

Homesteads in two rural Zulu communities: an ethnoarchaeological investigation

by

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ABSTRACT

Archaeological research on second millennium AD agriculturist communities in Natal has sought to gain insights into built settlement patterns as well as their interactions with the natural environment. The research has shown that the anthropological literature on Zulu homesteads is inadequate for purposes of archaeological interpretation in various respects; for example there is little consideration for the range of possible variations or for quantitative or chronological parameters. We attempt in this paper to supply a suitable data base for comparison with the archaeological results. We also examine possible links between different characteristics of the contemporary homesteads, comparing two samples from different rural areas within KwaZulu. An attempt is made to interpret the observed patterns in terms of social, economic and environmental factors affecting these communities today, as well as to relate the patterns to the archaeological evidence of precolonial settlements.

INTRODUCTION

Iron Age studies by the Department of Archaeology at the Natal Museum have exposed the limited value of the published descriptions linking behaviour, social organisation and homestead patterns among the Zulu for interpreting Iron Age settlement patterns. Excavations of Late Iron Age sites in the interior grasslands of Natal and Zululand (Hall & Maggs 1979, Hall & Mack 1983, Maggs 1982, Maggs 1988, Maggs *et al.* 1986) reveal variations in homestead layout not accounted for in the literature on the Zulu (eg. Bryant 1949:74–76, Samuelson 1929:249–253 and diagram in between 144–145—quoted by Krige 1936:42–44), in which the uniformity of Zulu homesteads is emphasised and the variation among them is disregarded. As a result, we are poorly informed on the parameters of variation among Zulu homesteads as well as the factors that influence this variation. This research project was, therefore, established to investigate the interaction between the layout of contemporary rural homesteads and environmental and socio-economic factors, with the expectation that a better understanding of these relationships would improve the Zulu ethnographic record and in turn contribute to the interpretation of Late Iron Age settlements in the region.

Research areas

Two rural areas were chosen to investigate the possibility of regional variation in homestead layout. Since regional variation can result from either socioeconomic or environmental constraints, both were measured. We restricted the number of social variables under investigation, however, by avoiding the complications associated with differences in cultural affiliation. The studies were confined to Zulu-speakers

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who also professed to follow Zulu traditions. Social and economic factors thought to affect the organisation of space and, in turn, the layout of Zulu settlements were recorded. Two different environmental zones were studied because we wanted to observe how variation in critical resources such as the distribution of agricultural land and availability of building materials affects settlements. Since Iron Age studies indicate differences between settlements in the coastal lowlands and the interior grasslands, a research area was chosen in each of these environments.

The first area is in the savanna coastal hinterland where communities are still building homesteads similar to those most frequently described by nineteenth and early twentieth century travellers in Natal (Angas 1849:95, Bryant 1949:74 76, Fynn 1950:289, Grout 1864:96–97, Shooter 1857:11, Tyler 1891:41). According to them, in the lowland areas wood and thatch were used for building the 'typical' Zulu homestead, which consisted of a ring or a horseshoe of huts surrounding the central, circular, log-built cattle pen.

The broken topography and narrow ridges of this research area are covered with *Acacia* savannah. The narrow catchments provide little room for fields on alluvial or colluvial soil adjacent to streams. Therefore, many fields are located close to the homesteads, which are interspersed among the grazing lands. According to local informants, rainfall is the most critical variable affecting agricultural productivity, whereas location does not seem to matter too much. The research area is within KwaZulu in the Mhlathuze River valley near Eshowe (Fig. 1). Historically Zulu territory, it is still a rural area, and the life style of the community is largely conservative.

The second area is inland in the foothills of the Drakensberg range in the area currently occupied by the Zulu-speaking amaNgwe people. Historically the amaNgwe lived further north in Natal. They left the Hlobane area in about 1819 and were eventually settled in 1848 in the iNjesuthi River valley (Bryant 1929:155 181, Manson 1979:42–48, Wright & Manson 1983:16 39).

The area is high-altitude grassland (Fig. 2) with broad valley bottoms covered in colluvial soils. The wide iNjesuthi valley is separated from valleys to the east and west by steep ridges. Homesteads are located on sloping ground above the valley bottoms where most of the cultivated fields are situated. The grazing lands are on the steeper slopes above the homesteads. This land-use pattern tends to separate homesteads from their associated fields. Although cattle are allowed to graze around the homesteads and in the fields during the fallow season, the best grazing lands are at a distance from the homesteads.

This upland area adjoins that portion of the Thukela Basin where archaeological research has shown that Late Iron Age homestead layouts varied from the historical Zulu homesteads as described in the lowlands (Maggs 1982, Maggs *et al* 1986). Accounts by some early travellers who journeyed into the interior described the substitution of stone for wood in the construction of cattle pens in sparsely wooded areas such as this one (Bryant 1949:827, Gardiner 1838:307–308, Gibson 1911:2–3, Robinson 1900:204, Sanderson 1860:234). However, these sources did not include any additional homestead information other than that the cattle pens were circular.

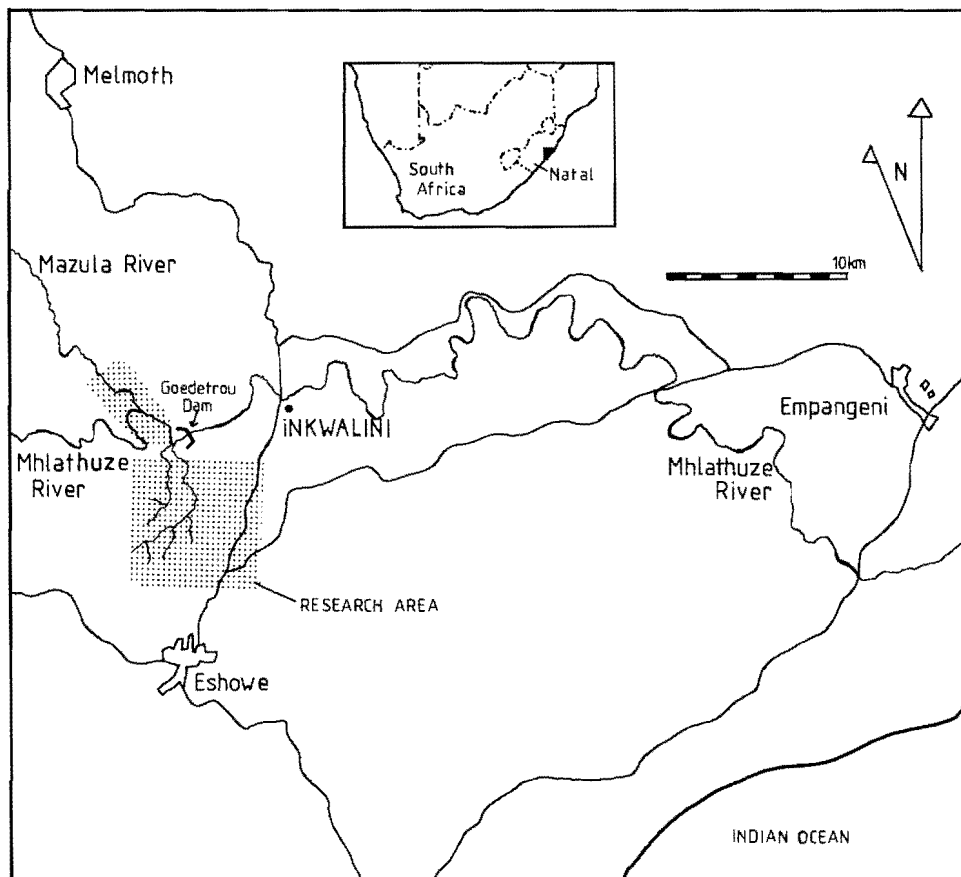


Fig. 1. Lowland research area iNkwalini.

Fieldwork

In this paper we discuss the findings of two separate field studies, one lasting from 1978 to 1981 and the other from 1983–1985. The first study (Mack) was an extensive survey of 100 homesteads while the second study (Oswald) was a more intensive investigation of patterns recognised in the first work.

The field work focused on those features most likely to survive in the archaeological record. Stock enclosures are the most common structures visible on Late Iron Age sites in Natal, while other features including middens, ash heaps, pits and hut floors are sometimes preserved. Aspects pertinent to archaeological investigation are whether these features relate systematically to one another; whether there is variation in the relationships between features and structures; whether the variation is patterned or random; and whether these patterns are directly related to the community's social or economic organisation.

In order to understand the dynamic relationship between the socioeconomic organisation and settlement pattern in each region, the field investigations and

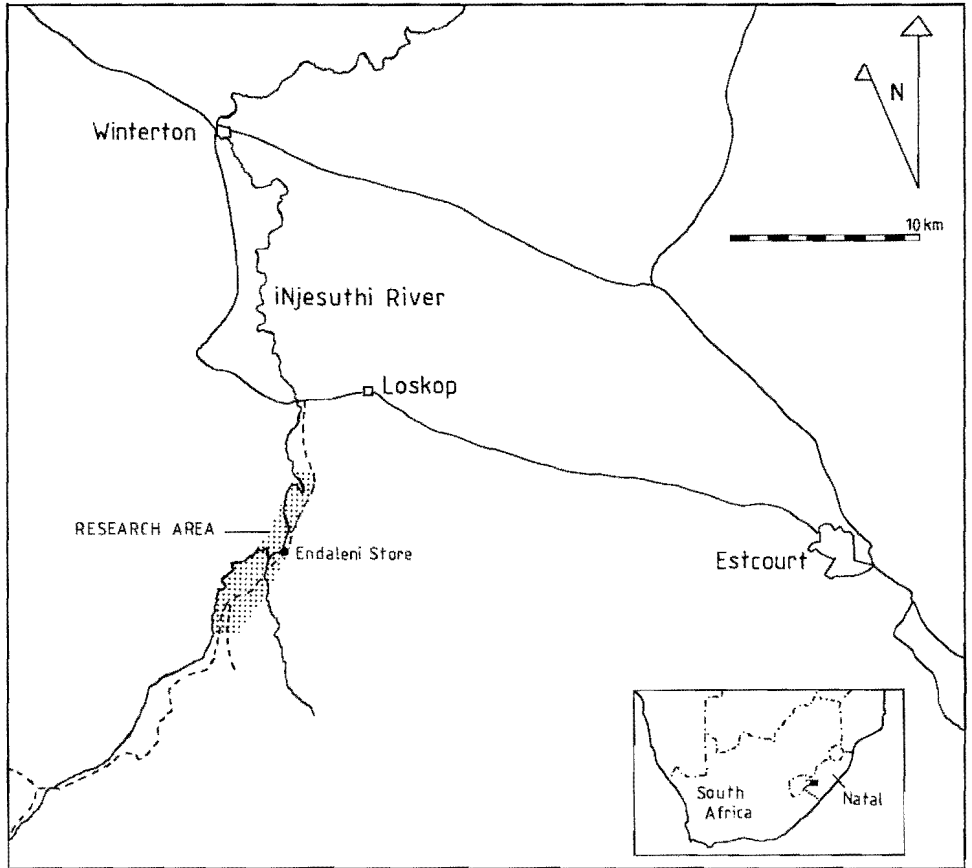


Fig. 2. Upland research area iNjesuthi.

analyses were aimed at accomplishing the following tasks: 1. To measure and map a sample of contemporary homesteads in each area; 2. To compare the layout of contemporary Zulu homesteads with descriptions in the earlier literature; 3. To assess whether terminology and associated behaviour has altered with recent changes in building style; 4. To collect detailed case histories of a range of homesteads; 5. To compile an oral history on the settlement patterns.

The interview schedules

Ethnographic and archaeological sources were used to guide observations and frame questions that would include information on the surrounding environment, socioeconomic organisation and settlement layout. Site location and aspect were recorded. Features found on archaeological sites, such as huts and stock enclosures were described measured and mapped. The schedules included standard ethnographic information on household composition (*vis-à-vis* the homestead head) so that life stages and genealogies could be established. Education, employment and religious status were noted for all family members in order to ascertain the kind and amount of urban influence in the study areas. Hut styles were recorded to

demonstrate the extent to which the historical style remained in use and to judge the effect of style on certain settlement patterns, while names of homestead and hut areas were noted to establish the relative persistence of terminology and associated customs. Finally, the focal point around which the homestead was arranged, the distribution of space for people and livestock, and the conceptualisation of this space were recorded so that the interaction between socioeconomic organisation and homestead layout could be better understood.

After the 1978 field trip a supplementary case study schedule of open-ended questions was devised to elicit information of a conceptual nature from informants within the sample who were willing to talk at greater length. Discussion was directed at finding out, for example, to what extent people anticipated their future housing needs in decisions made at the early stages of establishing a home. Another key point of concern was whether, in the context of changes such as building style or education, people continued to observe rules of respect appropriate in the older order.

