.

D: Individuals would expect payment for what they were ordered to do.

The Chief's desire to build a tribal office in Maun using bricks suggests that a close symbolic association between durable building materials and authority had long been a part of indigenous attitudes to materiality. Indeed, Reid *et al.* suggest that 'the adoption of rectangular houses in the twentieth century is likely to be a component of Tswana ideas and debates regarding tradition and modernity, rather than simple capitulation to colonising ideas' (1997:386). Frescura (1990) also gives a useful overview of the range of colonial interactions and their influence upon indigenous building practices, from missionaries, traders and government officials. Frescura's argument is that rectilinear building practices were a result of 'a long series of transformations in the social and economic life of the rural communities' (1990:11) of southern Africa. Importantly, it is in this period that a bureaucratisation of tribal power becomes evident, in which educated and literate Tswana were increasingly closely involved in tribal administration and hierarchy. The building of tribal offices was an integral part of this process, with Chiefs reasserting 'traditional' authority through the development of a bureaucratic, architectural presence at the centre of tribal life. Both literacy and materiality form a close connection in the way power was reconfigured over time. Dibolaen was uncertain that tribal labour would provide such a prestigious building, and was obviously hopeful that the Government would invest in the interest of effective administration (collection of Hut Tax). Historically the association of durable materials and rectilinear structures with authority and power has given way to more complex sets of perceptions linked to individual notions of modernity and tradition. However, another significant factor that is often ignored and that I return to in chapter eight, is the way durable materials offer people an alternative to renewal in the context of depleted environmental resources or social change, something also suggested by

Frescura who has argued that the adoption of rectilinear building practices in southern Africa was largely a result of changes in roof building due to the depletion of thatching grasses, or access to such resources (1990:11). My own fieldwork also suggested a link between corrugated iron roofing and rectilinear structures, yet Frescura's causal argument misses the point that rectilinear building is also an African tradition, and indeed is fairly common in central Africa and elsewhere, where many Ngamiland cultures originate. Responses to colonialism are interwoven with such extant traditions that exist as sets of cultural resources and are transformed over time into a complex pattern of renegotiated attitudes toward dwelling.

Movement and Sedentism

The movement of nucleated settlements was a relatively common social and cultural experience in Botswana (Bechuanaland) until the twentieth century. The historical record of this process relates mostly to the movement of tribal capitals, the major settlement of any tribe that was formed around the home of the *kgosi* (chief). Schapera suggests that colonial intervention in Tswana politics all but removed warfare as a significant factor affecting settlement relocation from the late nineteenth century onwards (Schapera 1943). He describes the case of the Kwena tribe between 1831 and 1864, who 'in the space of less than forty years... changed the site of its capital no fewer than ten times' (1943:59-60). The reasons for relocation included five instances of removal due to military attack and two instances of removal due to poor environmental conditions. One movement came at the behest of David Livingstone who persuaded the Kwena to move from Tsonwane in 1847, where the water was 'scanty and bad, and it being impossible for us to raise the staff of life in that locality, we felt it to be our duty to propose removal to a more salubrious situation' (Quoted in Schapera 1943:60).

The Ngwato, likewise, moved their capital five times in approximately fifteen years (circa 1810 to 1825), and similar patterns can be observed for the other Tswana groups (Schapera 1943:60). Since warfare as a factor in social and settlement upheaval diminished towards the end of the nineteenth century many large settlements in Botswana today are over a century old. For instance Kanye, (capital of the Ngwaketse) dates from 1855, Mochudi, (capital of the Kgatla), from 1871,and Ramoutsa (capital of the Malete), from 1875 (Schapera 1943:60). Whilst recognising that environmental factors continued to be a significant pressure upon Tswana settlement until the 1940s, Schapera saw changing building practices as a significant sedentising factor, stating that:

'In the old days, migrations like those mentioned ... entailed relatively little effort or cost. The dwellings of the people were simple, and required no materials that could not be obtained at the new site... Nowadays, more substantial huts and houses are being built, with doors, windows, galvanised iron roofs, and other imported fittings... Above all, however, especially in the tribal capitals, there is a European population whose dwellings and official or other business premises represent a considerable cash investment' (Schapera 1943:61).

As John and Jean Comaroff (1992) have noted, the 19th century missionary imperative to materially reproduce elements of Victorian morality and domestic life among the Tswana, as part of the Protestant project of pragmatic Christianity, involved building change as a conspicuous symbol of 'detribalised' identity. The early Missionaries, according to the Comaroff's, 'stressed the value of doors that locked, ensuring the security of possessions, and windows that let in light... penetrating the dark interiors of Africa and encouraging the "domesticating" pursuits of reading and sewing' (1992:281). Both Christianising and building square were inseparable projects in which the domestication of women and the labour of men were seen as essential models in the material and spiritual transformation of African, as well as British, working classes. The shift from tribal to proletarian identity was embedded in the sorts of labour and investment that such Christianised domestic architecture embodied. 'Spiritual' investment in place was directly linked to material

investment thereby in the way durable building materials, such as brick, glass, and tin, required the individual to sell their labour in return for cash, which was ultimately viewed as civilising in its effects.

It is evident that the very material permanence of missions in terms of their architecture as well as their perspective on the relationship between building activity and Christianity had real significance for Tswana society, especially its political elite. In important ways, such perspectives can be understood as transforming Tswana attitudes to materiality and social relations to place. In 1888, Frank Johnson witnessed how the Ngwato capital at Shosong was to be moved to Palapye due to failing water supplies. Of particular interest is his account of how Khama and the Ngwato dealt with the problem of the brick-built church at Shosong. 'The native dwellings, all constructed of 'wattle and daub' (poles, mud and grass roofs) were a simple matter', he stated, 'but not so the church building… constructed in the main of stone. The abandonment of such a building and the construction of another… was causing the Chief much trouble' (Johnson 1972[1940]:73). The eventual answer was for members of the tribe to contribute wealth in the form of cattle, Johnson acting as valuer and buyer of the beasts himself, whilst 'they all came up in their thousands, bringing cattle, cows, sheep, and finally all kinds of grain' (loc. cit.).

As Parsons has noted, the actual transportation of much of the church building from Shosong to Palapye over 80 miles by wagon was an expensive and time-consuming operation (1973:197), with Khama himself contributing 100 oxen to the cost. 'It was in this manner', argues Parsons, 'that patronage of church interests became a touchstone of allegiance to the state, and wealth became more than ever before evident as the criterion of participation in church affairs, and of access to formal education' (loc. cit.). Although church membership hitherto had been a prerogative of the established Ngwato political elite who had surplus wealth, wealth now became the enabling factor

for the non-elite 'commoner' ranks also. The taking down of the church brick by brick, rafter by rafter, including all the windows and doors and other fittings, and transporting them to the new village of the Chief thereby involved a wide range of Ngwato peoples for whom the materiality of the church itself was significant to its meaning. Yet this example also shows how material durability and fluidity were not necessarily contradictory tensions in the way social relations to place were constituted. For the Ngwato the notion of permanence was arguably social rather than material and thereby spatial, and this meant that durable structures such as the church building needed to be fluid in relation to place.

In 1901 Khama informed the colonial administration that the capital was to be moved again. Palapye, he argued, was suffering from inadequate water, unhealthiness, and was too distant from fields, which led to people staying away from the village for long periods (BNA RC6/2 Resident Commissioner's visit to Khama). The new site chosen was Serowe, which was a previously settled area under Khama's ancestor Kgare, and where he had lived as a youth tending cattle. 'So strong is their sentiment', wrote the commissioner, 'that Mr. Willoughby [the missionary] assures me that a refusal to allow the change will seriously weaken Khama's power and will in a measure break up the tribe into small communities' (loc. cit.). Khama had also pointed out that at the old site of Serowe 'a clump of large trees also remains where the old Kgotla [tribal meeting area] was held and it is suggested that the new Kgotla should also be placed there' (loc. cit.). This last piece of information strongly suggests a desire by Khama to strengthen his position as *Kgosi* through a reappropriation of ancestral connections within the landscape. By resettling his capital at the village of Kgare, an ancestor widely revered by many Ngwato people at the time, and re-founding his *kgotla* on the site of his ancestor Kgare's *kgotla*, he was thus able to draw on notions of social permanence in the landscape through ancestral connections to place in order to reaffirm his position as a Chief with ancestral support, which was potentially important at this time due to rival

claims on the chieftainship of the Ngwato. One significant factor in these threats to the Chief's authority was popular dissatisfaction with Palapye - and with many Ngwato beginning to move away from the Chief's village, his influence was under threat. A Chief is a Chief by the people (*Kgosi ke kgosi ka batho*), a popular Tswana saying, reflects a widespread understanding that the influence of the Chief is dependent upon popular support. For Khama, such influence over his people was threatened by remaining in Palapye when most Ngwato were determined to leave. A major problem for Khama as a colonial Chief was how to balance popular and colonial support, fluidity and fixity.

The colonial administration were quick to point out to Khama 'the very heavy cost not only to others but also to himself' (loc. cit.) of another move, pointing out that he had spent £4000 on the church and large amounts on schools also, and that the Government had buildings to the value of £3000, the mission at £6000 and traders at £10,000. 'He acquiesced in it all', wrote the Resident Commissioner, 'but said that unless he moved his people would leave him' (loc. cit.). The High Commissioner in Johannesburg, Lord Milner, asked that the expense of new buildings should come from an increased hut tax on the tribe, at least temporarily (H.C. to Res. Comm. 1901, BNA RC5/11). The Resident Commissioner in Mafeking disagreed, believing that 'the imposition of such a tax would give colour to a rumour... that now we have beaten the Boers we should take away native property also' (loc. cit.). Khama wrote Lord Milner that to move an entire village 'is a very arduous undertaking involving very much work both for my people and myself – and I am no longer a young man. To remove the town means also to desert buildings that have cost us and various white people living with us considerable sums of money' (BNA RC5/11 Khama to H.C. 5.9.1901). But it is clear that many members of the tribe were refusing to settle in Palapye and staying outside at fields and cattle posts, something that Khama argued was 'neither good for the individuals nor for the tribe' (loc. cit.). Khama's attempts to make movement more desirable to the

colonial administration were based upon the potential 'civilising' effects of a new situation, where 'people can labour in their gardens during the day and return home in the evening, [where] homelife is possible and the learning of many things which means progress' (loc. cit.). Khama was able to reassert his influence as both a colonial and Ngwato Chief by persuading the administration that movement would promote stability and progress in the future. As an Ngwato Chief, Khama reasserted control through the re-settlement of a place with important ancestral connections, as well as displaying his influence as a Chief over colonial and mercantile interests in Palapye.

What had happened at Palapye confirmed that large nucleated villages soon exhausted nearby land, and the people then began staying farther away at field locations. Although nucleated settlement was important to the way Chiefs exerted social and political control, more dispersed settlement did not necessarily mean a fragmentation of such control, as is evidenced in the east coast kingdoms of South Africa (Zulu, Swazi etc.) In fact, in 1896 Khama had already begun to decentralise power in this way, a policy which Parsons argues 'can be attributed to ecological and political considerations' (1973:213). Since natural resources around Palapye had been rapidly depleted by that date, and the question of the removal of the town was problematic due to increasing colonial investment in durable buildings, Khama's began to decentralise into satellite settlements, where both political control and access to resources could be satisfied. This process was in fact suggested to Khama by the London Missionary Society in 1895 when it suggested he 'experiment with decentralising... if he could trust his people sufficiently to let his headmen and subordinate Chiefs settle down in various parts of his country' (Parsons 1973:214).

Capital investment in buildings in the Protectorate, especially large population centres such as village capitals, increased dramatically in the immediate aftermath of the Boer war, reflecting not only an increase in trade and capital flow through the country, but also the altered political context

of Botswana (Bechuanaland) after the demise of Rhodes' company interests in the territory following the ill-fated Jameson raid. Both government and commercial activity in the Protectorate were on the increase. At Palapye, the government camp comprised quarters, gaol, a courthouse and offices, and there were at least six white traders, some with several shops (BNA RC5/11 F. Edmeston to Resident Commissioner 12.6.1902). As Khama himself said toward the end of 1901, building and settlement practices could now be unfettered by 'traditional' concerns such as fear of invasion - the political uncertainties of the past were now less relevant since 'there is only one king in South Africa, whether in Matebeleland or Transvaal' (BNA RC5/11 Khama to H.C. 5.9.1901). Although colonial investment in durable buildings at villages in this new regional context, either within the government camp, in mission and church buildings or by private traders, increasingly placed pressure upon Chiefs not to move, it was still acknowledged by the Resident Commissioner that 'the traders and missionaries must follow the tribe and I am strongly of the opinion that... the government must follow also' (BNA RC6/2 Res. Comm. Visit 1901).

At Palapye the Ngwato had invested some £4000 in church and school buildings (BNA RC 6/2) by 1902. However, for the majority of Ngwato, a village such as Palapye whose grazing and ploughing lands had become increasingly distant was 'a merely nominal dwelling place' (Khama quoted in BNA RC 5/11). Khama and the Ngwato elite faced heavy popular pressure to move regardless of capital expenditure, or face a loss of population to have power over. The capital investment in Palapye church had represented an emerging political process in Tswana society - capital investment in buildings was both the process and product of new power structures within society, emergent symbols of a society in transition. Importantly, in the context of debates concerning responses to colonialism, Tswana elites can be seen within this process to be taking advantage of colonial structures as new sets of resources for establishing and retaining power and hierarchy. Not only did Tswana elites see building investment as a process of power consolidation,

they also tried hard to augment settlement processes that would facilitate the emergence of a new economic elite. This was especially the case with arguments concerning settlement nucleation, which was understood by Tswana elites as fundamental to retaining both a strong political and economic centre, benefiting both Chief and his supporters. Transforming economic power retained in cattle into durable buildings represents a transformation of attitudes to materiality in which colonial power structures were indigenously interpreted and reproduced. As already argued however, Tswana investment in buildings was not just a replication of colonial symbols of power, it was a process in which local elites were attempting to translate wealth within a rapidly changing regional context. What makes the case of Palapye so interesting is the recognition by Khama and the elite that centralised power manifested in the nuclear village was ultimately threatened by other, more centrifugal, factors fundamental to everyday economic activity that tended to mitigate against nuclear settlement. The centrifugal expansion of such activities within the landscape had reached breaking point at Palapye, which threatened a collapse at the social and political centre. Khama acknowledges this in his arguments for moving the village 'even though it means to desert buildings that have cost us and various white people living with us considerable sums of money' (BNA RC 5/11), for although both administration and Ngwato elite were consolidated there , the Ngwato he argues, will soon leave him to rule an empty village 'since their objection to the town consists in its distance from their fields' (BNA RC 5/11). This example highlights how sometimes competing forces within the taskscape, such as the centripetal nucleation of socio-political activity and the centrifugal expansion of everyday agro-pastoral activity, are important factors in the way historical change in the landscape can be understood. In particular, it is the complex ways in which responses to colonialism, its structures, opportunities and attitudes, form transitional processes within indigenous societies that is of interest here. Another important aspect is how such attitudes to materiality were an integral part of developing relations between colonial and indigenous

peoples. In Palapye, it was not just materiality, but also the notion of land that was crucial to the way such relations unfolded.

Rejecting the gift: the fate of the LMS in Palapye

In 1897 Willoughby, the LMS missionary in Palapye, fenced off an area of land containing water supplies after a dispute over access from the magistracy, believing that white settlers were trying to expropriate native land. Khama saw this fence as a claim by the LMS to some sort of private property or freehold, and this led to an increasing estrangement between him and Willoughby. When, in 1902, the Tiger Kloof school, near Vryburg in South Africa, had been raided and burnt by Boers, Willoughby tried to secure the church buildings at Palapye for a new college since Khama was about to move his village to Serowe. In return for Khama allowing this, argued Willoughby, the LMS would provide fittings for the new church at Serowe, which would otherwise be stripped from the Palapye church. In May 1902 Khama agreed to lend (*go adisa*) the Palapye buildings to the LMS for the new college, on the understanding that nothing was given in perpetuity, neither buildings, nor land, nor water supplies (Parsons 1973:258). Willoughby rejected this offer, arguing that the offer must be one specifying freehold land alienation.

Later, in 1902, Willoughby urged the LMS to fence the new mission in Serowe, believing that the government would within the next few years legally recognise European land tenure within native reserves (Ibid. p.262). This lack of sensitivity to Tswana attitudes to land tenure eventually led the Ngwato in 1904 to declare their intention of setting up their own school in the Palapye church buildings and thereby becoming independent of the LMS, in the same way (as they saw it), that the LMS through Willoughby had attempted independence from the tribe in seeking freehold land tenure. As the new LMS missionary Jennings later wrote, the grievance was that Willoughby had tried to *buy* the 'beautiful piece of land including a large tract of garden soil, with the church

(valued at £4000), a large school building and other buildings' (quoted in Parsons 1973:264), which the Ngwato were offering as a *gift*, since Khama was known never to sell land in his territory.

Willoughby obviously believed that on the departure of the Ngwato to Serowe, the 'permanent' buildings would lose their social role and identity, and would become commodities rather than the focus for Christian activity. For the Ngwato, the commoditisation of buildings and land in this way went against the understanding that tribal land was not alienable but leased on behalf of the tribe through the Chief. Most land occupied by the administration and missions was considered a 'perpetual loan' (Schapera 1943:42), but the concept of selling land that then became private property, was almost entirely absent (Ibid. p.47). However, for the Ngwato, the durability of the LMS buildings meant that Palapye continued to remain a significant settlement even after the Ngwato abandoned it, establishing a new set of relatively fixed relations between places in the social landscape through material durability. Whereas Willoughby saw the move to Serowe as the 'abandonment' of Palapye, for the Ngwato the move was creative of both a new capital and a newly transformed old one, with a durable material presence that continued to retain social significance within the landscape. In this way investment in buildings was transformed by movement into temporal investment in place - places retaining indexes of agency, social and material relations as well as meaning, through their very durability and non-portability.

Willoughby's attempt to commoditise the LMS buildings in Palapye was felt as 'painful' (Parsons 1973:208) by Khama, since land tenure was intimately bound up with the construction and maintenance of social ties between an individual, Chief, and the tribe as a whole. For the Tswana, buildings as material culture were not separable from social relations to the whole group, and any attempt to alienate land or buildings was considered an affront to such relations. The use of land

for trade or residence was gifted by the Chief on behalf of the group as a whole - a social rather than legal relationship – and one in which the authority of the Chief was a crucial factor. It was Mauss in *The Gift* that argued that gifting was an important facet of social relations, and that both social and material identities are constituted by their position within relational networks at any given time. The land and buildings in Palapye were deeply embedded in such a network, with the colonial Chief as the source of social relations through the gifting of land and use-rights. As Gosden and Marshall have noted, 'gifts in kin-based societies may seem, to a Western eye, to be economic transactions, but are in fact concerned with the production and maintenance of social links'(1999:173). Willoughby's rejection of Khama's gift was understood by the Ngwato as a disruption of the set of social ties between the LMS and the Ngwato established through the gifting of land-use and presence in the village, and the attempt to alienate the objects through purchase was seen as an attempt to stand outside of such established social relations, to break a bond of exchange. Presence in the village was indigenously considered as acceptance within society, and the attempt to gain spatial and material autonomy through freehold tenure was thereby seen as a breaking of a social bond and a challenge to the authority of the Chief. Since gifts can be seen as involved in the production of sociability, any breakdown in social relations can also be reflected in the material relations between people. In 1903 for instance, Khama 'promised to pay for the new mission house [at Serowe], handing over £400' (Parsons 1973:263). However, on discovering that Willoughby was to leave the Ngwato to become the principal of Tiger Kloof College in South Africa the free tribal labour promised for producing 70,000 bricks, including many local men and boys, was not forthcoming.

In summary, indigenous notions of land tenure in Botswana were bound up with the establishment and maintenance of social relations through the gifting of use-rights and abode within the group's territory. This relationship between things and people created a complex network of social

linkages between individual and group through the Chief. Outsiders were drawn into such complex relations with the group through the Chief who gave permission to settle, trade and build in the group's territory. Willoughby's demand that Khama's *gift* should instead be *bought* from him, and thereby alienated from the continuation of social ties between them, led to thirteen years of strained relations between the Ngwato and the LMS.

The case of Ngamiland

The colonial record of settlement in Ngamiland relates predominantly to the Tawana as the ruling group through which administration of the region was exercised. However, some written records as well as oral history enable us to reconstruct some settlement trends for other groups, such as Yei and Mbanderu. As will be discussed, settlement patterns amongst all groups in Ngamiland, whilst differing culturally, have all been affected by political, social, economic and environmental factors. These factors led to a highly fluid population in the Okavango region with complex migration and settlement histories, something that the colonial administration constantly struggled to contain, hoping to follow a similar pattern to the administration of the other Tswana reserves, where nucleated settlement and strong Chieftaincy facilitated the policy of 'indirect rule'.

Since most non-Tswana groups in Ngamiland never settled in nucleated villages or had such a centralised polity as that of the Tawana, their mobility of dwelling cannot be understood in the context of village movement in the same way. The Tawana had always been highly mobile in their settlement practice in Ngamiland, mostly in response to political schism and the particularities of environmental conditions. For instance in 1883, after being forced to abandon Toteng after an Ndebele raid, they moved north-west to Nokaneng, where floods forced them to abandon that place for Kamokako in 1888. Floods were also the factor forcing them from Kamokako three years later, whilst the opposite - drying up - meant that they finally left their next site, Nakalatswe, for Tsau in

1897. Although Schapera writes that this place was also soon unsuitable, it was not until 1916 that the Tawana finally moved to their present capital Maun, which they attempted to abandon consistently from the 1920s (Schapera 1943:61).

In 1906, the colonial administration eventually settled the disputed Tawana Chieftaincy in favour of Mathiba and installed him as *Kgosi* at Tsau. Mathiba announced that the Tawana would now need to move to a new village at his installation. The Resident Commissioner, Ralph Williams wrote that: 'it was inevitable that the new Chief would not live in any town where the first tree was cut by Sekgoma who had supplanted him, and it was a request which it would have been impolitic to refuse' (BNA S 35/6 Rep. from Resident Commissioner 22.7.1906). Williams was here referring to the Tswana tradition that the first tree cut in a new village should be cut by the heir to the Chieftainship. Both Sekgoma and Mathiba had previously claimed to have done this when the tribe moved to Nakalatswe in 1891, in order to legitimate their claim to the Chieftainship (*Bogosi*) (Schapera 1943:67). Place, activity and Chiefly identity were bound together as part of experience - movement was an integral part of how Chiefs mapped out new allegiances and relations within the group through building activities and socio-spatial relations within the village.

However, it wasn't until 1913 that Mathiba told the Resident Magistrate Capt. Stigand that once a new settlement had been established it 'would remain there for at least 12 to 15 years or more like Molepolole or Serowe' (BNA S35/6 Stigand to Resident Commissioner, Mafeking 4.1.13), which gives an indication of how the temporality of settlement was considered during this period. After choosing a new site with others at Maun however, many Tawana then began to argue against a move, fearing a worse ploughing situation, and since a brief epidemic of pneumonia seemed to have passed at Tsau, many having deserted it from fear of witchcraft by the banished Sekgoma and his followers (BNA S35/6 Resident Magistrate to Resident Commissioner, Mafeking 29.1.1913).

Stigand complained that the vacillations of the tribe were 'childish' and 'quite unknown among other Bechuana tribes I have been amongst' (Ibid. letter dated 30.4.1913). He intended to leave the Government buildings where they were at Tsau 'because after 6 or 12 months the people might change their minds again' (loc. cit.). Mathiba eventually moved to Maun in 1915 after harvest to join others who were already there.

In 1926 the Resident Magistrate, G.E. Nettleton wrote that Mathiba had informed him that he and the tribe had decided to leave Maun for Toteng, some 50 miles west of Maun. 'When I saw Toteng in '24' he wrote, 'it was the most desolate spot. There was no water except in dirty pits in the bed of the Kunyeri river... I took the opportunity of telling him that it was greatly to be hoped that they would settle down somewhere and put an end to all this wandering about from place to place, which caused everyone unnecessary expense' (BNA S483/6 Nettleton to Gov. Sec. Mafeking 21.4.1926). Nettleton continued that 'the Chief and the people thoroughly understand that no move will be made unless they pay for the new camp' (loc. cit.), although he did not believe that this would ever be undertaken. Nettleton also did not believe that there existed any unanimity on the issue, since 'there are people who have made themselves comfortable and they object to having to go to Toteng and spend money on new huts to comply with a mere whim of the Chief and a few of his followers' (loc. cit.). The migration proposal of 1926 came to nothing, possibly in main due to the demand that the tribe should raise the funds for a new Government camp (Schapera 1943:62).

It would be another 11 years until the new Chief Moremi III revived the request to abandon Maun. In a letter to the Resident Commissioner in Mafeking (Mafikeng), arguing that 'the Tawana did not at any time desire to build at Maun.. the proof of this lies in the fact that the tribe as a whole never built at Maun... from time to time the Magistrate approached the late Chief Mathiba impressing upon him the necessity of making his people build at Maun' (BNA S483/6 4.5.1937). Moremi

continued to put the blame squarely on the administration by saying that 'during the last ten years, the Magistrates have been made aware of the tribe's discontent, with its wish to leave Maun and build elsewhere, yet during this time the Government, and with this knowledge, have spent large sums of money in new buildings in the Maun police camp' (loc. cit.). He might also have added, had he known of it, that Mathiba had promised Stigand in 1913 that, once established, his new village would remain for at least 12 or 15 years only before possibly being abandoned in favour of a new site.

The District Commissioner, J.W.Potts, had argued two months previously that 'administration would not move on account of its heavy expenditure on buildings, nor would it follow the tribe about the country.. a hospital has recently been established at Maun and could not be expected to move. The LMS had also erected buildings there [and] trunk motor roads had been built converging on Maun and the river had recently been bridged' (BNA S483/6 20.3.37 Potts to Ass. Res. Comm, Mafeking). A month later he again wrote that 'no progress would ever be made if the tribe was for ever to be on the march. Moremi informed me that neither people nor cattle throve at Maun... [but] the tsetse fly position is no worse than it was' (BNA S483/6 12.4.37). The Resident Commissioner replied that Potts should 'gain the assistance of the Chief and the tribe in the measures to be taken to deal with the tsetse-fly problem, and disabuse the Chief of any idea that the measures are designed to prevent the evacuation of Maun' (BNA S483/6 C.N.A. Clarke Assistant Resident Commissioner To District Commissioner, Maun). That this was the design however is almost certain, since, as Barry Morton (1996) has argued, the project of "villagisation" which was to tighten colonial administration over the dispersed populace was seen as a corollary of tsetse control policies.

After 1917, when tsetse fly came relatively close to Maun, there was a period of respite, as evidenced by Stigand's 1922 'flybelt' map. However, during the 1930s it made inroads into centres of population, and reclaimed the entire delta by 1940 (Morton, B. 1996:158). During the 1940s a policy of selective tsetse control was adopted, in which certain tsetse-free areas were defended, with the hoped-for corollary that the dispersed Okavango population would be coerced into relatively nucleated settlements, where colonial administration could be more effective. By the end of the 1940s a large number of people had relocated close to such centres, such as Maun, Shorobe and Toteng, where bush 'walls' had been established with hunters attempting to drive game back north into the central delta. Since the expenditure on tsetse control was much greater than taxes collected in the region, this policy of selective tsetse control was considered an important tool to facilitate improvements in tax collection, alongside augmenting the Chief's direct control over settlement issues, since headmen now became salaried 'Chief's representatives' in outlying villages.

In 1937 the administration however found Moremi considering a move to the Kwebe Hills region, and was 'engaged in gathering round him all the Tawana who have scattered... the more important families of the Damara [Herero], Makuba [Yei] and other tribes, with the idea of having a proper central village' (BNA S483/6 29.6.1937 D.C. to Gov. Sec., Mafeking). With the opinion of the colonial administration firmly against a move from Maun, a meeting between the Resident Commissioner and Chief Moremi was eventually called to argue the case. The Commissioner argued that 'roads come to here and this costs money. There is an aerodrome here. More and more people are coming here because the place is attractive, and if the air service is established there will be many more tourists and they bring money. The tourists will not go to Kwebe' (BNA S483/6 27.7.1937 Notes from meeting at Court House, Maun). Not only was Moremi being encouraged to

consider the sedentising role of cash investment in places, but also for the first time the commoditisation of 'place' through tourism.

For Moremi however, the socio-politics of the landscape in Ngamiland were entirely different. Whilst the colonial administration avidly pursued their own agenda which increasingly verged on direct rule as white investment developed in the region, Moremi was faced with Tawana consistently resisted settling in Maun, as also did the hierarchies of other ethnic groups, since belief was widespread that cattle stock could not survive near the village. Such was the link between place, space and political authority that Moremi was desperate to reassert Chiefly control by centralising power in a place where the dispersed population would be willing to build. With people living some distance from Maun with their cattle, the *kgotla* as a meeting place for discussing and agreeing upon social matters was constantly under threat. People complained that they needed to remain with their cattle rather than spend time travelling to the kgotla, with the inevitable result that the social role and importance of the *kgotla* and thereby the social and political role of the Chief was directly affected. However much the colonial administration wanted strong Chiefs as a means to efficient indirect rule, they were not willing to facilitate such strength through mobility in the landscape.

A popular Tswana saying runs 'kgosi ke kgosi ka batho' – 'a Chief is a Chief through the people', a fact that Tawana Chiefs were only too aware of. Moremi repeats his argument that capital investment had taken place in Maun in spite of Tawana protests, and that extant buildings and infrastructure along with the administration should remain in Maun, whilst the Tawana lived elsewhere. The Commissioner remained adamant that 'if the people move, the government must move' (loc. cit.), but that only a move within 15 miles of Maun would be considered. Moremi then adds dryly that he intends to move 60 miles away from the administration and that 'Your Honour

lives in Mafeking and the High Commissioner also far away but you have the same control' (loc. cit.). At a further meeting the next day Moremi argued that 'the government is only thinking of its own expenses and does not realise the great expense incurred by the tribe living in Maun – losses of stock – and feel that they will get scattered if they are forced to live in Maun' (Ibid. 28.7.1937). When asked what the water situation would be at Kwebe, Manaphuti (a headman) replied that there was 'no water but [it is] a good place for wells' (loc. cit.), to which Moremi added that if insufficient water was found 'that would be an unexpected punishment from God' (loc. cit.). The Commissioner responded that 'this can be expected judging by our own efforts to find water all over the protectorate' (loc. cit.).

The next year seems to have produced a plan to move the village a short distance to the 'east bank of the Thamalakane immediately below Maun bridge' (BNA S483/6 9.9.1938 notes of discussion between His Honour and Chief Moremi). The Resident Commissioner 'advised' Moremi to lay out the village with regard to sanitation and roads, which 'need not interfere with the customary position and layout of the minor kgotlas' (loc. cit.). Interestingly, advice on allocation and lease of trading plots was rejected by the Chief since 'traders would tend to regard these plots as their own' (loc. cit.). Also discussed was the question of forcing the non-Tawana groups to settle in Maun. The Commissioner stated that should the Herero leader, Hijaviposa, refuse to build in Maun, then 'imprisonment would not appear unreasonable in view of the previous conviction' (loc. cit.). In 1937 Moremi had convicted the Mbanderu headmen of insubordination for not settling in Maun. The Mbanderu leaders argued that their pastoral life, where they lived with their cattle instead of keeping them at cattle posts, meant that Maun was not suitable for them due to tsetse fly. Even the colonial administration admitted that 'misunderstandings were caused by the insistence of the Tawana that the two groups assimilate their customs and social organisations' (Kandapaera 1992:49). With the Mbanderu not having a comparable centralised political hierarchy in

Botswana, through which an alien, nucleated village pattern could be imposed, attempts at forced migration were a failure.

In 1945 relations between the Tawana Chief and the administration were strained once more with the decision to suspend Moremi as Chief for the period of a year. When he returned he revived the issue of moving the village with a new District Commissioner, Major Germond, who was more receptive to their case than his predecessor. He witnessed a gathering (*letsholo*) where a division was taken, 70% appearing to favour a move. Germond wrote to the Government Secretary in Mafeking that 'the existing Maun village is a mere empty shell and the Chief finds himself deserted by his people and tribal administration has become well nigh impossible' (BNA S483/6 8.10.1946 J.D.A. Germond to Gov. Sec). Germond believed that it was impossible to force people to settle in Maun due to tsetse fly, that both ploughing and diet were suffering, and that the risk of sleeping sickness was considerable. He then repeats Moremi's argument that the administration had promised tsetse control, but no improvement had occurred, which 'impoverished and weakened the tribe' (loc. cit.). Germond's proposal was new: to allow the tribe to leave for three years whilst attempts were made to control tsetse fly by the administration. He argued that 'people would not require to be told to return but would be attracted back by the very nature of the reclaimed areas' (loc. cit.). The reply from Nettleton was curt – 'the High Commissioner is not likely to reverse Government's policy regarding the moving of the village from Maun. Moremi might be wise though if he selected a site not so distant as the one he has in mind' (BNA S483/6 21.10.1946).

Soon afterwards, Moremi III died in a car crash returning home from South Africa, having failed in his several attempts to exert influence and authority on the matter of movement in the face of colonial opposition. The administration's view was clear:

'as a result of 40 years of misrule by corrupt Chiefs and regents the Tawana tribe finds itself in a sorry state. The people have lost faith in their rulers and are disinterested and suspicious. Tribal administration by Chief's representatives in District centres is but a farce and response to Government instructions and measures is slow and half hearted' (BNA S263/11 Annual Report of District Commissioner for Ngamiland, 1946).

Another administrator, Ashton, also stated that 'during these long years of inefficiency and misrule, practically all development work came to a standstill and tribal life generally sank to a low ebb' (Ashton 1937: pp.69-70). Since 'indirect rule' had been facilitated successfully by empowering the Chiefs towards a policy of centralisation in other parts of the Protectorate, the administration's failure in this regard in Ngamiland was squarely blamed on the Tawana hierarchy who could not exert the influence desired by the government, that of controlling the settlement patterns of Ngamilanders. It was the return of tsetse fly by 1940 that profoundly affected settlement patterns across Ngamiland, with virtually the entire population moving to live in the various 'protected' areas, if not in villages, by the end of the decade (Morton, B. 1996:166). The floodplains between Shorobe and Maun for instance began to fill with Yei searching for farming and pasture land from tsetse-ridden areas to the north, as is evidenced by life histories that I recorded there. Although they were more resistant to settlement nucleation than other groups, they were eventually allocated a ward in Maun in 1949 after which multi-locational and village-centred life became a normative pattern. Many cattle-keeping groups migrated further south to Boteti, such as the Mbanderu who left Chobe under Nicodemus due to tsetse fly after 1923. By 1964, half the population were "villagised", with most others located in rural areas close by (Morton, B. 1996:173). The administration at least in part achieved the desired project of settlement nucleation in Ngamiland through environmental policies such as tsetse control. It could be argued that by the 1940s the issue of Chiefly authority and settlement had become a vexed one, and that the administration adopted a direct environmental approach at least partly because of the increasingly evident conflict of interest between the fluidity of the indigenous cattle-keeping population and the fixity of

material investment in place by colonial interests. Such temporal fixity of place had critically undermined the dwelling relationship between cattle-keeping and farming activities and settlement. Although many centres of population did grow in the 1940s, tsetse was never successfully cleared from the Maun region and cattle-keepers remained unwilling to move there despite colonial pressure. Moremi did in fact make attempts to force people to settle there and 'achieved some success in this policy because the population of Maun was estimated at over 1,000 in 1943' (Schapera 1943:106-7).

A Question of Weakness?

The opinion that Maun failed as a nuclear village due to the weakness of the Tawana Chiefs is still current in the most recent literature dealing with settlement in Botswana. Silitshena for instance argued that 'where and when the Chief was weak or ineffective, people tended to disperse to settle near their fields or at their cattle posts' (Silitshena 1979:64), and used the example of the Tawana to contrast with the heavy-handed political actions taken by other Tswana leaders to centralise their population. In 1944 for instance, Tshekedi Khama forced the dispersed Kalanga groups around Bakanshakashokwe and Mafungo to settle in Sebina where their children should attend schools. This upheaval in Kalanga political autonomy and way of life, never having lived in large villages previously, changed however in 1948 after Tshekedi's departure as Chief, when the majority scattered once more to new farm lands (Dube 1984:pp.7-18).

This sort of analysis however can arguably be seen as a remnant of a colonial attitude that Tawana Chiefs were weak in their control over the dispersed and disparate Ngamiland population. As has been evident the blocking of settlement mobility by the administration contributed to a weakening of the authority of the *kgosi* in Ngamiland. Moremi, unable to force people to settle in Maun against their wishes, was perceived as lacking power, in the autocratic sense widely understood by

colonial officials as central to chiefly authority. However, arguably one of the strengths of Tswana chieftainship was that the power of the chief depended in large part upon community consensus - that the chief was perceived as empowered to do things on behalf of the group as a whole. This was nowhere more evident than in Ngamiland, where chiefs were empowered by the tribe to search out new areas for settlement and to ritually cut the first branch there. As the headmen stated to the Resident Magistrate in Tsau in 1913 'we empowered the Chief to go and prospect for a new site for the new town... and the Chief picked in accordance with our wishes' (BNA S35/6 29.5.1913). An important function of the Chief was as a "pioneer" who surveyed for a new settlement area if the majority wished to move. Both Mathiba and Moremi attempted to carry out this function, Mathiba proposing a move to Toteng, and Moremi the Kwebe Hills.

With the return of tsetse fly in the 1930s, a majority of cattle-keepers fled with their cattle to the Boteti and Lake Ngami regions. As Nettleton wrote in 1917 'the natives refuse to believe that the 'fly' can be checked or driven back: they put their faith in flight' (BNA S203/11 quoted in Morton, B. 1996:159). With material investment increasing in Maun as a regional centre for trade, tourism and mission activity, the Chief was forced to remain in Maun with the colonial administration. Moremi complained of this situation saying that 'he could not live in Maun alone as people would leave him without advisors' (BNA S285/3/1 minutes of meeting – Germond/Moremi/Tribe 20.9.1946). As was understood in 1902 in Palapye, a refusal to allow a Chief to decide settlement movement 'will seriously weaken [his] power and will break up the tribe' (BNA RC6/2 Resident Commissioner). Khama indeed stated then that 'unless he moved his people would leave him' (loc. cit.), and indeed many were not living in Palapye at all but scattered at their fields and cattle posts. The colonial idea that African chiefs had autocratic powers over the dwelling activities of their people was not backed up by colonial experience in the protectorate, as evidenced by Khama's situation at Palapye. In that instance a move was allowed, at no cost to the tribe. Had he

petitioned the government to move some years later after further colonial building had taken place however, Khama may well have been denied or told to pay for the move, or even had to face an increased tax as favoured by the High Commissioner in 1902.

Moremi was likewise unable to exert pressure on the other ethnic groups who constituted a majority in Ngamiland, since both Mbanderu and Yei lived scattered across the Okavango region with no centralised political hierarchy through which to exert control. The Yei had been considered *batlhanka* (slaves) of the ruling Tawana for many years, with significant numbers living with Tawana in servitude. Oral history collected in Maun shows that this system was still evident until at least the 1930s or 1940s, after which in 1948 a major protest by Yei resulted in a ward of their own and signalled the end to the *batlhanka* system of servitude.

The approach taken by Silitshena is that settlement in the colonial protectorate was even more strongly controlled by chiefs than in pre-colonial times, since 'indirect rule' empowered chiefs 'to be less accountable to their people as was the case before' (Silitshena 1979:18), and that this was evidenced in the weakness of the Tawana chiefs who allowed people to disperse to their cattle posts and fields (Ibid. p.17). Indeed, Schapera argued that 'chiefs could get away with anything as long as it could be justified in the interest of administration' (Schapera 1943:109). This sort of analysis does not sit easily with the archival evidence of colonial and Tawana conflict over settlement issues in Ngamiland however, since one of its major weaknesses is the confusion between nucleated settlement and sedentary settlement. The role of the colonial administration in sedentising settlement from the 1920s onwards had a major impact upon the socio-politics of Ngamiland, since nucleation thereafter became a factor of fixity and sedentism in the landscape, rather than an integral aspect of dwelling fluidity as it had earlier. The conflation of the concepts of settlement nucleation and sedentism was arguably a product of the colonial imagination that saw

dispersed settlement as a result of weak indigenous authority rather than a result of colonial practices of fixity, which inevitably undermined the authority and social role of the Tawana Chief, an important aspect of whose role was to establish areas of good grazing and agriculture for his people. Indigenous settlement fluidity responded to factors such as the exhaustion of ploughing or grazing land - both of which were crucial to the consensus of settlement - or disease, which was often blamed on the 'unhealthiness' of a site (such as at Tsau). The most important factor in fluidity in the first half of the 20th century however was tsetse fly. That settlement fluidity and dispersal rather than some other indigenous response to cattle disease was favoured historically in Ngamiland has recently been confirmed in other research in the Okavango region (Bolaane, pers comm.). When the administration could not persuade the Tawana Chiefs to nucleate their population even though fluidity of settlement was known to be an important indigenous response to tsetse fly, they removed the Chief from office, as happened to Moremi III in 1945. Sedentism – the gradual material investment by colonial trading companies, missions and government in buildings and infrastructure – was a decisive factor in the weakening of Tawana chieftaincy.

Conclusion

The imperatives of the livestock economy in Ngamiland certainly meant that tensions always existed between fixity and fluidity of settlement, although to a certain extent these tensions were contained by the cattle post system, including dispersed grazing areas surrounding a nuclear village. In particular it was the regional scale of the tsetse fly problem in Ngamiland from the 1920s that forced people to move with their cattle further than was containable by the cattle post system. The tradition of human mobility in the face of cattle disease in Ngamiland was increasingly countered by colonial veterinary practices, which sought to further sedentise the dispersed population through establishing relatively fixed sites for cattle treatment, dipping, etc. Practices relating to the livestock economy are undoubtedly an important dimension of any

discussion of fixity and fluidity within the historical landscape, and more research needs to be done to understand how indigenous and colonial practices relating to cattle were involved in such tensions over time. However, as I have argued here, it was eventually the temporal and spatial fixity inherent in the material durability of colonial building practices that led to conflict between Tawana Chiefs and the administration, since other related practices such as disease control were relatively fluid. In particular, my argument is that the evidence discussed here suggests a colonial confusion of the temporal and spatial dynamics of Tswana settlement, a perception that indigenous practices of settlement nucleation were related to sedentism and fixity, rather than fluidity. Whereas environmental determinants were often key factors in the tension between fixity and fluidity for the Tawana in Ngamiland, my argument in this chapter has suggested that social factors were also important to the temporal fluidity of Tawana villages over time. Fluidity of settlement was not only an aspect of ecological response over time, as with the response to the return of tsetse fly from the 1920s, but also an important social and political activity over time, in the way places, lineages and group identities within the social landscape were understood. The argument that where Chiefs were weak settlement was more dispersed, since nucleation was a product of centralised political authority rather than dwelling, misses many of the complexities of the role of colonial Chiefs within the landscape, and that fluidity of dwelling was in fact an important dimension of how Chiefs established identity, authority and popular support. When a new village was founded, new socio-spatial relations were established through building, in which lineage and kin relations were mapped out on the ground. Partly this process was played out against the backdrop of a social landscape in which places were importantly identified with ancestors, as with Khama's move back to the ancestral site of his ancestor Kgare's village site. With the increase in colonial investment in place, such as at Maun, the Ngamiland Chiefs were increasingly restricted in their role as mobile leaders within such a landscape of identity and meaning, unable to exert

influence over an increasingly sedentary set of interests embodied by the material durability of investment.

It is also important to note that, whilst mobility was an important aspect of Tswana chiefly authority in Ngamiland, in which both attitudes to materiality and place were bound-up with cattle and agricultural practices, more fixed notions of place were increasingly important to both Tswana and other groups in Ngamiland. Fixed centres of trade and administration were quickly taken advantage of, and although Maun was avoided residentially due to fears of cattle disease, the frequent movement of people along established routes between settlements led to relatively fixed trackways in the landscape that in turn influenced settlement growth. People undoubtedly took advantage of the beneficial aspects of colonialism in Ngamiland, whilst disregarding the less useful aspects. What I have tried to outline in this chapter are some of the tensions inherent in such responses to colonialism, where the ability to take advantage of certain colonial structures was sometimes complexly interwoven with restrictions and conflict placed upon people's activities. Whilst recent writing on indigenous responses to colonialism has usefully highlighted the agency of differing groups within this historical process, this chapter has sought to suggest how such agency was also often frustrated and undermined, even within the relatively 'indirect' forms of colonialism pursued in Botswana.

These themes of fixity and fluidity are developed in the next chapter, which also takes the relatively regional scale of Shorobe *molapo* belt in the eastern Okavango as its focus. Here the temporal dynamics of movement, materiality and social activity are examined to analyse the relationship between taskscape and *landscape* among a Yei population. The argument is developed from this chapter that the dwelling relationship between building practices and social activity in the landscape is a complex and mutually influential one. One argument that is developed from this

chapter is that both temporal and spatial (material) tensions of fixity and fluidity within the social landscape can also be examined in the context of the particular dynamics of social activities. The notions of centrifugality and centripetality are introduced as influential dynamics within the landscape that emerge from people's engagement with social activities.

Chapter Four

The Dynamics of a Temporal Landscape: the Shorobe Molapo Region

Introduction

In this chapter, the notion of migration will be extended somewhat to include what I have termed 'shifting' migration. Migration is normally used to describe the movement of a person or people from one area to another, for instance from a rural area to an urban area. This sense of migration has an inherently regional dimension to it, encapsulating the notion that migration is an act of crossing a threshold between differing places – an act both of leaving behind and entering into a new locale. Whilst the literature on this sort of migration is large, little as yet is understood about the dynamics of small scale movements within a given landscape. Such movements I will here characterise as 'shifts', small scale movements within a place.

This chapter will be examining the notion of place from the perspective of movement, memory, and dwelling activities, and will be concerned with the temporality of a particular region, the layering of social activity in a social landscape over time. Place is considered in this thesis as a dynamic process of dwelling in the world, in which both social and material dimensions of life are mutually involved. Since the concepts of 'building' and 'dwelling' linguistically suggest both verb and noun, process and material object, this suggests how important *process* is to any study of place. Whereas Casey (1993; 1998) examines the role of the body in the experience of place, this thesis focuses on building and place as processes of, rather than purely products of, dwelling in the landscape. Casey (1998) has argued for an understanding of place as a universal phenomenon anterior to *space*, both 'pervasive in its particularity' and 'at once concrete, relational, lateral and regional' (1998:31, 32). But it is his suggestion that Place can be understood as 'event', that 'places

not only *are*, they *happen*' (1998:27) that suggest how analysis may move beyond place as a product of the temporality of the landscape, toward being considered one of its forces or processes.

The arguments concerning movement, place and memory presented in this chapter are important related aspects of the Yei social landscape of Shorobe *Molapo* region. Both fixity and fluidity are mutually interrelated dimensions within the Shorobe region, operating on differing scales of place such as river channel, grazing island, settlement cluster or homestead (Plate 1). For the Yei population, frequent movements of dwelling site not only produce new socio-spatial relationships and material changes within the landscape, but also 'create' abandoned dwelling sites (*matlotla*) that are important *sites* of memory, or indeed burial. Casey usefully distinguishes between *site* 'which lends itself to predefined predications, uses and interpretations' (1998:26), and *place*, which is less assimilable within categories, being mostly experienced in the way phenomena are *emplaced*.

Local narratives involving such *matlotla* presented in this chapter are significant in the way they link together different locales of dwelling activity over time into a network of social and spatial relationships in the landscape, with memory and accumulated social meaning operating to link together varieties of place. As Bender notes, Australian Aboriginal landscapes are characterised by such grids or networks of meaningful locales, at once both topographical and mythological, through which individual and clan alike engage with both everyday coping in the environment and ancestral inheritance. Bender sees the production and reproduction of such social landscapes as serving to 'superimpose creation myths upon the land, thereby turning a temporal sequence into a spatial grid' (1993:2). However, 'land' as the natural substrate of human activity should not necessarily be seen solely as an inert stage or setting, but integral to the formation of social landscapes in a complex way. Whilst the memory of movement within landscapes can be seen as

the spatial mapping of temporal sequences, it should also be seen as the temporal mapping of spatial sequences – since memory, identity and landscape are mutually related and influential dimensions of social experience.

There are important distinctions to be made here between *dwelling* and *telling*, discursive and non-discursive forms of being, and how such dimensions of landscape are interrelated. Narratives about movement in the landscape are integral to the creation and maintenance of social identity, and are particularly evident in the Okavango Delta where populations are scattered and highly mobile. Placial narratives are integral aspects of kinship and other social linkages between locales and are important in establishing relatively stable structures of meaning over time. Culturally circumscribed discourses about landscape and kin relations are interwoven on a day-to-day basis with non-discursive dwelling activities, and both constitute dimensions that are separable but not separate within the intrinsic temporality of landscapes.

The Shorobe Molapo Region

The Shorobe Molapo region is located in the south eastern periphery of the Okavango Delta system (Figure 4.1) and is characterised by a complex of wide, undulating *melapo* (sn. *molapo*) or seasonal floodplains where flood recession agriculture is practised, with 'islands' of riverine woodland on higher ground (Figure 4.2). Topographically it is situated between the Kunyere and Thamalakane fault lines that are in turn part of the larger African rift system of faults (See Figure 2.2). The general gradient over the delta is extremely low, and the slope between these two faults is reckoned to be about 30cm per kilometre (Roostee 1986:1.1) which means that seasonal water movement throughout the delta system is slow. The Shorobe Molapo region is intersected by three main river channels, the Boro, Santantadibe and Gomoti, but the Boro is today the main channel, although still seasonal. The nature and extent of the seasonal floods in the *melapo* around Shorobe is dependent

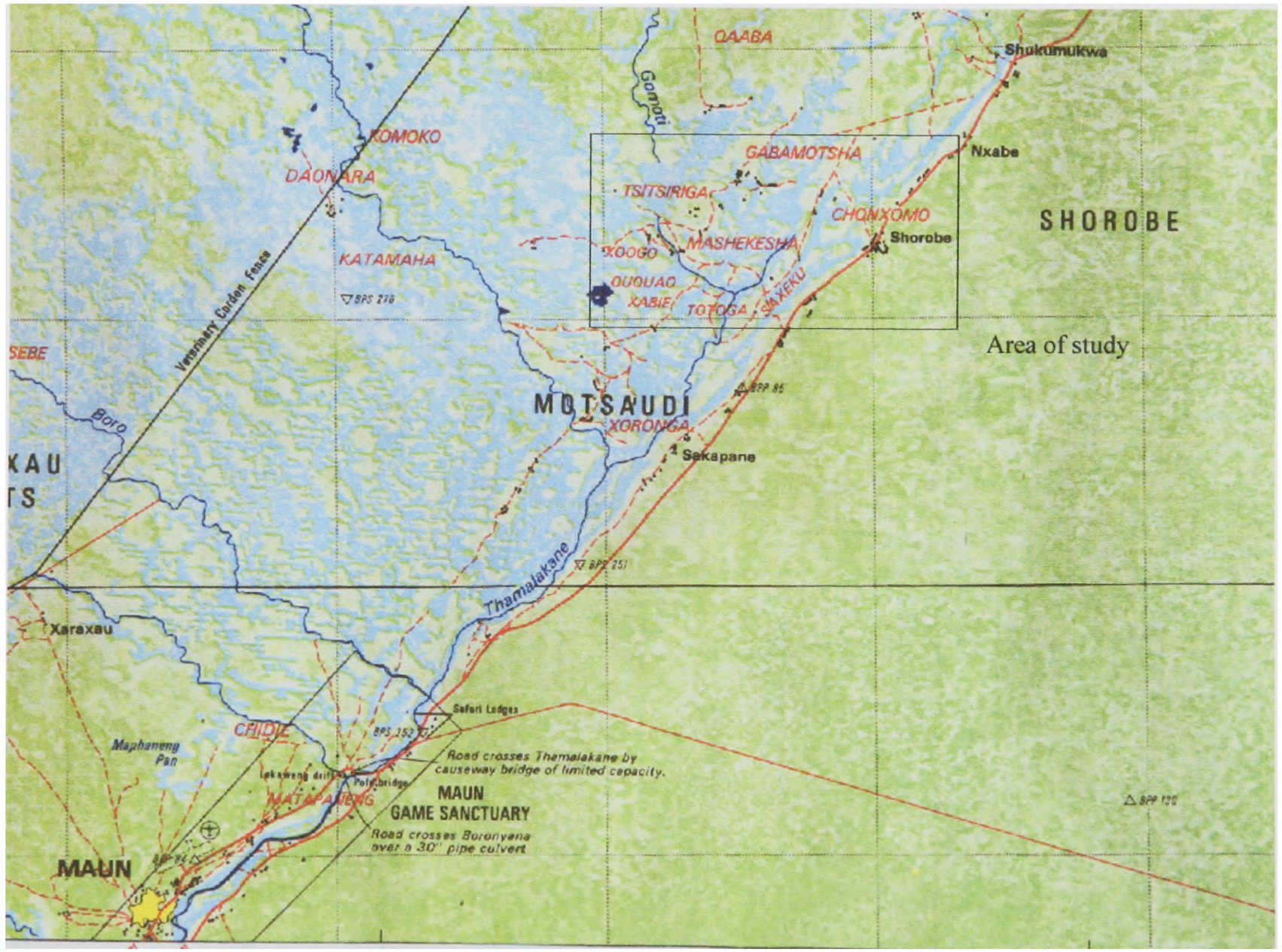


Figure 4.1 Location of study area in Shorobe Molapo Region, Ngamiland, Northern Botswana.

Map source: Dept of Surveys and Lands, Government of Botswana, 1984. (sheet 1923C4)
Based on 1969 arial photography. Scale 1:50,000.

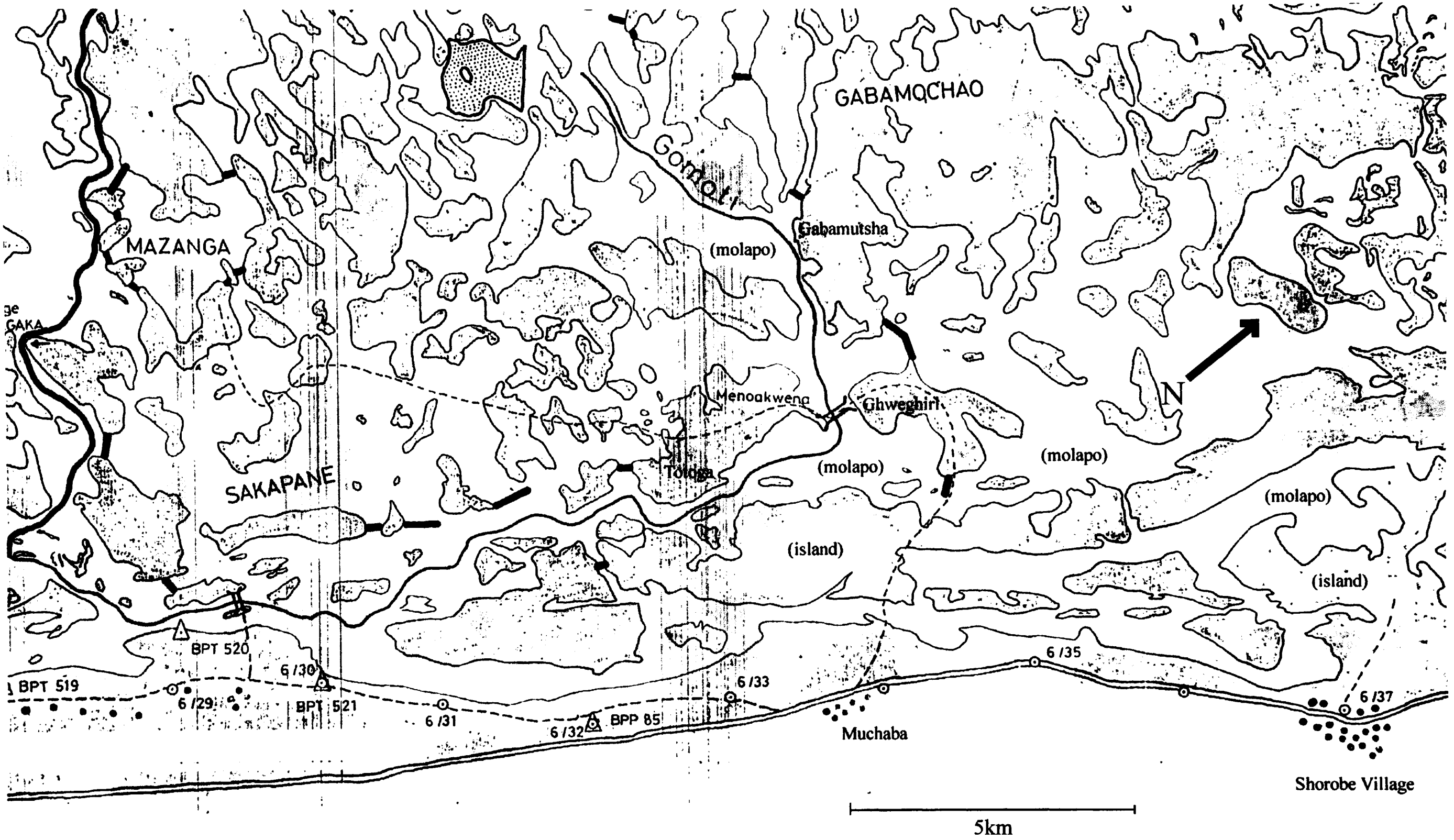


Figure 4.2 Shorobe Molapo region, NE Okavango Delta, showing Maun-Shorobe road (Thamalakane fault), with seasonal floodplains (melapo) and islands to NW. Fieldwork was based on Ghweghiri island, next to Menoakwena [teeth of the crocodile] bund.
Map source: Dept of Agricultural Research, Govt of Botswana. (UNDP/FAO BOT 72/019).

upon the extent of inflow into the delta from Angola, and the varying flow redistribution in the permanent wetland areas, a process that has seen considerable change over time. It takes roughly 5-6 months for the peak levels of input from the Okavango river that rises in the Angolan highlands to reach the Thamalakane fault in the south-east, which then acts as a collector drain for the approximately 5% of inflow that exits the delta system, the rest of which is accounted for by evapo-transpiration and groundwater recharge. The seasonal rise of flood waters in these *melapo* flood plains are used by farmers to practise flood recession farming. Such practices take advantage of the moisture retained in the soil profile in order to prolong the growing season on relatively fertile soils but also to produce earlier harvests (Plate 3).

The population of the Shorobe Molapo region is almost entirely ethnically Yei, although many do not speak or know the Yei language Seyei. The main reason for this is the historical subordination of the Yei (as well as other peoples in Ngamiland) to Tswana rule, which began in the early 1800s. Since the historical migration of the Yei from southern Zambia following the expansion of the Lozi empire, they gradually occupied many regions of the Okavango delta, and were riverine agriculturists, with fishing and hunting also significant activities. Oral history collected suggests that cattle-keeping has also been a significant activity for most during the last century, and perhaps longer. Although Tswana (Batawana) over-rule historically meant that Yei were considered *batlhanka* or members of a servile class, the fact that they were living scattered over a vast region and had no equivalent centralised political formation or hierarchy to the Tswana meant that direct influence over the rural Yei was weak and fragmentary.

A much more influential factor than direct political control in Yei settlement in the south-eastern Delta was the re-emergence of tsetse fly, which reclaimed the entire central Okavango delta by 1940 (Morton, B. 1996). The Shorobe region was demarcated as a tsetse controlled area by the

colonial administration during the 1940s, effectively coercing cattle-keeping Yei people into relatively manageable (and taxable) areas of administration. Oral histories suggest that many families moved south into the Shorobe area during this time or earlier in response to tsetse infestation, from areas such as Makoba. 'We came in this direction' stated one elderly man, 'and we were all migrating away from tsetse, not just because of cattle but because of sleeping sickness too. This must have been at the time of the second war'. 'Many of our cattle were killed by tsetse in Makoba' related another woman, 'the situation was better here, but there was still some tsetse'. Indeed, on fleeing infested areas many found no immediate improvement in their situation. 'When we first arrived here and settled at Gabamutsha' said one man, 'all our cattle died from *Nagana* (widely-used Zulu term for tsetse), a disease spread by the tsetse fly. After that I managed to rear some more, about 12 in number. I then decided in 1950 to go to the Transvaal to work in the mines, but after I returned I found that my cattle had been destroyed by tsetse once again'. Many narratives relate how migrant families settled in the region since 'here we knew that the *makgoa* (colonial administration) had begun to control the tsetse flies', and that even though the region was not entirely tsetse-free, it represented an improved situation.

Such narratives also provide clues to other aspects of such population upheavals. For instance, whilst it is clear that environmental pressures such as tsetse infestation were the main motivating force for migration to the region, there were also social forces, based upon kin and neighbour networks. 'When we moved here' related Rra Zingoro, 'we came to live next to my father's father. In those days people were often travelling around and visiting (*go etela*) each other and finding better areas for ploughing or keeping cattle. My grandfather had moved here before us and we followed him here'. Rra Maphomo remembered that 'my mother brought us here to Gabamutsha to stay with her relatives who had migrated here some time previously. People had been leaving XanXgana for some time and so they realised that they couldn't stay there alone without

neighbours'. So it is clear that whilst tsetse was of central concern to many Yei, and forced them to relocate with their herds to Shorobe, many others involved in the migrations were responding to the social upheavals that such movements caused by following kin to new places in the landscape. Many families waited for some years before following relatives south, since the quality and availability of ploughing land was unknown. Paths of regular visiting immediately began to take shape in the landscape between 'pioneer' cattle migrants and those left behind involved in agriculture and fishing. After some years, significant numbers had joined the cattle migrants, settling near them and establishing fields in the Shorobe area. Having joined them, subsequent migrations often continued, although this time of a 'shifting' nature within the new social landscape. 'After joining our grandfather here', related Rra Zingoro, 'we then moved away some distance to the west. We moved away since our cattle had increased due to the smaller amount of tsetse and my parents wanted to build a bigger *lesaka* (cattle pen). So we moved ourselves over there to where there are a lot of *Mosu*[2] (Camelthorn, *Acacia Erioloba*) so as to cut enough material for making it'.

Whilst it is tempting to consider migration as descriptive of movement between landscapes and movement existing within a given landscape, such a distinction assumes an implicit boundedness to landscapes that is unlikely to exist. Rather than undertaking long distance movements, the dynamic of most migrations to the Shorobe region were smaller scale, shifting movements over a number of seasons. In this way landscapes continually unfold and merge into each other as part of dwelling activity over time. Regions or locales of social interaction and dwelling activity however are an important dimension of experience, and as they unfold over time they constitute what may be considered discrete social landscapes in the way that places exert a *gathering* influence.

[2] For translations of tree species in this thesis I have relied on Roodt 1998, a constant companion during fieldwork.

Taskscape, *Landscape and Shifting Migration*

The influence of tsetse on Yei migration to the Shorobe region shows that cattle had come to play an important role in Yei dwelling practices, and remain so today, although agriculture is seen by many as an equally if not more important activity. The question remains how changes to such dwelling activities over time occasioned by environmental and social change have shaped, and continue to shape, the social landscape. I will here be drawing on Ingold's notion of the taskscape, as 'the entire ensemble of tasks, in their mutual interlocking' (1993:158) that is embodied in the landscape, since it helps provide a framework for understanding the temporality of the landscape as essentially social. I will focus on a few key issues in an attempt to answer the question I have asked, namely, how changes in the hydrography of the eastern Okavango system have led to the perceived 'drying up' of the *melapo*, and the responses to such changes (such as out-migration and the breakdown of communal practices), and homestead and settlement shifts associated with the relationship between agricultural and bovine activities.

The delta channels that formerly supplied the Shorobe region with much of its flood waters, the Gomoti and Santantadibe, seem to have been in decline for at least 60 years (Wilson and Dincer 1976). The Santantadibe still provides the area with some flooding in good years, but the Gomoti, which formerly flowed directly into the area, is now moribund. Some studies have suggested that vegetation blockage has contributed to the re-routing of channels, especially the abandoned Nqogha channel, further into the Delta system, but recent research has also pointed to the important influence of tectonic activity in the region (McCarthy 1986a, 1986b, 1993). Narratives from the Shorobe area are consistent with a gradual decrease in flooding, possibly from the late 1940s onwards. Rra Mothowamorena (Plate 5) related that he had come to the area with his parents (possibly in the late 1930s), but they had moved to Muchabe beyond the *melapo* to plough on

dryland in 1941 since there was too much water to plough the *molapo*. By 1945 however, they noticed that the *melapo* were drying and so they returned to the same *letlotla* (former dwelling site) to settle once more and plough, since farming the *molapo* gave better yields. Rra Kesego related that his parents were originally ploughing dryland fields (*mo motlabeng*), only beginning to plough the *molapo* edges around 1940. Rra Sakoi remembered that the area used to be one of permanent water (*metsi a ne a teng ka nako tsotlhe*). 'We only began to plough in the river bed,' he stated, 'when the river started to come only once a year, starting at Chobachoba *lediba*. We were unhappy when it began to dry even though we were ploughing, as we had to go long distances to find drinking water'. A *lediba* is an area of ponding after waters have receded, and were important waterholes for cattle and then for planting crops in the moist earth. 'Often we would plough the deepest parts of the *lediba* in August after the floods', related Rra Zambo, 'and then plough the *lediba* fringes later in November after the first rains had arrived. This way we were certain of some good crops each year'. As the flooding became seasonal, a system of bunding (an embankment against inundation, often used in south Asia as well as parts of Africa) across the *molapo* was carried out co-operatively by families intending to control the flood waters. 'Many people were using the bund (*borogo*) then for farming' related Rra Zambo, 'and they would open up a gap in it at the beginning of June to let waters through, closing it at the end of June. After the waters had dried in August they would begin to plough'. 'When the river began to dry' related Mma Ntema, 'we started to rely on *mabele* (sorghum) for food instead of fish, we all worked together to help build a bridge to let through the waters for a while'. 'It was very hard work', related Rra Mothowamorena, 'closing the hole in the earth dam to stop the waters, and the water would keep forcing a way through, we all had to work together to put earth back to stop it ruining the crops'.

Flood recession farming has always been a risky practice, since the timing of floods is not regular nor is its extent. Between 1974 and 1978 for instance no *molapo* cultivation was practised in

Shorobe due to late and slow recession of waters, forcing people to practise dry-land farming on the islands instead (Staring *et al* 1981:6). Another risk is that of rainfall, since heavy rains cause ponding in the lowest areas of the *melapo*, damaging crops. Moreover, high rainfall also leads to rising water levels in the main river channels, which flood the fields at a time approaching harvest. To prevent such early flooding the aforementioned earthen bunds were constructed by communities of farmers to protect the standing crops. During the 1999-2000 growing season, no seasonal floods reached Shorobe region, consistent with experience in recent decades. However, toward the end of an exceptionally heavy rainy season such rain-fed expansion of channels flooded the area at a time when many had not yet harvested, destroying many crops. The bunds had become somewhat redundant since farmers had started to plough beyond the bund, and forced it to remain open so that their fields would not be inundated. This attests to the mixture of practices now found in the landscape, namely the remnants of flood recession farming and more recent rain-fed farming in the *molapo*. Changes in the taskscape had led to significant changes in the *melapo* landscape.

The socially co-operative nature of digging earth in the *molapo* to create such landscape features as bunds was also evident in associated agricultural practices. Rra Sakoi related that at Chobachoba *lediba* 'we were farming a shared crop, which means that it was a mutual understanding (*tumalano*) to enable cattle to graze in some fields and joint crops grown in others'. Such practices never involved the erection of fences, but instead involved daily communal management. Ploughing was another aspect of communal activity (*kutlwano*) that involved the interweaving of people's mutual involvement in everyday practical tasks and social ties. Neighbours also came together to dig wells (*didiba*) to which they would all have access. As the perception of 'drying-up' increased over time, with more irregular seasonal flooding, the taskscape underwent changes. The practical engagement with each other's tasks within the environment evident in the notions of *tumalano* and *kutlwano* became less significant in agricultural practices, due to the breakdown of co-operative systems.

Rra Sakoi related how, 'those in Gabamutsha (a name of San origin for 'waterway' (i.e. the now moribund Gomoti channel)) used to plough in the collective but now many have moved away and no longer help with ploughing or fencing fields. Many people are dividing up their joint fields into separate ones. I believe this is because of migration to the villages that they no longer plough but expect a share of the crops'. Out-migration has meant that many people now regard the area as 'lands' to which they return to plough when the rains arrive.

The changing taskscape, from communal ploughing and mutual attentiveness throughout the year to individual rains-based ploughing, has affected the landscape through the fencing of the *molapo* into individual fields. It also led to a greater proliferation of fields planted without regard for flood recession techniques such as location of earth dams, with family members taking individual plots of land, validated by the government Land Boards. Rra Mothowamorena's son decided to start farming away from his father, and proudly displays his Land Board certificate of right to the individual use of this parcel of land. Whereas previously field location was responsive to the variable moisture retention of the *molapo*, usually consisting of saucer-shaped plantations around a *lediba*, fields are now mostly fenced rectilinear plantations of maize and sorghum, reflecting both environmental change (from flood recession to rain-fed agriculture) and the centralisation of land allocation previously in the hands of local leaders. The taskscape, as the sum total of constitutive acts of dwelling, is one of constant change since its temporality consists of the interrelationship between the rhythms of varying social and technical activities (Ingold 1993:160), we can also see how such rhythms are deeply involved with both natural and social rhythms of the environment. The pattern of resonances established through the sets of relations involved in the tasks of flood recession farming was different from that subsequent pattern of resonances created through tasks responding to the changing hydrography of the region in later years, and the temporality of the

Shorobe landscape can thus be understood as an unfolding of these changing patterns of resonances.

Another important set of tasks with which people are concerned are those associated with cattle-keeping, and the changing sets of relations between agricultural and bovine activities are of particular importance in revealing a relationship between taskscape and landscape in Shorobe region. All cattle keepers in Gabamutsha area now take or send their beasts to the permanent swamps at Morutseng for water on alternate days during the dry season. Some migrate there for three or four months during this season and return for the rainy season to use ponds (*mogobe*) in the locality, but they do not consider moving away to the permanent waters due to fear of lions. 'When the water was just leaving Gabamutsha', related Rra Maphomo, 'we used to dig *kakwete* (watering holes) in the *molapo* for our cattle to drink, but these did not last long'. Some got together to dig wells, but these proved insufficient. 'We have gradually had to take our cows further and further each year to water them' complained Rra Zambo, 'and I have stopped ploughing at Tshitshiriga since the others also stopped when a few left for the villages'. The social geography of water reticulation today is such that for those living closer to Muchabe, cattle are not driven long distances for water, but instead labour is concentrated on the retrieval of water by donkey cart, taking up to five hours a day.

Changes in the rhythms of social and practical activity inextricably bound up with the natural rhythms of the delta waters, should be understood as a dynamic taskscape, or set of interrelated resonances from daily involvement in the landscape, that has shaped the changing social landscape. Patterns of dwelling in the landscape can be seen as intimately connected with such activities. Rra Mothaletsipi related how his previous *matlotla* (former dwelling sites) always on whom he was sharing a *lesaka* (cattle pen) with. When Contagious Bovine Pleuro Pneumonia (cattle lung

disease) eradication policies were carried out in the area in 1995, he moved away from his neighbour since he no longer shared a *lesaka*, and settled near his fields. For herders, the sharing of *masaka* is an important aspect of *tumalano* or mutual understanding and co-operation. Usually two or three households will share a *lesaka* and care for them should the others be sick or visiting elsewhere. Such dwelling activities can be seen as a dynamic force upon settlement patterns and experience of landscape, which in turn exerts an influence upon those born there as locales of socialisation.

This last aspect is evidenced in the XanXgana area. In 1983 the community at Gabamutsha met to discuss the increasing conflict between fields and cattle grazing. Ten families resolved to move away from the area to XanXgana in order to ease the situation. A whole year was spent co-operating in the construction of new *masaka* and homesteads, and the ten families paid for a bore-hole to be sunk as a water supply. The new homesteads were all located on the banks of the *molapo* above their own new fields, with *masaka* the other side on the higher grazing areas. Most residents relate that the situation was resolved well since there is no agriculture above XanXgana, whereas cattle were destroying the crops in the densely ploughed Gabamutsha *melapo*. 'We are all neighbours since we come from Gabamutsha,' stated Rra Seamo, 'but the one who builds next to you is a special one (*moagelani wa mogolo*) since they visit you and help when you are sick'. The homesteads are stretched out in a line along the *molapo* bank with paths between that embrace the contours of *molapo* and island - lines of white sand within the yellow grass where use-wear has restricted seed germination over time.

The sets of resonances created by the relationships between varying dwelling activities as taskscape described here have resulted in a series of landscape changes. Since, as Ingold argues, 'the taskscape exists only so long as people are actively engaged in the activities of dwelling' rather

than being 'a kind of ideal design for dwelling' (1993:161), we can see how the landscape is an interrelated aspect of such engagement with tasks. The shifting migration by households to XanXgana was a resolution of a conflict in the practice of everyday dwelling activities, and since such activities are ongoing, the landscape is perpetually changing in response to changes in the taskscape. Moreover, the landscape has exerted a mutual influence upon the molapo people as an arena of ongoing socialisation. The landscape of XanXgana can in an important sense be understood as a re-production of the migrants' prior social landscapes, bringing with them the skills and even materials of other places and other times.

Masika le Baagisanyi : Kin and Neighbour Networks

Many instances of shifting migration in Shorobe region are linked to networks of kin and neighbour relations in the landscape. Neighbour groups split up and reform over time in response to such movement, yet such shifts cannot simply be seen as the spatial reorganisation of a change in social relations in the landscape, but also as the social reorganisation of a change in spatial relationships.

Totoga is an 'island' in the *melapo*, approximately 3 km long and 1 km wide. A single path winds its way through thick riverine woodland from end to end, with other sandy cattle paths twisting off through the thick camelthorn interior. The three homesteads that comprise the settlement of Totoga are all closely positioned, with goat pens outside, and two homesteads having fields close by. Two of the homesteads are occupied by *masika* (extended kin), the third by a non-related neighbour. All three groups are heavily reliant upon both social and material neighbour relations in everyday life. There is a constant movement between the homesteads throughout the day that has produced visible networks of paths in the sand.

The biographies of individuals in Totoga show that there is a single individual (known as Lekaa) around whom the others have been drawn to settle as neighbours (*baagisanyi*). Two families that are living in this man's homestead are close relatives, and were asked to come to live in Totoga in order for them to help each other with daily tasks. One homestead, that of Rra Modua, comprises an elderly couple living at the south end of a field bounded by Acacia. Some years before they had been living beyond the field to the north, as neighbours to another family, that of Mosaroze Moramenwa. When this family shifted to another site some 3 km away, they did not follow but 'stayed to be close to my nephew's son'. However, finding that he was just out of sight and (more importantly) earshot of the relative (Lekaa), he decided to dismantle the structures he had and rebuild closer. He decided to build inside the field, since he 'was getting old (ke ne ke tsofala) and wanted to be close to the goat pens'. The process took about a month but was eased since the *letlhaka* (water reeds) that he had used at his previous site were reused in the new one. 'We used to visit him even before he moved closer to us' related one of the relatives, Mma Matsarasara, 'but now we can see (*go bona*) him from where we are, and he could call us and we would hear'. A distinct path in the sand winds its way between the Mopane trees from her homestead to his, along which her boys run after milking his goats each day. 'Now that he is here he is a part of us, (*jaanong o motho wa rona tota*), before he was alone' she stated, suggesting the significance of spatial position to social incorporation. Such a sense of incorporation is heightened where elderly relatives are concerned, since the neglect of elder kin among the Yei is consistently viewed as a cause of *dikgaba*, or diseases caused by the displeasure of one's ancestors. Inter-generational support is reinforced by widespread religious beliefs in the area. I once told the elderly man of the recent death of a local young male, his response being that 'perhaps the child had been neglecting to visit an elder or some other relative. With this the ancestors (*badimo*) are very displeased, since children should visit their relatives regularly'.

On the south-western side of the middle homestead live a common-law husband and wife, Rra Rramorusi and Mma Mwezi, who have been staying there for 3 years. Previously they had lived at a spot not 500 metres away, and a few scattered upright poles still remain as visible markers. This was their first dwelling together since he had arrived in the area as an employed herdsman, and they were living with the people of another two homesteads there. 'We were with my son over there' related the woman, 'who one day moved away to a job. When he was going he told me that it would be better for me to move closer to other people in order to have neighbours. We were without neighbours over there as they had already moved away to Gatamaga. We were living together as an extended family. So we moved ourselves closer to Lekaa here, even though I am not a relative of his. He is a responsible man (*ke motho yoo boikanyo*) as he ploughs for us (*o re thusa lema*) and collects us water. Before when we were living over there he did not help us in this way, since we were not neighbours (*re ne re sa baagisanyi*). We feel as though we are a small village (*motse*) now since we are living close together, helping and visiting each other'.

The Setswana term *baagisanyi* expresses both *those that build together*, since it includes the verb to build (*go aga*), but also expresses the sense of *building harmonious social relations* (*go agisanya*), which expresses both causative and reciprocal cases of the verb, such that it describes both causing or helping create peaceful relations in general as well as helping create such relations between two individuals or groups. Another common term is *baagelani* from the verb *agelana* which is the reciprocal case of the verb *agelela*, which means to fence or surround something. In the reciprocal case this verb suggests that those enjoined in such mutual activities have already established close social bonds that will continue. 'To be neighbours' Mma Mwezi told me, 'is to be seen and visited frequently by those you are living with. Lekaa did not ask 'why are you moving here?' as he knew we wanted to become neighbours, since it is natural for people to help each other in everyday life. He gave us this place to build our homes and an area to plant our crops. I am

worried (*kea tshwenya*) however, since I cannot do as much for him." Reciprocation is an important dimension of *go agisanya* and therefore the mutual attentiveness to each other's needs expressed in *baagisanyi*. Her worry is that she will become a dependent of his rather than a neighbour. 'The way he helps me', she fretted, 'I also believe that he will take care of my funeral, he acts as a family member would. I believe he will provide all the guests with food and drink.' For her this was a serious cause for concern, since such things are important kinship obligations, rather than neighbour ones. Of interest here however is the way *masika* and *baagisanye* relations have interwoven within one dwelling context, as well as how material, spatial and social relations are inseparable in the socio-semantics of 'neighbouring'.

The normative description of Yei settlement is that of small groups dwelling together often linked through matrilineal descent. Dwelling relations are often conceived and understood as kin relations, and mutually, kin relations are expressed and practised daily as dwelling relations. 'I am a relative (*lesika*) and a neighbour of Rra Kesego' said Rra Samorwa, 'he is a junior relative (*setlogolo*). You see, we are all descended through Sanyedi, who is buried at Muchabe. My father told me that Rra Kesego was my nephew. We live close to each other here and co-operate often, especially with donkeys and the cart to collect water. I visit (*go eta*) him everyday to see how he is'. For most people, the qualities of being a neighbour and being a relative, in terms of the sorts of reciprocal activities and responsibilities involved, are inextricably linked. 'Here our neighbours we also call our relatives (*barebapileng nabo reba bitsa re re ke baagarona*) explained Mma Tshoganetso, 'since we are helping each other. We go to them to ask for things such as sugar or if there is a puncture on the donkey cart'. This woman uses yet another term for neighbours, *barebapileng*, from the verb to be next to or close to (*go bapa*), therefore expressing *those that dwell next to us*. She contrasts this with *baagarona*, which expresses *those that are our dwellers*, in the sense of family members building together in the same homestead. The socio-semantics and

practice of dwelling in Shorobe point to a fluidity between kin-based and non kin-based neighbour networks, in which everyday practical co-operation rather than genealogy is central to the establishment and maintenance of social relations.