Some of the homesteads included in the first study were revisited during the 1983–1985 fieldwork. New maps were drawn to show how the homesteads had changed in the interim. The unexpectedly large number of changes encouraged us to pursue the issue of change over time within homesteads. Thus a number of informants were interviewed about the history of their settlements from the construction of the first structure to the time of the interview. A factor of special interest was the many changes in function that some structures underwent during their lifespan.

The interviews

The procedure for completing the schedule for the first study was standardised in the following manner. Homestead composition (genealogies), details of education and religion, and numbers of livestock were recorded first, followed by site and homestead aspect. All structures were measured by tape and the distances between structures were measured by standardised pacing. Hut type and style and the huts' owners/users were recorded as each hut and its features were measured. In the amaNgwe community, because of the change in homestead layout and their several historical moves, informants were asked to draw in the sand the form of their father's or grandfather's homestead.

Four field trips were made over four years for the first study. In the iNkwalini area in November 1978, thirty-eight homes were visited and in June 1979 fifty homes were visited. This gave a sample size of 88 for the lowland community. The field work in November 1980 in the iNjesuthi area covered twelve homes. The interviews with the amaNgwe raised a number of questions which needed cross-checking in the iNkwalini area and a subsequent visit was made there in 1981 to eighteen of the homes from the 1979 sample.

The three sections selected in iNkwalini were made up of several neighbourhoods (*izigodi*). All homes in the Mazula River valley within reasonable walking distance of the confluence of the Mzula and Mhlathuze Rivers were visited. This area, subsequently affected by the inundation of the Goedertrou Dam, was hilly,

broken country and densely wooded. The second area, to the east of the main tarred road between Eshowe and iNkwalini which bisects Bantu Reserve No. 17 and south of Mandawe Hill, tended to have more open, grassy veld, rolling hills and patches of bush and trees. Starting with one contact, homes were visited around a network of connecting paths. The third area to the west of the tarred road and south-west of Mandawe Hill, was characterised by a heavy growth of aloes competing with fairly open thorn trees and scrubby bush. It was rather steep in parts with sections which tended to be barren and rocky.

Well-known local people were engaged as guide-assistants for each of the trips. Homes were visited within walking distance along a path, or on both sides of a valley, or on a ridge. In this way, clusters of homesteads were covered in contiguous localities. On some occasions there were specific invitations to homes.

In the uplands it was possible to visit only a small part of the iNjesuthi area, that which was located in the flatter or gently sloping valley of the iNjesuthi River. The predominantly rolling grasslands were interspersed with pockets of indigenous bush and sparse clumps of wattle (*Acacia mearnsii*). Habitation ceased towards the grazing lands (*amadlelo*) to the south west.

The chief designated a headman as guide-assistant and, following a meeting with the councillors (*ibandla*) where the reasons for the research were explained, the chief seconded a retired teacher and tribal elder to facilitate the interviews. The chief suggested to the two men that the best traditional information would come from the older members of the community. Visits were confined to homes easily accessible from the main road through the Location.

The second study was conducted over two and a half years. In iNkwalini informants were interviewed about the settlement history of 60 occupied and abandoned homesteads while similar data were collected on 149 homesteads in iNjesuthi. A heavier emphasis was placed on iNjesuthi to help overcome the numerical bias towards iNkwalini present in the first study. In both areas a small number of families were visited repeatedly. These visits provided the opportunity to observe and record behaviour related to the use of space, as well as to ask more detailed questions about site histories. Chief Mazibuko in iNjesuthi and Chief Mpungose in iNkwalini were especially helpful. They recommended knowledgeable people to help us record the genealogy of the chief's line from the time each group settled in their respective area in the mid 1800s, to the present. In most cases, the informants were also able to show us the homesteads occupied by the chiefs and their immediate families, thereby providing data on homestead layouts used by the chiefs over this time span.

THE HOMESTEAD

In this section the information gathered during the field trips is presented. Characteristics of the entire homestead are discussed in the homestead section while characteristics of buildings and features are described in the structures and features section. These characteristics are compared to patterns previously described in the literature. In these sections of the paper references to other works serve to confirm and amplify our field observations but do not represent the

primary source for the statements we make. A short discussion of the interaction between the natural environment, socioeconomic factors, and settlement location, layout, or design completes each section.

There are many historical references describing the general form of Zulu homesteads. Fynn, one of the first European settlers in Natal in the 1820s, recorded the circular form of the Zulu homestead (1950:189). The descriptions of other nineteenth century travellers, traders and missionaries, though scattered and unsystematic, emphasised the general uniformity of homestead layout over quite dispersed lowland areas (Angas 1849:95, Bleek 1965:16, Bryant 1949:74, Gibson 1911:2 10). These and other observers linked the spatial arrangements of the Zulu homestead to social conventions based on the rank or status of family members (Bryant 1949:75–77 413–415 417–421, Krige 1936:39–43, Samuelson 1929:250–252 and diagram between 144–145, Raum 1973:144–145 171 173 184 186). Supposedly it is the adherence to these conventions that gives homesteads the standard circular pattern still found in large parts of rural Zululand. But, were Zulu homesteads really so uniform in the past, and what is the position today? In this section we look closely at contemporary Zulu homesteads from the several perspectives of homestead orientation, alignment and shape. An effort is made to understand more fully the ways in which homesteads truly are uniform and the ways in which they actually vary.

Orientation and Slope

Homestead orientation in relation to cardinal direction is one way in which homesteads have been claimed to be uniform. However, two early descriptions of the Zulu homestead in the lowland area that mention orientation in relation to cardinal direction give conflicting information.

Samuelson (1929:252) indicates, without giving a reason for his observation, that east-facing sites are selected if possible, while Bryant (1949:75) places Jomela's home facing west to bask in the sunset. Krige's statement (1936:42, not referenced, but possibly following Samuelson, *ibid*) that homes usually face east is presumably the source of the apparent tacit acceptance by some anthropologists (eg. Kuper 1982:145) that Zulu homes did and should face east. If this is a convention, with symbolic associations, it is surprising that two of the authors who deal in great detail with the symbolism of the homestead do not raise the issue of an east-facing orientation (Berglund 1976—who had informants in the iNkwalini area; Raum 1973). In the iNkwalini sample 46 homesteads (52 %) do not have an easterly aspect at all (Table 1). Of the other 42 homes (48 %), only 24 (27 % of the total) face directly east, and 18 (16 % of the total) face north-east or south-east. None of the informants suggests that it is a convention to build their homes facing east. In response to discussion, slope is always given as the overriding factor dictating the orientation of the homestead, that is, *a homestead should face downhill*.

Slope is an important factor in site selection in the lowland area to avoid a waterlogged situation (Bryant 1949:76, Grout 1864:96, Samuelson 1929:252, Tyler 1891:42). We have characterised the degree of slope by four subjective categories: 'acute', 'moderate', 'gentle', and 'level'. In the iNkwalini area there are 17 homes (19 %) on acute slopes, 37 homes (42 %) on moderate slopes, 27 homes (31 %) on

TABLE 1
Homestead aspect

Aspect	iNkwalini		iNjesuthi	
	no.	%	no.	%
E	24	27	3	25
W	15	17	3	25
NE	12	14	22	17
N	11	13	—	—
S	9	10	—	—
SW	7	8	—	—
SE	6	7	2	17
NW	4	5	2	17

TABLE 2
Location of homestead

Area	hilltop		hillside		valley	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
iNkwalini (= 88) (lowland)	9	10	78	89	1	1
*iNjesuthi (n = 12) (upland)	4	33	2	17	6	50

* Hilltop and hillside locations are poorly represented because only homesteads near the road were visited.

gentle slopes, and 7 homes (8%) on nearly level ground. No homestead is located on absolutely flat ground; in fact, there is always enough slope to indicate a direction to the slope. Most of the nearly level sites are on hilltops or spurs and only one is in a valley. All combinations of direction and degrees of slope are represented in the iNkwalini sample (Table 3). However, there are more homesteads situated on east-facing moderate slopes than on any other combination of slope and direction. It is unclear whether this reflects either a mild preference for angle and direction of slope or a predominance of east-facing moderate hillsides in the iNkwalini area.

TABLE 3

The distribution of homesteads to the relative degree and direction of slope of the hillsides on which they are situated

Slope direction	N		NE		E		SE		S		SW		W		NW	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
iNkwalini																
“acute” n = 17	3	3	3	3	2	2	1	1	2	2	—	—	5	6	1	1
“moderate” n = 37	3	3	4	5	16	18	3	3	5	6	1	1	3	3	2	2
“gentle” n = 27	2	2	4	5	4	5	2	2	2	2	6	7	6	7	1	1
“level” n = 7	3	3	1	1	2	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—
*iNjesuthi																
“gentle” n = 6	—	—	—	—	3	25	1	8	—	—	—	—	1	8	1	8
“level” n = 6	—	—	2	16	—	—	1	8	—	—	—	—	2	16	1	8

* Acute and moderate slopes are not represented because only homesteads near the road were visited.

While it could be argued that choices were less limited in the past when population pressure on the land was presumably less, there is little specific site information available to compare with the modern sample. However, in the iNkwalini area information was collected on nine abandoned sites that were built between the reign of King Mpande (1840–72) and 1950. Although the sample is small, there is no departure from the findings in iNkwalini in 1978–79. There is one site on an acute slope facing east; two on moderate slopes, one facing south-east and the other west; four on gentle slopes, with one each facing north, east, south-west and west; and two on nearly level ground, one facing south-west, the other north-west.

In Tables 1 and 3 the homestead orientations in the uplands are described according to direction and slope. East- and west-facing slopes are equally represented, but there are no north-, south- or south-west-facing homesteads on slopes in this small sample. Although the upland sample is limited to the flatter valley areas of the iNjesuthi River, there is still a relative distinction between hilltop, hillside and valley (Table 2). However, the degree of slope is limited to gentle and level with the sites equally distributed among them (Table 3). As in the iNkwalini area, informants point out that the home is oriented according to the slope of the land, saying that it is this slope that forces the way the home will face, even though the layout of homesteads tends to be linear (see below). No one mentioned that homes should face east.

As in the iNkwalini area, information was collected on a small sample of six abandoned sites covering the same period, from 1848 to 1950. Homestead orientation again shows variation. The one site on an acute slope faces south, and the one on a gentle slope, west. The orientations of the four sites on moderate slopes are: one east, two south and one west.

It is clear from the above descriptions that the direction of slope is a major factor in the orientation of Zulu homesteads. It is the direction of the sloping hillside that is crucial in determining homestead orientation, both in the present and the recent past, and not cardinal direction.

Alignment

The social significance of homestead form and the alignment of certain features within the homestead has been the focus of discussion by both anthropologists and archaeologists in recent years (Huffman 1984, Kuper 1982). In our lowland area the alignment of certain features and the circular form of the homestead (Fig. 3) are directly related and reflect symbolic values. In order to examine the amount of variation in alignment we have given each homestead a score which is determined by the arrangement of five key characteristics: 1. The cattle pen (*isibaya*) occupies the centre of the homestead and should open down hill. 2. The great hut (*indlunkulu*) is placed uphill from the cattle pen in line with its entrance, the *indlunkulu* doorway facing the pen. Features 1 & 2 are scored not only on position but also on the orientation of their entrances. 3. The formal homestead entrance (*isango somuzi*) is below the cattle pen in line with the cattle pen entrance. 4. The ash heap (*umlotha*) is located at the formal entrance. 5. An additional point is scored if all the above features are aligned with the entrances facing downhill.

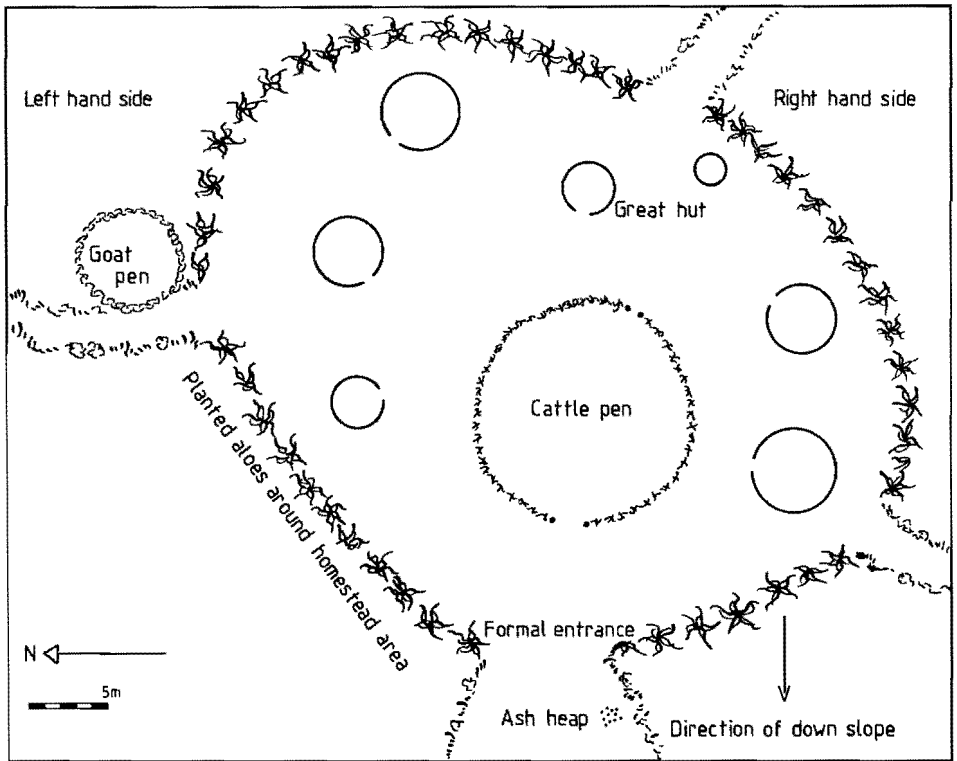


Fig. 3. Lowland circular homestead of three generations showing alignment of key features.