One obvious question that arises is that if everyone wants in some way to maintain neighbourly co-operation as an integral part of dwelling, then wouldn't we expect large settlements rather than small scattered ones? Dwelling sites however are an integral aspect of the taskscape, which is dominated by *molapo* field farming and cattle grazing. R.M.K. Silitshena (1979) argued that the largest factor in the formation and maintenance of larger nucleated settlements among the Tswana was centralised political control by chiefs. Such settlement patterns are rarely found in Southern Africa with groups such as the Yei that historically lacked such centralised socio-political systems. People create and maintain neighbour networks within a taskscape that is dispersed due to the spatial nature of the dwelling activities with which they are involved. Those involved in agriculture live above their *molapo* fields, often half a kilometre or so from their neighbours, who may number less than half a dozen homesteads. The spatial nature of cattle grazing is also an important factor in dispersal of dwelling sites since the risk of dispute over grazing areas and water access is considerable.

Such forces within the taskscape may be characterised as *centrifugal* in effect, since such activities involve a dimension of spatial dispersal within the landscape, and yet are crucially linked to a social centre, such as kin linkages. This means that there are significant centrifugal forces at work that are an integral dimension of the constitutive activities of the taskscape, since both social forms and the forms of the taskscape are temporally interconnected dimensions of dwelling (Ingold 1993). At the same time, the taskscape of Shorobe region also contains relatively *centripetal* forces at work which operate to draw people together toward material and social centres of

interaction. In this chapter I have suggested how centripetal forces of neighbour network formation and maintenance exist alongside relatively centrifugal aspects of the taskscape, such as cattle-keeping. The essential point to keep in mind is that both centrifugal and centripetal forces are not mutually exclusive or oppositional forces, but exist dialectically and are held in creative tension by people involved in dwelling in Shorobe region over time.

Whilst centrifugal forces can be seen as those that act outwards on a body moving about a centre, centripetal forces tend to act inwards upon a body, or move a body towards a centre. As social processes, such forces are in a constant dialectical relationship over time within the landscape since certain aspects of the taskscape are centrifugal and others centripetal, and this has important implications in the way that the social landscape is configured over time. Centrifugal dimensions of the Shorobe *molapo* taskscape include many aspects of cattle keeping activity involving distinct herds and separate grazing areas, and to a lesser extent agriculture with distinct and separate ploughing areas. Cash investment in these activities, such as bore-holes, are a further centrifugal force since they stress differences in access to and use of technological means. And yet these very aspects of the taskscape can also be seen as centripetal in the way that tasks bind people together in their mutual involvement and social relations through material culture, instantiated in neighbour networks and building practices. Neighbours may thereby build a common cattle pen together due to the socially *centripetal* forces of cattle-keeping and its related tasks, whilst practices of dispersed and interconnected dwelling sites as well as frequent movement and re-negotiation of neighbour (building) relations are also connected to powerful *centrifugal* forces operating dialectically within the taskscape. Whilst in this chapter I have discussed the operation of these forces at the regional scale, in chapter nine I examine how both centrifugal and centripetal forces are an integral social dynamic of dwelling at the homestead level. In chapter nine I explore in more detail how such forces might be understood within the context of the homestead over time.

Memory on the Ground: walking and narratives of dwelling movement

A further example, this time from Gabamutsha (another island in the Shorobe *melapo*), highlights not only these processes, but also how 'landscape is implicated as template in the process of memory-work', as Küchler (1993:86) has argued. Following this perspective, landscape can be understood *as memory*, that is, as process, rather than *of memory*, or inscription (see also Nora 1996). Küchler's argument is that landscapes, as well as cultural representations of landscapes, can be products of the process of remembering rather than codified objects of memory, and are constantly being remoulded in accordance with specific cultural templates.

Walking is an important activity in the Shorobe *molapo* region, walking between neighbouring homesteads, walking with cattle, walking to fields, and much conversation about the landscape takes place along such pathways. People frequently engaged in walks of memory with me, showing former dwelling and farming sites, burial sites and other sites of past and present activity, involving deceased and living people. Whilst on one level such walks are the spatial mapping of locations of memory, it is also clear that such personal and social landscapes are deeply involved in the process of remembering and forgetting – what Küchler terms 'memory-work'. Walking as memory-work is what people do every day in the landscape, and as such is not a special activity but an aspect of everyday experience. By describing an everyday activity in this way I am not necessarily aggrandising or giving undue significance to the activity, merely suggesting how important relatively mundane aspects of dwelling are to how layers of meaning are built up over time. Repeated movement in the landscape through tasks includes a whole range of other social interactions and accretion of meaning within the landscape. In this sense, movement is integral to the way memory is emplaced and remembered. The social act of remembering through the features of the landscape is an important facet of everyday life but not necessarily one that should be

separated out to forcefully from its contextual flow. The exercise of memory is important to the perception of the social landscape everywhere and not just the Shorobe molapo region. This said, the particular ways in which memory, biography and landscape interact are different everywhere. In the molapo region memories of dwelling sites and movements form an important network of relationships to place and social group over time. When being shown a *letlotla* (abandoned dwelling site) in the dry season, the only visual clue may be some evidence of cattle-keeping such as *boloko* (dried dung). During the wet season, former cattle pens (*masaka*) become a mass of *leketa* and *tepe*, plants that thrive on the nutrients of *boloko*, and usually form rings around the trees used as shade for animal pens. Landscape as memory means that place and memory are interwoven processes rather than superimposed maps of knowledge. In this case, environmental changes are brought about by social activity (cattle-keeping) that then become involved in the way memory is spatially interconnected in the landscape.

One such everyday walk of memory-work I undertook with an elderly neighbour. Rra Sarefo was born in XanXgana (towards the central Delta areas) and came to Gabamutsha as a teenager with his parents who were migrating south from tsetse fly:

'I have moved many times during my life, but always remained here. I believe each move was because I wanted to be close to neighbours. The first place we stayed at here was over there next to that Molalakgaka (*Albizia harveyi*). The second place (*lefelo la bobedi*) was next to that Mopane (*Colophospermum Mopane*) there with the Moana (Baobab, *Andansonia digitata*) next to it. You can still see some things there on the ground. We moved there to be closer to some neighbours (*Baagisanyi*) at the time. After they left I moved down here next to that Mopane there. At this place I was sharing a lesaka with Morotse Molomo who was a friend. After he died it changed there since there was fighting and noise (*modumo*) from other people. I also decided that I would have a lesaka of my own after Morotse died and so I moved some distance to the north, we cannot see it from here. I think I stayed about a year at this place. It wasn't good there as there were only Mosu (*Acacia tortilis subsp.heteracantha*) growing there and it was further from people. At that time I had a friend called Saqau who was living down here on this side of the *molapo*. I decided that there wasn't enough shade living with the Mosu, so I came to live with a Mopororo (Raintree, *Lonchocarpus*

capassa) behind my house and a Mopane in front. It was also because of Saqau that I moved here, since we were building together (*re ne re aga mmogo*) and also fishing. Then he went away to live in Shorobe [village], and only came back to plough and so I was staying alone there (*ke ne ke nna ke le nosi*). So I then moved this side and stayed there under a Molalakgaka for shade and I built a lesaka right next to me. When the government shot my cattle during the lung disease (*bolwetse jwa makgwafo*) I felt that I could not live there next to an empty lesaka any more without cattle in it, so I moved myself away to some distance from it. I now have some more cattle, and I have built a new lesaka next to me here on the edge of the *molapo*. It is very important for me to live close to others as a neighbour. In the past we hunted a lot, and on return home would share the meat between our neighbours'.

One noticeable feature of Sarefo's description is the role of trees as stable, structuring presences around which his memory of movement winds itself. In one sense, trees serve as a network of fixed locations within which social space is negotiated. The process of remembering both dwelling sites and shifting movements is centred upon trees, which thereby become important aspects of place over time. Trees are virtually synonymous with dwelling, providing the shade in which social activity around the house takes place. The shade tree of the dwelling place becomes a familiar shape in the landscape, and as such one of the most prominent aspects of orientation: 'when I return with the cattle, I just look for the Mopane canopy that I recognise as next to my house' said Sarefo. Trees are a type of placial phenomena that are involved in experience in differing ways. Since dwelling places and cattle pens require shade, such trees become over-arching and architectural in the dwelling context they provide. During movement in the landscape, the experience of tree-as-shade (inside) is transformed as an experience of the tree-as-form in the landscape (outside) - an architectural transformation. Memory-walks bring together these dwelling dimensions in the way that both outside and inside representations of experience are brought to the fore.

People's mutual involvement with each other as neighbours cannot be divorced from their everyday practical engagement in tasks, and the resonance of such mutually attentive activities is described by Ingold as 'the very foundation of sociality' (Ingold 1993:160). Whilst places can be

said to emerge as a dimension of landscape through such mutual involvement in tasks, places are arguably more complex still. With neighbour networks in the landscape changing and responding to new circumstances, places of dwelling are likewise shifting, as witnessed in Sarefo's account. Social and spatial relations over time are interconnected in complex ways that can be seen as involved in the social construction of place. Arguably, both place and landscape for the Yei of Shorobe *molapo* region is characterised by movement; dwelling is mobile, being is fluid in relation to situation and location. As Casey argues, 'part of the power of place, its very dynamism, is found in its encouragement of motion in its midst' (1996:23). As Casey also develops elsewhere, the etymology of dwelling (Old Norse *dvelja* and Old English *dwalde* [see Casey 1993:114]) contains respectively both senses of lingering and wandering, senses 'that are not oppositions but a dialectical interplay - a complementary series' (1993:120). Dwelling is not necessarily primarily about lingering in a place or position in the landscape over time, but potentially includes a much more dynamic and motional sense of being.

The everyday landscape of Rra Sarefo's memory-work is a landscape of remembering - a socially shared product of the process of recollection and mutual involvement, rather than an inscribed surface of codified memories linked through landmarks. As Tilley argues, 'memories continually provide modifications to a sense of place which can never be exactly the same place twice, although there might be ideological attempts to provide 'stability' or perceptual and cognitive fixity to a place' (1994:27). Shifting migration linked to the establishment and maintenance of neighbour relationships over time is an aspect of taskscape, a dynamic process shaping the landscape. As was suggested earlier, frequent movement is a process that produces many locales known as matlotla (abandoned dwelling sites). Such sites figure in the narration of personal biographies to spatially order temporal changes. The accretion of such locales over time is a central feature of the construction of the social landscape in Shorobe region. As Tilley further

argues, 'memories of previous moves in a landscape are as essential to understanding as they are in playing a game of chess' (1994:27). For instance, claims to farming and cattle grazing areas for a family or lineage are built up through social acknowledgement of activities within a region over time. The social understanding of location and landscape is temporal in the sense that what is synchronically available is always mediated through already established social relations retained from the past. *Matlotla* as sites in the landscape are deeply involved in the social understanding of emplaced identity, that is, how a dwelling experience based upon movement and re-negotiation of present relations can become structural and concrete, traces of activity that settle as sites of memory.

Burial – fixity and memory

For many people in the Shorobe *molapo* region, *matlotla* associated with graves of ancestors are of particular significance, even though they may be infrequently or no longer visited. Most *matlotla* that do contain graves do not contain many, and graves of more than one generation are rare. Whilst it was commonly stated to me that people should not move too far away from such sites, in practice people move regularly and rarely visit such *matlotla*. However, they are visited regularly in memory and narrative, which indicates a significant difference between discursive and non-discursive dimensions of forms in the landscape. Rural burial customs among the Yei now vary significantly, with some families taking their deceased to Maun to the cemetery, whilst others who lack networks in the town or money for expenses continue to bury their dead in the rural homestead. Among the latter group, customs relating to burial are relatively consistent: cattle-keeping adult males (and possibly sons without cattle of their own) are usually buried within the cattle pen, children and women are buried behind the house, either in the *mahuri* (or *segotho*) – a fenced area of domestic privacy – or directly behind it. Males who did not keep cattle would also be buried here. In one instance, according to Rra Kesego, his father was buried behind the house,

even though he had cattle, since the cattle were being kept some distance away at the time. 'Women are buried behind the house since this is where they spend much of their time, it is their place (*lefelo la bone*)' reflected Rra Kesego. In some homesteads large stones are found to mark such graves, and even thorn branches used to prevent animals walking on the grave. For some, such graves are important foci for religious activity. 'My father is buried under the cattle pen in my homestead' explained Rra Mothowamorena, 'since this is our culture (*ke ngwao yarona*). I sometimes clean this area [it has a stone and remains of small wooden fence (see Plate 4)] and splash water over it and call my father's name to pray (*go rapela*) for rain'. Rra Kesego would often go to his father's gravesite some miles away after the rains to cut down the grasses growing over it, but had eventually given up since the path to it had become overgrown with thorn trees.

Practices of shifting migration over time produce scattered *matlotla* with associated grave sites connected to former houses and cattle pens. Bohannan, who studied the Tiv of Nigeria, also wrote that 'the compound is called by his [the compound head's] name until his death… after which it may be called his *iche* (usually meaning an abandoned compound site) but not his "compound" (*ya*)' (1954:4). It is not uncommon for parents, grandparents and other close relatives to be buried in different sites of former occupation, perhaps marked with a large stone. Rra Kesego pointed out a large Mokoba tree (*Acacia nigrescens*) on the horizon as 'the tree of my father's grave (*setlhare sa phuphu ya ntate*)', and in the other direction pointing to a large Motshaba tree (*Ficus sycomorus*) as 'the place of my mother's grave (*lefelo la phuphu ya mme*)'. Whilst his father's grave was not visited any more, his mother's grave was fenced with wire to prevent animals grazing it and 'to show people that someone is buried there'. Acts of burial transform simple *matlotla* into *mafelo a diphuphu*, or 'places of graves'. Burial is transformative in the sense that grave sites establish a personal link to place involving emotion, memory, practices of remembrance, visiting etc. that other *matlotla* do not - significant temporal implications in the way

that places become biographically interrelated and how locales of emotional attachment to place through burial are established. The transformation of *matlotla* into burial sites is significant in that it transforms both social practice, memory and narrative within the social landscape. I was frequently reminded by elder people that a family should avoid moving away from a place where a close relative is buried, especially the parents. One cattle-keeping man in Gabamutsha, Rra Zambo, related that:

'My parents were born in MaXhwa and then moved to XanXgana, which is where my father is buried (*o fitlhetse teng*). My mother died here in Gabamutsha. The plot was further away then by that Mopane tree [c.200m away]. After she died we moved to this place. To my understanding it is not right to move far away from a parent's grave. I only moved to be closer to other people here. There were some living with us at the other place but some died and some migrated, leaving us alone there. Moving closer to others means being able to exchange help frequently, but I am not related to other people here'.

A thin grassless path is visible between the *letlotla* where his mother is buried and his house, evidencing the frequency of his grave-tending practice. His neighbour, Rra Zingoro, also related how he returned to Gabamutsha to live with neighbours (who were also paternal kin) on the death of some family members. 'A person should not leave a place where a close relation has been buried', he stated, 'since to neglect them there does not feel right, and I would soon become sick by *kgaba* (illness caused by ancestral displeasure)'.

Grave sites, especially those of parents, are occasionally used in treating an individual thought to be suffering from *dikgaba*, where the ancestor's name(s) are called out in supplication. However, such sites also operate within narratives differently to *matlotla*. As places of periodic ritual visiting gravesites are believed to be the places of ancestors (*mafelo a badimo*), and in one sense are similarly bound up with notions of care and visiting found in neighbour networks. People's narration of biography seems to be inextricably bound up with the naming of locations of ancestral

burial, especially parental burial. This operates to 'locate' individual identities in both social and spatial dimensions, in the context of the shifting migration and fluidity of settlement already described. Over time, the memory-work involved in the construction of narratives concerning the social landscape of Shorobe region shows a dialectic between such relatively fixed locations or sites, and the forces of more fluid social and spatial relations and movements connected with the generation of *matlotla* over time. Narratives in this sense are less about individual memory than social remembering, involved in the establishment and maintenance of social relations, relations that are always emplaced. Burial sites feature strongly in narratives concerning social relations to place since the act of burial arguably involves complex and deeply rooted social notions of emplacement. Gugler for instance remarks that in contemporary Enugu (Nigeria), 'the desire to be buried at home is just about universal across occupational groups... [and is] frequently mentioned as a rationale for building a house at home. The first-born son will inherit the very place where his father is buried and establish his home there' (1997:63). Burial forms an important part of both individual and group identity in respect to place and social belonging. In a classic account of how both migration and burial in Africa are involved in complex political and social networks of meaning, Cohen and Odhiambo (1992) explore the case of 'SM', a wealthy Kenyan lawyer whose widow wished him to be buried in Nairobi where they both lived and worked. However, his rural identity was strongly argued by other relatives and clan members, who insisted on their claim upon him and arguing for his return to the home village for burial, where he was eventually interred. The case became one of the most potent explorations of the politics of traditional and modern values in Kenyan society in the 1980s. Social notions of the emplacement of birth and death gather together perceptions of the unity of kinship and landscape that are not only found in Africa but in many other parts of the world. As Bohannan wrote, 'it is possible to look at a representation of Tivland not only as a map but as a genealogy, and indeed Tiv themselves think of their country as segmented in genealogical terms' (1954:14). Burial is an integral part of how social relations are

emplaced over time, and Shorobe narratives concerning burial sites operate as representations of both genealogy and place, and of the innate dialectic of forces of fixity and fluidity within the temporal landscape.

Movement and Building Practices

I have so far examined the social forces involved in dwelling sites, and have only suggested the influence of material dimensions. The mutuality of influence in the landscape between social and material forces is nowhere more evident in the Shorobe region than in the building practices associated with dwelling sites. Social activity in the landscape both produces and reproduces the materiality of dwelling, but is also in turn reciprocally influenced by the material dimensions of daily life. This is evidenced most clearly in Shorobe region in respect to the use and reuse of materials in processes of both dwelling in one location and movement within an area. Such building practices do not *reflect* the frequency of movement of homesteads, but rather *embody* it in the sense of being part of the process, rather than a product or function of such a process. The interconnectedness between social forces within the taskscape, such as those of centrifugality and centripetality discussed earlier, and material dimensions, such as building practices, is inherently temporal. Dwelling "takes place" in the way the activities of the taskscape unfold and manifest themselves materially over time, in building cattle pens, fences and houses. Place can be understood as process rather than product of dwelling, and building activity as an important material and social process of place. Building is a technology, a way of knowing the world rather than simply an application of knowledge contained in mental states. Technologies of the body, such as skills, are also the site for the mediation and transformation of complex social comportments toward the world and to forms of knowledge. As Dobres states: 'just as technologies are material acts of transformation that unfold during the day-to-day involvement of technicians with their material world, they are simultaneously about the day-to-day enactment and

transformation of individuals, social relationships, value systems, cultural epistemologies and world views' (2000:128).

Building practices in the Shorobe region certainly raise interesting questions about these relational complexities that are an integral aspect of technology. In Totoga, Rra Modua had moved closer to his relatives, and in doing so had reused much of his previous house, including *maphako* (roof supports), *letlhaka* (water reeds, *Phragmites australis, P. mauritanus* – collected perhaps ten or more years previously[3]), and *dithlomeso* (rafters). The door (*setlatla*) is made from *lenyele* (*Sesbania sp.* – a tall reed-like weed that grows after the rains) and the *lolwapa* (courtyard) is made from *lebelebele* (Millet, *Pennisetum glaucum*), both of which Rra Modua collects from his field during harvesting. 'Since I am getting older', he related, 'any renewal (*go _afatsa*) to the house walls will now be with millet stems from my field, but grasses I can still collect around here'. The temporal link between dwelling and building practice as technology is expressed strongly here. Cycles of both cultivation and building activity are brought together within the crop storage hut (*ntlo ya dijalo*) since it is walled by the stems of the millet grain it stores (Plate 2). The use of millet stems for constructing walls is common in the area. In XanXgana Rra Sebitwane uses millet stems from his field cut during harvest in April, but his preferred *lenyele* is not normally available until June or July, which he then uses for making the *lolwapa*. *Lenyele*, found as a weed during harvest or after rains in the *molapo*, is preferred due to its physical durability, similar to *letlhaka*. Another alternative is *Motlhabakolobe*[4] (Xanthium strumarium), a similar shrub-like weed that grows in the *molapo* during the rainy season, as well as *Mokolane* (Real fan Palm , *Hyphane petersiana*) branches that are cut as part of the palm-wine tapping process and afterwards utilised for building. Grasses for thatching are either *Motengyane* (I have not been able to identify this

[3] Whereas I rely on Roodt 1998 for tree species translations, my plant species translations come from Cole 1995, unless otherwise stated.

species) or *Tshikitsane* (Silky Bushman Grass, *Stipagrostis uniplumis*) collected on the dryland areas above the *melapo* (*mo motlabeng*) during June or July when it has dried sufficiently to use (Plate 6 shows a number of such *molapo* plants used for walling).

Interestingly, the use of such annually renewable materials in the Shorobe *melapo* are seen as alternatives to the preferred materials of *letlhaka* for walling and *mokamakama* (Cymbopogon excavatus - Terpentine Grass) for thatching. These two materials only grow in the permanent swamp areas of the Okavango, at least 20 miles from the Shorobe *molapo*, yet seem to have previously grown in the area according to narratives. Some households invest some cash in obtaining *letlhaka* by paying for transport to well known reed-cutting places such as Morutseng, Daonara or Ditshiping, and others have moved to these settlements to cut and sell *letlhaka* and *mokamakama* grasses. Although in many parts of the Delta *letlhaka* is considered renewable yearly, in Shorobe *molapo* region the expense of *letlhaka* is such that most renew only after some years or many years, or use alternative plants.

Much of the importance of *letlhaka*, as already suggested, is the way it can be transported to a new dwelling site by rolling up the bound together reed walls of both house and *lolwapa*. Rra Mothowamorena (Plate 5) narrated that: 'when we constructed our first dwelling (*motse wantlha*) here we collected all the *letlhaka* from the *molapo*. When we moved to Muchabe we carried all the materials from these buildings with us in a sledge (*selei*), and when we moved back brought it with us again. We took down the *letlhaka*, rolled it, and just carried it in the sledge... *letlhaka* is very light and can easily be moved with us should we want to go'. Likewise, Rra Sarefo said that: 'every time I decided to move closer to others I would take the materials from my last house, well only the good parts. It is easy for us to move frequently since the *letlhaka* is simple to take down and move'.

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[4] According to informants in Shorobe, there are two types of *Mothlabakolobe*, a river-growing one and a dryland one.

Such reeds are also reused increasingly due to their rising cost, either in terms of cash or labour involved in their collection. *Lelthaka* is also culturally significant material in the performance of certain rituals. One woman, Ntema, related that ritual cleansing of *letlhaka* dwellings after a person's death should be done by an elder 'with a burning brand of *letlhaka*, which must be held toward the corners of the house' after which younger people may enter. The homology between house material and ritual material was stressed as important since it represented 'burning the smell of the deceased (*monko wa moswi*) from the walls of the house'. For the same reasons, Rra Fanabe insisted that *letlhaka* must be replaced after a death, 'since bad dreams (*ditoro tse di maswe*) will enter the mind from the smell of the relative in the *letlhaka* walls'.

Both frequency of movement and materiality of dwelling should be seen as interwoven dimensions of dwelling activities in Shorobe region. However, such building practices cannot be understood as 'temporary' in any sense, as has often been argued in relation to San dwelling structures. Although building styles are 'temporary' in the sense of needing frequent renewal, and are made from reeds rather than the more temporally 'permanent' clay bricks, the argument here is that they are not expressive of a 'temporary' relationship to the landscape. Both San and Yei building practices are integral to a construction of place that is not site specific but involved in localities or territories within which dwelling practices occur. Patterns of *matlotla* and burial sites combine to form a landscape of familiarity, belonging and social networks, within which contemporary dwelling occurs. Land is not seen as alienable, but socially embedded, in that those arriving in a region first (*batho bantlha*) are responsible for 'giving' land to those coming later to plough and keep cattle. The *batho bantlha* of an area are not seen as owners but rather arbiters of the land. In Ghweghiri, the families of Moramenwa and Mothowamorena are considered *batho bantlha*, and according to them were 'given' the area (*be re file lefatshe le*) by the San living nearby, who also 'gave' them the

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the land one has fairly large globular seed heads, and grows fairly abundantly in and around the Shorobe *Melapo*. The

place-names used today for the fields, islands and *madiba* (areas of water left after floods have receded). Since dwelling is inherently a social activity, both location and movement within the landscape are fundamentally both spatial and social processes. The materiality of such dwelling practices is not 'temporary', since the social landscape is not. Since the material processes of dwelling are inextricable from the social processes, the material forms are part of the same process of dynamic place formation, a 'permanence' of belonging expressed through mobility.

This inherently dynamic process of social and material relations has often been glossed as reflecting 'temporary' relations to landscape. Turnbull provides a good example of this sort of analysis and how it has been applied in African ethnography, whilst also showing how materiality and dwelling relations are interwoven:

'in the course of three years, which is the maximum life an Ik village can expect, internal groupings and subdivisions occur, reflecting temporary alignments... when I saw new villages being built it was evident that friendship was the prime element in determining who shared the same *odok* [outer fence], for those people co-operated in the building of stockades that were common to them and helped each other with housebuilding too... but such friendships were fragile and temporary... neighbours who have once been friends and have fallen out often become the very worst of enemies, and this results in some of the less attractive peculiarities of the internal construction of an Icien village' (1984:96).

In such ethnographies, the materiality of dwelling is a 'result' of, and a 'reflection' of a changing, dynamic social life, and in as far as the materiality of the Icien village is subordinate to social relations, is more or less functional in its social presence in the landscape, formed and reformed by neighbour relations. The data presented in this chapter suggests that the materiality of dwelling has to be understood in a far more integrated sense than as a 'reflection' of social life or environmental

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river-growing one is common in Maun when the Thamalakane floods. See also Cole 1995:271.

conditions, being an influential dimension in the shaping of social life and socialisation. With a broader understanding of the mutually interconnected temporalities of social and material dimensions of dwelling, this chapter has attempted to examine how both building as a dwelling activity and the materials of dwelling are involved in the social networks of neighbour and kin relations within a given landscape. As has also been shown, there needs to be a paradigm shift in order to understand the nature of the 'temporary', the ephemeral, and the frequently moved. For this, an understanding of the temporality of particular landscapes is needed, in order to see that both material and social dimensions are dynamically involved in processes of dwelling. Toward this I have explored the concept of taskscape, with its foregrounding of dwelling and the socio-temporality of place, in relation to a particular landscape, the Shorobe *Molapo* region. With a temporal approach to such landscapes, the concepts of permanence and temporariness are misleading in the way they dichotomise dwelling. In the case of Shorobe, both permanence and temporariness can be perceived as interconnected processes of dwelling - shifting migration being predicated upon 'belonging' or attachment to the wider landscape, and likewise both attachment and belonging to place can be seen as arising from processes of movement and dwelling practices over time.





Plate 1 (top) Homestead of Mothowamorena, Gweghiri.

Plate 2 (bottom) Modua's storage house, walled with stems of harvested crops, Totoga.





Plate 3 (top) Mosaroze Moramenwa's maize crop planted in *molapo*, Ghweghiri.

Plate 4 (bottom) Mothowamorena's father's grave marked with poles and a stone, under his former cattle pen, Ghweghiri.

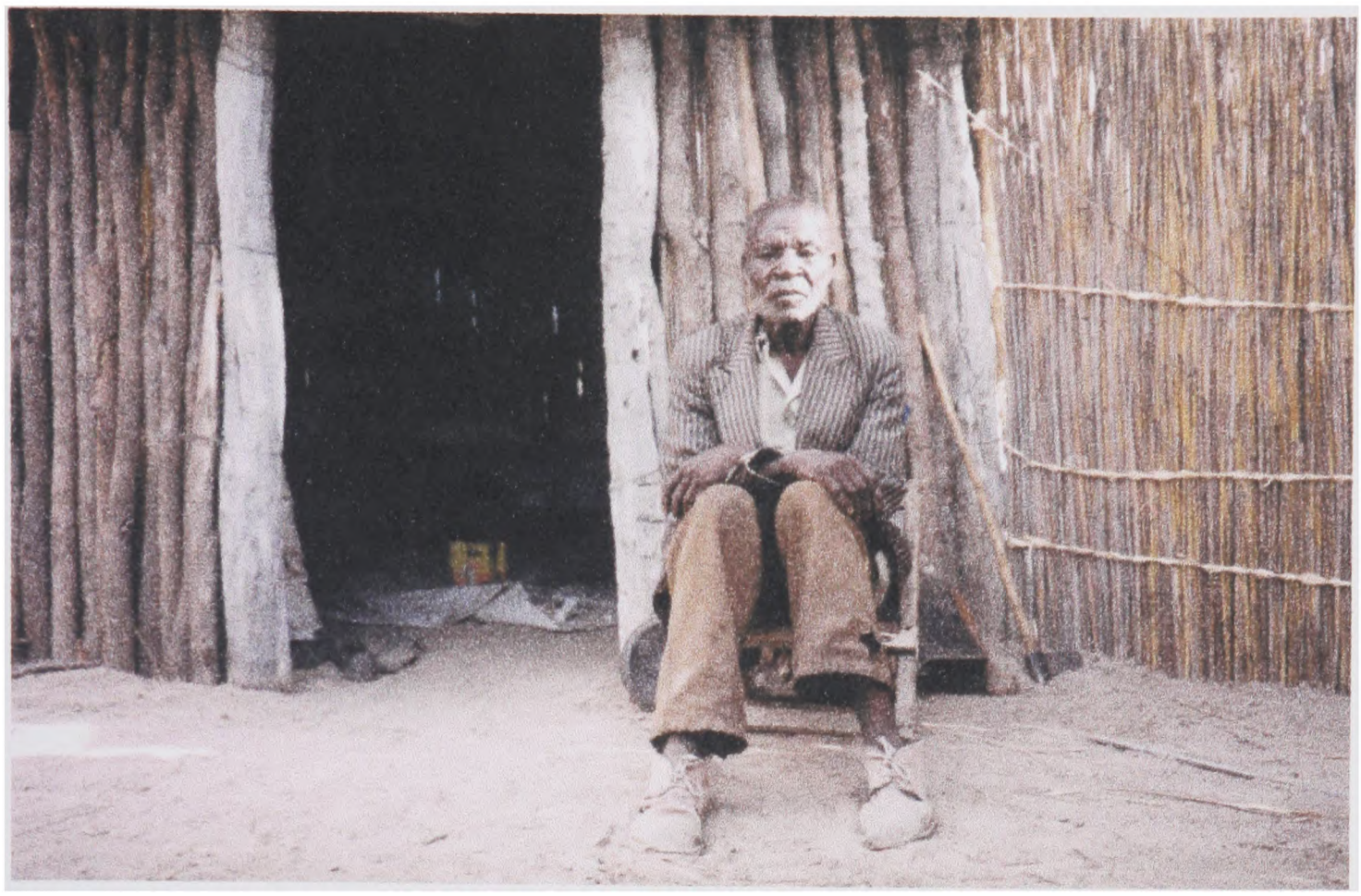




Plate 5 (top) Mothowamorena, an elder of Ghweghiri.

Plate 6 (bottom) *Lenyele* and *mothabakolobe* stems, old *letlhaka* and *tshikitsane* grass used to wall a house, Ghweghiri.

Chapter Five

Shifting Contexts: Taskscape and Settlement among the Pastoral Mbanderu of Lake Ngami Region.

Introduction

Like the previous one, this chapter seeks to explore landscape and dwelling on a relatively regional scale through analysis of taskscape and the temporality of place, yet also focusing attention upon settlement form. Moving west from the eastern Delta region, this chapter considers the Lake Ngami region and in particular the pastoral Mbanderu people (Figure 5.1). The Mbanderu are closely related to the Herero, with whom they share considerable social and cultural similarities. Both groups speak dialects of the same language, and both maintain a similar double descent pattern of social organisation, based upon the *omaanda* (sn. *eanda*) which are matriclans or mother groups, and the *otuzo* (sn. *oruzo*) which are patriclans or father groups. However, both groups consider themselves as distinct and originating from differing parts of Namibia, and indeed can in effect be considered endogamous, since marriage between Mbanderu and Herero is uncommon. Of the existing ethnographic literature on the Herero and Mbanderu in Botswana, Vivelo (1977) deals with some aspects of Herero culture, including homestead design, and Algamor (1980) deals with perceived Mbanderu social "closedness" with respect to pastoral activity and identity, arguing that the strong assertion of Namibian identity common among Mbanderu finds expression in their maintenance of a pastoral identity in Ngamiland. Algamor's argument is similar to that discussed by Parkin (1999) concerning the prolonged contexts of displacement found among refugees even many years after resettlement, in which uncertainty about relationships between persons, places, possessions and identities can be socially reproduced. He quotes Colson (unpub.) who argues that

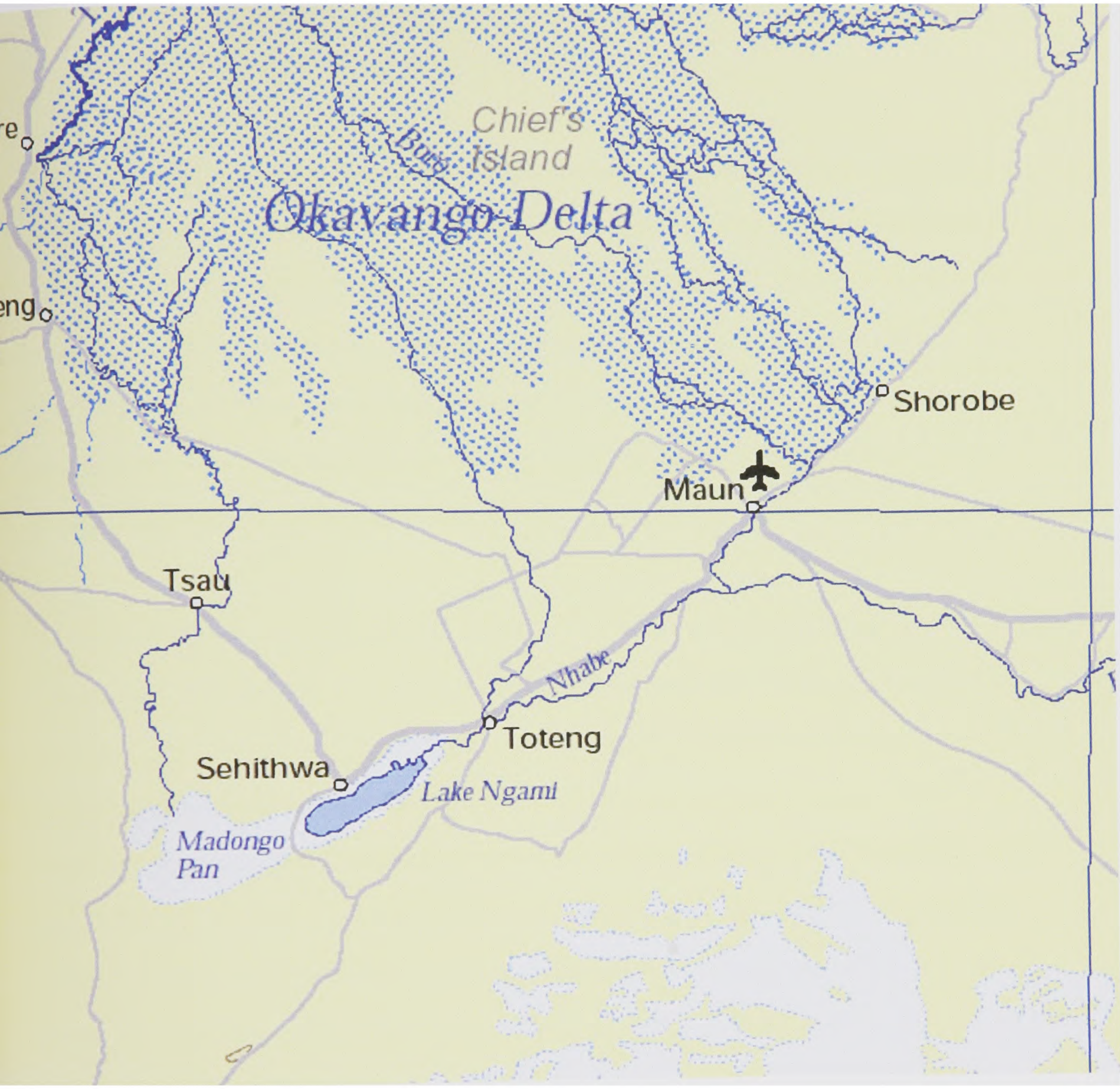


Figure 5.1 Southern Okavango Delta and Lake Ngami regions, northern Botswana.

Map source: United Nations, Dept of Public Information.

such coping strategies should be seen as belonging not just to marginalised peoples, but to many disempowered groups in relation to majority interests.

Although pastoral activities still dominate the Mbanderu taskscape, Tswana influence over time has meant that many Mbanderu families also maintain habitations in villages such as Sehitwa, and Mabudutsane ward in Maun. Such strategies of multi-locational habitation have been practised for many years, allowing the group to take advantage of services, employment and especially schooling. Extended Mbanderu families are scattered between differing places in the landscape, moving between places frequently. Indeed it is the social pathways between places that is the real focus of this chapter rather than places themselves.

The multi-locational aspect of this chapter reflects such diverse and fluid sets of experiences, characterised by frequent movement between locales and dwelling sites within the landscape. Such movement is an important and integral dynamic of social life for the Mbanderu. Whilst on one level such pathways are an integral part of a group's material and dwelling strategies, there are important social dimensions to movement occasioned by visiting, gifting, sharing in tasks etc. – paths allow and create the potential for arrivals and departures, the path of life and finally of death – people talk often of the paths (*ditsela*) that unite homesteads in the landscape, not just a metaphor for social ties but a description of how social relations are carried out in an everyday sense.

It is not my intention in this chapter to offer an historical view of Mbanderu settlement change from pastoral dwelling to multi-locational and semi-sedentary strategies, but rather to examine how shifting contexts within the landscape have affected dwelling experience and practices. I have examined such contextual change for the most part as an integral aspect of the inherent temporality of taskscape. Toward this I have structured the analysis into three distinct parts: an examination of

the pastoral taskscape and dwelling morphology of the cattle homestead, dwelling practices and homestead form in Sehitwa village, and finally an examination of Mbanderu dwelling in the urbanising town of Maun. Analysis in each case focuses upon how building practices and dwelling form are interrelated with a shifting taskscape, and how such dwelling forms reciprocally influence social life. Individual biographies are used to ground and explore the complexities of dwelling experience, as well as operating to open up some socio-semantic routes of dwelling analysis.

The Mbanderu Social Landscape: some context and background

Lake Ngami no longer receives the vast amount of Okavango Delta waters it once did historically, and today is mostly completely dry. It has continued to be a significant grazing region however, particularly for Mbanderu and Tswana peoples, and scattered settlements can be found around its vast perimeter. Although the Mbanderu have always resisted settling in villages and lived in scattered cattle homesteads around the lake, a significant number of families settled around the Tswana village of Sehitwa, including the Mbanderu headman (their Chief remains to this day in Namibia).

The Mbanderu of the Lake Ngami area understand their region as a single unity referred to as *ekondua rimue*, *rimue*[5] being the term used to describe people affiliated to the same descent group. The *ekondua rimue* is considered an area of pastoral activity within which each Mbanderu has social rights of movement and dwelling with his cattle. This sense of fluidity was expressed in responses to the Tribal Grazing Land Programme of the government of Botswana, which they termed *ondorota no ongaruhe*, 'fences there for ever' (Algamor 1980), i.e. fencing that would restrict the free movement of Mbanderu people and cattle within their region. The notion of

[5] Indigenous terms in chapters four and five are in Sembanderu, unless otherwise stated (Set.=Setswana). Interviews were conducted in Setswana in Maun and Setswana and Sembanderu in Sehitwa and Lake Ngami region.

ekondua rimue is an important context that frames the everyday pastoral taskscape. Many Mbanderu argue that fencing within the *ekondua rimue* should not be 'there for ever' in the manner of private ranches, demarcating private land. The *ekondua rimue* is understood as loosely arranged into differing named 'locations' where certain households consider their grazing areas to be. Such locations have "their own" rainy season pasture where they move to with their cattle when the rains come, and whilst this does not mean that a household must graze the same specific pasture each rainy season, it usually moves to and camps within a pasture area that is known as the grazing ground of their locality. The pattern of moving to particular pasture zones associated with specific localities seems to be relatively fixed over time.

Although within each locality important socially co-operative practices exist, many people see their closest social connections outside of their locality, since although close genealogical relations used to bind people to localities in the past, this no longer seems to be the case. One of the effects of expansive settlement around the lake periphery seems to have been the breaking off of agnatic sub-units (e.g. sons with their families) into new localities, which effectively weakened some social links between sub-groups, yet reinforced social ties at the level of the sub-unit homestead. The expansion of sub-units into localities is facilitated by the fact that cattle are identified as belonging to individuals rather than being communally owned within a collective herd. Livestock units belonging to social sub-units cared for in the same cattle pen are seen as inherently separable, and this enables groups to come together co-operatively and yet move apart again.

The meaning of 'locality' for families is mixed. On one level a man will describe a certain area, for example where his mother or father is buried, as a place where he has 'rights', as well as listing other localities with which he has an *oruzo* (patriclan), *eanda* (matriclan), or *ovakue* (affinal) connection. On another level, all localities within the *ekondua rimue* are felt to be interconnected

due to the nature of such social bonds. Algamor has noted that 'the issue of different locations might seem to be ecological, but it is, in effect, social' (1980:53). I would rather see both ecological and social dimensions of location and place within the pastoral taskscape as essentially interconnected aspects of dwelling, and the Mbanderu 'location' as a process of dwelling involving social, material and ecological relations. The often expressed notion (in Setswana) *re masika rotlhe*, "we are all kin", was used to explain the notion and practice of free movement within the *ekondua rimue*, a connectivity to various aspects of the landscape that is created, maintained and expressed through reciprocal economic and social relations. For example, drought may badly affect grazing in some localities and this may initiate a movement of people into other people's areas that have been less badly affected, and this is seen as being possible since there will undoubtedly exist complex social ties to neighbouring groups established over time.

Mbanderu cattle dwelling sites take the form of *onganda* (pl. *ozonganda*) or main homestead, and *ohambo* (pl. *ozohambo*) or wet season grazing camp. According to Kandapaera (1992), *onganda* were frequently moved in the past, in search of better dry season grazing and water sources, and the *ohambo* moved in relation to the *onganda* within the locality. This duality of dwelling sites is evident in the other pastoral landscapes, such as that of the Nuer, where residence is separated into dry season (*cieng*) and wet season (*wec*), the former being the village homestead and the latter a cattle camp. As rains arrive many pastoral groups take their cattle to graze fresh pastures some distance from the dry season water sources, as surface water becomes available as ponds. Although Evans-Pritchard (1940) saw the Nuer *wec* as 'temporary' cattle camps and *cieng* as more or less 'permanent' village sites, Burton has argued for the Atuot that 'it would perhaps make better sense to speak of cultivation camps and cattle villages' (1980:275), due to the social and ritual importance of the wet season camps. The importance of Burton's inversion of Evans-Pritchard's distinction is that it problematises the way that we read ecological adaptation socially, that is, just

because the wet season is shorter than the dry, cattle camps are not necessarily more 'temporary' in a *social* sense. In a similar way I want to suggest, as I did in chapter four, that the temporality of the Mbanderu landscape is inherently social, and that spatial movement in time (as well as temporal movement in space) is an important aspect of landscape formation.

The notion of *ekondua rimue* is a socio-spatial one since it makes no meaningful distinction between social (genealogical) relations and relations to place or places within the landscape, and is a term that describes and defines the Mbanderu social landscape. Spatiality is a difficult concept both in terms of its general nature and indeed of its particularities. Yet if, as Casey (1998) argues, place can be considered as a generalised notion, pervasive in the very particular ways in which people and things are always and everywhere emplaced, then we should perhaps understand *ekondua rimue* as a 'socio-placial' term. As such it expresses an understanding of the landscape in which place and social relations are interwoven in the production of meaning. Grazing locations for instance, as Algamor notes, whilst apparently ecologically adapted, are in effect socially experienced and interpreted. This coming together of both ecological and social dimensions of landscape is of course integral to the way that the taskscape is experienced and transformed over time. It is important to note that there is no meaningful separation between bovine, ecological, or social dimensions of the Mbanderu taskscape, but rather that each is in a mutually transformative (dwelling) relationship with landscape over time. As Harvey has noted, differing modes of production and social formations 'embody a distinctive bundle of time and space practices and concepts' (1992:204). This said, both spatial and temporal aspects of *ekondua rimue* should also be grounded in material processes, since it is the latter that enables the former concepts to gain meaning. Tasks are embedded in the materiality of Mbanderu dwelling, shaped by and in turn helping shape social activity in the landscape. As such, the Mbanderu *onganda* can be seen as a dynamic or transformative dimension of sociality, in that it both produces and re-produces notion

of social space and time. This is nowhere more evident in the *ekondua rimue* than on the level of the homestead (*onganda*) in the way that material and spatial relations interrelate.

The Onganda (Figure 5.2)

The Mbanderu homestead or *onganda* is the centre of social, pastoral and even religious activity. Without any centralised social or political system, it is the *onganda*, and especially that of the head of a patriclan, that serves as a social and ritual focus. From an Mbanderu perspective, the central part of any *onganda* is the cattle pen (*otjiunda*), in relation to which the household head builds his house, and his family in relation to him. Like other predominantly pastoral groups, cattle are the central focus of daily dwelling activities and social relations, which are often characterised by cattle relations, such as the cattle given to a wife's family at marriage. It is cattle themselves and the everyday tasks associated with them that form the nexus of the Mbanderu homestead. As one informant often told me, it is people that live alongside cattle, and not the other way around. This close dwelling relation between household and cattle is important to an understanding of both Mbanderu being and building practices. One of the earliest Herero ethnographies, by Buttner (in an 1883 monograph discussed by Vivelo 1977), notes that the term *onganda* connotes 'a place where milking is done', an understanding that privileges not just the role of cattle in everyday pastoral life, but the social importance of the *otjiunda*, the cattle pen, around which people dwell.

Without doubt one of the most consistent features of *onganda* organisation in Ngamiland is the positioning of this main house (*ondjeuo onene yo okuruo*) occupied by the head of the household and his wife, with regard to the *otjiunda*. Almost invariably this house is built with the door facing the main cattle pen in a westerly (*kukuhitira ejuva*) direction, and a visible path leads from the

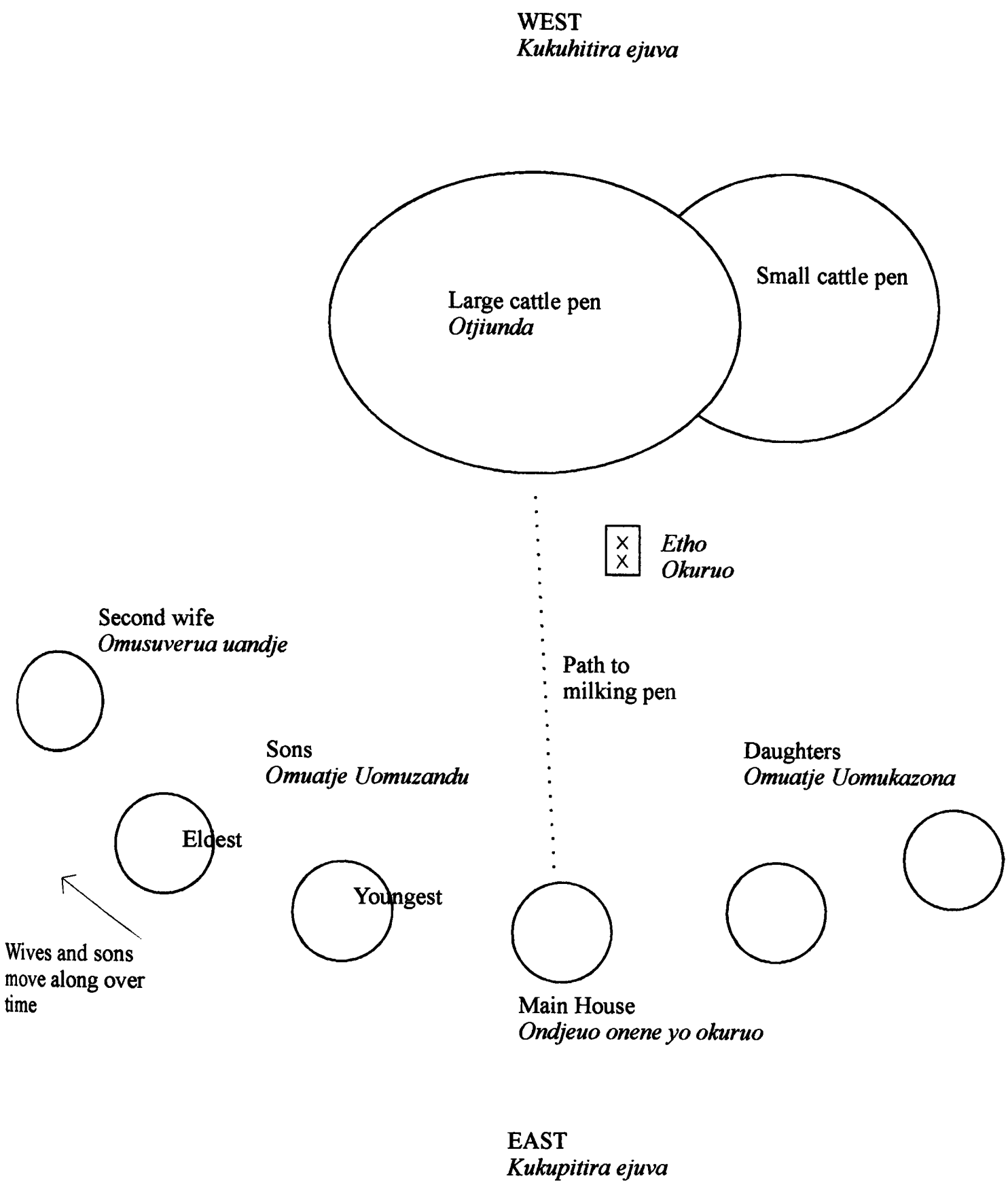


Figure 5.2 Schematic diagram showing arrangement of the Onganda or Mbanderu homestead.

house to the entrance of the pen in which calves are kept apart from the milk cows[6]. To the left (*ku kumuho*) of the main house, arcing away in a semi-circle around the pen are the houses of the sons (*omuatje uomuzandu*), and to the right (*ku kukunene*) the daughters (*omuatje uomukazona*), with the first born (*omuatje uomutenga*) furthest away, and the last born (*omuatje uomaanderu*) closest to the main house. Over time, social relations are altered through marriage and the building activities of maturing children of the homestead, all of which result in movement within the homestead, building and rebuilding in response to new sets of social relationships.

The path between the main house and the cattle pen (Plate 9) also serves to orient important religious practices within the homestead. Mbanderu religious practice is centred upon the ancestral mediation between their mortal descendants and a supreme but remote deity. Within the homestead religious practice is centred upon a ritual fire (*okuruo*) that is situated just to the right of the path between the main house and the cattle pen. Next to the ritual fire is an upturned thorn bush (*etho*), which is ritually linked to the *okuruo* (Plates 7 and 8). The religious importance of both *okuruo* and *etho* are complex and linked to the beliefs concerning the interrelationships between ancestors and their genealogical descendants. It is evident that not all homesteads are responsible for keeping *okoruo* and *etho*, since they are inheritable within a patriclan from father to son or between brothers. It is relatively common for households to refuse to inherit the *okuruo* and *etho* if they are churchgoers, in which case they may pass to another male relation.

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[6] It was suggested to me on several occasions by Tswana informants that the significance of facing west in Mbanderu and Herero culture could be understood if one considered that they were facing the direction of their homelands in Namibia, and that the dead were buried facing toward their ancestors there. No Mbanderu would confirm this however, arguing that it was simply an inherited cultural practice (*ombazo*). Herero oral historical data from Namibia does tend to corroborate this. In the collection of oral histories and stories, *Warriors, Sages and Outcasts in the Namibian Past* (ed. Heywood et al., MSORP, 1992), Kaputu relates that, 'in those days the houses of the Hereros were built in a circle within an enclosure with four gates. One afternoon a baboon came into the homestead from the west..then walked between the holy fire and the kraal, and from there it walked past the door of the main house of the holy fire to the eastern gate' (1992:62). The description of the baboon's movement suggests that the homesteads of pre-displaced Herero and Mbanderu in Namibia corresponded very closely to those found in Ngamiland, as noted by Vivelo (1977).

The *etho* is invariably a small thorn bush (normally Blackthorn, *Acacia detinens*) which Vivelo (1977) suggests symbolises the revered *omumborumbonga* tree (Leadwood, *Combretum imberbe*), which is widely held to be connected with ancestral spirits. The *etho* bush is collected by pulling up a bush (since its roots must be in place) and walking back to the *onganda* with it on the back. Both the *okuruo* and *etho* are used in the treatment of illness caused by ancestral displeasure (*mawe*). Rituals connected with *mawe* are carried out next to the ancestral fire and thorns, mostly involving the ritual splashing (*o kumba omeva*) of the sick. In some homesteads that I saw, the thorn bush was also where ashes from the *okuruo* were cast (see Plate 7), since they should not be scattered. Vivelo (1977) blames the loss of such 'former descent based activities such as reciprocal curing among patrisibs' for a breakdown of adherence to the 'ideal' homestead pattern. The lack of both ritual fire and thorns, he argues, takes away the orienting feature of dwelling practice that linked the present with the past.

The Mbanderu headman in Sehitwa explained the importance of the *okuruo* to me as the 'bringer of light and good luck' (Set: *mathogonolo*) to both the immediate homestead and those of the extended patriclan, considered part of the same genealogical house (Set: *motse wa mongwe fela*). He considered the *okuruo* as the connecting point between the patriclan and the ancestral world, at which healing should take place and a continuous flame kindled. Whilst the fire and thorns have an important occasional ritual role, they are also an integral part of the everyday dwelling activities of the homestead. The *okuruo* fire is lit each morning and possibly evening by the main wife, or if she is away by another person, and this continuity of observance is understood as important to the everyday well-being of the patriclan.

After visiting a number of *onganda* in western Ngamiland, it is clear that the building relations between the most basic sub-units of a nuclear family (household head, sons and daughters), as well

as the importance of orientation toward the west, is a consistent organisational principle that orders the Mbanderu *onganda*. When it comes to more complex family arrangements, over time different families approach building relations in a variety of ways, and whilst many expressed such relations as norms, little consistency between families is apparent. One such case is the eventuality of a male household head's death with no sons, or no sons old enough to establish a new homestead with himself in a new main house. In this case, related one informant, the grandfather or uncle or other close male relative will incorporate the widow and her family within his own homestead, in which case they will keep their cattle (*ozongombe* sn. *ongombe*) within his cattle pen. The widow will build close to the household head to his left, and his sons will rebuild further along if required, to make space for her house. The daughters of the deceased will then build with the other daughters to the right and any sons building beyond the natal sons to their left, arching around the cattle pen. The widow would then occupy a position normally associated with a second wife. Another informant however related that she had gone to live at the homestead of her mother's brother for this reason, but had built to the left and not to the right with his other daughters since the pattern should be inverted to show or indicate to others that they are members of the extended family rather than the nuclear one.

Another instance of variation in practice is that of polygamous households, that were still relatively common among my Mbanderu informants. Whilst many agree that a second wife should build to the left of the main house beyond the eldest son, some say she should build between this son and the main house. For a third wife, some say she should build between the second wife and the eldest son, and others that she should build to the right instead, with a fourth wife building to the left again. It is clear that when questioned on cases of extended family and polygamous households, people's responses regarding homestead organisation are mostly based upon past experiences rather than any strictly interpreted cultural norms. Since polygamy is now relatively

uncommon, as are extended kin households, the divergence of idealised patterns may be explained in terms of the way experience, memory and notions of culture interrelate. Whilst some people believed that they had not built according to an ideal arrangement, questioning on the derivation of ideal patterns invariably led back to former experience from the parental homestead, or other close relatives. Since the practices of previous generations are invariably seen as the source of social and cultural continuity for an individual, abstracted notions of culture (*ombazo*) are inseparable from reflections on practice over time

Whilst Vivelo wrote about the *onganda* that 'although not one existing Herero homestead conforms to the ideal, it was confirmed as an ideal plan by all' (1977:34), he does not explore the arguably more interesting space between the *ideal* and *practice* of dwelling sites. What he does suggest is that there has been a steady breakdown in customary homestead arrangement due to the breakdown of traditional religious practices that formerly provided a crucial orienting focus for homestead organisation. In practice, he argues, most homesteads only roughly follow the ideal designs and for the most part do not adhere to them at all. For me, this raises several potentially more interesting anthropological questions - what is the nature of such 'ideal designs' indigenously, since they were not claimed as being analytical constructs, but agreed indigenous blueprints for dwelling, and how do such conscious expressions of 'culture' interrelate with everyday dwelling practices, the materiality of engaged social activity? Norms may not originate as abstractable rules, but they often become so – the question is whether there is an important distinction to be made between the ethnographer expressing norms and people themselves. The question of why people articulate norms is as potentially interesting as the inadequacy of such norms in capturing social realities. In this sense, memory operates at different levels and there is a significant distinction between learned social memories that are often collective, and individual memories of past experience of dwelling practice.

The Ohambo

During the wet season when surface water ponds are available, cattle may graze for some time away from grazing areas close to the *onganda* and its water source, usually a hand-dug well. Such pastures are widely known and seem to be repeatedly visited by people grazing within a certain location. These remote cattle camps or *ohambo* are often revisited sites where houses and cattle pens are renewed with materials gathered in the bush close by. Thatching grasses are collected that will last the rainy season, and new poles may be cut from Terminalia trees, with walls in-filled with soil and cow dung mixture between horizontal supports. Visiting between the two sites (which may be a day or more away by foot) begins immediately, with milk, sourmilk and meat being brought back to the *onganda*, and other goods being taken to those staying at the *ohambo*. Those staying away with the cattle are likely to be young men who spend their days herding, but it is not uncommon for women to be there also, milking and making sourmilk. The *ohambo* camp is built in a similar manner to the *onganda*, but is likely to have fewer buildings since most of the family will only visit for relatively short periods. The important ancestral fire and thorns for instance will not move to the *ohambo* during the wet season, and elderly and young children may also remain behind. However, as I discussed earlier, it would be wrong to thus consider the *ohambo* as an inherently 'temporary' wet season dwelling site in relation to the relatively 'permanent' *onganda*. As mentioned earlier, the social landscape of Lake Ngami is perceived as divisible into locations, each containing interdependent dry and wet season grazing areas. Wet season grazing areas are relatively stable within the landscape over time, and are perceived as of equal importance as a factor in the ordering of locations within the landscape. Also, although building practices and other material investment at the *ohambo* are relatively less durable when compared to the *onganda*, the *ohambo* is not inherently perceived as 'temporary' in a social sense. The period of time at the *ohambo* is remarked on by people as a time of differing social activities, such as singing and

dancing, which heighten its social and ritual importance to the group. Although differing materially from the *onganda*, the *ohambo* is no less socially permanent an element of the Mbanderu taskscape, and in many ways is in fact perceived as a site for social permanence due to the sorts of activities and social relations associated with it.

This pattern of pastoral dwelling involving wet and dry season grazing sites within the landscape has been affected over time by a combination of local and national influences through contact with non-pastoral (especially Tswana) people, which has led to increasing semi-sedentary practices, such as cattle-less village homesteads and even agriculture. Over time such contextual changes in dwelling have led to important shifts in the socio-semantics of Mbanderu settlement. One example, discussed in more detail later, is the case of Sehitwa, the main Mbanderu village of Lake Ngami. For most Mbanderu people living in villages such as Sehitwa, *onganda* indicates the cattle-less village or town homestead, and *ohambo* the remote cattle homestead, thus becoming roughly equivalent to the Tswana duality of village (*motse*) and cattle post (*moraka*). The fact that *ohambo* has come to be used for cattle post or *moraka* rather than wet season cattle camp is significant in that it represents a translation of experience from pastoral to village-based and increasingly semi-sedentary dwelling in which the Tswana model of village, cattle post and fields (*motse, moraka le masimo*) has been socially negotiated as a way of understanding new practices. Such shifts in meaning over time are integral to the way the changing taskscape is temporally related to experiences of place and the material dimensions of dwelling.

From Homestead to Burial Site

When an Mbanderu dies, he or she is often buried within the homestead in a position dictated by their social relation to the household head or *omuini*. Increasingly, the cemetery at Sehitwa is being used as an alternative site. However, unlike the Yei of Shorobe discussed in the last chapter,

an Mbanderu family will move away (usually only up to a kilometre) from their homestead site when the leader (*omuini* - 'owner') dies and is buried there. Other members of the family may be buried in the homestead without precipitating such a move however. Whilst for the Yei burial in the homestead is not incompatible with continued residence however, and in fact produces closer social relations to place, for the Mbanderu the burial of the male household head in the homestead leads to a shifting migration (*o kutjinda*), a movement that transforms a homestead (*onganda*) into a burial site or *etundu*. The term *etundu* semantically indicates both former dwelling place and burial site, but whilst all such burial sites are former dwelling places, not all former dwelling places are necessarily burial sites. One Mbanderu woman described her reason for migration as a feeling of 'not wanting to live in cemeteries' (Set: *ga re batle go nna mo mabitlang*), something echoed in Cyprian Ekwensi's classic story of the pastoral Fulani of Northern Nigeria, *Burning Grass*:

'Sunsaye was indeed well beloved and they buried him in great pomp on the spot where his first camp had been. Then they cleared away in great haste. For legend holds that the place where a man died is bad luck' (1962:118).

Another important facet of the *etundu* that also distinguishes it for instance from Yei practice is the way that it becomes used as a burial ground for future generations. Indeed, unless a household have moved to a completely new location, family members are more likely to be buried at such an ancestral burial place close by than in their own homestead. If the household head or *omuini* is not buried in the homestead, but in the *etundu* of his parents or grandparents or in a cemetery, many Mbanderu say that they need not migrate, although some argue that the homestead is associated with the deceased leader and the new *omuini* should establish his own *onganda*. If the family do not migrate the new *omuini* will be expected to occupy the main house, although I have seen examples where he will not do so until the deceased leader's main wife either leaves the house or

dies. One informant, Tududa, told how his great-grandparents were buried in Namibia, but that his grandparents had been buried in their old *onganda*, which has become the family burial site (*etundu*) since his father and mother are also buried there. Another, Makuruhona, told me that his father had not been buried at his grandfather's *etundu* since it was too far away, and so had been buried at his own homestead. Another woman, Constance, related that a family migration of 50km due to drought in their former location means that her father will not be buried with her grandfather, but will start a new *etundu*. Another woman, Kautaponde, described how her husband had been buried in their homestead, after which they stayed there for about a year, during which time she was not supposed to milk the cows or even look toward the cattle pen (*otjiunda*) for fear of bad luck. Her eldest son then established a new homestead some distance away. However, another man, Johannes, argued that a migration should take place at most one to two months after a burial.

Whilst the burial of a former *omuini* precipitates a material and social process of reorganisation within the household, it is the movement of the cattle pens to another site linked to a new household head that is perceived as the central dimension of migration. Inheritance and ownership of cattle socially defines the new *omuini* as a social nexus for the dwelling relations of other relations. This important dwelling relationship between cattle activities and sociality is also inherently a material process - the reconfiguration of social relations over time is spatially engaged with through the group's engagement with the materiality of the dwelling site, building and rebuilding the cattle pens, houses and hearths of mutually involved social activity. Once new cattle pens have been made from cut thorn bushes, spatial (that is, building) relationships based upon each person's relation to the new *omuini* of the main house (*ondjeuo onene*), are renegotiated. Within the homestead both building relationships and social relations are interwoven dimensions of dwelling experience. Whilst homestead movement precipitates a sudden reorganisation of socio-

spatial relations within a homestead, where no migration takes place, socio-spatial changes through building may be more gradual. Building, moving and rebuilding are common experiences as socio-spatial relationships change over time. One informant, Uatira, described how his father's second wife had had to rebuild three times, and himself twice, in order to accommodate the houses of younger brothers and their wives. The second wife then decided to move to the right side in order to avoid another move, even though she felt wrong there on the side where daughters build.

A woman, Konee, pointed out that she is married to the eldest son in an *onganda*, and that they had had to move twice to make space for the second son after his marriage to two wives. Even though her husband is the *omuini*, the mother is still alive and they will only move into the *ondjeuo onene* after she dies. The mother had not left the main house after the death of her husband because he had been buried elsewhere and they didn't have to move. Konee also described how she crushed the old houses and took the useful parts away, even though it was the responsibility of the younger son 'forcing us to move' to gather materials for them. She also related how the family had moved from a previous place due to poor shade, and that her husband's father had insisted he be buried there and to make it the *etundu*, 'since he did not wish to force us to move from this new place as we all liked it'. Another elder woman, Mata, told how her husband had been buried at his parents' *etundu*, and that she would also be buried there. Her eldest son would then move to occupy the main house, having previously moved once before to make room for the second wife of his younger brother. Such biographies all suggest how social changes are interwoven with the spatial and material dimensions of dwelling over time.

If the new *omuini* or household leader (usually a son or brother) is to inherit the *okuruo* and *etho* (ancestral fire and thorn bush) from the previous plot then additional practices are involved. When the previous *omuini* is buried, the *okuruo* and *etho* are taken from their place to the right and

moved to the left of the path. Some describe this as a form of 'death' to accompany that of their custodian. The inheritor is usually an eldest son, or if he is unwilling (perhaps due to Church sensibilities) another senior male relative such as a brother. Two informants, Wahuma and Washiwa, described how the migration of the *okuruo* and *etho* always takes precedence, so that it is one of the first things done. 'If the main house is not yet built, the place where the house fire is to be will be made, and after lighting it will be taken to the *okuruo*, made ready near the cattle pen'. The importance of this continuity is such that a stick from the previous *okuruo* is used in its migration. One elder in Sehitwa, Pata, described how he had inherited the *okuruo* and *etho*, 'cutting a piece of *Mogkalo* (Blackthorn) across the grain rather than splitting it (*go kgaola*) and putting it in the *okuruo*. Whilst it was still burning I brought it here to make a new *okuruo*'. Pata used his parents' *okuruo* fire to light his new house fire, which was then used to light the new *okuruo* the next day. In this way, ancestral continuity was assured between both ritual and home fires. Whilst there is no domestic cooking done on the *okuruo* since it is considered a ritual hearth connected with ancestral spirits within the homestead and patriclan at large, it is lit each morning from the main house hearth, normally by the senior wife, which establishes an ongoing relationship between daily dwelling activities and religious practice.

Burial Positions: Dwelling and Transformation

In summary, burial is a practice carried out both within a homestead and at a former homestead or *etundu*. In general, the burial of family members other than the household head (*omuini*) may take place within the *onganda* (such as females within the cattle pen) without precipitating a migration. If the *omuini* is buried within the *onganda* then a new leader will normally re-establish a dwelling site a short distance away soon after. If the *omuini* is buried elsewhere (at an *etundu* or cemetery) then a migration may still occur, or the new leader may soon after inhabit the main house of the *onganda*. What I want to examine now are differences in the positioning of graves within the

homestead and then after its transformation into an *etundu*. The transformation of a place from dwelling to burial site is an important one for the Mbanderu, which brings with it altered burial practices and social activities connected with the site.

In terms of burial practice within the homestead, discussion with at least a dozen households showed that certain consistent elements over time are evident. The most significant is the positioning of the grave (*ombongo*) of the *omuini* or male leader of the household, which is positioned outside of (and with head towards) the cattle pen (i.e. 'facing' west), and to the right of the central path, close to the ancestral fire and thorn bush (*okuruo* and *etho*) (Figure 5.3). I will briefly summarise the descriptions given by four households about other elements of burial practice:

Wapakwa related how wives of household members are buried *within* the smaller cattle pen, and that the head of the woman should face toward the centre of the larger pen. Children, she related, should be buried beneath the thorn fence of the smaller pen, and the thorns replaced over it. A relative then added that 'children are buried under the thorn fence so that their graves cannot be trampled by cattle...older people's graves can support themselves but a child's grave is too fragile to be stood on'. Tutuda related how his father had been buried at his grandfather's *etundu*, and that he also would be buried there. He suggested that it was customary for generational lines of graves to move from right to left, so that his grave and that of his family would be placed to the left of the path instead of to the right where his parents' graves were. Also, there should be a clear spatial division in the grave lines of males, women and children. However, 'all the graves should face west', he said, 'since everything has its own culture - even the birds build their nests in the trees

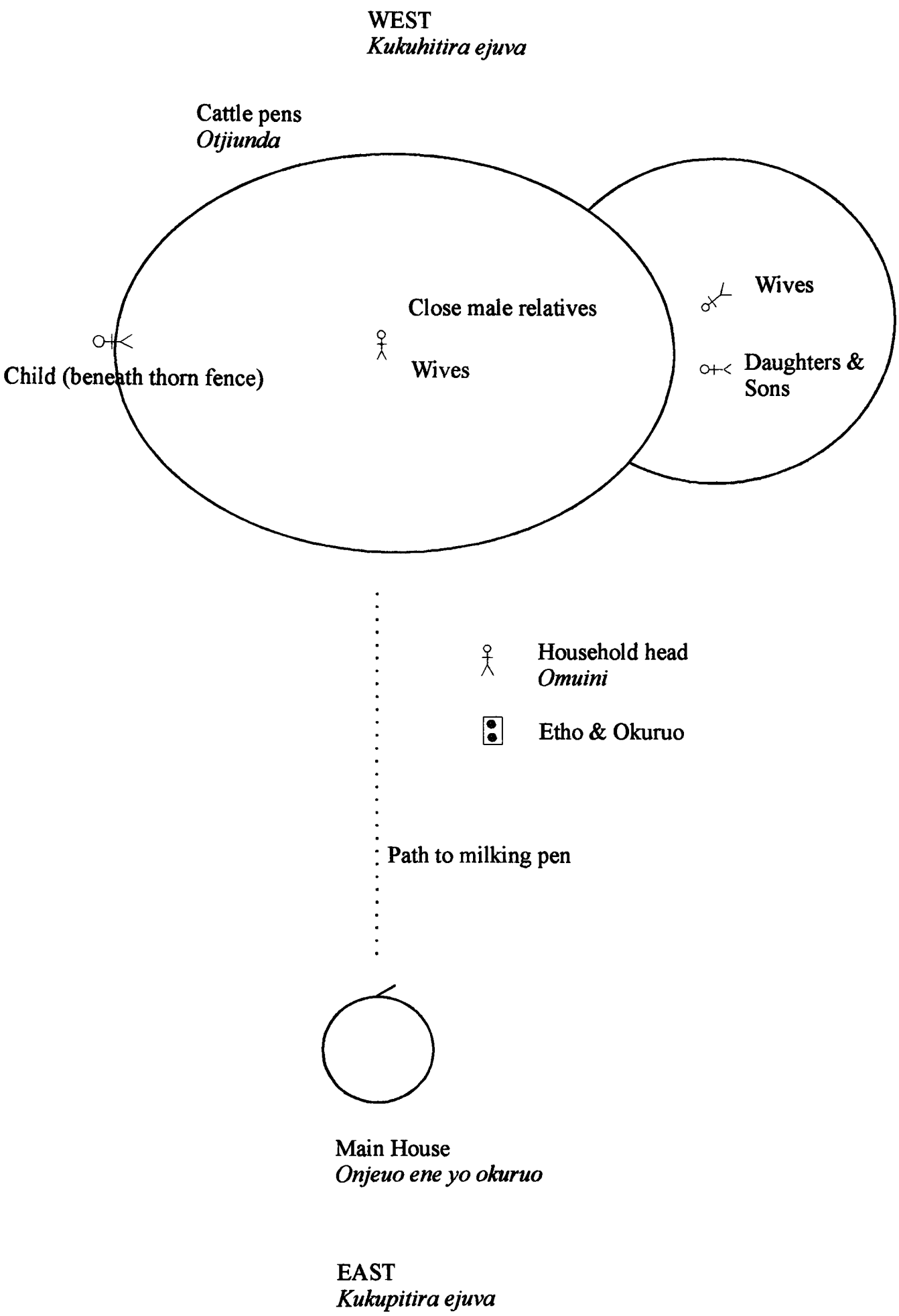


Figure 5.3 Common burial positions within the Mbanderu homestead. Other burials than that of the household leader will not bring about a migration.

facing west[7]. I visit the *etundu* very often. If someone is sick I cut a twig from a thornless tree to show respect and place it on the graves as I call their names'. Makuruhona related how his grandfather had been buried in a place called Makaku yet his father and mother were buried at their old homestead, where he also would be buried since it is now their family burial place. He and his brothers would be buried in the line of his father, his sons in the line of his mother, and females such as daughters and wives inside the area of the old small cattle pen. For another, Hijavitama, whilst he would be buried outside the cattle pen of his own homestead, his wife would be buried in the large pen facing the small one, with his daughters and sons inside the smaller pen.

It is evident that there is a good deal of variation in burial practices among Mbanderu families. On the death of the household head, the door (*omujeruo*) of his house is removed and placed to one side. One informant, Johannes, related how formerly the door was made from the skin of a cow, and that this skin would be taken by the new *omuini* to found a new main house. However, it seems that although the door is still removed today to indicate respect for the deceased household leader, it is not necessarily inherited. In general after migration none of the materials from the old main house are reused but left to decay. 'We say that these things have been collected by the deceased and so we should make our own buildings' said Tududa. 'We do not crush his house', said another informant, 'because we want the spirit of the man to remain in the *onganda* since he is buried there in the *otjiunda*'. 'The first thing done at the new *onganda* is the construction of the *otjiunda*' related one woman, 'and whilst the new pen is being made the *omuini* will place a stick where the new main house will be, and it will be built there after'. Once this building is finished, the rest of the household will begin to build in relationship to it. Several other informants also said that they never took materials from an old homestead when establishing a new one, especially not

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[7] Birds mostly build nests in on the westerly side of Acacia trees to avoid the intense heat of the day, and some Mbanderu suggested to me that doors were faced west since people wanted to ensure that the entrance to doorways, where people often sit, was likewise kept shaded.

the thorn fence. 'Nothing is supposed to be taken', one man insisted, 'for instance for firewood, especially from the cattle pen for young cows since beneath these thorns a child may be buried. You see, the cattle pen is both the cradle and the grave of the *onganda*'.

The cattle pen, the *otijiunda*, is perceived as both the thorn fence boundary and the space created within, which together hold and gather the cattle of the homestead. The metaphor of the cradle is suggestive of the way this feature of the homestead is perceived as both protective and nurturing, not just of the cattle, but of the social existence of the household - its very identity and future well-being. In this sense the material boundary of the *otijiunda* gathers and nurtures the vulnerabilities of the symbiotic relation within the homestead between cattle and people, it is felt as demarcating a space connected with the ancestors. Most Mbanderu see the *otijiunda* as situated outside of normal space and time relations within the *onganda*, and thereby in essence closely connected with religious practices. The ancestral and religious contexts in which the relations between cattle and people are bound make the *otijiunda* the material and spatial focus for ritual activity within the homestead.

The transformation of the homestead into a burial place is a process in which material and social forces are both at work over time. The importance of a temporal approach to the social landscape is evident here, since these places emerge as important to a process of dwelling, as events as much as sites. As I have discussed, it is evident that the positioning of graves within the homestead is altered significantly when the homestead site becomes an *etundu* or burial place. The statements about burial practice discussed in this chapter show that although there is a significant variation in the understanding of burial practice norms, all Mbanderu understand a distinction in the manner people are buried within a homestead (*onganda*) and a former homestead (*etundu*). To summarise this distinction, in the homestead people are buried in relation to the cattle pen as the social and

ritual focus of dwelling, in a position dictated by their social identity within the homestead (i.e. wife, child etc.) whereas in the *etundu*, people are buried in relation to the graves of previous generations, and often in a line below them or to one side. In the example shown in Figure 5.4, the former cattle pens and houses have long since gone, the family having moved on the death of Tududa's grandfather who was buried next to the milking pen (as shown in Figure 5.3). Tududa's grandmother was also taken to be buried at this site some years later, as were his father and mother, in a line behind them. According to Tududa, future graves will not follow this line, but instead move to the other side of the former path, where graves will be placed according to their social relations to each other. In another example (Figure 5.5) this mixture of generational and sex based organisation at the *etundu* is also shown. In this case however, clusters or areas of burial are used instead of lines, with the founding grave placed according to burial in the *onganda* (father of interviewee) and his mother to the left of the path. These two examples show how Mbanderu burial organisation at the *etundu* is considered mostly from the perspective of close kin ties, especially the relationship between the deceased and the ancestral founder of burial site. To my knowledge there is no extant English language ethnography of Mbanderu burial practice which could give a broader ethnographic context for this analysis.

This transformation of burial practice between the *onganda* and *etundu* within the same site is obviously closely connected with the temporality of dwelling, since it is the removal of the cattle from the former cattle pen to a new place that is fundamental to the process of social transformation. It is clear that within the *etundu* the former cattle pen location is not regarded and is unimportant in the positioning of family graves. The importance, and meaning, of the cattle pen as a physical locus for burial within the homestead is interwoven with its role as a material container of the household cattle - it is its temporal dwelling context that is important in

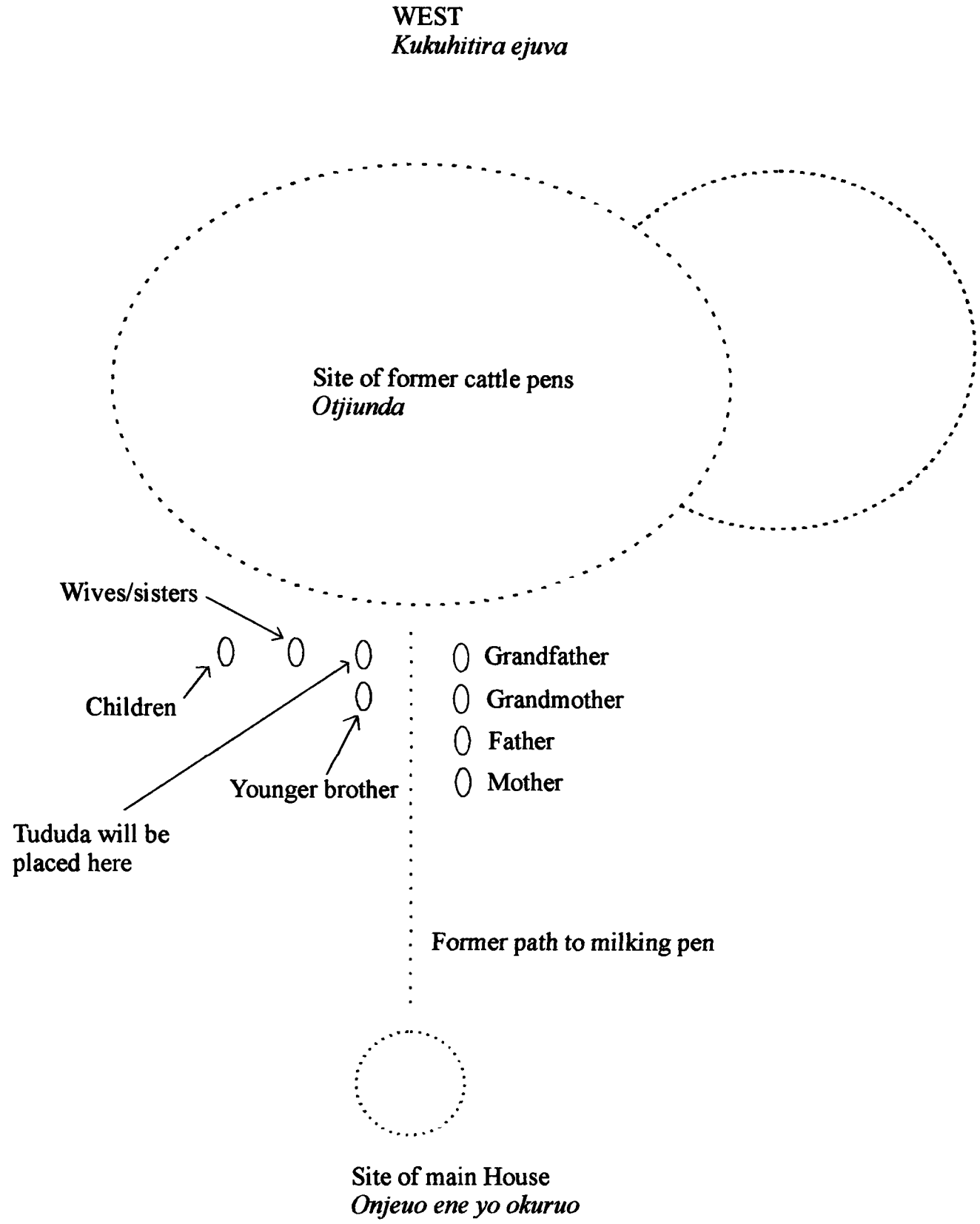


Figure 5.4 Schematic diagram of burial organisation at the *etundu* of Tududa Kambata (from a sand drawing). *Relationships shown are to interviewee.*

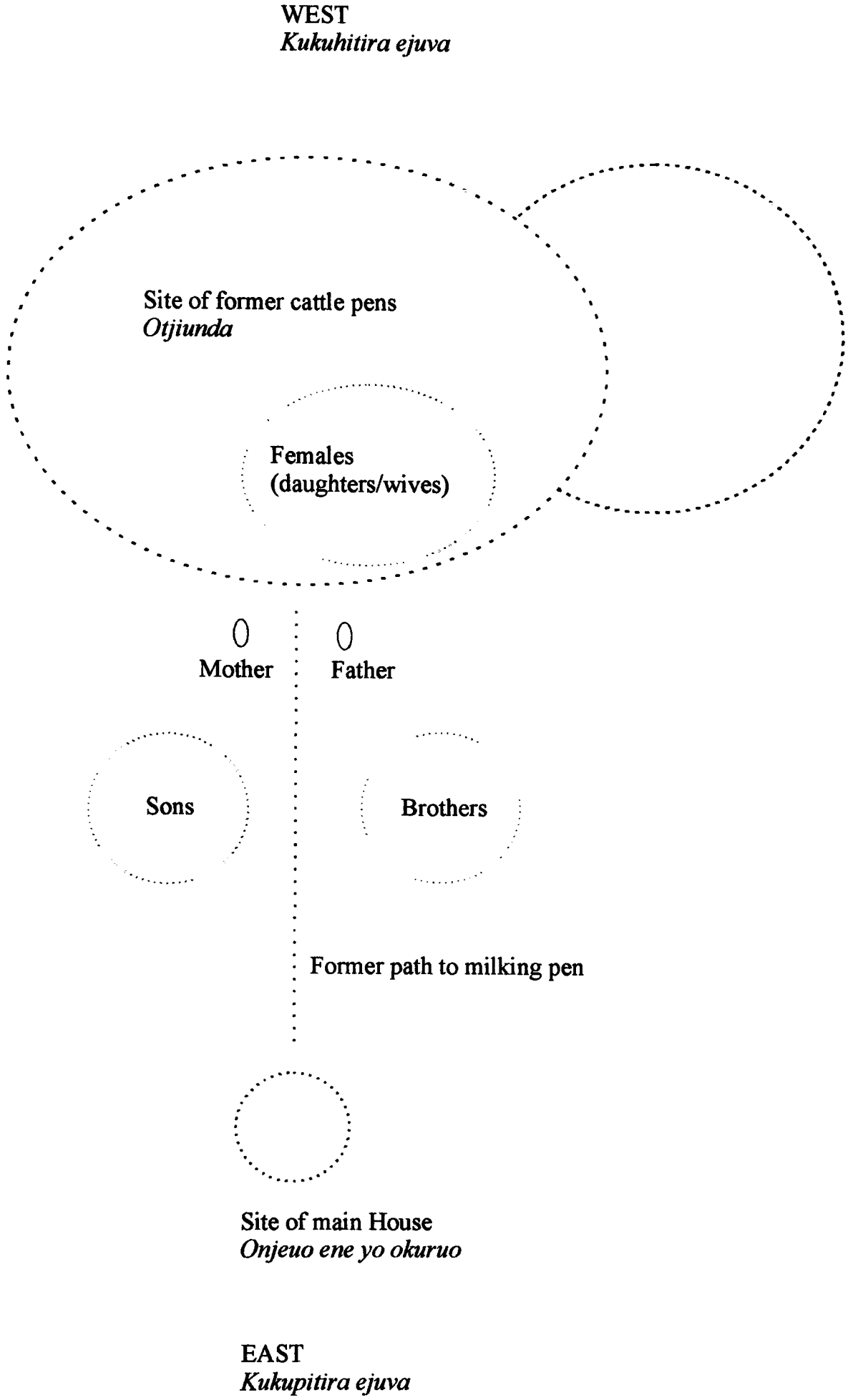


Figure 5.5 Schematic diagram of burial organisation at the *etundu* of Mukuruhona Kandjou (from a sand drawing) *Relationships shown are to interviewee.*

religious practice, rather than any abstractable or architectural meaning. Once the cattle have been removed, the *otijiunda* loses its meaning as a locus for ritual activity, especially burial.

One of the key elements arising from the examination of data on settlement discussed thus far is that of temporality, and how the consideration of movement through time is central to an understanding of socio-spatial change. In addition, it is the materiality of dwelling that grounds our concepts of spatiality, and exerts an important influence on sociality in general. In this discussion, the way in which movements in the landscape are socially ordered is through an engagement with the various tasks of dwelling - the making of the cattle pen, the main house, the lighting and daily renewal of the fire - and the practice of such activities is involved in the creation and maintenance of social groupings. The way such social activities give rise to cultural forms such as the *onganda* or *etundu* is a shifting, temporal process - for instance in the way burial in the *onganda* is focussed on the cattle pen (*otjiunda*) where everyday life is centred, whereas post-migration burials will normally focus spatially on relations to other graves. Moreover, the way in which the materiality of the *onganda* arises through dwelling activities, can be seen as exerting a mutual influence upon the social processes within the *onganda* over time - producing and reproducing an arena of socialisation. The temporal responsiveness of the homestead forms to changes in the taskscape is such that socio-spatial relations within the *onganda* are frequently in a state of flux in response to the human lifecycle.

Experiences of Village Life

Although the Mbanderu have always had some small presence in major villages in Ngamiland, such as Maun, either because of political coercion or to take advantage of goods and services, such presence has increased in villages in recent decades due to a number of factors. Most Mbanderu suggested to me that one of the most important 'pull' factors influencing them to build a village

homestead was the provision of primary schooling in many villages from the 1970s onwards, as well as the availability of water, and the small possibility of cash employment. Whereas in the previous section the nature of Mbanderu pastoral dwelling was considered - the temporal and dynamic relationship between social activity and dwelling form and landscape, this section examines Mbanderu involvement in the growth of a village in the Lake Ngami region, Sehitwa. This involves analysis of various contextual changes in the Mbanderu taskscape over time, and in particular an examination of several household biographies, in order to ground an understanding of how dwelling and place are mutually influential over time.

Oral accounts suggest that Sehitwa was a settlement site associated with Tswana (Tawana) migrations in the region north of Lake Ngami in the second half of the 19th century, which some Mbanderu people eventually settled near to, possibly to benefit from trade and other social exchanges. Oral accounts suggest that Sehitwa was probably one of the first permanent Mbanderu grazing localities (*onduriru*), before other areas on the Lake Ngami periphery. The Mbanderu and Herero had certainly been under political pressure to settle in villages throughout the first half of the 20th century, mostly as an indirect result of colonial administration attempts to rationalise tax collection through the Tawana chiefs in Maun. Mbanderu leaders always resisted this process, which they saw as a direct attack upon their pastoral identity, even to the extent that they viewed schooling as jeopardising their chances of returning to Namibia. In the 1940s and 50s Tswana cattle-keepers began moving to bore-hole ranches away from Lake Ngami, yet the Mbanderu were resistant to doing likewise, apparently since cash investment in bore-holes was not considered consistent with pastoral activity, since it would force them to remain in particular localities. In the same way, many considered that investment in a bore-hole in Ngamiland meant that they would never return to Namibia. Such repatriation concerns are still important for many older Mbanderu,

although I found less evidence of a long-term desire to return to Namibia among younger Mbanderu who had schooled in Botswana.

Sehitwa, as with all settlements, is a dynamic product of the changing social activities of its inhabitants over time. According to oral accounts, before the 1960s or 70s the small number of Mbanderu families that lived around Sehitwa village lived in homesteads with their cattle with them, grazing them in the vicinity. One of the most important changes in the Sehitwa taskscape was the agreement to remove cattle entirely from the village environs, sometime during the early 1970s. The headman, Uatumua, related that before then Sehitwa 'was a scattered grouping of homesteads with cattle pens, but that people soon started moving into the village from outside to enable children to attend the [junior secondary] school that had been established'. The potential conflicts between cattle and such homesteads quickly became apparent, and a meeting was convened at which a decision was made to remove cattle from the village to cattle posts elsewhere. Whilst the Mbanderu had always resisted the coercion to settle in nucleated settlements such as Maun in the first half of the twentieth century, the gradual shift in context that transformed Sehitwa from grazing location to village site with school, police buildings, and tribal offices (*Kgotla*), was an entirely different set of political and social processes.

Most Mbanderu decided to keep their homestead in Sehitwa and make a new 'cattle post' in the Tswana manner some distance away (which became referred to as *ohambo*, now connoting cattle-homestead rather than wet season grazing camp). This new duality of village homestead and cattle post constituted a new dwelling experience for most Mbanderu. It inevitably meant that families no longer resided mainly in one cattle homestead as one extended unit but instead moved frequently between village and cattle sites, creating and maintaining material and social pathways in the landscape, in the form of milk and meat being brought to the village and purchased goods

taken to the cattle homestead. This sort of movement and visiting became an inextricable part of daily life, since dependants such as school children and the elderly (Plate 12) began to reside in Sehitwa close to the school and clinic, male family members staying mostly at the cattle homesteads, with women moving frequently between sites supporting both village and cattle homestead units. Alongside the movement of cattle activities away from Sehitwa was the gradual migration of family sub-units from other locations into the village, building homesteads to enable their children to attend school and for sick and elderly family members to attend a clinic. In many cases it is women who are involved in building and maintaining a village homestead for schoolchildren, with men making occasional visits. Increasingly some Mbanderu have built in villages so as to find cash employment, such as cleaning or government-run activities, for everyday subsistence, a process of cash dependence that has recently increased dramatically after cattle disease (CBPP) decimated family herds in 1995. The processes of family sub-unit territorial expansion that were discussed earlier arguably led to fragmented nuclear groups that were more vulnerable to disasters such as CBPP and the concomitant changes in dwelling activities, leading to greater village in-migration.

Narratives of Duality

In March 2000 I began to record Mbanderu narratives about the transformation of Sehitwa and of how spatial changes and social changes were interrelated dimensions of the temporal landscape. The narratives also revealed the importance of material culture in the memories of change and transformation of place, highlighting how the material dimension of place is integral not just to the experience of social change over time, but also its collective understanding. Such narratives also provide important insights into place as process of (rather than an arena for) dwelling.

Prisca was born in Sehitwa, and for much of her life remembers it as a grassy and wooded area, 'this was the cattle grazing place', she said, 'everything we did was centred on the *otjiunda*, the cattle pen'. The former cattle pen is now recognisable as a patch of tall green plants encircling a large Camelthorn tree some hundred metres or so to the west of the group of houses. 'The village has developed (Set: *go thabologa*) a lot', she reflected, 'even the goat pens have gone'. In the 1970s they drove their cattle out of the village toward Daotsao, some 65km away, to keep them in their relatives' cattle pen, only later establishing their own pen there yet continuing to stay in their relatives houses rather than build their own. 'We might establish some houses next year', explained Prisca, 'but now we just go there occasionally to get milk and meat and to visit people. We have no transport, we have to pay for lifts. But there is good grazing there. Some of us are planning to go and stay there and make it our *onganda*, but my husband is the head and he works in Sehitwa now so he will not go, just us'.

Analysis of the layout of Prisca's homestead (Figure 5.6 and Plate 10) shows that although the cattle pen is now gone, former socio-spatial relations between houses based on the cattle homestead have been maintained, with the second wife building to the left of the main house, a son to her left (*ku kumuho*) and a daughter to the right (*ku kukumene*) of the main house, with the first wife having no children. Two houses built for visitors separate the first and second wives, and many other people confirmed that visitor houses should be positioned close to the main house to the immediate left. Prisca chose to talk about change through a significant set of objects within the house however - the household milking calabashes. 'When the cattle went, so did the calabash (*njupa njondere*)' remarked Prisca. In the main house (*ondjeuo onene*) of most cattle homesteads, a group of calabashes (*njupa*), milking buckets (*otjikanderu*), a funnel, spoon and skin container for making fat are kept. The main calabash, the *njupa njondere*, belongs to the leader, who offers people milk to drink from it. There are in addition three 'female' calabashes, called *njupa kaodidi*,

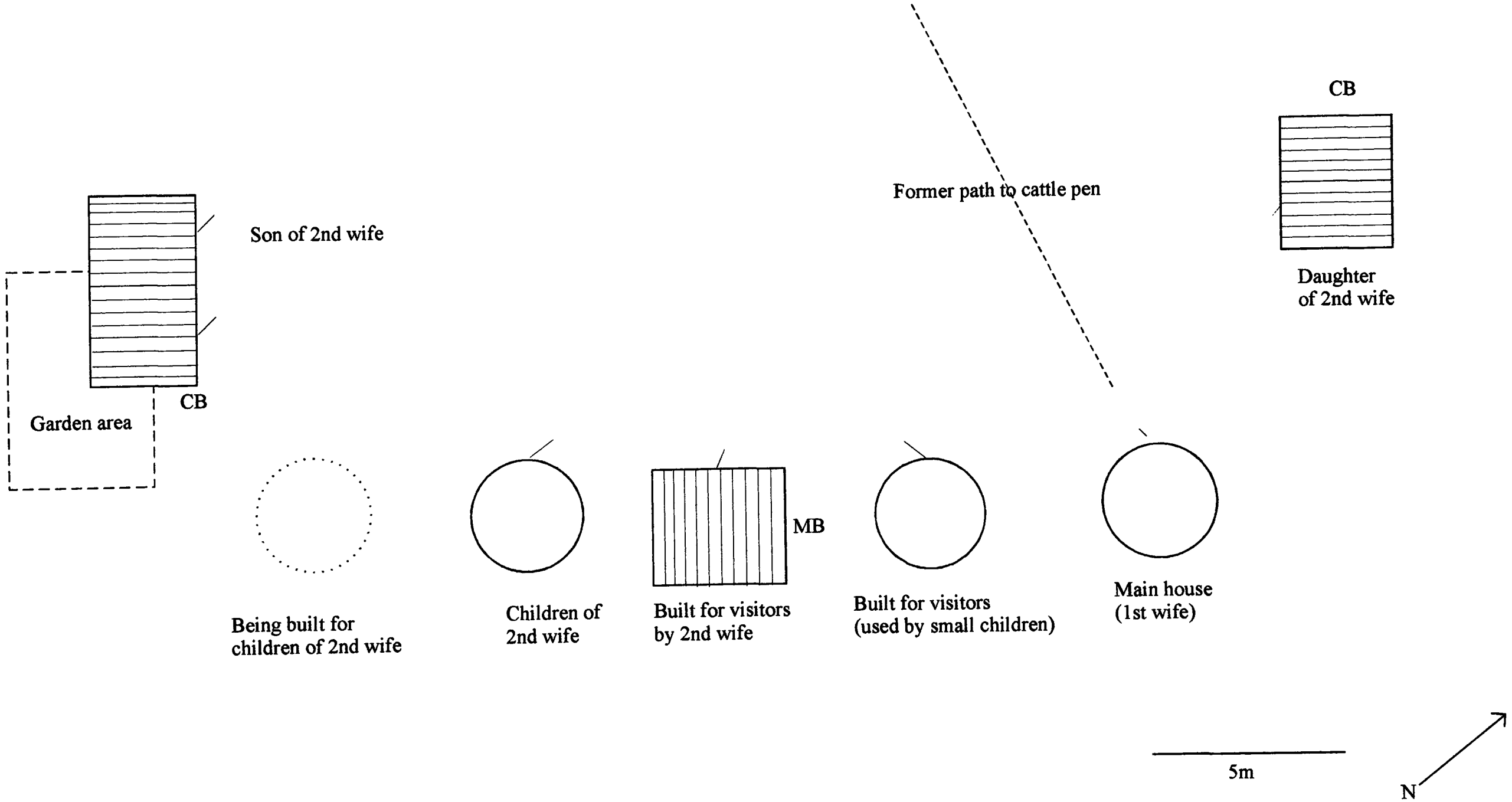


Figure 5.6 Homestead of Prisca Uhona, Sehitwa.

njupa yaluma and *njupa maguno*, each of which hold differing prohibitions associated with the status of the user. Another calabash, *njupa ngwaha*, is often kept to the left of the door as one enters, and is associated with circumcised boys.

The system of calabashes is so closely linked to beliefs surrounding a household's cattle that since CBPP disease many people no longer use the socially restricted ones, and only use ones for general consumption by all household members due to the lack of cattle. A household's set of calabashes are considered important objects surrounded by social prohibitions connected with the fertility and fortune of the herd, and thereby the family itself. Prisca related that although her family's main calabash went with the cattle, the others were hung in an empty house in the homestead in Sehitwa with a fire lit each morning and evening to honour them (Set: *go supatlotlo*). They felt it better for the calabashes to stay alone without anybody living with them since the cattle had left the homestead. 'When there are cattle in the cattle pen' stated Prisca, 'the calabash should live in the main house where people are sleeping, not living alone, but since the cattle have gone, they should not stay with people. This is not our custom (*ombazo*) since it is something that has only happened because Sehitwa is now a village and the cattle have gone. We just lit a fire in the hut where we put the calabashes to show to others that something is inside the house' (Set: *go supa gore go na le sengwe mo ntlong*). In this sense, 'something' takes on a resonance of importance (something worth respecting) and in one sense can be understood as a response to the perceived agency of the calabashes in their relationship to the family herd. The social lives of such objects that undergo changes in their everyday dwelling context are of particular interest since they illuminate some of the complex and fluid ways materiality is dynamically involved in the dwelling process over time. Prisca was not so much articulating cultural norms about dwelling thereby as she was suggesting a culturally circumscribed way of *coping* as part of dwelling, which to me seems an important distinction.

*

Uatumua Nguvauva is the Mbanderu headman at Sehitwa, younger brother to the Mbanderu Chief Mumjuku Nguvauva II, who was some years ago asked to stay with the Mbanderu population in Namibia. Uatumwa described how his brother took the *okuruo* and *etho* with him, and showed me the place where they used to be, not far from the old cattle pen. When the cattle were taken away to a new site the family decided to keep the main house (*ondjeuo onene*) and *okuruo* in Sehitwa, since this was where most of the family continued to live (Figure 5.7). At the new *ohambo* they built houses, including a *moemedi*, a copy or 'representative' of the main house, opposite the cattle pen. 'The eldest son will inherit this *moemedi* as the *ondjeuo onene* (leader's house) in the future', he stated, 'since he lives with the cattle, the *ohambo* will become the main homestead of the family rather than the village place, and the main house will be there rather than here. For now, the house just represents the place of the leader'. The creation of a *moemedi* or representative house was a way of coping with some of the social contradictions of dwelling between two sites for this Mbanderu family. With most family activity remaining in the village, the homestead retained features associated with cattle even though they had been removed, such as the *okuruo* and spatial relations between individual houses. However, with a possible shift of main residence (and particularly the family head) to the cattle homestead site in the future, these survivals of cattle homestead organisation in a cattle-less place will undoubtedly transform along with the shifting taskscape.

*

Mbaeba was born at her parents' homestead at Botatugo, some distance from Sehitwa, but after she married and moved away her parents left for Namibia. She became the first wife of two to a man in another location, Tulugamoro, but both the husband and the second wife died. Her husband

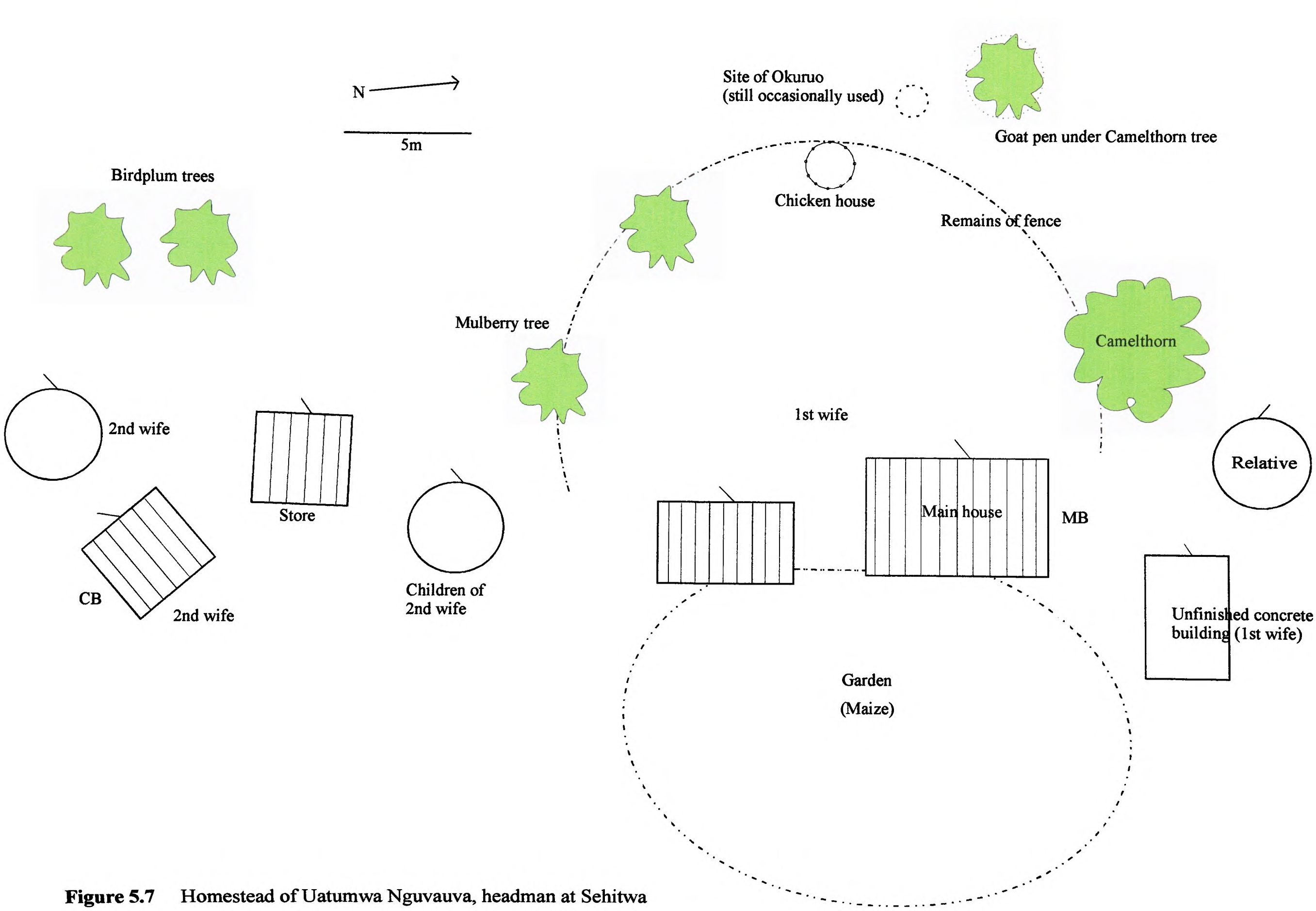


Figure 5.7 Homestead of Uatumwa Nguvauva, headman at Sehitwa

had built houses in Sehitwa for the family children to attend school and for himself to seek cash employment constructing houses for the Village Development Committee (VDC). Her son continued to take care of the family cattle at her parent's homestead, but in 1995 disease left them cattle-less. They then decided to move to their cousins' location some distance away (Gareng) where there was a bore-hole they could use. Her and her daughters spend most of their time in Sehitwa now working for government drought relief schemes, only occasionally visiting her son and relatives in Gareng, taking them goods and returning with milk (*omaere*) and perhaps dried meat (*otuhango*). We sat inside her house during a heavy thunderstorm, looking out towards the orange and black clouds nearing sun set. 'When we came to build here we still built our houses with the doors westwards, even though there are no cattle here' she explained, 'since this is what I am used to (Set: *ke e tlwaetse*). One of my daughters lives with me and works at the VDC, the other married and moved to her husband's home in Sehitwa. So you see we are becoming village dwellers now (Set: *banni ba motse fela*), and my daughters are more used to it than life at the *ohambo*. A lot of people came after the cattle disease to look for work, some using the compensation money for building with concrete bricks, since there is a lack of normal materials to use in the village, and renewal is a problem since there is no cattle dung '.

Many discussions about settlement differences and transformation involved the subtleties of meaning in the Setswana verb *go tlwaela* (to become used to, or familiar with, something, someone, some task) as used by Mbaeba. This verb also forms such terms as *tlwaelana* (reciprocal verb) meaning two people becoming used to each other, and *tlwaelo* (noun formation), similar to the English word 'habit'. For Mbaeba, the dualities of settlement involved a dual life, with differing qualities, tasks, and approaches to dwelling, based upon differing sets of social activities, experiences and expectations. At first, my understanding of *tlwaela* was somewhat two-dimensional, taking it as essentially part of an 'it's just what I'm used to' statement. In a

phenomenological sense the complex process of gaining familiarity with surroundings, both social and material, moving between differing parts of the social landscape in a fluent way, is arguably a fundamental topic of anthropological research. What people such as Mbaeba are expressing in verbs such as *tlwaela* is the experience of gaining social fluency in coping with different dimensions of the social landscape. Moreover, *go tlwaela* suggests a familiarity with place that is integral to the process of dwelling, since it is in the totality of tasks, skills and bodily comportments to different places that fluency of coping and dwelling unfold and are expressed. For Mbaeba, the temporal subtleties of *go tlwaela* as the experience of place over time, explained why she built in the manner she did, why her children were less interested in cattle life, and why she felt less at ease in the village than they did. It is in the expansive exploration of the socio-semantics of verbs such as *go tlwaela* that future research could interestingly explore what it is to dwell within a landscape, between places and social groups over time.

*

Close by, a path leads to a standpipe with wooden posts arranged around it to keep donkeys and goats away, and further on is the homestead of Kapombo, a middle-aged woman, busy with clearing tough grasses growing up in the sandy living area. She was born at her parent's *onganda* in Tsau and was brought on marriage to Sehitwa by her husband to his father's place. Sometime later she divorced herself from him and went to live at her brother's homestead in Thololamoro. After some time there she heard of cash employment in washing for some white contractors in Sehitwa, and put up a shelter for herself there to stay in. Over the next few years she gradually continued to build up the homestead with her brother's help, collecting wood from his area and discarded iron sheets from Maun, using a friend's car. Her brother's young children came to live with her in order to attend the local school. Her brother keeps a house for her at his cattle place, and she sometimes goes to visit him and returns with milk products, especially sour milk, a staple

at the cattle homestead. On entering Kapombo's plot one is immediately struck by the changed spatiality created by the positioning of buildings within it (Figure 5.8 and Plate 11), that stands in contrast to the other Mbanderu homesteads around it. If an archaeological study were to compare this plot to its neighbour it might well conclude, based upon evidence of ground plan alone, that here lived a non-Mbanderu family. Kapombo however is an Mbanderu, and the explanatory context for the unusual (at least in Sehitwa) spatial arrangement is that being partially disabled, her movements between buildings would have been difficult had a line of westerly facing buildings been constructed. In this way, communication between architectural elements within the plot is adapted to her needs, although she would not consider doing this at the *ohambo*, where the cattle are. When asked why, she answered that 'all the houses should face the cattle pen at the *ohambo*, but here it is a village and so things are different'. This biography suggests the importance of understanding the body as a source of spatiality, in which bodily movement is fundamentally creative of space and built form. In the case of Kapombo, the relation between body and homestead form is made conspicuous since her disability has disrupted the norms of spatial movement that are a fundamental dimension of what we understand by dwelling. Disability raises questions about the given nature of the body in understandings of social activity and material culture, and also highlights how taken for granted the body is in analyses of building practices.

These biographies of Sehitwa bring out some of the complexities of a changing taskscape and its relationship to place over time. In particular they show how place itself is dynamically involved as a process within the landscape, exerting an influence on the changing make-up of social activities over time. The biographies discussed here reveal how the regional scale of dwelling, encapsulated in the Mbanderu notion of *ekondua rimue*, in which landscape and social group are brought together, can be critically examined on the scale of the homestead, in the way wider social

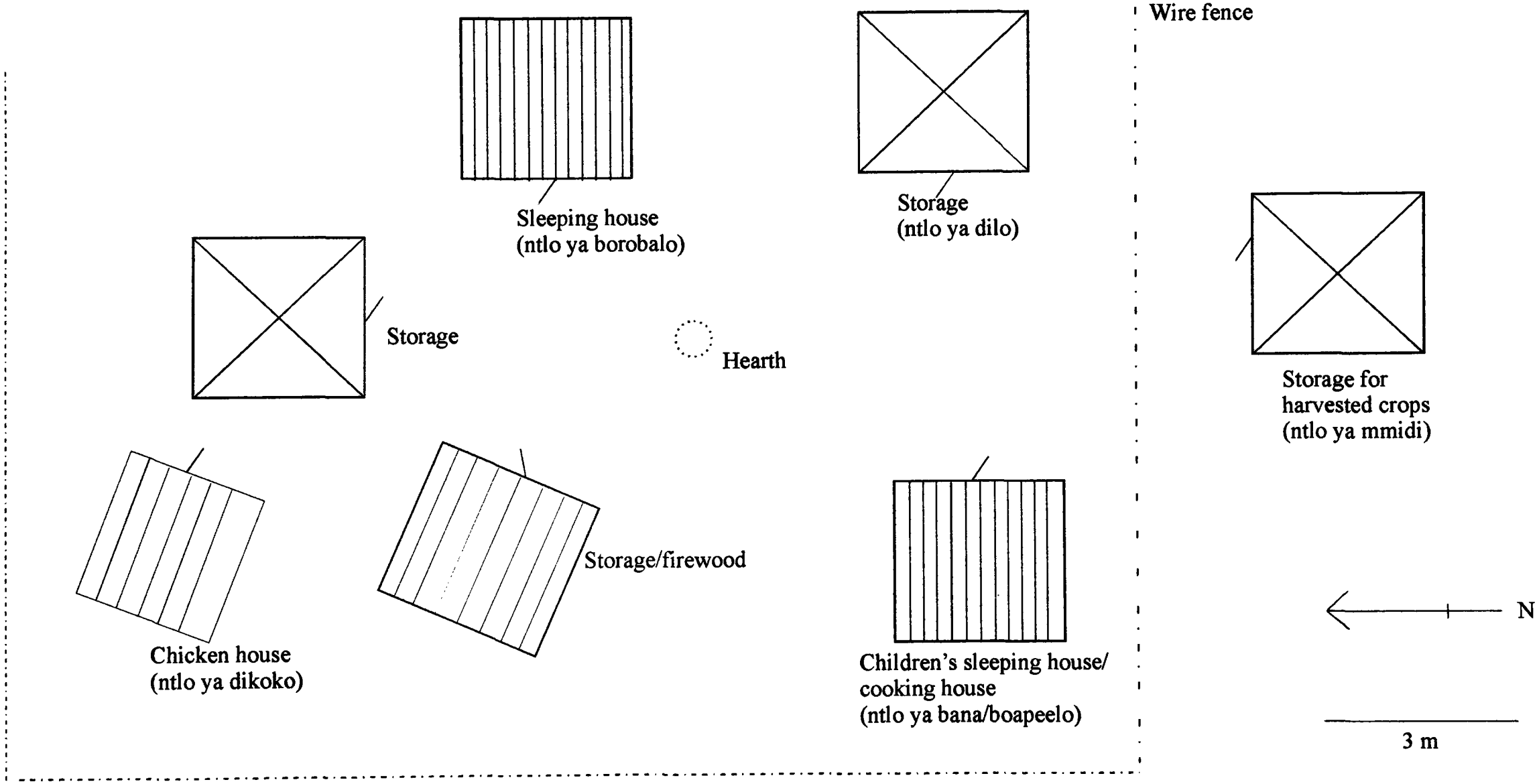


Figure 5.8 Homestead of Kapombo Mareng, Sehitwa.

activities within the landscape are experienced. This approach has revealed how such things as the treatment of calabashes, 'representative' houses, the temporality of 'becoming used to' village life and physical disability, are all important aspects of how place as process of dwelling is experienced.

Reproducing Displacement and Marginality: Mabudutsane or 'Herero Village' in Maun (Figure 5.9)

It seems that there has been some Herero and Mbanderu presence in Maun since at least the 1920s or early 1930s, that is, shortly after the founding of the village. According to one Herero woman the first Herero inhabitants in Maun were two women, Enoke and Kangamero, who settled the present site in the early 1930s. Her own family have had a presence there since the early 1950s after Kgosi Mrs Moremi tried to influence the Herero headman Kaominga Kahaka to settle in Maun. However, although some families are now cattleless and are permanently resident in Mabudutsane, the majority continue to consider Maun a place for schooling, visiting the hospital or relatives and purchasing goods, whilst most of their attention is directed toward cattle-based activities elsewhere. Frequent movement between remote *ozohambo* (cattle posts) and the *ozonganda* (homesteads) in Maun produces and reproduces the networks of material and social exchange that have always been central to Mbanderu dwelling activity in the landscape. In particular however, I want here to concentrate upon an analysis of Mabudutsane sub-ward as a locale involving the production and reproduction of these sets of dwelling activities through both material and socio-spatial relations. In doing this, I will examine how this place exists as an arena of socialisation, producing and reproducing social and temporal notions of displacement and marginality commonly expressed by its inhabitants. An examination of several case studies of family dwelling areas will help to ground this analysis.

'Herero Village' is the English name for an area of habitation either side of the road from Sehitwa near the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA) property, (formerly the London Missionary Society Church) on the west side of Maun. The area is in fact referred to by the Tswana tribal administration as Mabudutsane, meaning a sub-ward of Mabudutsa Ward. The Tswana headman of this ward Rra Odirile, explained that since the Herero have never been granted their own ward within Maun they live there without any local political representation. Whilst the area is known as Herero Village, probably less than one third of its inhabitants identify themselves as Herero, with the majority claiming Mbanderu identity. I spent over six weeks of fieldwork with this roadside community, which included approximately thirty formal interviews with households, as well as numerous informal discussions and activities, and I also produced a detailed plan (Figure 5.9) of one area of Mabudutsane between the U.C.C.S.A. (United Congregational Church of Southern Africa) and the Sehitwa road (see Figure 5.10 for position of study area).

Most houses are made from natural and salvaged materials rather than concrete blocks, and corrugated iron shelters house a number of drinking places where people group to purchase Chibuku (commercially sold sorghum beer). Most households comprise school children of varying ages, with female relatives taking care of them. Other noticeable groups are more transient and include people attending clinics or the village hospital which is relatively close by, young males and females hoping for some cash work, people visiting and purchasing commodities, and women in formal employment.

A town planning report prepared on the area in 1991 concluded that: 'the socio-cultural attributes of the predominantly Herero community in the area may have somehow also influenced the development of the unusual plot formations, which has unfortunately led to overcrowding. Young adults tend to erect their huts next to their parents on the same plot rather than move.. this suggests

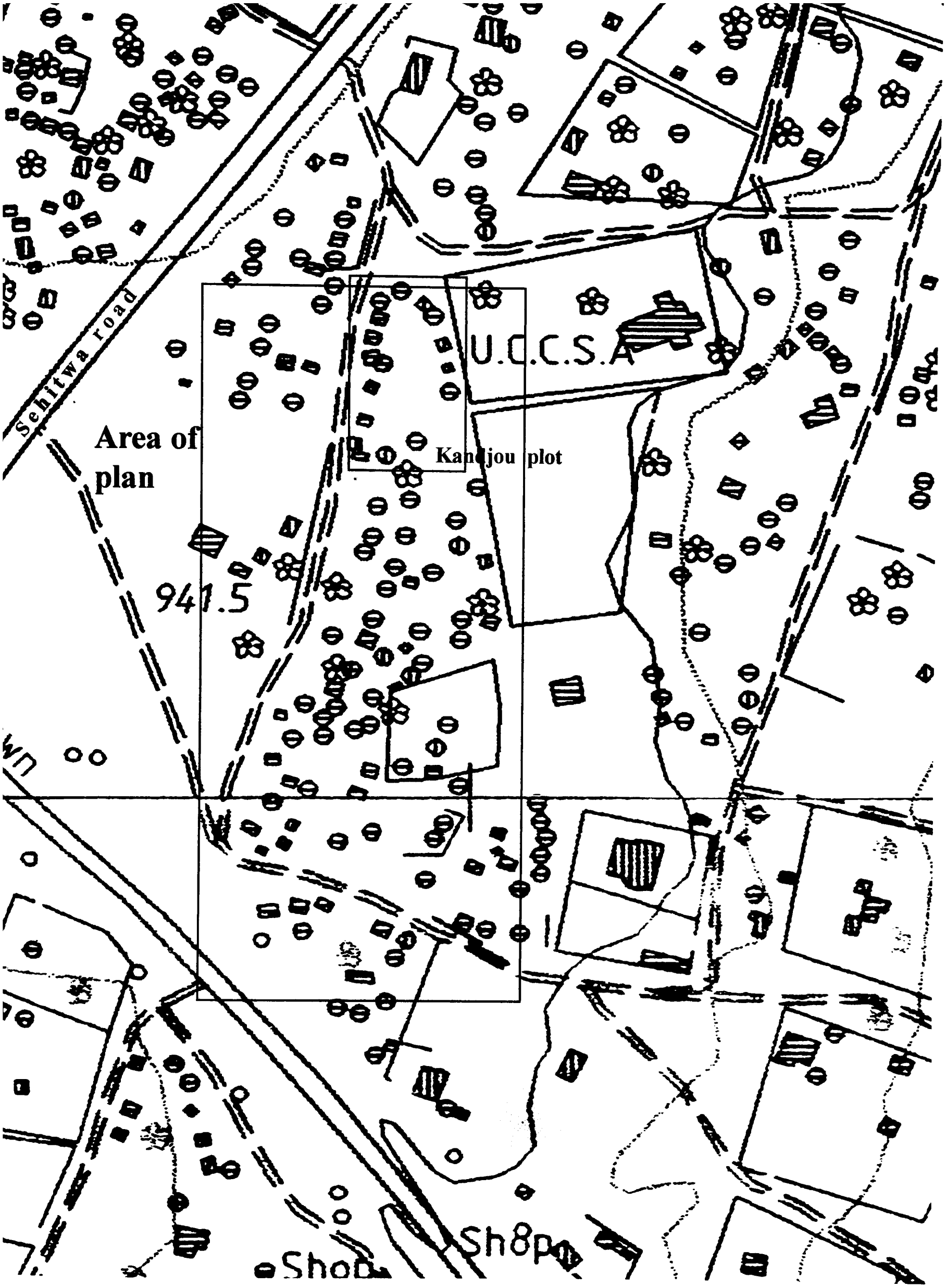


Figure 5.10 Location of plan [Figure 5.9], showing part of Mabudutsane ward ("Herero Village"), Maun.

Map source: Dept of Surveys and Mapping, Government of Botswana, 1994 (Sheet 0943) Based upon 1994 aerial photography.

a desire to maintain strong family and community ties' (Malila 1991:46). Since the vast majority of plots are unfenced and since more than one household may be building together as extended kin, it is no easy matter to identify family compounds or homesteads. In fact, this is partly intentional on the part of its inhabitants, who consider the area as a 'base camp' for Mbanderu and Herero people whilst in Maun.

Over time, the number of houses has increased with extended family members joining each other, and since no formal plot boundaries exist, demarcation and claims to living spaces are rare. On drawing a detailed plan, people were however able to identify "their" dwelling areas. These areas were not simply where they carried out domestic activities such as cooking, but in fact were zones around houses belonging to specific relatives who had built with them. As I mentioned earlier, people often build houses in specific spots to incorporate the resultant space between buildings as a socially recognisable one, rather than a notional one. This process, in which the practice of building creates and maintains social space, explains much about the socially recognised plot boundaries shown to me in Mabudutsane. 'We never thought of fencing our areas', said one woman, 'since we are all related people staying in one place. We are different to other people since we take care of each other and build together'. 'We don't know how to organise ourselves in a village', said another woman, 'since there is no *otjiunda* or main house to build with'. 'We do not need to separate ourselves with fences like the others in Maun,' related another, 'since we are all related people staying together, sharing our everyday things....you cannot live together with such boundaries'. 'At the ohambo no-one is allowed to build behind another person, but you will find that here' argued another woman, 'my parents built in a line and this is better since we can see each other and communicate well. There are often disputes here... I once went to the *ohambo* for some time, and on return found that someone had used my place to defecate in, and I quarrelled with them (Set: *go omana*). Some years ago a man built a house behind us here saying that he had lived

here many years previously and he was returning, but he died soon after and the house fell down'. The temporality of domestic space in Mabudutsane is an inherently social and negotiable, fluid set of practices, articulated through building practices as sets of socially produced material relationships.

When arriving there from remote cattle areas, it takes some time to adjust to the social and spatial complexities of the area. What quickly becomes apparent is that this settlement is a product of the range of Mbanderu social activities in Maun, dwelling activities that contrast markedly with other resident groups. For the most part, most Mbanderu do not regard Herero Village as a secure area for dwelling, and are generally suspicious of Tswana tribal administration and government intentions toward them. Few Mbanderu or Herero families expressed to me that they considered the place their permanent home, and acknowledged the transient nature of visits, employment, schooling and residence. Many suggested that the area had become crowded and haphazard as a result of collective reluctance to admit any long-term notion of 'belonging' to the village or even Ngamiland. My argument is that whilst contexts of identity are continually evolving, places are integrally involved in such processes, and that Herero village in particular has been dynamically involved over time in processes of social production and reproduction. Places make people as much as people make places.

Mabudutsane as a Locale of Socialisation

Finally, I wish to consider how Mabudutsane exists as a locale involved in the production and reproduction of sets of Mbanderu and Herero experiences of displacement and marginality as a group within Botswana, and how it exerts a mutual influence upon its inhabitants, who have created it, as an arena of socialisation for children (the majority population) within the context of these social experiences. Although experiences of displacement and marginality are not separate

issues, they are separable, since more recent displaced groups within Botswana, such as the Mbukushu, are arguably less marginal, although only recently displaced from Angola. Many Mbanderu say that it is their pastoral identity that continues their social marginalisation in a rapidly urbanising, cash-based economy such as Botswana. Although Mbanderu had been resident in Botswana for about a hundred years, Colson's argument concerning the social experience of relocation is highly relevant:

'A settlement is never a final settlement. Life is always at risk. Whether or not they suffer further displacement, once people have learned from bitter experience that life is uncertain, possessions transitory, and human relationships brittle, it is to be expected that their coping strategies will take account of such possibilities even though these conflict with other urgent goals that they wish to attain' (Colson unpublished:19; quoted by Parkin 1999:304).

The inhabitants of Mabudutsane frequently respond to questions about settlement in terms of their marginal status as a group, and frequently equate their marginality as a result of their displaced status as a people. To add to Colson's insight, I wish to argue that the persistent responses to settlement and dwelling practices that she identifies as 'learned' responses based upon practical experience, have a crucial material dimension that reflects such practical coping strategies and that may mutually be involved in the social reproduction of such responses over time. Such an analysis is inevitably complex, since it necessarily involves a phenomenological approach to the social experience of domestic environments. Whilst only being able to suggest ways of approaching such an analysis within Mabudutsane, it has the potential to form the focus of future interesting research.

Many inhabitants of Mabudutsane openly discuss their belief that the authorities intend to remove them from the village to locations on the outskirts, where only fenced plots with nuclear families will be allowed by the Land Board. Many argue that this is proof of their marginal status as a group, and it is evident that many feel bound together by such evidences of potential exclusion.

Two women once became very angry when recounting that they had been told to remove their head-dresses for a photograph required for their national identity (*Omang*) card, believing that it was a Tswana attempt to marginalise them by removing representations of their culture in official documentation. The government report of 1991 concerning sanitation concerns in the ward, referenced earlier, in fact did not propose wholesale removal of inhabitants but recommended that 'the area be de-congested to allow developments to be carried out... the decision of individual households to move should be achieved through persuasion not coercion. It must be remembered that there is already some suspicion in the Herero community that the purpose of the exercise is to remove them from the village centre' (Malila 1991:8). 'We do not feel secure living here', argued one Herero man, 'since we may be moved any time. We do not feel like investing in houses or anything here, since we may be told to leave tomorrow'. Whilst similar projects are openly discussed in other parts of Maun, people continue to invest time and cash in building since they have been told that cash compensation would be paid to all land board permit holders. Few in Mabudutsa own such official land board permits, and few trust that the government would compensate them for removal from Mabudutsane. It is clear that the coping strategies of historical displacement are still current within Mbanderu and Herero social and material life. Algamor also noted some twenty years ago that one of the main reasons for Mbanderu reluctance to invest in boreholes was a widespread belief that their stay in Botswana was temporary, and that 'you cannot take a bore-hole to Namibia' (1980:49). In this way both social and material relations are deeply involved in the constant negotiation of group identity over time, and the social relationship to specific landscapes.

The social perspectives represented in most anthropology, including this thesis, almost always exclude juvenile experiences as a matter of course, or treat them as less than meaningful within the overall analysis. Although this is understandable, the social and cultural "forms" that anthropology

is interested in have a crucial temporal dimension, which integrate past experiences within the matrix of current perceptions and actions. Whilst Bourdieu (1977) sees this process as the durable, transposable dispositions of learned social behaviour affecting our everyday life, or structuring our structures as he argues, socialisation should be seen as a process in which our material surroundings are influential agents of social experience and structuring. In Mabudutsane, Mbanderu and Herero children experience social space as a communal and corporate sphere of activity produced by the way building activities have expressed and reproduced dwelling relationships among the group. Over time, the socio-spatial communality of their built environment can be seen as a crucially influential factor in the way learned dispositions arise and the way social activities are reproduced.

Of particular interest is the complex way in which marginality and the extended structures of displacement are mutually reproduced over time in specific settlement contexts. In Mabudutsane, the lack of spatial markers as boundaries, the materiality of building and other social activities, and significantly the overt contrasts in homestead arrangement and organisation between village and *ohambo* contexts, are all influential in producing and reproducing sets of social activities that confirm their own narratives of cultural difference. For instance, the importance of cattle-based activities for many families means that time and mutual social involvement are located at the *ohambo*, whereas only infrequent activities are located in Mabudutsane where they stay in a house within an extended kin area. The material and socio-spatial attributes of Mabudutsane are often consciously reflected upon by people as revealing that they are not village people but pastoralists, and do not "know" how to settle in villages. This reflection is further politicised as evidence of group difference and marginality. More importantly however, the lasting and transposable dispositions, or *habitus* of displacement and marginality, can be seen as having an important material involvement in the way settlement contexts operate as locales for learning sociality.

As a way of exploring such relations between place and sociality much of my fieldwork focussed upon obtaining detailed biographies of Mbanderu families and their dwelling activities. Such biographies offer distinctive insights into how social activity and the materiality of place mutually unfold and influence each other over time. Comparison of Mbanderu biographies in different settlement contexts reveals much of the everyday meaning of the social landscape. In particular, the biographies of Herero village further reveal the presence of other places, a wider social landscape, in the temporal make-up of any one place. Herero village is a place of other places, its houses, pathways and meeting areas are forms of a wider social landscape. Biographies bring such places and pathways together within the story of a particular household.

Kandjou

Around 1970 Mukuruhona Kandjou and his brother decided to build some houses in Mabudutsane, principally so that their children could attend junior secondary school. 'Although we built houses for children to sleep in and for those looking after them', he related, 'I also began staying here a lot as well'. His biography involves periods of work in Maun followed by periods of cattle keeping, and at least ten years employment in Namibia. Whilst his wife remained at the *ohambo*, his children were looked after during school terms by his brother's wife to whom he gave money. 'The people that stayed here' he stated, 'were my children, my two brothers' young children and my two sisters'. Whilst he and his brothers have never had their own houses in Mabudutsane, at the *ohambo* the brothers built in a line with their children building around each of them (Figure 5.11).

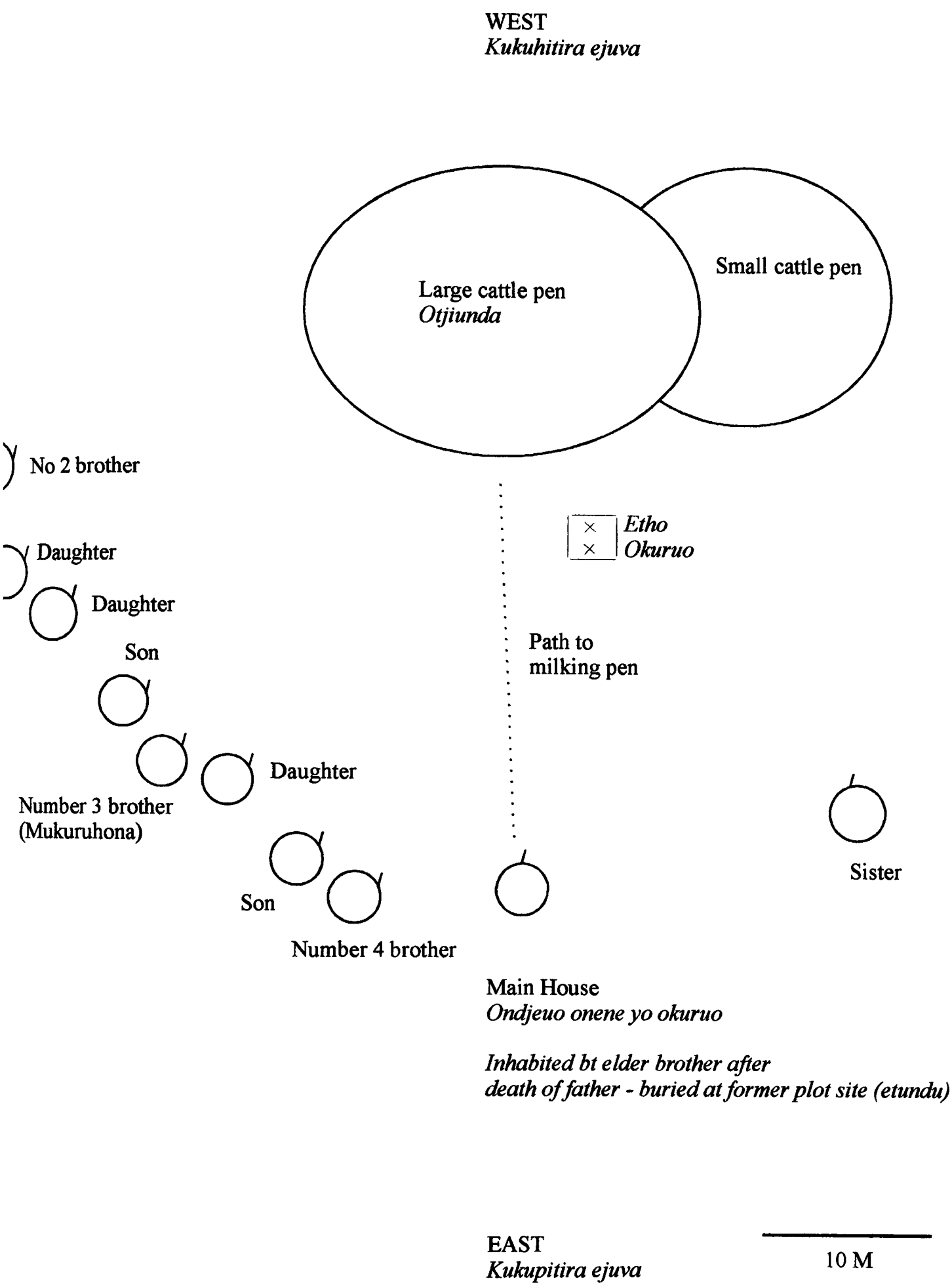


Figure 5.11 The Ohambo or cattle-homestead of Mukuruhona Kandjou's family, at Zinive near Nokaneng, western Okvango delta.

The Kandjou plot in Mabudutsane (see Figure 5.9, sections 1 , 2 and 3) is separated into two rough segments - one section a large oval with buildings on a perimeter facing inwards, with another to the west [extreme right of section 2 and left of section 3] where Mukuruhona, some cousins, an aunt, and another brother stay. 'In Maun we just stay according to the amount of space there is available, people build facing any direction and in any relation to one another. My father bought the plot from another Mbanderu, and later relatives came to build with us so it is now crowded. If any relative comes to Maun and wants to stay and build and bring their children, then we just say: 'find a space and build'. Questioned about the positioning of the two rectilinear buildings to the rear of the original houses, Mukuruhona answered that he had built there to stop others taking a space that they might believe to be behind his dwelling area. They later built two other houses in the other direction for the same reason, to stake claims to an area. For the families in Mabudutsane, the practice of building is a practice of creating and appropriating domestic space in the way that fencing or hedging is for other groups in Maun. Integral to this appropriation of space is the social orientation of doorways, in this case directed toward a central social area where daily activities take place.

Some ten years after Mukuruhona built in Maun, his younger brother did likewise, where the large oval plot is now, for his children to attend school. One of them, Kambunduava, related that at first there were houses for his parents, the children, and storage, made from wood and grass collected at the *ohambo* about 18km toward Sehitwa, and transported back by donkey cart, with soil dug near the river in Maun. Later other relatives came to build - a male cousin with his family, then an aunt (his father's sister), and then his father's younger brother and his wives - and the plot grew towards the east. 'Once my father had established this plot' he argued, 'other relatives came and asked to build with us and we soon became crowded. They wanted to stay with us rather than build

elsewhere is Maun since we are all helping each other and sharing things here, and we look after each other's children'.

Kasondoro

Johannes Kasondoro was brought to Maun as a child to attend school, although most time was spent at Daoga where their ohambo is located. Since CBPP in 1995 he has come to spend all his time in Maun since his age stopped him restocking cattle. Those living with him in Maun are mostly female relatives looking after schoolchildren and older children looking for work. Some of his sons are living at Daoga and rearing cattle there, whilst his daughters take care of their children here in Maun. He still visits Daoga occasionally to see how his sons' cattle are doing, and to take sick children to his father's brother for healing from *mawe*, ancestral sickness. 'Any child or adult that dies in Maun we take there' he stated, 'to be buried where my father is buried at the etundu'. Materials for building and renewing houses, including dung from the cattle pens, are also transported back to Maun by donkey cart. 'Here in Maun houses are just built in any position that people want. At the *ohambo* they are arranged according to our custom. I am not happy (Set: *ga ke itumele*) about this situation in Maun, since sons should not build to the right of the parent. I have a feeling of wrongness about the positions of houses here in Maun, but we do not consider this place to be the proper place for an *onganda* anyway. Some people live here since they have lost all their cattle to disease, and without cattle they cannot live in a customary way. To lose your cattle is to no longer have a life - no-one is able to stay at that *ohambo* anymore since the heart has gone. It is people that stay with cattle, not cattle with people'. His comments echo the Kabyle saying noted by Bourdieu, 'a house without a cow is an empty house' (1990:279).

Pikinini

Constance Pikinini relates how her parents built just one house at first next to some other matriclan members in Maun. Her father never stayed here, but her mother did for as long as she and her sister were schooling, and then returned to the *ohambo*. A second house was built when the sisters got older, but when it was destroyed by rain, she built another next to it, where she now also has children of her own. Other relatives came to build with them later - a sister of her mother with her children, and later one of those children had children and built houses for them to stay in. The last houses to be built all centred on one outside hearth, and are all for children to sleep in - 'we built them like that so that the children would all be together in a sort of yard where we cook for them'. The household depends upon frequent visits from the *ohambo* by her parents or others, bringing sour milk, vegetables and cooking fat, as well as goat meat. When she decided to build more houses for the children, they were faced with transport costs to collect wood from the *ohambo*, and so were only able to afford to bring back roof supports. The walls, normally made using bound sticks with soil infill, by 1996 had to be made using drinks cans mortared together with mud, 'that I had seen the people in Maun using for many years and decided to copy (Set*: go etsa*)'. After the rains ceased Constance went to the *ohambo* and brought back an amount of dung (Set: *boloko*) from the *otjiunda* for replastering over the cans, much to the dismay of the bus conductor. Her siblings all returned to the ohambo after schooling, but now her brothers visit Maun often to look for work, staying in the houses for the schoolchildren, leaving on the bus for the *ohambo* as soon as the weekend arrives.

Kangunde

The biography of Hnomuinjo Kangunde shows how kinship ties form social "pulls" between differing places, establishing and maintaining social trails both to, from and through places within the landscape. The social importance of visiting and movement is concerned with maintaining

such landscape trails, the supply routes of kin and affinal material relations that underlie systems of sociality. She was born at the parental *ohambo*, near Tsau in western Ngamiland, and stayed with her mother at Tsau whilst schooling. In 1979, when 11 years old, she was married and sent to Ghanzi, gaining a divorce in 1987, and returned to Tsau. Her parents have since died, but her father had built in Maun, establishing somewhere to stay there in case of sudden need (Set: *ka tshoganetso*) such as the hospital or shops. Her sister schooled in Maun, and then moved to another plot elsewhere to the west of Maun, since they believed the authorities were intent on removing all the inhabitants of Mabudutsane. After some time at Tsau, she migrated to Maun in order to find cash employment, leaving her children with the grandmother at Tsau, and returning every three months. She sells meat and traditional beer and cleans, and uses the money for school fees. Her father had built a two-room concrete brick *ntlo ya sekgoa* (European house) in the plot in Maun, with money gained from selling cattle, but since his death it is rented out and the money taken by her to Tsau for his widow, his second wife. The other houses belong to two male cousins, one of whom is in Namibia. She herself in planning next to settle in Sehitwa to find cleaning work.

The way such social and material biographies interweave suggests a relationship to landscape in which multiple connections to differing locations are highly desirable. I presented this notion earlier as a way of understanding the Mbanderu notion of *ekondua rimue*, which makes possible pastoral movement and flexibility through complex sets of reciprocal social relationships within both patriclan and matriclan groups and affinal relations. Although I have termed this a 'notion', *ekondua rimue* should really be understood as the various sets of material and social contexts encountered by people, such as cattle-keeping and village contexts, and the way in which Mbanderu go about dwelling across such contexts. Central to this analysis of dwelling has been the presence of place as process, as in the understanding of social production and reproduction. Most Mbanderu I spoke to asserted that visiting relatives in other places was integral to their

dwelling in the landscape, one person even comparing the social trails of visiting as the veins along which blood flowed within the extended family's body. The total set of relationships between these metaphorical 'bodies' over time may well come close to how *ekondua rimue* should be understood both as an abstract social concept and as an involved and engaged manner of dwelling in the world.





Plate 7 (top) Ashes from the *okuruo* (fire) are not discarded but thrown over the *etho* (thorns) (Kgantsang, Ngamiland).

Plate 8 (bottom) The *okuruo* and *etho* are cared for by a senior member of a patriclan, and used in ritual activity for the extended family (Kgantsang, Ngamiland).





Plate 9 (top) Path from main house to cattle pen at Mbanderu homestead (Kgantsang, Ngamiland).

Plate 10 (bottom) Mbanderu homestead with houses facing west in Sehitwa village.





Plate 11 (top) Mbanderu homestead at Sehitwa. The houses have been built facing a central area rather than facing west due to the owner's mobility problems.

Plate 12 (bottom) Mbanderu family, Sehitwa.

Chapter Six

Concrete Experiences: Materiality and Permanence of Place

Introduction

Long-term fieldwork in a given place facilitates not only the incremental integration of the fieldworker into a network of localised social relationships through participation in everyday activities over time, but also an awareness of the spatial and temporal dynamics of a place, that are in any case embedded in such social activities. In this chapter I focus in particular upon the process of building *mantlo a sekgoa* or 'European-style houses', that are defined as such due to their construction from *ditena tsa sekgoa* or 'European-style bricks', i.e. concrete bricks, and *disenke* (corrugated iron roofing). As will be discussed, this process is both dramatic and subtle, involving processes of both 'delocalisation' and 'relocalisation' of the materiality of place within the notion of a dwelling site as a composite of values and differentiated experiences. This chapter will deepen the understanding of this notion through an analysis of how the temporal, spatial and material dimensions of such buildings are mutually involved in the dwelling process, how they are both material products of dwelling activity and also influential in the way that dwelling activities are constituted over time. Gosden (1994) for instance has highlighted that what may be termed the agency of the material world cannot be considered as one-sided; the material world is involved in a mutually productive relationship with society, as Gell also recently argued (1998) in his detailed work on the agency of art objects in social affairs. Whilst I do not want to stress the equivalence of buildings and persons in the exercise of agency (as Thomas sees Gell's argument (1998:x)), it certainly signals a way beyond the rather static house-body metaphors of previous anthropological analyses of architecture (e.g. Preston Blier 1987), that foreground symbolism and metaphor to the

detriment of a processual (temporal) understanding of dwelling and the potential influence of our built environment.

Structure of the Argument

The first section of this chapter examines in detail the relationship between the materiality of building and dwelling practices among the Mbanderu. Whereas in the previous chapter analysis focussed upon the nature of the Mbanderu social landscape, settlement and social activity, this chapter explores the temporal complexity of social and material culture change within the Mbanderu homestead. It will be argued that, whereas mobility of (and within) homesteads is an important facet of Mbanderu culture, a complex of social and cultural changes, such as the increasing use of concrete in house building, ranch farming and investment in bore holes, has influenced a change in the role of mobility in the landscape. One conclusion is that material culture change such as concrete buildings, is an important factor in the social transformation of place over time. This theme is developed in the second section, which examines the issues of permanence and temporariness as sets of both social and material relations. The equation of material and social or dwelling permanence is problematic. I argue that cash investment in *mantlo a sekgoa* is not always an index of permanence or social notions of 'modernity', but is a far more complex process in which uncertainty and temporariness, even mortality, are equally important factors. This leads to a final section that considers how cash investment in *mantlo a sekgoa* for Yei and Tswana people in Maun can be considered in terms of the anthropological debate concerning the individual and the 'dividual'. The argument presented throughout this chapter is that *mantlo a sekgoa* are both product and process of the increasingly *composite* nature of persons in Ngamiland. Composite in this sense means that people contain differing types of social relations, some of which may be kin-based, others cash-based etc., and that houses can also be considered as integral to the processes whereby persons are individual and dividual in different contexts (LiPuma 1998).

My argument concerning the role of houses in the construction of composite persons agrees with LiPuma's argument that 'persons emerge from that tension between dividual and individual aspects/relations' (1998:57). All three sections interrelate these themes in order to analyse some of the temporal relations between place, material culture and dwelling that are central to this thesis.

Some Distinctions

This thesis makes no meaningful distinction between the mutually expressive dimensions of temporality and spatiality, since both contain the conditions of possibility of the other, and arguably only gain definition through an understanding of the material sphere of social relations. An emphasis upon temporality rather than history means that the analyst is interested in the processes of social activity expressed spatially within the world over time, rather than *in the past.* Whilst an environmental historical approach to building activity in Maun may well place material changes along an historical continuum within which certain external factors and conjunctures are seen to have effected changes, such as the determinants of environment, population, economy etc., such an approach tells us little about the temporal nature of social activity that is involved in a dynamic relationship with places. In the previous chapter I argued that social changes at the household and extended kin level have fractured the sets of relationships to the wider social landscape integral to previous material and social experiences of place, and that this had contributed to the commoditisation of natural resources, which in turn influenced the course of possessive and cash-based individualism evident in Maun, an issue I will return to later. Whilst this is one context in which *mantlo a sekgoa* may be understood, as products of cash-based rather than kin-based social activities, in which the temporalities of cash itself are considered (investment temporalities) rather than those of social activities in the landscape, the picture is much more complex, since homesteads are areas of interaction between varied social forces which are expressed through everyday material relations. The particular building activity with which this

chapter deals highlights the way in which such everyday material relations are experienced temporally, and how ongoing changes to the built environment (place) exert an influence upon social relations. In particular, my fieldwork data are concerned with transformation over time through dwelling, especially spatial and material transformation of homesteads in relation to the narration of biography, and in the next chapter I will focus upon some of the spatial implications of this building activity. It is through these contexts and scales that I will be drawing out an argument that *mantlo a sekgoa* offer an understanding of how both change and continuity are mediated through dwelling-as-process, both of which are temporal concepts, and as such need to be understood within the practice of everyday social activities involved in the transformation of the landscape over time.

Just what I mean by change and what I mean by continuity will be developed throughout the following analysis, but it is apposite to set it out as a preliminary distinction, not least since concrete buildings are widely regarded by most commentators as evidence of 'culture change', 'cultural homogenisation' or even 'development', depending upon the vantage point taken. Whilst some assume that social changes produce cultural changes, such as the 1950s and 1960s modernist view of proletarianism in Africa towns (see Ferguson 1990 for critique), recent neo-modernist (and yet inverted) views frequently find expression in African governmental pronouncements, seeing culture change as a prerequisite for social change:

'urbanisation is a process through which a population may develop from the traditional state of being, through a transitional state to becoming modern' (Botswana (Govt of), CSO, 1995:70).

The 'state of being' understood here, we can safely assume, is not that of Heidegger's *Dasein*, but a reified notion of social and material relations encapsulated by an abstracted set of 'traditional' and

'modern' practices related to the experience of place, which urbanisation has the agency to transform. Discarding such reified notions is the first task needed to clear a path of understanding of how material and social relations are mutually involved. Whilst it is clear that notions of modernity are significant for some people in making such houses, or more especially for containing notions of modern living, this dimension has been explored interestingly by building function analysts such as Anita Larsson (1989). Larsson criticises Hardie (1980) for his avoidance of radical changes in gender relations connected with the house in Botswana, and for over emphasising points of continuity. She disagrees with his assertion that '[t]he concepts which underlie the internal organisation of the house have not changed and thus neither [has] the built expression' (Hardie, 1980:199 quoted in Larsson, 1989:519). In particular, she argues that *mantlo a sekgoa* involve a domestication of women's social activity within the house rather than within an enlarged dwelling area or 'outside' the house, thereby conceptualising dwelling and processes of change in purely spatial dimensions . The Setswana notion of modernity however is often phrased *botswelele ko pele*, 'proceeding-forwardness', and it is this temporal bodily engagement with spatiality inherent in dwelling-as-process that is my focus in this chapter - not with notional and reified representations of change or continuity, but with how engaged practical activities bring about transformations in the material and social fabric of dwelling sites.

As an illustration of the approach I am positing here, it is an understanding of the distinctions made by people about their environments in practice rather than as narrative that can subvert the concepts applied to experience. One such distinction is that between *ntlo ya Setswana* and *ntlo ya sekgoa* - a Setswana or European-style house (Plates 13 and 14). Whilst visiting Rra Mohuhutso in Maun early in fieldwork, I asked him about his nephew's *ntlo ya sekgoa*, with smooth concrete plaster walls, corrugated iron roof, etc. He replied quickly that this was an *ntlo ya Setswana*, since the concrete plaster covered adobe bricks rather than concrete ones. The whole family agreed that

although it looked just like an *ntlo ya sekgoa*, what made such a house was the concrete bricks, the *ditena tsa sekgoa*. 'My nephew made the roof and my wife made the walls for him,' he argued, 'this is our custom (*ngwao ya rona*). But with an *ntlo ya sekgoa*, you must find a builder to make the walls, it is skilled (*kitso*) work'. What initially looked like a material distinction quickly became identified as a social one, since it was the social construction of the house, the gender and kin-based division of tasks, that distinguished a *Setswana* house from a European-style one - differing materials embodying a variety of social activities.

Building and mobility among the Mbanderu

Chapter five described in detail the Mbanderu experience of settlement and shifting migration of the homestead, practices linked to burial and the establishment of new socio-spatial relations on the death of the household head. Such practices were seen to be current at the cattle post homestead, which most consider the 'proper' family home, away from the town, since social and spatial relations there are cattle-focussed. I want to consider here however how such practices of movement within the landscape interrelate with building practices, and in particular with the building of concrete-brick buildings, known as *ondjeuo jo virumbu*. A central argument in this section is that the taskscape of kin cattle activities is such that the individuating act of cash investment in a concrete building is incongruent with the collective nature of social activities centred around cattle relations. Collective dwelling activities and pastoral mobility have factored against building durable structures for most Mbanderu.

i) Movement of the homestead

On the question of movement of homesteads on the death of the household head, there seems to be a good deal of debate amongst the Mbanderu I worked with in Maun and Sehitwa. The debate

seems to centre on the issue of how burial affects the remaining household members. Whilst all agree that a family could not continue living in a place where a household head was buried, since this practice was one of gravesite (*etundu*) formation, a divergence of practices occurs when burial takes place elsewhere, whether at an *etundu* or cemetery. With burial and movement being so closely interwoven practices, some argued that changing burial customs had altered mobility practices, and others that sedentising factors such as *ondjeuo jo virumbu* (concrete buildings) had effected changes in burial custom.

Hijavitama, whom I met in Maun, related that 'in the past we used to migrate (*o kutjinda*) on the death of the household head, but these days people don't move so much since they are churchgoers', indicating that Mbanderu burial practices were ultimately bound up with religious practices related to ancestors, and thereby affected by Christian notions of death. Mbanderu religious attitudes toward death are centred upon close ancestors (*ovakuru*) and the spiritual connections between living and ancestral kin, especially invoking their assistance in worldly matters (*o kukumba kuvakuru*) and through ritual treatment of an individual by an elder (*o kumba omeva*). On death, a person is believed to join ancestral kin and remain interested in living family members, whilst also existing closer to a relatively remote deity figure.

Hijavitama continued to explain changes he perceived in contemporary burial practice by saying that 'most people do not bury in their plot due to concrete houses at the cattle posts - you cannot bury someone there since you cannot move after building with concrete. Before, people could move since they had Mbanderu (*ondjeuo*) houses which could be rebuilt easily'. He also stated that his household would remain where they are after his death, since he was to be buried outside, at his father's *etundu*. Hijavitama's statements suggest an understanding of a dwelling process in which both belief and material considerations are linked together at the level of everyday practice.

Another man, Kangotwe, stated that 'after the leader dies, people should inherit the objects and then migrate (*o kutjinda*). But we don't use concrete bricks (*ozohima ze virumbu*) since they cannot be remade at a new site like our houses - moving is the main reason I do not use these materials at the *ohambo*. Even if the leader is taken to the cemetery people should migrate, since it belonged to that leader and not the living ones'. Kangotwe introduces mobility as a practice of renewal of social relations through the transformative conditions of death of the leader, but importantly here, linked to place and to materiality. For Kangotwe, the mutual renewal of persons (social relations) and place (movement) are deeply interwoven practices. This was evident also in the biography of a woman, Kautaponde, who related that 'when my husband died we removed the door and placed it beside the house... we stayed for a year in the plot after that, even though I wasn't supposed to milk the cows or even look at the cattle pen. Other people did this for me, until my elder son made a new plot elsewhere'. Her close relations to the leader meant that her everyday practices relating to his cattle pen were altered, suffering a form of 'death', until a new leader (her son) re-established a new social and material presence for the kin group. Even though her husband was buried elsewhere, the altered social relations of death affect socially configured dwelling activities in a given place, which only the re-establishment of place can realign.

For Hange, a Mbanderu from Toteng, the location of burial rather than the renewal of relations is a prime concern, but more especially uncertainty over the practices of his relations is an important factor in his building activity. 'I have not used concrete bricks to build with at Makwerekwere [a cattle post area] since we might have to move when my father's brother [the leader] dies', he related, 'But we could build like this at Toteng [a village] since the land is owned by the government rather than people, and they must use the cemetery. I think that the uncle will be buried at Legothwana [name of family gravesite area], and if he is then we will not move, and his

young brother or elder son will move into the main house, if the uncle's wife wants this to happen'. As an extended family member, Hange is uncertain of the future practices of others with whom his dwelling activities are interwoven in the engagement of everyday cattle tasks. The taskscape of extended family cattle keeping is such that the individuating act of cash investment in a concrete building is incongruent with the collective nature of social activities centred around cattle relations. The social uncertainty of place (alongside the holding of wealth in cattle rather than cash investment) is central to Hange's experience of dwelling in the landscape.

Another factor was introduced by Pata Tjozongoro, an elderly household head in Sehitwa who explained that 'we no longer bury people in the cattle pen since there is a cemetery now... it destroys the land (*senya lefatshe*) if you move, since no-one will want to live where an old cattle homestead was since the grass there will be poor. It is also because we have spent a lot of cash on these buildings - where will we get the money to build again? Because of this I will be buried at my parents' gravesite and the family will not have to move from here'. His eldest son would then move into the main house built from concrete, or if he declined, the second son would be 'given' the religious items of thorns and fire and live there. The headman at Sehitwa, Uatumwa, echoed Pata's insistence that mobility in the landscape was harmful to the land, but also argued that use of the cemetery obviated the need for movement. 'What is more', he said, 'people these days are spending cash on buildings and bore-holes for their cattle. This stops them migrating'. The notion of land degradation through movement is a perception based on pasture quality, since 'grass will not grow where houses used to be as well as around the cattlepen, and people will avoid such an area since there may be burials there. People didn't take care of the land well in the past'.

The sets of relationships between people and places created by burial and movement are involved in processes of renegotiation as contexts change. This was highlighted in the case of Narchi, a man

from the settlement of Tshenyane, who related that the place had once been a cattle post site but had become settled by others as a village. He had migrated some distance away from his parents' former homestead and graves, but was now faced with having to claim the former place in order to protect it from settlement, and to give it to his children to build there, leaving the graves in one corner. 'It is important to do this,' he argued, 'since the village is growing and somebody might build on the graves. This is why I will be buried in the cemetery, so that they will not have to move away from their houses'. With the temporal social landscape being refashioned around these graves, changing the context and relations in which they were embedded, practices are also refashioned - in this case returning to dwell with graves. Over time the social landscape undergoes many such transformations and renegotiations of practice and relation to place, and in the case of the Mbanderu the predominant renegotiation is between pastoral and collective practices within a mobile landscape and the non-corporate, static landscape associated with sedentary settlement and individual cash investment in place. Whilst the divergence of practices among Mbanderu with regard to burial and movement broadly reflects the concerns and experiences of remote and village-based families, most extended families have networks linking several dwelling sites in the landscape. The concept of dwelling-as-process is one that allows us to see how the temporality of social activities is involved in the production and reproduction of place, and since dwelling is a complex network of social relations within the landscape, the shaping of one place always involves the influence of social activities in other places. The interconnectedness between burial, movement, perception of place and building activity involves not only those specificities or conjunctures of place described here, but also involves influences from the wider social landscape.

ii) Movement within the homestead

Alongside the process of homestead movement within the landscape is that of movement within the homestead, where there exists a dynamic process of repositioning of socio-spatial relations over

time. As described in chapter five, the cattle homestead or *onganda* is founded through the establishment of a cattlepen, in relation to which the leader places his house, known as the 'main' house, facing the pen in a westerly (*kukuhitira ejuva*) direction. The path between this house and the pen for milking cows is normally conspicuous, and helps orient the placing of the religious objects of ancestral thorns and fire to the right of the path near the pen. To recap the organisation of the homestead (described on page 134), to the left of the main house, arcing away in a semi-circle around the pen are the houses of the sons, and to the right the daughters ,with the first born furthest away, and the last born closest to the main house. In polygamous households, the first wife (*omusuverua uandje*) occupies the main house, and other wives build beyond the eldest son to the left. Over time, social relations are altered through such things as marriage and coming of age, all of which result in the movement of individual sub-units within the homestead, building and rebuilding in response to new sets of social relationships. Social relations find expression in spatial relations, and yet neither are experienced outside of the specific material relations of dwelling activities, especially those of building. As Bourdieu notes, 'the world of objects is a kind of book... read with the whole body' (1990:76) - movement within the homestead is concerned with the mutual engagement of persons and houses - both social and material organisation in a process of mutual making.

Mumdua, a man from Sehitwa, described how his father's second wife had moved three times, abandoning her previous house to the eldest son and building again, each time being 'pushed' along the line by the eldest son as later sons started to build, but eventually decided to build on the right to avoid more movements (Figure 6.1). She used the *Mogonono* (Silver Terminalia, *Terminalia sericea*) branches and 'white' termite mound soil (*mmu wa seolo wa mosweu*) from the area to build each time, with thatching grass of *Tshikitsane* (Silky Bushman Grass, *Stipagrostis uniplumis*)

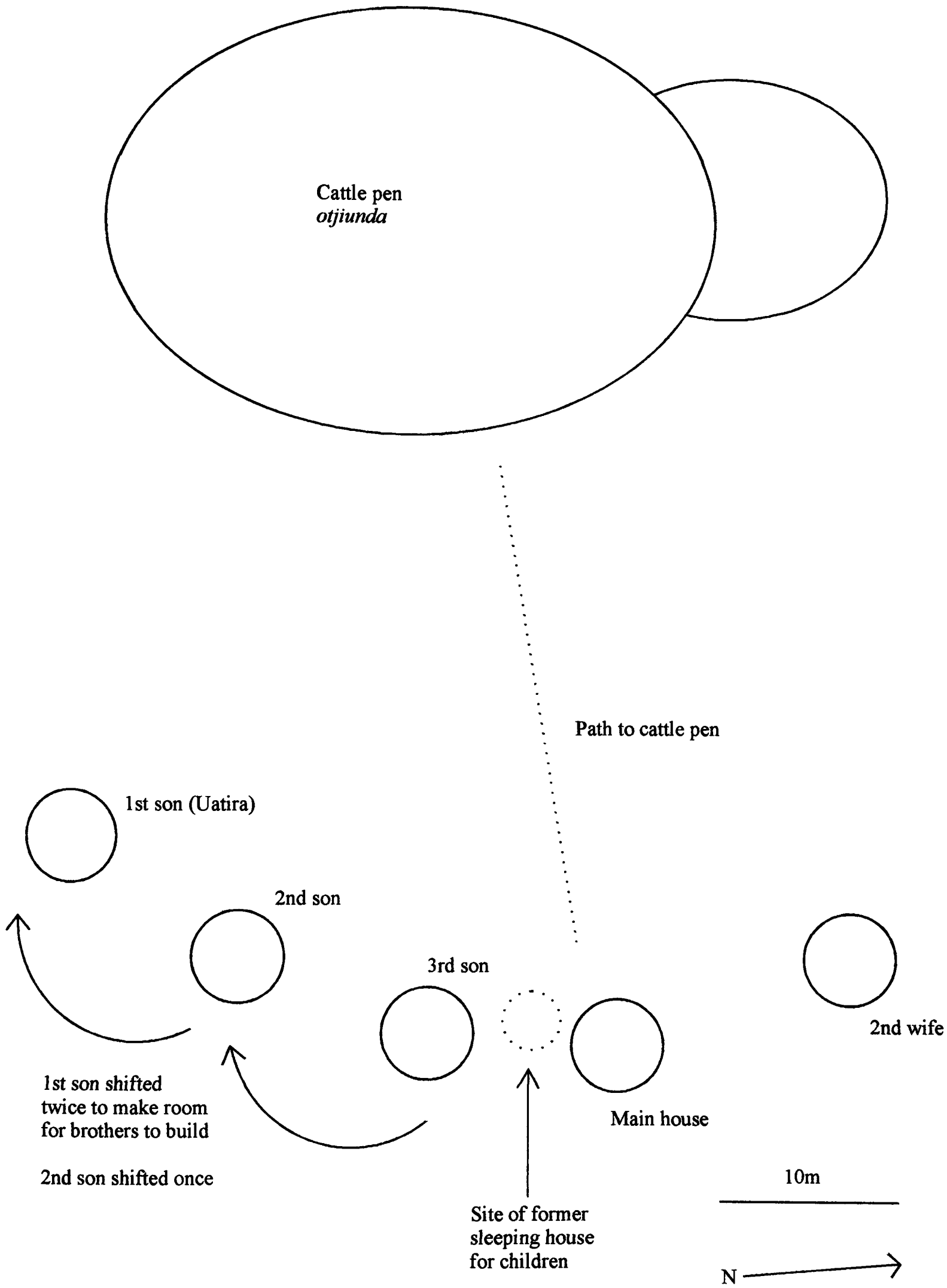


Figure 6.1 Ohambo or cattle homestead of family of Uatira Mumduu at Ninixau, Lake Ngami region

gathered locally. Konee Hengare, a woman in Sehitwa also described how 'my husband [the eldest son] and I have had to migrate along the line twice - both due to the marriage of the second son to his two wives. We crushed (*go thuba*) the houses and took the materials along with us to the new place. We had to crush them due to a lack of materials where we are... we cannot use concrete bricks at the cattle homestead because of our movement' (Figure 6.2). In a similar way another woman, Mata Kandarothu, described how she still occupied the main house after her husband's death (buried at parent's gravesite), and that her eldest son has had to move once to make room for the second wife of her second son (Figure 6.3). 'My eldest son will come to live in the main house when I die,' she related, 'and someone else will live in his old house or they will fall down (*gonwe di tla wa*)'. Both Konee Hengare's father-in-law and Mata Kandarothu's husband were buried outside the homestead at an ancestral *etundu* meaning that the family did not need to move dwelling site due to burial. Konee related that 'my husband's father was buried at the former place (*letlotla*) but he had moved here with us before then, due to bad shade. He told us "do not bury me here since you will have to move from this good place" so when he died we took him back'. It could be argued that uncertainty over dwelling site is lessened due to these processes, but there are other uncertainties (especially environmental) that are influential in mitigating against cash investment at cattle homesteads. Where cash investment is involved more frequently is in the establishment of boreholes, which attempts to lessen environmental uncertainties, and is sometimes thereby accompanied by building change, reflecting an altered temporal cycle of pastoral activity in the landscape.