A maximum score of five was achieved by 56 (67%) of the 83 homesteads for which there is sufficient information. Of the 21 homes (25%) with a score of 4, there are nine homes where the door of the great hut faces at right angles to the cattle pen. In six of these the reason was stated to be that the prevailing wind should not blow directly into the hut because of the inconvenience as well as the danger from sparks in a thatched building. Despite the doorway alignment in these nine cases, the great hut position demonstrates the conventional alignment. In another conventionally aligned home the cattle pen entrance faces across the slope because the owner does not want the cattle to walk over a maize field situated just below. If these entrance exceptions are disregarded the maximum score increases to 66 (80%) of the sample. Of the nine homes without cattle pens, the sites of the intended pens have been selected in two instances, and in another case, no trace of the former pen remains because all the beasts have gone for marriage exchange (*iloboto*). Finally, of the last two homesteads with a score of 4, one has the great hut built off centre, and the other has the cattle pen built up slope from the huts.

There are six homes (7%) with an alignment score of 3. Three of these are new homesteads still under construction. One has no great hut or cattle pen (goats are penned in a small, centrally situated enclosure). Another has no cattle pen (the designated, centrally situated area was pointed out) and the great hut door faces to

the side to avoid the prevailing wind. A third has the area for the planned cattle pen in the centre, but the ash heap is far to one side of the huts. One of these three homes was revisited in 1984 and it was found that the cattle pen had been built according to plan. In the other three homes, one has the great hut door facing to the side and two ash heaps at the top of the cattle pen, one inside and the other outside the fence. In the second home the great hut is situated off centre and the cattle pen entrance is at the top of the pen, facing the huts. The structures in the last home do not conform in any way to the usual pattern.

This information clearly shows that conformity to a conventional alignment is high and that the alignment of the four key features is oriented down the slope with only one exception. Certainly no homesteads are oriented across the slope. Only one home with a score of 4 contravenes the conventions (the cattle pen is out of place). Even in those homes where there are no cattle pens (it is unlikely that a cattle pen will be built if there are no cattle), the alignment of the other features and the placement of the rest of the structures follow the conventions (see section on shape of homestead). A score of 3 usually results from practical considerations: for instance, a young family establishing a home may not yet have had the time to complete construction of the entire homestead or to acquire cattle. There is a notable departure from the conventions in only two of these instances.

While the iNkwalini research area is rural, it is of course subject to influences such as formal education (Vilakazi 1966:123), labour migrancy, religion and others. We therefore interviewed each homestead head with regard to four indicators of social change that might tend to alter individual perceptions of preferred spatial patterns, namely education, religion, marital status and employment (Table 4).

Education is divided into five categories. In iNkwalini 53 heads (70%) have never attended school. Of those who have attended school, many of the 18 (24%) in the standard two or less category said that they wanted enough schooling to be able to sign their name or to write a letter home.

Religion is separated into four categories. A distinction is made between orthodox Christian denominations (five heads, 7%) and separatist African churches, such as Zionist, which incorporate traditional social values (five heads, 7%). *Ibhinca* (traditionalist) is defined as 'one who still wears Zulu traditional dress' (Dent & Nyembezi 1969), and by extension retains other traditional social values. This category contains 11 heads (15%). The largest category, *igxagxa*, is difficult to define, but contains the majority of heads (55–72%). These heads do not class themselves as traditionalist nor do they acknowledge either orthodox or separatist church affiliation. While the rather pretentious characteristics of the 'drifters' described by Vilakazi (1965:109–110 137) were not evident, his term *igxagxa* has been used here to designate those informants who are 'in between'. Some heads in this category said that they have had church contact in the past but that they were now 'resting'. Others said that if, as traditionalists, they 'needed anything' (meaning, for example, healing) they would go to a Zionist group. Although Table 4 refers to the status of heads only, information on the other family members shows that while there is a trend for them to fall into the same category as the head, it is not unusual to find wives with different affiliations from those of their husbands or co-wives (who have different affiliations from each other as well

TABLE 4
Socioeconomic description of household heads

	iNkwalini (n = 76*)		iNjesuthi (n = 12)	
	no.	%	no.	%
Education				
none	53	70	10	83
Std 2 or less	18	24	2	17
Std 3-5	3	4	—	—
6-8	1	1	—	—
9-10	1	1	—	—
Religion				
<i>ibhinca</i>	11	15	5	42
<i>igxagxa</i>	55	72	4	5
African churches	5	7	—	—
Orthodox churches	5	7	5	25
Marital status				
polygynous	22	29	5	42
monogamous	54	71	7	58
Employment				
none	25	33	7	58
local—near	6	8	—	—
—distant	2	3	—	—
away—near	42	55	1	8
—distant	1	1	4	33

* 12 homes do not have heads in residence

as from the *ibhinca* head). An adult child may differ from other family members while in one case a co-wife of an *ibhinca* head is both an *isangoma* (traditional diviner) and a Lutheran Church member.

Marital status is a simple dichotomy between polygynous and monogamous marriages. There are a few heads with three wives, but it is the practice of polygyny rather than the number of wives that is under consideration here. Fifty-four heads (71%) have one wife, six (11%) being *ibhinca*, while 22 heads (20%) are polygynous.

We did not collect information on household income because there had previously been forced removals of families by state agencies linked to the Goedertrou Dam construction. Questions on household wealth, particularly income, were thus perceived by the community as being related to the threat of relocation. Our economic questions were therefore limited to employment and the distance between home and job. Twenty-five heads (33%) were at the time not employed in the formal sector because they were between jobs, could not find work, were retired, or had never had formal employment. Six (8%) worked on the dam construction or on local farms and returned home daily. Two (3%) worked mainly in Empangeni or Eshowe and could therefore return home weekly or monthly. The largest group (42 heads, 55%) is in the category away-near, and they worked in Durban and Pinetown, visiting home monthly or yearly, or every few months. Only one head (1%) worked in Johannesburg (away-distant category).

In conclusion, while the iNkwalini homestead heads do have contacts with a wider world, especially through their jobs, the information on education and

religion suggest that these men are fairly conservative. There is some social variation within the community. This variation, although small, is greater than the variation in homestead alignment. Since practical reasons are given for most of the deviations from the conventional alignment, it appears that the introduction of sociocultural customs not symbolically associated with the conventional alignment is having little or no influence on alignment.

In contrast with the lowland conformity, the older conventions for alignment are no longer followed in the uplands. Eight homesteads (66,6%) in iNjesuthi have the huts built in a straight row (Fig. 4). Two others have huts extending at a right angle from one end of a line of structures, to the level of the cattle pen. Another homestead is fan-shaped. The twelfth home has no cattle pen and only three widely scattered huts. People say that the cattle pen should be in front of the great hut and in the eleven homes with cattle pens, this is essentially the case. The cattle pen entrances, however, usually face across the slope rather than downhill so that no one, especially women, should walk across the cattle resting place (*inkundla*) in front of the cattle pen, which is an area that must be respected. In 1983–85 we found that the alignment of the great hut and cattle pen is not uniform. It is not unusual for the cattle pen to be behind the huts or to the side. In addition, the ash heaps are in front of the individual kitchens rather than at the homestead entrance.

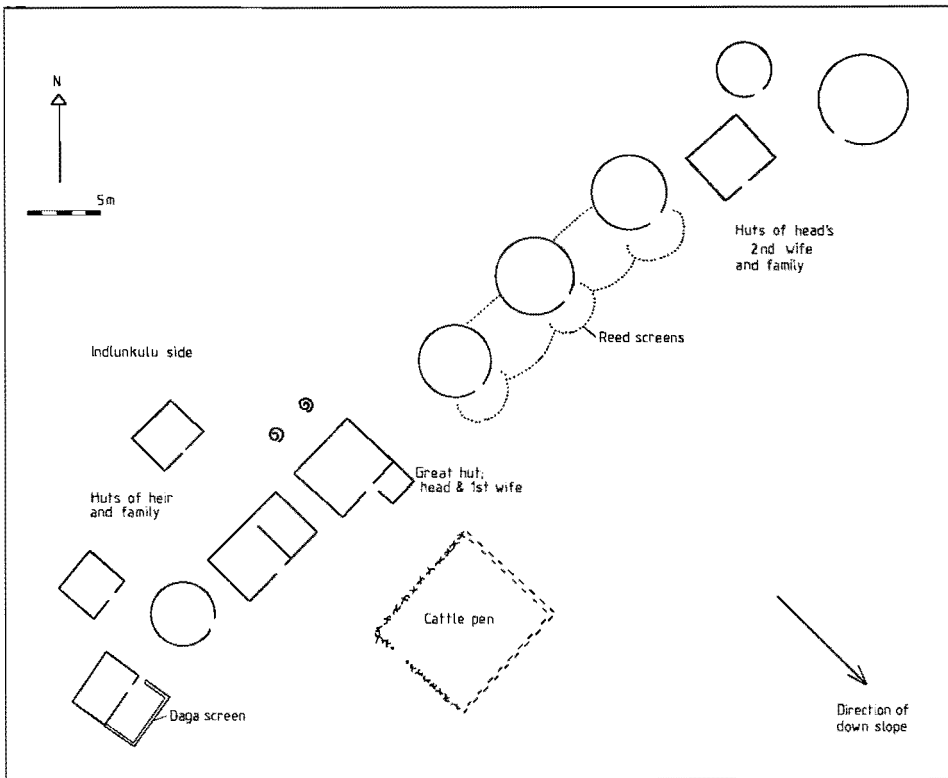


Fig. 4. Upland linear homestead showing arrangement of structures.

Nevertheless, the social information in Table 4 depicts the upland heads as predominantly traditional (5 %) or 'in between' (4 %). Polygynous heads (42 %) are more prominent than in the iNkwalini sample. However, this may be a function of the interview strategy, which focused on the older men in the community, as well as a function of the small sample size. Ten (83 %) of the heads have no education and none has more than a smattering of schooling. At the time there was no formal employment locally, therefore most of the employed men (4–33 %) had jobs in the Transvaal (away-distant) and only one person worked in Durban. Despite the conservative background of the heads, the upland homesteads do not follow the conventional spatial rules for alignment. This is the opposite position from the lowlands, an incongruent situation that is discussed further in the next section on homestead shape.

Shape

Although homestead shape is heavily influenced by alignment, other factors are also important. The positioning of the structures in each homestead depends on the way in which the social conventions are followed by each family as well as on its composition and the sex and social rank of the owners of the structures (Krige 1936:42–43, Bryant 1949:77 414–415, Raum 1973:144–145 147). The information gained from the supplementary schedule, where people were encouraged to talk more freely than itemised questionnaires permitted, sheds more light on the relationship between social conventions and settlement layout.

Items on the supplementary schedule were developed to get some idea whether historical names for key areas of the homestead are still in use and whether observances and attitudes as described in the literature are still relevant. The diagrams and accompanying keys from Wanger (1927:225–226) and Krige (1936:42–44) quoting Samuelson (1929:144–145, 250–253) were used as reference points to provide the range of key terms discussed with informants.

During construction and during the life of the homestead people still follow the practice of using medicated pegs (*izikhonkwane*; Bryant 1949:195, Krige 1936:47) for protection against lightning or for strengthening the homestead. These protective pegs are usually river stones of any colour roughly the size of a hen's egg, or perhaps twigs from any tree, or nails. The pegs are collected by children or adults in the home. Sometimes the medicine with which they are treated is brought home by a labour migrant family member. Usually the herbalist places the medicine pegs in the homestead, otherwise the homestead head may do so. Pegs may be placed in the roof thatch, or buried in the ground, just inside or outside the *ikhothamo* (the doorway arch, a respected area; Berglund 1976:104–108), or at the four quadrants of the hut or of the homestead. They can be completely buried or left with a tip showing.