Another influential process is that of the changing context of dwelling sites. As described in chapter five, the dynamic nature of the taskscape meant that the context in which former cattle homesteads were experienced became transformed into cattle-less village homesteads. I understand the notion of context here not as a set of external factors, but integral to the whole range

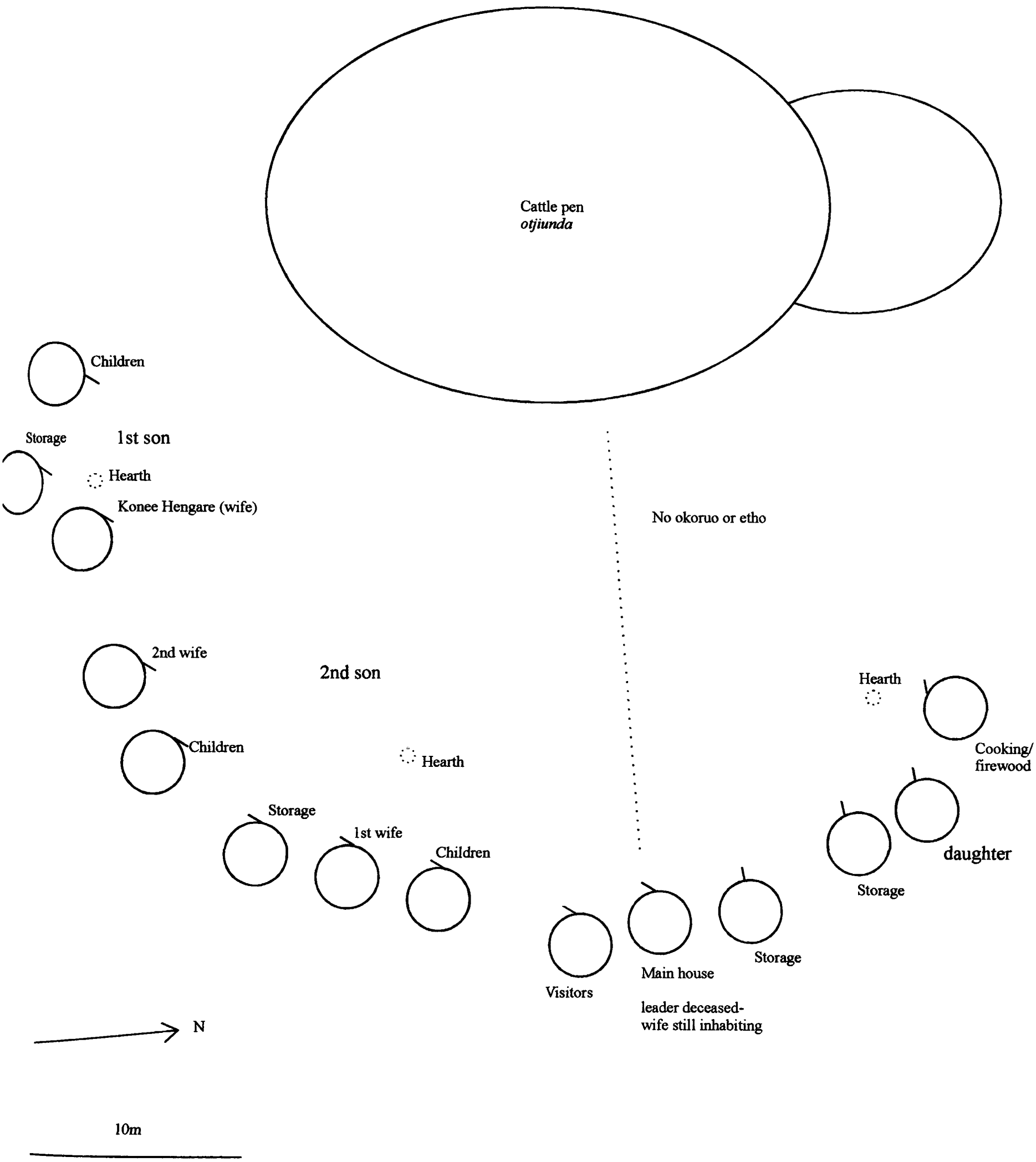


Figure 6.2 Ohambo or cattle homestead of family of Konee Hengare at Motaho, Lake Ngami region

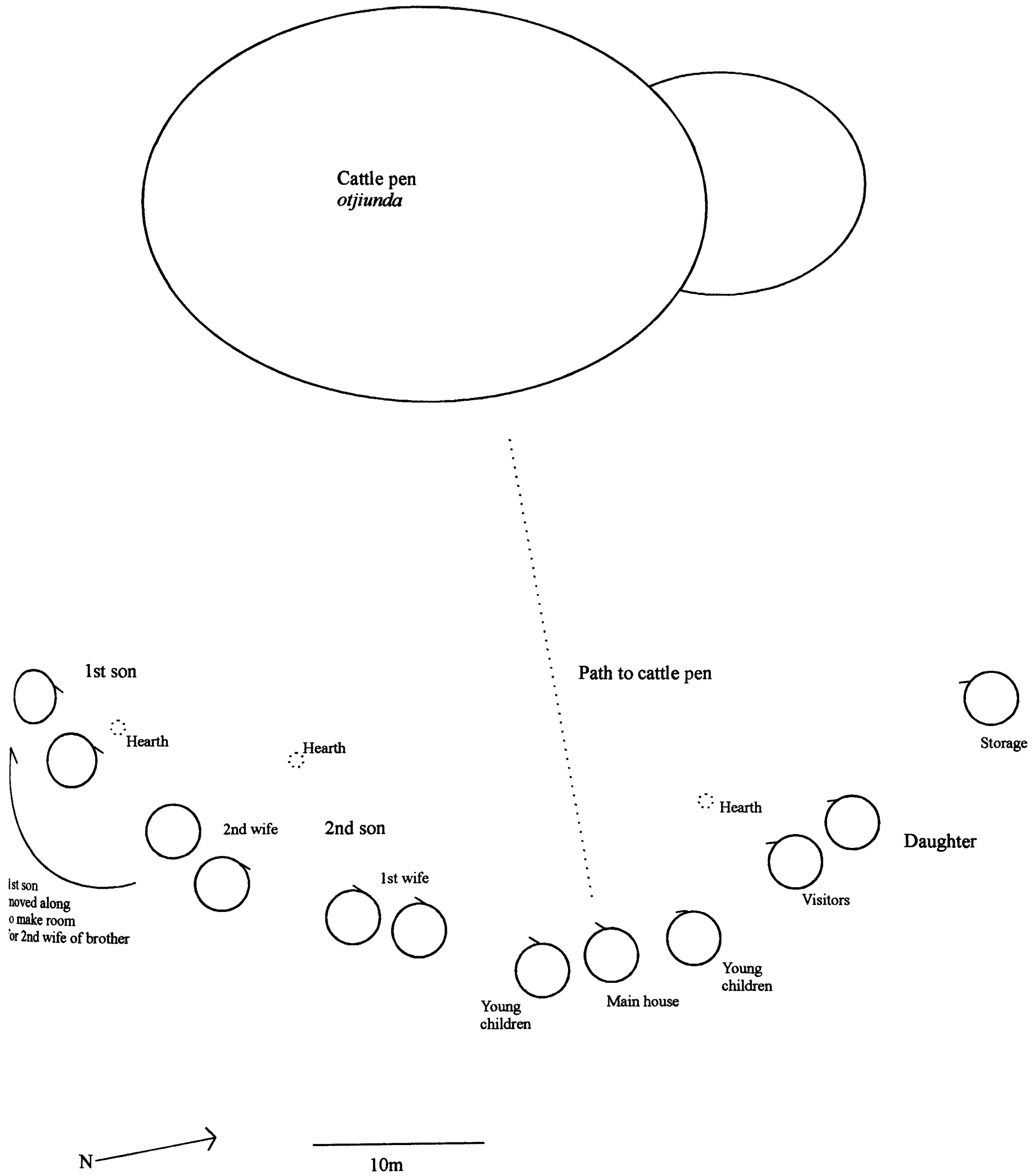


Figure 6.3 Ohambo or cattle homestead of family of Mata Kanarothu at MmaMotau, Lake Ngami region

of social activities engaged in by the household in the landscape. A change in the context of place is merely to say that a shift in the taskscape of a place has occurred (such as removing cattle from homesteads), which will inevitably effect material changes in the landscape over time. In Sehitwa, the contextual change for Mbanderu homesteads was part of a wider process of taskscape change involving other groups, and included the influence of the state in providing schools and developments, leading to rapid in-migration. Yet although cattle were removed during this process, most households continued to regard the *onganda* in Sehitwa as their main home, and elements of cattle-focussed homestead experience continued alongside other more village-oriented practices such as building with concrete. The shifting context of taskscape needs to be understood as a fundamentally temporal process, where practices may be drawn from differing sources in a given place through the process of dwelling. As Bourdieu notes, 'practice unfolds in time.. its temporal structure, that is, its rhythm, its tempo, and above all its directionality, is constitutive of its meaning... not only because it is played out in time, but also because it plays strategically with time and especially with tempo' (1990:81). A particular case study involving these issues is that of the Kantho homestead in Sehitwa (Figure 6.4 and Plate 17), where the cattle were removed in 1967 to an *ohambo* (cattle post) some distance away (at Shulabompe). I was taken to the homestead by Outumua the headman as he wanted to show me the ancestral materials still used there, even though the cattle were gone. Kadiwana Kantho, the middle-aged sixth son of the leader, explained that the spatial organisation of the family had become disordered as a direct result of the practice of building with concrete, which happened some years after the cattle were removed from the area and it became a village. Whereas before the eldest son would have moved within the homestead to make room for the subsequent sons, at some stage he had invested in concrete buildings, and fractured this process. The result was a lack of space between the main house and the eldest son for the remaining sons to build, and since it is

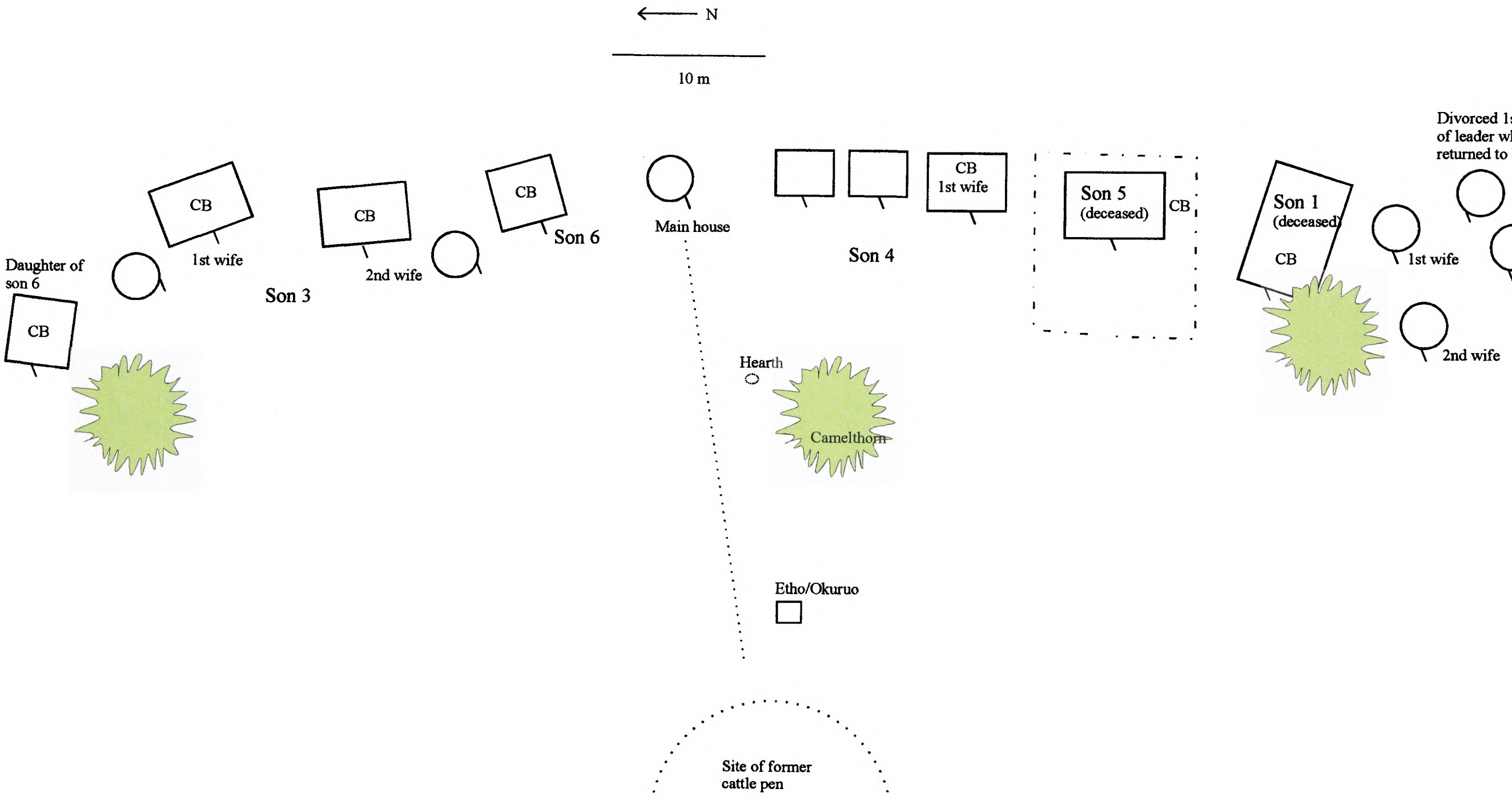


Figure 6.4 Homestead of Kantho family, Sehitwa

moila (a forbidden practice) to build beyond him, the other brothers were forced to build on the right side, designated for daughters. 'Us younger sons had not built here at all, but when we came to build there was no space, and the eldest son could not move since he had built with concrete'. This altered practice thereby affected the daughters who could not build to the right since brothers now lived there, and so one built 200 metres to the east and another 200 or 300 metres to the west.

Kadiwana's final comment was that 'the main house is still alive, and must be inherited since the fire and the thorns are here. Concrete however has changed our culture (*ombazo*) in that we do not build in the position that we are supposed to any more'. What is evident in this particular homestead, as with others in Sehitwa, is not so much a 'transition' from cattle homestead to village homestead, but a composite of the sets of practices associated with dwelling in both contexts, in as much as such sets of practice can be mutually defining. It is certainly evident in the biographies of such homesteads that material changes do have an effect upon social relations, and indeed Kadiwana's statement seems to ascribe an agency to concrete bricks that acts to 'change' social practices within the homestead such as movement. His statement is an acknowledgement of the effects of the temporal qualities of materials such as concrete upon the socio-temporal dynamics of the homestead. Tensions exist within the homestead but are recognised and ascribed to the social effects of material change, and since material relations and social activities are mutually generative, these tensions are central to the forward momentum of dwelling-as-process.

What exists here are particular tensions between the individuating process of cash investment in building associated with village contexts, and the collective and hierarchical socio-spatial concerns of the cattle-based homestead. Materials have particular temporalities that inhere in them, and it is these particular temporal qualities that people practically manipulate in their everyday engagement with tasks. Whilst in the Kantho household the individual investment in concrete to make houses

has fractured the corporate activity of mobility of sub-units, such a process cannot be seen as a purely internal dynamic, but one that at each point involves the wider social and material landscape in which the homestead exists. This may be argued as a material playing-out of shifts in the contextual field in which persons and buildings exist in a place such as Sehitwa, but this does not adequately explain the complexities of experience and range of practices within a particular homestead such as Kantho's, where a process of continuing dwelling practices associated with a cattle homestead is held in tension with a changing taskscape of cash-based individualism.

One important factor in such individualism in building activity is the process of separation of cattle activities between nuclear family sub-units, with separate brothers establishing their own ranches, as Kadiwana's eldest brother had done. Algamor notes that: 'Whatever the social composition or the nature of co-operation within such a small unit, its livestock is a sub-herd within the larger herd of the homestead and despite the close co-operation of homestead members their livestock is not, in practical terms, treated as one herd. This fact, that social livestock units within a homestead are not necessarily tightly tied to each other, is of crucial importance in matters of flexibility of movement of people and livestock' (1980:45). This fact is crucial to understanding the process of individuation through building activity in the Kantho case, since it is the collective dwelling associated with cattle that underlies practices of internal mobility within the homestead. The dislocation of the family herd to differing places in the landscape dramatically altered the range of dwelling activities, and thereby social meanings of the system of collective building mobility. Rather than referring to a vague notion of context change, it is in the particular dynamics of place as process of dwelling that the important temporal tensions between materiality and sociality are seen fully.

Permanence, Temporariness and Investment in Buildings

In chapter five I discussed Evans-Pritchard's (1940) understanding of the Nuer *wec* as temporary cattle camps and *cieng* as more or less permanent village sites, a distinction which Burton (1980) argued should be inverted since time as chronology (how long spent in a place) was not necessarily an accurate reflection of the socio-cultural permanence of places in the landscape. Since at least part of Evans-Pritchard's understanding of temporariness rested on his perception of building activity - more substantial in villages than at cattle camps, where shelters instead of houses were extensively used - it is important to examine how such temporalities of place in Ngamiland are interwoven with building practices within the process of dwelling. The confusion within anthropology over time as category and time as temporal experience is one that Gell (1992) sees as unnecessary, since society evidently exists in a physical universe of time and space that is distinct, but not separate from, the social experience of temporal flow. As I noted earlier, the material realm (such as concrete) has its own set of temporal properties that are distinct from social relations but involved in a process of constant mutual influence through dwelling activities.

It is the social experience of these temporal properties of materials that are deliberately engaged with and manipulated, since they open up various potentialities and close off others within the process of dwelling. However, the social relation between the temporal properties of materials and the temporal experience of place is neither causal nor implicit. What this means is that identifiably 'durable' materials are not necessarily an index of social durability in the sense of permanence of dwelling in the landscape. Returning to the case of Konee Hengare, their village plot in Sehitwa contains a *Mogonono* (Silver Terminalia, *Terminalia sericea*) and drinks can structure thatched with local short grasses, which was followed by a structure for children made entirely from corrugated iron. In 1996, having received government compensation money after the CBPP cattle disease, Konee and her husband invested in a two-room concrete brick house. 'This house is for

our schoolchildren to stay in,' she related, 'but we don't spend much time here, just if they are sick - the older children look after the younger ones here mostly and we stay at the cattle homestead. We built this concrete house here because we do not spend much time here and it is hard to find other materials to build with around the village'. Here, the temporal durability of concrete is an index of temporariness rather than permanence, since infrequency of dwelling at the village site means that building renewal as part of everyday practice is absent. With this perspective, investment in concrete is a response to the social demands of multi-locational dwelling in the landscape, where building activity over several places is restricted. A social interpretation of the concepts of permanence and temporariness within the landscape needs to take into account indigenous dwelling practices in the way that social and material relations interweave. For Konee Hengare's family, their 'permanent' home is the cattle homestead, wherever it is located through mobility, since the durable element is the social unit *in place*. Being in place means that the nuclear family engage together in the activities of dwelling, from which experiences of permanence and temporariness flow.

For the majority of people in Ngamiland, the sets of social relationships to place are somewhat different from those of pastoralist groups such as the Mbanderu and Herero. For the majority of people I interviewed in Maun, building activity and investment generally followed the pattern of where social activity within a household was located. As the following table shows, whilst the majority of households in Sanyedi ward in Maun had built *mantlo a sekgoa*, only half of households interviewed actually had extended family connections to cattle posts or fields.

Table 1 Investment in *Mantlo a sekgoa* in Sanyedi Ward, Maun

No. of plots Interviewed	No. of plots with *ntlo ya sekgoa*	No. of plots with only one *Ntlo ya sekgoa*	No. of plots with cattle post or fields	No. with *ntlo ya sekgoa* at cattle post or fields	No. of plots female headed
22	17	9	11	2	13

These data represent the 'contraction' of the extended family taskscape to the urbanising centre itself, with a majority of female-headed households involved in the cash economy to varied extents and investing cash in potentially rental accommodation. Indeed, rental of individual houses within a plot by a household is common in central Maun, and involvement in building *mantlo a sekgoa* is often integral to this social activity, since there is a perception that such buildings are suitable for rental, whereas *mantlo a setswana* are less so, needing laborious renewal and disruption of tenants.

Out of the households who have cattle post areas, five claimed that CBPP cattle disease meant that they no longer spent time there at all, and do not intend to in the future. In general, activities such as cattle-keeping that were formerly engaged in by most family members have now become fragmented, sub-units engaging in different types of activity in the landscape. In one plot in Sanyedi ward, Rra Saudu, his brother and mother, all built together and rarely visited the cattle post, whilst the younger brother stayed mostly at the cattle post and rarely visited Maun. Rra Saudu had built an *ntlo ya sekgoa* in Sanyedi since fire had completely destroyed his previous *letlhaka* house twice, and his younger brother had done likewise at the cattle post, thus suggesting that investment in building can act as an index of perceptions about location and permanence. However, Rra Saudu stated that 'I don't have a house at the *moraka* since I do not have any money to buy window frames and the like - this is why I don't go there very often at all'. This strongly suggests that, although building activity does suggest some sort of perception of temporal 'permanence' about location of dwelling activities, there is a mutuality of influence at work,

whereby investment in built environment produces and reproduces such perceptions of location and dis-location. This explains why Rra Saudu is uncomfortable about visiting the *moraka* due to having no architectural presence there - his investment in durable structures in Sanyedi ward strengthens a perception of permanence of dwelling (as well as identity) there, and weakens connections to other places. The temporal properties of materials and those of social relations to place are mutually influential over time in the patterning of social activities within the landscape.

With the government compensating people in cash for cattle destruction in 1995, several households in Sanyedi ward invested the money in concrete buildings, thereby converting cattle-based wealth into property. The effects of cattle disease thereby hastened the process of taskscape contraction for many households, facilitated by the conversion of livestock and labour into cash forms.

The 'cows into bricks' process of wealth conversion is one available way of raising funds to build with and in the two cases I recorded this wealth conversion was undertaken by a father for a son. One man, Setswantsho related that when his house in Maun burnt down in 1992 his father gave him two cows to sell to help him build a new concrete house. Another man, Kebokilwe, related that he wasn't working when he first moved to Maun, and his father gave him some cows to sell to build an *ntlo ya sekgoa*. He stated that 'my father's gift (*mpho*) of some cows meant that I could build here, but even today I go back to his place a lot to help with the cattle'. It seems clear that such gifting of cattle for wealth conversion is part of the process of maintaining close social ties between family members, but there are also socio-temporal issues at play. Kebokilwe's statement that 'cows are the wealth (*lohumo*) of the cattle post, but houses are the wealth of the village' represents a dwelling process whereby wealth is perceived as temporally positioned in relation to place, and especially those sets of social activities that produce and reproduce places. For

Kebokilwe, wealth has a social presence rather than an economic one, being a product of varying intersections of social and material relations at points in the landscape.

Whilst both concrete houses and cattle embody wealth in differing ways, there are certain points of comparison that people acknowledge, such as the perception of *increase*. Perceptions of wealth in cattle often centre upon the ability of the herd to grow over time, increasing the wealth of the owner and the fortunes of the family. The temporal rhythm of increase is partly based upon the temporal potentialities of natural time (birth of calves), and this analogy is frequently used in bank advertising for financial savings, along with the analogy of grain storage. Social institutions grew around the temporal structure of herd increase, such as *mafisa*, the lending of cattle to poor or client herders, who would keep them for milk and offspring with the intention of self-sufficiency. This notion is fully employed in perceptions of investment in *mantlo a sekgoa* since most people consider that rental monies will more than pay for the outlay, and increase the wealth and fortunes of the family over time. The translation or conversion of wealth from cattle into construction, seen as characteristic of the urbanising process, is arguably a continuation of the temporal process of wealth increase interwoven with which are perceptions of ancestral favour. Within this process is an inherent engagement with social permanence in the sense of mutual involvement between family members in the direction of future increase, or 'proceeding-forwards' (*botswelelopele*) as a unit. The perception of family 'good fortune' (*lesego la lolwapa*) is thereby a composite experience of ancestral (diachronic) favour gained through extended family (synchronic) mutual involvement in wealth increase activities, and the retention of past practices through new contexts is crucial to the experience of social permanence.

Perceptions of durability and permanence are also importantly interwoven with perceptions of the mortality or lifecycle of persons and buildings, and the metaphor of death (*go swa*) is frequently

used to describe building decay over time. This will be taken up fully in chapter ten, but here it is important to examine how concrete buildings are conceived and perceived from a lifecycle perspective. Building with natural resources such as water reeds, wood and grass, gives a built environment certain temporal properties, since over time such materials need renewal. With grass and reeds there are certain times of year (dry season) when collecting takes place, and this lends a structure to the temporal rhythm of the changing morphology of the homestead, through the rhythm of associated social activities over time. For many homesteads, the possibilities and limitations of such rhythms are central to social experience in the landscape. In the urbanising context where social (household) change has been rapid, the contraction of the taskscape has led to an increase in building with concrete and other durable, cash-purchased materials.

Research on building with concrete in Botswana has often focussed upon notions of modernity (e.g. Larsson 1988), that is, on how the functions of houses have changed over time in keeping with people's desires to live 'modern' domestic lives, and yet none of this research examines building activity within a broader understanding of the dwelling process, focussing instead on building function analysis and utilisation of space. Larsson, for instance notes that:

> '[m]odern housing has meant the introduction of new and in many cases alien elements that for low-income dwellings result in a situation that is seemingly full of contradictions concerning the use of the building and of the outdoor space... [but] whenever possible, people seemed to adjust to the modern and somewhat alien dwelling provided through government efforts, through their own needs and through the maintenance of more familiar traditional elements' (Larsson 1988:10)

In other words (as I argue in chapter eight) the material durability inherent in processes of urbanisation does not necessarily lead to disorientation or social fragmentation, but rather people make use of their cultural resources to orient themselves within new contexts. Larsson quotes Löfgren who argues that:

'material expressions of culture around us, in this case dwellings, should not be considered only as cultural products. They also play an important role when culture shapes us. People are influenced by the way houses are built, dwellings are furnished or tools designed. The message conveyed through such media may, however, not be in line with what is explicitly said. Consequently, it is important to analyse cultural expressions in a way that problematises every aspect of everyday life, including its most trivial part' (Löfgren 1982:27 quoted in Larsson 1990).

The dichotomy between 'traditional' and 'modern' that underlies such analyses fails to recognise the way that building activity is embedded in a wide variety of material and social relations in which past practices are involved. For these reasons I have chosen not to examine the relationship between building and notions of modernity. Whilst many people did relate building with concrete with *botswelelopele* or 'progress' and development, this perception overlay more prosaic concerns of the relation between materials and everyday social activity. In other words, people are arguably less interested in notions of modernity than in the practical difficulties of customary building activity in an urbanising place. As Plates 14 and 15 show, building with concrete is often not associated with modern housing but is integrated with current technologies and skills based upon other materials.

In places such as Maun, what is more evident is people's attempts to stand outside of the temporal process of renewal through investment in concrete, since renewal involves sets of social activities and relationships in the landscape increasingly unavailable to them, rather than any indigenous notion of modernity. One acquaintance with a terminal illness who worked in Maun and had several children had begun to buy concrete bricks in order to build an *ntlo ya sekgoa* in the family plot, since the durability of the house would outlast her and provide shelter for her children. I am suggesting that investment in material durability is sometimes a response to individual uncertainty concerning the effects of mortality upon existing social relations. Another example of how both social and material permanence are perceived as interconnected dimensions of dwelling is in the

case of inheritance of plots. In two plots in Sanyedi ward it was explicitly recognised that inheritance of the plot would go to a child who had built an *ntlo ya sekgoa*, even though they would customarily not have inherited it (Plate 13). 'My eldest son has built a large *ntlo ya sekgoa*,' related one woman, Njiro, 'and he is the one who will inherit this place since he has built it. But according to our custom it is the youngest born who should inherit'. In such cases investment in concrete is equated with strength of claim to land, durability of materials temporally structuring future social relations within the homestead. Inheritance is integral to notions of social permanence, that is, to perceptions of forward momentum and increase over time, and here there is a link being made between house and position in household, with inheritance and thereby permanent social position being equated with the durability of architectural presence.

Investment and individual/group relations

I argued earlier than the building of *mantlo a sekgoa* within the Kantho plot in Sehitwa could be seen as a process of individuation in contradistinction to the collective social mobility of previous practices. However, since it was the removal of cattle from the homestead that transformed collective dwelling practices there, it could be argued that the separation of herds into ranches by the family was the essential individuating process, and that building practices reproduced this separation of the family sub-units within the homestead. Cash investment in building is in some way already predicated upon the individuation of group members - in the urbanising place the sub-units of a family are increasingly already individuated through the fragmented, individual rather than collective dwelling activities engaged with, such as cash-based labour, and this is often reproduced materially within the homestead through investment in *mantlo a sekgoa*.

Importantly however, such investment is ultimately bound-up with processes of individuation, in the way that material relations are transformed within the household over time. Investment of cash

from labour in buildings is an important practice in Ngamiland that is arguably connected with processes of both affirmation of individuality and reaffirmation of kin (collective) identity. This composite set of identities is no contradiction, as is indicated in my own data on cash investment in buildings in the parental homestead, where the development of both individual identities and strong kinship links are mutually sustaining and related processes. Rather than seeing *mantlo a sekgoa* firmly as products of cash investment of individual labour by new 'possessive' individuals, I argue that such buildings are equally interrelated with notions of group (often kin) identity. Further, I argue that in this sense *group dynamics create individuals, who are then reciprocally involved in maintaining and establishing group relations*. The notion of a temporal duality of individual (persons having social relations) and dividual (persons composed of social relations) aspects of personhood within a given culture identified by LiPuma (1998) can be approached in a new way through analysis of *mantlo a sekgoa*. Whereas he sees the duality of dividual and individual as still somewhat oppositional, with cultures foregrounding either dividual or individual modalities of being at different times, analysis of investment in *mantlo a sekgoa* suggests that rather than being oppositional aspects of personhood, both being individual and being relational (dividual) are mutually sustaining processes. In Africa, a strong individual is a product of group dynamics, since the notion of the important individual ('Big Man') is one that invests socially and materially in the group. The building of a concrete house for a relative such as a parent in the home village is seen as of equal if not more important to gaining status as an individual as building for oneself. 'If I build a large house for my mother' stated Gaorethoa 'people will say - "he is an important person since he takes care of his family", but nobody will say this if I just build a large house for myself somewhere else'.

There has been much research in African studies on the topic of individualism, particularly with regard to migration and material relations to place. As Geschiere and Gugler (1998) argue,

research in the 1960s recognised that life in African cities could hardly be understood without reference to the continuing involvement of urban residents with their rural area of origin and kin group. Indeed, some recent studies (Gugler 1997; Geschiere and Gugler 1998; Ferguson 1990; Potts and Mutambirwa 1990; Potts 1995; 1997; Trager 1998) argue that this 'dual system' phenomenon is a continuing feature of African urban life, and that even those people born in urban areas often state their desire to retire to rural 'home' areas. Rural identities are of continuing importance to the economic subsistence, political identity, and social life of most African town dwellers. The 'dual system' of Africanist literature in which the individual migrant becomes ever more involved in processes of collective identity such as house building, especially in natal villages, resonates strongly with the 'dual person' notion that has emerged from Melanesian anthropology. The notion of the individual is also implicitly about the ability of a person to establish and maintain strong social relations. The 'Big Man' notion of African individualism for instance relates to the ability of a person to be at the centre of group relations, often through the distribution of wealth.

It is important to note that in Africa, individuals who play such significant social roles in their natal villages are often not resident there, and may spend much of their working lives as migrants elsewhere. Individual migrants may only visit occasionally to oversee the building of a house or resolve disputes, since individuals who provide materially for the group are often accorded significant social roles. Nicholas Townsend's (1997) work on male migration in Botswana highlighted an increase in the variability of male life courses corresponding to economic structural change in the country. This may not seem surprising, but many studies that attempt to look at change over time within households have taken residency as a basis for household composition without acknowledging the important role that absent members make. He confirms the dual system model, arguing that his informants 'used descent as the criterion for whether a person had a claim

on village land and could be buried as a ward member' (Townsend 1997:409). According to Townsend, establishing a 'household' in the home village 'marks a man as a full adult in the community' (loc. cit.), with corresponding duties and obligations within that community, and that it is rarely done before the age of forty. Once established, 'physical residence is not necessary for household membership, and there are flows of people, goods, services, and cash between households and between non co-resident members of the same household' (Ibid. p.410).

Data from my own fieldwork in three wards in Maun suggested strongly that cash investment in buildings is integral to a wider process whereby persons affirm their own identity within the social context of the wider household. My data from Sanyedi ward, Maun included a detailed homestead survey of 22 households and showed that in April 2000 a total of 31 separate persons had invested in building *mantlo a sekgoa*. The following table summarises which relatives had invested in this way within the plot:

Table 2: Individual investment in *mantlo a sekgoa*: Sanyedi ward, Maun

Male Head	Female Head	Daughter	Son	Niece/nephew	Sibling to M/F Head	Other Relative
4	5	10	5	3	4	0

With 17 households *de facto* headed by women, the data shows that about a third of female and male heads have themselves invested in concrete buildings. A third of all investors in building were daughters, twice that of sons. Extended family members, who have often migrated to relatives' homesteads in Maun to work, are also significant investors in Sanyedi homesteads. Overall this data shows that two thirds of all investment in *mantlo a sekgoa* is not by household heads but by other relatives who wish to dwell in an extended family household rather than establish a separate plot. Daughters in particular chose to invest in such buildings in the parental

plot, expressing positive feelings about dwelling with other family relations. This female core of dwelling activities is a common feature of Yei homesteads in Sanyedi ward, where day to day tasks, such as building, cooking and childcare, are organised collectively.

Older sons in general expressed feelings of social separation from the natal homestead, and often talked about plans for establishing their own plot elsewhere. One man, Jeffrey Emasiko, stated: 'here in my mother's plot the women build together. But I am gradually buying concrete bricks myself and keeping them here until I have enough to build a new house in a plot I have found in Maphane ward'. For Jeffrey and other men there is an equivalence between the gradual material (spatial) and social individuation of the person. This process often takes some time, since investment is sporadic and frequently interrupted. The newer wards on the outskirts of Maun are characterised by fenced plots that are often empty or with concrete structures at various stages of completion. Jeffrey related that: 'when I have moved then I may bring my mother to live with me there, and leave this plot to other relatives. I do not feel able to build here for myself'.

Another man, Mpho, argued that 'it is important that I have a plot in my home village, even though I work elsewhere. I hope to finish my house there one day and return here to live'. For both Jeffrey and Mpho this piecemeal process of investment is interwoven with notions of identity - of how perceptions of self and social group are interrelated, of social expectations of their role in society and obligations to the group, especially providing care to elder relatives. As unmarried men, the physical qualities of concrete buildings are perceived by them as set apart from everyday household gender relations in which women are seasonally involved in building work. This is important to them, not due to notions of modernity, but due to the social uncertainties of dwelling. Both Jeffrey and Mpho argued that the uncertainties of living in Maun meant that such collective dwelling activities could no longer be easily maintained. 'I am not married' stated Mpho, 'and I do

not live here but work elsewhere, so who is going to renew the houses if I do not build with concrete?' In the context of increasing social change in household composition in places such as Maun, building with concrete can be understood as a way of coping with social uncertainty over time. This was certainly the case with the Garebakwena family, who decided to build an *ntlo ya sekgoa* in the face of future employment uncertainty and since some skilled kin members were looking to migrate elsewhere (Plate 16). 'If we do not build a house now, we do not know what the future will be like' stated the family head, Kgalalo. *Mantlo a sekgoa* are often built for relatives in Maun by migrants due to the uncertainties inherent in their absence as material providers. Social uncertainty is of course readily experienced by most as material uncertainty - who will help renew my house, or provide care during illness, for instance? *Such buildings therefore often represent absence, uncertainty and temporariness, rather than presence, certainty and permanence, often assumed in some analyses.*

This is confirmed in another recent ethnography of concrete building practices (Thomas, P 1998) who argues that Malagasy migrants consider individual migration a temporary activity, however long they are away from home villages. Thomas found that feelings toward urban migration and urban centres in general were often ambivalent, and that rural identities were asserted by most. Townspeople are generally viewed and referred to as *tia têna* (motivated by a 'liking for themselves'), whereas those in the country were *tia nama* (motivated by a 'liking for others') (1998:438). The term for a longer-term migrant was *rerelava*, 'those who wander around and around without purpose a long way away' (1998:439). Thomas found a widespread antipathy toward displacement from rural roots, a fear of being 'lost' to the home society. One of the ways in which migrants attempted to reinforce the social ties at home was through the construction of 'white houses', involving considerable investment in materials. These were looked upon favourably in the home village as maintenance of social and family ties rather than representing

urban or western values. Thomas concludes that, '[t]he dual orientation of migrants' lives – the urban and modern world of wage-labour, and the rural and more traditional world of kinship, ritual and subsistence cultivation – can itself be seen to be embodied in 'white houses'... part of potentially displaced and delocalized people's strategies of reaffirming their connection to their ancestral homeland' (1998:439).

Land

Concrete buildings can be considered as non-portable material culture. An important theme in this chapter as well as the thesis overall, is the nature of permanence in dwelling relations to place, and especially how material relations such as building activity relate to the notion of dwelling. One important dimension in the examination of permanence within dwelling is how indigenous notions of 'land' are socially experienced. Customary land allocation for establishing a homestead is through the ward headman (*kgosana*), and the homestead is thereby embedded in a set of social relations toward the Chief and to other ward and tribal group members. Customary land tenure is thereby a set of social relations between household and community through the Chief, with land having no alienable qualities as individual property. Spatial and social relations are interwoven in customary settlement practices where close agnatic kin dwelt in particular wards of a village together. *Taking place* and *taking part* in community were interconnected aspects of dwelling. After Independence (1966) the Tribal Land Act (1969) removed the centrality of the Chief in this process in place of Land Boards who allocate residential land on behalf of the state to citizens on 99-year leases, and in 1993 the Tribal Land Amendment Act gave took away the customary privilege of local tribal groups to local land. Whilst most plots in the newly established areas of Maun gained land in this new way, most central plots were customarily granted before 1970. In one such central ward, Mabudutsa, relatively few plots have been fenced, and hardly any *mantlo a sekgoa* are evident, unusual for central Maun. One reason for this is the fact that most people in

Mabudutsa believe that they will be removed from their ward by the government in order to develop the area, and are not investing in their homesteads. Table 3 highlights the disparity in such activity between Mabudutsa and Sanyedi wards.

Table 3 Land Board plots and investment in *mantlo a sekgoa* in Sanyedi and Mabudutsa Wards, Maun.

Ward	Plots interviewed	Plots with *mantlo a sekgoa*	Plots with Land Board Certificate	Plots fenced
Sanyedi	22	17	19	19
Mabudutsa	17	6	4	2

The perception of security of land tenure is important in establishing a context of permanence required for building *mantlo a sekgoa*, since cash investment in materials involves perceptions about the future. As discussed earlier, uncertainty about the individual's temporal relation to place is a key factor in building practices, and especially in the conversion of labour and the opportunity cost of cash into concrete buildings and the hire of builders. The spatial immobility of durable materials is mirrored in the temporal relations that people have with them - material durability is interwoven with perceptions of the durability of social relations to place and space. Arguably, such material durability is integral to a wider process of making landscape more determinate and sedentary. Material durability does not necessarily create a more enduring sense of place, but it does influence social relations to place over time. One example of this is Keitumetse, a middle-aged man in Maun, who built a concrete house within his parent's homestead. After marriage he moved to his wife's village some distance away. As he had built a concrete house he retained an enduring presence in the natal homestead, even though he eventually rented it out. Material durability means that social relations to place are increasingly concerned with possession and

inheritance, and I have here argued that an important context for this social transformation of relations to place has been the legalistic re-casting of collective relations to place as individual relations to 'land'. It is arguable whether material durability establishes a more lasting *sense* of place, but such durability is certainly an integral part of the transformation of social activity in the wider landscape. Whereas places have become more permanent and determinate in the social landscape, people have become increasingly mobile within the landscape, often migrating many times. Places may have become more lasting and durable, but people's experiences of them are often ephemeral, fluid and uncertain.

The continuing experience of social uncertainty over place can also be understood as experiences of more or less *permanent temporariness*, that affects the range of dwelling practices engaged in by individuals.. This experience is widespread in Mabudutsa ward in Maun, where most inhabitants believe that the government will forcibly evict them and use the land for commercial development. This perception of insecurity partly explains the low registration of plots with the Land Board and lack of fencing activity. Whereas in the pre-Independence period land was understood as belonging to the Chief who had arbitrary control over people's residential land, after Independence this sense of authority and possession was passed to the government. There is a strong continuity in perceptions about socio-juridical relations to land as an element of people's perceptions about the nature of power and authority in Botswana, that has important material implications in the relation between dwelling and building. I am not arguing that an absence of any practice of freehold tenure means a lack of any 'permanence' in social relations to land or place, far from it. What interests me here is how indigenous notions of authority, possession and land relate to social activities, especially building activities, and how we might characterise these shifting relations. I argue that it is particularly important to do so when considering the social and temporal particularities of concrete buildings since they arguably represent differing sets of dwelling relations to the land in

which they are embedded than those entailed in buildings that arise from collective dwelling activity.

Uncertainty over social relations to place exists perhaps on different scales and in different social and material contexts - for instance on the scale of the nation or of the homestead. On a national scale, relations between household and Chief or between household and state, are the relevant social relationships for negotiation over rights to living, farming or exploiting natural resources in an area, or even concerning forced removal. I earlier argued that transience of dwelling has been an important social experience for Mbanderu people, produced and reproduced materially through dwelling, and that it is especially relevant when one considers the historical reluctance of Mbanderu to invest socially and materially in Botswana. This experience of permanent displacement or permanent temporariness has been documented occasionally in other research in Africa. In *Permanent Pilgrims* (1995) C. Bawa Yamba describes how 'most of the inhabitants of the pilgrim villages in Sudan are third-, fourth-, even fifth-generation immigrants who have lived all their lives in Sudan, yet still regard themselves as being in transit. And not only do they define themselves as being on their way; to the outside observer, they live and act as if they were on their way' (1995:1). Differing perceptions about social relations to place between different groups are an important dimension of how social activities and material relations are configured within the landscape.

Uncertainties leading to experiences of long term temporariness also exist within a homestead, affecting the configuration of dwelling activities and building investment. For instance, when children grow older it is common for them to live in separate dwelling units within the parental plot. When they reach adulthood the question of dwelling location becomes an important implicit consideration, since inheritance and marriage practices are potentially uprooting. Amongst many

young adults living in the parental plot there is an almost permanent uncertainty about location which affects their dwelling and building activities. A good example of this is a homestead in Mabudutsa ward, where many of the household members state that they have been unable to build concrete buildings as they would have wished, since a young uncle will inherit the plot and they will have to move elsewhere. When one considers the plan of this homestead one is struck by the house of the young uncle that occupies the centre of the homestead, surrounded by other relatives. The relatives stated that although they have always lived in a large extended family homestead, permanent buildings are unresponsive to change and since inheritance makes their dwelling there uncertain, they have ruled out investment in concrete houses. What can be characterised as 'temporary' is more accurately a 'shifting' of socio-spatial relations over time, an experience of fluid dwelling relations 'permanently' embedded in social and personal ties to kin.

Amongst those whose experience of customary dwelling practices is one of more or less permanent temporariness there is a strong perception that the building of an *ntlo ya sekgoa* is appropriately located on a state certified plot that has been registered with the Land Board in their name (which only became possible for women after the establishment of Land Boards). This is a process of the individual 'taking place' (a sense of permanence) in the landscape as a pre-requisite for personal cash investment in building. For many women this process was an assertion of relations to place transformed through the individuating activity of cash employment rather than collective dwelling. Few customary homesteads in Mabudutsa have invested in concrete buildings, due to the unresolved uncertainties about relations to place.

Practices related to the building of *Mantlo a sekgoa* arguably represent new sets of relations between buildings as objects and the social landscape in which they are rooted. Firstly, Strathern (1999:158) argues that self-ownership is a crucial ontological pre-requisite or context for property

to be personally owned in exclusive relation to the individual as opposed to any other member of a group. She discusses the concept of self-ownership, or property in one's person, which she understands historically as having later given way to ownership of personal labour. Whilst I cannot enter into an extended discussion of indigenous notions of property in this thesis, I would argue that cash-based as opposed to reciprocal social practices of exchange have altered such notions. What does seem to be more possible now, as Strathern notes, is that 'persons can multiply themselves through the range of products available for consumption' (1999:99) rather than exclusively through social relationships. For women in Botswana especially, the attainment of self-ownership through full individual rights (rather than rights as a dependent of a male household head as before Independence) has marked an important social transformation that has for instance meant that women can gain residential plots as individuals. This process was of course coterminous with a process of women gaining possession of their own labour within the cash economy - of thereby becoming self-defining individuals in a socio-economic sense. Whilst self-ownership is the context of possession for portable property or labour, 'land' is arguably the context of possession for the temporal durability and immobility of concrete houses.

But just what is 'land'? In one important sense it is obviously the physical substrate of dwelling. But what I have been considering in this chapter is how concrete buildings involve a transformation of indigenous notions of land as a dimension of social relations to place. Freehold land tenure barely exists in Botswana, reflecting a widespread historical notion of the inalienable nature of land as belonging to the group through the Chief. Customary land tenure was bound up with building practices involving freely available materials that did not represent the investment of personal wealth, this being almost always confined to cattle. In recent times this historical status hierarchy has been inverted so that wealth in cattle is sometimes liquidised to build houses, representing a shift in focus to town-based social and economic activities.

In this sense, both notions of 'land' and the materiality of buildings are united in the same process of transformation of the landscape, both practically interwoven and providing the relational context for the other. This is explicitly recognised by the Land Boards whose regulations on the acquisition of residential land are that allocated plots should be fenced within six weeks to avoid double allocation, and that within five years a structure should be erected for the sole purpose of residence (Rra Pitse, personal communication). The spatial formation of exclusive land usage through fencing or other material demarcation is thereby inseparable from changing material relations and the nature of the social landscape, and is bound up with the physical properties of durable building materials. For many of my informants, individual rights to a plot of land were seen as an important prerequisite to cash investment in buildings, not just since such investment required security of tenure, but because fenced plots were perceived as an appropriate context for such buildings.





Plate 13 (top) *Ntlo ya sekgoa* (concrete brick house) of an eldest son in parental homestead, Sanyedi ward, Maun.

Plate 14 (bottom) Single-room *ntlo ya sekgoa* joined with mud brick houses into a *lolwapa* courtyard, Sanyedi ward, Maun.





Plate 15 (top) Concrete bricks used as replacement walling material for *letlhaka* and retaining the wooden roof supports, Wenela ward, Maun.

Plate 16 (bottom) Building a four-room *ntlo ya sekgoa* using skilled family labour, Wenela ward, Maun.



Plate 17 Kantho family homestead, Sehitwa. View south from main house toward eldest son's concrete house.

Chapter Seven

Migration, Pathways and the 'Otherplaceness' of dwelling.

Introduction

One of the arguments developed in this thesis is that the context of any one dwelling site needs to be seen in the context of people's coping practices and dwelling in the landscape as a whole, since social and material pathways between places are crucial aspects of social activity. This chapter focuses on a number of homesteads to examine how the contexts of other places and the pathways between places in the social landscape are important to analysis of particular dwelling sites. The data will be examined to argue that places are mutually creative, that is, that the social and material fabric of one place is inextricably linked to that of other places, and that this set of relationships represents both constraining and enabling forces at work in the landscape. Whilst there is much literature on migration and urban-rural linkages in Africa, few studies have focussed on movement and migration linkages from a material culture perspective such as building strategies, or settlement biographies. The material strategies of families differ significantly within Maun, often depending on prior experiences. For instance, many recent Mbukushu immigrants to Maun settle on the extreme peripheries of the village where natural resources for dwelling activities are more available, whereas other migrants are involved in renting in the central areas of Maun. The morphology of dwellings often reflects many of these migrant experiences, such as renting, visiting, schooling, and are thereby often externally referential in their nature – that is, the morphology of one dwelling often refers beyond to the social and material existence of other locations.

For ease of analysis I have characterised three broad types of homestead in order to discuss the differing influences of the wider social landscape on particular dwellings, although any such typology should be seen as an heuristic device rather than a meaningful set of social distinctions. The rough distinctions that can be made are between those households with few or no continuing links with social activities in the surrounding landscape, those with frequent and well established links to other areas close by, and those having migrated a considerable distance, having infrequent contact with other areas, and rarely re-establishing agro-pastoral activities in the Maun area. The triumvirate of village, cattle post and fields, so often used to characterise Tswana settlement traditions, is a problematic one in the context of Maun, where the large majority of the population is ethnically non-Tswana and originate from remote farming areas in other parts of Ngamiland. Being historically not nucleated village dwellers but sparsely settled riverine (*molapo*) farming and fishing communities, this dwelling triumvirate was never part of their everyday experience of the social landscape. For those ethnically Tswana peoples of Maun (Tawana), many no longer have cattle since cattle disease in 1995, and migration and cash employment have dramatically affected ploughing labour to the extent that most families no longer plough at all. However, some households that have been resident in Maun for some generations continue to maintain these links with the local social landscape, and move seasonally between different dwelling contexts. This chapter then sets out to explore the connectivities and dynamics of dwelling - the way in which the placeness of landscape can be understood as an ever more complex web of activity, in which pathways, movement and interrelations are key to the temporal nature of place.

Quantitatively, the largest set of households that I encountered in Maun were those that originated from farming communities in Ngamiland, having migrated within one or two generations, and who continue to have close ties to kin in their area of origin, making frequent visits with goods purchased in Maun. There are normally considerable material and social flows between village

and farming areas, including harvest produce, natural resources for building, firewood, meat, as well as labour. After some time, the link between the village and farming areas may be experienced in a similar way to the Tswana model, with families having both village and farming dwelling sites. Indeed, many Yei families talk of the family *moraka* (cattle post) and *masimo* (fields), which shows how pervasive the Tswana categorisation of dwelling through language has become, since in most cases distinctions in dwelling sites in the landscape are far from formalised. For instance, Kesego migrated to Maun more than thirty years ago from Shorobe region, and refers to her parents' homestead where they keep some cattle as the family *moraka*. Her father refers to her homestead in Maun as the family home *ko motseng* (at the village). *Such migration of kin tends to categorise and recontextualise places in terms of their social meaning to the group as a whole rather than necessarily by what happens at such places*. All members of Kesego's family have shifted their perception of dwelling places over time based upon collective experience, which has also been significantly influenced by Tswana socio-semantics of dwelling experience.

The next significant group comprises households having migrated a considerable distance and having differing sorts of linkages with other areas, since visiting is less frequent and more restrictive due to distance and socio-historical connections to an area. The migration is often connected with employment although services may be influential, especially the hospital and schooling. Visiting other areas tends to be infrequent, sometimes connected with harvests, and often for family weddings or funerals, and the sorts of material flows between these areas are haphazard, often cash or commodity based. This set of households often initially rent houses in Maun, or stay with other previous migrants, before establishing their own plots on the periphery of the village, where natural resources for dwelling activities are more accessible. This is more necessary for this set of households due to their lack of connections to the local area, which provides the second and first sets with social and material networks in the local landscape.

Another significant set of experiences that I encountered, especially among households resident for a few generations in Maun, is that of households with no established links to other places, or having had past links that have disappeared over time. This set is not large but is a significant (and perhaps growing) aspect of contemporary life in a large village in which the cash economy is increasingly and irrevocably replacing agro-pastoral activities and associated social networks in the local landscape, a process speeded up by the recent destruction of cattle due to Contagious Bovine Pleuro Pneumonia (CBPP) in 1995, after which many small-scale herders failed to restock and became entirely dependent upon the cash economy.

The argument developed through these examples is that the homestead is not a hermetically sealed unit of analysis that has reference solely to the daily activities of its inhabitants, but that other contexts, other places, are an influential factor within the homestead. On the material level, buildings may be constructed from materials collected and transported from family places in other areas, or financed by a family member working elsewhere, or even built for visitors who occasionally come to stay from other places. Previous experiences also bring the influence of other places and contexts into new areas, and this is frequently seen in the sorts of building activities undertaken by migrants, who adapt previous experiences to suit new environments. Social networks (or lack of them) may also influence the location of a homestead within the village. The existence of other multiple locations where considerable time is spent is also a factor in the sort of building activities carried out in any one particular place. Since both material and social dimensions of the homestead are interrelated aspects of dwelling, analysis of the morphology of dwelling sites is inevitably also a way of understanding, or way of seeing, the way social and material aspects of life are mutually enabling or constraining forces upon each other. Houses have often been understood in the way they embody or represent or symbolise social or cultural ideas,

but this mentalistic or cultural approach to the social existence of building activity does not acknowledge the everyday, coping aspects of social life in which building as an activity is carried on. Other places and other social contexts are not represented in people's building activities in a highly conscious or culturally planned way, but in involved practical and social everyday ways that form the bulk of people's activity within the homestead.

Shorobe Molapo Region Migrants

The first set of case studies that I will examine are based upon interviews and follow-ups that arose from fieldwork in the Shorobe *molapo* region. After completing fieldwork in the region I visited several families in Maun who were close relatives of the people I had become acquainted with in Shorobe, and whose homesteads were often visited by them. All of the families had established family compounds in Maun some years previously, a few in the 1960s, in order for their children to attend schools. This meant that some members of the family, in most cases the wife or grandmother, became settled in Maun, and the farming area became a farming area for the families, with the older males staying there with cattle or goats. As the children grew older, most of them stayed in Maun and became involved in the cash economy, only visiting the parental farming area occasionally, preferring to invest time and cash in village life, but enjoying helping with cattle occasionally. In a few cases one of the sons was more suited to the farming and herding life than the others and went back permanently to stay, with the other family members only visiting occasionally. For most families, some sort of family continuity with the farming area was desirable, since this is widely considered to be the social and economic backbone of extended family life, since the cash economy is often considered an insecure and short term arrangement rather than long term support structure. This is often the basis on which Shorobe families continue to articulate their multiple location strategies within the extended family, and building activities are

important within this understanding of the wider social landscape and people's roles and identities within it over time.

Case study: Selebelwe Mothowamorena

Selebelwe's homestead in Shorobe sits on the edge of the *molapo* above his fields, and a large paddock for cattle next to his house encloses a hand dug well. 'My mother and I both moved here away from my father's place' he explains. 'I have some fields here next to the house and I just wanted to come and settle next to them. So I asked my father for some land over here to build. I even built a house here for my father in the hope that he would move over here also, but he only stayed for a month and then went back. I think it is because his father is buried at that place and he doesn't want to leave that site. But he is old now and soon I will have to bring him over here to stay with us'. Selebelwe's house is a two-room concrete brick structure, the only one in the area, and some distance behind is a compound belonging to his mother, made from *letlhaka*. 'In all the years in which I was working' he explains, 'I used to come to the *moraka* at weekends to check the cattle since I enjoy cattle a lot. I hired a cattle herder who was living in Maun to come here and look after them whilst I was working away. After I lost my job at the abattoir in Maun in 1996 I didn't need him any more and I came back here to work and I now spend most of my time here. I built this concrete house here in 1995. In Maun I have a 2-room house with electricity as well as a *semauso* (street vendor's stall), but we have stopped running this since we moved away. I invested in concrete buildings as I was earning some cash and traditional buildings take a lot of time to renew and repair. The concrete brick house is more durable. I would like to put a ceiling in this one here and paint it inside and out with this paint I have bought, but there is a lack of money now'.

I asked Selebelwe whether he had thought that he might have to move in the future, and how his building activity affected this. He replied that ' I keep my cattle in the *lesaka* here and then each

day I drive them over to Totoga (an island in the *melapo* close by) for grazing. Since I have a well here at the top of this field, I can bring them off the field into this paddock to drink and then drive them out of the top gate. When the harvest has finished I can keep the cattle here to feed. All this means that I do not need to migrate with my cattle as some people do to find water. I prefer to stay in one place rather than to move around a lot'. Since movement of dwelling site in the Shorobe region is often connected with establishing or maintaining reciprocal neighbour relations based upon mutual engagement with tasks, as was discussed previously, Selebelwe's expression of autonomy from both neighbour support and the need to move around can partly be understood in the context of his material and social relations to places beyond the Shorobe region. Significantly, one of the first things Selebelwe showed me was the Land Board certificate granting him farming and residential land where he had built, which for him represented autonomy from local use-rights and the context for investment in concrete buildings, a shift from social to individual relations to place discussed in detail in the previous chapter.

Selebelwe's wife arrived from the fields and joined the conversation, and she began to articulate some domestic comparisons between village and farm. 'Here at the *moraka* I have to collect water and firewood. In Maun we have a telephone and I can speak frequently to my relatives in Gaborone. Cooking is very different there... I cook very different foods such as eggs and rice. Here we only cook maize meal. And there are lots of neighbours in Maun and we visit each other frequently because we live close together. Here people live much further apart and we do not see people as frequently. Here there is more need of practical help because people have fewer things. We rely on other people much less in Maun since we have everything that we need in the house, such as power and water close by.'

It becomes clear when analysing both the materiality of Selebelwe's Shorobe homestead as well as the sorts of things that he and his wife say about it, that both the fabric and the experience of the place are affected and indeed constituted to a great extent by that of other another place, the village. This is most obvious in the materiality of dwelling - the concrete bricks, the iron sheeting, the old car, the pots of paint, chairs from a furniture store and other goods. More essentially however, the very materiality of the homestead evinces a temporal connection to other places in the form of labour in employment, experiences of other dwelling practices, and other social contexts. Understanding the temporal dimension of the landscape in this way is important if we are to have a unified concept of how social and material pathways coalesce at certain points and places, such as within Selebelwe's Shorobe homestead. A recognition of the temporality of the landscape allows us to bring together biographies of people and places to see how social activity and materiality are mutually influential and interconnected dimensions of dwelling.

The temporal dimension is implied but not discussed by Philip Thomas in his (1998) study of Malagasy building practices, in which he usefully discusses processes of de- and re-localisation of mass produced materials such as concrete. Thomas first outlines the practice of building what are indigenously termed modern, or European-style 'white houses' in Madagascar by urban migrants in their rural settlements, and offers a critique of the way such forms of construction have often been seen in terms of the 'delocalisation' of architecture and of indigenous culture as a whole. He argues that 'although materials such as sheet-metal roofing panels may be produced outside the local economy, they can also be involved in processes and practices of "relocalisation"' (1998:426) by local people. Consumption is linked to production in that as people use objects they produce a new set of social meanings for the object, a 'second moment of production' (loc. cit.). Thomas argues that 'through building houses with cement and sheet-metal, Manambondro's urban migrants were in part engaged in appropriating materials from the global flow of commodities for use in

their projects of making and remaking place… [t]he dual orientation of migrants' lives – the urban and modern world of wage-labour, and the rural and more traditional world of kinship, ritual and subsistence cultivation – can itself be seen to be embodied in 'white houses'… part of potentially displaced and delocalized people's strategies of reaffirming their connection to their ancestral homeland' (1998:427, 439). Places are constantly involved in the dynamics of change, and yet this is never done in isolation, but in relation to other places that are connected to it through the social and material pathways of the landscape. Thomas's analysis of the dynamic relation between material forms, social relations and place usefully supports my developing argument in this thesis of place as process of dwelling.

Whilst Thomas argues that the 'delocalized' nature of mass-produced materials can become 'relocalized' through the act of consumption, this process of recontextualisation for Selebelwe, although involved in a process of reaffirming social ties in a given locality, implicitly involves the delocalized space and time of other places, held in a dynamic tension - not the global realm of mass-produced commodities as Thomas saw it, but the relatively local centres of commerce and industry. Whilst his concrete building has become 'localised' in the sense that it is both rooted in and is part of the creation of place, it necessarily embodies other places in the temporality of its fabric - the labour in town factories, the cash investment, the involvement of skilled builders, the transport of materials etc. For these reasons, I believe that *otherplaceness* rather than *delocalized* is a more useful concept for understanding how the wider landscape is dynamically involved in the particularities of place through social activity over time.

After a period of fieldwork in Shorobe region I visited Selebelwe's compound in Maun, where I met his daughter and stepdaughter, who sells commercially produced Chibuku beer from her concrete brick house. Opposite her house is a two-roomed house belonging to Selebelwe with

electricity and a large pile of bricks ready to extend the building to include a kitchen. There are two other buildings on the plot where Selebelwe's mother and father stay when they come to the village to visit, separately, since they are divorced. Both houses are made from natural materials that Selebelwe brought back from the cattle post. In the same way that his concrete house in Shorobe both embodies and represents the otherplaceness of his activities, his parents' houses in his village plot likewise embody and represent the distant cattle post. They do this not only by being constructed from wood and grasses brought from that place, but also thereby visually representing their ties to place, a house that socially suggests a visitor from the rural homestead. Whereas in times of cash employment in Maun Selebelwe invested in his homestead in Shorobe area, he now foresees the reverse happening: 'If these cattle do well here in Shorobe and I can begin to start selling one or two' he related, 'I will invest in building my house in Maun rather than here, since I will be spending more time there. The next thing that I will do is increase the number of rooms by adding to the building, and put a standpipe in the plot, which will cost P400. I want to put some new rooms up for visitors and for my daughter's children. I will just do it the way that I built the first room, by buying the bricks and collecting them all there and then hiring some builder to come and put up the walls and the corrugated iron roof'. It is in just this way that places in the landscape become both socially and materially entwined over time, and the analysis of any one place inevitably uncovers pathways within the social landscape that brings them together.

Case study: Dash Maphumo

Maphumo lives some five kilometres from Selebelwe in Gabamutsha. He described to me how his family are spread out over several different places these days, a process that started in the late 1960s when a primary school was built in Shorobe village. His building activity between his two homesteads - in the village and at the cattle post - is a process of constant renegotiation of priorities and needs over time rather than strategic planning:

'My parents have a large plot in Shorobe, but I was born here at the *moraka* in Gabamutsha. Both the place at Shorobe and the one here I consider to be my permanent place (*ja rata ya me*), since my cattle and fields are here. I often stay in Shorobe if I am repairing the buildings here in Gabamutsha. We have built an *ntlo ya setswana* in Shorobe, but we plan to build an *ntlo ya sekgoa* (concrete brick building) soon. In fact the bricks are all ready but there is a lack of money to pay the builder to construct it. We do not plan to build a concrete house here however. But since they are both my permanent places they are both worth investing in buildings, it is just that Shorobe is a large village and there are not the materials there to renew the buildings, so concrete bricks will be easier to maintain. We spend less time in Shorobe and this is also why I intend to build with concrete bricks there, as they do not need regular maintenance. Since I am not there often I am not able to stop damage to the buildings in Shorobe from donkeys and goats, but they cannot damage concrete bricks'.

Maphumo here describes another way in which other places affect particular places - absence. With little time spent in the village, the absence of social activities on a daily basis significantly affects both the sociality and the materiality of the homestead. The temporality of daily social and material life normally inherent in the homestead means that renewal of houses is a continual and integral facet of social coping. However, the distribution of social groups between places affects this socio-temporal pattern considerably, and in Maphumo's case has led to the decision to invest in concrete, a process that embodies the socio-temporal adjustments and changes inherent in multi-locational strategies within the landscape. The case study of Maphumo ties in directly with the case studies in the previous chapter where I argued that investment in durable materials is often connected with absence or temporariness rather than permanence or sedentary dwelling as is often suggested.

'People ask "where have you worked to get the money for this house?" and I tell them that I worked in Maun for many months to build here in Shorobe. Everybody knows what is involved in building a house and where the money to build comes from in other families. It is important to us to know who is building for their family and where they are working.' Houses embody the agency of both

persons and places - they are socially experienced as bits of the relations people have to places and that places have to people. Knowledge about the persons and places embodied in houses is an everyday facet of dwelling - it is part of the gossip and other informal exchanges of information that produce and reproduce ties to place over time. Maphumo's clay brick houses in Gabamutsha also, to a local eye, suggest other places, especially since there is no available water locally for making bricks, and must be brought from long distances in large quantities by donkey cart. 'We brought the water needed for making the bricks from Shorobe in my backie [truck]' explains Maphumo. 'The bricks you see there are going to be made into a stoop for the house made with poles before the rains come. The *letlhaka* I collect myself. I fill the car up with petrol and go to Daonara or Morutseng where it is being cut by people from Maun'. As much as a concrete house, the way in which natural materials are combined in Maphumo's house represents other places - the reed swamps, the distant standpipe - which others find less accessible. To them, Maphumo's houses are 'built by the car' using distant natural materials whereas they cope with what grows in the vicinity. Materials embody both the placeness and otherplaceness of dwelling in differing ways within local perspectives and on differing contextual scales within the landscape.

Schooling has always been an important factor in the process of migration in Ngamiland, and Maphumo's family were not alone in responding to both post-Independence education and health provision by establishing homesteads in population centres such as Shorobe and Maun. This sort of migration is understood by most families as a way of creating and maintaining social and material pathways in the landscape. In this way, Maphumo relates his biography as a 'landscape' of life stages, since places represent bundles of space and time that were established by the family to take advantage of certain opportunities:

'When I finished schooling in Shorobe I went to Maun for junior secondary. I have two brothers, who were also both schooling at Shorobe before me. After Form 2 they schooled in Maun and stayed with relatives.

After that they stayed in Maun and now have a plot in Sanyedi ward. After they got this plot other relatives went to Maun to stay with them. The second brother got married and moved away from the plot in Sanyedi, and I got to use his house there when I was also schooling at Maun. When I had finished school I decided that I wanted to spend my time farming and so I came back to Gabamutsha and built my own house, I was 28 years old. Until that time I was sleeping in one of my mother's huts'.

The establishment of a separate house within the farm homestead for himself was a significant act for Maphumo, since the act of building was an act of self-placement within the landscape, a strong social statement of self-identity and future intentions. He also saw it as a lifecycle change, a threshold crossed from the mother's house to his own adult dwelling. In Setswana, the sense of 'where do you live?' is commonly phrased 'o agile kae?', 'where have you built?', as well as 'o nna kae?', 'where do you stay?'.[8] The influence of the wider landscape and other places of experience lies behind such biographies and acts of building, not only creating new personal resonances between house, place and the 'otherplaceness' of lived experience, but also placing and re-placing group relationships in the temporal landscape. The latter process in Maphumo's case can be witnessed in the way his dwelling activities in Gabamutsha in particular are carried out on a daily basis in part with regard to the wider social landscape of extended family in other places. Building in the rural homestead, is not simply an act of establishing self with regard to place, because such an act is always already carried out within the context of the wider familial landscape, within which one is socialised and which thereby informs our acts of dwelling.

Building in the Natal Village

Many homesteads in Maun evince a series of linkages to other places through the further migration of relatives, who subsequently remain influential in the material and social make-up of the familial

[8] Both *go aga* (to build) and *go nna* (to stay, sit, inhabit etc.) are used in everyday speech to talk about dwelling, with *aga* having connotations of a home village, where a migrant might return to for instance, with *nna* in this case referring to a staying place, such as a relative's plot or rented housing. Interestingly, *nna* is also the pronoun I or Me, as well as the verb *to be* (see Conclusion).

compound. This was particularly true of many families in Wenela ward where I lived during fieldwork, an area that was gradually gaining more concrete buildings and electrical connections. A significant feature of recent research into social aspects of African migration has been the continuing recognition of the 'dual system' whereby migrants consistently assert and articulate connections with their place of origin, most often through building activities. Recent work (Gugler 1997; Geschiere and Gugler 1998; Ferguson 1990; Potts and Mutambirwa 1990; Potts 1995; 1997; and Trager 1998) has suggested the important continuity of other places in the social and material lives of migrants, and the importance of these multifarious connections in the landscape. Indeed, as Potts and Mutambirwa (1990) argue, longer term migration can be seen as a factor of relative security of identity, rights to land etc. in places of origin rather than a breakage of such links over time. Gugler (1997) found that in Nigeria the dual system had become the cultural norm, and that movement between places by individuals strengthened the position of the group in general, since 'the effectiveness and established cultural existence of rural-urban ties means that migration is based on realistic expectations since much is known about the urban situation through close kin and contacts there' (1997:71). Townsend's (1997) work on male migration in Botswana highlighted the increase in the variability of male life courses corresponding to economic structural change in the country. Throughout such changes however, he noted that establishing a 'household' in the home village 'marks a man as a full adult in the community' (1997:409), with corresponding duties and obligations within that community. My own studies of wards in Maun broadly support the 'dual system' notion, and in this section I will discuss some case studies of migrant building activity in the natal compound in Wenela ward whilst absent, activities which interweave with the notion of the 'otherplaceness' of dwelling.

Case study: Dineelo

Dineelo lives in a compound in Wenela ward in Maun established by her parents for them to attend school (Figure 7.1). However, her parents had never spent much time there, and indeed Dineelo had spent much of her youth in their remote homestead in Xuxao. Over the years, ten houses have been built in the homestead, only six of which exist today. The first six houses built in the homestead were all made from wood and grasses collected from Xuxao, and clay bricks made at the river bank in Maun, and all were made in response to immediate need: the visiting of her mother; her brother's arrival to look for work; her sons' house falling down. At this stage building activity in the homestead had been carried out by Dineelo, but the next building, a sizeable concrete structure completed in 1992, was done by a hired builder, and undertaken for Dineelo by her brother, the manager of a bank in the southern town of Selebi-Phikwe. Some years later in 1996 Dineelo built two houses from clay bricks plastered with cement by a builder, and for the first time constructed square, for visitors to this brother's wedding celebrations held in the homestead. The latest building was again a concrete building made by the eldest son, who is a policeman in the customary court at Maun, the other son also a policeman in Gaborone.

'No-one is ploughing at Xuxao anymore', stated Dineelo, 'everyone is away working and we all depend upon them for food and building these days. My eldest son has built this concrete house, but he has already found another plot for when he gets married, although he doesn't have enough money to build there yet'. An interesting process has developed in the homestead over time in the way that other places have become integral to the social and material fabric of the household. In the early stages of the plot, building activity was linked to the dwelling activities centred on Xuxao area, and materials for building were brought from there to Maun when need arose. Subsequent stages have involved the cash earned in more distant places, the subsistence link with Xuxao lost and the reliance upon the cash of migrant members replacing it. 'My brother will

Second brother

6
MB

Built by migrant (second) brother for Dineelo
- used local builder

7
CB

9
CP MB

Both built for visitors to
wedding of migrant brother

8
MB
CP

First house

1
LE

CB

10

Built by
first son

purchased
bricks/
kin labour

Built for mother
when visiting

4
MB

For herself, leaving
1st house for children

2
MB

Occasional hearth

N

5
MB

Built for her sons

3
MB

5m

MB	Mud bricks
CP	Cement plaster
CB	Concrete bricks
LE	Letlhaka

Figure 7.1 Homestead of Dineelo Pitso, Wenela Ward, Maun.

not live here', stated Dineelo, 'but he has built here for me since this is his home too and that is where a man should build, where his family are. He might stay for many years in Phikwe but this is still his home place, where he will build and come back to'. For Dineelo, the transformation of the homestead over time is a continuing process in which familial bonds and identities are constantly being negotiated in the wider context of economic and social change, and the notion that building activity is an integral part of continuing one's presence and identity in a home place remains strong.

Further along the straight sand path, some of Dineelo's neighbours in Wenela also have piles of concrete bricks in their plots stacked in readiness for future building activity by an absent migrant relative. Kathiko moved to Maun from Seronga in the northern delta some twenty years previously to be with her son, who now works in Gaborone as a driver for a government department. Whilst she and her daughter have built using clay bricks made at the nearby riverbank, her son has built a two-room concrete structure at the top of the plot with foundations laid to extend it even further. 'When my son returns I will move into that building', she stated, 'he built it last year when he came back from Gaborone for some time, it was for visitors or relatives to stay in, or even to be rented out if we need the money... he has his own plot elsewhere in Maun... but he built this place for us since he is working and we were happy when he returned home'. In this case building activity can be seen as an integral part of reciprocal familial relations and in particular the social and material responsibilities of migrants to their natal household. But such responsibilities should also be seen as important status activities, and building for one's close relatives in this way gives the migrant a significant social identity as a provider, a process that was discussed in the previous chapter. The point I am developing here is that inherent in this sort of dwelling activity in the natal household is the important dimensionality of 'otherplaceness', in the complex ways in which the activities and presences of migrant household members are socially experienced in natal wards through houses

and building activity. Whilst I would agree with Philip Thomas (1998) that much of migrant building activity can be seen as a process of 're-localisation' of the social, economic and material forms gained elsewhere in the way that natal identities are being reaffirmed, my own understanding is that 'otherplaceness' (rather than 'de-localised') remains an important dimension of the way such homesteads are transformed and experienced over time. In particular, the concept of 're-localisation' suggests a transformation of meaning from exterior to interior over time, whereas I would rather argue that all material culture to a certain extent contains elements of 'placeness' and 'otherplaceness' in the way in which it is contextually experienced. Rather than being simply incorporated, migrant buildings retain biographical identities in particular ways that ensure that the economic and social pathways that were involved in the building activity are socially acknowledged and shared.

Ties to Place and Hierarchy - Examples from the Royal Ward, Kgosing.

Doing fieldwork in the Royal ward in Maun was a mixed experience since the households that I worked with were not royal, and in fact were relatively poor and cattle-less descendants of servants to the chiefs Mathiba and Moremi III of the first half of the twentieth century. Although such bondage is officially long gone, the female head of one of the households was adamant that *'le gompieno re sa ntse re le batho ba kgosi'* ('even today we are still the Chief's people'), and indeed when I paid visits she was invariably at the *kgotla* cooking or performing some task. The other household was also the family of a former servant (*motlhanka*) of chief (*Kgosi*) Mathiba. The biographies of both homesteads are interesting in the way that both family and other social connections with other places in the landscape have influenced aspects of dwelling over time, especially the residential ties of servitude.

When examining the biography of the first homestead, that of Moikedi, one is immediately struck by the influence that the social activities of being a *motlhanka* had upon the family's dwelling activities. Originally, she related, the family had lived some hundred yards or so further away from the chief's place, but that Kgosi Moremi had insisted that they rebuild closer to him in order that they heard his calls for them. Added to this, the entrance and whole orientation of the homestead was and still is focussed upon the *kgotla*, the chief's meeting area. Moikedi's homestead can hardly be understood without a temporal examination of the settlement context in which it exists. Particular dwellings are affected by those around them since they exist in a social context in which building activity is a fundamental aspect of dwelling relations on a daily basis. This was a much more evident process in the past than it is today since the post-Independence Land Board now issues rectilinear parcels of land, meaning that neighbours are relatively autonomous in their spatial relationships. The second *kgosing* homestead also shows this influence of neighbouring dwellings in its biography, in the way that (as was discussed in relation to Herero Village) the family used building activity as a way of claiming areas nearby, incorporating adjacent land into the extended homestead before neighbours or incomers built there. The fear that neighbouring places will expand and annex a previously negotiable or communal place has been the impetus for a significant amount of building activity in Maun, a particularly interesting way in which buildings, places and social relations interconnect. The notion of boundaries and boundedness of dwelling as an integral dimension of the social relations of settlement is a fascinating one, which I turn to in detail in chapter nine.

When Moikedi's grandfather first came to Maun, they did not build in the village, but at the Boro river some distance away to the east, with their cattle kept at Maphane (name given to areas of plentiful Mopane trees). Maun itself was considered a poor place for cattle due to tsetse fly and many people remained outside at their 'lands' dwelling sites. When they were later told to build in

the village with the chief (due to pressure from the colonial administration), they moved the cattle post to Motsaudi, also to the east, and also began ploughing there. This was where they collected all their materials for building in Maun, brought back by *selei* (an ox or donkey drawn sledge). Today, her two sons live there looking after goats and the crops, although they no longer have cattle after cattle disease in 1995. The sons do not have their own houses in the Maun homestead, but instead stay in one of the spare buildings when visiting (Figure 7.2). Some time after Moikedi's father's death she moved the farmstead at Motsaudi closer to the road to make travelling to Maun more convenient, although they still plough the same fields as her father did previously. This is where she spends much time during the ploughing and harvesting season, returning to Maun in the winter months only. The biographical landscape related by Moikedi is one of relations between places - the social ties to the village and the dwelling activities of other places. Both places are influential factors in the way dwelling is constituted in either place and indeed in one sense could be understood as coming together to constitute a single dwelling of the family within the landscape as a whole. This sort of unified perspective is useful since it brings together places within the realm of lived experience in which landscape as spatial mapping is less relevant than social mapping.