It appears that people have a clear idea of the conventional layout of the homestead and the symbolic importance of its alignment. However, some people state that the terms and conventions in use depend on both individual choice and knowledge, for one person cannot know every applicable term and rule. In the words of one homestead head: 'We don't all follow every Zulu rule in any case.' This indicates that caution is necessary in extrapolating this information in a wider

context (Raum 1973:1 154 173 212–213). The terms discussed below are those remaining in use by the people in these communities, as checked against the keys to the diagrams cited in the paragraph above.

Since no single feature can be identified as the focal point around which each homestead is arranged, the way in which the homestead takes form merits closer examination. The site location as a whole is considered when a new homestead is to be established (Raum 1973:147–148, Mertens & Schoeman 1975: Ch. 6). Informants said that the perceived slope of the land makes the arrangement (Bryant 1949:76, Grout 1864:96, Tyler 1891:42). One man expressed it in a different way: the area for the cattle pen is chosen first and then the situation for the formal homestead entrance and the great hut will be self-evident. Others said that the great hut is situated in relation to the cattle pen. The term *yangenhla* literally means 'it (the hut) at the top' and reflects the central position of the great hut in the homestead both physically and symbolically (Berglund 1976: 102, Bryant 1949:77 414, Krige 1936:40 42 47, Raum 1973:169–170).

The great hut is perceived to control or look after the homestead. Informants also stress the unity between the great hut and the cattle pen. Although many activities associated with the welfare of the home take place in the great hut, those activities requiring more space take place in the cattle pen, because the two areas are conceptually and symbolically the same (Berglund 1976:112). For instance, grain can be stored in pits in the cattle pen, as of old, or in the great hut. Also the ancestors can be approached in either the great hut or the cattle pen.

The terms for the two sides of the homestead convey the social status of the people living in particular sections. Huts and the area they occupy are subject to prescribed behaviour on the part of homestead members (Raum 1973:144 173 179 186). Traditional terms for each side (*uhlangothi*) of the homestead generally remain in use (Bryant 1949:414, Krige 1936:40–42, Raum 1973:144). The most common terms used in iNkwalini for the right and senior side (as one stands at the entrance and looks toward the great hut, Fig. 3) are: *kwesokudla* (right/eating hand), *lolukhulu* (senior/great side), *yenkosana/yesizinda* (eldest son, heir), or occasionally *lwenkosikazi* (side of senior wife). Those for the left side are, *kwesokunxele* (left hand side), *oluncane* (small, junior side), or *lasekhohlwa* (huts of small/left wife). So, by implication, the old concepts of seniority appear to be followed. Although no formal gatherings or ceremonial occasions were observed during the fieldwork, homestead members and visitors followed the conventions on an everyday level (Raum 1973:186 188–189).

In the iNkwalini sample, only one home has a physical structure as its main entrance (Bryant 1949:76, Raum 1973:144). Ten other homes have partly or wholly planted perimeters, with a wide gap for the formal entrance below the cattle pen entrance. Sometimes the area immediately below this formal homestead entrance is so overgrown or steep that it is not practicable to use. Nevertheless, there is always a definite spatial point that is identified as the entrance, and the entrance determines the position of the ash heap. Informants said that it is customary for ash to be deposited at the entrance. This proximity to the entrance is significant. For example, after a death in the homestead people must go to the formal entrance and wash their hands in ash and the contents of a goat's stomach.

In the lowlands today the subdivisions into homestead areas and the relevant terms used are simpler than the complex picture described by Samuelson (1929:250–251). Since it is the composition of the family that determines the number and complexity of the social statuses that need to be accommodated spatially, reasons for this simplification include the fact that there are fewer wealthy commoners and more small homes today than in the past. For example, no one in the samples has a right-hand wife and consequently the term for the associated homestead area has fallen into disuse. However, it is clear that there is at least a core of traditional concepts still in use and that the associated behaviour still has social and spatial significance.

In the uplands the questions on the open-ended schedule were discussed in the seven homes where the head was present. The amaNgwe have a phrase to describe the change of the homestead layout to a linear arrangement: *ukuvelwa umuzi* (to have opened out the homestead). They acknowledged, however, that it is not the proper Zulu way. Several men expressed attachment to the circular form of the homestead and regretted the change. One man felt that the circular arrangement encourages obedience, with the senior family members in a physical and psychological position in the great hut at the centre to oversee everything. They rationalised the change by saying that the land is too hilly to build circular homesteads, or that a circular form is the solution when space is at a premium, or that the influence of education or the church has led young people to take up the changes. According to informants, the change to a linear arrangement took place in the early 1900s. However, they insisted that the customs have not changed along with the arrangement and that the positions of the huts are the same, such as the relative positions of junior huts.

The above comments arose as the seven men participated in the exercise of drawing in the sand and describing the home of a father or grandfather. All set the great hut centrally and in line with the cattle pen. Most homes were represented as having had sufficient huts to curve all the way round the sides of the cattle pen, to produce the circular form. One old man named most of the occupants of the huts, according to the conventions of status of family members, at whatever stage of the family cycle it was that he recalled.

Although our comments can be only tentative because of the small sample and short time in the field the terms used for areas of the homestead do show the same grouping according to seniority as in the lowland sample, though there are some differences, possibly adaptations to the altered layout (Fig. 4). The most marked visual difference is produced by the use of reed or daga (clay) screens (*amagama*) often built round the group of huts in each wife's section. The great hut and its associated huts, such as kitchen and sleeping hut, are situated more or less centrally above the cattle pen and called the *indlunkulu* (senior) section. The right 'end' of the homestead is occasionally called *indlunkulu* as well, although in this sample, it is occupied by heads' second wives or by younger married sons. The left 'end' is most frequently (eight homes) occupied by *izindlu zenkosana* (the huts of the heir of the home, ie. eldest son and wife/wives). Informants also said that the junior/second wife occupies a special place, consonant with her traditional role of independence from the senior house (Krige 1936:41); some would put her in a new

homestead, otherwise she would be on the left side. In 1983–1985 the second wife's accommodation was often found on a separate terrace behind the huts of the grandmother and senior wife. In other cases, the second and third wives occupied their own homesteads located behind and uphill from the senior wife's home. The relationship between status and homestead layout is, however, not straightforward in iNjesuthi. For instance, the right side, or end, is supposed to be the senior side, as indicated by the senior status term, but is occupied by family members of junior status. The left side should be the junior side, but the heir lives on this side. Such contradictory statements made during the discussions were not resolved. However, while the homestead arrangement has changed to linear, the concepts of senior and junior areas are still applied. The flexibility with which decisions are made about living arrangements within the context of the status of homestead areas appears complex and needs further investigation.

The layout of the upland homesteads accommodates the special conventions that people have chosen to retain. However, it seems as if the parts have been separated from the whole, so that there is still a correspondence between some of the parts and the conventions, but the 'whole' or overall shape is different. In this case, the correspondence is attributable to the continuing influence of social status over the distribution of family members within the homestead. The difference is primarily due to the fact that in the uplands the cattle pen is no longer the physical, as well as the ritual, centre of the home. In 1983–1985 informants said that this makes no difference to the ritual role of the cattle pen. However, we do not yet understand the steps in the transition that untethered the ritual role of the cattle pen from its spatial context. In fact it is suggested from this study that the relationship between traditional behaviour, the value placed on traditional customs, and the 'traditional' homestead layout is not a simple one that can be readily explained in terms of varying amounts of acculturation. Instead, investigators need to focus on the constituent parts. Just as some aspects of cultural behaviour are more susceptible to change, some parts of the layout seem to be more susceptible to change than others. The questions become, which parts will be changed first and why?, and what are the relative roles of situational events, practical considerations, social conventions, and culture change?

By looking at layout in another way, the detailed maps of the homesteads make it clear that there is a great deal of variation between homesteads within the limits set by social conventions. Even though the overall shape of the lowland homesteads is circular, they vary considerably in size, number of structures, and details of their internal plans. These variations coincide with variations in family size and composition, such as number of wives or generations in residence. Not only does each homestead differ from its neighbours, but a single homestead changes during its life span as the family grows and the composition alters (Oswald 1987 has more detail). In an effort to determine whether the growth and development of each homestead results in a systematic and predictable homestead pattern we conducted two analyses. First, we looked at the sequence in which the huts were built. Then the distribution of huts within each homestead was compared with the number of generations living there.

Oswald (1987) found that the first structures built in a homestead are the great

hut and the building for the head's wives. However, in the iNkwalini sample, there were occasions when practical considerations required flexibility as to which structures were built first. For example in the new home of a young couple and their small children, where the bush was still being cleared, the kitchen was built first followed by a private hut. They were placed in relation to anticipated positions for the cattle pen and the great hut, which would be built when required and as time and funds permitted. In several other homes, people said that a kitchen was built first, followed by the great hut (Raum 1973:147).

Whatever the case for the initial buildings, since subsequent structures are placed down the sides as the family grows—adolescents build their own huts, and sons eventually marry and bring their wives home to live—it should follow that an older home with several generations in residence would be more likely to have structures further down the sides than a home with only a nuclear family in residence. In order to see if this is indeed the pattern, the iNkwalini homesteads were divided into four horizontal sections which were aligned with the cattle pen (Fig. 5). The number of structures in each section was compared to the number of generations occupying the homes (Table 5). Several trends are evident (typified by the results in the total column of Table 5). The number of structures in all the homesteads decreases

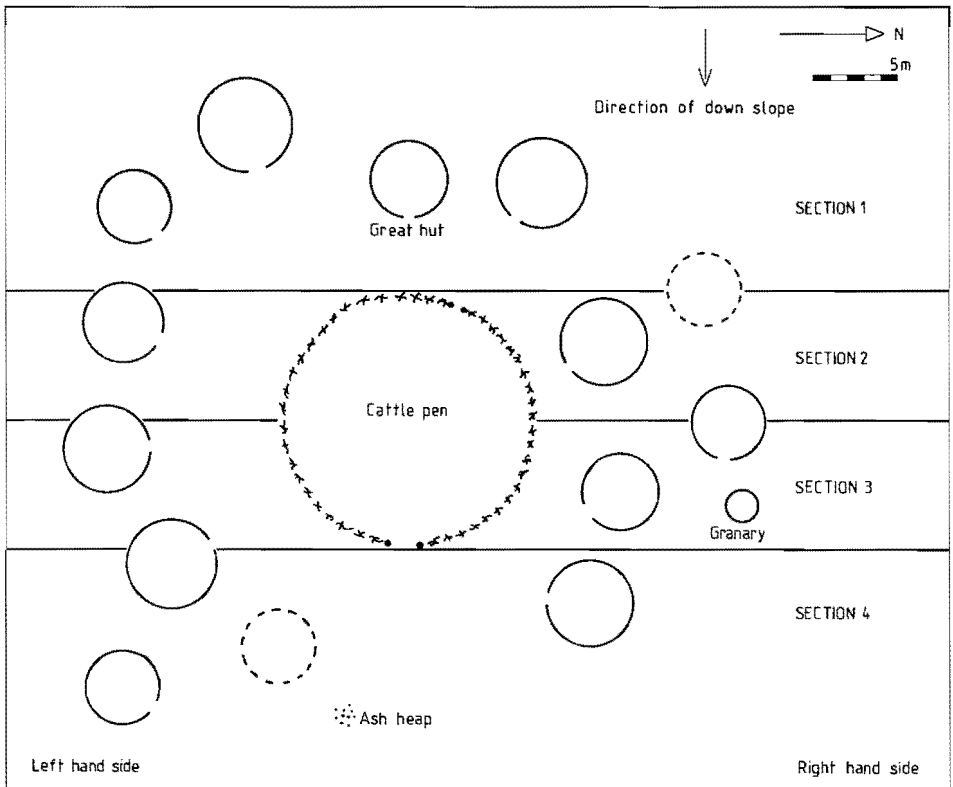


Fig. 5. Lowland circular homestead of three generations divided into four sections.