The changing morphology of Morwe's plot in *kgosing* (Figure 7.3) is a biography in which the wider social landscape can be seen as embedded in the material and spatial dimensions of dwelling. The homestead began as a *letlhaka* enclosed *lolwapa* (fenced dwelling area enclosing houses) of three houses including Morwe's father (*motlhanka* to Kgosi Mathiba), grandmother and elder sister. The father had been brought to Maun by Kgosi Mathiba from Nokaneng in western Ngamiland, and this is where Morwe, his mother and other siblings and relatives remained. 'The rest of us never came to build in Maun,' he related, 'but remained with our grandparents and visited here - there was much cattle theft around Maun and disease, but my father had no choice'. Morwe

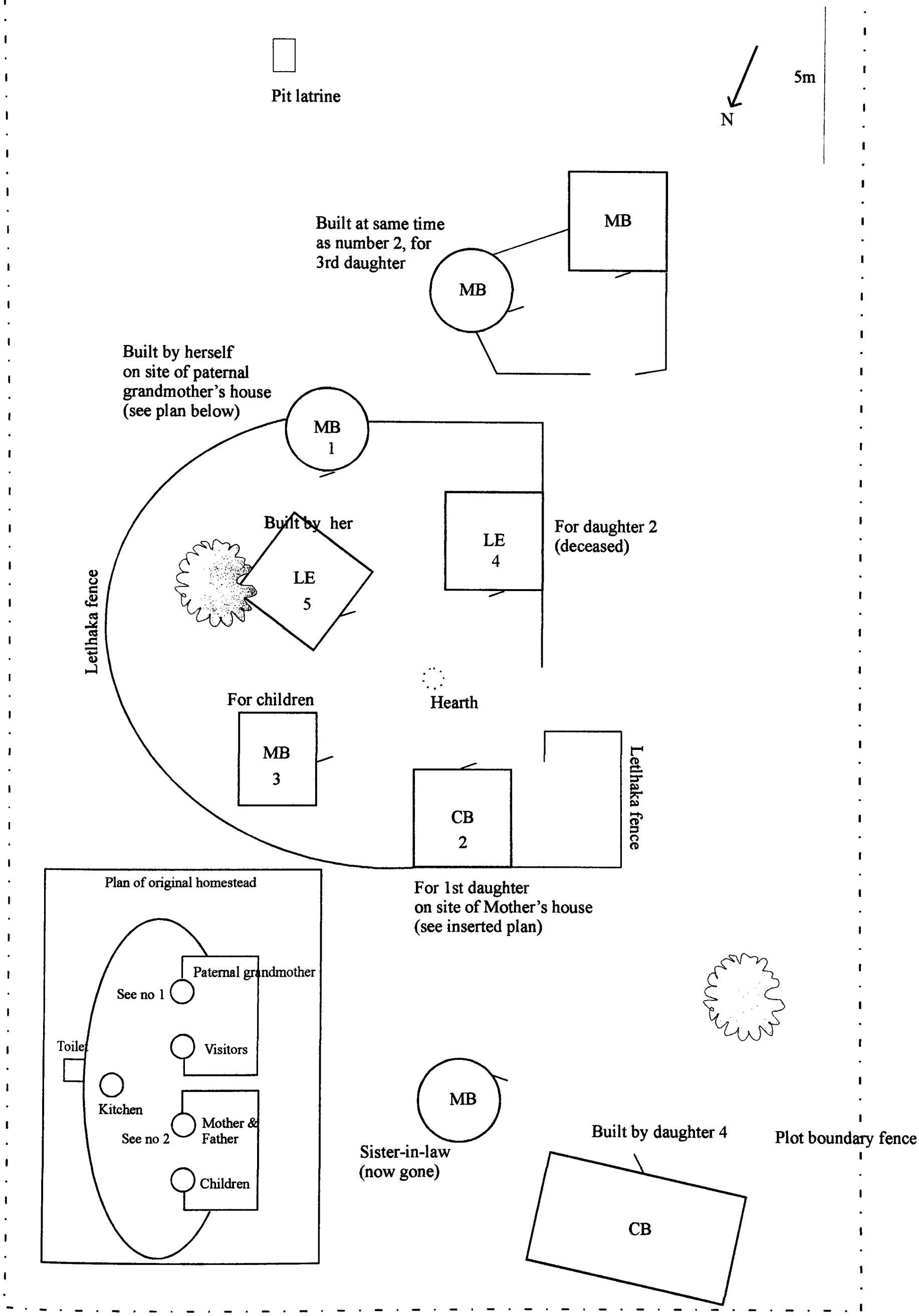


Figure 7.2 Homestead of Moikedi Mokwatso, Kgosing ward, Maun

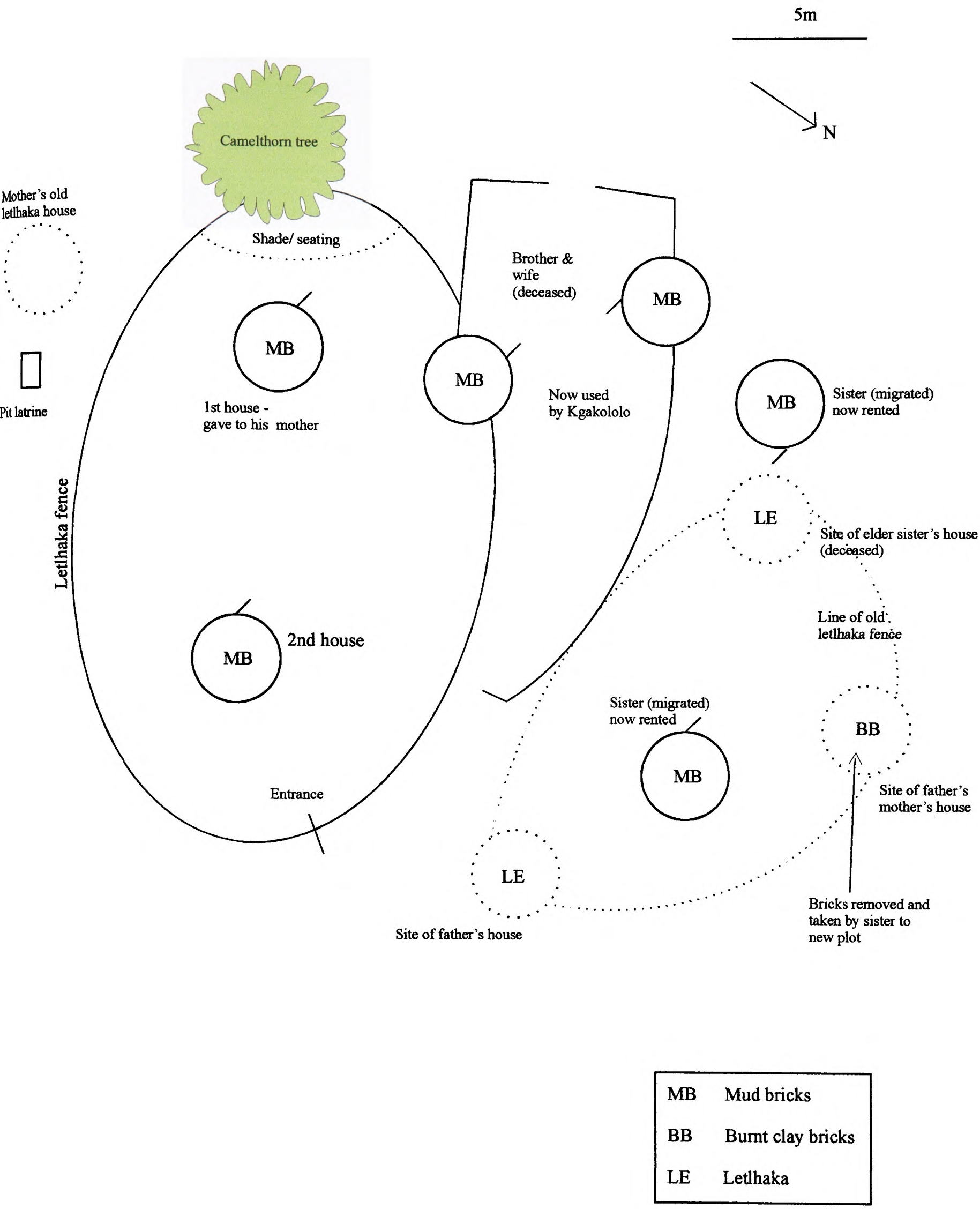


Figure 7.3 Homestead of Kgakololo Morwe, Kgosing ward, Maun.

eventually came to Maun in 1970 to work as a nightwatchman, and his mother came with him. They did not build into the father's *lolwapa* but remained some distance beyond, 'since we had come from outside and were not part of the *lolwapa*, and we wanted to have another space to build in'. When Morwe's mother's *letlhaka* hut became old he built another house next to his and gave her his one, and afterwards enclosed both in a *letlhaka lolwapa*, since 'I was the youngest one who is the one to stay with the mother'. The earlier *lolwapa* of his father nearby eventually went after they had died apart from the father's house which was made from burnt bricks, and in the space Morwe's younger sister built two houses of her own. During this time, Morwe's elder brother had been living in Sehitwa, 100 km to the west, and came with his wife to join him and the mother. Since the *lolwapa* was small he positioned his house within the fence but facing out and thereby made an annex *lolwapa* utilising part of Morwe's fence to economise on the now expensive *letlhaka*. A few years later Morwe's sister moved to another part of Maun after marriage, and her two houses were rented out. When she began to build elsewhere she firstly came back and knocked down the old father's house in order to re-use the old burnt bricks for her new house.

Morphologically, the homestead over time has developed three separate *malwapa* or enclosures, and this development can be understood in the context of the biography of place related by Morwe. The temporality of the homestead is inherently social in nature, and the changing forms within it are not just reflections of the dynamics of family members in their movements through the social landscape over time, but are also influential in positioning relationships between people in everyday experience. When Morwe and his mother came from Nokaneng, they built 'outside' the family for socio-spatial reasons unconsciously or tacitly agreed within the family. To have incorporated their houses within the father's enclosure, according to Morwe, would have been inappropriate since they had spent their lives elsewhere and felt some social distance from the context of the homestead. This sort of temporality is seen also in the subsequent morphological

changes within the homestead, whereby the brother from Sehitwa builds outside of the *lolwapa* forming a new cell adjacent to it. In this way, other places and the temporality of the landscape are interwoven elements of the development of place. Since the temporalities of both building and dwelling activities (especially when the materiality of the homestead is renewable rather than 'permanent') are so closely interwoven, the biographies of people and dwelling spaces become so too. In the case of Morwe's homestead, the different spatial elements can be understood within the context of social movement and dwelling in other places over time, and how such lived experience becomes an influential factor in the biography of a dwelling site over time.

Referring Beyond: the 'otherplaceness' of 'Herero Village'

In chapter five I put forward one set of ways in which 'Herero Village' could be understood, namely as a locale for socialisation in which the built environment is an influential factor in the production and reproduction of social forms connected with long term displacement, including cultural and economic marginalisation. I now want to extend this theme by examining how this place is interwoven with the wider social landscape, and how both settlement and homestead morphology can be said to be influenced by referral to other places and social contexts, and how social and material pathways in the landscape are involved in place formation. As outlined in the introduction, the nature of linkages for most Mbanderu families is that of frequent movement of nuclear and extended family members between homesteads in Maun and a cattle post (*ohambo*) usually sited some distance to the west, or even around Lake Ngami.

The biographies of most families show a relatively recent in-migration to Maun of one or two generations, but that experiences of more nucleated village life often extend further back with networks of family sites between cattle and villages having been established over time creating

nodes of social activity along established pathways. One of the important characteristics of these pathways lies in the ways in which they influence the development of place over time, which is one of the major arguments of this chapter. For the Mbanderu, movement between the *ohambo* and the *ondoropa* ('town', derived from Africaans word 'dorp') is the practice through which the whole social unit is self-supporting, socially and materially. Most Mbanderu plots in Maun are not autonomous, but rely on this network for most dwelling activities, since involvement in the cash economy for most has been intermittent and seen as secondary to cattle-based activities through which notions of wealth and well-being are expressed and understood. It is important to note that the *ondoropa* for most is the locus for services rather than dwelling, and even long-term residents will express a feeling of being 'outside' or uncomfortable in their dwelling relations to place - even to being in an alien place. One of the developing arguments in this thesis has been that notions of permanence and temporariness in the landscape are problematic - in this case since length of residence may not determine the social importance of a place. Many of the biographies of Mbanderu people in Maun were characterised by a sense of 'permanent temporariness', a notion I developed in the previous chapter. For most, a sense of permanence in terms of place emerged from engaging in collective social activities directly connected to cattle keeping - a sense of place and of belonging being directly interwoven with cultural activities. The sense of social permanence expressed in the notion of *ekondua rimue* (Mbaderu grazing locations) can be understood as a sense of belonging to place through engagement with cattle and thereby a full social life. Many lament that such things as cattle disease have forced them to remain in Maun, since without cattle they cannot live at the *ohambo*, but for most it is health and education that keep them in Maun. Analysis of the materiality of Mbanderu homesteads in Maun shows a constant referral beyond to the wider Mbanderu social landscape.

Hange Hange told me his story whilst we sheltered from a ferocious February rainstorm. He says that in the early 1930s his father had lived across the river from Maun at Boseja where his cattle grazed and where many other Mbanderu also lived. When the grazing failed they moved to Toteng, some distance to the west, a former village site of the Tawana. At the end of the 1940s they established a homestead in Maun for Hange's younger brothers to attend school, and established a cattle pen behind them toward the river. 'It was only twenty cows for milking' he stated, 'and the rest were kept at Toteng with the father's brother'. They kept cows in Maun like this for about five years, but the village began to grow and the grazing began to disappear, and the cattle were eventually driven back to Toteng, with milk products brought back occasionally on visits. Eventually settlement at Toteng increased and forced the cattle out again to a remote area called Makwelekwele, with some family members going with them. In this way the pathways and nodes within the landscape were established and continue today. As Hange drew plans of the homesteads in the sand I pointed out to him that in Maun the cattle pens had been behind the homestead rather than forming the focus of the dwelling, as at Boseja, Toteng and Makwelekwele. He answered that Maun was *nakwana* (temporary) and that even though they faced the buildings west, they never considered the place a proper Mbanderu cattle homestead, only keeping a small part of the herd for milk.

The biography demonstrates how the growth of settlements have affected Mbanderu dwelling situations over time, but most significantly shows how various strategies are evolved to cope with new dwelling circumstances. In Hange's case, the concern with dwelling with cattle remained throughout each stage, yet a network between cattle sites incorporated into villages and new cattle areas emerged, with each site being as much part of the dwelling unit as before, only now distributed in the landscape with crucial pathways established between them. In this way their homestead in Maun constantly referred beyond itself to the dwelling activities in the wider

landscape, especially in the way the small cattle pen was placed behind the *onganda* rather than at its centre. This was not a highly conscious or symbolic act by the Hange family, but was part of the way the homestead was experienced on an everyday basis - the range of dwelling activities engaged with produced the morphology of the dwelling site. The town dwelling site refers to the pathways of its formation and of its continuing social life, but also refers to an identity that is about displacement and lack of ease with its surroundings in the *ondoropa*, an arena of alien expectations and dwelling activities.

My argument here is that this process of landscape network formation was a process of ongoing practical coping with contextual change over time rather than the playing out of rational dwelling strategies. However, analysis of family social and material networks could give the appearance of such rational plans, since such networks seem to take advantage of both rural and town locations. This structured view of landscape, whereby places are seen in the context of multiple strategies for dwelling is an ultimately synchronic interpretation of an arguably more complex diachronic process of dwelling. As the case study of Hange shows, pathways and networks in the landscape often emerge over time in response to changes in the relation between dwelling activity and the context of place. Movement and pathways between places of extended kin emerge as the configurations of social activity in the landscape change over time. Bourdieu argues in particular how people involved in everyday dwelling tend to embody the objective structures of dwelling in their activities without necessarily developing them rationally as strategies:

'Since the habitus, the virtue made of necessity, is a product of the incorporation of objective necessity, it produces strategies which, even if they are not produced by consciously aiming at explicitly formulated goals on the basis of an adequate knowledge of objective conditions, nor by the mechanical determination exercised by causes, turn out to be objectively adjusted to the situation. Action guided by a 'feel for the game' has all the appearances of the rational action that an impartial viewer, endowed with all the necessary information and capable of mastering it rationally, would deduce. And yet it is not based on reason...the

conditions of rational calculation are practically never given in practice: time is too limited, information is restricted etc.' (Bourdieu 1990:11).

The 'otherplaceness' of dwelling, whereby places in the landscape are mutually involved both materially and socially over time, is a notion of movement and pathways - of connectivities and conjunctures. Pathways, networks and nodes in the landscape are essentially temporal in nature. Whilst Bourdieu recognised that 'phenomenological analysis is more attentive than objectivism to the temporality of action' (1977:9), his understanding of the role of *habitus* remains essentially structural in nature: his concern is with how objective structures exist within societies over time, rather than how experience is configured and related to the world. Gosden's (1994) concept of *social ontology* is potentially more useful since it adapts Marx's notion of material and social processes of transformation to reintroduce the mutual making of people and things, a dimension crucially lacking in Bourdieu's *habitus*.

The concept of social ontology emphasises that people are always socialised into spatial and temporal patterns of activity within a socially transformed and transforming landscape or physical environment. This system of reference helps develop notions of time and space since it 'forms' us as we act to form it: 'our social being derives from the structure of our acts as these extend over space and through time' (Gosden 1994:80). With this in mind, a criticism of Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* based on its lack of recognition of materiality as an influential dimension of social life is certainly valid. Bourdieu's later work on distinction and the social field discusses material culture as a set of strategies of consumption produced by the habitus, but Bourdieu never fully develops a notion of materiality or mutuality between material and social forms.

With materiality and involved dwelling activity brought back into the core of analysis of how building, landscape and social activity interrelate, the several family sites within Hange's network

can be seen as the result not of 'strategy' but of 'coping' with contextual change. As a fieldworker, my interactions with Mbanderu people in Herero Village certainly produced a large number of highly conscious reflections upon the social landscape, settlement and dwelling activity. It would be nonsense to argue that conscious strategies do not exist with regard to social activity in this way - they do, and the way people's conscious reflections upon practices interrelate with non-conscious activity is of particular interest, as were social discussions initiated by my presence and questions as fieldworker. Another informant, Kasondoro, had lost all his cattle to disease, and, whilst his sons continued to raise cattle at the *ohambo*, he and his daughters with children remained in Maun. Throughout our discussions concerning his biography he punctuated his responses with reflections upon the nature of different places. 'Because of my feeling of a lack of customary patterns to our building activity here in Maun,' he argued, 'this strengthens my feeling that it is only at the *ohambo* that all customary practices can take place, where we can live as Mbanderu. Some of the Mbanderu and Herero here in Maun have lost all of their cattle to disease - without their cattle they cannot live at the *ohambo* and must stay here - you cannot use the *etho* or *okoruo* without cattle, you cannot live there as a family at all, but must stay away in the town'. Another man who was listening, Kambata, agreed: 'my cattle are dead, but if I managed to get some more I will return to the *ohambo*. To lose your cattle is to lose your life, you cannot have a house or cattle pen or live with your ancestors - nobody can stay at the *ohambo* any more since its heart has gone'. A neighbour, Kandjou, stated that 'Maun is a town and so we cannot build according to our customs since there is no *etho* (ancestral thorn bush) here - it is our cattle that build our homes. This means that here we just build where there is space, in any place where there is room near our relatives'.

Both the Mbanderu *ohambo* and homestead in Herero village are products of differing sorts of involved social activity in given contexts. Building activities in Herero village over time, whilst differing dramatically from rural patterns, can be understood as part of the same system of dwelling

practices. Whilst the crowded and boundary-less area may seem superficially distant from scattered pastoral settlement patterns, Herero village is a social product in the landscape, a congealed form of the taskscape in the same way and by the same group of people. However, when rationalised, the nature and meaning of such places is far from equal, as the above statements reveal. The circularity of interpretation that takes place is one that involves a dialectic between experience and place. It is clear that people's experiences of the built environment within Maun reconfirms rural dwelling sites as being 'right' or 'proper' contexts for dwelling, and identity issues can be seen to be bound up within this dialectic of built environment and learned experience or dispositions. The 'otherplaceness' of Herero Village is evident in the way it re-establishes rural places as the location of a more complete social 'being' - where there is space to express social relations materially in a cattle context. Herero village is experienced as *ondoropa* (town), an arena of altered, alien and thereby non-Mbanderu practices. *Ondoropa* involves on an everyday basis differing ways of dwelling and 'being', and this heightens peoples' sense that other places are repositories of Mbanderu identity and sociality. *Ondoropa* is the appropriate place for the cattle-less to reside since it is experienced as 'outside' of normal Mbanderu dwelling and social relations. The houses that people build there are cattle-less houses, and have little social relationship to each other, simply being placed in any available space. Other places are materially embedded in the fabric of Herero Village, since most families bring building materials from the *ohambo* - wood for construction, grasses for thatching and dung for plastering. 'Otherplaceness' as a revealed dimension of place is socially meaningful for many Mbanderu in the way that materiality and appropriate dwelling contexts in the landscape are culturally experienced. As an experience, 'otherplaceness' can also be about displacement, unease with surroundings, an inability to dwell. This analysis thereby brings together Mbanderu dwelling with the fact that it takes place on differing, related parts of the landscape - a relationship that could be explored in future research.

The analysis of the intersections of the wider social landscape, of other places, in the social and material make-up of particular places, is a highly complex one, but the example of Herero Village shows how it involves the interrelationship of both conscious strategy and practical coping over time. Many Mbanderu offered the phrase 'we are not village people' to suggest that both nucleated settlement and the range of social activities within such settlements was alien to them, and explained the nature of Herero Village. For them, the nature of this place reconfirmed both their own understanding of their identity as a pastoral group, and contrasted with the built environment elsewhere in Maun, that of 'village people'. This process can be seen as an important and influential dimension of displacement held in many aspects of Mbanderu society many years after settling in Botswana. Mbanderu visit Maun for temporary periods during pastoral activities, and Herero Village is also a product of this pastoral taskscape, having emerged in form through the social activities of frequent movement and social inclusivity of the social landscape, the *ekonduo rimue*. It has also become a highly conscious reconfirmation however of pastoralist identities, since the 'otherplaceness' of this built environment means that constant referral is being made beyond the *ondoropa* (the town), as an alien dwelling context, to that of the 'proper' place of Mbanderu dwelling - from crowdedness and uncustomary spatial and social relations to the place where cattle keeping and built environment are mutually creative dimensions.

Identifications with Place and Placing Identities: the Mbukushu in Boseja Ward

Boseja is a relatively common appellation for a ward within a village meaning 'place across the river', and in Maun it refers to a large area south of the Thamalakane river that is opposite the main village, historically used as farming and grazing locations. Today it is occupied by the sprawling extensions of migrant plots mingled with old fields, and I spent some weeks in one area with a Mbukushu population, most of whom were first generation migrants from Shakawe in the extreme north-west of the Delta. Many Mbukushu came into Botswana in the 1970s as refugees from

Angola, and were settled in 13 'villages' formed around 13 recognised headmen that led the refugees out of Angola, known as Etsha 1 - 13, but I do not know of any study that has examined how this process of re-settlement affected the Mbukushu (see Conclusion). Most Mbukushu migrants in Maun visit Shakawe perhaps twice a year, mostly at ploughing and harvest times, and some households bring back amounts of sorghum from these harvests on the bus, but for most connections between these places are limited materially and socially, and the nature of the pathways between them is limited - contrasting markedly with the Mbanderu and Yei of the southern and eastern Okavango Delta regions. The Mbukushu migrants have settled some distance away from others in an area of low Mopane trees (*Maphanyane*) and wild sage (*mokodi*) scrub, and have cleared large square plots for themselves leaving a number of the larger trees for shade (*ditlhare tsa moriti*). Within these plots a highly distinctive building style is used, in which slender Mopane stems (*dipalelo; dithupana*) are tied horizontally in parallel throughout the wall, with 'white' termite mound soil (*mmu wa seolo wa mosweu*) used to infill, usually in a rectilinear plan to incorporate a corrugated iron roof (*disenke*) (Plates 18 and 19). A *lolwapa* courtyard fence is not usually made due to the cost and availability of *letlhaka* reeds, but some households have made one using wild sage that grows abundantly in the vicinity, bound together in bunches, as well as Millet (*lebelebele*) stems from gardens or from neighbours' fields (Plate 20).

The *dipalelo* or *dithupana*[9] style is quite similar to that of the Mbanderu and Herero, and indeed the Mbukushu are linguistically extremely close to these groups, although they are not pastoralists. For my Tswana informants the *dithupana* style represented 'otherplaceness', that is, were seen as buildings that referred beyond the context of Maun to the distant areas of the northwest, of 'Bombukushu' - the place of the Mbukushu, where the style was presumed to originate. The *dithupana* style worked to *de-localise* the Mbukushu in the eyes of other groups, and was placed

[9] A convenient term, but not one commonly used by my informants, who did not have a Setswana name for the style.

alongside other social distinctions such as language. Most Tswana identified the *dithupana* style with other places, since 'otherplaceness' is also a constituent element of 'otherness' and ethnic distinction - other groups are essentially related to other places, not this place. This sort of 'otherplaceness' was seen by most Tswana as the core not of conscious identity-formation on the part of other groups, but as a constituent element of experience gained in other places and relocated. My Tswana informants living close by saw these *dithupana* houses as referring beyond, not through overt identification with other places and with each other as a distinct and homogeneous group, but since building activity was deeply interwoven with practical experience, and such experience is necessarily located and placed in the landscape. Migration is a process of 're-placing' such involved activities in the landscape, and it was the nature of migrant Mbukushu everyday engagement and coping with practical dwelling problems that was identified as 'otherplaceness'. One Tswana woman told me that 'I did not know they were Mbukushu until I saw them struggling to make bricks, then I knew that they were from elsewhere', and another stated that 'they use *dithupana* since that is how their parents built, and what they learnt with them - what else were they to do when they came here?' Other places are suggested through the sorts of skills people have and how they cope in different contexts.

After conversations with the Mbukushu migrants another process became evident. Most households claimed that they had never previously built using the *dithupana* style prior to arriving in Maun, with only one woman stating that she had seen it used in Etsha 6. One woman, Moname, stated that other people around her helped her to build this way when she arrived, saying that it was the style most adapted to the local environment, since in Shakawe she had always used water reeds but that there were none in Maun. Some stated that when they had first arrived in Maun they started to build using mud bricks, but that the houses had quickly collapsed and they were helped to build using *dithupana*. A man, Manyema, stated that he had never built this way at home, 'since it

is a style that people have developed here in Maun because of the lack of materials such as *letlhaka'*. An elder woman, Kashiate, said that whereas in Angola and then in Etsha 3 she had used *letlhaka* to build, she came to Maun and saw people building with *dithupana* (ke ne ke bona batho ba aga jaana mono) and the structure was male work. She then insisted that the Mbukushu were not using their way of building here in Maun since they were living among different people who did things differently (*Mambukushu a a mo Maun ga dirise mokgwa o ba o dirisang kwa gabone ka gore mo Maun go tetse merafe e e farologanyeng*).

So it quickly became clear that whilst for other groups the *dithupana* style refers beyond Maun to other places, for the Mbukushu it is a style that has emerged out of their experience of place in Maun, and in this way is identified with this place in particular rather than any previous places of experience. For most households it is understood as an adaptation to the local subsistence environment - using the small Mopane stems for *dithupana* and the wild sage for weaving into a *lolwapa*. For Kashiate it was experienced as a non-Mbukushu style, not because of the lack of water reeds, but since they were living among and adapting to the styles of those other groups around them. For the Mbukushu the *dithupana* style was identified with Maun, its particular resources and limited possibilities for building, and not with their home places, since none of them had built this way before. Many of them had turned to this style after unsuccessful attempts at mud brick house construction, and one Ndebele woman living in Boseja had also used *dithupana* like those dwelling around her. It would however seem that, although most Mbukushu had not encountered *dithupana* before, some had built this way before living in Maun, and that this style has become the dominant one for the group living and arriving there today. Whilst in origin the style does embody 'otherplaceness' in form and experience, the way that it has become 'placed' and identified with Maun rather than with other areas or even 'home' places by most migrants,

highlights how complex the notions of place, identity and culture can be, especially when considering the movement of peoples within the wider social landscape.



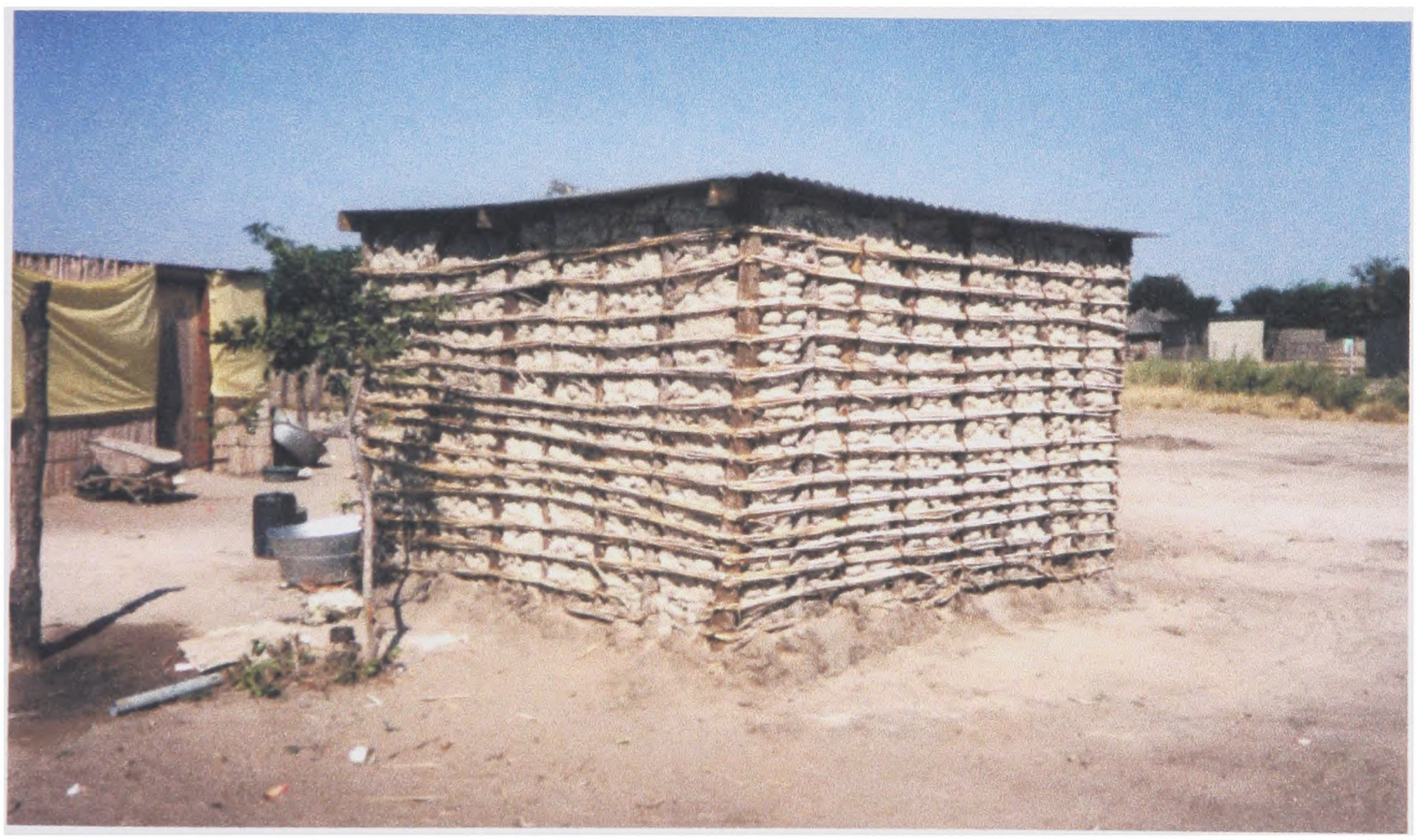


Plate 18 (top) *Dipalelo*-style Mbukushu house with courtyard made from woven wild sage stems, Boseja ward, Maun.

Plate 19 (bottom) *Dipalelo*-style Mbukushu house, made using two layers of mopane stems or branches and mud infill, Boseja ward, Maun.



Plate 20 Mbukushu man weaving a *lolwapa* from maize stems kept from a recent harvest and *tshikitsane* grass found in the vicinity, Boseja ward, Maun.

Chapter Eight

Gathering Resources: Building and Coping in the Urbanising Environment

Introduction

This chapter explores the relationship between building activity and dwelling within environments. In doing so, several themes are developed: how perception and environment interrelate as part of dwelling; how ancestral cultural resources are drawn upon in such perceptions and in the experience of settlement change (especially urbanisation); and how social change (extended kin networks, gendered activities) in the urbanising place in particular has affected natural resource usage and commodification. From the data discussed in this chapter I draw out several keys points: that building activity is an integrated aspect of wider dwelling practices in environments; urbanising processes do not necessarily lead to social fragmentation but to people drawing upon cultural resources derived from the past as part of coping and orienting themselves in new contexts; that the contraction and expansion of the taskscape for differing groups, especially gender groups, is an important aspect of social change, which has influenced practices such as building with post-consumer materials in the urbanising village.

Dwelling activities are materially and spatially interwoven on an everyday basis, and distinctions between them are far from clear or indeed analytically useful. Can we for instance make useful distinctions between the collection of wild edible plants in a wood, and the cutting of building wood whilst there, one being 'gathering' activity, the other 'building'? The notion of 'building activity' is decidedly blurred at the edge since it exists within a range of social activities connected with the environment with which people engage. And yet 'environment' is not an inert entity

against which, within which or through which people engage with tasks and extract materials. Nor, I would argue, is it the same as 'landscape', which has always tended to retain notions of place - of memory, recognition, meaning and biography - whilst 'environment' has in one widespread sense retained notions of 'nature'. Whilst 'environment' is not 'landscape', it is surely not 'nature' either, as Ingold points out, since environments are at heart historical and involved in the temporality of human activity - a *process* that is both relative to those involved in its development and shapes the development of those entities who are engaged within it (Ingold 2000:20). In recent times 'environment' has also gained connotations of differing scales, from the immediacy of our particular surroundings (micro-environments) to truly global ones (macro-environments). The issue of scale aside, a common understanding in all semantic appropriations of' 'environment' is arguably that environments are the *medium* within which social and material dimensions interact, that it is the *mediating* presence of environments that provides us with the context in which we may relate to the world and to others, since social relations can hardly be thought to exist beyond material relations in given environmental contexts. For me in this chapter, the notion of the active mediation of environments contributes to the developing understanding of an 'ecology of life' recently articulated by Ingold (2000:18), in which the historical intellectual division between mentalistic and naturalistic approaches to human dwelling is resolved through an attitude that 'ways of acting in the environment are also ways of perceiving it' (Ingold 2000:9). Both skill and knowledge acquisition are thereby historically interwoven aspects of interaction with environments, providing the medium for both change and continuity. Both current and future forms of activity within environments are importantly shaped by past practices, but a group's ancestral cultural resources are not abstract ways of perceiving the environment, but are rather embedded in the sorts of learnt skills and technologies brought to bear in everyday coping. In this way, environment may be considered as the mediating context within which taskscape shapes the landscape. One way of understanding this distinction is that the environments of historical

landscapes have not always remained the same, but have changed over time, in the same way that social and economic contexts do. The notion of taskscape for instance foregrounds social activity as being an influence upon the transformation of the landscape over time, but does not explore the way that environmental change and landscape change are interrelated. Archaeological analyses of the landscape have also for instance mostly implicitly separated out the investigation of past landscapes from environments, the latter forming the sub-discipline of environmental archaeology.

In this chapter I will explore these themes firstly within a peripheral settlement to Maun (Matlapaneng) which is rapidly being settled by migrants, to examine perceptions and engagements with natural resources (*tlholego*), as well as perceptions of change and environmental degradation. The context of migration is important here, since migrants bring with them differing set of cultural experiences and expectations of environment, and in particular where they may lack extensive kin networks that for many are essential to coping. This leads to a second section that questions indigenous explanations which attribute to population increase and environmental degradation the commodification of natural resources in the village. Indigenous perceptions of *tlholego* and its commodification can be understood as a product of social change in the context of rapid in-migration and urbanisation. From a social perspective, commodification of natural resources can be strongly linked to fracture in social organisation and relations to natural resources, constituting a shift in social relations and activities within the urbanising village - a shifting set of engagements with the tasks of building that is temporally interwoven with shifting perceptions of the resource environment.

This conclusion is examined further to examine how the urbanising village environment itself increasingly forms the medium through which dwelling activities take place, and within which social relations interact with physical surroundings. The widespread use of drinks cans as a

building resource for house wall construction is discussed, a practice which forms a case study in how social changes inherent in African urbanising places not only leads to the commoditisation of things such as natural resources, but also how alternative coping practices emerge as part of dwelling. For such people, building activity remains necessarily an immediate material response to immediate environment, in the sense that the immediacy of their surroundings must exist as the particular environment for dwelling activity due to the social configuration of the household, and a 'recycling' manner of building has emerged over the last few decades as a collective response and is an established 'style', called *ntlo ya ditini*, or 'house of tins' (Morton, C. 2002, Coote, Morton and Nicholson 2000).

Dwelling in Matlapaneng, the 'place of small stones'

The area known as Matlapaneng is perhaps some six or seven kilometres from the historical heart of Maun to the east, the other side of the Thamalakane river, where it twists south-west from its main source, the Boro channel (Figure 8.1) (see also Figure 4.1). Biographies show that the area was virtually uninhabited until forty years or so ago, with only some farming or cattle posts in the vicinity, and that its roots as a settlement can be traced to the establishment of two white-owned camps on the river, Crocodile Camp and later Okavango River Lodge (c.1970) In recent years another camp, Audi Camp, has also made this area its base for tourists. Soon after migrants and their families began to settle the area and many were employed by these camps. Later, migration to the Maun area increased rapidly and Matlapaneng gained its first standpipes around 1987. Although the whole area is called 'place of small stones', the area most inhabited today was originally known as *lake*, after a large metal container float used to transport things across the river in the past.

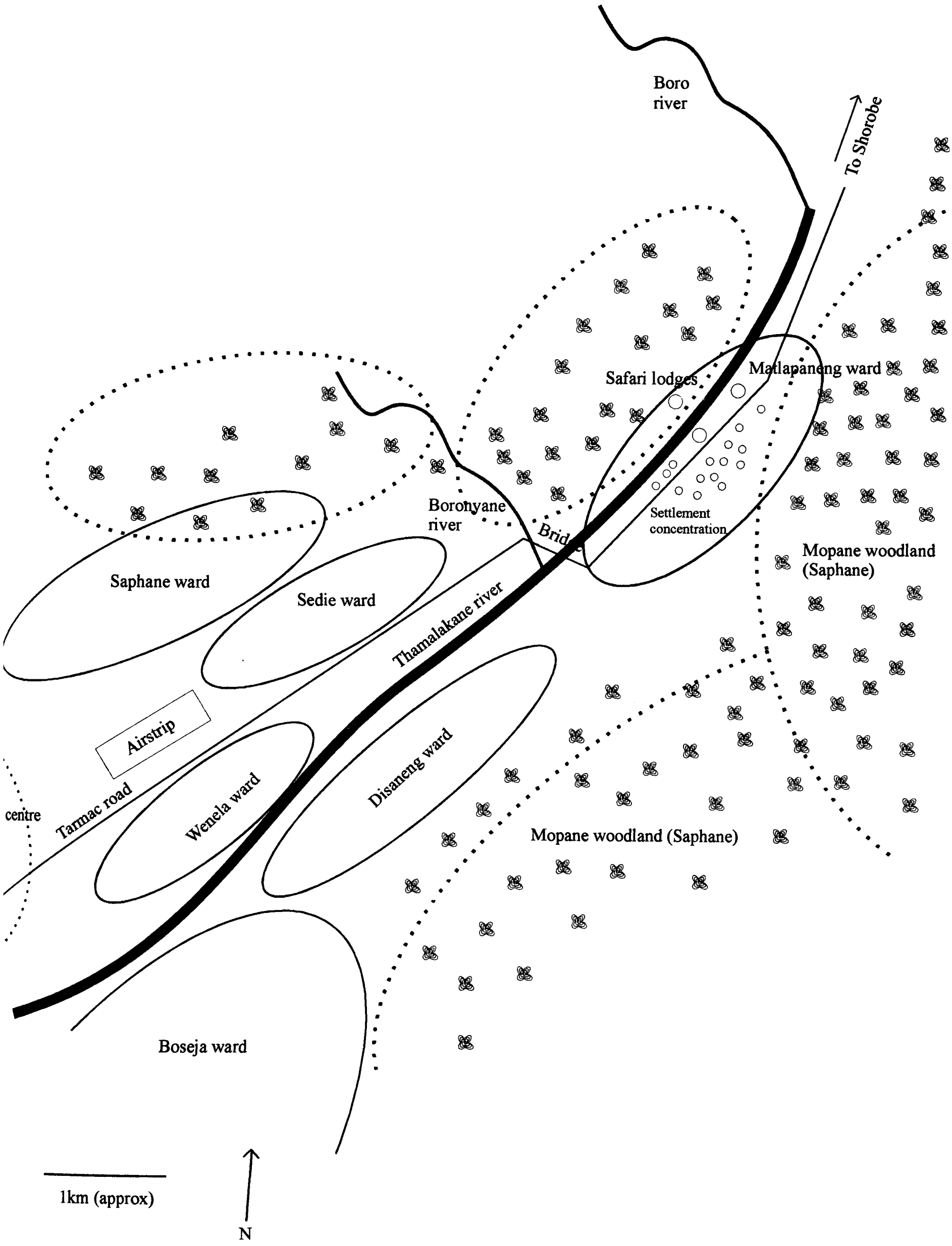


Figure 8.1 Location of Matlapaneng and other eastern wards of Maun.

Key . . . . . Major wood collecting areas

I spent five weeks travelling to Matlapaneng during a heavy rainy season to examine the relationship between building activity and *tlholego* (often translated as 'nature') and what this might mean for my questions about the nature of dwelling. Since in Setswana *tlholego* is the noun formation of the neutral verb *tlholega*, 'to become created' (also importantly used in the sense of the nature of someone's character), we gain an understanding of *tlholego* as 'nature' not as external to society, impersonal and wild, but rather as an internal quality of living things, as 'creation', which unites elements within environments on an experiential level. In other words, *tlholego* is not simply perceived as an exploitable natural resource base but as a sphere of historical interactions between people, ancestral spirits, animals (occasionally animal spirits), and especially the close spiritual connection between human morality and responsibility and the receiving of rain, upon which human farming and other plant life depends. *Tlholego* brings together natural, social and spiritual dimensions of everyday life as an internalised concept of the character of creations - the notion of creation being central since all living things are the result of the activity of *modimo* (a supreme but remote deity) within the world. As the created world, *tlholego* importantly suggests that culture and nature are interwoven aspects of environments, since ancestral agency is also equally responsible for the provision of current resources through good custodianship. Not only is nature the cultural work of *modimo*, it is also an inheritance of skills, knowledges, arts and livelihoods held within it. From an ecology of life perspective, *tlholego* is culture - culture is practised through the medium of an ancestral environment which is temporally structured to bring together both the weaving of walls and the maturation and harvest of wall reeds.

Most households in Matlapaneng originate from Okavango delta areas, and are predominantly Yei and Mbukushu, with numerous other groups, such as San, Kgalagadi, Kalanga, Subiya and others, all having found plots in the area through the chief's representative (*kgosana*). The agreement of

the *kgosana* over finding a place to live is still widespread and understood as a necessary acknowledgement of customary practice and hierarchy, reflecting the way strangers formerly joined a new community. The new arrivals show the *kgosana* the spot where they intend to build, or frequently ask him for a suitable site. The next stage is the clearing of the site in order to make a space for buildings and activities, which is done by selecting a number of trees to be left as providing good shade (*ditlhare tsa moriti*), or if small to be left to grow into shade trees. In relation to such trees, building positions are then arranged over time, not as a simultaneous design, but in relation to each other as they are built. In some cases a house is positioned next to the tree cut for its construction, since 'this was where I was cutting branches on the tree, so there was no reason to build elsewhere - the tree will grow more branches to provide good shade later' (Keitumetse Duelo). Another woman (Esekile) described how 'I arrived here from Maphane and just looked at this spot and saw the several trees that were casting good shade and then I knew that I could build a *lapa* (home) next to one of these and clear some of the smaller ones'.

Woodland trees become perceptually transformed into shade trees through this process, since shade trees are important foci for social activity on a daily basis, having a social 'life' that is spatially a circle since people move around them daily seeking shade, but also temporally cyclical since their social life is also considered in terms of their growth patterns, for instance through pollarding. Although a perceptual shift is evident in the conception and organisation of a homestead, such a shift is characterised by a conscious aiming-at-ends - the transformation of surroundings brought about by a specific problem at hand, in this case the locating of a suitable dwelling site. Such conscious aiming-at-ends is necessarily about engaging with the unfamiliar, but in the case of establishing dwellings, cannot be said to be a dominant comportment toward the varied tasks at hand, which are all familiar, practical and based on prior experience, such as bush clearing, wood cutting and building. In this sense, although the 'problem' of dwelling location involves a conscious

transformation of surroundings, this is a dimension of all problem solving, which brings highly conscious strategies to bear on situations. This perceptual engagement is quite distinct from that of everyday homestead activity where building and other activities are brought together in practice rather than separated out. Perhaps this is what Bourdieu is indicating in his observation that practices can be 'objectively harmonised without any calculation or conscious reference to a norm' (Bourdieu 1990:58). The past experiences of migrants establishing homesteads are actively present in their schemes of perception and action, and are especially evident in their daily involvement with *tlholego*.

"The axe does not kill the tree" - Perceptions of Environment and Human Activity

Perceptions of woodland, which is predominantly Mopane (*Colophospermum Mopane*), and the effects of tree and grass cutting as well as wild food and plant dye collection, were relatively consistent amongst people in Matlapaneng, and the various tasks associated with interactions with the environment were understood as gendered. Most tasks involving trees, whether cutting or erecting structures, are male, whereas grass and reed cutting, wild food gathering and plant dye collecting are female. Most people do not cut trees in the close vicinity of their own buildings (or that of others without permission) for some protection from high winds, nor is it conceivable that someone would cut down a fruit tree (*setlhare sa maungo*), either a riverine one (*sa noka*) such as *Motsinsela* (Bird Plum, *Berchemia discolor*) or *Mokutshumo* (Jackel Berry, *Diospyros mespiliformis*), or in the bush (*mo motlhabeng*) such as *Moretlhwa* (Brandy Bush, *Grewia Flava*). One woman, Margaret Palau, told me that 'people should not cut fruit trees or other useful ones, it is against what people say, it is bad'. The wish to avoid dispute (*go omana*) with others and the wish to preserve *kutlwano*, or communal relations, means that environmental sources of collective good such as local fruit or dye producing trees are imbued with social, and even spiritual meaning:

'The ancestors (*badimo*) are angry if fruit trees are killed - it shows disrespect to our culture and brings bad luck' (Margaret Palau).

Another consistent perception concerning human agency is that the use of an axe will not kill a tree, but that the use of a saw may do (*selepe ga se bolae setlhare, shage ke yone ee bolayang setlhare*). One man, Sarefo, argued that 'you should cut branches with an axe (*ka selepe*) because it will not kill the tree. The saw (*shage*) kills the tree since the sun heats the flat part produced by it and destroys it, whereas with the axe it is irregular and will survive the heat'. Another man, Bonoro, stated that 'a tree is like a person (*jaaka motho*) it needs food and air - if you cut it, it will suffer. Pointing to one tree near to his house (Plate 25) he stated that 'this is why we do not cut all of the tree but leave some to survive, but with the saw it might die from the wound'. An elder man, Mooketsi, added that 'it is better to cut with the axe than the saw, since with an axe the tree will produce some wax (*boruko*) and it will begin to sweat (*go fofula*), enabling it to produce new branches and grow again - if you cut with a saw no wax will come out and no new growth either'. The importance of re-growth is evident in practices of pollarding and coppicing undertaken by all these men. Pollarding is a consistent practice in most homesteads to improve the shape of tree canopies, to provide better shade, often undertaken in the winter (dry season - *marega*) so that new growth will come with the rains in summer. 'If you leave a tree', argued Sarefo, 'it will produce an ugly (*setlhare se maswe*) canopy and the tree might fall down, but if you cut it, it will grow tall with good shade'.

The understanding of tree growth and human practices of cutting underlie the pollarding of trees both for shade and for building wood (*maphako*), although practices associated with cutting for building are not consistent. The reason for this is the difficulty of cutting tree branches with an axe, meaning that some people cut down large trees and subsequently take the straight branches

(*dikala tse di thamaletse*) that are used for building poles, whilst others attempt to cut such branches without felling the tree. Because of this, most building poles are not cut from mature trees, but instead are *mophanyane*, the straight central trunk of an immature Mopane tree, which can be cut close to its base and simply stripped of smaller branches (Plate 24). These may be also be used as *dithupa* (*dipalelo*), or supports between poles to facilitate thatching or walling. This practice is acknowledged also as a type of coppicing, since the *mophanyane* will re-sprout during the rains, and is important to people's perception of the effects of human activity upon *tlholego*. One man, Tsela, said that 'after cutting close to the bottom of the tree, the next year I will find several new growths that will become new trees - to cut a *mophanyane* is not to kill it, but to harvest (*go roba*) it'. This was echoed by another man, Barobi, who told me that 'even in my fields when I cut the *maphanyane*, after the rains they will grow again - you can take it like the crops and use it to fence the field, it will never be finished up, (*ga kake a fela*). Some women in Matlapaneng use *maphanyane* to make garden boundaries against goats (Plate 22), and yet perceptions of this type of vegetation are mixed. Although all recognise that it is a stunted form of the Mopane tree, some argue that areas of Mopane scrub are the result of heavy wood cutting. A woman I met clearing a plot of small *maphanyane* told me that the whole area was full *maphanyane* since the Mopane in the area had been cut by builders and were slowly growing back. Whilst however the rejuvenation and resilience of Mopane is evident, it is unlikely that areas of *maphanyane* are the result of cutting but instead due to varying soil conditions which occasionally produces areas of stunted Mopane scrub, and indeed one such area is found close to Matlapaneng (Plate 23). Recent literature on the history of African environments has also questioned assumptions about the relations between indigenous resource management, especially woodcutting, and perceptions of deforestation and denudation. In particular, Fairhead and Leach (1996) have argued persuasively for a re-evaluation of historical perceptions concerning environmental change and its relation to

resource usage, presenting interesting evidence that human settlement has in fact contributed to woodland regeneration through the regrowth of fence posts over time at abandoned sites.

Tlholego and Ancestral Practices

An important perception of Mopane is that cutting activity is more akin to harvesting (*go roba*) than cutting (*go kaola*), based upon everyday experience of the tree's growth patterns and the impact of human activity. Central to this understanding is the perception of sustainability over time, which is not so much linked to future availability as *continuity with the past*. As already mentioned, perceptions about the environment are often expressed in terms of the past practices of ancestors (*badimo*), which serve to structure not only present practices and modes of experience, but also, through their continuing structuring role in present perceptions, negatively sanction practices that would establish a break from the past, such as "the axe will not kill the tree, but the saw will". Sustainability, as an indigenous perception rather than an western notion of environmental practices, is here more concerned with preserving a continuity of practices and set of relationships to the environment based upon ancestral cultural resource, through the structuring role of the *habitus*. When I asked one woman whose homestead and cattle pens were fenced by hundreds of maphanyane how she saw the relationship between harvesting Mopane and the environment, she replied that 'this fence was started by my parents and I just replace parts of it as they rot - it is the same with *tlholego*, when a tree falls down another one takes its place - I am following what my parents did, and their parents before them' (Mma Lebela).

The perception of ancestral precedence and continuity occasionally presents itself in a spiritual sense in relation to human activity within the environment, with diversion from ancestral practices having deleterious effects upon society, most frequently understood as bringing *dikgaba*, or disease occasioned by ancestral disfavour. On one occasion an argument broke out between two female

informants concerning grass cutting, one arguing that grass should only be cut after seeding and that one should shake the grasses to let the seeds fall, and the other saying that this did not matter and that she cut as soon as the grass was mature enough. The first then argued that this was not how her ancestors had collected grass and that she would bring *dikgaba* to her home by thatching with unseeded grass. The second woman argued that she had always cut this way without incurring sickness. A belief that grass seeds should not be removed from a place of collection is widespread in Matlapaneng. Some people make the journey into the delta to collect the swamp grass *Mokamakama* (Turpentine Grass, *Cymbopogon excavatus*), or the more local dry-land *Tshikitsane* (Silky Bushman Grass, *Stipagrostis uniplumis*) and Motengyane, but most agree that the dry-season winter (*marega*) was the right time to let seeds fall whilst cutting.

As an established seasonal routine (the time for grass-cutting) it is connected not just with ancestral practices and perceptions of *tlholego*, but also importantly with social organisation, patterns of activity within a calendar that is not abstracted from daily practices, but is rooted in them. As Ingold notes, the taskscape, as the range of engaged social activities in the landscape, is crucially concerned with our collective harmonisation, with the way in which an individual's tasks are socially synchronised, forming and reforming the social landscape over time. In the case of seasonal tasks, these rhythms are both reaffirmed by collective tasks of cutting and group journeys to cutting areas, and also built into the materiality of dwelling sites through patterns of renewal and building with the 'harvests' from *tlholego*. Perceptions of human agency in the environment are bound up with perceptions of the agency of ancestors in the present and their role in structuring present practices, but more than this, there is a sense of reciprocity between ancestral practices and *tlholego*, that have both co-existed and sustained the possibility and context of material and social life in the present.

Another context in which such ancestral agency and *tlholego* interact is the use of trees in ritual activity, as well as notions of the connection between certain trees and ancestral spirits. Many Mbanderu for instance associate the Leadwood tree (*Combretum imberbe*) with ancestral spirits, and will not cut it down. Some Mbukushu informants stated that Motawana (*Capparis tomentosa*) was likewise not cut by them since it was used by healers for treating diseases. 'We should not cut this tree since it is what our ancestors used to heal,' stated Mothaba Kanjenje. 'My parents didn't cut trees or bushes used by our healers, and to do so would be to go against them and is bad luck'. A San man living in Matlapaneng related how such healers often relate illness to ancestral displeasure: 'in such a case we go to a certain tree called *Samoxwetama* where part of the root is taken as a remedy, since this tree is connected with our ancestors. Each group has a different tree that is connected with their own ancestors, where they go to speak to them and heal themselves. Most of these trees have edible parts used in healing'. A Mokgalagadi man likewise stated that 'we were born finding a tree as a worshipping place. You go to the stem of the tree and you face east and start talking to your ancestors. My parents used any type of tree that was close to their home when they moved - they often used river fruit trees such as *Mokutsumu* (Jackal Berry, *Diospyros mespiliformis*) and *Motsaudi* (African Mangosteen, *Garcinia livingstonei*)'. Trees are important both as sources of healing, building, shade etc, but also as *places* within the ancestral landscape. In this way both *tlholego* and ancestral agency merge as part of dwelling - resources are both natural and handed-down from ancestors. Rra Saxago relates for instance how the *tepe* plant grows in abundance in his homestead which they collect to eat, which 'has grown up here as a result of my ancestors collecting this plant and throwing away the flower heads. Now we eat it because they ate it, and my children will eat it because I eat it. Some years they do not grow - this is when someone in the family has displeased our ancestors. But they will grow again'.

Distance and Proximity: Perceptions of a Changing Taskscape

Alongside perceptions of the interactions between dwelling activities and *tlholego*, in which the character of both human actions and that of natural resources are considered, are perceptions concerning the changing dimensions of the taskscape. A common narrative of longer-term residents of Matlapaneng is that formerly collecting both building wood and firewood was a proximal activity whereas now it is a distant one, caused by the pressures of in-migration. In particular, it is the straight Mopane poles (*maphako a a thamaletse*) or *mophanyane* that are used for building that are perceived to be very distant from the village. Another common perception is that most good firewood collected today is the unused remains of tree-cutting for building purposes, and since such activities are increasingly distant, so too is firewood collection. Many informants state that firewood collection was once an almost daily activity carried out by females in the close vicinity, but that so many people had settled the area that it had now become necessary for men to use transport to collect in the bush for several weeks supply. The area named Saphane (name for a Mopane dominant area of bush) is where most people head to for these tasks, and most people claim that they have to go further each time they go out into Saphane to cut or collect.

Although the taskscape in essence has social rather than spatial dimensions that are spatially configured in relation to the landscape, the perception of expansion of the sphere of dwelling activities from proximal to distant is crucial in the way households go about constructing their material surroundings. Narratives of such expansion relate also to the Thamalakane river than runs through Matlapaneng, where formerly activities such as *letlhaka* (water reed) cutting and *tswii* (water lilly root) gathering took place, but are now confined to permanent swamp areas some distance away. 'When the river began to dry,' stated Sexago, 'at first we began to take our *mekoro* [canoes] which could carry a thousand bundles (*ngata*, a thumbfull) which was enough for a house and *lolwapa*. We followed the river up stream until we reached the reeds, six days in total. But

now the river is too dry to do this, and you must go by car'. A combination of in-migration pressures and hydrographic changes in the delta have contributed to an established perception that the everyday tasks of dwelling, where 'everything we needed was close at hand, to eat, to build, to hunt' (Sexago), have lost their dwelling relationship to place and have become detached and distant, involving transport. An important distinction within dwelling tasks is that of gender. Since dwelling tasks within the environment are highly gendered, different changes affect households in different ways. As Saxago related, men began to find different ways of coping when faced with a drying river which involved collective action. The question of proximity, distance and transport is not a neutral or static one, since it involves complex sets of social relations, and is associated with male dwelling activities, whereas much of the former gathering and cutting were within the female dwelling sphere of experience. For female migrants, some dwelling tasks, such as collecting building materials, may no longer be possible or become transferred to the male domain, and new ways of coping emerge.

Concomitant with a set of perceptions about the spatial expansion of dwelling activities are perceptions of spatial contraction. The same forces involved in expansion for some groups also leads to others perceiving a compression of their dwelling environment, since some former spheres of activity are perceived as no longer practicable. One San woman, Kgaga, stated that 'we used to walk about and collect many things at Borowana before we came here, but here we just live in our plot because everything is too far - we ask people who live around us for unwanted building things like grass and reeds, and gather the *leketa* that grows in their plots'. For her and her mother, their sphere of dwelling activities has contracted to their immediate surroundings due to a changing perception of the spatial relations involved in everyday dwelling. Whereas former dwelling activities included interaction within the environment, gathering foods and materials within a day's

walk, food gathering is now restricted to *leketa* and *tepe* and building with the river plant *Motlhabakolobe* (*Xanthium Strumarium*) for building.

Both *Leketa* and *Tepe* are widely perceived as being edible wild plants that have been brought to Matlapaneng through settlement, Sexago thereby claiming that 'there was no *Leketa* or *Tepe* here in the past, they have grown here since people have thrown away bits of the plant, the flowers that they don't eat, and it has seeded itself' (Plate 21). Fortuitously my visits to Matlapaneng were in January as people were collecting and eating the plants during the rains, and groups of women sat around together talking animatedly whilst stripping the white flowered *Leketa* plant of its spinach-like small leaves. One woman, Ndadeboro, stated that 'this *Tepe* grows mostly where the soil is good after the rains, usually places where a cattle pen used to be in the past. It is the only wild food that I collect now, all the other plants went when the river died'. Seasonal gathering activities now centre on both former and present dwelling sites, and people often travel some distance to former cattle post areas to harvest the plants after rain. In this way the presently constituted taskscape can be understood as a complex nexus of interactions of past dwelling activities in the social landscape - with former sites of cattle activity becoming transformed into identified sites of edible wild plants. This shows how memory and past activities in the landscape often interact with aspects of the natural world to create ongoing sets of relations to place, such as the continuing growth of planted hedgerows and trees, long after their context of use has disappeared.

The increasing distance of resources from the everyday sphere of dwelling and the resultant contraction of the taskscape for many people in Matlapaneng, has led to an increasing commodification of resources for dwelling. In Maun itself this process has been an increasing experience for some years, which many people relate to population pressure as well as environmental change. However, I now want to turn to the examination of how social changes at

the household level related to migration and the urbanising process in Maun can be said to be important factors in social relations to environment in this part of Ngamiland.

Natural Resource Usage and Commodification in the Urbanising Village

Settlement change and environmental degradation, especially with regard to the commodification of formerly 'free' materials, are often dominant explanations within Africanist literature, and yet more interestingly they are central themes of indigenous narratives concerning such altered relations. This section examines such narratives in the light of indigenous practices to argue that significant social changes within the urbanising village have been an important influence in the biographical shifts of natural resources, and although objective changes within subsistence environments around settlements have taken place due to population pressure and hydrographic trends, it is the context of changing social relations to place that needs to be examined first in order to understand developments such as commodification and coping practices such as recycling.

Although the cash economy has always been a feature of dwelling activities to some extent in the Okavango Delta region, it has become increasingly dominant in recent years for a far wider range of people than before. Indigenous narratives about this process suggest macro-environmental change (including disease) and environmental degradation due to migration as the main reasons for a decrease in dwelling activities such as cattle-keeping, farming, and material and food collection. The data presented here suggest that social changes at the household level as well as changes at the level of the extended family structure - a re-centring of the taskscape upon the settlement itself rather than on an expanded landscape of engaged seasonal dwelling activities - are important factors in the changing taskscape. One important aspect of change, for instance, has been the increase of female-headed households and the loss of material relations to rural areas through

involvement with the cash economy. Changes in household composition in the urbanising place are arguably an important factor in the commodification of certain tasks and materials of dwelling.

Since dwelling is the process through which our social involvement with the landscape is expressed, underlying our everyday engagement with surroundings, it is no surprise that indigenous narratives about building activities relate to perceptions of external change rather than internal social and household changes. Binang Mahupe related that 'we used to collect *maphako* (poles), *bojang* (grasses) and *dithupa* (thatching supports) north of Maun years ago, and make *ditena tsa mmu* (mud bricks) at the *molapo* (river bank), sometimes hiring a cart to collect it all. But today it is too far to go, since people have been cutting for a long time and the seeds have been destroyed - they might grow if the rain comes, but if you cut it and the rain does not come it will not grow again. These things are very expensive to buy in Maun. It is cheaper to go and get the materials yourself, but there is a lack of time and transport'. A neighbour, Solomon, argued that 'today I am not young any more so I buy these materials these days. In the past we used an ox-drawn sledge and *mekoro* (canoes) to go to XuXao... but we stopped due to lack of water, since the river dried up. After this we began to hire cars to go into the swamps to cut the grass and reeds. I would renew these houses of mine this year but I don't have children or a wife, so I hire somebody to do the buildings'.

Also in Sanyedi ward, Mrs Banda related that 'the materials of our home have changed since I have become too ill to go and cut materials with a donkey cart at Daonara. It depends on life (*botshelo*), if I am well I will go and cut, but if not I will have to buy, there is no-one else to help me here'. Kenile, another woman, remembered that 'with my parents we used to cut water reeds, poles, and grasses in the bush (*naga*) using an ox-drawn sledge every year. Even today I use transport to bring these things back from the delta, paying the driver with half the load'. Her neighbour,

Ketlhogile, related that until recently she used to cut grasses for thatching at her parents' fields in Shorobe, but after getting a job in the Safari industry hired a builder to put up a concrete house. For one woman, Bakae, like many others, the first generation of houses built by the family in Maun were all of *letlhaka*, in her case cut in the Thamalakane river nearby. After the river stopped supporting *letlhaka* they began to buy it, 'then we only bought it for the *lolwapa* since the price increased and we began to build with mud bricks, and also had to buy the poles and grass since we had no transport or men in the household'. Another female-headed household close by had a similar experience, 'cutting *letlhaka* and grasses around Shorobe (their home area) and using hired transport to bring it back. But in 1985 we started using mud bricks and later tin cans for renewing the house walls since those areas dried up. Today we give half of four loads to the driver and swap reeds for old clothes with the cutters so that we can make a large *lolwapa*. But we use cash from selling food for building poles'.

Maphako, or vertical poles used to support house rafters, are normally Mopane or some other dense wood, such as Silver or Purple-pod Terminalia (*Terminalia sericea/ pruniodes*) or Leadwood (*Combretum Imberbe*), and are an interesting focus for study in Maun, since as already discussed, the cutting and collection of wood for house construction is highly gendered, forming part of the male sphere of building activity. What is evident in many homesteads in the village is that the roofs of many houses have lost their supporting *maphako* and now rest upon the mud-brick walls, considerably lessening their durability. Serurubele, the female head of one Mabudutsa household, stated that she 'had removed the posts from the house since they were expensive to replace and we no longer have a *moraka* (cattle post) to collect these things from'. A close neighbour however, Diana Totang, remarked how, even though she buys *letlhaka* from cash earned selling sorghum beer, 'my younger brothers have a *moraka* where we collect *maphako* and *dithupa* (thatching supports)'. Another neighbour, Gaoduele, related that 'my parents at first used to cut *maphako*

across the river (Boseja), as well as cutting grass and *letlhaka* in the delta, but now we no longer use roof supports and the walls are home-fired clay bricks. We do not have a *moraka* to collect materials from and I was never married'. One woman even removed the roof supports from two houses in her plot to use as fencing posts due to a shortage of wood for this purpose that had become urgent due to the spatial encroachment of neighbours.

It is clear from most homestead biographies that social changes have had significant impacts upon people's relations to the wider landscape. One common feature is that previous generations were highly expansive in their landscape mobility, using carts, sledges and canoes to travel to fields, cattle posts and material collecting areas, but that many also used cash for some materials at certain times. One of the most significant changes has been in household composition, with a large rise in the number of female-headed households compared to previous generations. In terms of dwelling activities, I argue, this is significant since the gendering of certain activities means that many female-headed households have to rely on cash to pay for materials and labour for many male building activities, such as wood cutting, roof construction and other tasks. What is noticeable is that most such households (mostly mothers and daughters) participate as a household in water reed and grass cutting or travel to purchase them at source areas. Many do not pay for transport but give half the load to the driver as payment, which is a cheaper strategy than purchasing materials in Maun. A fairly common form of income for women over the years has been the selling of reeds and grasses to others in the village, alongside that of beer brewing and selling.

One reason why some women have not replaced the roof supports on their houses and instead spend cash and labour on water reeds is arguably that the former are customarily perceived as male aspects of building activity and the latter female. Given a choice between spending available cash upon replacing roof supports or renewing the *lolwapa* with reeds, most women choose the latter.

The relation between dwelling and materiality in the homestead is gendered, with differing aspects stressed by men and women. The gender dimension of dwelling is an important background to understanding how both dwelling and building activity interrelate. One single male with lodgers who had inherited a plot from an aunt reported that 'I removed the reed courtyard fence (*lolwapa*) so as to have an open space in the plot but kept a bit of it for privacy on one side - women like to create a *lolwapa* since they often cook outside, but I cook inside with paraffin'. This perception was often echoed by women who saw the *lolwapa* as a central feature of the homestead, creating an area for daily domestic activities. One woman, Moenge, stated that 'all our houses at first were made from *letlhaka* due to it being easy (*go bofefo*) to make quickly after going to the delta to collect it. My mother was not married any more, and we made a *lolwapa* that joined our houses and enclosed them. Our plot is just this *lolwapa*, not outside it. We use the *lolwapa* as a boundary since there are no fences between the plots here'.

One way in which the transformation of relations between people and environments (witnessed through the social life of materials such as *letlhaka*) can be understood is in the changing social lives of women within urbanising places. Another woman, Difutsana, related how her homestead was established by her parents, who spent most time at their fields area, with her and other children staying in Maun. When they died, 'the man's job, which was fencing the plots, was left to my brother, but he died. So the plot did not last, and I just fenced a smaller area for myself and my children with water reeds. In 1998 the whole place was destroyed by fire, but we rebuilt it again with money from brewing beer'. The water reed courtyard separates the social activities of the drinking area from domestic activities of the family, but is also perceived as 'stopping thieves from taking things at night' as well as 'giving privacy to what is going on inside'. These perceptions and concerns with inside/outside as public/private relations within the social context are often found in female-run drinking places, which are a major source of income for women in Maun. *Letlhaka*

fences are regularly used to screen drinking areas from public view in order to keep peaceful relations with neighbours. With cash income from brewing or selling commercial sorghum beer, women spend considerable amounts of cash on renewing such privacy fences around their homes, or may invest instead in corrugated zinc sheets. 'I replace parts of the *lolwapa* as it needs it,' stated Difutsano, 'using *letlhaka* bought in Maun. The supporting posts (*maphako*) were cut in the bush by a man who we hired to do the job', since they had neither transport nor men to cut trees for themselves.

By way of contrast, an interesting example of male perceptions of how building activity and relations to environment are interwoven is found in questions relating to building 'style'. Rra Mohuhutso related that he lives in a plot owned by his nephew, who collects all their building materials from his *moraka* at Samedupi. 'The *maphako* are *Motsiara* (Purple-Pod Terminalia),' he stated, 'and Mopane has been used for the *dithlomeso* (rafters), *mehariso* (base roof strengtheners sitting on *maphako*) and *dipalelo* (thatching support and rafter strengtheners). These trees were cut since they are strong (*di thata*) and straight (*di thamaletse*) as well as resistant to termites due to their strong heartwood (*pelo ya setlhare*). This one house has been renewed maybe for 30 years, and the roof supports are still strong. This is the Batawana style (*mokgwa*), which I can recognise because of the types of wood used in making the house. When I see a house made from these trees, then I know that Batawana built it (*ke itse ba agile ntlo*). It is not the way a house looks but what materials are used that tells me that it is built by Batawana'. What Rra Mohuhutso is suggesting in this response is that the relationship between environment and dwelling activity is one that informs certain cultural experiences such as building style, distinction, recognition etc. Such sets of perceptions emerge from experience in dwelling in the landscape, in this case that of distinguishing the properties of wood types, cutting for building and house construction, and are structured by early experiences of gendered dwelling activities. Both male and female perceptions of building

activity and relations to the material environment discussed here can be seen as the playing out of the *habitus* of dwelling activities within the context of changing social relations in the urbanising village. The structuring role of the *habitus* not only ensures that the various tasks of dwelling are perceived as belonging to gendered spheres of activity, but that changes in household composition over time will affect dwelling site morphology and relations to environments also.

Widespread social changes in household composition, including increasing numbers of female headed households often relying on cash income from selling beer, have had significant effects upon building activity and building form in Maun, especially with regard to the relationship between building activity in the village and the wider social landscape of dwelling activities. The significance of the wider social landscape to social activities and dwelling sites in particular places was discussed in the previous chapter, and one aspect of relevance here is that of transport. Previous generations with cattle posts in the region often spent little time in the village itself, instead frequently shifting activities between cattle and agricultural sites, using ox or donkey drawn sledges or carts. Such self-sufficiency in transport was essential for family communication between such areas, and meant that materials could be brought into the village from other dwelling sites. However, not only transport but cattle-keeping in particular is perceived as part of the male dwelling sphere, with agriculture containing both male and female activities. Since transport is perceived as a male activity, many women in Maun often rely on hired transport to fetch materials formerly transported to the village by male household members.

The important thing to remember about 'households' is that they are not structured entities, but a process of dwelling - household composition is not static but temporal and biographical. The temporal shifts in social and environmental relations in Maun are also reflected in research in some rural contexts. Van Driel (1994) for instance describes how:

'Migrated women with jobs and women staying behind in the village depending on income sources like remittances, beer brewing and subsistence agriculture complained about the lack of male support. They define almost all their problems in terms of lack of income and explicitly associate these financial problems with changes in the family support network. Rapid changes in the social and economic organisation of society form the core of these problems. Traditionally, the extended family provided economic security and emotional support through the mutual responsibility of its constitutive members. Men and women performed different tasks and all contributed to the welfare of the family' (1994:3).

In the 1995 Dissemination Seminar of the 1991 Population and Housing Census, concern was openly expressed about the continuing trend of decreasing marriage prevalence in Botswana (1995:181), with the proportions of women not marrying rising from 23% in 1971 to 50% in 1991 (for men rising from 44% to 55%). Yet a factor mostly unconsidered in social statistics concerning household change is that of ethnicity. Without wanting to develop this aspect too much here, it is worth noting that the ethnically Yei majority in Maun are characterised in the ethnographic literature as matrilineal in descent, and this is played out on several levels in everyday social life. At the *Leso*, a period of social mourning held at the homestead of a deceased's family for approximately a week, much discussion concerning genealogy takes place, with important relations traced through the female line, as opposed to the male line for the minority Tswana population. Social relations with the mother's family are generally closest, and often form the basis for extended family relations in the wider landscape. Statistical changes are highly contextual, since an increase in Yei female-headed households arguably exists in a very different context from that of Tswana groups. Such statistics are interpreted by Tswana commentators within a patrilineal and male dominated social context, which may be inappropriately applied to Yei perceptions of social ordering and experience.

For the majority Yei community, the gradual loss of material and social pathways to the wider social landscape was not necessarily perceived as a matter of having less male kin support by women, or female kin support by male migrants, but a consequence of 'town' life and the role of cash in empowering not just the individual but the social network. This shifting set of socio-economic relations, into which formerly 'freely' available materials are drawn, is a movement toward increasing centrifugality, since the individual is positioned to establish social relations through wealth disposal, rather than through the obligations of kin-based social activities. Perceptions of the structure of cash-based rather than kin-based society are interwoven in the urbanising village, so that kin relations are brought into new socio-economic contexts through cash, and cash-relations (such as vendor-customer relations) are often rethought and recontextualised within kinship relations. The interweaving of perceptions of social obligation and kin and neighbour activities and the social life of cash is of particular relevance to the notion of dwelling as process in the urbanising context, since such interconnections are the social bridges between environments, and point to how differing environments, the medium of our material engagement with the world around us, relate to each other within the wider social landscape.

In a chapter of the 1991 dissemination report specifically concerned with the environmental impacts of an expanding, urbanising population, Arntzen argues that the rise of female-headed households 'implies that women are the main resource users and determine to a large extent resource use patterns' (1995:375), with both technological change and household income forming influential factors alongside population increase in determining the impact of such changes upon local natural resources. There is little doubt that considerable social changes to the nature and composition of households in Maun have had impacts upon the nature of dwelling activities and building activities in particular, since I have argued that building activity is emergent from social activity in the landscape. Concomitant with such household changes have been changes in the

range of dwelling activities engaged in by households, with certain gendered areas such as cattle keeping, wood cutting, transport, aspects of building, perceived as male spheres of dwelling activity, either abandoned, hired or purchased. For male migrants in Maun, labour for female building activities such as brick making, thatching, plastering etc. is often hired. Gaoruletse Ketsilepele in Matomo ward in Maun has always earned money in this way, building and renewing houses for others, as well as building houses to rent out to migrants in her own plot. 'I began to use tins to build with after a while since I have no transport to collect soil - I have never been married, so I ask my neighbours to help with transport or I buy materials here in the village. It is not only men who ask me to build or thatch for them, but also women who have no-one to help them'. For male migrants lacking female kin support, female dwelling activities have become highly commodified. However, this is not only a feature of the urbanising village, and it is common in rural areas to find women earning some money in this way.

Many migrants inevitably regard themselves as 'outside' of normal dwelling relations to the resource environment when living in Maun, a point often stressed to me by the frequent narratives of contrast between 'home' and 'town' life. In such narratives home areas are biographically imbued with differing sets of material and social relations from Maun, where money is perceived as necessary for everyday dwelling, especially building. Whilst such migrant narratives cite population size, degradation, and distance as factors in the commodification of building activities in Maun, such narratives subvert the underlying social recontextualisation of the migration process, characterising changes in dwelling activities as a factor of environment rather than of social context. Since dwelling is fundamentally a practical process of social involvement within environments, this is the very reason why indigenous narratives point rather to external causal explanations than to social ones. Whilst the transformation of social relations inherent in the experience of migration, where the sphere of activity is focussed upon the urban centre and rarely

on its relations to the surrounding landscape, is the context within which one can understand migrant cash-based relations to dwelling activities, for other groups longer term social processes within particular places have been influential factors. I have presented in this section an argument that seeks to involve dynamic temporal factors such as the gendered dimension of dwelling activity as important to an analysis of resource use and commodification and especially how building activity and homestead form are mutually related with such social processes over time.

"The only material for poor people" Coping Practices in the Urbanising Environment

So far I have used the term 'urbanising' as descriptive of a particular set of conditions that form the settlement context or environment of place toward which my data from the Maun village area relate. I have thus far avoided entering into an exhaustive analysis of the objective settlement conditions implied by such a term, since for my purposes it is the *processual* nature of urbanisation that I wish to explore rather than a de-temporalised, synchronic 'state' of material development. The urbanising process is transformative over time not only of the material and spatial aspects of everyday life, but also of people's perceptions and everyday dwelling practices - it is as much a social process as a material one, since both dimensions are involved in a mutuality of influence over time. Whilst urbanising can in one sense point to a process in which a place is materially (spatially) transformed over time through the activities of a 'national' rather than 'local' taskscape, it is also a process of perceptual and bodily transformation, since those embodied practices gained through experience in the context of place are necessarily reoriented over time. The significance of our material surroundings in influencing such bodily and perceptual comportment toward the world is recognised by Bourdieu, who states that:

'Between the child and the world, the whole group intervenes... [i]nhabited space - starting with the house - is the privileged site of the objectification of the generative schemes [habitus], and, through the divisions

and hierarchies it establishes between things, between people and between practices, this materialised system of classification inculcates and constantly reinforces the principles of the classification which constitutes the arbitrariness of culture' (Bourdieu 1990:76).

Since I am here stressing the processual nature of such generative schemes rather than (as Bourdieu does) the conservative gravity of our built environment, it is necessary to extend this notion to include the wider possibility of change over time, in which both material and social forces are at play, as is the case with urbanising settlements. Maun is a settlement in which the interstices between prior practices and recent ones are most evident in the material lives of people, where the materiality involved in one set of social practices merges with that of another, especially in constructing the built environment. So far in this chapter I have outlined how changes in relations to environment are related to wider social changes associated with the urbanising process that has affected both household activities and the extended family taskscape. It is here valid to talk of the taskscape of extended family units rather than communities as a whole, based upon my experience of how activities in the landscape are socially organised. Such changing relations can be understood as providing the context for the increased commodification of formerly freely available building resources. As argued earlier however, the perceived 'expansion' of the dwelling environment, with such material resources appearing remote and beyond reach, whilst bringing such relations into the sphere of the cash economy for many, also produces perceptions of the 'contraction' of the dwelling environment for many.

The spatial contraction of the kin-based taskscape has produced over time dwelling practices that involve the immediacy of the settlement environment, practices such as the re-use and 'recycling' of the freely available material of urbanising places, often post-consumer, industrial or construction materials. Although commodities and consumption are much discussed cross-culturally, analysis has overwhelmingly been focussed on how identities are formed through consumption, rather than

processes of production, recontextualisation or the recycling of material forms. Anthropological case studies that examine particular social and cultural contexts could usefully explore the ambiguity of meaning in recycling practices. As David Parkin has suggested about Kenya:

> 'people realise perfectly well that it is poverty and desperation that cause them to recycle and they often express this in a kind of private language of their own which is partly gently self-mocking and yet at the same time defiantly excludes the outsider... even the term Jua Kali is itself a nice piece of irony, both mocking the comfort of those who work inside buildings or in the shade and drawing attention to their own marginalised state... it is perhaps through such materials that users speak the language of margins, dispersal and re-assembly, thus mirroring their own social situation' (David Parkin, 1998 personal communication).

In particular, a building practice has emerged in Ngamiland, and especially Maun (and almost certainly sporadically elsewhere), which uses discarded drinks cans as a walling material, either in place of mud bricks for some, or to replace *letlhaka* for others. This practice is almost certainly thirty years old based upon some oral accounts, but has increased in recent years. The drinks cans are gathered from bars and pathways by women, and are known by many as 'the only material for poor people', since they are freely available and light enough to carry on foot long distances without transport. One woman in Shorobe *molapo* region had carried a large bag of dozens of cans about 10 miles over several journeys from Shorobe village in order to build her house. Some of them were beer cans from a bar there, and others were found on the paths near her relative's plot in the village. This practice of re-use is not confined to the urbanising village, but is a popular resource for those people with restricted access to kin labour, cash, or the resource environment, all of which characterise life in the urbanising village to a larger extent than in rural areas. The woman in Shorobe *molapo* region, for instance, had restricted access to transport since her father had died, and so was unable to collect the large amount of water necessary to make mud bricks. Having spent many years previously in Shorobe village, her way of coping was to build as she had done

there, using discarded drinks cans for walling. I spent some weeks in Sankuyo village in the remote eastern delta, where young women had also built using drinks cans. Many stated that they had seen such buildings in Maun, and had decided to copy (*go etsa*) the style, since many of their families who might help them build through cutting wood etc. were absent working in the tourist camps. Originating as a response to coping in the urbanising environment, the style is also now found in the remotest areas where people drink, discard cans, and build in the style of the town.

Biography and Re-use

Whilst a contraction of dwelling relations to resource environment as a result of social changes within the urbanising place is a key theme of my analysis here, it is also important to examine the nature of the re-use involved - the material and its properties, potential meanings, and cultural perceptions. One of the most influential areas of analysis in recent anthropological studies of material culture has arisen from a wide literature on consumption practices, and focuses upon the social life of objects. The seminal work in this area is Kopytoff (1986) who sets out a way of understanding the social life of objects at stages of commodity and non-commodity. The social life of the drinks-can considered here could thereby be examined in terms of a movement from commodity (product in a bar) to non-commodity (waste object), but also by being incorporated into house walls could arguably then move through what Phillip Thomas has called a 'second moment of production' - the biography of the object now involved in a set of new, localised meanings, in the way that the old ones were 'delocalised'. The movement from commodity with cash value to free resource and vice versa is also an interesting social transformation, in which commodification is involved in the social production of individual possession through cash relations, whereas relations with freely available resources are collective, negotiable and relational. A process of re-contextualisation is evident in the re-use of such materials. The notion of object biography is

potentially useful in understanding this process since previous meanings are sometimes carried over into new contexts.