TABLE 5

iNkwalini homesteads: number of generations in occupation and number of structures in each of the four sections shown in Fig.5

Generations	2 no. = 23 (33%)		3 no. = 44 (63%)		4 no. = 3 (4%)		Total	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
Number of structures excluding great huts in section:								
1	77	61	221	58	18	69	316	59
2	33	26	83	22	3	12	119	22
3	16	13	54	14	5	19	75	14
4	1	0,8	23	6	—	—	24	5
Total	127		381		26		534	100

radically from the top of the home (section 1) to the bottom of the home (section 4). The trends within each section and generation are, however, more complex. The proportion of structures in section 1 is high for all families, but families with three generations have a lower percentage of structures in section 1 than the other families. Families with four generations have the highest percentage of their structures in section 1. The percentage of structures in section 2 decreases as the number of generations in residence increases. The number of structures in section 3 increases slightly under the same conditions. This pattern may be characteristic of the movement of people from section 2 into section 3 as families mature and more huts are needed. The opposite pattern is shown in section 4 to that in section 1. Three generation families have a lower percentage of huts in section 1 and a higher percentage in section 4 than other families. Although these trends are not as clear as expected, two generation families do have a higher percentage of their structures at or near the top of the home than do three generation families. Four generation families have the unexpected pattern. We suspect that this is in part created by widows joining the homes of their sons. As a result of their status these women may be housed at the top, thus increasing the number of structures in section 1. Another contributing factor is the age of the homestead. In a very old homestead, many of the children and grandchildren may have moved away. Their huts fall down and the remaining family members build new structures closer to the top according to their revised status within the coresident family (Oswald 1987 has more details). The present sample (3) of four generation homes is too small to allow further analysis.

In addition, this exercise showed that ten homesteads (7%) are fan-shaped rather than circular (Fig. 6). In these homes the structures are concentrated in the upper sections (1 & 2), irrespective of the number of generations in the homes. Although there is no obvious explanation for the fan shape, there is an interesting note that may eventually lead to a better understanding of this layout. During the 1983–85 fieldwork old men drew diagrams of their parents' traditional homesteads that were sometimes fan-shaped. Also, there is one three-generation family in iNjesuthi which has remained in the head's father's homestead, which is fan-shaped. This layout warrants further investigation, especially of the possibility that it was a stage in the change in homestead layout from circular to linear in iNjesuthi.

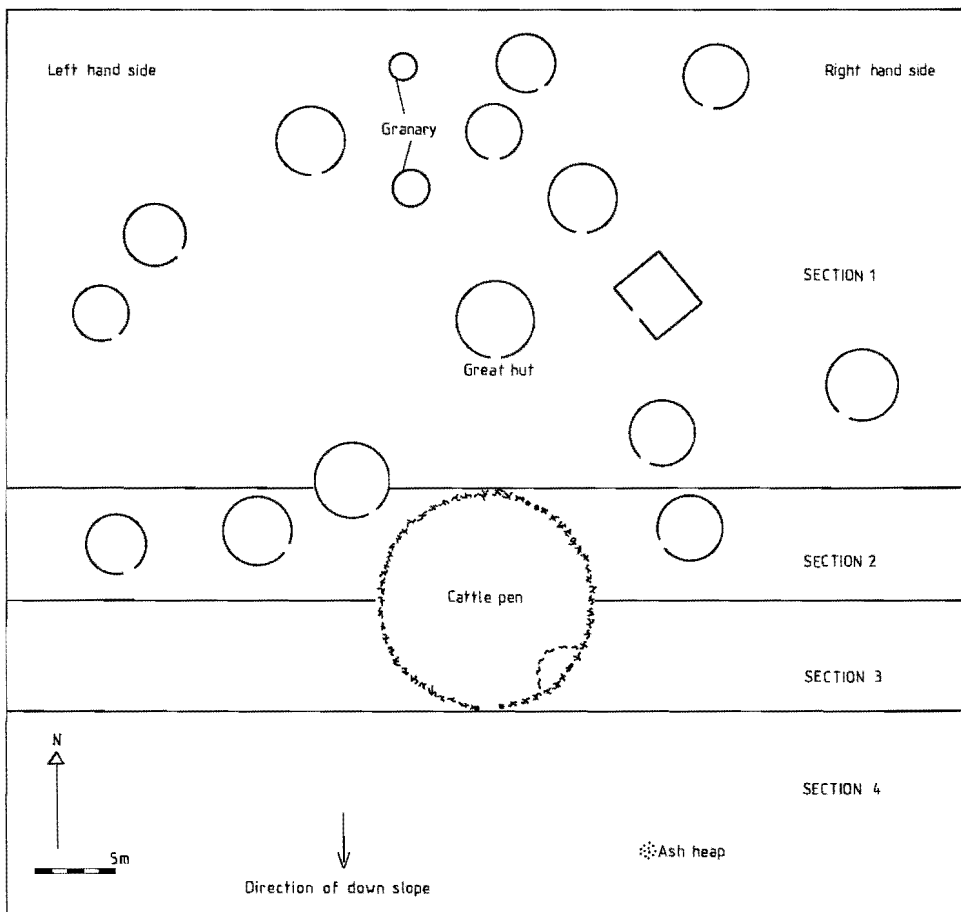


Fig. 6. Lowland fan-shaped homestead of three generations divided into four sections.

Although we expect the developmental cycle of the family to affect the size and layout of the homesteads in the uplands also, the sample size is too small to determine if there is a systematic spatial pattern associated with the family cycle.

Size

Archaeologists have often felt the need to estimate human population size from elements of the archaeological record (Naroll 1962, LeBlanc 1971, Wiessner 1974). Furthermore demographic factors have played a significant role in interpretations of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Natal (Guy 1978, Hall & Mack 1983). With this in mind we examine two possible associations between structures and population size, namely the number of huts and the floor area of huts in relation to the number of inhabitants.

On average there are more people and more huts per homestead in iNjesuthi than in iNkwalini (Fig. 7). Since the small iNjesuthi sample is biased towards more mature homesteads, the difference is not surprising and suggests that the iNkwalini

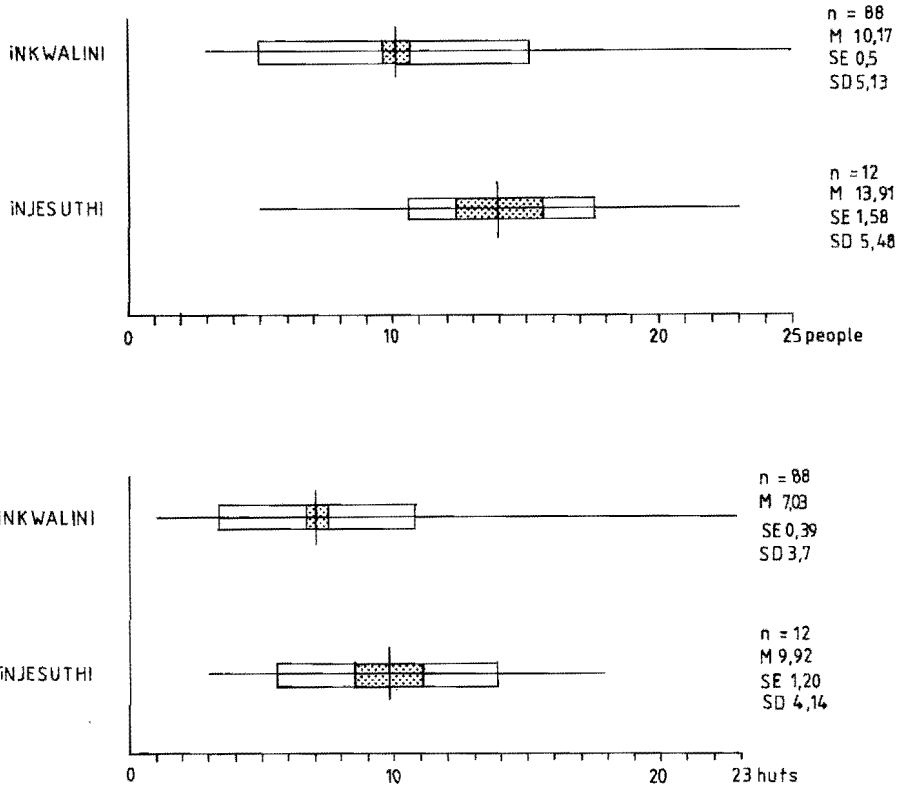


Fig. 7. Demographic characteristics of homesteads: number of people per homestead; number of huts per homestead.

sample is likely to be the more reliable. The wide ranges and standard deviations both in numbers of people and numbers of huts per homestead (Fig. 7) show that these parameters would provide only very coarse demographic indices.

Of far more interest is the comparison between numbers of huts and numbers of people per homestead (Fig. 8). Here there is a good linear relationship which is virtually the same in both samples. This suggests that the number of huts may well provide a reliable basis for estimating the population of rural Zulu homesteads.

Clearly there is some variation between individual homesteads (Fig. 8). A number of factors may affect this. In particular it seems that buildings are constructed essentially to cater for adults and their activities, while children share their mother's accommodation. Whether a woman has three or ten young children, she may have the same number of huts in which to house them. If her family hut is too crowded, the overflow sleeps in her kitchen. It is only when children reach puberty that they have an impact on the numbers of structures in a settlement, for at that time they build their own private huts (we have included this age group with the adults). Therefore we can see no obvious causal relationship between numbers of children and buildings.

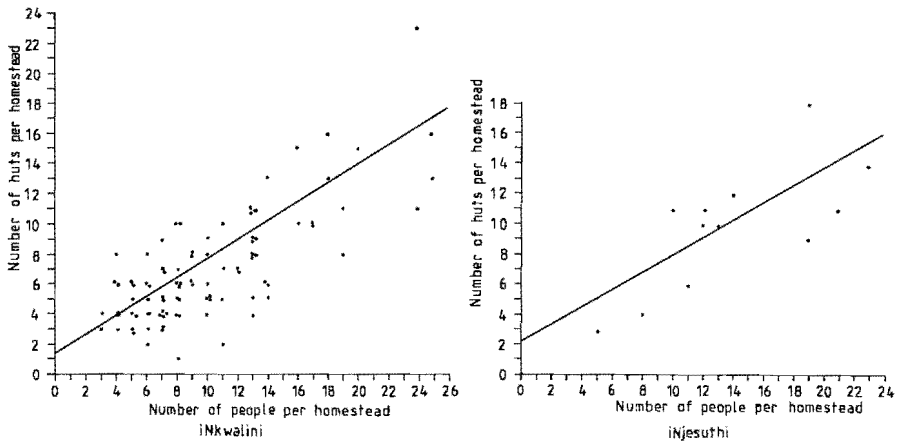


Fig. 8. Relationship between the number of people and the number of huts.

Instead it would seem, theoretically, that the number of huts in a settlement should more closely affect the number of adult inhabitants. But, even here there are several complicating factors including different hut functions (see below), marriage forms (monogamous or polygynous), and the homestead developmental cycle which may affect this relationship. For example, in one family the head has two wives, each with a married son. The daughters-in-law share the kitchen of their respective mothers-in-law and live in their husbands' private huts. This results in a ratio of seven huts for seven adults, or one hut per person. When the daughters-in-law build their own family huts and kitchens, there might be as many as eleven huts for seven adults.

We therefore compared the number of adults with the number of huts in the two areas. While the two samples show similar linear trends (Fig. 9) they are not quite as close as the previous results (Fig. 8). This is similarly reflected in the averages which show virtually identical figures for people per hut (1,44 in iNkwalini, 1,43 in iNjesuthi) but slightly different figures for adults per hut (0,67 in iNkwalini, 0,59 in iNjesuthi).

Another way to approach the problem of estimating population from the built environment is to use floor area. The two samples are compared in Fig. 10, in terms of the amount of hut floor space available per person. While the mean values are similar there is a wide range of variation between homesteads, which suggests that this measure would have little reliability.

Therefore, if we are looking for a conversion factor from structures to population, the best means available from this research project would seem to be offered by Fig. 8.

STRUCTURES AND FEATURES

Structures and features are major components of the archaeological record of the Late Iron Age. Therefore, they have the potential for providing important information about behaviour and socioeconomic organisation during the Late Iron

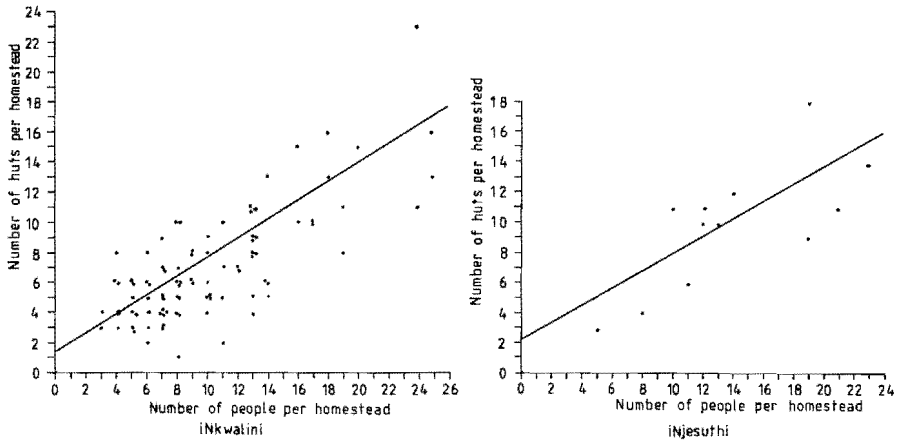


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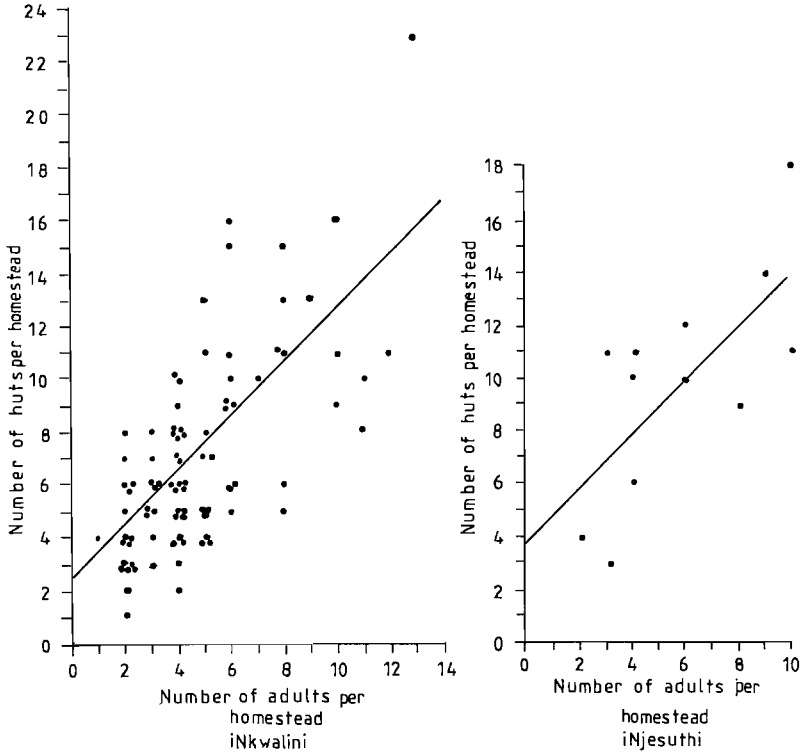


Fig. 9. Relationship between the number of adults and the number of huts.

Age, if the relationships among them under various conditions are understood. We investigated a few of the possible interactions between social patterns and aspects of structures and features such as numbers, size and style.

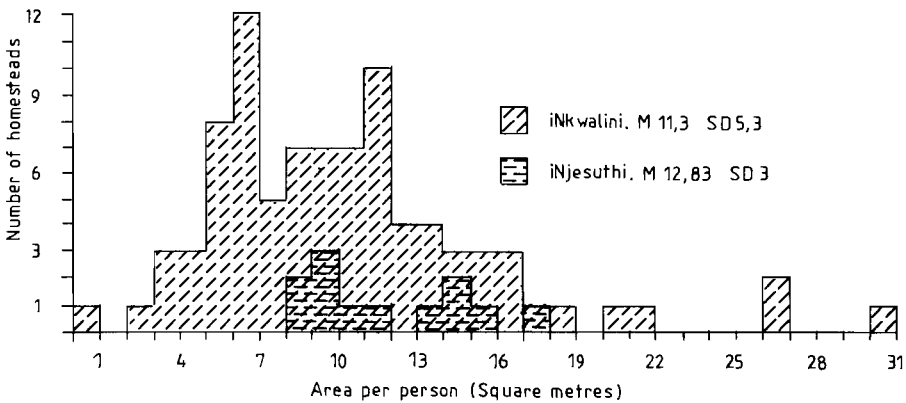


Fig. 10. Area of hut floor available per person.

Style of hut construction

Early travellers through Natal described only the *iqhugwane* (hemispherical framework and thatch domes) style structures (Bryant 1949:78, Fynn 1950:290, Gibson 1911:3, Grout 1864:97, Shooter 1857:13). Today there are several building styles in use; *iqhugwane*, rondavel (mud cylinder with conical thatched roof), single-room square hut (mud rectangle with thatched or iron roof, referred to as a square from here on) and mud multi-room rectangle (referred to as multi-square from here on). Two or more hut styles often occur in a single homestead. The relationships between social conventions, ritual dicta, pragmatic behaviour, function, and style are not well understood. Therefore, we made an effort to include these issues in this research.

Iqhugwane and rondavel are almost equally represented in iNkwalini, while square and multi-square are relatively rare (Table 6). Discussions in eight homesteads revealed that the *iqhugwane* is uneconomical in terms of materials,

TABLE 6

Hut styles

	Total huts	Iqhugwane		Rondavel		Square		Multi-square	
		no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
iNkwalini	622	292	47	285	46	32	5	13	2
iNjesuthi	118	26	22	41	35	38	32	13	11

time and skilled labour both for construction and annual maintenance. By contrast, the rondavel is easier to build, and requires maintenance only every two to three years.

These observations led to a discussion with members of the community on the consequences of abandoning the traditional *iqhugwane*. This structure is considered to be favoured by the ancestors (*amadlozi*; for terminology see Berglund 1976:29, 89), who are the guardians of the homestead, especially when the great hut is involved. This hut is prominent in both major and minor ceremony and ritual (Berglund 1976:198–199 210) while certain areas of it require customary respect and avoidance (Berglund 1976:102–110, Raum 1973:147–159). Informants said that any problem associated with stylistic change can be solved by informing the ancestors of the change. One family had slaughtered a goat on such an occasion. People considered that the presence of a single *iqhugwane* in a homestead was adequate to show respect for the ancestors, even if it was a kitchen. One man explained that a great hut could be a rondavel because a rondavel, like an *iqhugwane*, is thatched, a method favoured by the ancestors.

In the uplands the same four hut styles are constructed but in different proportions from the lowlands (Table 6). iNkwalini had no square dwelling with more than two rooms. In contrast, the iNjesuthi sample had a large six-roomed house in one homestead, a three-roomed dwelling in a second and two square dwellings with several rooms in a third. In spite of a marked swing away from the *iqhugwane* style, the high value placed on the traditional style is conveyed in

statements that the ancestors do not like rondavels and squares. Reasons for abandoning the *iqhugwane* were similar to those cited in iNkwalini: an *iqhugwane* requires too much time, skill, and materials. Rondavels are considered to be so much easier to build that women can do a lot of the construction while the men are away from home working as migrant labourers. However, the presence of one *iqhugwane* in a home ensures that 'the work of the ancestors will still be done'. As long as the ancestors are informed in the correct manner people feel confident about the change in hut style.

There are two huts of special importance in the amaNgwe community, the great hut (*indlunkulu*) and grandmother's hut (*kagogo*; abbreviation of *indlu likagogo*). Alternative terms for the latter are *yakwethu* (hut of our home, meaning lineage), and *yamakhosi* (hut of our seniors, that is, ancestors; called treatment hut in Raum 1973:171–172), all names symbolic of the hut as a focal point in ritual, major or minor. With regard to the great hut, some people are reluctant to use the term *indlunkulu* freely because they feel that it should be reserved for referring to the person, the homestead section, and the hut of the chief's principal wife. To keep stressing this term in the commoner context, they say, is to forget to what it should really refer. However, no other name for this main hut was offered, and 'indlunkulu' was used in the research (Dent & Nyembezi 1969).

As was the case in iNkwalini, discussion in eight homes focused on symbolic and ritual observances in the different hut styles. While it is the expressed ideal that the important huts, great hut and grandmother's, should be *iqhugwane* because the ancestors prefer them, it is felt that in practice these huts can be rondavel or square without dire consequences. The iNjesuthi sample contained four square great huts, all 'bed-sits'. The rituals are observed in the sitting room section, because the ancestors never go into the sleeping area. There is also one square grandmother's hut in one of the homesteads with a square great hut.

At this point we need to consider the names for particular areas of a hut (elicited in the form of a check list) and on the attitudes towards these areas. The results show that many, though not all, the terms described in the literature are still used (Wanger 1927:222–223, Krige 1936:46–47, Berglund 1976:102–103), and the appropriate behaviour is observed. The back part or apse of all huts, including rondavel and square styles, is termed *umsamo* (Bryant 1949:81–82, Raum 1973:157–158) and is an area that must be honoured. Informants said that the *umsamo* in the great hut of grandmother is the most important because she is the one who has ancestors concentrated around her. Private huts which are structures of lesser importance, often occupied by junior status homestead members, do not have the same concentration of ancestors. In all types of structure the conventions for the great hut *umsamo* are observed, even when the structure (*umbundu*) marking its position is omitted. In one square, two-roomed great hut, an enamel coffee pot of beer was placed on the floor of the main (living) room, in the *umsamo*; and in a rondavel great hut, a meat offering in a potsherd was placed on top of the wall where it met the thatch of the roof in the *umsamo* area.

Although every hut has its *umsamo* and the ancestors are indeed everywhere, it is unheard of to make an indoor offering anywhere except in the great hut or grandmother's hut. The ancestors are said to be strongest in the latter. Ancestors

are approached not only at the time of a major ritual but also on more informal occasions, as a need arises, or when it is felt that they should be remembered (Berglund 1973:103-197). The family head speaks to the ancestors (*-thetha amadlozi* ibid:43-198) while walking up and down the yard. He then goes into the main hut and/or grandmother's hut to continue speaking to them. One man said that offerings should be made in the mother's place (*kagogo*, that is, the hut of the grandmother of your children) and not in the great hut. This distinction implies that every homestead should have the two huts. However, whether there are both seems to depend on the stage of the family cycle, and also on personal preference within the interpretation of rules and custom. Where both occur in the homestead, even when the grandmother has died, both would be used to speak to the ancestors. We conclude that although the use of the two ritually important huts appears to be ambiguous, hut style does not interfere with the basic core of concepts about communion with the ancestors and the special hut areas.

The emphasis on the grandmother is notable. According to informants there are two important people in the home, the grandfather and the grandmother. It is the man who decides where the huts should go. If he is alive, a hut is built for the grandfather but it is mostly called grandmother's hut and is a focus for the ancestors. The grandmother is the centre and combines everything, and as a mother she is special. It must be mentioned in this context that the situation is fluid as to where the grandmother will live once her husband has died. The custom is for her to remain in the home where she lived with her husband, that is, with the eldest son (*inkosana*), the heir. If, however, she is very attached to a younger son and he moves away, she may choose to leave her marital home and the heir to join the younger son. He then builds the hut for her (*indlu likagogo*) at once. Another informant commented that if people overlook the building of grandmother's hut, misfortune brings pressure to comply.

The most readily observed convention that operates in all hut styles is the determination of male and female sides (Bryant 1949:182-183, Krige 1936:46, Raum 1973:154-159). However, situational exceptions were observed on several occasions. For example, an elderly senior wife joined the men on the right side of the great hut. This is permitted when a woman is past the menopause whereupon certain restrictions are relaxed. In another case the unmarried research assistant moved freely on the men's side of a private hut in the home of her kin. She was considered a child despite being the mother of two children, because she was unmarried. If she had observed the rule for hut sides, her kin could have censured her for assuming a social rank to which she was not entitled, that is, the rank of a married woman who must observe the convention.

It is clear from these examples that people are willing for practical reasons to change a style that has strong ritual associations and meaning. They have adapted the new styles to function within the ceremonial context, as well as changing the ceremonial conventions to include the new styles. There may be circumstances when style is rigidly maintained in order to make a strong ritual or ceremonial statement, but these examples show that we cannot *assume* that the ties between ritual and style are that strong.

Hut function

Functional categories among roofed structures (Table 7) are the great hut, private hut, kitchen, beer kitchen and granary (Bleek 1965:54 60 63, Bryant 1949:81 83 183 190, Krige 1936:43–44 47, Raum 1973:171 178). The great hut is the principal hut of the homestead (Berglund 1976:102, Bryant 1949:414, Krige 1936:40 42 47, Raum 1973:169–170) and is occupied by the senior woman of the home. This is the head's mother, or when she dies, his wife. iNkwalini informants explained that when a man establishes his own home, even if his mother is deceased he must still build the great hut in her name. If his wife is still young, she should not fully move into the great hut until she achieves a more mature status. However, she must do some work and cooking there every day. In this way respect is shown to the ancestors of the home.

There is a distinction made in the literature between private and family huts. The former are primarily for sleeping and storing private belongings, although young adults also use them for visiting. They may be owned by a head, a newly married couple, a mature wife, or single young people. We found that a family hut is built for a woman once she has had one or two children. She and her young children sleep there, her possessions are stored there, and many daily activities take place there, even cooking if she does not have a kitchen. However, we found it impossible unambiguously to identify family huts during our field work, because of the flexible manner in which women used their huts. In addition, the women in iNkwalini do not differentiate family huts by using a separate name for them, as they do in iNjesuthi. As a result we placed huts owned by married women in the private hut category.