A significant gap in the literature remains the analysis of the construction of complex inter-cultural identities through the re-use of post-consumer objects. We need to look beyond inter-cultural consumption toward a concept of the social life of "things" involving object biographies and layers of material and social existence. Arjun Appadurai (1986) argues not only that commodities have social lives, but also that the value inherent in things is a product of economic exchange, and that the link between value and exchange is a broadly construed notion of 'politics'. He further identifies commodities as 'generally seen as typical material representations of the capitalist mode of production, even if they are classified as petty and their capitalist context as incipient' (1986:7). What is more, he identifies a 'commodity situation' in the social life of a range of "things", 'defined as the situation in which its exchangeability (past, present or future) for some other thing is its socially relevant feature' (1986:13).

Both Appadurai and Kopytoff agree that "things" exist socially in a way that enables movement between the states of commodity and non-commodity. Appadurai identifies 'ex-commodities' as 'things retrieved, either temporarily or permanently from the commodity state and placed in some other state' (1986:16). For Kopytoff, 'commodities are singularised by being pulled out of their usual commodity sphere' (1986:74). The notion of 'singularisation' adopted by Kopytoff is a process whereby the "thing" of homogeneous value (a commodity), becomes valued as 'unambiguously singular' (1986:73). He states that 'in the sense that commoditisation homogenises value, while the essence of culture is discrimination, excessive commoditisation is anti-cultural' (1986:73). Kopytoff is here arguing for a polarity of values which he identifies as an *a priori* quality, something Miller is uncomfortable with (1995:3). 'Singularisation' is one shift

from the 'commodity situation' of the object, transforming homogeneous value into unique value, mediated by the force of culture. There is a homology between Kopytoff's notion of 'singularisation' and Thomas's notion of 'relocalisation' already discussed. This process is one of breaking down the political link between exchange and value identified by Appadurai, since value is no longer derived from economic exchange potential but through cultural or personal meaning attachment.

But not all objects that are removed from their 'commodity situation' are inherently valued as a result. Kopytoff points out that, '[b]eing a non-commodity does not by itself assure high regard, and many singular things (that is, non-exchangeable things) may be worth very little… to be a non-commodity is to be "priceless" in the full possible sense of the term, ranging from the uniquely valuable to the uniquely worthless' (1986:74). This sort of social biographical approach is one way in which recycling could be considered within consumption theory. Within this literature however, there is still a real ambiguity about the possible status of post-consumer objects that are involved in further sets of consumption practices (that is, recycled or re-used). Kopytoff states that 'most goods are, after all, destined to be terminal… the expectation is easily enough fulfilled with such things as canned peas' (1986:75). This immediately highlights the problem in conceptualising post-consumer objects, since commodities are still mostly considered as the contents – the consumed – rather than the total object: the contained rather than the container. The re-use of waste is inherently ambiguous – it is no longer a commodity, yet not because it has been 'singularised'. Post-consumer objects continue to have a social life, to be consumed, yet somehow have already passed the point of terminal consumption as described by Kopytoff. The social biography of the drinks can is certainly one of movement from commodity to 'free' resource, since it has literally and metaphorically become emptied of value as a commodity, through consumption. In this case, can we really see it as the same object at a non-commodified stage of its biography?

Once emptied, does it not become part of the 'public' world in the sense that waste becomes when a private owner discards it, becoming a freely available resource?

The notion of object biography is a potentially useful and yet problematic one. One area in which such analysis is useful is in the local manipulation of material meanings (as earlier suggested by Parkin), in the way cultural perceptions and previous object meanings are sometimes carried over into new contexts. The problem with much literature on re-use thus far has been the attention paid to Western perceptions of irony rather than indigenous ones (for instance Roberts 1996). In Maun, a few people told me that waste drinks-cans still represented for them the immorality of alcohol consumption and wouldn't be considered a suitable material for house building. One woman told me that she had wanted to make her house entirely from Carling Black Label cans, but couldn't find enough of them. When I asked her why she favoured this beer she replied that both beer and can were stronger than the others and would be best for building. On further questioning it became clear that the pervasive advertisements for this beer which included imagery of strength was clearly implicated in her perception of the physical qualities of the container. However, for most women such associations are not carried over within the object, which becomes both literally and metaphorically 'emptied' of its meaningful content. In this case, can we really see the drinks can as in any way the same object as when it was full? Perhaps we should rather see the act of consuming its contents as one that transforms the drinks can into a new object - one with new possibilities and qualities.

Whilst I am hesitant to characterise this as a process whereby such waste objects are socially incorporated into the 'natural' world, since 'nature' is not by definition a freely available resource, we could perhaps meaningfully recognise the potentially 'naturalised' way in which post-consumer objects are socially understood and utilised through acts of dwelling. With this perspective such

materials become involved in the aesthetics of material distinction through dwelling activity in the same way as the materiality of the natural environment. In other words, drinks cans have objective qualities such as strength, shape, durability etc. that are considered when building activities are undertaken, and these objective qualities are both constraining and enabling factors for social activities in the same way that other elements of the natural world are. In this sense, drinks cans 'fit' the activities in which people are engaging within their immediate material environment, brought into use through the sorts of practical distinctions made about materials on an everyday basis.

It is the fact that people make such distinctions and turn to such alternative materials within their dwelling environment that not only suggests the influence of a 'compressed' or 'contracted' taskscape focussed upon the settlement itself, but also that building activity is crucially interwoven with a broader process of dwelling in given environments. Crucial to this thesis has been the notion of place as process of dwelling, that places are not merely the result of dwelling in the landscape but are influential dimensions of social life. This dynamic nature of place is mediated on a daily basis through people's perceptions of environments, that places can be composed of many environments, and indeed be defined by certain environments that identify them, such as the 'bush', frequently referred to in Setswana as *naga*. Environments are not outside of social engagement with the world, but are dynamically involved in the way that people interact both with the temporality of places (such as built environments) and with the temporalities of the natural world, as developed in the first section. The urbanising place of Maun is perceived differently at different points by different people, since it includes disparate types of environments, especially between centre and periphery, and differing perceptions of dwelling.

In some central wards of Maun, women have been utilising drinks cans for many years since they no longer have transport to bring soil or mud bricks from the river bank, or do not have cash to hire transport. For them it is economical (*itsholelo*) to perhaps hire one cartload of soil rather than four, and use tins as bricks instead. For many Tswana women for instance, such re-use is directly linked to *itsholelo*, to the commodification of normal building resources and transport. A frequent aspect of homestead biographies for many Yei people in Maun, who do not have a tradition of building with clay bricks, is the movement from *letlhaka* building in the first generation by self-collection, to mud bricks for the second, and then to drinks cans. Although the narratives surrounding this material change often refer to increasing commodification of resources, the underlying theme is always of fragmentation of rural linkages, age and incapacity for labour, and the migration and absence of household members. Many informants, especially non-Tswana, argued that they had chosen to build *mantlo a ditini* (drinks-can houses) due to ease of construction (*go bofefo*), since other methods were time consuming and difficult. This echoes distinctions made between *letlhaka* and other materials by Yei people, with many stating that *letlhaka* is easy for migrants to use due to speed of construction. This perception of the relationship between materials and mobility for Yei people was discussed in chapter four in the Shorobe region, where *letlhaka* was perceived as an integral part of the mobility of dwelling within the landscape.

I have argued elsewhere (Morton, C. 2002) that the development of the drinks-can style in Maun is related to Yei perceptions of materials and building activity drawn from other dwelling contexts, a dimension of the concept of 'otherplaceness' developed in the previous chapter, since people's skills, experiences and distinctions of building practices are necessarily of a place. When people move, they take places with them. Materials are involved in differing perceptions about their status and use for differing peoples within differing contexts, but a recurrent sense is that such materials exist as a resource available to immediate dwelling, and that it is proximity that is crucial to such

dwelling since spheres of activity in the landscape are relatively contracted in the urbanising settlement. In certain areas of the village (for instance Sedie ward) the history of building with drinks-cans can be traced to the recent establishment of certain bars (such as Sedie Hotel) there, and this further suggests the importance of physical proximity to the range of building activities engaged in. In particular, this relationship between dwelling activities and material proximity is one in which environments over time act as a mediating presence between the range of dwelling activities and their location, or place of involvement.

An example of this process is the homestead biography of Setlogetswe in Wenela ward, which shows how social changes within a household can have effects upon a dwelling site, and how the range of social activities engaged in is interwoven with the temporality of place. Setlogetswe lives on the plot established by her father, near the former Wenela Co. premises (a company recruiting and transporting mine workers to South Africa). The whole family briefly lived together in a *letlhaka* house, but in 1974 he set about hiring builders to construct a four-room *ntlo ya sekgoa*, with concrete bricks and large corrugated iron roof. All the children lived in this house, apart from a married son who built a mud-brick house outside. In 1987 there was a particularly bad storm in January and the roof was blown off the house, costing 1,500 Pula (circa £200) to replace. The following year however it was destroyed once more by a storm, and this time a lot of damage was caused inside the house to possessions. After this event Setlogetswe built two mud brick houses, one for herself and another for her siblings. Since her father was retired she built him a house from *letlhaka*, and the plot began to take shape around the ruins of the old house in a similar form to the surrounding plots. Sometime later Setlogetswe decided that the increasing cost of materials meant that she would have to do something else, and she began to knock down the walls of the concrete house, and built a new house with the retrieved bricks, mortared together with mud. Her siblings, all unemployed, also did the same, and since none could afford to hire builders to construct a

building using the bricks they also mortared them with mud dug in the nearby river bank. The inherent temporality of place, in this case the homestead, is key to understanding how these processes of social and material interconnectedness are constituted. The example of Setlogetswe's homestead is interesting in the way that the 'male' material of concrete brick is reappropriated by Setlogetswe through the 'female' building activity of customary wall construction, from 'delocalised' material reflecting the father's social and economic activities, interweaving notions of 'otherplaceness' within its walls, to a 'relocalised' material of the immediate dwelling environment. In this sense Setlogetswe's re-use of such bricks is similar to that of drinks-cans, since both materials are embedded within a context of place as a process of dwelling over time.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the relationship between building practices and dwelling within environments through several different case studies that highlight differing dimensions of social and material relations to place. Whereas in the previous chapter analysis focussed upon the interconnectedness of the temporal landscape through an understanding of mobility and the 'otherplaceness' of dwelling in Ngamiland, this chapter has examined how perceptions of the resource environment, the gendered nature of building and collecting activities, and social change, have all affected the nature of dwelling within the urbanising place. Crucial to this analysis has been an exploration of an indigenously perceived 'contraction' of the dwelling taskscape in the urbanising village upon the settlement itself rather than to the wider resource environment, examined here in the context of social change at the level of the extended household. Rather than leading to a fragmentation of dwelling however, people in Maun have coped with the changing nature of place by drawing upon ancestral cultural resources and past practices to orient present experiences. Such cultural resources form an important dimension of dwelling, structuring perceptions and practices over time and establishing modes of coping within differing

environments. The following chapters extend the themes of dwelling and building discussed thus far from the larger-scale view of dwelling as the social and material interconnectedness of place and activity within the landscape, to that of the homestead - its boundedness, temporality and the relation between dwelling and homestead morphology.





Plate 21 (top) Self-seeded *leketa* growing in a Matlapaneng plot after rains.

Plate 22 (bottom) Garden next to a Matlapaneng homestead with a boundary fence made from *maphanyane* (Mopane scrub), renewed each year.

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Plate 23 (top) Area of *maphanyane* (Mopane scrub) near Matlapaneng.

Plate 24 (bottom) Homestead fences made from immature Mopane stems, many cut from previously coppiced trees (Muchabe, Shorobe *molapo* region).



Plate 25 Mopane tree, Matlapaneng. Many trees show such evidence of previous cutting and regeneration, a process attributed to axe-cutting as opposed to other technologies such as sawing, which are perceived as inhibiting growth. Both object, skill and knowledge are thus combined in the perception of the historical environment of Matlapaneng.

Chapter Nine

Centrifugality and Boundedness: Dwelling and the Homestead

Introduction

In chapter four I introduced the notions of centrifugality and centripetality as characteristic of forces that I identified as at work within the Shorobe taskscape over time. In that context I identified centrifugality as an integral dimension of social activities in the landscape, which works to separate social units through engagement with tasks. I particularly identified cattle-keeping and aspects of agricultural activity as operating in such a centrifugal manner, since social groups tend to separate in response to involvement with herds, grazing areas, water holes etc., and since family fields are spatially separate and bounded in relation to others. In *The Kabyle House*, Bourdieu notes how female ritual and technical activity is oriented by 'the intention of thwarting all the centrifugal forces that threaten to dispossess the house of the goods entrusted to it' (1990:279). In other words, such ritual activity is *centripetal* in effect, exerting a social force upon a centre, in this context, the house as a social arena of activity. Bourdieu in particular highlights how centrifugal forces (acts of 'expulsions') involving the house, such as the loaning of objects or milk, are socially countered during vulnerable times, such as immediately after birth, early ploughing, harvest etc. and that other centripetal activities 'aim to ensure the 'filling' of the house' (loc. cit.). Although Bourdieu is particularly concerned with how ritual activity is structured, for my purposes in this thesis it is the notion that the taskscape contains both centrifugal and centripetal forces as a dimension of social practice that I wish to examine.

Centrifugal forces within the taskscape are crucially related to both a centre and a boundary - both to the activity itself and its relation to other activities and their locations. Rather than being a relatively static notion of core-periphery relations however, centrifugality suggests a dynamic tension between centres of activity and their social and spatial interrelations (centre-outwards relations) over time. However, I also identified forces of centripetality that act upon such centres over time (centre-inwards relations), that tend to bring groups together through collective activity. In the case of cattle-keeping both forces are brought to the fore at different times, with some tasks being centrifugal in effect (daily herding and driving to water) and others centripetal (sharing cattle pens, milking, slaughtering, calving etc.) in which neighbours or extended kin come together in activities. Agricultural activity also holds both forces in tension, with neighbours and families working collectively at certain times and separately at others. I earlier suggested that an explication of such forces within a particular taskscape such as Shorobe *molapo* region was useful in an analysis of settlement distribution and form and other features of the landscape.

This chapter will examine how these forces are involved at the scale of the homestead rather than the relatively larger scale of cattle-keeping, but at the same time retaining the notion that such scales of landscape and place are interconnected dimensions of dwelling - a theme which structures the argument of this thesis. Whereas in the previous two chapters I examined the porosity of place, in terms of the mutual making of places and pathways ('otherplaceness'), in the next two chapters the homestead as a material and spatial entity is considered. In this chapter the notion of boundedness and boundaries is examined through an analysis of the *lolwapa (pl. malwapa)*, the material and spatial demarcation of the homestead. Analysis of the interrelations (interstices) between *malwapa* over time within a ward shows the mutuality of influence between such material boundaries and socially centrifugal and centripetal forces within dwelling over time. Perceptions of space and material boundaries exist in a complex interrelationship of mutual making - and this is

explored through the case study of Land Board boundaries. One important argument is that whereas the *lolwapa* is concerned with the centripetal force of *enclosure*, the Land Board boundary is centrifugally *expansive* in effect, which has influenced the formation over time of homesteads characterised by largely open central areas with houses around the periphery. Since the Land Board plot boundary is inevitably considered a boundary of dwelling, indigenous perceptions of front/back relations are arguably influential in the formation of expansive public front areas and smaller private back areas. Both centrifugal and centripetal forces are also held in tension over time in the growth of settlements, with both centre-outwards expansive forces existing alongside more centre-inwards forces of social activity.

Having earlier identified what sorts of activities are potentially centrifugal or centripetal in effect on the relatively larger scale of dwelling such as the Shorobe *molapo* region, it is important to my argument in this chapter to identify such forces that are relevant to an analysis of the temporality of the homestead. Figure 9.1 is an attempt to distinguish such activities, whilst recognising that some activities should be understood as containing elements of both forces that are stressed at different times.

Centrifugal	**Centripetal**
Cash employment	Food preparation/ cooking/ sharing meals
Sexual relations	Shared childcare
Seclusion (woman after birth)	Socialisation & leisure (singing/ dancing/ grooming etc.)
Basket weaving and dying	Drinking (sorghum beer, tea)
Consumption of goods/ services	Social ceremony (marriage/ death)
Mobility/ movement & migration	Religious gathering
Sleeping/ storing possessions in separate house	Shared sleeping house/ storage of possessions
Aspects of farming & cattle-keeping	Aspects of farming & cattle-keeping
Hunting	Gathering & collecting (wild plants/ materials)

Cash investment	Social dispute/ debate
Awareness/ fear of *Boloi* (witchcraft)	Neighbour relations
Personal health/ illness	Care of elderly/ sick

Figure 9.1 Possible centrifugal and centripetal forces of dwelling related to the homestead.

The list above obviously paints with a broad brush in its attempt to characterise tasks and activities in terms of their potential as social forces, and should only be considered a starting point for analysis and understanding rather than a quantitative conclusion. It is a useful process however, I argue, to attempt to distinguish sets of data as part of a wider argument in this way. There are two aspects of this attempt at distinction that need further comment however. The first concerns gender: there is an underlying theme on one level of my data that suggests that female dwelling activities are relatively centripetal in effect, and that male activities as relatively centrifugal. In the previous chapter I discussed how female collecting and purchasing of water reeds was connected to concerns with the material *enclosure of dwelling* whereas male concerns were related to a process of material *disclosure of dwelling* (discussed in the next section). The homestead is not hermetically sealed however, and it is important to note that the discussion of the homestead in this chapter is heuristic in the sense that wider contexts of dwelling in a place are being consciously set to one side. There are obviously wider dimensions of place in which male dwelling is particularly centrifugal, such as the *kgotla* (village meeting place and political centre) which was also formerly directly related to agnatic grouping and residence in villages. Another aspect of this table is the possible conflation of centrifugality with individuality and centripetality with dividuality or collective relations. Whilst some aspects of these concepts may be shared in important ways, this chapter is not an analysis of the relation between materiality and individual/ group dynamics within the homestead. Importantly, both centrifugality and centripetality are both social forces, integral to

the way people are mutually involved in dwelling, rather than dimensions of the nature of personhood. In particular, it is the temporally influential relationship between materiality and such social forces within the homestead that is considered in this analysis.

Boundedness and dwelling

Most of the examples that I am going to discuss in this section are based upon research in Sanyedi and Mabudutsa wards in Maun. Both are central wards, with Sanyedi originating as a Yei ward (especially people from the Shorobe area) and Mabudutsa a Tswana ward. With their relatively long occupation histories they provided an opportunity to examine morphological changes over time through the activity of several generations of building activity. In particular I became involved in documenting the layering of social activity and building within homesteads, and how building activity could be seen to exert an influence on social activity over time. What emerged was evidence of processes of *enclosure* and *disclosure* inextricable from perceptions of the boundedness of dwelling, that ordered and re-ordered building activity within compounds over time, and which was integral to wider processes of social change within households. These processes were especially related to the gendered dimension of building activity and materials explored in the previous chapter, with female dwelling activities more concerned with *enclosure of dwelling* expressed in the collecting and building of *letlhaka lolwapa* boundaries, and male practices with *disclosure* - a lack of concern over or removal of, the *lolwapa* enclosure and an external awareness of the house itself. Boundedness is a crucial theme in this analysis, since it draws together in complex ways how both materiality and socio-spatial activity are interrelated as part of dwelling.

In many homesteads the *lolwapa* is the central area of social interaction and for many people is experientially and semantically synonymous with the home. In southern and eastern Botswana the

Tswana *lolwapa* boundary is a low clay wall, often decoratively moulded or shaped (see also Grant 1995). In Ngamiland, the Tswana have long used water reeds in the Yei manner to construct the *lolwapa*, which is normally 6ft or more in height. It is the area of most social interaction with family members and visitors and the site of the cooking fire for most of the year. In everyday language, *lolwapa* can indicate your household, your homestead or the material boundary itself. Mpho, a Yei man whose homestead I shared during fieldwork said that:

'the *lolwapa* is the mother of the homestead, its where we were raised and sometimes slept. I do not have one now since I have built a concrete house for myself. I remember the *lolwapa* as a place where my mother spent most of her time, where my father had his chair. There were cooking spoons stuck in between the reeds, which we renewed every year. I cook indoors on a gas stove, but the *lolwapa* was not just a kitchen, it was where everything happened'.

Mpho's attempt to describe the social life of the *lolwapa* and failure to encapsulate it in a functional sense shows how dynamic the relation between social activity and space is within the homestead. *Spaces do not 'contain' activities, but activities can in a sense be said to 'contain' spaces.* Looking back at Figure 9.1, we can begin to understand how certain types of activity involve material and spatial dimensions in differing ways - with centrifugal activities being potentially more exclusive and expansive, and centripetal activities being more inclusive and overlapping. Activities have spatial implications, and this is temporally related to the boundedness of dwelling in material terms. The spatiality of social activity, whilst dynamically related to material surroundings, is often conflict with them also. The Garebakwena family in Wenela ward for instance expanded their *lolwapa* in preparation for a family wedding. The spatial implications of the wedding ceremony, where dozens of people gather in the *lolwapa,* meant that a larger material boundary needed preparing to accommodate such activity.

Prior to the establishment of Land Board plots with their rectilinear wire fences, homestead enclosure was established through the building of material boundaries such as courtyards, mostly made from *letlhaka* bound onto a series of upright poles. This material enclosure is still considered the boundary of a family homestead for homesteads not set in Land Board plots. The practice of *lolwapa* building is an essentially dynamic one, not just since such boundaries need regular social re-negotiation through the process of renewal, but also since the creation of a living area by demarcating a boundary is a continual process of dwelling rather than the end point of a culturally prescribed design. Homesteads respond to the spatial implications of social change within the household. The natural decay of materials mean that new social arrangements can be 'rebuilt' materially by taking away or adding fenced areas and houses. If a person dies or leaves the homestead, another person might inhabit the house, or it might be left to decay or the materials re-used. Sometimes a new enclosure will bring the houses of close individuals together, or be shifted if the relationship between houses and inhabitants is altered. Bohannan noted for instance that with the Tiv of Nigeria 'in the course of hut repairs, the position of people in the compound is gradually shifted to correspond to the new situation' (1953:17), and this indeed characterises the way that *lolwapa* boundaries establish and realign material relationships in response to social circumstance within the compound. The close link between the material *lolwapa* and the social unit it helps establish is reflected in the semantic accretion of meanings within the word itself; contextually meaning both material boundary, home and family group. Bohannan likewise discovered the Tiv word *ya* to have two aspects, 'it means primarily the site and the huts, and the cleared space in the centre. But it also means the people who live in it, and the relationships that exist between them' (1953:7).

In Mabudutsa ward in Maun (Figure 9.2), enclosing houses through a *letlhaka* boundary is still the main practice of defining domestic areas. The main important difference to note between

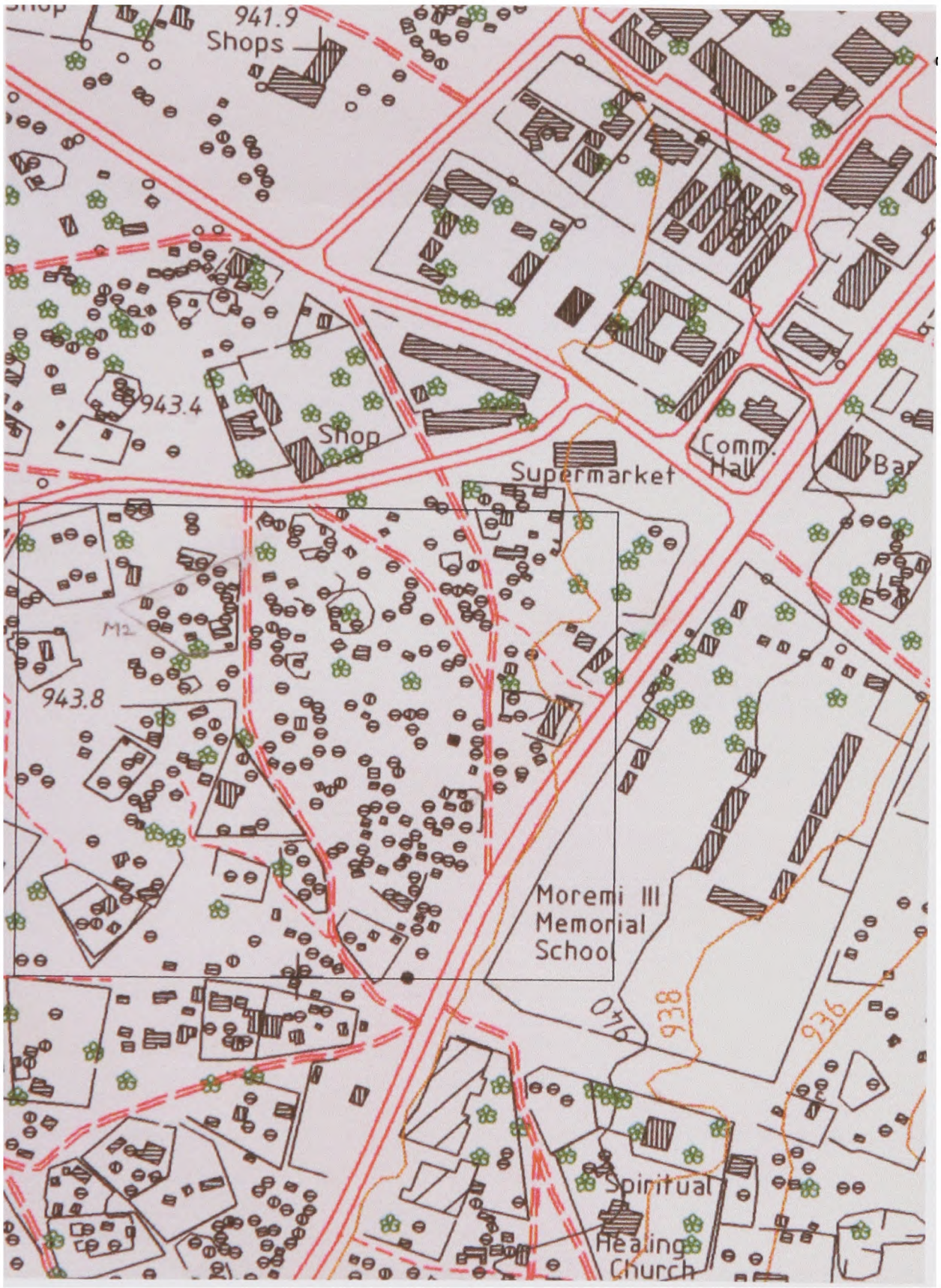


Figure 9.2 Map of part of central Maun, showing study area in Mabadutsa ward. Altered version of 1:5000 scale map.

Map source: Dept of Surveys and Mapping, Govt of Botswana 1998 (Sheet 0943), based on 1994 aerial photography.

Land Board measured rectilinear plots with wire fences and those whose boundaries are defined by a *lolwapa* fence, mostly made from *letlhaka*, is that over time the latter are fluid and respond to social circumstance, whereas the former are unconnected to the *lolwapa*, but rather establish an area of *land*. For many informants in Mabudutsa, the response of Diana Totang was typical: 'this is a small plot, our compound is just inside the *lolwapa* and not outside it'. For many people in Mabudutsa, the boundary of the homestead is the *lolwapa*, the material fence that separates the domestic sphere from that beyond or 'outside' (*kwantle*). When approaching a home it is common to call *'dumela mo lolwapeng'* ('hello inside the home'), to which they will reply *'dumela kwantle'* ('hello outside'), and having thus announced your presence with another call of '*koko*!', entrance into the domestic area can take place. The *lolwapa* boundary is more than the production of a domestic centre identified with the family, it also produces differing relative social positions in a spatial sense - it both encloses in one sense and also discloses social relations in another sense. The practice of *lolwapa* enclosure shows how interwoven social and material processes are within the temporality of dwelling. Most homesteads show signs within their biographies of *lolwapa* change over time in response to social reorganisation, such as death, marriage etc., with some homesteads expanding and others contracting.

The *lolwapa* is the social 'front' area, enclosing the entrance to a house or houses and extending in a rounded enclosure in front of it, and thereby relatively public in relation to 'back' areas. At the back of the house is often found an enclosure known as a *mahuri* (sometimes called *segôtlô*), more common in rural areas, which is a private area for toilet but also for storage, and sometimes child or female burial among Yei and Subiya people in remoter areas. The *mahuri* is rarely a fenced area in Maun - bathing is often done inside and pit latrines are common - but back areas are still considered private and a distinction between activities appropriate to such places is still evident in practice. The back area for instance was where we butchered goats and a cow brought from the

cattle post for a wedding within our homestead, whilst people drank sorghum beer in the *lolwapa*. Most people in Maun referred to this area as *kwa morago* or 'round the back', whereas in Shorobe *molapo* region most homesteads had a water-reed *mahuri*. The distinction between front and back in terms of the appropriateness of tasks remains a strong cultural context of dwelling however.

During fieldwork in Sedie ward one incident in particular brought the question of the interrelationship between material boundaries and dwelling to the fore. In the compound of Zira Bwezi, her son had died and members of her church had come with the minister to splash (*go gasa*) holy water in the corners of the *lolwapa* and *mahuri* (front and back courtyards), on the threshold to the house, and on the house walls inside and out. The stated purpose was to 'remove the smell of the dead person' (*go ntsa monko wa motho yoo suleng*) - a cleansing and cooling of a 'hot' situation in which the material of the house is in a liminal state after death. The splashing of walls and corners meant that the dwelling space of the deceased had been encompassed by the holy water, with particular attention paid to the boundaries and thresholds between spaces. This sort of ritual activity involves a perception that persons and dwelling sites are mutually affective, with boundaries and thresholds containing and accessing meaningful spaces. Hardie (1980), who carried out fieldwork among the Tswana of Mochudi in the south of Botswana, also notes that:

> 'when a death is announced, members of the community, and particularly kin, immediately congregate at the house of the deceased, which is never left empty until after the burial. The windows of the house are blackened, and at night a fire burns continuously, with singing and prayers in the *lolwapa* to keep away possible malevolent influences in this disordered time. On the following day, the house is washed, 'cooling down' the 'hot' situation' (Hardie 1980:220).

The boundaries of both domestic, town and tribal areas were all once the scene of ritual protection practices in Botswana, and today the blessing of dwellings for protection by church priests using holy water is often undertaken, an interesting feature of cultural continuity. Such perceptions of

the meaning and significance of boundaries are still expressed in the social undesirability of sharing material boundaries with neighbours in order to avoid dispute and witchcraft practices. The necessity of material and spatial separation from neighbours is widely acknowledged in current perceptions. The *lolwapa* wall was, and occasionally still is, shared with an adjoining family compound, usually close kin. Beyond the *lolwapa* boundary, the interstices between homesteads are mostly considered communal areas or pathways.

Taking this understanding of the centrifugal Tswana homestead which stresses separation of boundaries and dwelling alongside other more centripetal forces of enclosure and communal areas of activity, Rapoport and Hardie argued that these aspects of dwelling were 'core concepts' of Tswana dwelling - factors of continuity which could be understood and developed by urban planners (Rapoport and Hardie 1991). Rapoport argued that by establishing 'certain core elements of the traditional culture and environment, and highly valued elements of the new' (1991:37), planners could establish 'supportive' environments for African urban environments. The problem with such transposable, ahistorical 'core concepts' is that they inevitably exist as constructs of the analyst rather than people involved in dwelling. Rapoport and Hardie's approach is a good example of how dwelling is often viewed as a set of material results of beliefs, mental constructs and designs, traditionally prescribed and continued through changes in built form. Rather than understanding the homestead as a set of 'core concepts', the emphasis of this analysis is on the relationship between homestead morphology and social activity, and in particular what forces can be identified as crucial to this dynamic of dwelling.

Interstitial dynamics

When constructing a temporal map of a village area such as Mabudutsa ward through the collection of homestead biographies it became clear that the interstices between neighbouring homesteads had been highly fluid and negotiable over time, rather than subject to any abstract notion of land ownership. In this way, families had claimed areas to extend their *lolwapa* through negotiation with neighbours and then through building houses. The analysis of such interstices is crucially linked to that of building activity and perception of place. These interstices between homesteads are not empty, but filled with social activity. The interstices between homesteads are important dimensions in social life within the village since they are the site of social engagement on a daily basis between neighbours. Such interstices can be understood as a crucial arena for the production and reproduction of community understanding (*kutlwano*) and social harmony (*kagiso*). One woman in Mabudutsa related that 'I have built this far from Onalenna [her neighbour] since this is *kutlwano*.. it means that we will not quarrel in the future'. The avoidance of dispute with neighbours and the fostering of *kagiso* is part of the way dwelling and social beliefs and concerns interact on an daily basis. Both material and social interstices are bound together as part of dwelling in the social ward - the interrelations between houses and social groups are complexly interwoven in meaningful ways. In this context the notion of *interstices* is thereby preferable to *space*, since it stresses the interrelation between things. This relational aspect of space is implied in the Tswana word *phata*, which is generally translated as 'space', but which specifies a gap between two things, such as posts, or a path between two hills (Matumo 1993). In this context at least the notion of *space* is too general and abstract, and tends to reify such interrelations between things, so that things move *into* spaces, or when removed, *create* space. What I want to stress in this analysis is how homesteads and their interstices are both socially dynamic and meaningful dimensions of building activity.

One area in which the concept of spatiality is potentially useful is in the understanding of how elements of social activity relate to one another, and to material forms. As I stated earlier, activities can be understood as having spatial implications and expression, and this is interwoven with building practices. One interesting example of this sort of spatiality within the ward context is the act of walking - physical communication between homesteads. This social activity produces identifiable paths in the sand and thereby perceptual interstices as an integral dimension of place. Walking and route taking are perhaps the most significant aspects of interstitial dynamics when we are considering the social and material relations between homesteads.

Whilst routes between and among homesteads are interconnected visually, they are not all socially equal - private and public routes need other visual cues, interpreted daily by local people, in order for the spaces between compounds to be negotiated in a socially acceptable manner. I have known some people placing objects to prevent a path from becoming established, and another compound who neglected to avoid the development of a public path across their plot, which eventually divided it into two plots over time as a result. Pathways are one of the best examples of the temporality of places in the way they emerge, are reaffirmed through usage, alter people's perceptions of place, and the way interstices between boundaries are socially understood. Paths within a ward tend to open where people take visual cues that privacy is not being transgressed, such as alongside a *lolwapa* boundary, rather than between buildings where no *lolwapa* has been erected. A *lolwapa* boundary thereby not only serves to enclose a set of relations between houses but also to disclose. Path-taking is an act of physical communication between places which can often be meaningful. Kathiko Setamorago stated that she always varied the routes she took to and from her homestead, since she was wary of *boloi* (witchcraft), which could take advantage of repetitive route-taking over time. Van Nostrand discusses how an 'informal' settlement (Old Naledi) in Gaborone was perceived as 'village-like' by residents, since ‘there are no straight roads

and people gather together to drink and talk' (Tshema Mooketsi quoted in Van Nostrand 1982:28). The many criss-crossing paths and the arrangements of homesteads that are a feature of Old Naledi are a common feature of wards such as Mabudutsa in Maun. One informant in Old Naledi related that such complex path-taking was related to people's tendency to avoid following familiar routes to and from one's house, since such repetitive routes could be bewitched. As Van Nostrand points out, 'for these people, the irregular pattern of paths and roads in Old Naledi was one of purpose not random evolution. A "cool" community was well defined with a variety of routes' (1982:28). The temporal complexity and social life of pathways is an important and exciting area of research into the nature of dwelling, which in the context of this chapter can only be touched upon. Within the context of the argument presented here however I have suggested that paths are forms that emerge from the negotiability of dwelling in the context of social and material interrelationships. They are temporally related to social perceptions of interstitial relations between social groups, and are thereby often meaningful dimensions of how people communicate socially and locationally.

Changes in the *lolwapa* boundary and thereby the interstices between neighbours are connected with the tension between centrifugal and centripetal forces at work within the homestead. As I noted in Figure 9.1, the building of sleeping houses for older children or extended family members is a centrifugal force, expansive and stressing the separateness of social sub-units as part of dwelling. In one example in Mabudutsa ward the expansion of one homestead in this way was temporally related to the contraction of a neighbouring homestead, whose area receded centripetally due to the abandonment of houses of deceased household members. This was the homestead of Khana Zambo, an elderly woman now living alone in a small *lolwapa* with one hut for sleeping and one storage, but some years previously the *lolwapa* had been larger, enclosing both her, her elder sister and the children, with their mother outside (Figure 9.3). With the death of her sisters and of her own children, she began to bring the *lolwapa* inwards each renewal time, and

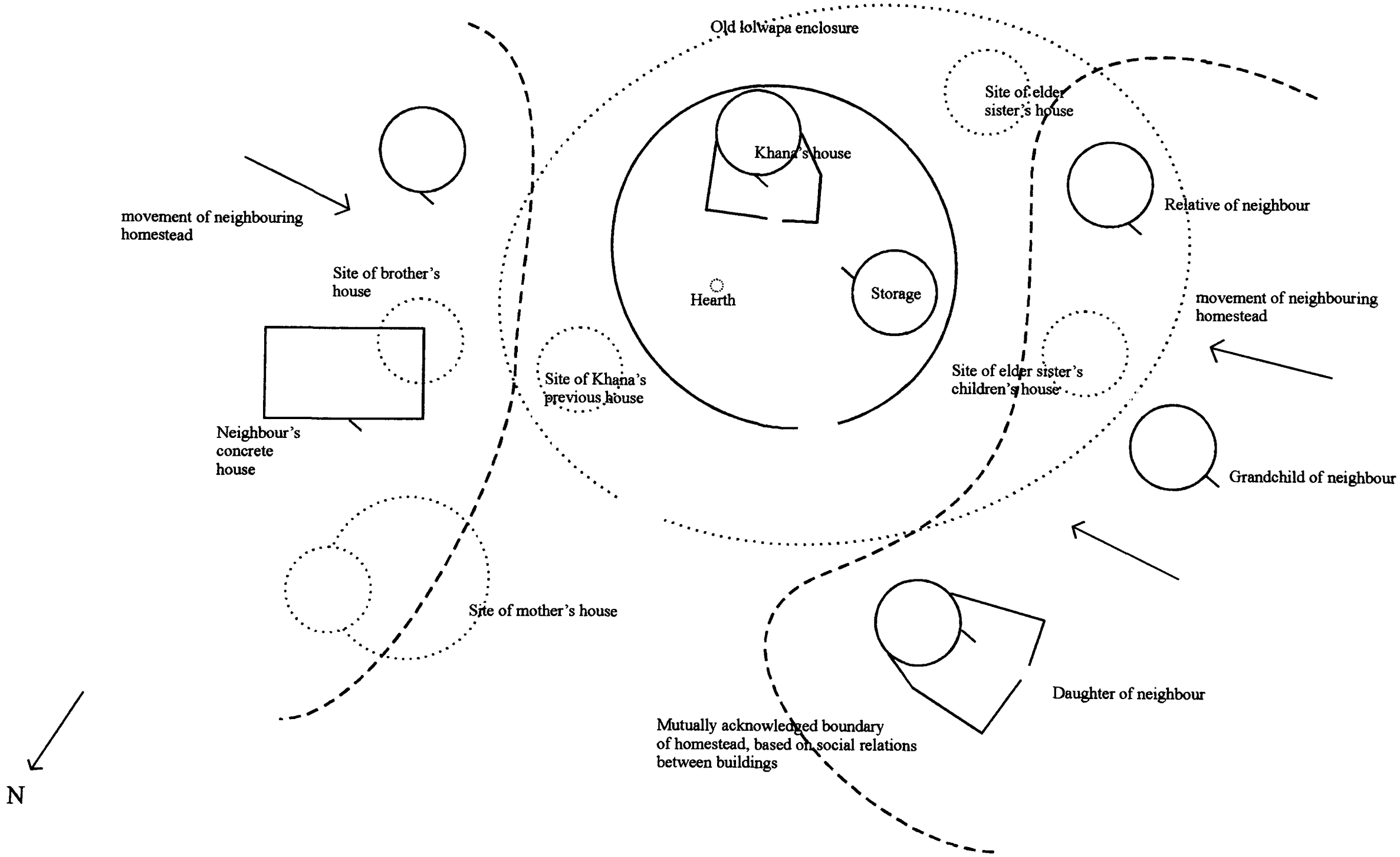


Figure 9.3 Schematic diagram of homestead of Khana Zambo, Mabadutsa ward, Maun, showing dynamic movement of homestead size and relation to neighbouring homesteads.

now the homestead has contracted to just her *lolwapa*, with the children of neighbours building where her relatives houses used to stand. Over time, the area around Khana's *lolwapa* became a negotiable interstice between her and her neighbour who needed a place for a grandchild to build. Khana agreed to this expansion since she 'was too old to build and had no relatives who wished to claim the place', and this also happened on the north side of her area.

The temporality of dwelling is one in which both social and material practices are interwoven in the way places are made and remade. Social and material centres, the nuclear family *lolwapa*, exist together with their boundaries and interstices to establish dynamic and negotiable arenas of social interrelations. One way of understanding the *lolwapa* is how it is perceived not only as *enclosure* but also as the *disclosure* of dwelling relations to place - establishing meaningful exterior relations as well as interior ones. There is a general point here about the social existence of boundaries, in that they have both internal and external social lives - they both enclose and disclose social relations to place. In Mabudutsa ward the interstices between homesteads are important locations for *kutlwano*, or harmonious relations between social groups, since they are held as negotiable and fluid aspects of dwelling. A failure to negotiate with goodwill and to claim areas through building is thereby a significant cause of dispute and poor neighbour relations.

The Care of Enclosure

In many homesteads, *lolwapa* boundaries change frequently in the way they create spatial relationships between houses. Since *letlhaka*, the main constituent material of the *lolwapa*, is cut in June or July, practices of boundary change involving the *lolwapa* ordinarily take place in the dry winter months. One such practice, evident in a number of plots was that of *go tlhokomela* (to take care of somebody/ something), whereby a *lolwapa* encloses the dwelling area of two or more houses, in which specific 'care' relationships between people exist, such as an elderly or sick person

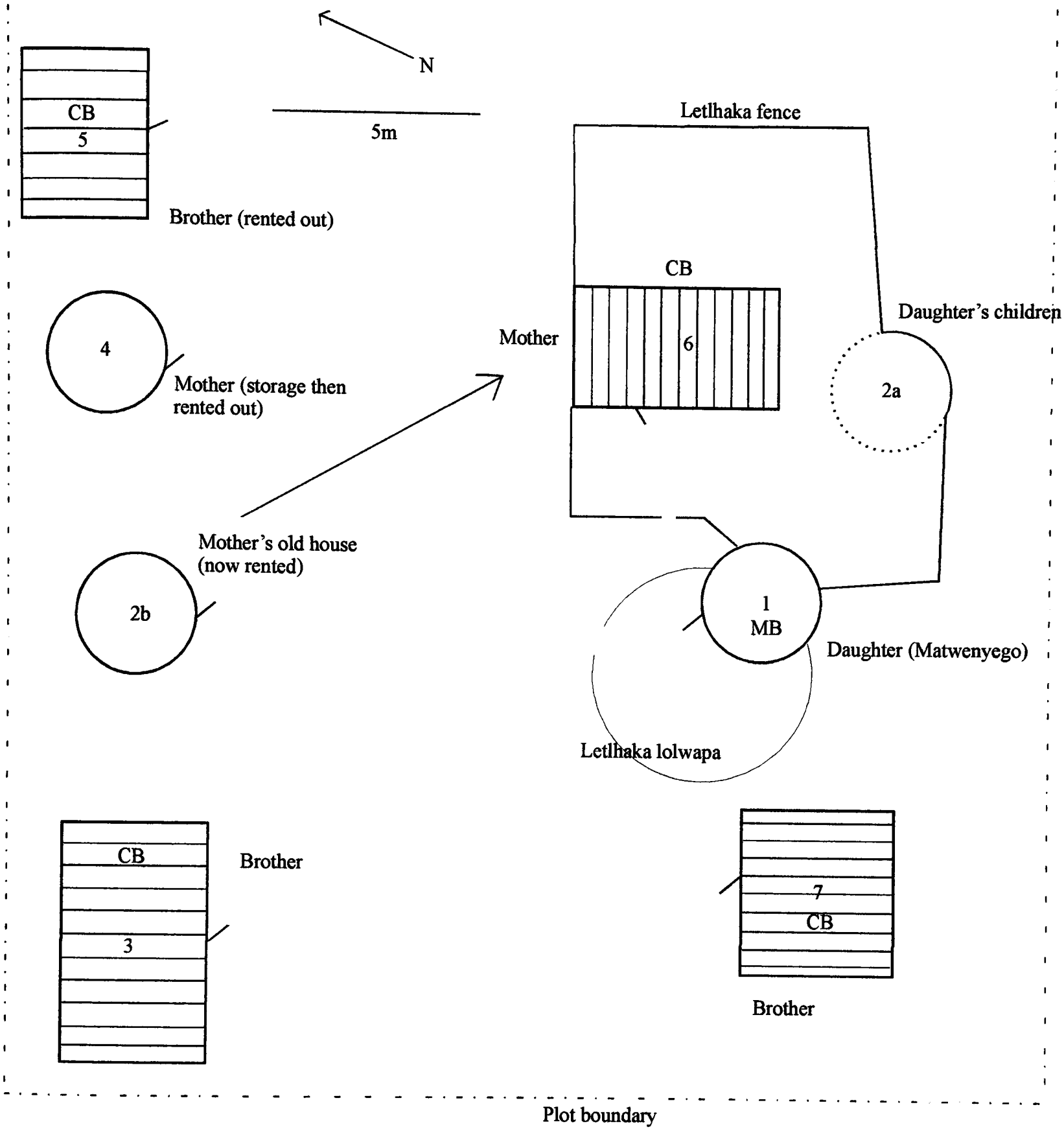
or young children. In most cases people spoke about both the *lolwapa* boundary 'looking after' the enclosed houses and people as well as the people looking after each other, and thereby not just using *go tlhokomela* as a metaphor. The enclosure does indeed 'look after' the houses within it, protecting them from wind and animals, but also brings those within it into close personal relations through dwelling activities. Houses that share a *lolwapa* in this way are considered to be in close caring relations to one another, often a mother with a dependent close relative or children. The establishment of a physical boundary is often highly pragmatic within the context of such care relationships since it enables close communication between people in their everyday activities. As I have argued, such practices of enclosure often disclose to other people the types of dwelling relations between people, not in a highly conscious manner but through shared cultural understanding. For instance, Kenewang Semalomba in Sankuyo village has a brother who is mentally ill, and who lives in a small house next to her own. For her, the enclosure of his house within her *lolwapa* is a practical matter - she can easily physically communicate with his house and he with hers without leaving the *lolwapa*. However, building a house for him within her own *lolwapa* was also an important disclosure of kin obligations, affirming her own role as an individual as caring for a relative - 'everyone knows that I am the one who cares for him since I built his house within my *lolwapa*. There are some whose relatives are not cared for or built for and this is not good'. *Go tlhokomela* (involvement in care provision) is thereby an inherently centripetal force of dwelling, bound-up with building activity and disclosure of meanings within the homestead.

Several other case studies show this process in different ways. In Sanyedi ward (Figure 9.4), Matwenyego related that both her and her brother's children were living behind her house in the family plot (Figure 9.5), but that at some stage she began to visit the family cattle post some



Figure 9.4 Map of part of central Maun. The large rectangular area leaning to the right demarcated in red (tarmac roads) is Sanyedi ward, a ward with a mostly Yei population with strong links to Shorobe region..

Map source: Dept of Surveys and Mapping, Govt of Botswana 1998 (Sheet 0943), based on 1994 aerial photography. Enhanced version of 1:5000 scale map.



igure 9.5 Homestead of Matwenyego Segopelo, Sanyedi ward, Maun. Mother built house 6 with a large *lolwapa* to enclose the house of her daughter's children, in order to look after them.

distance away for longer periods, and so her mother began to look after the children. When this situation became established, the mother built again next to the children's house and enclosed them with a *lolwapa*, *'go ba tlhokomela sentle'* (to look after them properly or well) and her other houses were then rented out. 'She did this since she was the one looking after them and making the *lolwapa* meant that she could do this more easily'. Also in Sanyedi, Thoromo Modua's homestead (Figure 9.6) comprises a relatively large *lolwapa*, which encloses several houses belonging to her children. She has always gone to collect *letlhaka* each year for renewing (*go _afatsa*) the *lolwapa* that encloses the houses of her daughters. 'We wanted a large *letlhaka lolwapa*,' she related, ' because it protects us from other people as well as cars and the wind, as well as meaning that thieves cannot easily steal our possessions. We all work together within the *lolwapa*'. All the houses inside the *lolwapa* were built by her and her three daughters, with two sons yet to build separate houses. The eldest daughter eventually built a 2-room *ntlo ya sekgoa* using cash from a job, which meant moving outside of the family *lolwapa*, yet still within the plot boundary. 'She had to build outside since there was no room inside for a large building. And she is old enough anyway not to need looking after in the *lolwapa*'.

For Thoromo, the *letlhaka* enclosure is a complex yet simple boundary that creates an important domestic centre of care between mother and children. For her, perceptions about protection from external threats is an important dimension of the act of enclosure, which is also interwoven with the practice of renewing and disclosing relations of care between her and her children through travelling to cut materials and re-building a fence again each year. There are complex social processes at work here, based upon past experiences of how care within family relationships are interwoven with material and thereby spatial dimensions of dwelling. For instance, Thoromo related how 'my mother always wove a new *lolwapa* each year, sometimes making it bigger if we needed more room. Daughters and mothers help each other to weave a new fence. We always

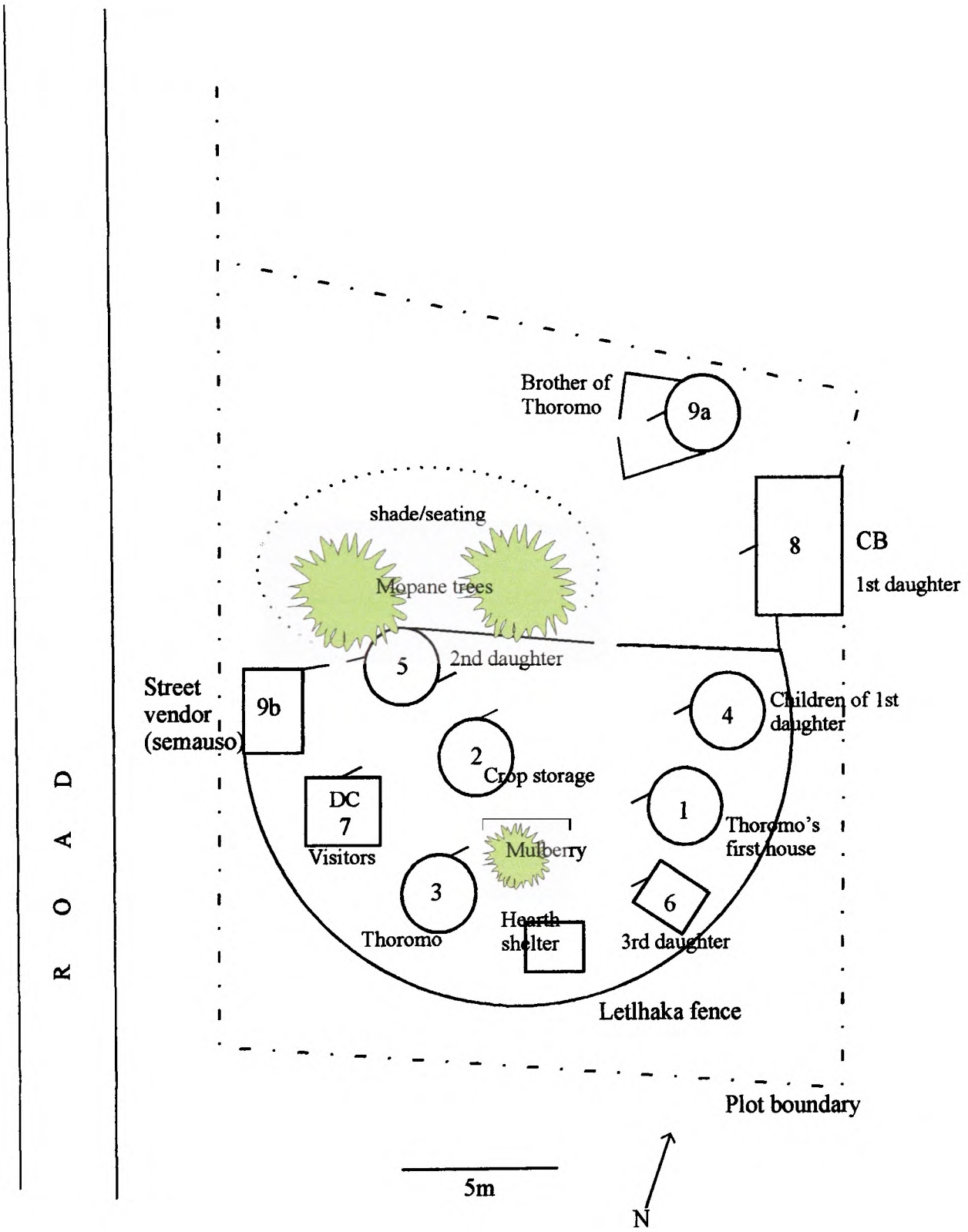


Figure 9.6 Homestead of Thoromo Modua, Sanyedi ward, Maun. The *letlhaka* fence that formerly demarcated the homestead has been bounded by a plot fence, and family members have begun to build in relation to this new boundary.

lived inside our mother's *lolwapa*, and often slept there too'. Following their mother's example, all of Thoromo's daughters had built their own house within the *lolwapa*, whereas her sons had yet to build, and it was her daughters that joined her in the annual journey to collect *letlhaka* and in constructing the perimeter fence. Past experiences of care and collective dwelling activity are bound up with material forms such as the *lolwapa* boundary. This temporal dimension to such building practices suggests how the materiality of the homestead is involved in the production and reproduction of sociality.

A further example of this gendered process of social and material care associated with female groups is shown in the Mositakgong homestead (Figure 9.7). The original homestead included parental house and houses for the eldest son and daughter, all joined together facing a central space. A male cousin came to build near them, eventually moving to another side. The eldest son was ill and burnt down his *letlhaka* hut, and thereafter slept in the open air inside the *lolwapa*, but died soon after. Sometime later the mother became sick and went to another village to be cared for by relatives, but died. Her house wasn't renewed and fell into disrepair. The eldest daughter then re-established a house in this position, building a 1-room *ntlo ya sekgoa*, giving her hut to another sister. Over a period of time the homestead was involved in a gradual renegotiation of homestead positions through building activities, with the eldest sister moving into the position of her mother both spatially and socially - 'us sisters are all together in the *lolwapa* now doing everything like washing and looking after our young children, but I am the only one working and so I have to look after them'. Such examples show how shifts in the dynamic of care and social responsibility is a process in which the various practical, engaged activities of dwelling are transformed over time - the exercise of care and responsibility are disclosed to society at large through practices of physical attention, which importantly includes literally building and enclosing relations between carer and cared-for.

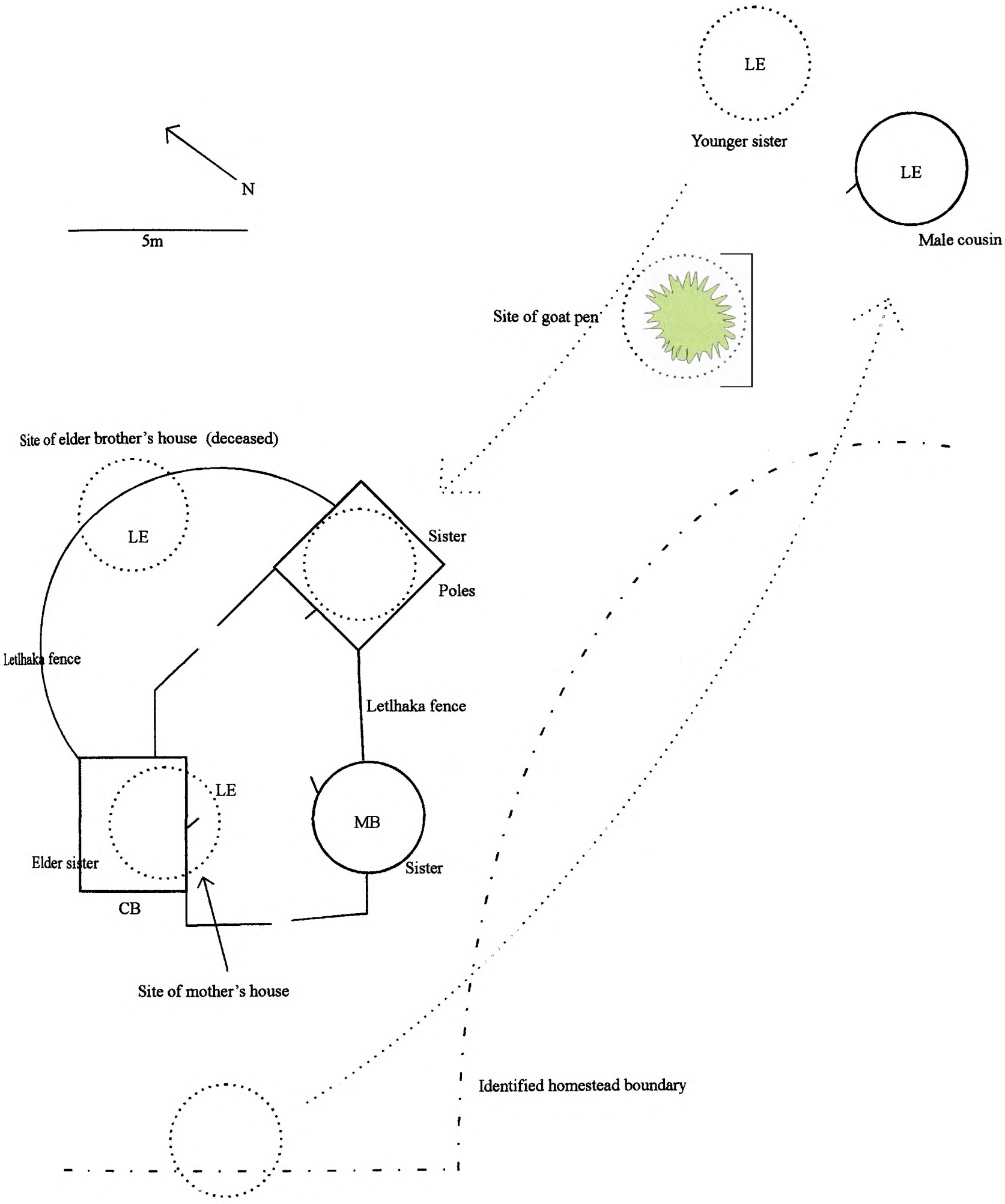


Figure 9.7 Homestead of Kewame Mositakgong, Sanyedi ward, Maun. Original *lolwapa* of mother and three daughters. Elder daughter builds on site of deceased mother's house; younger sister moves in to form enclosure. Male cousin moves from busy path to rear of homestead.

In one homestead in Sanyedi ward belonging to a single male, Robert Tsheko, a process of physical *dis-enclosure* (and thereby a *disclosure* of the house itself) has occurred (Figure 9.8), whereby the previous *letlhaka lolwapa* established by his aunt from whom he inherited the plot, has been only retained on one side along a path, but removed on the other. 'The *lolwapa* reeds were old and I took them out,' he related, 'since I wanted to have an open space in the plot. I didn't join the new buildings together with a *lolwapa* because it would have cost so much'. The *dis-enclosure* of this *lolwapa* was a process in which social and material changes can be seen as interwoven - he rented out the aunt's two *mantlo a setswana* and built himself a 1-room *ntlo ya sekgoa* in the corner of the plot after previously having a tin-roofed *letlhaka* house next to his aunt's house. Whilst Robert's aunt had largely considered the *lolwapa* enclosure as the bounded homestead, Robert himself began to build along the 'plot' boundaries established by the Land Board, since he had hopes of building more rectilinear houses for living and rental in the future. With such a composite household of tenants, the previous *lolwapa* boundary enclosing nuclear family activities were perceived as inappropriate to the relationships of those living in the homestead and so he removed it.

Another homestead biography in Mabudutsa ward highlights how boundedness and centrifugal activities are temporally related in the homestead context. Centrifugal forces are crucially related to both a centre of activity and the tendency away from such a centre, which in the context of dwelling I have described as social activities that involve a dimension of social 'apartness' or separateness which is temporally related to cultural forms. The following example highlights how this dual understanding of centrifugality can be seen as influential in the analysis of homestead form over time. Naraxoh came to Maun to live with her younger and elder sisters, and they all built separate houses within a *letlhaka lolwapa*, all contributing to building and other dwelling activities (Figure 9.9). One time Naroxoh came back from fetching water to find all the reed

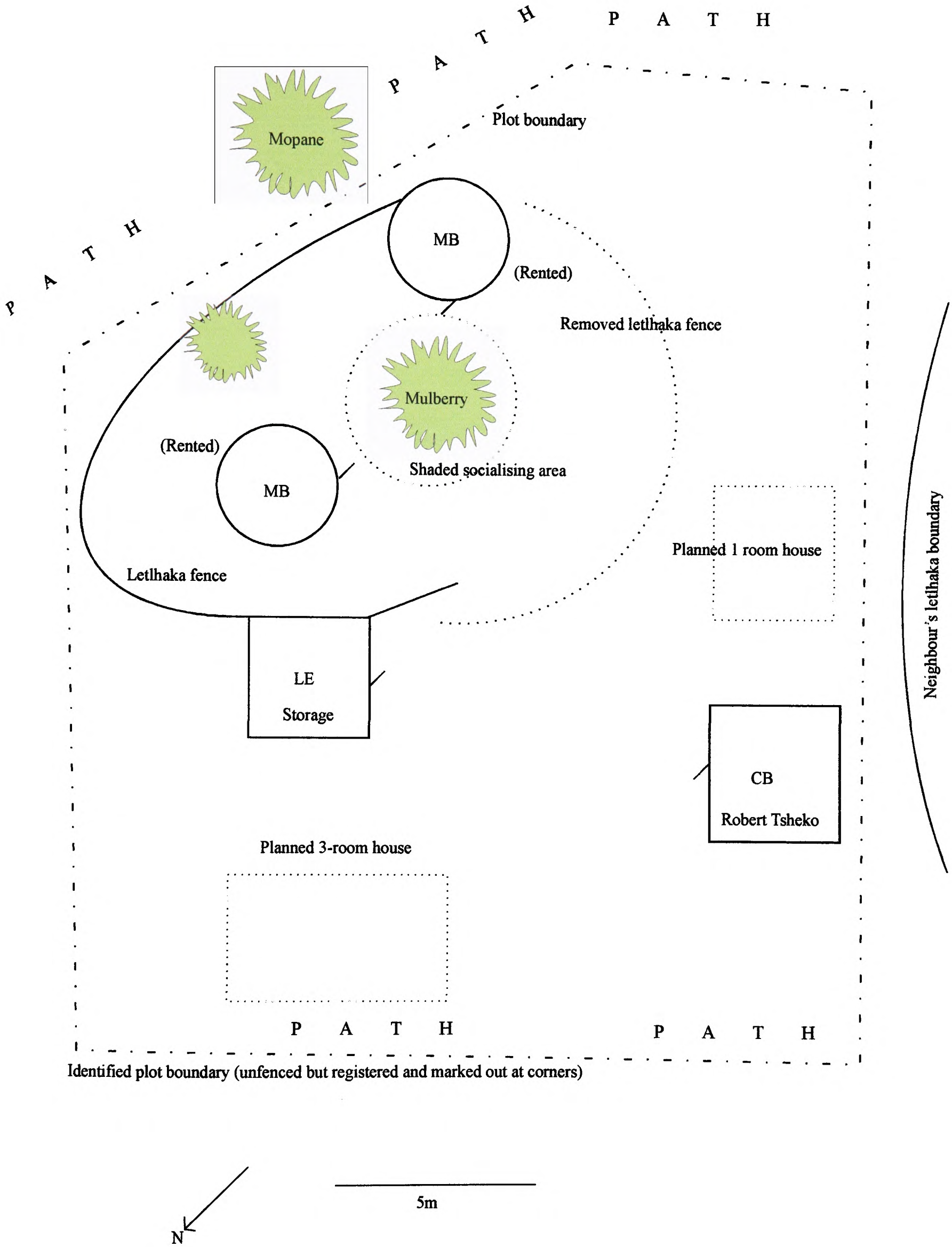


Figure 9.8 Homestead of Robert Tsheko, Sanyedi ward, Maun. Robert removed the lolwapa fence after he inherited the homestead from relatives, renting out some of the houses. He plans to build concrete houses for rental following the rectilinear plot boundary.

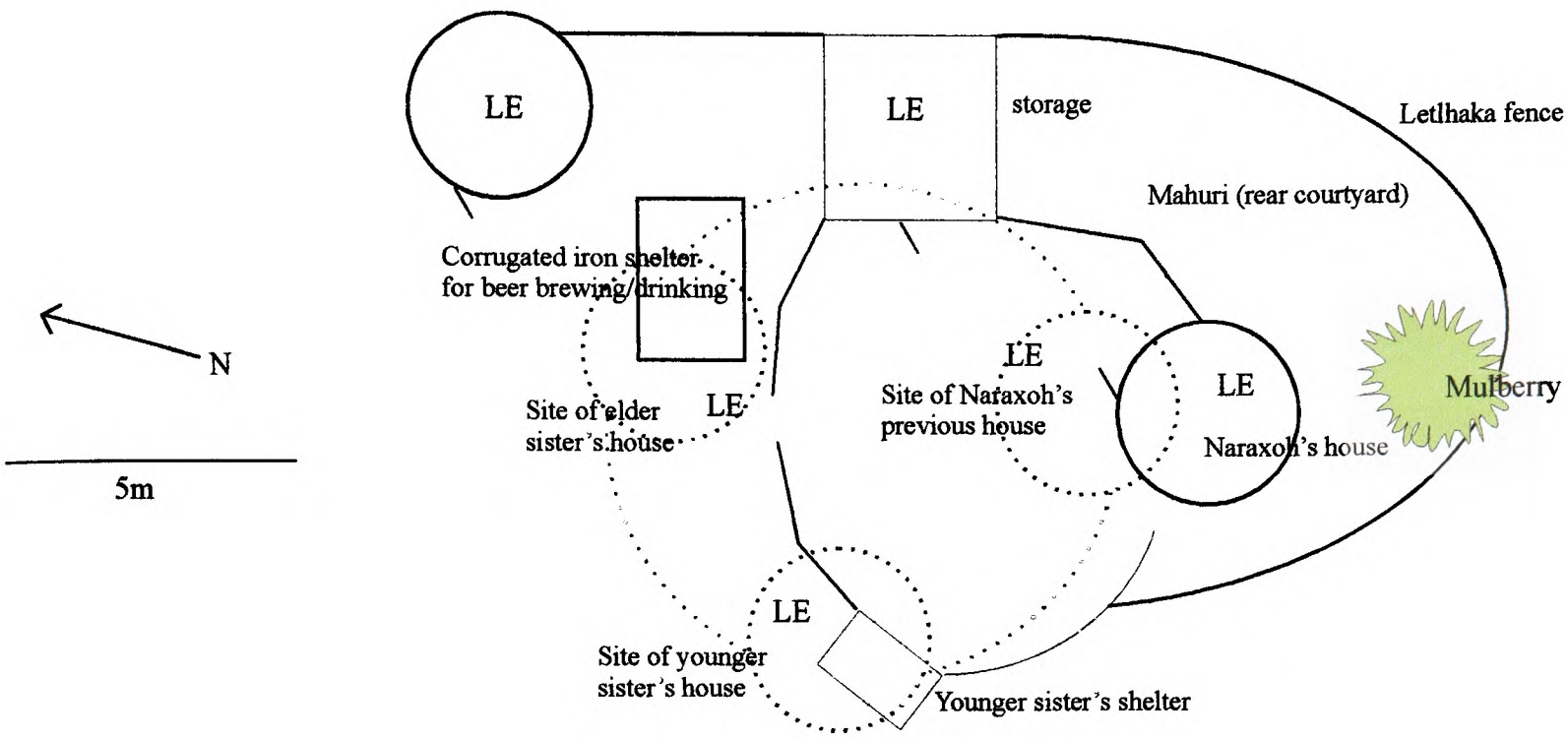


Figure 9.9 Homestead of Naraxoh Mayezi, Mabadutsa ward, Maun. The first homestead was rebuilt by Naraxoh without her sisters and took a different form based on an altered dwelling context in the homestead. The younger sister subsequently erected a small recycled shelter for visiting in a similar position to her old house.

houses on fire. Since her elder sister and younger sisters had begun to spend most of their time living at the fields, renewal of the burnt homestead was a task that Naraxoh faced alone. 'I was selling traditional beer and used this money to buy materials for rebuilding. After the fire I began to consider this homestead to be my own since I was the one who mostly stayed here, bought materials and renewed the *lolwapa*. So after the fire I did not renew all the houses and the large *lolwapa*, but only my own house and a smaller *lolwapa* around it. The younger sister now only has a shelter here for when she visits, not a house at all'. The form of the homestead changed from a larger, enclosing *lolwapa* to one in which Naroxah's house and living area dominates - the younger sister's house is peripheralised to the extent of not even being within or facing into the *lolwapa*. Processes of centrifugality are particularly evident at certain times when the activity of material renewal is undertaken, since this is when constantly renegotiated social relations are made manifest through building activity. The changes in homestead form in this example show how building activity and social relations are temporally interwoven. With the sisters mostly absent, the homestead was not rebuilt as before, but centrifugally around the dwelling activities of Naroxah. Building activity is temporally related to social relations to place. Both presence and absence are important to the temporality of the homestead.

Beyond the lolwapa: the Land Board fence

Thus far I have described how the *lolwapa* for some households (especially in Mabudutsa) constitutes the material boundary of the dwelling site, enclosing and disclosing dwelling relations between houses and people. *Lolwapa* can be used in the sense both of the fence itself, the area it encloses and the social group within it - those who share the activities of the *lolwapa* area. In this section I examine data from Sanyedi ward, where rectilinear Land Board plot boundary fences have been erected around the homestead *lolwapa*. In the previous section I examined how interstices between *malwapa* within Mabudutsa ward can be understood as an important and

dynamic dimension of the boundedness of dwelling over time, being charged with social tension, negotiability and indigenous notions of social understanding (*kutlwano*) and harmony (*kagiso*). The fear of spatial transgression and thereby social opprobrium was certainly evident among many households in Mabudutsa where customary land allocation dominates, who identified areas that could cause dispute if they started building on them. However, in Sanyedi ward, it seems that the process of Land Board plot allocation had altered the way such interstices are perceived, formalising areas of residential land with a rectilinear fence. Importantly however, such plot boundaries are not shared, with at least a gap of a metre between them. This was explained to me by the Tawana Land Board as allowing access around residential plots, but should also be understood within a context of continuity of past practices in which boundaries are only shared with close relatives. What is more, rectilinear plot boundaries have altered perceptions of the boundedness of dwelling sites in complex ways over time, which has altered building practices within homesteads.

Plots are allocated by the Land Boards in Botswana in the name of individuals, often through the Chief's Representative (*kgosana*, headman) in a ward. There is no systematic laying out of plots in Maun - most migrants look for a suitable place to settle, and the Land Board later come to mark out a rectilinear plot boundary, showing them the corners, no larger than 70m by 70m (it is smaller than this in Southern towns). The plot holders are then told that they must fence the plot within a period of six weeks to avoid double allocations, and to develop it with some structures for residence within five years. In wards such as Mabudutsa, the registering of plot areas around homesteads has been patchy, whereas in Sanyedi most homesteads are fenced in rectilinear plots. In chapter six I suggested a strong correlation between building with concrete and the registering of plots, since security of tenure arguably provides a context of possession of land in which cash investment in building can take place. Here however I want to examine how centrifugal and

centripetal forces are involved in the transformation of building practices and homestead morphology over time in response to the Land Board plot boundary fence.

Njiro Sakutcha (Figure 9.10)

Njiro established her homestead with her husband many years ago, coming from the central Okavango delta area. At first they built a *letlhaka* house (1a) for themselves, and later (1b) another for their children to sleep in, with another (1c) eventually built to replace the first. The spatial dynamic within the homestead has changed considerably over time, 'since at first we were three houses in one corner right next to the path, but now we are behind that area mostly, and tenants are where we were before'. Njiro remembers that her and her husband identified the area behind their houses as somewhere that their children could build in the future, 'we left a space behind rather than in front because people were not likely to build there behind us'. She explained that this was due to a perception that the area behind the houses was part of the homestead, used for domestic activities. The second generation of buildings was begun with both sons building houses (one a large *ntlo ya sekgoa*) and then a daughter and maternal grandmother, in an arc in the back area. As this pattern developed, the mother also moved from what had now become a central building facing away from the children into this arc of buildings. This second generation of buildings however clearly respects a wire fence in the south east corner which was erected after the plot was registered with the Land Board, yet to the north and north west the boundary is perceived as a public path. 'People have been using this path for many years and so we consider it our boundary. There would be disputes with neighbours if someone just started building where a path has always been'. Long-established paths can become perceived as boundaries, and in this case complements a more formal plot demarcation in another part of the plot. Over time, the homestead has been transformed through building activity from a first generation to second generation area corresponding to two arcs of buildings at the 'front' and 'back' of the plot. There has also been a

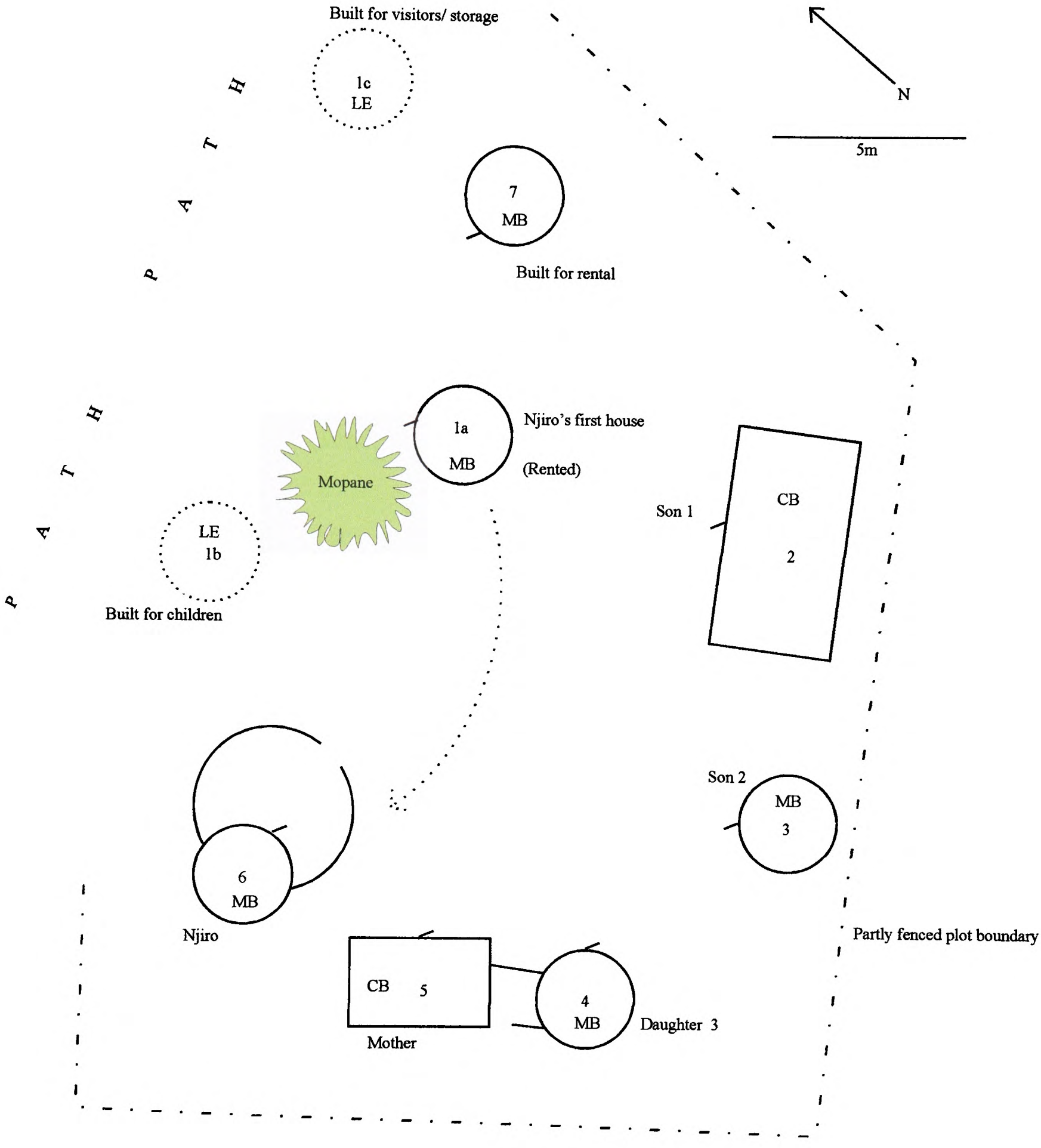


Figure 9.10 Homestead of Njiro Sakutcha, Sanyedi ward, Maun. The first generation of houses left a large back area where the second generation subsequently built. The remaining first generation house is now rented out, and the parents moved toward the back with the second generation.

process of re-centring of social activities between these two areas which has led to the mother moving into the children's (*lefelo la bana*) arc behind and renting out the first generation houses. This sort of generational process is centrifugal in its effect upon homestead morphology over time, with a movement away from the centre towards a back area. However, the process of re-centring of domestic activity over time from the first generation of houses to the second built in the back area, highlights how centripetal activities tend to provide a tension between such movement away and drawing together as part of dwelling over time.