The kitchen is also a place where many daily activities occur, especially child care, entertaining woman friends, food preparation and cooking. Young children often sleep in their mother's kitchen, which is nice and warm. Many women use a beer kitchen for brewing because the regular kitchen is too warm for the fermentation process. When a woman stops cooking with her mother-in-law, she also stops pooling her crops with those of her mother-in-law, therefore when she has her own kitchen she also has one or more granaries. In general a mature woman with several children will have at least a private hut, a kitchen, and in iNkwalini, a granary. She may also have more than one private hut, a beer kitchen and another granary.

iNjesuthi has a type of structure not found in iNkwalini, a small square log cabin used as utility or ritual huts. Utility huts are general purpose storage structures that often contain agricultural equipment, large pots, thatching grass, plaited rope, and

TABLE 7
Functional types of huts found in iNkwalini and iNjesuthi

	Great hut		Ritual hut		Private hut		Kitchen		Beer kitchen		Utility hut		Total	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
iNkwalini	84	14	—	—	364	58	138	22	36	6	—	—	622	100
iNjesuthi	10	9	6	5	55	47	31	26	5	4	10	9	117	100

implements. Ritual huts are reserved for activities concerned with spiritual observances in the home.

The two research areas differ slightly in the relative numbers of structures in each functional category. More of the homesteads in iNkwalini have great huts (84–95 %) than do the homesteads in iNjesuthi (10–83 %). However, ritual huts in iNjesuthi may share the ritual functions with great huts in some cases. If ritual huts are placed in a category with great huts then 11 (92 %) iNjesuthi homesteads have huts honouring the ancestors.

Most structures in each area are private huts (Table 7), although iNkwalini has rather more per homestead (mean = 3,21) than does iNjesuthi (mean = 2,92). This difference is in part a function of local demographic variables. Since adults in iNjesuthi must travel much further for employment (Table 4), many young men and women are leaving home to live more or less permanently in cities. As a result, some of them do not continue to maintain a private hut at their father's home. Utility huts in iNjesuthi are sometimes the deteriorating private huts of grown children who have moved away for work or marriage. If the numbers of utility huts are combined with those of private huts, they comprise 38 % of the structures in iNjesuthi, that is 3,75 private huts per home. This higher percentage is more in keeping with the larger family size in iNjesuthi (discussed below). It is also possible that some heads do not build private huts for themselves when they are home for only a few weeks each year.

Utility huts may be indicative of different storage needs in the two areas. For instance more individually owned ploughs were observed in iNjesuthi than in iNkwalini. Further research is necessary to show whether the two communities store their agricultural equipment and household items in different places, or whether iNjesuthi families require more storage space.

Family composition is a factor in determining the number of kitchens per homestead in each area. There are 1,53 kitchens per home in iNkwalini compared to 2,58 kitchens per home in iNjesuthi. These figures probably reflect the higher rate of polygyny in iNjesuthi (Table 4). To see whether that is the case, the number of wives is compared with the number of kitchens in each home (Tables 8 & 9). Although there is a tendency for the number of wives to equal the number of kitchens, there are many exceptions. Equal numbers of wives and kitchens occur in 41 (47 %) iNkwalini homesteads and 6 (50 %) iNjesuthi homesteads. Wives outnumber kitchens in 37 iNkwalini homesteads (42 %) and four iNjesuthi (34 %) homesteads. This is to be expected, because a bride cooks with her mother-in-law ('under' her) until she attains the status, conferred by the birth of one or more children, when she can have her own kitchen. Another reason is that, because of financial and labour constraints there is often a time lag in building the required hut (Oswald 1987). The opposite situation, where there are more kitchens than wives is less common; there are 10 cases (11 %) in iNkwalini and 2 cases (17 %) in iNjesuthi. The explanation is often that a new kitchen is constructed to replace a dilapidated one, or there has been a divorce and departure of a wife. Both of these events were recorded in iNkwalini.

The number of kitchens is therefore not an accurate measure of the number of

TABLE 8

iNkwaleni comparison of the number of kitchens with the number of wives in each homestead

Number of wives	Number of kitchens							
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
0	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
1	5	24	2	1	—	—	—	—
2	5	9	11	3	—	—	—	—
3	2	2	7	5	—	1	—	—
4	—	—	2	4	1	1	—	1
5	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—

TABLE 9

iNjesuthi: comparison of the number of kitchens with number of wives in each homestead

Number of wives	Number of kitchens				
	0	1	2	3	4
0	—	—	—	—	—
1	—	2	—	1	—
2	—	—	2	1	—
3	—	1	1	1	—
4	—	—	—	—	1
5	—	—	—	1	1

wives in the home. There is another problem in applying this tool to Late Iron Age settlements. It is not known how long the custom of each wife having a kitchen has been practised, indeed Raum (1973:144 158 171 195) is the first authority to mention that there are separate kitchens in the homestead. Bryant (1949:190) mentions the all purpose function of family huts and Krige (1936:47) merely says that the wives (of the head) cook independently.

The relationship between hut style and function is examined in Tables 10 and 11 to test whether there are any close correlations. The results show no tight correlation between function and style in either iNkwalini or iNjesuthi but there are some trends. (We have chosen to focus arbitrarily on proportions exceeding 50 %). In the lowlands there are a few squares or multi-squares, and those few are widely distributed among the functional categories. As discussed previously the rondavel and *iqhugwane* are equally represented in iNkwalini, but there are different patterns in the use of these two styles. Great huts and kitchens are more likely to be *iqhugwane* structures than are family or private huts, which, in turn, are more likely to be rondavels than are the other functionally specific types of huts. In the uplands the trend is slightly different. Within this small sample, no great huts are *iqhugwane*. Kitchens are *iqhugwane* more often than are other functionally specific structures. Great huts, family huts, and ritual huts are frequently rondavels. Utility huts are squares more often than are the other hut types. In both areas beer kitchens are not associated with a particular style since they are often recycled buildings. People in iNjesuthi are incorporating the latest styles, squares and

TABLE 10

Distribution of hut style according to the functionally specific hut types in 88 iNkwalini homes

	Great hut		Family hut		Private hut		Kitchen		Beer kitchen		Total	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
Iqhugwane	58	69	22	27	111	39	84	61	17	47	292	47
Rondawel	24	29	47	58	154	54	47	34	13	36	285	46
Square	1	1	5	6	13	5	7	5	6	17	32	5
Multi-square	1	1	7	9	5	2	—	—	—	—	13	2
Total	84	100	81	100	283	100	138	100	36	100	622	100

TABLE 11

Distribution of hut style according to the functionally specific hut types in 12 iNjesuthi homes

	Great hut		Family hut		Private hut		Kitchen		Beer kitchen		Ritual hut		Utility hut		Total	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
Iqhugwane	—	—	—	—	5	14	17	55	2	40	2	33	—	—	26	22
Rondawel	7	70	13	65	13	37	3	10	2	40	3	50	—	—	41	35
Square	—	—	2	10	16	46	10	32	1	20	—	—	9	90	38	33
Multi-square	3	30	5	25	1	3	1	3	—	—	1	17	1	10	12	10
Total	10	100	20	100	35	100	31	100	5	100	6	100	10	100	117	100

multi-squares, into their homes more quickly than are the people in iNkwalini. This may account for the diversity of styles used for private huts since they are the structures most influenced by personal preference. However, in both areas, practical considerations, fashion and personal preference allow any type of function to be housed in any style. Therefore we can find no fundamental patterning in this aspect of homestead planning.

Hut size

Zulu structures were in the past described only in terms of relative size (Bleek 1965:54, Fynn 1950:290, Gibson 1911:4, Grout 1864:97, Krige 1936:45, Shooter 1857:13). However, size is important because it is sometimes recoverable in the archaeological record even just as a floor. We therefore, wanted to know whether variations in floor area today are indicative of differences in social behaviour. To address this issue the contemporary structures were measured and the results are analysed below.

The floor area of the roofed structures in each study area is compared in Fig. 11. Buildings in the lowlands are generally smaller than those in the uplands, and the size range is also smaller. This could be due to a difference in availability of building materials or it may be due to more complex relationships, for instance the effect of function on size, which we have not considered.

It is interesting to note that in both areas squares are smaller than rondavels, the style they are replacing. However, the perception of spaciousness may differ from absolute size. One informant said that she prefers squares because they can be

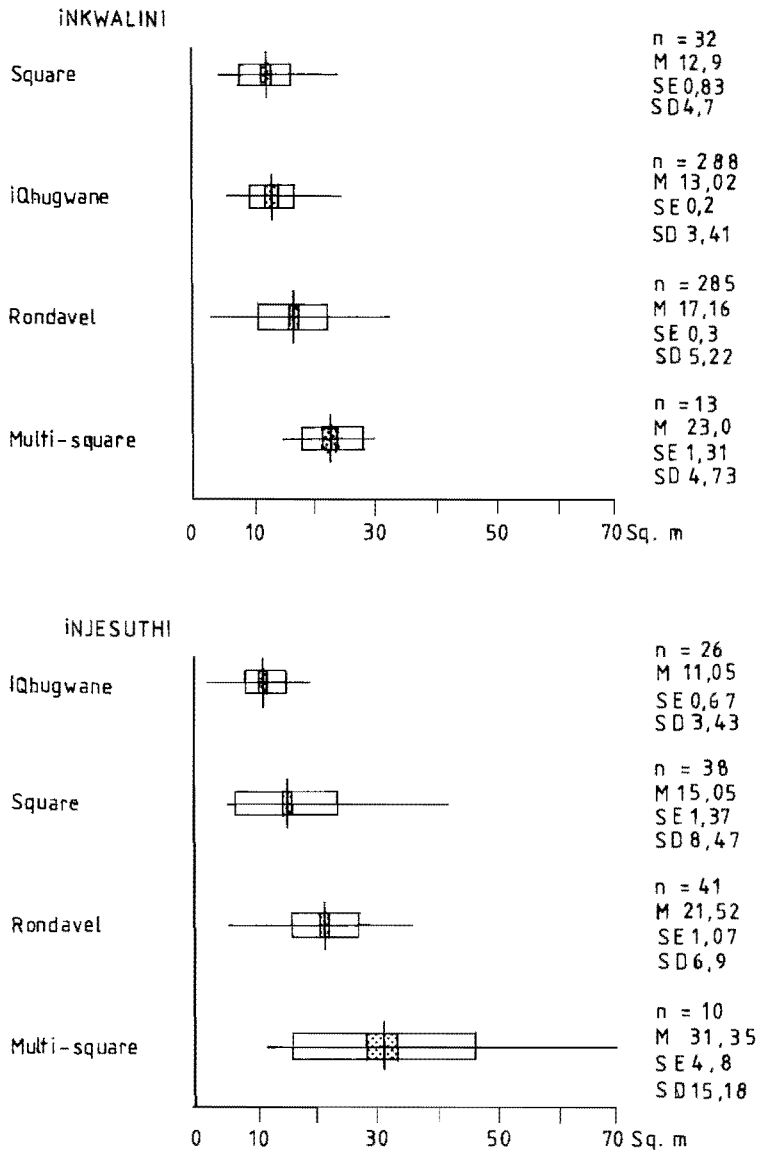


Fig. 11. Floor areas of the four styles of hut.

larger than rondavels. She went on to say that European furniture, especially a bed, fits more easily into a square structure. Squares may therefore appear to provide more space than rondavels when European furniture is used. With this exception, the general trend is for the newer building style to have more floor area than the older.