Koi Kadisa (Figure 9.11)

Koi's homestead was discussed in chapter six and was quite an important visiting place in Sanyedi ward during April and May 2000 since my field assistant had struck up a relationship with one of Koi's grand-daughters whom he had met during our first visit. Koi established her homestead around 1960 not far from her parental homestead in Maun. She has built continuously in the same *lolwapa* over the years, forming a group of four structures, two of which she built for her children, one of which is now for storage and another a fire hut (*ntlo ya moleelo*) for the rainy season, joined by a *letlhaka* fence. 'This *lolwapa* was our plot then, just this fence and the small area right around it. But sometime in the 1970s we went to the Land Board and they measured a plot of land around the *lolwapa*'. Later her working children paid to build an *ntlo ya sekgoa* within this boundary for her to live in, but it is now used by grandchildren who are schooling. 'The new fence changed the way we built, since we had to build in a square around the *lolwapa* rather than where we felt like building. But the *lolwapa* is still at the centre of my plot'. She here implies that the process of establishing rectilinear boundaries of land brought about perceptual as well as practical changes in building activities for her and her family. She is also suggesting that this boundary has had a centrifugal effect upon the homestead (buildings now built away from the central *lolwapa* towards the boundary) as well as suggesting that the domestic activities of the *lolwapa* remain a centripetal

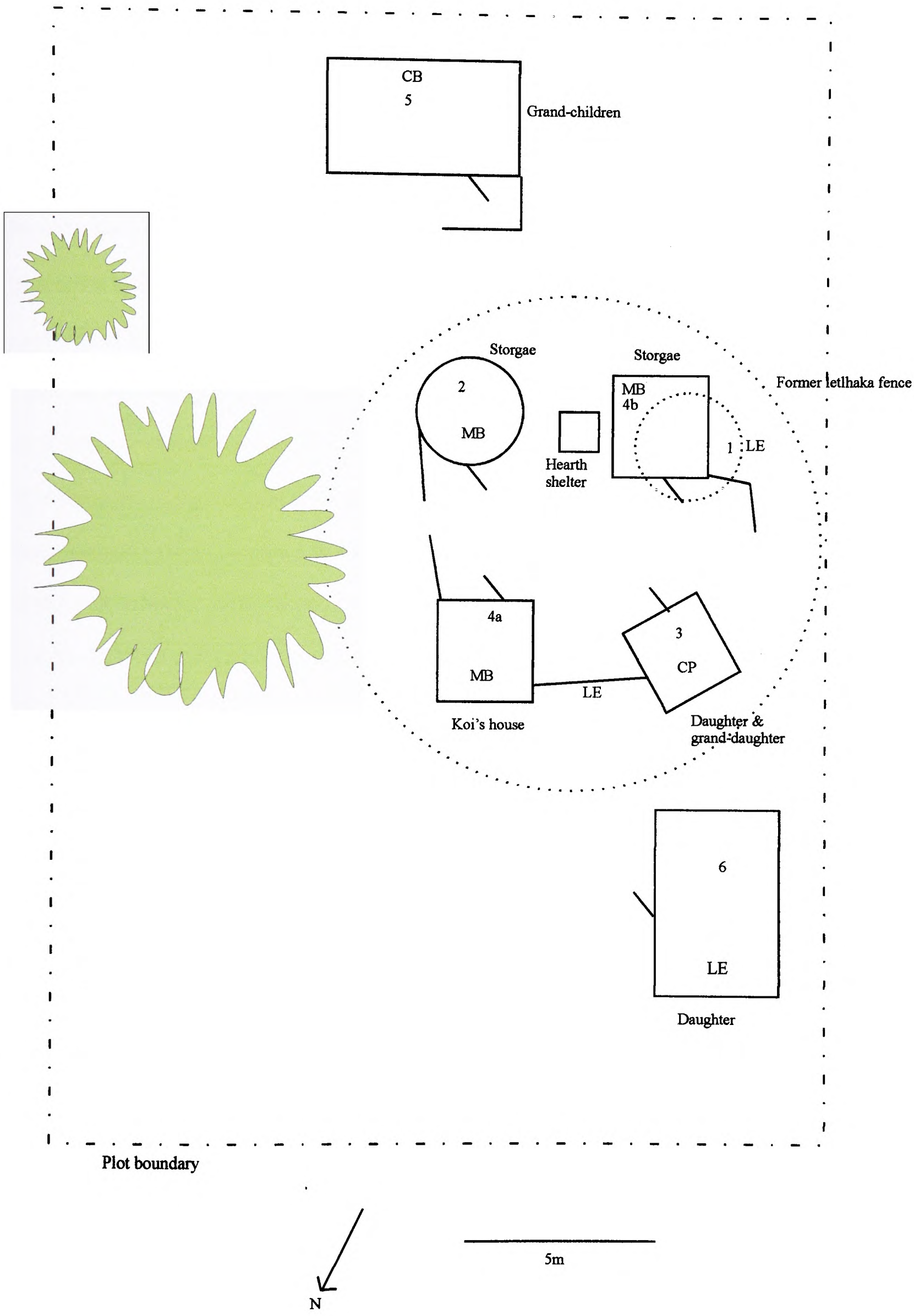


Figure 9.11 Homestead of Koi Kadisa, Sanyedi ward, Maun. The earlier *lolwapa* has remained intact centred around Koi's house, yet her children have built externally in relation to the new plot boundary fence.

force for dwelling (which she expresses as resistance to the effects of the new boundary). The new boundary is perceived as exerting an influence on the homestead, pulling it away from the *lolwapa* toward the boundary. Koi is resistant to the notion that the Land Board fence is influential in this way, yet realises that her own *lolwapa* now exists in a differing spatial context than before. Previously, the *lolwapa* existed in a socially negotiable set of interstitial relations with neighbouring homesteads, but did not occupy a position with relation to an area of 'land' perceived as a residential area. "In a way,' she related, 'they were telling us that you cannot build outside of this line, but anywhere inside it. They wanted to make everything square because that is the shape of metal fences, whereas *letlhaka* fences are never square'. Koi ascribes the rectilinear style of Land Board plots to the material properties of metal fencing rather than processes of plot rationalisation, a perception drawn from her practical experience of materials and fence making. After the establishment of the fence 'my *lolwapa* was in the middle with all this empty space around it'. This last perception is important as it shows how the material process of boundary creation is involved in creating perceptions of dwelling space, but also indicates something of how Koi perceived her dwelling area before enclosure - having meaningful interrelations with other homesteads (especially kin-based spatial connections) but not fixed in a way that formalises such interrelations.

Ketlhogile Yarae (Figure 9.12)

The first generation of buildings in this plot was a *lolwapa* containing three houses (south west corner of plot), which preceded the demarcation of the Land Board plot, and are still used by Ketlhogile's brothers. When the plot was laid out, Ketlhogile's mother's cousins came and built at the northern end of the plot, using a separate entrance in the fence. Later, in 1991 and 1993, Ketlhogile used cash earned in employment to build two 2-room concrete houses around the south east corner of the plot, with plenty of 'back' area between the buildings and the fence. 'I put these

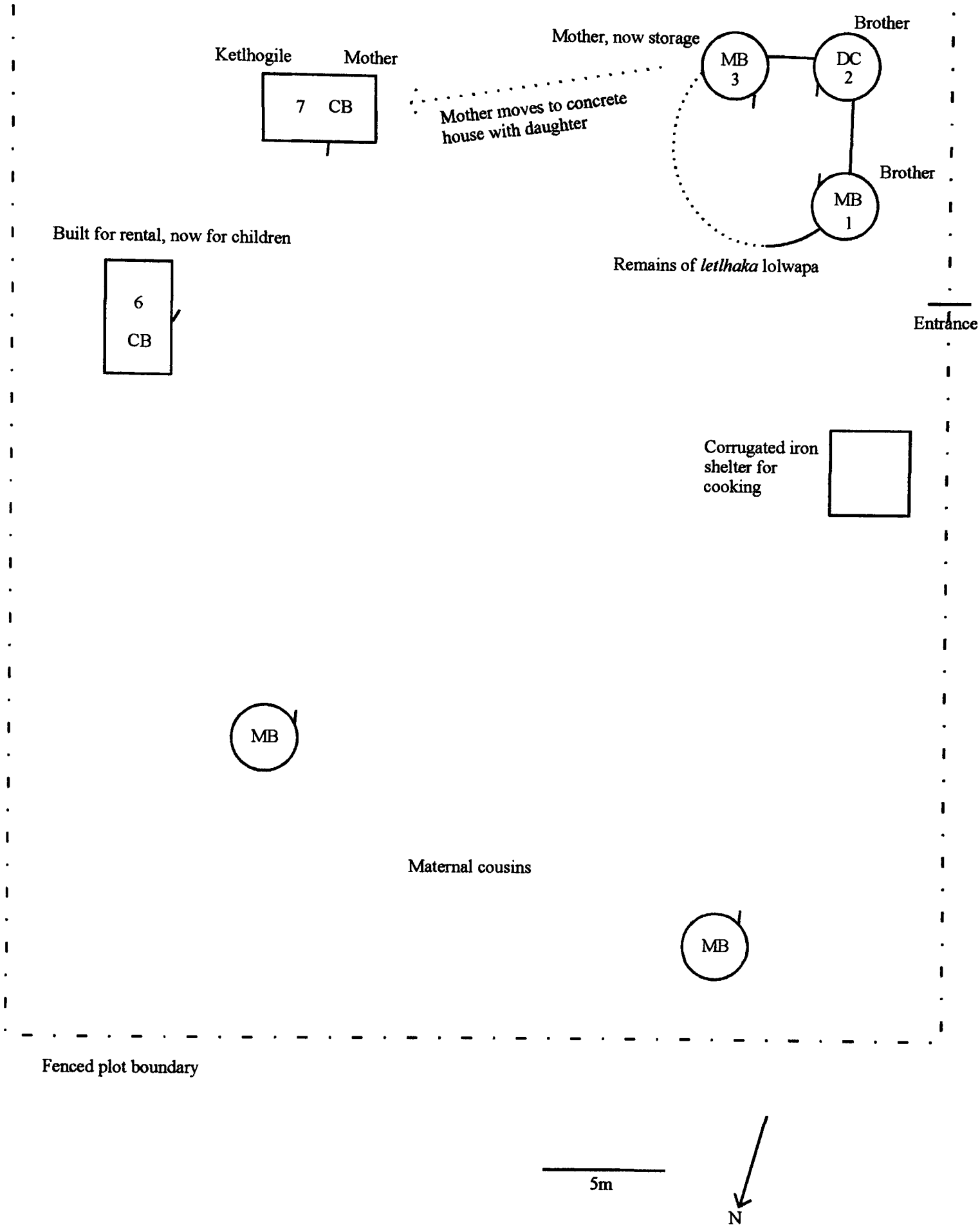


Figure 9.12 Homestead of Ketlhogile Yarae, Sanyedi ward, Maun. Remains of original *lolwapa* in corner of plot is visible, although gradually not being replaced. After the erection of a Land Board plot fence, subsequent building activity has expanded in relation to this new boundary, with the new concrete buildings respecting the rectilinear boundary in particular.

new houses facing the centre of the plot,' she stated, 'so that we can easily see each other and have a central area for various activities. It is important to have a large central area when people come to a wedding or *leso* (a period of visiting a deceased person's family plot). We started building like this after the plot area was measured and fenced, since before we didn't know how big the plot was'. These sorts of statements evince a complex perceptual relationship between material boundaries and building practices within the homestead over time. As discussed earlier, such notions of boundedness within the customary village ward involve understandings about interstices and interrelationships between homesteads which inform building practices within separate homesteads. When material boundaries are formalised through Land Board fences, some people claim to perceive for the first time the real dimensions of their homestead, implying that such boundedness was a latent or emerging social dimension of place rather than an abstract creation of a formal fence.

The establishment of a circular dwelling form where all houses communicate with a central social area has as much to do with practices of front/back relations as establishing collective areas of activity, since the circular shape enables each house's front areas to be in communication, leaving the back areas private. Concern with front and back areas is often evident even in homesteads in Maun where many activities are done within the house rather than in a *lolwapa* at the front or a *mahuri* to the rear. In particular this concern is evident in the avoidance of building in front of another house, or thereby being in some other way in a 'back' relationship to another house. This concern with orientation is arguably closely interwoven with cultural practices of bodily comportment and orientation, and suggests a parallel between the spatial positioning of houses in a plot and the arrangement of persons at social gatherings, which often takes the form of a rough circle to avoid such back relations. The following table is an attempt to think through some of these relations between house orientation and social bodies.

Houses	Persons
Doors communicate	Facial communication (positive)
House behind or turned away from another	Turning back upon someone (negative)
Lolwapa area	Socialisation and interaction
Mahuri area	personal activities (e.g. toilet)
Surrounding central public area	Social or formal gathering (*kgotla*)
Joined by *lolwapa* or sharing close activity area	Dependent or care relationship

Table 4 Front and back relations of houses and persons

Whilst presenting connections in this way is clarifying in one way, my argument really centres upon how such relations between bodily comportment and building activity unfold over time, and is a temporal dimension of the homestead rather than a set of relatively static spatial concerns. A good example of this sort of process came from a visit to the village of Sankuyo in the eastern delta area, where I spent some weeks staying with (Subiya) relatives of my field assistant. The village itself is roughly linear along an escarpment where water standpipes had been positioned, with homesteads forming rough lines or arcs in one direction with small fields behind, in order that crops were better protected from elephants. In one homestead, that of Dikeledi Sinvula (Figure 9.13), three of her daughters had built their houses to the right and another, the youngest, to the left. 'After that my two sons began to build *behind* two of them', she related, 'and they found themselves in *front* of two houses. The sons built behind them and said "we built behind since the line of houses should follow the edge of the field (*ke gone ka fa go tshwanetseng go agiwa ka teng*), and that is where our sisters should have built" '. After the sons had finished their houses they told the daughters that they should take their houses down and move since they had built them in the centre (*fa gare ga jarata*) of the plot rather than along the edge. Since the new houses now faced the back of the sister's houses, they abandoned these houses and began to build again, one to the left and one to the right in the line. One of the sisters stated that 'we felt uncomfortable

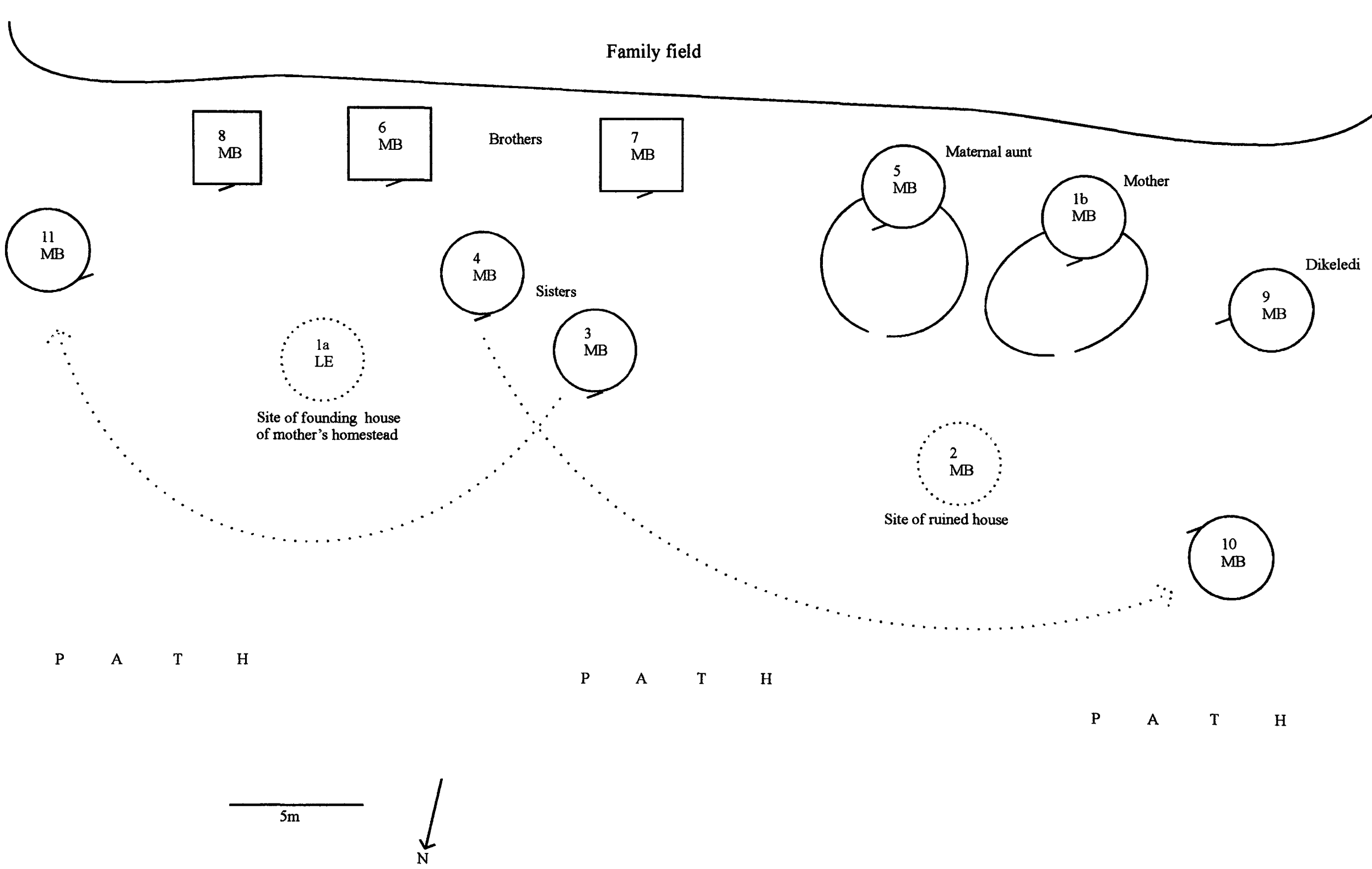


Figure 9.13 Homestead of Dikeledi Sinvula, Sankuyo village, Eastern Okavango Delta. Two sons (buildings 6&7) built behind two sisters (buildings 3&4). The brothers stated that the sisters had not built in a line in relation to the field boundary as they should have. With houses now directly behind them the sisters felt 'uncomfortable', and were forced to rebuild at the edges of the line.

(*botlhogole*) and as though we couldn't live there easily at all because they had built behind us'. The word they used, *botlhogole*, is often translated as *awkwardness* (Matumo 1993), which also suggests the sense in which house and bodily comportment are mutually interwoven aspects of dwelling - bodily awkwardness with the tasks of dwelling can be brought about by perceptions of awkward or inappropriate spatial relations in the homestead.

It is interesting to note that whilst I perceived houses as arranged in arcs or rough circles, people mostly talked of them as a line of houses, that happened to form an arc or circle, sometimes perceived as due to a lack of space. This was somewhat borne out in remoter settlements such as Sankuyo where houses are often built in a line rather than arc or circle. If we take this understanding of a line of houses within plots in Maun, this reinforces an understanding that front/back relations are of equal if not more importance than the establishment of spatial 'centres' through building in an arc or circle. It is also interesting to note that in Dikeledi's homestead in Sankuyo, the boundedness of the homestead that oriented and ordered the sons' building activity was the fenced field boundary behind the homestead. This boundary suggested to the sons that their sisters had built in a central position rather than in a line, and that their building activity should 'correct' and straighten the line in response. This perception is further strengthened through various practices associated with the small fields as being 'back' areas, or 'gardens' (*tshingwana*) that are distinct from fields (*tshimo*) that are mostly in front of homesteads in the lower channels.

In some homesteads the rear garden area or *tshingwana* is an extension of the rear courtyard (*mahuri*) - one woman described that in order to increase their garden crops they stopped using their *mahuri* (where her mother was buried) and began to do domestic things in the front *lolwapa* instead. With the *thsingwana* forming a 'back' area of the homestead, Dikeledi's sons considered their building activity as re-aligning 'proper' relations between houses and boundaries - in the same

way that people adjust themselves bodily in response to the proximity of other people, through systems of incorporated behaviour learnt through practice in a given cultural milieu. The realigning of spatial relations within the homestead brought about by the sons building behind the daughters has less to do with cultural designs or blueprints for homestead layout than with how bodies and houses respond to shifts in relational positions over time. An argument could be made that physically incorporated structures such as that identified by Bourdieu as 'doxa' or embodied habitus, are often deployed in spatial relations, and especially in relations between houses within the dwelling site.

The concern with front/back relations is also evinced in social situations in which turning one's back on someone (*go fulara*) is taken as a strong statement of disrespect. It is also metaphorically taken to mean abandoning or not returning to someone or something, and as such sometimes euphemistically applied to an elderly person who has died. An important gesture in debate if one is dissatisfied with somebody or to show strong disagreement is to turn the back. Preston Blier notes of the Batammaliba of Togo:

'the front of the house is identified in many ways with one's public position in the community.. the back of the house, in contrast, is identified with anti-social values and related ideas of disorder, malevolence and death. Accordingly no windows or doors give access to this part of the structure.. In anatomy the back is similarly identified with death and potential danger... complementary traditions link the back with ideas of moral turpitude. Turning one's back on someone needing aid is a serious moral offence (*cala*). To talk behind someone's back or to do something behind a friend or family member is also a serious *cala*' (Preston Blier 1989:350).

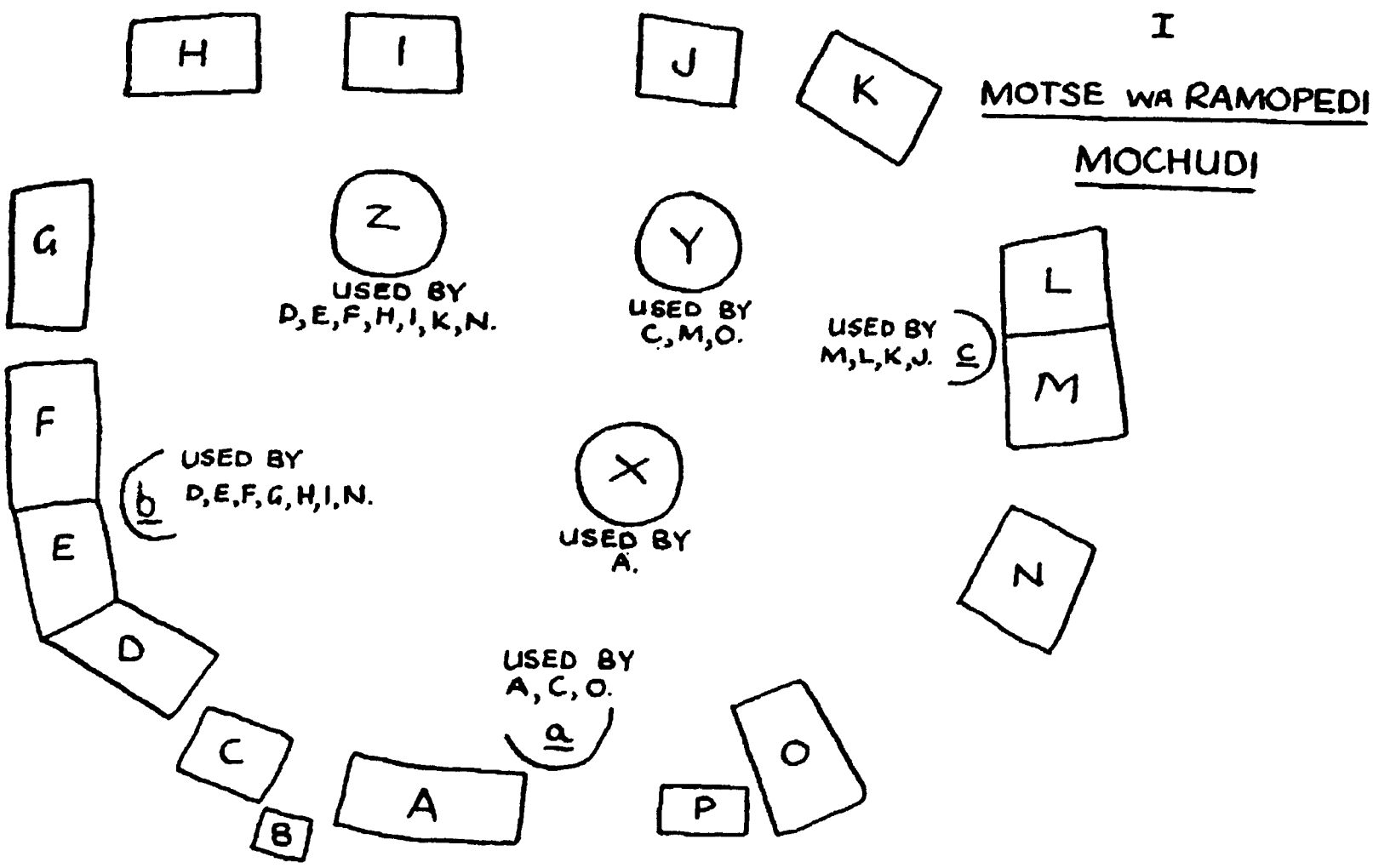
Front/back relations are integral to bodily comportment in terms of respect, attention and interaction that are inverted or realigned through the practice of turning away from another person or group, witnessable during debate or argument at social gatherings in Botswana. This is enough

to suggest, I argue, a common contextual background between the comportments of bodies and houses, especially when it comes to what feels 'right' or 'proper' based upon embodied spatial practices, and one that future research may find fruitful.

Such concerns with front and back meant that Ketlogile Yarae built in a different way after the Land Board fence was erected - the new houses to the right of the old *lolwapa* are some distance away and are built with a back area close to the new fence. Such front/back concerns are centrifugal in the way they influence building activity. This is shown in the way buildings move outwards toward the new boundary in order to present front areas and preserve back areas. This centrifugal influence is crucially related to how houses, back areas and boundaries are culturally interrelated, which has been analysed in this section in relation to cultural experiences of the comportment of the body. With a dynamic influence upon houses towards the boundary in order to present front areas, a large central area is often present in many Land Board plots, which is often described as an area for large social gatherings. Such central gathering areas are not evident in Yei settlement experience yet may be related to Tswana practices of ward organisation. Schapera notes about Rampedi ward in Mochudi that:

'the ward settlement is roughly circular in shape. The sixteen homesteads of which it is composed are distributed round the circumference.. In the centre of the ward is a large open space, in which its public affairs and entertainments are conducted. On this open space have been erected three cattle-pens in which draft oxen and other cattle that may be at home are kept at night.. [and three meeting places which] serve mainly as convenient places of assembly where the men of the ward foregather in the early morning or late afternoon round the fireplace and discuss their affairs' (Schapera 1972:95).

As Schapera notes, residence in such wards was bound up with close kin relations to a headman through the male line. In his example (Figure 9.14) houses are 'distributed around the circumference' of the ward - the word circumference implying that a perceived boundary existed,



Key:

Homestead

Meeting area (kgotla)

Cattle pen

A Headman

Figure 9.14 Schematic plan of Rampedi [Ramopedi] ward, Mochudi, as recorded by Isaac Schapera in 1934.

Source: Schapera, Isaac: 1972 (1935) African Studies 31.2. P97.

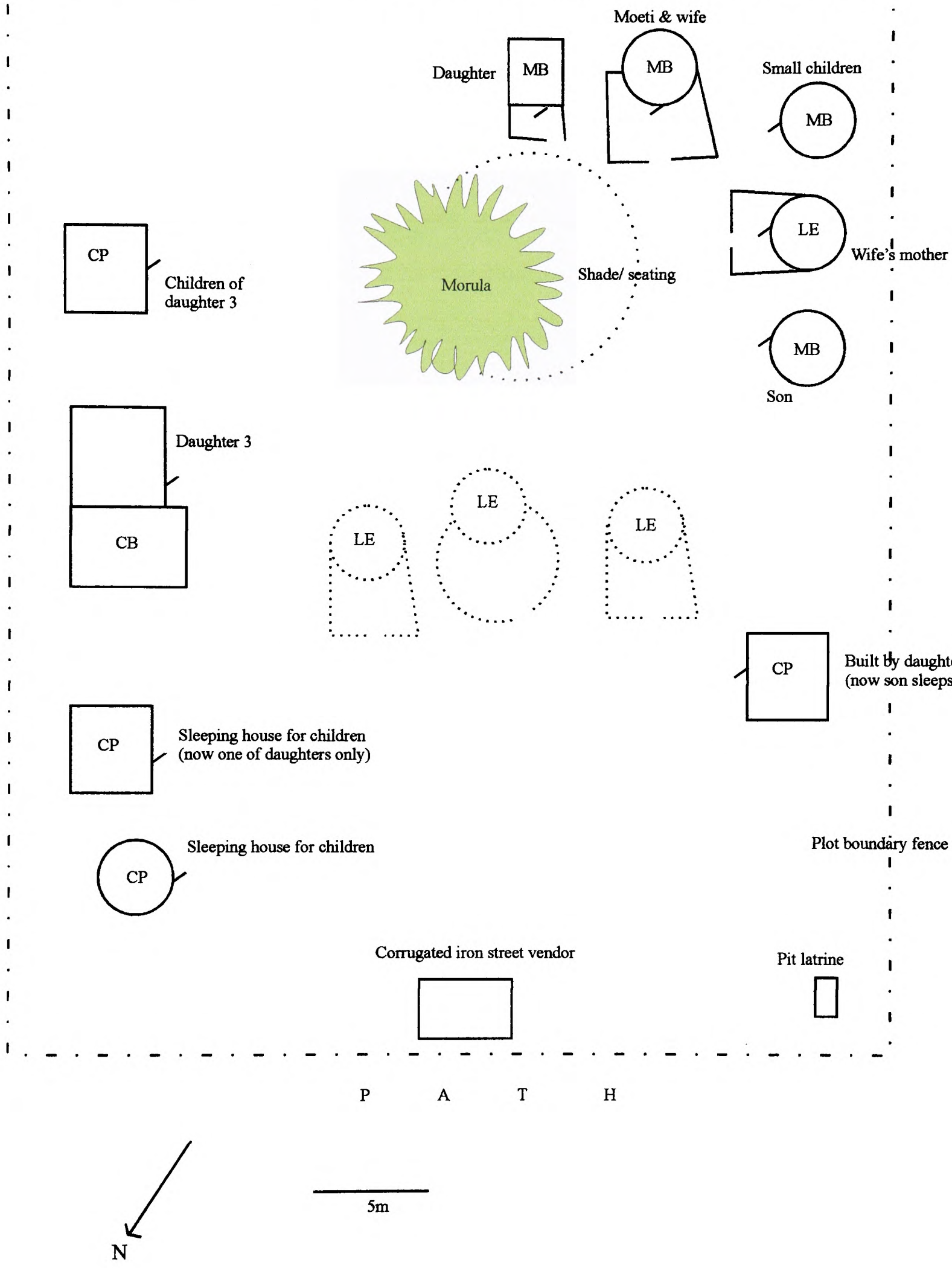


Figure 9.15 Homestead of Moeti Motho, Sanyedi ward, Maun. Originally, Moeti settled next to a large Morula tree and built three letlhaka houses. After the erection of the Land Board boundary fence, the homestead expanded with the second generation building in relation to this dwelling boundary.

down, the children played with fire in the *lolwapa*!' In the early 1970s Moeti responded to radio announcements concerning the establishment of Land Boards and the plot was fenced. 'The second generation (*tshika kana losika ya dikgago ya bobedi*) of buildings began to follow the boundary made by the new fence - where they showed us the corners of the plot'. The term *tshika* or *losika* for 'generation' in Moeti's utterance refers to veins or arteries and flesh (especially sinew) and hence progeny or generations within families. Moeti introduces the term as a metaphor of how buildings and the growth of families are linked over time. In the context of buildings it also stresses a close physical and temporal continuity in the materiality of the homestead, with buildings often being generationally related to each other through re-use of materials (such as rafters and roof supports) over time - hence the extended metaphor of sinews and veins reaching out through the family across generations. This generational notion of building activity is not only interesting in the way houses are perceived within the temporal dwelling site, but is also important in terms of the spatial comportment of houses and bodies already discussed. In particular many Yei people argued that a youngest child should build nearest the mother, and the eldest furthest away, since the youngest would look after the older generation. For some Yei families children build either to the left or to the right of the house of the household head. Elder relatives also tend to build closer to or within the *lolwapa* of the household head. The understanding of generation is thereby something that is a meaningful aspect of everyday spatial interaction as well as temporal relations.

'When the new fence was made' Moeti stated, 'I saw that this was the area where our family was to build in the future, and that it would be better for us to build around the outside in a line to allow room for the children'. This statement suggests how radically the new fence shifted Moeti's perception of the homestead - as containing and limiting future building activity within its boundary - indeed, the notion of boundedness expresses the sort of perceptual shift experienced by many people. The fence boundary had defined building activity quite explicitly for Moeti ('there

were corners and gates for entering') whereas before building practice was guided by relations between other homesteads ('now they have their fence and we have ours and there is a gap between'). One of the policies of the Land Boards was to avoid shared boundaries and to provide access between each plot. This practice reflects a general cultural undesirability of shared boundaries in Botswana due to the potential for dispute over the responsibility for and usage of fences. In Maun after the rains have come, most households set to work laboriously weeding their sandy plots of grasses for fear of snakes, but will not touch areas outside the plot. The plot is *not* perceived by people merely as an abstract demarcation of residential land belonging to them - perceptually it defines 'inside' and 'outside' the homestead (*jarata*) through its material presence. The case studies discussed here have suggested that material boundaries have a considerable impact on the perception of space in settlements. In the context of the homestead the Land Board fence meant that people began to perceive space *within* a plot rather than *between* other homesteads and neighbours. Suddenly people were presented with a boundedness to their building activities and relations, and thereby centres - centres which came to be understood as inherently collective or social arenas.

Baithute Makgata (Figure 9.16)

'There were five *letlhaka* houses that I remember when I was young for us children and my parents, but they weren't joined together within a *lolwapa*. We were living together here with that *morula* tree as a shade. A long time ago there was no fence around us, but after the death of my father this is when we fenced it, after the Land Board started measuring plots. After that we had a sense of space (*re utlwile phata*) around us - before then we didn't know the size of the plot. After the fence was put up we began to build around the edges of it, with the daughters building first to the west and then the sons building in the space to the east side of the plot'. This sort of account shows how the materiality of one set of social activities (erecting a plot fence) effects changes not only to

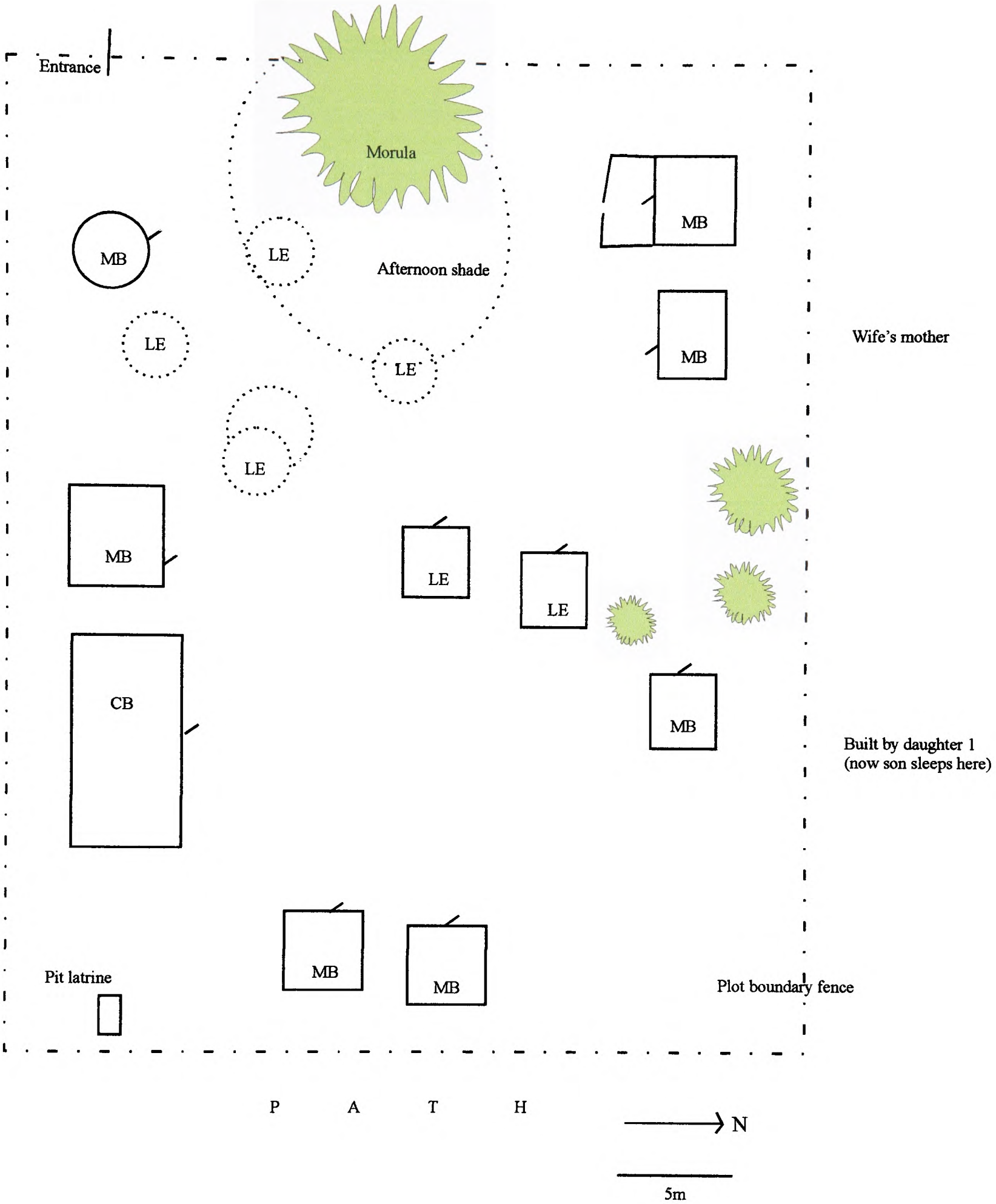


Figure 9.16 Homestead of Baithute Makgata, Sanyedi ward, Maun. The first generation of *letlhaka* buildings were built close to a large Morula tree (the fruit are eaten, but not by all). After the erection of the Land Board fence, the homestead has expanded outwards in relation to the fence and the establishment of front and back areas.

perceptions about place (marking out of plot within the ward), but also to social relations. In the case of Baithute's family, the plot was marked out around the pre-existing houses with space to both west and east, thereby establishing these houses in a relatively central plot position. There is some evidence to suggest that Baithute suggested this to the Land Board, since he wanted to keep the *morula* tree in the plot, and with a path just beyond it this meant the plot had to extend eastwards.

As Baithute suggested, the pre-fenced homestead had no perceptually central or peripheral areas, and if building activity was structured around anything it was the shade of the *morula* tree. Fencing gave them a feeling or sense of space (*phata*) that was not perceptually part of the earlier homestead, since it introduced a perceptual boundedness to dwelling through its very materiality. One close neighbour, Koi Motlalepula, related that 'when I began to build my children's houses some neighbours quarrelled over where I was building, saying it was too close to their path, and so I didn't build there for some time. However, in 1981 the Land Board measured the plot and I fenced it up to the path and then began to build my children's houses there anyway'. The word used for this sort of spatial perception is again *phata*, which derives its meaning from a perception of the space between things, such as people or objects, and not as in the abstract sense of openness. A closely related word, *phatlha*, also refers to physical gaps such as between trees, within hedges, walls etc., but these words are pronounced very similarly in Ngamiland (commonly, an 'l' after another consonant is not pronounced in Ngamiland). A 'feeling' (*utlwa*) of space as related by Baithute is a sense of the relations between material things, in this case fence lines, but is also concerned with the gaps between houses, between houses and fence etc. Perceptually, this boundedness does more than establish perceptions of internal space - it is creative of external space also. The areas surrounding homesteads were once socially negotiable and fluid dimensions of dwelling - social and spatial interstices filled with temporal tension. Areas between Land Board

plots do not resemble such interstices - they are external to dwelling rather than interstitial and integral - they are commonly areas of waste material and stray animals, sure signs of their diminution of status in the context of place.

In parts of Mabudutsa people complain *'go kgotlhaganye mono, ga gona phata'* (it is crowded here, there's no space) - *phata* can thereby also be a set of perceptual dwelling relations between homesteads as discussed earlier with regard to interstices within wards. *Phata* as an aspect of dwelling relations in a place is a complex of prior and present dwelling practices, with those recent migrants from remote areas talking most about *go kgotlaganye* or being crowded together, as well as those who have lived through material changes in their ward. For others, *phata* is an aspect of making social activities possible, it is space as bodily gesturing - both created by and making possible the activities of dwelling in a place. In order for Baithute to make mud bricks in his plot he needs an area of space to lay them out to dry - such *phata* or space is in some way created by the activity in a place, and establishes networks of activity that have perceptual implications as much as material constructions.

One theme that has emerged through these case studies has been that of a social geometry of dwelling - that spatial relations within places are often conceived of through social practice as well as through material boundaries and interstices. The notion of a social geometry is integral to the centrifugality and centripetality of dwelling that I discussed earlier. Certain practices and activities are spatially expansive through an engagement with the task at hand, and others are relatively compressed, conjoined and entangled. To get a better understanding of this social geometry it is necessary to recast centre/periphery relations as front/back relations, as I have earlier argued. In Baithute's homestead, areas of expansive activity such as drying mud bricks, threshing grain, storing wood and building materials and digging a large pit for burning refuse are all done just

within the boundary of the homestead, and are perceived as 'back' areas activities. Many other tasks take place in the socially 'front' central area, such as cooking, socialising with guests, sorting gathered or purchased foodstuffs, weaving baskets, washing clothing and caring for young children. Drying clothes are often placed on lines at the back of houses or along the Land Board fence.

This unfolding relationship between place, spatiality and social practice is also interestingly evident in the way that pathways are culturally conceived of. In particular I was drawn into a consideration of how orientation and directionality in space can be understood to emerge from social practice when I examined the nature of pathways that cross one another. At first I believed I was investigating a site - crossroad - which are significant historical sites in British culture (often related to death). In Ngamiland however, the crossroad is not so much a site as a process, in which the potential for omnidirectional movement potential is perceived. This is particularly highlighted in the ritual context. Ndozi Ntungwane of Sedie ward for instance described how her family dealt with *dikgaba*, illnesses caused by ancestral displeasure, through the process of ritual splashing of the sick person (*go phekola*) with a mixture of water, ash and extract of the *tlhogotsweu* plant (*Aerva leucura*) which is used, she stated, because its drooping white heads remind people of the white hair of their ancestors. In particular, the *ngaka ya setswana* (Setswana doctor) might instruct them to perform the splashing and calling of ancestors' names at a crossroads, where two or more paths intersect in the village. The term for crossroads is '*go ditsela di phatlalela teng*' which means 'where paths leave each other', since the verb *phatlalela* refers to the act of deserting someone or withdrawing from their companionship or friendship. My realisation that people conceived of crossroads as paths leaving each other rather than joining or crossing was similar to that of the researcher described by Stoller (1980) who 'realised that Songhay [Niger] roads do not intersect, but rather end in a fork with two new roads going off in different directions' (1980:419).

The perception that crossroads (or intersections) are places of departure is key to understanding their role in the treatment of ancestral disease, since during the *phekola* ritual, the spirits of the ancestors (*badimo*) that have congregated within the person and caused the illness, will 'leave each other and go in different directions' (*go phatlalala*). The spirits are not necessarily believed to depart along the actual paths forming the crossroads, and it is unclear to me just what the influence of the crossroads is perceived to be, aside from a powerful metaphor. Ndozi stressed to me that the place itself was not powerful, but the activity that took place there was. For her, the siting of the ritual activity at the crossroads was about unifying the processes within the ritual (spirits departing from the person) with those of the place (pathways departing from each other). This unifying of processes rather than meanings is key to understanding how places are invested with a social geometry through social practice. Such examples do seem to provide more evidence for an interweaving of practices and perceptions between landscape and body, not merely on the level of metaphor and language, but as I have suggested in the way that gestural space, social movement and activity over time are perceived as creative of place, and how forms such as houses and persons are equated experientially. Crossroads, as processes rather than places of ritual activity - out of, or away from which spirits and sickness may be scattered (*go phatlalala*), do seem to exist as an example of how aspects of centrifugal and centripetal relations are interwoven in complex ways with spiritual and other social dimensions of dwelling. The centrifugal dynamic of expelling the condensation of ancestral spirits within the body is conceived of as analogous to the centrifugal dynamic of the crossroad where pathways move away from a centre. But the process also contains an important centripetal tension in the way ancestral spirits are drawn within the body, causing illness, which is analogous to the social condensation of activities within the homestead, the mutual spatial entanglement of persons and activities centrifugally drawn toward a centre. The resolution of these tensions within the social geometry of place is conceived of within the nature of sites such

as the crossroad which are dynamic in the way both centrifugal and centripetal forces are experienced - the simultaneous expansion and condensation of the social and the spatial. Whilst this a lot of interpretation on a limited ethnographic base, it constitutes a significant dynamic that I consider to be of interest for further research.

Conclusion

This chapter has extended analysis of the relationship between place and dwelling through an examination of homestead data from Sanyedi, Mabudutsa and other wards in Maun, and as such offers analysis on a finer-ground scale to the previous chapters, which took the landscape and the interrelatedness of place as their focus. In particular I have extended the notion of centrifugal and centripetal dimensions of social practice that I introduced in chapter four, to examine the mutually influential relationship between social practice (activity) and homestead morphology over time. A central case study has been the examination of spatial perception and boundedness, as evidenced in data relating to the *lolwapa* and Land Board boundaries. The latter is examined in terms of its effects upon conceptions of spatial relations, social practice and building activity over time, to extend the overall argument that there is a social geometry evident in the way spatial relations and social practice are configured. This relationship is temporally embedded in the unfolding of place as a process of dwelling, which is related to conceptions of 'placial' phenomena such as crossroads, which experientially bind social forces within the homestead to the context of the wider social settlement in which it is embedded. The next chapter extends this analysis of the homestead to consider the way in which both memory and social biography are interwoven aspects of dwelling that are both contained within and extend away from the homestead in the way materials enclose and disclose social practice and meanings over time.

Chapter Ten

Re-membering the Home: the Biographical Process Of Dwelling

Introduction

This chapter sets out to analyse the particular temporal relationship between the family as a social group and the homestead as a material and spatial entity. In previous chapters I have described how the *lolwapa* is both a material boundary and a social group, in common with some other African cultures. Blier for instance writes that 'since the Batammaliba [of Togo] employ the same word (*takienta*) to mean both house and family, an implicit link is made between the two. If the house is strong, then at least in linguistic terms so too is the family' (1989:339). In particular, what interested me was the process of re-membering the layers of dwelling - the manner in which people imaginatively excavated their homesteads to explore the temporal connections between material elements of their surroundings. The 'connectivity' of this process could be characterised as one of 're-membering' in the sense of rejoining physical parts, since each element (such as a house) is considered to be part of the whole *lolwapa*, which changes morphologically over time, and also since such elements are inextricable from the identity of the person or persons associated with them. This chapter then explores the relationship between memory, biography and history as mutually interwoven aspects of dwelling within the homestead.

As such divisible wholes, both social and material dimensions of *lolwapa* could be considered as both *partible* and *distributed* over time and space. They are partible in Strathern's sense of "partible personhood" since both families and homesteads are entities made up of cells (houses and persons), but also since both families and homesteads gain form and identity over time through the sorts of social and material enchainment created by everyday relations between such cells.

Although Strathern's concern was with the less obvious 'dividual' nature of the formation of social personhood (such as the relation between sex and gender in Melanesian society) it is also true, as Gell points out, that 'if we seek to delve inside the person all we seem to find are other persons.. any one social individual is the sum of their relations with other persons' (1998:223). In a similar manner, delving into the social life of objects reveals other objects, sets of material relations that are inextricable from the temporal flow of social life. In the *lolwapa*, analysis of one house reveals connections to other members of the material whole distributed over time and space, a process of re-membering in which both architectural and social biographies are interwoven.

Gell also raises the point that 'objects all have to do with the extension of personhood beyond the confines of biological life via indexes distributed in the milieu' (1998:223). The issue of agency aside, the notion that the *lolwapa* is a temporally and spatially distributed object is certainly beguiling, and also points to a way of understanding how the dynamic interrelationship between social and material dimensions is involved in the dwelling process. If re-membering is all about the re-collection of temporally and spatially distributed indexes, then this process is also one that stresses the connectivities between elements (indexes) such as houses within a *lolwapa*, fields within a water channel etc, and thereby of relations between places and landscapes.

One way of understanding memory is as a process of re-membering or re-collecting distributed parts of social and material wholes in the temporal landscape, and in doing so understanding the connectivities of place as process of dwelling. I agree with Kwint who has argued that 'human memory has undergone a mutual evolution with the objects that inform it; that, in other words, the relationship between them is dialectical' (1999:4). This dialectic to me is a central part of how sociality and materiality are interwoven dimensions of dwelling. For Kwint objects 'stimulate remembering' as repositories of prior experience, otherwise 'dormant, repressed or forgotten' (Ibid.

p.2). In a similar fashion, Pierre Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire* deals with sites of symbolic memorialisation that 'arise out of the sense that there is no such thing as spontaneous memory' (1996:7). For Nora, memory is 'multiple yet specific; collective and plural yet individual... rooted in the concrete: in space, gesture, image and object' (1996:3), and as such practically in opposition to memory transformed by the practice of history (1996:8) and the continuing presence of *lieux de mémoire*. Such sites are as much part of the temporal landscape of Ngamiland as of western Europe, even though the cultural milieu is radically different, and the sites of memory are often obscure or invisible to those not connected with them.

As Kwint suggests, memory can be seen as fundamental to the development of the senses, not only informing how our lived experiences shape our responses to the material world, but also in the *longue durée* of evolutionary time. The dialectic of bodily sense and external material world has been a core dynamic of the temporality of landscape, a mutually influential process of making. Stewart (1999:17) points out that Marx had suggested that senses are not merely organs of apprehension but a source of material memories, and that Bergson (1908) had argued that 'there is no perception that is not full of memories' (quoted in Stewart 1999:17). This understanding of the body bearing a somatic memory of its encounters in the material world which shapes its future orientation is inherently concerned with the temporality of everyday engagement with the world. Bourdieu's notion of embodiment is somewhat different to this, concerned as it is with the temporal nature of 'structuring structures'. Social institutions, he wrote, need to be durably objectified, 'not only in things.. but also in bodies, in durable dispositions to recognise and comply with the demands immanent in the field' (1990:58). His description of incorporated body schema is certainly one in which memory (especially early memories) is similarly concerned with the non-conscious (or non-discursive) dimension of sociality over time, but lacks the important mutuality of influence from the physical world understood in the development of sense-memory. The creative

and cultural work of sense-memory described by Marx, argues Stewart, 'leads us to think about the ways in which aesthetic forms both produce sense experience and result from it' (1999:18), and it is this dialectic between production and reproduction that is arguably at the core of the temporality of place as process of dwelling.

Memory, Biography & History

The next question is how this notion of memory and the process of re-membering relate to the other key ideas of biography and history. It is important to clarify the distinction between these notions if I am to argue for an important link between memory and biography and the materiality of dwelling. Perhaps the most important recent work on the relation between objects and biography is the introduction to Hoskins' *Biographical Objects* (1998) where she wrote that, 'the notion of telling one's life directly to another person did not exist in Kodi.. I could not collect the histories of objects and the life histories of persons separately.. the object becomes a prop, a storytelling device, and also a mnemonic for certain experiences' (1998:2;4). For her, a project which began with a central concern with biography (especially *auto*biography) became one in which objects were understood as important in both the form and performance of stories about the past. For the people of Kodi, she argues, 'it is a cultural propensity to speak about such issues indirectly, and to use objects as a metaphor for the self' (1998:3). Hoskins' notion of biography is a relatively formal one - the narration of life histories or stories about the self. For me, the building-up of biography over time was a less formalised aspect of the fieldwork encounter. Whereas for Hoskins the notion of biography was 'a co-creation of a narrative that is in part structured by the listener's questions and expectations' (1998:1), for me biography meant the layering of personal information related to material surroundings, which included memories, responses, stories, utterances and discussion. Whilst Hoskins' research interest was in indigenous narratives about the self through objects, my own interest was in establishing biographical information about material

forms through people. My concern with homestead biographies became entangled with family ones and the biography of persons.

Whilst Hoskins work opens up a field of interest by re-centring objects in the anthropological literature on biography, my own approach in this chapter differs from her ethno-biographical one in several ways. In particular, I am less concerned with constructing a 'history' or 'narrative' about homesteads or families, than an 'archaeology' of spatial and temporal relations within a place. But the main distinction between Hoskins' notion of biography and the one I want to develop here is in the understanding of the temporal relationship between memory and materiality. Hoskins' central understanding of objects is as 'metaphors for the self' (1998:5) and 'memory-boxes' - mnemonic devices for the narration of life histories, containers of memory but not dynamically involved in the production of memory. In particular, Hoskins' sees the role of objects as 'metaphors to elicit an indirect account of personal experience' or as 'providing a distanced form of introspection' (1998:2). In this chapter I argue that homesteads and houses provide evidence for a more complex temporal relationship between materiality and memory, and that the notion of biography can be widened from a narrow focus upon narrative structures about the past (history) to include the gradual layering or deposition of memory related to dwelling over time.

I am suggesting an archaeological perspective for understanding the way biography and history are integral to the interaction of memory and materiality. From an archaeological perspective, differing dimensions of memory and re-membering are both embedded in and emergent from material forms, and interrelate with biography in complex ways. *Rather than objects being mnemonic in their relationship to memory, and metaphorical or heuristic in the way they relate to biography, an archaeological perspective suggest how material culture, memory and history are interrelated aspects of dwelling.* In this chapter I identify three differing dimensions of this

memory relationship to materiality in the way they emerge and interact with biography: *memory-in*, *memory-of* and *memory-as*. Memory can be understood as a heterogeneous dimension of dwelling, not just a layering of past experience, but a product of how we make sense of such experience in the ever-unfolding present. Memory has as much to do with the 'protension' of the future as 'retension' from the past, as Husserl suggested. Husserl's model envisaged a temporal 'presentness' that encompassed both past and future, where history was not a chain of causal antecedents, but a combination of 'retensions' of the past in the present and 'protensions' of the future in the present, a process that enables people to mediate temporal relationships. Temporality in Husserl's argument is recovered as a constitutive part of *present* being, and draws together past experience as well as ordering the potentialities of future practice. I develop the notion of *memory-as* to describe how practices can in certain contexts be constitutive and active of memory - memory as process rather than content.

So if I have offered a sense of biography as more dynamically related to the layering of material relations over time, what is the relationship between history and memory? As I have mentioned, Nora (1996) proposes a somewhat antithetical relationship between memory and history, suggesting that history and memorial sites in the landscape are products of the uncertainty of memory in western society. History for Nora is a highly manipulative practice in which collective memory is transformed over time so that memory and memory-of-history become relatively inseparable. It is for these reasons that he seeks to distinguish 'memory societies' from 'history societies' (1996:8), which he roughly equates with non-western and Western societies respectively. For the purposes of this thesis I would rather understand history as the cultural representation of memory, a dialectical relationship that shifts over time. The sorts of memory that history interrelates with however are not always the same: we could make meaningful distinctions for instance between memory of past experience and memory of historical representations of the past

(such as through stories, songs, dances etc.). With this perspective I do not really see the sharp distinction between memory and history that Nora does, since both are mutually involved aspects of dwelling - it is hard to imagine memory without its representations and vice versa.

From the archaeological perspective on memory that I have argued for here, both history and memory are seen as importantly related to materiality, not just in the sense that objects have histories and contain memories, but since social relations are inextricable from the layering of material relations over time.

Memory-in ('othertimeness')

In this chapter I will be focussing upon homestead case studies from Maun to examine how, both as sites and as objects, they are involved with memory. Memory is also a process in the sense of remembering as an activity, and certainly this temporal dimension of memory (memory *as* things) in which materiality and practice (as well as social discourse) are entwined is important to understanding how dwelling in the landscape is configured over time. Firstly, however, I want to consider how remembrances residing within materials, forms and tasks of places are important to how such sites retain, order and prompt memories - as indexes of the 'otherplaceness' and 'othertimeness' of dwelling. 'Othertimeness' is a corollary of 'otherplaceness' since the social involvement of sites within a landscape inevitably involves temporal networks, in which the material layering of the dwelling site simultaneously indexes not only social involvement with other places but also times of relative prosperity, poverty, interaction, isolation, environmental change etc. *Memory-in* then describes the way dwelling memory is embedded in material surroundings, and is influential in the way past practices are understood and future practices are structured. Materials embody memories of practices, techniques, knowledges and social activities that are influential in the way future practice is oriented (and thus in social reproduction).

Batlametse Ditau

Batlametse and her siblings live with their mother and grandmother in an isolated spot to the east of Maun, in a homestead fenced with Mopane poles. The family moved to this place from Tshibogolamatebele (a village some distance south of Maun) as migrants, but in 1992 Batlametse's father died, leaving the family without a cash income and male labour support. 'My father cut all the Mopane for the houses in our homestead', related Batlametse, 'he took his axe to Saphane and carried it back on his back. He also made the roofs and did the fencing - you can still see his axe marks in some of the wood. When he died there was nobody to cut wood for building, so we began to wall the houses with the millet stems after the harvest each year. We took them from our grandparents fields since they were closer than our own'. Some of the pole-house walls were removed and the poles used for renewing the fence around the plot and the walls replaced with millet stems, and yet another has been walled with *motlhabakolobe* (river plant) reeds and wild sage since 'one year there was not enough millet stems and I had to go to the river to cut plant stems instead'.

Discourse about materials involved in dwelling sites is inextricably bound up with that of the biographies of family members, such as the role of the father in wood construction, the grandparents' millet field, the reuse of someone's walls for fencing, as well as memories of environmental change, such as the lack of millet stems one year. In the fabric of dwelling sites are found material memories about the social landscape, since the site is itself so intimately bound up with the temporality of place. Whilst the agency of the father is remembered in the axe marks on the poles, their re-use as fence posts and replacement with millet stems in the last four years represents to Batlametse the continuing problems facing the family in their dwelling tasks since the father's death. For Batlametse, telling about the way the homestead was materially composed

involved remembering the way tasks had been undertaken by various family members over time - memories in the fabric of dwelling were mostly repositories of tasks associated with persons or groups. Changing relations between the material elements of the plot also mean changing relations between memories associated with them - *memory-in* and materials are both renewable dimensions of dwelling over time.

Anderson Willy

Anderson Willy (Plate 26) is an Mbukushu migrant from Etsha who settled in Boseja ward in 1982. He remembered that his first house was built in the same way as his parents', using Mopane sticks and earth filling. 'The Mopane and grass were difficult to find when I built my first house,' he stated, 'I had to travel about 7km on foot to find them. I then built another one, square this time since I bought some corrugated iron roofing. I remember doing this since I had some money left over from my work contract and since thatching grass was hard to find'. The next building was for visitors - 'I used mud bricks for this one since I remember discussing with neighbours how difficult it is to find Mopane branches for making walls'. After some time they moved into the visitors house and used the previous one for storage of goods, building a new shelter for visitors 'using Mopane sticks again this time since although they were difficult to find I had money to get transport and even buy *letlhaka* for the outside'.

The materials within buildings are mnemonic for Anderson in telling about his biography in Boseja since arriving there. His buildings not only record the changing availability of resources for building in Boseja, but also his changing circumstances of access to resources and involvement in the cash economy. The biography of the homestead features a mixture of social, economic and environmental memories that are all interwoven facets of place as process of dwelling. The 'othertimeness' of the homestead is experienced by Anderson through material memories, such as

walking many kilometres to find wood for his first house, and the need for a visitor house once relatives began to stay. He remembers the year in which he decided to fence a garden in the plot as the time when he was frustrated about not being able to return home for harvests due to work. The fencing of a garden area has become a strong memory of his self-sufficiency as a migrant a long way from his home area. Whilst the iron roof holds a strong memory of cash employment, the increasing amount of goods forced them to abandon their house as a store and to inhabit the visitor house as well - memories of employment, purchase of goods and movement in the homestead all become interwoven. The *memory-in* dimension of Anderson's homestead is a combination of narratives about materials in the context of a changing social landscape, a complex and fragmentary set of task-based remembrances embedded in the homestead surroundings. Future research could focus upon to what extent such *memory-in* dimensions of surroundings are collectively shared and manipulated in narratives about the past. Potential for this sort of research was suggested to me occasionally through discrepancies in people's material memories, often reflecting gender divisions of labour. Anderson and his wife for instance occasionally disagreed about memories in certain houses due to their involvement in differing building tasks. Many of Anderson's wife's memories centred on where the mud bricks were made and occasional poor seasons for some materials as well as renewal problems and durability of thatching grasses, quite distinct from Anderson's memories of wood and items of cash investment.

Ketisitswe Legabe

'It is because there is no money for building now that I have used so many different things to build with,' related Ketisitswe. 'Years ago I worked in the Johannesburg mines, 9 months there, 3 months here, then back again - I bought goats and donkeys with my money. Then I stayed here with my mother and worked as a labourer at KDS Safari. Two years after my mother died my sister came and removed the useful building wood from her old house - I said "the living should

take the house of a dead person - there is no-one inside" so she built with it since there was no money for transport. I myself cut my shade tree down to build with since there was no money for transport'. Sitting outside his house (Plate 27), he talks about the different materials he has used: the black fencing 'from Mr Salbye at KDS which was used as a shade for plants, he gave it to me to use for whatever I wanted'; the green canvas 'given by Mr Salbye since it had holes in and let in the rain'; the stitched together maize meal sacks 'are very strong and useful, my sister stitched them together and gave them to me for flooring; and the shiny coated bubble-wrap used as walling 'given to me by my son - it used to be material for a ceiling. I covered it on the outside with some old *letlhaka* given to me by a neighbour, but it is mostly dead (*le sule*) now'.

He no longer works at the safari company, having started to make bricks for the Village Development Committee, but memories of his former job and colleagues are materially woven into the fabric of his dwelling, eliciting stories and anecdotes about those associated with the materials.

The *memory-in* dimension of his house is a complex set of relationships that are of obvious importance to Ketisitswe - his stories show a pride in his former relations to certain individuals and to the meaning he ascribed to the gifting of surplus materials. The materials represent a bond of friendship between himself and Mr Salbye, who occupies a higher socio-economic position, and such cast-offs thereby embody values in relationships in complex ways. Such materials take on differing memory values over time as circumstances change - for Ketisitswe they had become charged with relational significance due to the severing of social connections through redundancy, reflecting the contradictions inherent in social relationships established through employment. The *memory-in* aspects of re-use in his house thereby took on added significance as remnants of social relations retained in the present fabric of dwelling, although the context of material relations had changed - materials as repositories of both memory and the temporality of social relationships.

Memory-of

Whilst these case studies show how the *memory-in* dimension of materials reveals an 'othertimeness' of dwelling, as repositories and layers of tasks in the landscape, social relationships involved in dwelling, changes in environmental or settlement context etc., 'othertimeness' is also inextricably bound up with the dimension of *memory-of*; of how presently constituted dwelling sites are related in time to their previous shapes, forms and inhabitants. Materials, whilst being repositories of memory about their own social existence and that of persons involved, also contain a genealogical dimension, through which previous material generations are accessible in memory. In this sense both *memory-of* and *memory-in* find no meaningful distinction aside from being separable possibilities for the way materials are involved in processes of remembering. All dimensions of memory are necessarily sensual, constituted by the way we interact over time with the physical world, 'the body bearing a somatic memory of its encounters with what is outside of it' (Stewart 1999:19). My argument is that both *memory-in* and *memory-of*, whilst usefully distinguished heuristically, should be considered as one when examining the genealogical and biographical aspects of dwelling in the description of the past.

Just as Kwint argues that 'objects have consequences and a history of their own' (1999:4), both social and material memories can be involved with the temporality of forms no longer present. Memory and ephemerality are (as Proust famously explored) importantly entwined. As Pierre Nora also argued, the durable memoralisation of the French cultural landscape stands as a monument to collective social fears of the poverty or at least porosity of memory. This is most readily seen in British places in 'Lest We Forget' monuments to our war dead (see King 1998). However, I am doubtful whether we can usefully distinguish *memory* from *memorial* societies in the way Nora suggests. The *milieux de mémoire* (1996:1) that Nora sees as a quality of the social landscape in non-western societies is arguably an important dimension of all social landscapes

(memory as integral to landscape). The notions of material durability and ephemerality in relation to memory is however of significant interest. People in Ngamiland often talked to me of the material ephemerality of dwelling as integral to the nature of generational activity. The translation 'generation' and 'genealogy' is my own understanding of the term *tshika* or *losika*, as was discussed in chapter nine. This term for 'generation' can also be used to refer to veins or arteries and flesh (especially sinew) and hence progeny or generations within families. The temporality of the homestead is conceived of in terms of the temporality of the human lifecycle - common metaphors of the death (*sule*) of the house relate perceptions of material decay to the removal of the human agency of renewal because of either death, migration or lack of resources.

This physical metaphor of temporal relations between generations of persons and houses brings together memory as both a social activity and as embodiment. Genealogical memory is conceived of as a knowledge of the identity of ancestors, which is important in orienting social activities within the landscape, based as they are upon kin networks and inheritances. It is also a matter of the embodied past - persons and things are in a sense embodiments of memory as expressed in the idiom of sinew or arteries flowing between generations. In practice, this is implied in the way elder members of family are considered physically closer to ancestors than younger members and are thereby ritually important persons. Certain persons understood as closely connected with ancestral agency (*memory-in/ embodied*) will perform ritual activity, call their names etc. (*memory-as*) since they are either generationally or personally connected to them (*memory-of*). One elder, Kgoto Modua, related that ancestors were displeased with the neglect of those closest to them (i.e. elders), and might exact punishment through illness. The way to treat this is to go to the elder and ask him to *phekola* the body of the afflicted (ritually treat with water and other materials such as plants and ash), but if the elder refuses, to take some of his hearth-ash by stealth. If the elder by chance sees this happening however, it will have no effect. Both hearth and elder are here

perceived as proximal to ancestors, both containing ritual agency - both embodying ancestral memory in particular and important ways. For ritual efficacy, the elder must be ignorant of the removal of his hearth ash. This reminds us that, however implicated materials become in the establishment of meaning in social activities, there may also be a latent neutrality underneath, a lurking potential for disregard. Such potential however also lurks in the way that, as Kwint argues, 'death is partly about the subject returning to the object (body only) when we become 'solely material' (1999:9). Both *memory-in* and *memory-of* weave in and around these understandings of temporal physical connections between persons and things, and play with perceptions of how memory and meaning are retained or discarded over time.

The Genealogy of the Mulberry Tree

In April 2000 Emang, a woman of Sanyedi ward, related to me the genealogy of her house (one of the oldest still standing in her uncle's plot, she believed) (Figure 10.1). Directly in front of the house was a well-established Mulberry tree, under which we were seated. She had come to live in this house, she said, after the death of Sepopelo Morutsi, who had inherited it from her brother, Ditlhapi, when he left for another ward. He had inherited the house from Mma Boloni, a cousin of his mother's and the founder of the house, after she migrated to another ward, and it was she who planted the Mulberry tree.

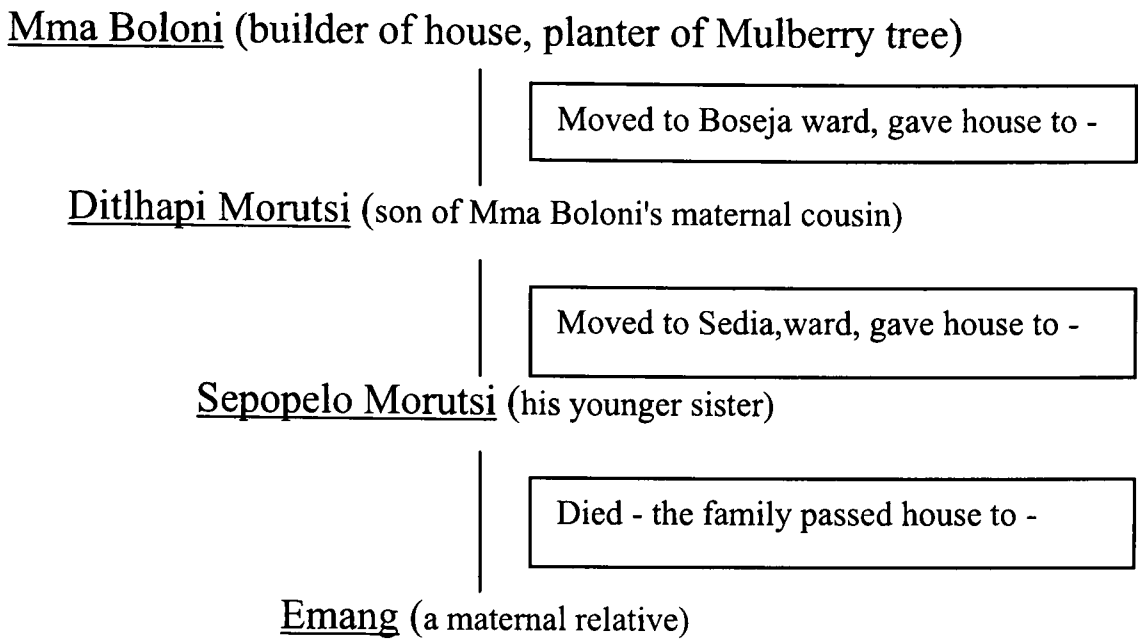


Figure 10.1 (Dwellers of Mma Boloni's house)

Emang could tell that each occupant had carefully tended the Mulberry tree over the years, just as they had given due attention to renewing (*go _afatsa*) the house itself. She pointed to how former occupants had cut some branches in order for the tree to grow straight and strong, and to provide good canopy as well as fruits. 'Each dweller of the house (*monni wa ntlo*) was a relative (*masika*) even though they were not born in the plot. Because they were *masika* both the house and the tree grew over the years. Most of the houses in Maun are thin - relatives do not stay in them but go away and give them to others'. Emang refers here to the observed tendency for the walls of older houses to gain thickness over the years through plastering activity, which she compares to the growth of the tree through the constant tending of its owners over the years. The growth of both tree and house are brought together as similarly arising out of the dwelling practices of *masika*. Indeed, she implies that it is only *masika* that really dwell in this way, since such growth is seen as arising from the way generations of kin grow over time. The dwelling of non-kin groups does not give rise to such forms she argues, but only to 'thin' houses (*mantlo a masesane*) with no genealogy and no social or material 'thickness' in the present.

This reveals how closely bound together social and material perceptions of the *lolwapa* can be - houses and even husbanded aspects of nature are closely associated not only with the temporal activities of persons, but also with the types of relations between persons both in the present and over time, with kin relations being perceived as an important set of material relations, in this example the 'thickness' produced by layers of attentive activity. For Emang, her identity as a relative within the extended household is also attested to by her dwelling activities - by her attentiveness to the growth of the house and the tree. More than being a narrative or idiom for exploring kin relations in a place, the practice of dwelling is such that it helps define social relations through mutual engagement with tasks, with the social and material thickening of the homestead site. Both *memory-in* (visible agency of relatives in pollarded tree, renewed walls of house) and *memory-of* (material link to absent or deceased relatives, places etc.) dimensions are entangled in Emang's experience of the house and Mulberry tree. For Emang, re-membering the genealogy of the homestead and of the family are interrelated activities in which material relations are important to understanding social ones.

Fire Events in Memory

The spacing apart of houses as a precaution against the spread of fire is a common element of people's 'feel' for the best way for a homestead to grow. In some cases this is based upon direct experience of fire events, yet it is also a set of spatial relations into which people are socialised and thereby reproduced over time. In discussing homestead biographies with families, I was struck by the role of the fire event in memory as a temporal boundary between building generations within the homestead. Fire is transformative both of the homestead and of memory, especially in the context of homestead biography, bringing about both the 'death' of one building generation and the creation of a new one. Such sudden events are important in the way memory is organised, becoming a temporal link between the various emotions, decisions etc., that arise as a consequence

(as is the case with a sudden death). Such concentrations of subjective response brought about by external causation become transformed as 'turning points' in the context of memory. 'I want to go forwards, not backwards' argued one woman, 'grass roofs may catch fire, and you will have to go back and build again. This is why I built with a corrugated iron roof'. Fire is perceived by some as both temporally and socially regressive in its consequences, setting people back, having to rebuild and rework their surroundings.

In memory, such acts as fire are for the most part remembered as transitions rather than regressions however. David Saudu explained that the first generation of buildings in his plot were all built using *letlhaka* reeds, but that they changed the positions of the house to face into the plot but away from the wind. The next generation ended in 1985 with a fire which destroyed all the buildings. 'After that fire I decided to build a concrete house instead of renewing again with *letlhaka*. My mother's house wasn't replaced since she had already died, and my younger brother moved to the other side of the homestead. We didn't just build again after the fire, we changed many things'. Fire events often bring about rapid adjustments to the morphology of homesteads based upon a renegotiated set of social relations rather than a previous material existence.

In chapter nine I discussed how the homestead of Naroxoh had dramatically altered in rebuilding after a fire, and argued that the new morphology was inextricable from social relations in the context of place. After the fire, Naroxah's homestead transformed morphologically into one focussed upon a single *lolwapa*, since Naroxoh alone among her sisters spent most of her time in the village. Instead of rebuilding the other family members buildings as before, the new form reflected the way social activities between the family members were distributed within the landscape. As a general point this suggests that fire events re-establish a close link between the range of social activities in a homestead and its material form - since forms do not tend to be

replaced but renegotiated. My argument is that this practical, material dimension of the fire event in its relation to the way social activities are distributed temporally in the landscape, is crucial to an understanding of how such events operate as transitional stages in the collective memory. Whilst fire is often experienced subjectively as regressive in its effects, it is often remembered, conversely, as progressive in the way it regenerates homestead form and social relations materially.

Memory-of as Memory-work

Küchler (1993) has argued persuasively that outside of western contexts, perspectives on landscape may be characterised more by landscape as memory (process) than as inscription or mapping of memory. Landscape as a form of representation is implicated in the process of remembering over time rather than as *memory-of* which she sees as fixed and objectifiable. This process she identifies as *memory-work*, in which a culturally constructed template is involved in the transformation of landscape perception over time (1993:104). What she doesn't explore is how such *memory-work* is informed over time - how the culturally constructed template is constituted as memory. If, as Ivan Illich reminds us, 'to dwell means to live in the traces that past living has left' (1982:68), then *memory-of* remains an important dimension of the temporality of landscape, both in the way past practices are embodied as skills and orientations in the world and in the way material culture exerts an influence upon social activities. One of the frustrations of Bourdieu's work in this sense is his lack of a developed understanding of the influence of the materiality of dwelling in the process of socialisation, limiting his analysis to statements such as 'the habitus is a metaphor of the world of objects.. [which is] a kind of book.. from which children learn to read the world.. read with the whole body' (1990:77). *Memory-of* is arguably a more dynamic dimension of landscape than the temporally static and mapped-out one understood by Küchler, if one also considers the way that perceptions, practices and material environments are reciprocally involved in producing and reproducing the cultural template that Küchler identifies as the source of *memory-work*. Further,

this opens the possibility for *memory-of* to be as much about forgetting as remembering, since the vast majority of formative practices that become embodied as habitus are forgotten and yet retained unconsciously as integral to the way we orient ourselves in the world. *Memory-of* as incorporated elements of both discursive and non-discursive dimensions of past practice, events etc. can thereby be seen as always already a process of *memory-work*, or remembering, since it helps inform the transformation of landscape over time.

There was a particular homestead in Maun that made me think about this relationship between habitus as *memory-of* and the temporal nature of *doing* or *acting* through memory in the context of building practice. The homestead of Boikwatho, a Mosarwa (San) woman from Sehitwa was unusual in that the houses were built facing west in three rough lines rather than forming a circle with a central space as is found in most plots. The houses had been built by her sister who had migrated from Sehitwa some years earlier and moved on with her husband elsewhere. 'They built the houses in three lines due to the lack of space,' explained Boikwatho, 'but it is really the same as one long line, the way we had always built in Sehitwa, facing west. All the San living in the village face their houses west, even some Tswana do this in Sehitwa. When my sister came to Maun this is the way she built. We didn't grow up in a plot with a space (*phata*) in the middle'. The practice of facing houses west in a line can be seen as an Mbanderu influence, but whereas nearly all Mbanderu who migrate to Maun abandon this practice, this San family had continued to reproduce the same dwelling form, albeit with changes brought about by space restrictions.

In chapter five I argued that Mbanderu building practices (such as facing the cattle pen in a westerly direction) were inextricable from the dwelling context of cattle-keeping. Other groups do not share this dwelling context and yet are influenced by Mbanderu building practices (such as in Sehitwa), such as this San family from Sehitwa. But why have such families as this retained this

homestead practice, when practically all Mbanderu in Maun have abandoned it? One argument is that for the Mbanderu, such building practices are closely connected with the cattle-keeping context, and are not considered as alienable from dwelling context. The orienting influence is the cattle-pen with which houses have a close dwelling relationship. This context is significantly absent in nucleated villages. For this San group, building in a line facing west however is a matter of reproducing a homestead through memory of past practices, reflected in Boikwatho's statement that 'I did not grow up in a plot with a space in the middle'. Boikwatho is here reflecting in a highly discursive manner upon a dwelling context that is not normally iterated but practically engaged with, and yet her understanding is based upon a notion of reproducing a homestead *of memory* in the present. The *memory-of* dimension of her building practice is both discursive ('this is what we used to do') and non-discursive ('this is what feels right'), which further indicates the manner in which *memory-of* weaves together embodied practices and ideational concerns. 'If I was to build my own place,' she related, 'I would build my houses facing west in a line. This is just my feelings (*ke maikutlo a me fela*)'. What is interesting is the way that this feeling of 'rightness' in the reproduction of dwelling form for Boikwatho feels 'wrong' for the Mbanderu, who do not consider a village homestead as the appropriate context for such building practices. My argument is that the building activity of Boikwatho's family in Maun shows how *memory-of* is a complex of both discursive (tradition) and non-discursive (habitus) memories, and that such dwelling activities are always already involved in *memory-work* or remembering in the way they are temporally played out. More than being just "bringing to mind", remembering should be recognised in the way it "brings to body" past practices in the present - *memory-work* is a process of the everyday spheres of dwelling as well as those identified cultural practices such as Malangan art identified by Küchler. As such, place as process of dwelling may include memory as a much more pervasive aspect of how people orient themselves practically and skilfully in the world.

Seleli Zhilu - memory-of, breakdown and coping

By way of a conclusion to this argument, in a homestead neighbouring mine in Wenela ward in Maun lived Seleli Zhilu and her twin sister, their children, and a male cousin (Figure 10.2). The twin sisters consistently told me that they were unhappy with the way the living arrangements in the homestead had turned out, and were building a new two-roomed *ntlo ya sekgoa* next to the one in which they lived. 'At the moment it feels wrong, people are not living where they should, so we are going to change the arrangements. When we have finished building the new house, the youngest children will stay in the room closest to us and the eldest in the further room. At the moment the children are staying together in one house but they should now be living separately, with the younger one closest to me'. Several things are striking about this process, but I was immediately taken by the way that understandings of spatial relations between *mantlo a setswana* had been transferred to their dwelling in the two-roomed concrete houses - the importance of adjacent rooms in separate houses replicating the importance of arrangement between single-cell *mantlo a setswana* within the homestead.

This sort of continuity as embodied memory is strongly suggested in the feeling of 'wrongness' about arrangements and the desire to alter them to 'fit' an arrangement that feels better. It was here that I considered Bourdieu's statement that 'the corrections and adjustments the agents themselves consciously carry out presuppose mastery of a common code' (1990:59) which, although he doesn't examine in terms of adjustments to the materiality of dwelling, is equally applicable. The 'common code' implicit in the sisters' impulses to build and readjust spatial relations within the homestead is arguably a composite of those discursive and non-discursive dimensions of *memory-of* already discussed. What is interesting in this case however is that the issue had become a talking point between us, due to some sort of breakdown in the background of involved dwelling activity. The discursive elements of *memory-of* are here brought to the fore in a way that Heidegger describes as

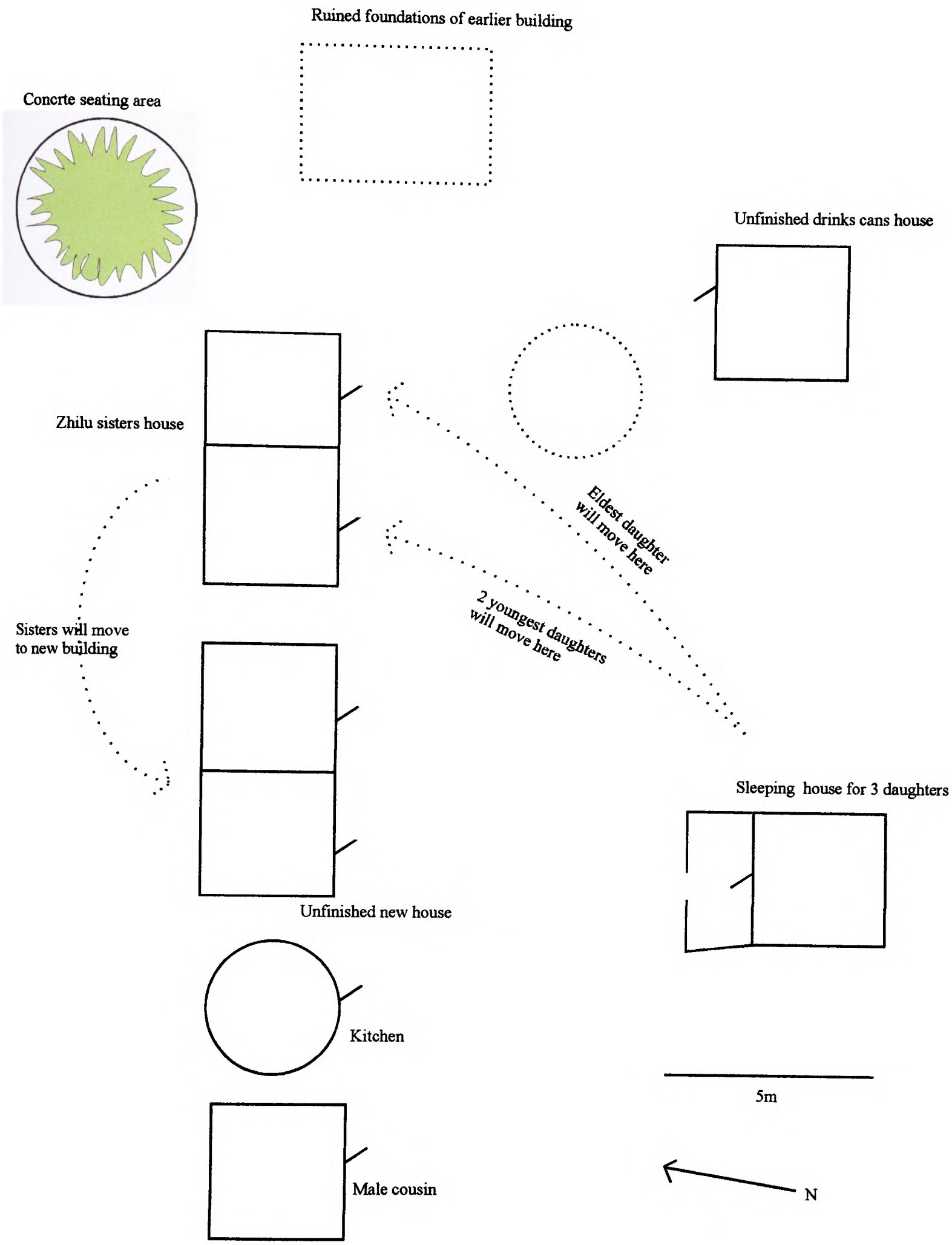


Figure 10.2 Homestead of Zhilu sisters, Wenela ward, Maun. The sisters feel uncomfortable with the spatial arrangement of household members, and plan to move the youngest daughters close to them, with the eldest daughter further away (although in the same 2-room house). The comfortableness of this spatial arrangement using 2-room concrete buildings arguably refers to the *habitus* of socio-spatial arrangements within the homestead. Importantly, such bodily comportments are here negotiated through new material contexts.

disturbance, especially in the way that spatial relations in the homestead had become *conspicuous* rather than unobtrusive. In this instance, the houses themselves were being perceived by the sisters in a certain *unavailableness*, that is, they were circumspect about their spatial practices rather than involved with them. This is certainly important to the way in which *memory-of* as part of dwelling is sometimes brought into the discursive state, since problems in the ongoing flow of dwelling require a certain amount of conscious remembering in order to shift to new ways of coping.

Re-membering as process (Memory-as)

Concluding his argument concerning the agency of material culture Gell discusses how Malangan carvings are indigenously understood as the 'body' or 'skin' of a deceased person, in which the dispersed agencies of a person at death (what Küchler terms 'lifeforce') are ritually collected together in a single material index. 'The gardens and plantations of the deceased,' he writes, '.. are still in production, their wealth is held by various exchange partners, their houses are still standing, their wives or husbands are still married to them' (1998:225). The process of making a Malangan carving, he argues, coincides with the process of readjustment made by local societies to the removal of a member. What is particularly interesting is his understanding of this 'lifeforce' as 'the net result or product of a lifetime's activity in the social world, not a species of mystical energy distinguishable categorically from ordinary life and activity' (1998:226). This argument points to a less mentalistic approach to memory (which sees the *past* as retained in the *present* through specific mental representations) in which memory and re-membering can be considered an integral part of the way social activities are constituted over time. Memory in this sense is something that can be participated in, a process of dwelling, a set of social activities rather than mental contents.

Approaching my own data on the treatment of houses and possessions of the deceased in Ngamiland, this understanding of memory as a process of dwelling in which the dispersed indexes

of a deceased person's agency are dealt with in a practical way, is particularly interesting. One of the most important concerns is the showing of respect (*go supatota*) to the deceased through certain activities, thereby participating in memory-work. 'It is important that the deceased's house (*ntlo ya moswi*) is occupied after their death, not to be left to fall down' related MmaSefo, 'and we wash the house and the clothes to cool them down (*gore ene tsididi*). We cleanse the illness (*lwetse*) from the house before others enter it, since a house will still contain the spirit (*sedimo*) of the deceased'. The house is conceived of as having a 'memory' of its occupant, both in the material sense of ritual uncleanness due to close proximity with deceased, as well as through spirit 'containment', which may trouble future occupants by causing bad dreams. Dreaming of the deceased is not necessarily considered a beneficial process for the family, and ritual cleansing is in part conceived of as preventing dreams and other troubled memories.

'A month or so after the cleansing of the house,' continued MmaSefo, 'we can begin to renew the house again, and someone can go inside and live there, it shows disrespect to not continue to occupy that house'. Another neighbour, MmaVoya, relates that 'after the funeral we washed all the clothes of my husband and gave them to our relatives to wear, so that they will remember him. We also replace the *letlhaka* on the house, which is enough to cool down the house'. MmaNdozi in Boseja also stated that 'the house is ritually treated after a death, especially the floor which is renewed and water splashed on the walls as well as the children. If you are a Churchgoer this might be Holy water. We splash (*phekola*) the children to stop them having bad dreams (*go emisa ditoro tse di maswe*)'. An Mbukushu woman, Diwane, stated that the splashing of water is used to remove the 'smell' (*nkga ya moswi*) of the deceased, since this smell might make the children have bad dreams throughout their lives.

This important link between odour and the material world in relation to memory is also central to Küchler's analysis of how objects of remembrance, such as carvings, embody kin relations to land. Houses thereby are involved in memory not just through close physical association with deceased persons but also through sense-memory, especially that of smell which is particularly closely linked to emotional remembrance. The social consequences of smell in the context of houses are the emotional remembrance of the deceased, and in particular the influence that such smells may have upon the living, either sickness or bad dreams. In both cases the memory of the house is closely associated with odour, which needs to be ritually removed with water or the renewal of its materials. In some cases, as mentioned in chapter four concerning Shorobe region, this is also carried out through the use of a firebrand within the house to 'burn' out the smell of the deceased from within.

Memory and especially the activity of re-membering deceased persons is thereby an aspect of a wide range of dwelling activities (memory-work as integral to dwelling), rather than being treated as an analytically separate category (such as ritual). *Memory-as* or remembering is a dimension of building activity, of ritual cleansing, of distributing clothes and other objects, of dreams, of smell and other material and sensual connections to a person by the group. The processes of reorganisation and readjustment in which social groups engage after a death are practices of memory-work, in which remembrance is something in which people participate socially. Houses contain memories of persons through 'containing' their odour which is believed to need removal if the house is to lose its death-attachment to the deceased, and return in a more neutral state to the living family. It also 'stands' for the deceased in memory - to materially neglect it is to dishonour the deceased, to renew it is to actively participate in positive memory-work. This process of re-membering as memory-work in which both persons and material indexes (houses) are brought into

present dwelling is integral to the notion of biography, in which telling about the temporal homestead and persons is a mutually interwoven activity.

Homestead biographies: persons and houses in memory

In this final section I want to turn to what was my original encounter in Ngamiland with the subject of memory and dwelling: the biographies of persons and houses, and in particular the close association between them both in synchronic and diachronic representations of the *lolwapa*. The semantic clustering of meanings around the term *lolwapa* (as is the case with other African languages) is crucial here, bringing together both social and material understandings and perceptions of the house, indicating both the courtyard wall or fence surrounding a house or houses and metaphorically those people who live within it - both material house and social group being mutually defining. As I have also argued, both the social and material *lolwapa* are temporally related generationally (*losika*) through the metaphor of extended sinew or arteries (*tshika*).

In the narration of homestead biographies there are broad similarities in Ngamiland and in Africa more widely in the way that building elements and social activities are interrelated, including: the sleeping house (*ntlo ya borobalo*), house for storage of goods, food etc. (*ntlo ya dilwana*), sleeping house for young children (*ntlo ya bananyana*), cooking (fire) house (*ntlo ya boapeelo/ moleelo*), and a house for visitors to sleep (*ntlo ya baeti*), as well as smaller structures for domestic animals, such as hens (*ntlo ya dikoko*). Most biographies include various combinations of these elements in forming a homestead (*lapa/ jarata*) in which the *lolwapa* boundary tends to either enclose most of the buildings (such as in Shorobe *Molapo* region) or the home of the parents only where most of the cooking is done. The morphology of the homestead is highly responsive to changes in the composition of social activities in a given place, with a crucial factor being the degradation of natural materials and the concomitant varied tasks of renewal.

As I suggested in the previous chapter, *the morphology of dwelling sites is sometimes just as influenced by who is absent from the tasks of dwelling as who is involved* - it is the particular ways in which social activities are distributed in the landscape, and how collective tasks in their relation to place have changed over time that can be seen as crucial to analysis of the homestead. Just as the 'otherplaceness' of dwelling suggests how places are materially and temporally linked, biography also suggests how both *involvement* and *non-involvement* are crucial to the development of place over time. As the matrix of activities (taskscape) in the landscape changes over time, biography suggests that memory is also bound up with remembering *obstacles* to activity, and the inability to engage in certain ways with tasks. Biography is an important context in which the temporal shifts between involvement and non-involvement as part of dwelling are represented. The discursive aspect of memory within biography often seeks to explain the relation between materiality and sociality (houses and persons) in terms of why certain spatial relations, buildings etc. have not come about, as much as explaining what is extant. In other words, *biographies often deal with activities not engaged with as much as those engaged with - memories of non-involvement often feature as much as those of involvement.* 'We did not renew the *lolwapa* last year' argued Ontumetse, 'since my mother was sick and stayed away with relatives'. Another man, Mpho related that 'we wanted to build a house there for my sister but we never managed to do it and so she stayed away until this year'. 'My brother's house burned down some years ago, and we did not renew it straight away' argued one woman, Bonolo, 'since we could not afford transport last year and this year either'.

Biography as discursive memory interweaves both involvement and non-involvement as important to its own internal construction of meaning. Perhaps one of the most interesting contexts in which to understand this aspect of dwelling biography is in the way memory and materiality become

interrelated over time. From this perspective, the *memory-in* dimension of material forms such as houses relates not only to the house itself, but to other houses not built, foregone alternatives, obstacles to different building activities etc. This dialectic between *memory-in* and *memory-of* draws together not only previous forms and activities of the homestead, but also a whole range of dwelling activities not engaged with, that can sometimes become importantly biographically, in the way that dwelling memory is discursively constructed.

In the following case studies from Maun, this understanding of how biography, memory and materiality interrelate and become important to dwelling is developed further. I also argue that this relationship is crucial to an understanding of what I have termed in this thesis *place as process of dwelling*, particularly in the way that memory and biography of both family and homestead are interwoven, not just as *aide mémoire* but in the way that both are mutually creative of identity, biography and memory itself. As outlined in the introduction, both dimensions of *lolwapa* can also be understood as distributed entities in time and space, which further highlights the process of social and material connectivity.

Regine Masake (Figures 10.3 and 10.4)

Regine (Plate 28) relates that when she first arrived in Wenela ward in Maun from Sankuyo village, she built a house for herself and her 4 young daughters to sleep in (A). Regine also had three young sons who stayed with relatives. Not long afterwards her eldest daughter reached an age for staying alone, so Regine built another house some distance away (B) since she was concerned about losing living space for her other children to other migrants. Some time later she built a house close by her for her third daughter (C), and then to the other side for her fourth daughter (D) (the second daughter preferred to stay in the mother's house). This daughter also started to build for herself (E) but was unable to get enough roofing materials (the rains destroyed it soon after). Over

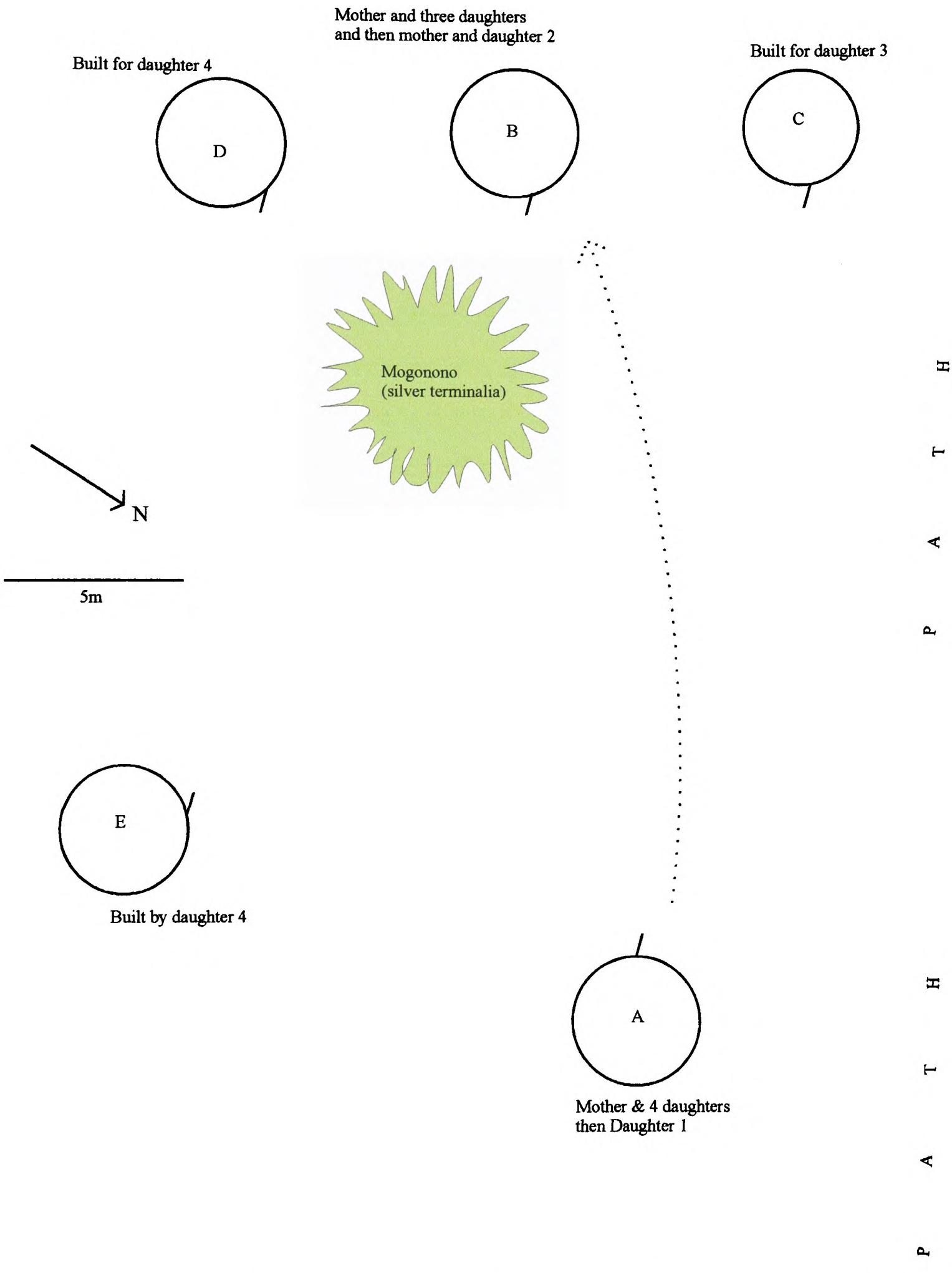


Figure 10.3 First generation of houses in homestead of Regine Masake, Wenela ward, Maun.

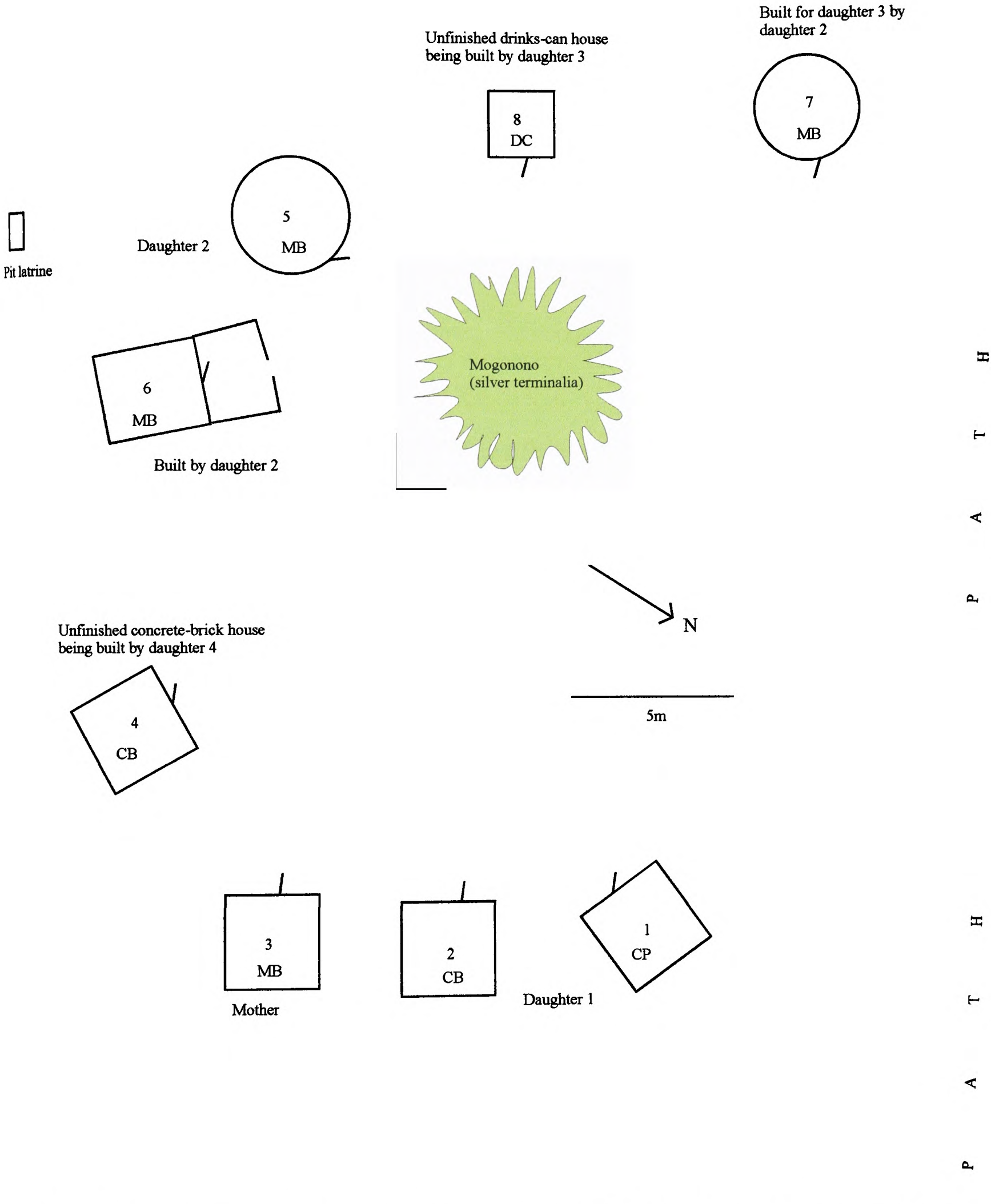


Figure 10.4 Second generation of houses in homestead of Regine Masake, Wenela ward, Maun.

the first ten years of dwelling the homestead extended itself from one house to five as the daughters grew and began to have children of their own. This was related to me as the first generation of the homestead, since all of them were replaced with a second phase.

The second generation began with the first daughter replacing the original house (A) with two new ones, one made from mud bricks (1) with concrete plaster, the other for her children made from concrete bricks (2), financed from her work selling traditional beer in a neighbouring ward. The mother then began to build herself a new square house (3) with a corrugated iron roof (due to cost of thatching grasses) next to her first daughter. The fourth daughter, having failed to build an *ntlo ya setswana* nearby next began building an *ntlo ya sekgoa* (4) which at the time also stood waiting for a roof, but this time would not be destroyed by rain. The second daughter, having eventually built her own house (5) also built a square one with an iron roof next door for herself (6), in which her children and others stayed in occasionally. Regine was staying here at the time, since she was waiting for someone to finishing plastering the floor of her new house (3). The second daughter also built a new house (7) for her sister (Daughter 3), who then set about 'learning how to build' by starting a drinks-can house (8), which was not finished. The first daughter has now got her own plot in Botsabelo ward for herself and her children, and two of Regine's sons have been staying in the vacant houses, one of whom is a policeman, the other one comes and goes to his farm lands where he has a wife. Regine rents out this house most of the time.

The way I approached householders such as Regine was to ask whether they could remember the building sequence of their homestead, and I certainly did not expect the idiom of generations. My first impression was that it was a metaphor used as a mnemonic, a frame of reference in which the continual flow of dwelling was broken up - possibly to satisfy my enquiry about 'sequence'. Hoskins, asking a similar question of her own research, concluded that whilst she had been an

important part of the bringing-out of stories, this did not include the 'idiom that they were articulated in' (1998:3). Whilst this was my own conclusion, I was less sure that houses, like the biographical objects she describes, were merely 'storytelling devices' or a mnemonic for certain experiences. Whilst houses are in one sense (like Hoskins's 'memory-boxes') mnemonic containers for disparate elements of memory, they are arguably more than biographical metaphors in the way memory and materiality are temporally related as part of dwelling. The container interpretation of houses has been widely explored - Gell for instance writes that 'the house is a body for the body.. they are containers which, like the body, have entrances and exists.. cavities filled with living contents.. eyes which peer out through windows.. to enter a house is to enter a mind' (1998:252).

This sort of approach to the house misses the point that, especially in Botswana, the importance of the house is not necessary in its 'objecthood' but in its socio-spatial relation to other houses, its social and temporal positioning in a group as a homestead. It is here that I return to the notion of a distributed object in space and time, to recover the sense of the homestead as a separable, yet unitary entity as it is understood by people in Botswana. The house is a material and social 'cell' within the homestead, emergent from and temporally related to, the range of social activities within it. Regine's detailed explanation of the two main generations of her plot arguably represents something much more than a 'storytelling device' - *it points to a re-membering of the social and material dimensions of dwelling in which persons and houses are mutually implicated over time.* My argument is that one way of seeing genealogical memory in Botswana is as the re-membering (reassembling parts of) of a social entity (agnatic lineage, matrilineage etc) distributed over space and time, as constituted within the person. Re-membering genealogy is about separating oneself as much as it is about reassembling again. Regine's re-membering of building practices within her homestead is integral to this process of dividing and reassembling, of building separate houses for her growing daughters who thereby spatially and socially become detached parts or sub-units

within the homestead. This process continues with daughters also having children who likewise become detached over time in separate houses. The houses are all built so as to be in a line that communicates (i.e. a semi-circle), which is a common feature of the spatial arrangement of people at social gatherings in other contexts (the semi-circular enclosure of the *kgotla* or meeting area for instance). The material and social 'dividuality' of the homestead is a complex dwelling process, but can often be glimpsed at times when members come together to participate in collective tasks or talk, and then go about tasks separable from that of the family group. Re-membering persons and re-membering material indexes such as in the temporal homestead are mutually implicated processes, and, I argue, are a crucial context in which to understand the Setswana idiom of building 'generations' (*tshika*).

But just what constitutes the beginning of a new building generation in memory? For Regine, the transition is made by the first daughter's replacement of the original house - 'the first generation all fell down (*wile*), they were all replaced with new houses.. you see, the first house was dead (*e sule*)'. The second generation was felt to begin when houses began to be replaced rather than renewed, expressed as the 'death' of the house materially, and thereby as the passing of a material generation within the plot. The 'death' of a house is an expression of the transition of a house from everyday social interaction to that of memory - a metaphor of physical disintegration and re-assemblage through re-membering. With the 'death' and replacement of the original house, the second generation is seen to begin, and the sequence of replacement of older houses continues. In one homestead, that of Koi Motlalepula of Sanyedi ward, a second generation was identified, in which her three houses had their walls gradually replaced with tin cans. This sort of radical replacement seems to be understood as materially generational in a way that renewal is not.

What is particularly interesting from Regine's account of 'generation' is the perception of the 'death' of the original house and its replacement with another by the first daughter. This act of replacement then precipitates further processes of re-generation within the homestead (by the other daughters as well as Regine), which is then perceived as continuous to the present. In other words, 'generation' is perceived in memory as the precipitation of a process of 're-generation', which is importantly linked to the way that social activities within the homestead are constituted over time. Although Regine's narrative strongly suggests that her memory of 'generation' was essentially material, since the original house had 'died' and needed replacement, what lies behind this process is a significant alteration in the balance of social activities in the homestead. Going back to Regine's biography of the homestead, the process of re-generation began with her eldest daughter's building of two new square houses, both of which involved cash investment in concrete (one for plastering, the other for bricks). This represented the first building activity within the plot which Regine had not instigated as a mother, since the first daughter had financed her houses from selling traditional beer. With the daughter now involving herself in dwelling activities independently of Regine, building for herself and her own children, a significant shift in the way social and material relations are interrelated within the homestead had occurred. I am hesitant to describe this process as one of 'individuation' within the homestead, but it does seem to represent a complex shift in the way sub-units relate to each other as an entity.

The perception of a new generation of building can now be re-cast analytically as the interweaving in memory of the way social and material transitions are mutually related: the movement of dependent daughters involved in collective dwelling activities to relatively socially and materially independent relations within the same dwelling site over time. One argument is that the memory metaphor of the 'death' of the generation of houses that Regine built for her family stands for her status transition from material provider to that of a sub-unit within the homestead. The metaphor

of 'generation' thereby brings together the perception that material relations within the homestead are important to the way social relations are constituted over time, with the metaphor of 'death' of houses pointing to the way that both houses and persons are part of a single temporally distributed entity in memory. In this way, homestead and family biographies, both material and social dimensions of dwelling as *lolwapa*, are bound together as part of a mutually interpretative, or dialectical, relationship. This relationship within memory is an ongoing process of dwelling, but whilst in this case study I have concentrated upon Regine's re-membering of the homestead over time, this does not mean that temporal 'landmarks' in memory are necessarily highly subjective. The first daughter, for instance, related that she understood the next generation of building to have begun with her own building activity, confirming a processual understanding of memory that is importantly related to the way practices and activities are constituted over time, rather than *in the past*, which is implicit in static, event-focussed understandings of memory.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the relationship between memory, materiality and biography in the context of the temporal homestead in Ngamiland. Distinctions between *memory-in*, *memory-of* and *memory-as* have been made in the way memory and materiality interrelate over time. A central argument has been that houses as material culture are more than mnemonic or metaphorical containers of memory (Hoskins 1998) in the way they are involved with biography. Indeed, my argument in this chapter has been that processes of re-membering persons and houses (social and spatial relations) are mutually interconnected. The indigenous notion of *generation* (*tshika*) has been examined to show how such material (spatial) and social relations are mutually implicated in the construction of both memory and biography.





Plate 26 (top) Anderson Willy of Boseja ward, Maun, with his wife and daughter.

Plate 27 (bottom) House made from recycled materials, Wenela ward, Maun.



Plate 28 Masake family, Wenela ward, Maun.

Chapter Eleven

Conclusion: From Dwelling to Building (and back again)

The central question that I posed myself in the introduction to this thesis was: what is the relationship between building activity and the notion of dwelling in a given landscape? I have gone about answering this question through an awareness of differing scales of dwelling within the landscape. In its three sections the thesis has broadly tried to grapple with both the region, the locality (settlement and its interconnectivities within the landscape), and the homestead, as its three main scales of analysis. In large measure these scales of analysis were suggested by the fieldwork experience, in which differing spatial scales of dwelling were constantly implied in the fluidity of both people and places within the landscape. The somewhat intractable question remains as to how much this fluid notion of dwelling scale may equally apply to other landscape contexts elsewhere. Perhaps it is as much as I can do in this thesis as to suggest that as much as the fluidity of scale was particular to dwelling in Ngamiland, such fluidity is likely to exist elsewhere, especially in the very relevant contexts of migration, movement and social networks that exist in many parts of the world, as examined in transnational, migration or refugee studies. Fluidity does not mean temporary relations to place, and indeed often works to reinforce notions of social permanence within the landscape. The conflation of fluidity within the landscape with temporariness and sedentism with permanence in the colonial imagination sometimes finds contemporary expression for instance in understandings of the social meanings of material durability. The fact that durable materials are often more of an index of temporary or uncertain relations to place than a house that needs frequent renewal and an ongoing engagement with place is often unacknowledged. An

awareness of scale is not just a heuristic device but also essentially part of experience, of how the whole body understands movement, connection and place.

The questions I posed in my introduction bear an obvious relation to that which Heidegger set himself in his 1951 lecture *Building Dwelling Thinking*, that is: 'what is it to dwell? How does building belong to dwelling?' (1993:347) to which he offers the answer 'building is really dwelling' (1993:350) and 'the essence of building is letting-dwell. Building accomplishes its essential process in the raising of locales by the joining of their spaces' (1993:361). So for Heidegger *building as letting-dwell* is predicated upon *dwelling as letting-build* or for that matter *letting-think*. Thinking and building both *belong* to dwelling he argues - dwelling is the basic character of our Being. However, from an anthropological perspective, the importance of building to letting-dwell as well as in the process of place formation (raising of locales) needs to be questioned. How do these notions fit with how peoples such as the San dwell? Research into gatherer-hunter societies has long suggested that complex social landscapes (such as the ancestral and mythological landscapes of Australian aborigines) and a host of places within them exist in the absence of elaborate building traditions. Although building firmly belongs to dwelling, the belonging of dwelling to building and built places is somewhat more problematic.

Heidegger's notion of dwelling as a philosophical characteristic of Being is quite distinct from that explored in this thesis, which seeks to form an understanding of dwelling through the social and material processes within a particular landscape. To be a useful notion anthropologically, it surely has to concern itself centrally with how social relations are embedded in the temporality of landscape, how it contains certain forces (such as centrifugality and centripetality) relevant to social activity, and how its own inherent processes, such as place and materiality, are important to our understanding of sociality and social relations. It has been my assertion in this thesis that a

developed understanding of these processes of dwelling enables us to analyse the temporal relationship between social activity and materiality, processes of place and emplacement, as well as the integrated social landscape. Without a developed notion of dwelling, analyses will continue to overlook the social and material forces inherent in the everyday. Indeed, the everyday lies at the heart of the notion of dwelling developed in this thesis. Whilst much anthropology claims for itself an understanding of the everyday, it has only rarely attempted to theorise it. In this thesis I have chosen to search for what forces or processes might be revealed if we take the everyday as our starting point. However, dwelling should not be considered a theory as such but a perspective or context in which to understand social activity. As such it does not seek to 'explain' phenomena, or be explained by phenomena, but rather to open up ways of examining the everyday processes at work in a given locale. As the context for social activity (such as building) in the landscape, dwelling is (as Heidegger suggests) a basic characteristic of our being-in-the-world. What I have tried to argue in this thesis is that dwelling is more than a static ontological context for social activity - it contains its own dynamic processes and forces within the landscape, that can be seen to exert an influence in the way activities, material forms and places are temporally structured.

This thesis has of course chosen to limit its investigation of dwelling to its dynamic relationship with building. However, in doing so I have not claimed for building a unique quality of letting-dwell (as Heidegger implicitly argues). Nor have I attempted to define what building activity might include or indeed what dwelling might mean cross-culturally. I began research in many ways to explore the close relationship assumed between dwelling and building conceptually, especially the notion that building is letting-dwell in some fundamental way. This thesis has been an exploration of the temporal relationship between dwelling and building, and indeed the theme of *permanence* continued to gain prominence throughout my enquiry. The question I have asked is: if the close relationship between dwelling and building is conceptually centred on the notion of

permanence within the landscape, can we usefully distinguish between social and material permanence, and what are the implications of this for our understanding of dwelling? Interestingly, Casey notes two roots for the word 'dwell' - the Old Norse 'dvelja' which meant to tarry, delay or linger, and the Old English 'dwalde' which meant to go astray or wander. Most of the chapters of this thesis have tried to understand these two forms of dwelling, of fixity and fluidity, within the context of Ngamiland. To accept both these notions of dwelling challenges the ready assumption that building as permanence is letting-dwell in a way that fluidity is not. The evidence from Ngamiland presented in this thesis has suggested that dwelling is crucially related to both fixity and fluidity, and that social permanence is separable from material permanence in the landscape.

Temporality and notions of permanence have been key themes therefore. The related dimension is that of space - what can we say about the way dwelling is spatially expressed? For reasons I discussed at length in the introduction, I have chosen place instead of space as a way of understanding dwelling as process. In chapters nine and ten I returned to space and the notion of interstice as a way of examining the specific material relations between houses and homesteads. Place as process of dwelling has been an important theme that I would ideally wish to expand upon and investigate in more depth. The distinction has sometimes been made between buildings and dwellings, and between built places and dwelling places. Heidegger for instance argued that 'dams and market halls are built, but they are not dwelling places. Even so, these buildings are in the domain of our dwelling [that]..is not limited to the dwelling place' (1993:347). What links building to dwelling eventually he argues, is that building has dwelling as its goal - all building activity is aimed at furthering our dwelling in a place. Casey likewise notes that 'just as building and dwelling are distinct activities that nonetheless often combine in fact, so built places and dwelling places overlap without being co-terminous...[F]or built places to be dwelling places, they must be reaccessible over time and have felt familiarity ' (1993:114). But are both these understandings

necessarily always the case? Semantically, both understandings stress that the quality ascribed to dwelling is social fixity within the landscape (*dvelja*) rather than fluidity (*dwalde*), with overtones of domesticity and belonging. As such, many of these characteristics of dwelling are close to what we might mean by inhabitation. The relationship between inhabiting and dwelling is beyond the present discussion, but both stress the importance of place as not only the context for social activity, but also the medium. Social activity through place, or place as process of dwelling, is an argument I have developed through this thesis as one way of understanding everyday social and material relations. Importantly, my own notion of the process of place is grounded in the temporal fluidity of social activity rather than fixity. Through analysis of the particular social and material relations of Ngamiland homesteads, I have suggested that both fixity and fluidity as dimensions of dwelling are crucial to the temporal understanding of place. I have termed this the 'otherplaceness' of dwelling, to suggest how places embody the wider social and material connectivities within the landscape. Without pathways there can be no places, and this shows how important process is to the understanding of place.

In chapter six I examined the particular set of interactions between materiality, permanence and dwelling brought about by the use of concrete in everyday building activity. The case study of the Mbanderu explored how material durability and permanence interrelated with other cultural practices connected with movement and fluidity within the landscape over time, such as burial and cattle keeping. The material durability of concrete was shown to have had a significant influence upon such practices, such as movement of houses within the homestead, as well as homestead movement in the landscape. Throughout chapters five and six, place and materiality were seen as highly influential processes of dwelling for the Mbanderu of Lake Ngami region, in which the taskscape was interwoven and reconstituted over time. After examining in detail how the social landscape (*ekondua rimue*), settlement form (*onganda/ohambo*) and burial (*onganda/etundu*) were

closely interwoven with dwelling over time, the case study of Sehitwa described how changes in dwelling context or taskscape had led to multi-locational strategies, with the former cattle homesteads retained as village compounds and new cattle camps built some distance away. Analysis of the former cattle homesteads in Sehitwa showed a strong element of continuity in building practice, even with the cattle long gone, something almost entirely absent in the case study of Herero village. In Maun, occupation in Mabudutsane or Herero village is consistently perceived by most Mbanderu as a *permanently temporary* base for access to services and commerce. The argument that I presented was that place can here be witnessed as an important process of dwelling - exerting a temporal influence upon it. Mabudutsane then is not just a product of the range of social activities in which the Mbanderu engage with in Maun, although the restricted nature of such activities is reflected in building practices. Importantly, Mabudutsane is also an influential process in the way Mbanderu engage in social activities over time, involved in the process of socialisation. One particular argument is that Mabudutsane has been an important dimension of reproducing notions of social and economic marginalisation among the Mbanderu and Herero of Ngamiland. An important factor in this is how understandings of long-term displacement (from Namibia) are reproduced in material relations in Botswana, such as willingness to invest in durable materials. Analysis of building practices in Mabudutsane suggests how places may both reproduce and produce such understandings of marginality into the future through socialisation. Almost entirely absent of fences, Mabudutsane is frequently described by Mbanderu as the place of one interrelated family. Such understandings of kinship, expressed in close building relations and absence of boundaries, are arguably heightened through the context of place - being in a Tswana village.

The discussion of place, materiality and permanence in chapter six suggested that from a dwelling perspective although material durability, with its own temporal properties, was an influential factor in social and cultural activity, relations to place and notions of social permanence in the landscape

are often far more complex. Several aspects of social relations to place were considered, including investment, understandings of land tenure, inheritance and the frequent migration between sites. The argument was presented that investment in durable materials for building was often restricted due to people's uncertainty about the permanence of their relations to place, whether in the family homestead or in a ward of the village. Continuing the theme of chapter five, I suggested that a context of *permanent temporariness* was a characteristic feature of many people's dwelling experience, where future relations to place were highly uncertain. However, another interesting dimension that I was unable to explore within that chapter are the notions of possession and individual/group relations.

Possession

Since concrete buildings involve individual cash investment, are often not made using collective labour but by local builders, and retain cash value as property or rental units, they are quite different from buildings that emerge from group dwelling activities involving materials gathered from the local environment. As the 'property' of individuals within a wider social group, does this mean that they are part of a process of establishing exclusive rather than inclusive relations both to things and to other people? Certainly the dichotomy of inclusivity and exclusivity is inherent in any analysis of possession, since, as Strathern (1999:155) notes, it resonates with the western conceptualisation of the individual within society. Petchesky (1995) for instance argues that communal land relations in Europe were inclusive and provided the framework for self-creation, embedded within the community. Rather than suggesting that *mantlo a sekgoa* are involved in a process of producing exclusive rather than inclusive relations, they should be understood as embodying a variety of social and material relations. Whilst the role of the individual is highlighted in the biography of *mantlo a sekgoa*, collective and inclusive relations are usually also present in a variety of forms. In this way, whilst *mantlo a sekgoa* often appear to highlight a

process in which dwelling is increasingly characterised by individual, cash-based relations, it may just be that the contexts of collectivity in which it is embedded have become less obvious.

Strathern (1999) develops a similar analysis of possessive individualism in her discussion of Foster's (1995a, 1995b) distinction between the collective and possessive individual in Melanesia which he links to individual ownership of diffuse national aspirations. Strathern (1999:107) argues that although this sort of distinction is often part of indigenous narrative, there is a concealed set of relationships inherent in the self-orientation of the possessive individual toward 'society', 'the nation' etc, evident in the sorts of generalised qualities they claim as their own ('I'm like all those people etc.'). This relational capacity, in which objects are personalised through acts of consumption, Strathern sees as a displacement of Melanesian relationism rather than its antithesis - that it could be understood as a recontextualisation of indigenous social relations rather than a transformation of them as such. This relational capacity, she argues, can be characterised as producing composite persons rather than collective ones - composite in that persons are involved in differing sorts of social relations in different contexts in different places. I would argue that just as persons are increasingly composite in terms of the types of social relations and modalities they contain, so are the houses and homesteads in which people live. A concrete house is usually a product of both individual investment and group activity, and as such is dynamically influential in how such relations are experienced and reproduced in the future.

Analysis of concrete houses has the potential of contributing to the debate about individual and dividual personhood in the way in which they are involved in group and person relations within the homestead. In particular I argue that *mantlo a sekgoa* are involved in a process whereby individual and 'dividual' contexts or modes of dwelling are mutually supporting. Houses are an element within a homestead as individuals are within a household or other group. The evidence of

investment in houses in Maun suggests that the context of *individual* status and identity (which is often read into such building activity) is one that is inextricably bound-up with group dynamics. In other words, the building of such houses is a process whereby individual and dividual modes of being are engaged with and reconciled. I am in agreement with LiPuma (1998) who argues that all cultures necessarily contain both individual and dividual modalities of personhood, and indeed that persons can be said to emerge from a tension between these aspects over time. Importantly, LiPuma argues that the ethnographic goal is to identify the conditions under which certain aspects of personhood are brought to the fore, such as the possessive individual, or the collective dividual. He identifies a 'dual person' (1998:60) that resonates closely with Strathern's 'composite person' - personhood as the capacity for heterogeneous types of relations. The day-to-day manner in which such modes of being are engaged with is *dwelling*. The homestead in Maun is not simply a site for the playing out of individual/group relations, but rather a process of dwelling that establishes how persons and groups become mutually involved and are understood. I will examine my argument that group dynamics establishes individuals as part of dwelling through two case studies from Maun.

The homestead of Koi Kadisa in Sanyedi ward is perhaps only a hundred metres from her parents' old home, where she was born. She had three daughters and two sons, and two of the daughters still live in her homestead with their children. At one end of the plot is a two-room concrete building, set some distance apart from the enclosed grouping of mud-brick houses that forms the core of the homestead. It was placed here, she stated, since 'concrete houses need a space of their own'. The concrete house belongs to Koi, although she does not live in it, preferring to stay in one of the mud-brick houses in the *lolwapa*. 'The schoolchildren (grandchildren) are living inside it, but when I can no longer renew my house I will move into it. This is why I built it, since I was afraid of illness'. In this sense, investment in concrete seems to represents uncertainty on both an

individual and collective level - will I be able to renew my house in the future and will others provide help? Koi's concrete house helped resolve future uncertainties through individual investment. An elderly Herero informant in Wenela ward, Rra Metujo, also stated that he had never bought building materials before, but had decided to build a one-roomed concrete house since he was concerned about how age would affect his ability to renew his house, and since his son had migrated to a distant town. Without any cash, he took some work for a short time to buy the bricks and labour. In a neighbouring plot, Regine Masake sells beer for a living, and is gradually building a concrete house behind her own. 'I am building a new house behind this one with some money that I save each month to go and buy bricks' she stated, 'and I have also hired a builder to make some bricks with concrete. It is going to be a two room house and I am going to rent it out to get some extra income'. For her, concrete is seen as a way of resolving the uncertainties of cash income from beer which is notoriously unstable, since *mantlo a sekgoa* are perceived as particularly suited for rental purposes. In some plots, such as that of Kathiko Setamorago in Wenela ward, migrant family members invest in concrete buildings for their relatives in order to provide them with rental income. This popular practice allows the person to become a provider of cash to relatives through investment, thereby raising their own status as an individual who provides for kin.

Rather than being evidence of increasing social permanence and certainty in the urbanising place, such investment reveals how concrete is perceived as a way of coping with increasing social fracture and uncertainty in the context of family migration, illness and increasing reliance on cash employment. However, I later learned that Koi had built the house with cash provided by her daughters who were employed. Since, in Maun, households are increasingly concerned with collective consumption rather than production practices, the circulation of cash is important to how

individuals and groups interrelate, fulfil social obligations and gain social status and respect. Koi's concrete house can be seen as a composite of the dynamic relations between individual and group.

Choices and limitations

So far in this conclusion I have discussed some of the central questions outlined in the introduction - how they have been addressed in the thesis and how the evidence of building practices in Ngamiland contributes to a developing understanding of some key themes such as dwelling, permanence, materiality and place. However a thesis is inevitably limited in its scope and choices are constantly made between sets of fieldwork data as part of the writing process. I was also keenly aware of this process during fieldwork, making choices between opportunities that emerged, and occasionally re-focusing enquiries in a different place or with another group. The term I used at the time to describe this process was *reflective serendipity* - the taking stock of situations and relationships in the field that are mostly unplanned and uncertain in direction. Occasionally this process of reflection would lead me to shift my fieldwork practice in a different direction. One important episode was at the end of a period of fieldwork in Shorobe region. Having the intention of returning, I was told by my research assistant that we would need to go to a traditional doctor before going to gain protection. Apparently some local rivalries had escalated with the presence of white researchers, and my host family had become suspicious of witchcraft by jealous neighbours. Fearing that real community problems might ensue, I decided not to return, but to refocus research in the Lake Ngami area.

There are areas of fieldwork that I have not been able to include in this thesis because of inevitable limitations, one of which was a period of research that I carried out in Sankuyo village in the eastern delta area in July 2000. This village lies north of the 'buffalo fence' - a veterinary cordon that separates cattle-keeping areas from wildlife areas of the Okavango. A previous village site

was abandoned some twenty years previously when the government provided a bore-hole at a new site along the ridge of an old river channel. People relocated there from the old site, abandoning fields that were increasingly threatened by the increase in elephant herds in the Moremi game reserve and Chobe district. Instead they kept more manageable smaller fields (*tshingyane*) close to the new homesteads, which were built in a line along the ridge. The village now runs a Community Based Natural Resource Management[10] (CBNRM) scheme with photographic and hunting concession money going toward community schemes. The whole village is involved in this scheme through employment and decision-making over allocation and spending of accrued funds. One noticeable difference about this remote village is the state-of-the-art pit latrines that each homestead owns, paid for by the community scheme. The village is particularly interesting as a case study in how national policies (CBNRM) and service provision (such as water pipes, school and clinic) are incorporated as part of dwelling in a remote area. My research suggested that the village had become increasingly dependent upon external factors, especially the wildlife economy, with increasingly few engaging in agriculture. Many of the houses were empty, since the owners were employed for long periods at wildlife camps, or schooling in Maun or further afield.

I asked one man to take me to the old village site. After some time he stopped in amongst some palm trees and stated that we had arrived at the site. There were no traces of previous settlement, and this was a large village supporting a community of two hundred or more abandoned only twenty years previously. He pointed to where the fields used to be - no traces of field boundaries or even self-seeding crops. Of course for him the signs were everywhere, woven as they were with the memory of inhabiting this place. Descriptions of the old village suggested not only a very different material place, without concrete buildings, piped water or clinic offices, but a significantly different social existence also. At the old village many people spent much of their

[10] Overview at http://www.cbnrm.bw.

time together collecting water from a well some kilometres away, working in the fields below the village in the *molapo*, or working in the homestead. People spend little such time engaged in collective tasks in the new village, and indeed there was little about the new site that suggests a dwelling place in the sense of 'dvelja' - of lingering or tarrying - and everything that suggested 'dwalde' or the dwelling of wandering within the landscape.

I chose not to include Sankuyo as a case study in this thesis because of the necessary limitations of the thesis, but also mainly because I felt that the three weeks I spent in the village revealed the inherent problems of doing research in such villages with many migrant absentees. Repeat visits of a fairly long period would be necessary in order to catch up with migrants when they return for periods of time. Throughout my fieldwork I was always aware that a multi-locational approach was the most appropriate to the sorts of research themes I wanted to explore. However, this approach included significant limitations as well as potentialities, since there were relatively few households or places in which I was deeply or repeatedly involved over the fifteen month period - such ongoing relations were restricted to two main households, my host family and that of my fieldwork assistant. However, my approach was only relatively multi-locational, since most research was focused upon a single large settlement (Maun) and areas of the surrounding region (Ngamiland). Perhaps a better term for this sort of approach is *expansive* - building up a larger picture of social activity in an area through multiple examples. I think in a way this enabled a relatively *intensive* understanding of the nature of a place, that a more restricted (yet in-depth) set of data would have to exclude. Perhaps this argument is somewhat surprising given the emphasis on practice and temporality in the thesis, to which a more intensive fieldwork approach might seem better suited. However, there was an important sense in which the expansive approach to data brought relationships and themes to the fore that may have remained submerged in an intensive approach, such the perspective on materiality and pathways ('otherplaceness'), dynamic forces

within the taskscape of an area (centrifugal and centripetal tendencies), as well as a notion of dwelling scale that underlies much of the thesis. In most chapters I deal with the reality that all of my case studies are both unique and general. I decided in planning each chapter to focus upon case studies in order to 'ground' the discussion, and in particular to try and show how general themes could be explored in the particularities of one example. Choices between case studies were made on the basis of how efficiently they illustrated my general argument based on a much wider range of examples, given the limitations of a chapter.

An Anthropological Approach

This thesis has grown in a very organic manner, and it is perhaps appropriate to discuss its development, its situation with regard to other studies and approaches, and possible future trajectory. As a study of a region or of subject matter (such as building practice) it is perhaps unusual - the architectural or cultural studies reader interested in learning detailed information about building techniques, styles, symbolic systems and ethnic variation will be disappointed (although I did collect detailed building information), as will the social anthropological reader interested in kinship, exchange or other such core themes. It is also perhaps unusual in the way some chapters deal with similar sets of data or information in relation to different arguments and themes, as opposed to differing sets of data and a similar set of arguments. The main reason for this, as I discussed in the introduction, is that I took the position that to approach something such as 'dwelling' anthropologically, I would need to argue for its manifestation and social presence or force rather than its Being or essence. As I have already argued, I do not see dwelling as a theory as such but as a perspective (see also Ingold 1995) that can be taken on relations between place, materiality and social activity discussed throughout the chapters. In this sense, I have not attempted to develop a 'theory' of dwelling through evidence from Ngamiland, but rather to argue for a perspective on forces within the temporal social landscape. A key text for the development of

the approach I have taken in the thesis has obviously been Ingold's article 'The Temporality of the Landscape' (1993), which explores the notion of taskscape and its relation to landscape change over time. Although I began this section by saying I couldn't easily identify in the literature a close relative of my approach, in one sense it is an exploration of Ingold's article in an African setting, since the notions of temporality, place and social practice have certainly been key themes. What seems to distinguish the approach I take is a central focus upon materiality (building practice), as well as the argument that biography and memory are important to a dwelling perspective. There is a growing body of literature on some of the other themes that I have explored, such as the importance of pathways and the body to the temporality of place, as well as the dynamics of social practice. I also see a distinction between my discussion of the forces of centrifugality/centripetality developed in chapter nine, and the notion of centre and periphery or boundary as found in analyses of domestic activity such as that of Peter J Wilson (1988), since I am here concerned with the material dynamic of social practice rather than its spatial distribution in the first instance. The notions of centre and periphery for me are too static to be of real use as a way of analysing how the material homestead becomes spatially configured over time. After all, just about any activity has central and peripheral areas. If centre/periphery relations are peculiarly suited to the representation (mapping) of archaeological evidence of domestic activity, it becomes less useful in material anthropology where it is the material evidence in its social context that is considered.

As an approach, it perhaps interesting to ask what other research methodologies could have been used, what points I can now criticise about how I went about this study, and what I might change if faced with developing a future research agenda, or even what I might suggest as potential research themes and methods to a student. Thus far I have described my own research methodology as expansive rather than multi-locational, and in the introduction I described the contingencies of local opinion, expectations and comfortability with my presence and role as fieldworker, which

inevitably shaped my methodology. Although I soon established a daily practice easily digestible by my community, in which interviews and plan drawing were a central feature, it sometimes meant that follow-up visits were treated with suspicion. In short, agreeing to a role within the community to facilitate my research placed social limits on my activities, which I would strongly avoid if faced with a future research project, giving myself much more leeway in terms of how I interact. Something I have not yet mentioned is that my wife joined me for the entire research period, and that I found this to be extremely beneficial. With my wife I was able to talk to women especially more openly, and participated fully in two long marriage ceremonies in Maun as a married man, from which I would otherwise have been excluded. My wife was taught numerous skills around the homestead that the women were reluctant to show me, and which provided an important insight into gender activities, which I developed in chapter eight. I would also criticise the somewhat bitty nature of this study in terms of places and peoples, suggesting that this could be avoided if a discreet study area was carefully chosen in advance, such as Shorobe *Molapo* region. This would have the overall methodological advantage of coherence and continuity throughout the study, interweaving arguments through a similar set of reference points, as well as having the advantage of gaining a deeper perspective on change over the course of fieldwork.

Future research

The case study of Sankuyo village raised issues that I felt unable to deal with in the context of this thesis. The way people incorporate external contexts and factors (such as the role of government, national institutions, NGOs, tourism etc.) into dwelling and perceptions of place was interesting, but I felt ill equipped to properly address this set of agencies within my study. I probably come closest in my discussion of the process of urbanisation in Maun village in chapter eight. In this discussion I argue that rather than this process of culture change producing fragmentation and

alienation in a broad-based sense, people incorporate such processes of place as part of dwelling - a process facilitated by existing cultural resources identified as ancestral. People bring such resources to bear in the way they orient themselves bodily within the experience of place. Dwelling is thereby a process in which materiality and body are in a dialectical relationship over time, a relationship that forms the core of social practice, but which is less frequently analysed in itself. In chapter nine I also thereby explored how material relations (buildings within a homestead) were linked to bodily relations (orientation in social contexts) and how this link was important to understanding dynamics of social practice within the homestead. Future research could examine in more detail the way that the body is important to a notion of dwelling, and its dynamic relation to place and materiality. Some studies have attempted to take a phenomenological approach to understanding how the body and social space interact, such as that by Richardson (1982) who identified as 'factlike' and 'aesthetic' two differing modes of being within a place, respectively that of being-in-the-market and being-in-the-plaza. He similarly argues that it is the central relationship between body and materiality that is at the core of social practice, arguing that '[i]f material culture is the physical expression of the world in which we are, then defining the situation means how people incorporate material culture into the situation they are creating so that they bring about unity between the situation and the material setting' (1982:423). The emphasis is not upon agency or upon material culture as a nexus (Gell 1998) of social relations, but on how body (especially the kinaesthetic body) and materiality form a unity as part of dwelling. In chapter seven I suggested how both place and pathway were brought into unison from a dwelling perspective, both temporally related to how social practice and landscape are transformed over time. Both path and foot, cooking pot and hand, drum and ear, all form a unison in the context of dwelling. As I discussed in chapter ten, both somatic memory and perception are complexly interwoven (Kwint 1999) over time, and future research on how this dwelling relationship between body, material world and perception of place is likely to be highly revealing.

In Ngamiland, it is not only the urbanisation process within villages that could form the basis of such research but also how culture change, place and socialisation are temporally interwoven. One of the few anthropologists working in the central Okavango Delta, John Bock, has recently argued that 'children from the same ethnic groups separated by a few years and a few kilometres are having radically different lives resulting in major differences in the types of skill and knowledge that are embodied within them' (Bock 1998). I have also recently begun to think about the temporal relationship between perception, place and practice (Morton, C. 2002) and have sketched out a research agenda which focuses upon the emplacement (following Casey 1996) of perception and of technological skill. From this perspective I examined migrant building practices in Maun, especially the recycling of drinks cans, to suggest a homology between the development of this building practice and that of water-reeds in the Okavango delta. The argument is put forward that the Yei inhabitants of Maun have developed and favoured the use of drinks cans over the mud-brick technology of their Tswana neighbours because of identifiable perceptual links between water-reeds and drinks-cans. This suggests how our perception of materiality is *of* a place as well as *in* place, and that when people moved into new environmental contexts, the perceptual resources gained in one place are influential in how we go about coping, the skills we bring to bear and the choices we might make. Just as Parkin (1999) has argued how mementoes are transitional objects for displaced groups since they refer both to origins and to potential futures, research could also highlight the way that skills are transitional in the way they are both *of* a place and form the basis of coping in future settings and environments. This research would contribute to an understanding of dwelling since it would examine in detail both the body/material culture dialectic of places and settings as well as the way processes of place and social relations interrelate over time. Indeed the notion of fluidity and movement which has been a central theme of this thesis, I would see as

possibly being an important focus of such research, since it necessarily involves a developed understanding of the temporality of the social landscape.

In Ngamiland this research agenda could well be applied to the Etsha group of settlements in the western Okavango. Although a significant number of ethnically Mbukushu peoples have always lived in Ngamiland, during 1969 and 1970 around 4,000 Mbukushu refugees from the Angolan war were settled in a 100 square mile resettlement scheme around Etsha in the western Panhandle (Larson 1971, 1979). Thirteen villages, known as Etsha 1-13, were established according to 13 group leaders identified by the Botswana government as part of a process of resettling Mbukushu refugees from the Angolan civil war. There are several ways in which I see the themes developed here as forming interesting research with regard to these settlements. Firstly there is the process of resettlement itself - how people went about coping in a new environment and landscape using skills and knowledges gained elsewhere. What objects did people bring with them as refugees, and how were these items important in re-establishing dwelling elsewhere? I briefly visited the main village (Etsha 6) and found that a museum of material culture had been established some years previously. The custodian who unlocked this store and showed us around described it as a place of ancestral objects brought with them from Angola, a crucible of notions of ethnicity and identity, forged in the context of displacement in an alien social landscape. Are there generational differences in notions of place and displacement, and how have these notions been affected by over thirty years of dwelling in Ngamiland? Case studies of long-term displacement such as found in Ngamiland among the Mbukushu and Mbanderu are potentially important to our understanding of dwelling. For the Mbanderu notions of social impermanence in relations to place are bound up with historical social relations to their 'host' group (the Tswana), and expectations of return to Namibia. With each new generation, processes of social incorporation continue to affect the dwelling of Mbanderu people in Botswana, including socio-economic participation and investment. Both memory and

biographies of displacement would thereby be of importance in an analysis of the Mbukushu of Etsha, since strong memories of movement in the early 1970s would still be extant. One particular area of research in the Etsha villages could be the analysis of everyday skills - adapted, newly acquired or lost - as well as how the materiality of a new landscape has been an influence on social activities and thereby social relations. This research would add considerably to the sorts of themes developed in this thesis, but also add new ways of exploring the relations between place, practice and dwelling.

In chapter five I discussed how dwelling could also be interestingly explored through the sorts of semantic clusters associated with the experience of places. I discussed how the Setswana verb *go tlwaela* (to become used to, or familiar with, something, someone, some task) also forms such terms as *tlwaelana* (reciprocal action) referring to people becoming used to each other, and *tlwaelo* (noun formation), used in a similar way to the English word 'habit'. In that case I discussed how movement between differing places involved differing experiences, tasks, and approaches to dwelling, based upon differing sets of social activities, and material relations. This sort of socio-semantic analysis of the experience of landscape could be usefully extended. In chapter five I argued that the raised consciousness of *go tlwaela* was related to coping with both an increasingly diverse set of material and social relations within the landscape, and a lack of familiarity with such changing contexts. Another important semantic cluster, which I noted in chapter seven, is the set of meanings attached to the Setwana verb *go nna*, which Matuma translates as 'to sit down, stay, dwell, live, occupy, inhabit, be' as well as indicating the first person pronoun 'I' or 'me' (Matumo 1993:287). There is much of interest in this semantic cluster, which obviously involves a unification of notions of being and dwelling. The notion of sitting, staying or resting, that is also an important everyday aspect of *nna*, brings to mind the etymology of dwelling as the Old Norse *dvelja* (to linger, delay, tarry) as discussed by Casey (1993:114). But perhaps the most interesting

aspect of *nna* is the way dwelling and being are both identified with self - that self is defined by a notion of being that is also inherently dwelling. Within *go nna* a semantic cluster unfolds that evokes the sense that the place-world is an integral dimension to social becoming. But as I discussed in chapter four, it is *go aga* (to build) that gives Setswana some of its most important and delightful terms of dwelling, from *go agêlêlana* ('to become neighbours, share joys and sorrows') to *go agana* ('to prop one another up, spiritually, materially') (Matumo 1993:2). As I mentioned in chapter seven, in everyday language the question 'where do you live?' is often phrased 'O agile kae?' or 'where have you built?'. I believe this usage reflects a social concern with places of origin, with migrants popularly maintaining social linkages through building activity. In a country and time of high population mobility, the question 'where have you built?' is the one most likely to elicit a place of origin, which often implies ethnic and other identities. Although I have tried to explore where relevant some of the socio-semantics of dwelling in this thesis, it is an area of further research that I feel would contribute strongly to the thematic analysis developed in this thesis.

As a research agenda, I would highlight an approach to understanding how materiality and material relations are crucial to the way we interact with and gain familiarity with places, and how important such bodily knowledge of place is to dwelling. Such research would obviously draw upon such concepts as *habitus* (Bourdieu 1977) and taskscape (Ingold 1993) which have been discussed at points in this thesis, as well as *availableness* and *occurentness*, Heidegger's description of (to simplify it somewhat) our relative familiarity and unfamiliarity with our engagement with our material surroundings. An understanding of how materiality and place can be understood as processes of dwelling from this close analysis of skilful coping, its interpenetration with social relations, and the transformation of place over time, can be identified as key themes of research extending from this thesis.

A Final Evaluation

My 1998 project proposal to the Economic and Social Research Council was to examine how recycling practices, especially building practices, within an informal settlement in Gaborone, could be related to skills, technologies, aesthetic systems, and perceptions of environment gained in other places, and as such was to be a study of migration and material coping practices. I planned to work in an urban squatter area in Gaborone with another fieldwork site in the village of Mochudi to the north-east. Soon after arrival in Gaborone the Botswana government began to remove squatters from one identified field site, the Mogoditsane area, claiming that the residents were settled 'illegally'. There was considerable dispute over the action, involving the local council, residents and the media (See Appendix A). This was more of a difficulty for the residents of Mogoditshane who had lived there since 1992 than it was for me, since I could re-think my fieldwork location. However, I began to receive advice from academic colleagues at the University of Botswana that safety and access could become a significant research issue in informal settlement in Gaborone, so I began to reconsider my fieldwork plans. After consultation with Dr. Onalenna Selolwane at the University of Botswana, I decided to return to a place I had visited in 1996 (Ngamiland) documenting a drinks-can building style (Coote, Morton and Nicholson 2000:9). Dr Selolwane had close relatives in Maun who would be prepared to host us for the period of fieldwork. I planned to widen my study to examine building practices more generally in relation to the wider social landscape, a serendipitous shift of research direction, but one that in hindsight has been very beneficial to my own research interests.

In the introduction I posed the question of whether the themes explored in this thesis could be said to build up an overall sense of dwelling in Ngamiland, or whether it is by nature partial in its treatment of dwelling. I suggested that instead of considering the representation of dwelling as a

phenomenon (which the thesis avoids), an attempt has been made to outline how dwelling as an approach might be considered. There is of course an important everyday sense in which dwelling is considered a holistic dimension of social being, toward which social enquiry could conceivably work toward describing or understanding. I do not really consider this thesis as having set out to do this, as having painted a picture of dwelling in Ngamiland. Rather, the intention has been to try and identify some important processes, forces and dynamics within dwelling, and how they are complexly interwoven over time with materiality and place. Perhaps a more accurate evaluation would be one that explored just how partial any analysis of dwelling must be. For instance, both during fieldwork and in this thesis I have focussed analysis upon the experiences of certain groups and certain locales. Just how different my discussion would have been had I done fieldwork with the San groups in the Okavango Delta for instance is an important question. What if I had stayed in another large village, such as Nokaneng in the western Delta? Whilst these are interesting questions, I think they are no more applicable to this study than to any other anthropological analysis. The attempt has not been made then to represent 'dwelling' in Ngamiland in any complete way, but rather to describe some key processes and themes that are integral and emergent from dwelling, such as materiality, place, movement, pathways, settlement etc. all of which arose from analysis of aspects of social life in the region. As I reflected upon in the introduction, this approach developed out of a relatively expansive rather than intensive fieldwork methodology, building up a fairly large sample of homesteads as data, from which the processes identified in the chapters were seen as important and emergent features. This methodology could be understood as intensive in the sense of data gathering, and I believe that it was the repetitive process of drawing homestead plans and observing variations in both social and spatial patterns that informed the analysis of the thesis. Living closely day-to-day with two households also meant that the data was brought back into a domestic context at the end of each day, and discussed with my host family. This period of reflection at the end of the day was of real interest, since their perceptions of my

own ethnographic representations of encounters (such as a plan drawing) were different to my own, and were read differently.

Finally I would like to comment upon the thesis as a whole enterprise in which preparatory study, fieldwork, analysis and writing are bound up with sets of social relationships both within and outside those it purports to analyse. In this moral sense a thesis cannot be so easily concluded, since it is both a product and a nexus of social relationships. Evaluating this thesis as a whole enterprise means understanding how the thesis as such a nexus has operated, and how, both as product and process, it can be judged. My initial fieldwork plan was to include participation in an ongoing project with the Dept of Sociology at the University of Botswana, entitled 'Recovering the Legacy of Schapera', intended to update the analyses of household data begun by him in the 1930s. On arrival however, my contact Prof Suzette Heald was preparing to leave Botswana and the project was lacking direction. We had originally planned together that part of my fieldwork would be to update household data on Rampedi ward, Mochudi (see Figure 9.14). Given that this would have contributed to updating probably the most historically important set of data on household and settlement in southern Africa, my own study feels rather idiosyncratic. However, although the updating of such sociological data is important work for students to participate in, my own research interests in material culture, landscape and dwelling are quite distinct from this approach to settlement and in hindsight it was a positive action to move away from this project and focus upon my own.

For me, the process of judging my thesis as an enterprise is only just beginning. I have tried to think of some unusual ways in which my presence there for fifteen months contributed to the communities with whom I worked. I employed a young man (Boitlhoko Kgalalo Garebakwena) just out of school for a year as my assistant. I hope that this was a beneficial experience to him, I

believe it was. When I was preparing to leave he had managed to get a job in the Safari industry (long his goal) with the help of a reference I had written. I was heartened by the Kgosi's positive attitude toward 'traditional' or chiefly representation for the Yei of Ngamiland, which they feel strongly about, and sincerely hope that he is successful in reforming the House of Chiefs to represent minority groups such as the Yei and others. My own small contribution to this process was to raise Kgosi Tawana's awareness of the Mbanderu people, who are mostly unknown or undistinguished from the Herero by many in Botswana. During fieldwork my wife Catherine worked with a newly opened day-care centre for orphans, many of whom had been orphaned by the AIDS pandemic, and many of whom were likely to be HIV positive as a result. I know that her work there benefited the children for as long as we were around, and we hope that local people have been encouraged to support it, the only orphanage as yet in a region and time of orphans. I think the opening of the orphanage challenged many local assumptions that the extended family system was coping with the problem as it had always done. The ongoing reality of AIDS in Botswana remains a context for all research in Africa today, and whilst I do not address it directly in this thesis, its effects on dwelling and coping are being felt everyday by many people. When we visited the village of Tsienyane (Rakops) my wife spoke to local hospital workers about the orphanage in Maun. Many observed that the problem of AIDS in Botswana lay in *go saba* (backbiting or gossip), a social problem that needed to be tackled first. Much of my evaluation of the enterprise lies ahead in the sorts of ways my own sets of experiences in Ngamiland are resolved, built upon, or returned to Botswana, and the sorts of potential projects that may emerge. One project that may come to fruition is the mounting of an exhibition at the small Nhabe Museum in Maun, which acts as a cultural centre for Ngamiland. The motto of the museum, painted on its sign outside the building, is 'stream of history' (*moedi wa ditso*) and it is into this stream that I hope to place some photographs of buildings, people and activities taken during fieldwork, exhibiting the strength and depth of people's resources in a time of widespread social change.

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BNA S483/6	The Question of Removal (of Chief's Headquarters) 1937-46
BNA S263/11	District Commisioner (Ngamiland) Annual Reports
BNA 203/11	Letter from H.C. Weatherilt to Government Secretary, Mafeking 3.8.1915
BNA S285/3/1	Minutes of meeting between District Commissioner Germond & Moremi III & tribe at Maun 20.9.1946

Appendix A

Newspaper articles relating to the Government of Botswana's removal of "illegal settlement" at Block 5, Gaborone.

Item 1 "City councillors condemn demolition of squatter camp"
Botswana Daily News, August 25th, 1999 no.159 page 2.

Item 2 "Squatters sue government"
The Midweek Sun (Gaborone) Sept 1st 1999 page 2.

Item 3 "Squatters resist eviction"
The Midweek Sun (Gaborone) Sept 15th 1999 page 2.

City councillors condemn demolition of squatter camp

By Thomas Nkhoma

Gaborone City councillors have condemned the decision to demolish a squatter camp at Block Five in Gaborone as a heartless and cowardly action by the government.

Speaking during a special full council meeting on Monday, the councillors disassociated themselves from the decision and further condemned government for engaging the council staff and machinery without their consent as a deliberate ploy to soil the good name of opposition led councils.

They say they were misled by being told that the squatters who would be affected by the exercise were those who had not put up any structure.

They argued that the action to destroy the squatter camp without an eviction order from the High Court was in contempt of court since there was a pending court case concerning the old squatters.

The councillors said although they did not condone squatting the action taken by government without a court order or notice was a flagrant disregard of the rule of law by a government which claimed to respect the rule of law.

They called on the government to expedite the servicing of land at Blocks 7 and 10 to alleviate the problem of accommodation in Gaborone.

Earlier on the council's Principal Attorney, Mr Jerry Moutswi and the City Clerk, Mr Kebonyemotse Koma had told the councilors that the action to destroy the squatter camp was entirely government's decision and did not involve the council.

They said the council was only asked to assist with manpower and equipment and the only person who could explain government's decision was the permanent secretary in the Ministry of Local Government, Lands and Housing.

In their comments, the councilors attacked the City Clerk office for taking decisions without consulting them or the Mayor, Mr Botshabelo Bagwasi.

Councillor Ezekiel Dube of Naledi South complained that the government was quick to act against its own people, but very reluctant to provide them with social amenities.

Mr Dube attributed the problem of squatting to the inability by the government to act promptly in land allocation, saying that some people have long applied for plots, but to no avail.

Councillor Bonang Mafoko complained that the government had the tendency to employ people without caring much about where they were going to be accommodated.

Councillor Richard Sechaba said the Ministry of Local Government, Lands and Housing had dismally failed in infrastructural development as some people had been on the waiting list for plots for more than 15 years now.

Mr Sechaba said the situation had also been aggravated by the fact that the Botswana Housing Corporation (BHC) had now gone commercial and Batswana could not be expected to buy houses when most of them earned -P600- and less.

He complained that as the councillor for the area he was not consulted on the issue.

Responding to some of their comments the city clerk, Mr Koma agreed with the councillors that they should have been consulted.

Mr Koma said he had been given the impression that the councillors were consulted prior to the action by government to destroy the squatter camp, but it had now surfaced that the consultation was not effective.

The camp was demolished because people had allocated themselves plots on state land. They also defied authorities' order to move out or face stern action.

The government has stated that it will continue to take tough action on squatters to stem-out illegal occupation of land.

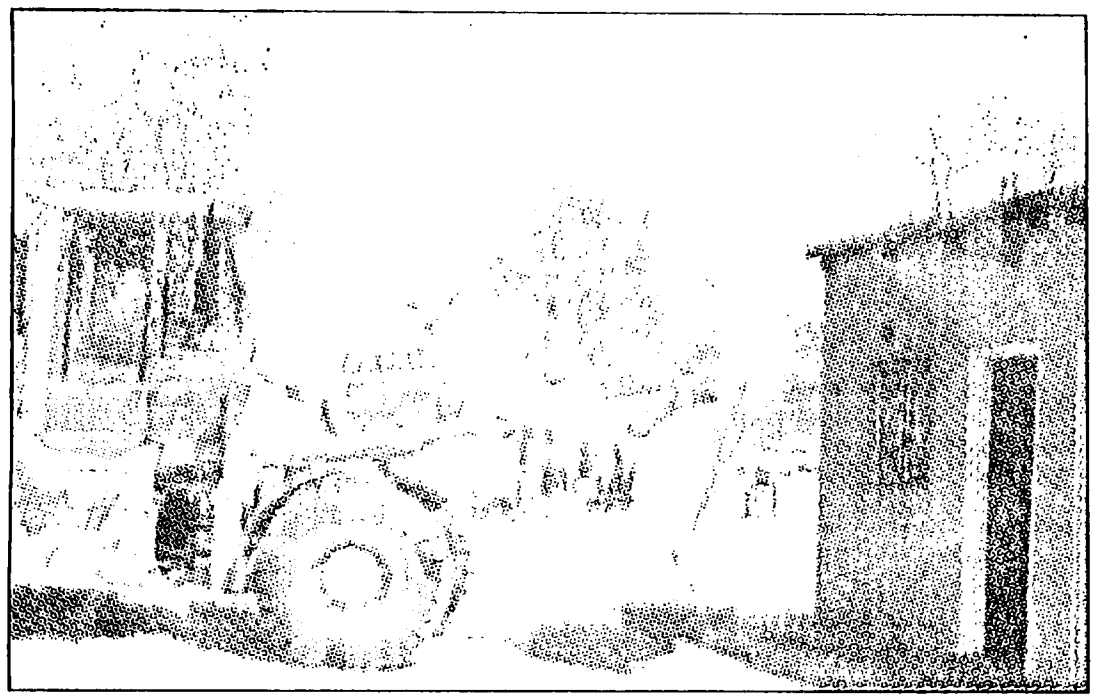
President Festus Mogae told a news conference last week that it was wrong for people to allocate themselves government assets just because they need them. He said there were procedures for applying for land.

BOPA



The Gaborone City Councillors in a session. The councillors have strongly condemned the demolition of the squatter camp next to Mogoditshane, by the Ministry of Local Government, Lands and Housing last week.

"Squatters" sue government



Mosekaphofhu squatters are taking government to task over the recent demolition of their houses

by Bashi Letsididi

IN THE unfolding saga over the demolition of some houses in Gaborone, the lawyer acting for the people whose property was destroyed, Patrick Kgoadi, says that they are planning to sue the government for over P5 million.

Kgoadi said that presently he is in the throes of drafting a writ of summons through which his clients are making claims for the violation of their constitutional rights, destruction of their property and loss of income.

"My clients have a constitutional right to shelter and that right was violated on the day that their houses were demolished. That demolition was done without any warning having been given to them. We will also be making individual claims for property that was destroyed," Kgoadi said.

Kgoadi also said that some families will make claims for loss of income resulting from the demolition of their houses.

"Some of the people were running kiosks and that was their only source of income. Now the kiosks have been destroyed and the people have no employment. Others were renting out their houses and they have lost income in the form of rentals."

Kgoadi says that the legal bill that they have calculated so far stands at around P5 million but there is every likelihood that it will rise as they are still assessing other areas of possible litigation.

He says some of the children who witnessed the demolition of their houses have been traumatised and they will have to get psychiatric assessment to determine the extent to which they have been affected.

He also says that there is every possibility that the children, some of whom are still at school, are going to have a hard time concentrating in their studies when the schools open.

The other litigation possibility concerns violation of privacy as the dispossessed have been robbed of their right to undertake private business undisturbed.

Kgoadi has already written to the Attorney General Chambers to register the protest of his clients. The history of the dispute goes back to 1992, when both the residents and the government made claim to the land.

The residents won the legal battle in April 1993 when the court decided in the favour of the residents. Subsequently they made an application through the court to be given title deeds.

When their houses were destroyed on August 16, the matter was still pending before the court and the demolition of the houses given the circumstances has been described by some as contempt of court.

Squatters resist eviction

by Bashi Letsididi

IF by demolishing the houses at Block 5 the government thought that it would succeed in driving out the Mosekaphofu squatters, it was gravely mistaken. A month after Gaborone City Council bulldozers razed some houses to the ground, the residents - who allocated themselves plots in state land - are staying put. Brand new shacks are springing up in this modern conveniences-free area. New plots are being cleared up and fenced. Others, which have not been developed, are studded with pegs, a sign from the owners that the land is taken.

After what happened last month, residents are not as welcoming to strangers as they were initially. There is cause to be suspicious. After the bungling of the demolition when houses that are subjects of a court case were destroyed, the government has resorted to psychological warfare. During The Midweek Sun's visit on Monday afternoon, two police vehicles and three others from the Surveys and Mapping Department were on the prowl. Loosening up somewhat one of the residents said that visits by the police as well as government officials were a daily occurrence.

Residents say they have no plans to move out because they have nowhere to go. Some of the new squatters only got plots recently and are still in the process of clearing them. One of this group, a middle-aged man who could only reveal that he comes from Bobirwa, spent the Monday afternoon debushing the 450 metre square plot he acquired last month.

The man says that he knows that another visit by the bulldozers is imminent but being a veteran squatter, he cannot be bothered.

"A similar thing happened to me some years back in Francistown when we were evicted from Masemenyenga. After that I rebuilt my shack. In about a month's time I would have built a shack and if it destroyed, I will build another one," the man said.

The man acquired his plot through the Mosekaphofu Squatters' Camp Committee, the make-believe 12-member land authority. The committee has been charged with the responsibility of allocating land to some 2030 squatters each of whom is expected to pop out P50. The money will go towards legal expenses because the squatters intend to take government to court in order to secure legal rights to the land.

However, the litigation plans might have to be temporarily put on hold following reports that the treasurer, Gilbert Mosekgwa might have misappropriated the money that was entrusted to him. Superintendent Oreeditse Mautle of Gaborone West Police Station confirmed that they are investigating Mosekgwa after some members of the committee forwarded a complaint on September 2. Mautle could not say exactly how much had been misappropriated, but a committee member puts the missing money at around P6 500. The acrimony of the case is such that last Monday, Mosekgwa was forced to go into hiding because some squatters called at his house baying for his blood.

But despite this setback there is no indication that the fighting spirit of Mosekaphofu residents has been dealt a blow. They know that self-allocation of state land is illegal but they collectively see justification for their action. The argument they have advanced throughout is that they have been impoverished by rented accommodation and they want plots in order to build their own houses.

That argument aside, the squatters know that they have taken a big gamble and they readily admit this. The chairperson of the Mosekaphofu Squatters Camp Committee, Mothusi Mosweu, has advised others that they should not build expensive houses because eviction is something that they will live with.

"If we develop our plots, they will not evict us. A similar thing happened in Ledumadumane. There were people who allocated themselves plots and only five houses were demolished while the rest of the structures were left untouched," Mosweu said.

The reasoning here is that if the squatters are eventually evicted from Mosekaphofu then they would be relocated in Block 6, 7, and 8 which are currently unoccupied.

The former MP for the area, Paul Rantao - who is campaigning for re-election - has come out in support of the squatters because they have nowhere to stay. Rantao says throughout the government's effort to get the squatters to vacate the land, he was never consulted and he was not party to the decision to have the people forcibly removed. He says that the demolition of the houses, rather than solve the squatting problem, actually compounds it.

"The government is treating these people like quelea birds. Each human settlement is characterised by different social activities, like trading, brewing beer and farming and you cannot just uproot people from their homes without giving them adequate notice," Rantao said.

He feels that it would have been better if the government had engaged in constructive dialogue with the squatters.



Moseka Phofu vowed to resist when threatened with eviction last month. They are now backing their vow with action by rebuilding what was destroyed.

Appendix B

Copy of permit granted for research in Botswana (August 1999- August 2001)
(OP. 46/1 LXXIII (51)

TELEGRAMS: PULA
TELEPHONE: 350800
TELEX: 2655 BD

REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
PRIVATE BAG 001
GABORONE

Ref: OP. 46/1 LXXIII (51)

April 13, 1999

Mr. Christopher Morton
St. Antony's College
University of Oxford
Oxford OX2 6 JF
U.K.

Dear Sir,

RE: GRANT OF A RESEARCH PERMIT: MORTON

Your application for a research permit dated February 2, 1999 refers.

We are pleased to inform you that you have been granted permission to conduct research on "Building and Dwelling in Urban and Rural Botswana: An Anthropological Study". The study will be conducted at Gaborone, Mochudi and Maun for a period not exceeding two (2) years effective August 1999.

The permit is granted subject to the following conditions:

1. Copies of any papers written as a result of the study are directly deposited with the Office of the President, National Archives (2 copies each), National Institute for Research, National Library Services, University of Botswana Library, National Conservation Strategy Agency, Ministry of Labour & Home Affairs and Ministry of Local Government, Lands and Housing.

2. The study is conducted according to particulars furnished in the application.

3. The research team comprises only Mr. C.A. Morton.

4. You work in liaison with local authorities at your place of study.

5. You obtain permission from concession holders where you wish to conduct the study.

6. The permit does not give authority to enter any premises, private establishment or protected area. Permission for such entry should be negotiated with those concerned.

Yours faithfully,

J. Sethibe
For/PERMANENT SECRETARY TO THE PRESIDENT

cc: Permanent Secretary,
Ministry of Local Government, Lands & Housing
Ministry of Labour & Home Affairs
Director, National Institute for Research
Director, National Library Services
Librarian, University of Botswana Library
Executive Secretary, National Conservation Strategy Agency
Government Archivist
District Commissioner, Kanye
Council Secretary, Kanye
Landboard Secretary, Kanye

JS/atm

Appendix C Fieldwork interviews

Ward	Village	No. of Interviews
Mabudutsa	Maun	30
Mabudutsane (Herero Village)	Maun	30
Matlapaneng	Maun	28
Sanyedi	Maun	22
Wenela	Maun	15
	Sankuyo	12
	Sehitwa	11
Boseja	Maun	11
Sedie/Saphane	Maun	8
Matomo	Maun	8
	Ghweghiri*	6
	Gabamutsha*	6
Thitoyamokodi	Maun	6
	Totoga*	3
	Xanxgana*	2
	Morutseng	2
	Shorobe	2
Newtown	Maun	1

*Shorobe *Molapo* Region