The size of the various functionally specific types of structures is described in Fig. 12. In three categories, beer kitchens, kitchens, and private huts, the sizes in

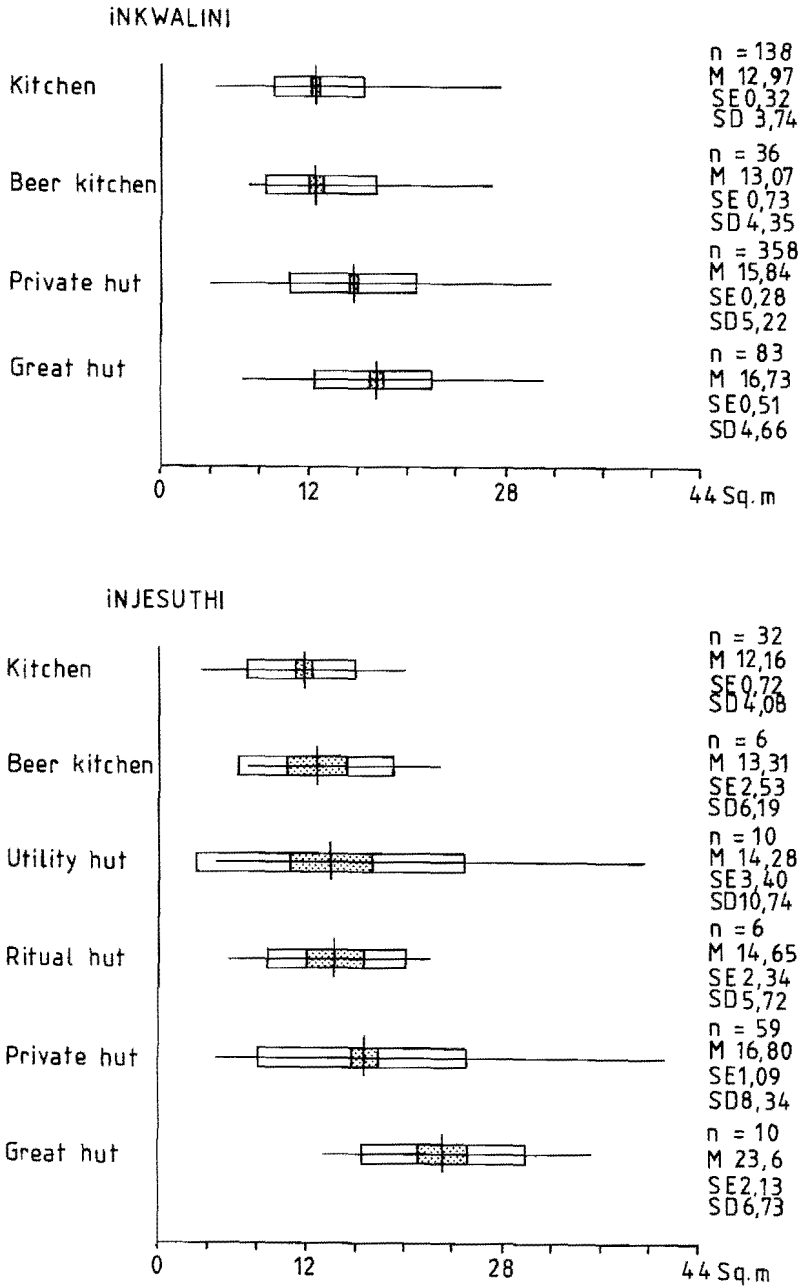


Fig. 12. Floor size of functionally specific hut types.

the two areas are similar. However, great huts and family huts are much larger in iNjesuthi than in iNkwalini. Within each study area the means are close enough and the standard deviations have sufficient overlap to make absolute size an unreliable

indicator of function. The important pattern is the consistency in the relative ranking (by size) of each functional type of structure. Within each research area the pattern is the same, which suggests that there is a systematic relationship between function and floor area in contemporary Nguni settlements. However, in today's settlements this is unlikely to be a simple relationship since size is also correlated with building style which in turn is to some extent affected by the different materials and mechanics of construction (Oswald 1987) (Fig. 12).

Cattle pen

Livestock enclosures are potential sources of social and economic information about preliterate communities. Domestic animals contribute to the diet, are sources of raw materials, and can be traded for other commodities. They are also a means of acquiring and storing wealth and they have important ritual roles. Cattle function in all these ways in the men's realm in historical and contemporary Zulu societies (Berglund 1976:110, Bryant 1949:77 247 266 334–335, Krige 1936: 121–122 184–189 389–394, Raum 1973:424, Shooter 1857:15). These roles overlap considerably with the result that a man with many cattle is wealthy in both a secular and a ritual sense. He provides his dependants with milk, which is a staple food, and with meat; himself and his sons with the resources to acquire wives; and his family with the means to hold ritual celebrations. Cattle are not just the payment for a ceremony, they have an intrinsic ritual value (Berglund 1976:199–208). It is assumed that the cattle kept by Iron Age peoples had similar roles in their societies (Huffman 1984).

Style of cattle pen

The two predominant styles of cattle pens are geographically clustered, one occurs in the lowlands the other in the highlands. Cattle pens in iNkwalini are usually (94,5 %) circular structures made from local wood. They are invariably located in front of the *indlunkulu*, the centre of the homestead, with one exception (see homestead alignment section). The major variable among these pens is size (see below) rather than style.

In the highlands cattle pens are rectangular and of dry stone walling. They are often built in front of the *indlunkulu*, but its location varies (see homestead shape and alignment sections). In 1984 we found that a stone cattle pen may remain in use after the family has abandoned the original site and rebuilt somewhere nearby. This partially explains the odd spatial relationship between the cattle pen and huts that we recorded on some sites. We also learnt from early abandoned sites that when the amaNgwe built circular homesteads in the past, they normally had a round pen in the centre. It appears that the change to rectangular cattle pens occurred in conjunction with the change in settlement shape and alignment as discussed above. A few round stone cattle pens remain in the iNjesuthi valley today, but none fell within this sample.

Size of cattle pen

Although there is little stylistic variation within each area, there is a wide range in cattle pen size (Bryant 1949:76, Gibson 1911:2, Grout 1864:96). What does this

variation mean? In areas where the remains of stone animal enclosures provide dimensions, archaeologists have tried to use the size of the cattle pen to estimate the size of the Iron Age herds (Hall 1981:127 135–137). We therefore measured cattle pens in both areas to see whether there is a relationship between pen size and number of cattle. In addition, we hoped that discussion with the communities would show whether they have a generally accepted method to decide on the size of a new cattle pen, and whether they consider there is a minimal, maximal or optimal size of pen (Hall *ibid.*).

The analysis in this section excludes calves and calf pens because the sample is too small. Briefly, there are three types of calf pen; a small secondary enclosure attached inside to the upper part of the cattle pen, a small secondary enclosure attached to the outside of the cattle pen, or an entirely separate structure that is most often situated in the lower homestead area.

The distribution of cattle pen sizes for iNkwalini and iNjesuthi is portrayed in Fig. 13. Both areas have the same median size of 100–150 square metres, but iNkwalini has a much larger size range and mean size than iNjesuthi. Neither sample shows a strong correlation between the number of cattle and pen size (Figs 14 & 15). Information from discussions with men in iNkwalini show why this is not surprising. The number of cattle a man has at any one time depends on a variety of factors. Drought can take a heavy toll, for example one man had 50 beasts in 1979 but only 15 in 1981, while many smaller herds were wiped out. Another man, who built his cattle pen in 1950 for 55 animals had only 12 beasts left in 1979 after the balance had been used over the years for *ilobolo* (marriage exchange) for his sons. The longer a cattle pen is used, the more factors impinge on the original relationship between the number of beasts and size of pen. Homes in iNkwalini are occupied from 15–30 years while in iNjesuthi some are occupied for several generations (Oswald 1987). The large variation in herd size in both

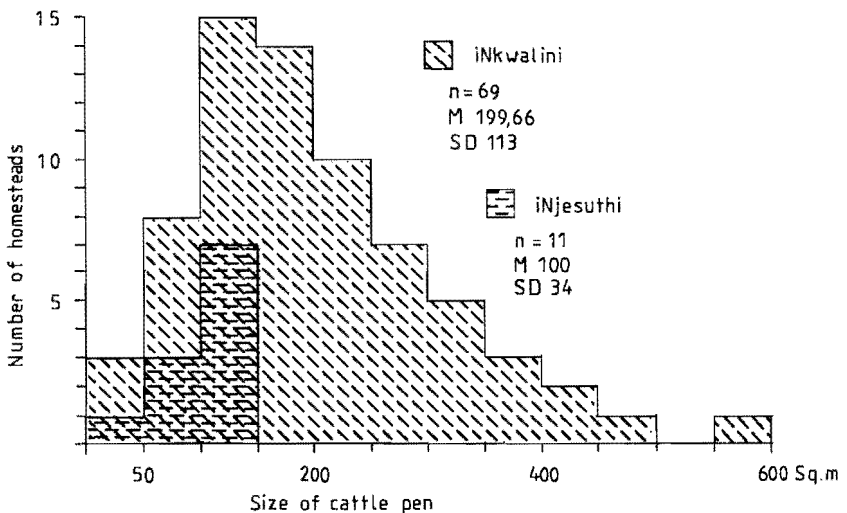


Fig. 13. Cattle pen sizes.

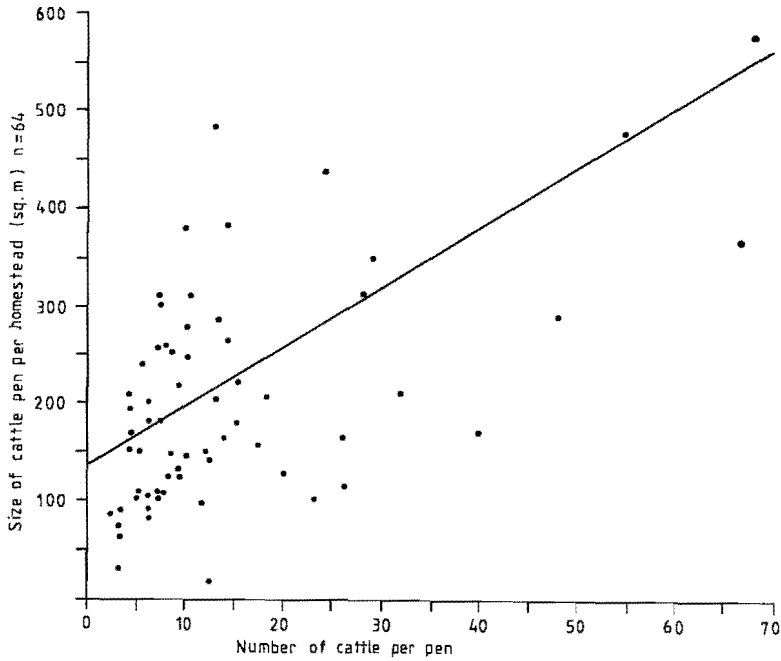


Fig. 14. Number of cattle compared with the size of the pen in iNkwalini homesteads.

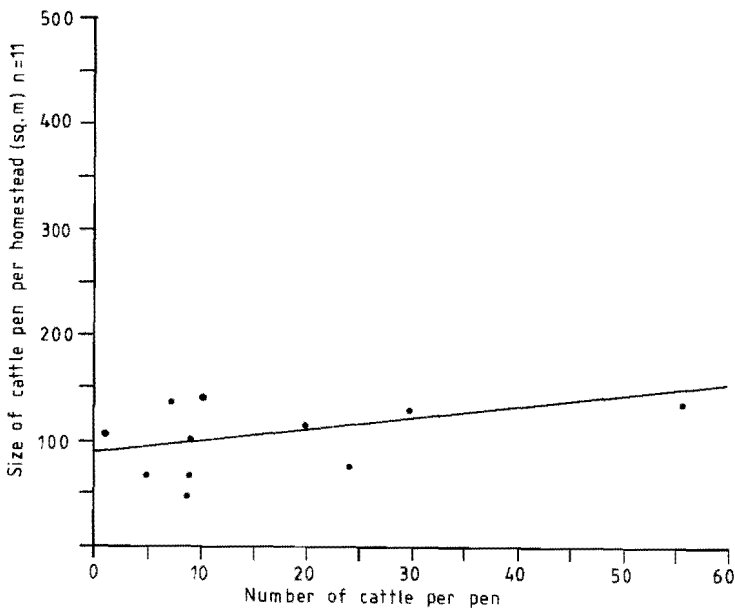


Fig. 15. Number of cattle compared with the size of the pen in iNjesuthi homesteads.

communities is shown in Fig. 16. In short, if there is a causal relationship between herd size and cattle pen size, it will be most evident at the time the pen is constructed.

Eighteen men in iNkwalini were interviewed about the factors they take into consideration when they build new cattle pens. Most of them state that herd size is a major consideration; however there is no simple formula for space per beast. Furthermore a man must allow for increase in herd size through calving, *ilobolo*, or purchases. Two men said that they had accommodated increases in herd size by enlarging their original cattle pens. Past experience convinced one man to build a larger cattle pen when he moved to a new home. Another commented that a cattle pen cannot be too large as far as the cattle are concerned, but it can be too small, for then the cattle fight. One family maintained that ‘if you have a small *isibaya* (cattle pen), you can’t build a big *umuzi*’ (home).

Building material is another factor to be considered. In iNjesuthi a man built bigger than he needed at the time when he changed from a pole fence to a stone walled pen. Another man emphasised the amount of effort it takes to enlarge a stone cattle pen; therefore, it is better to build a large one in the first place. If it becomes necessary to enlarge a stone pen, one end is usually knocked down and extended.

It is clear from the foregoing that caution is needed when relative cattle pen size is used to indicate relative wealth. While both samples show some correlation between pen size and stock numbers these correlations are weak and there are individual examples which show results far from what might be predicted. Clearly there is likely to be a closer correlation in the case of recently built pens rather than those in use for some years or even decades. In order to test this relationship further a large number of recently built pens need to be measured and compared with the numbers of stock they house; a topic for further research.

The assertion by one iNkwalini family that there is a relationship between cattle

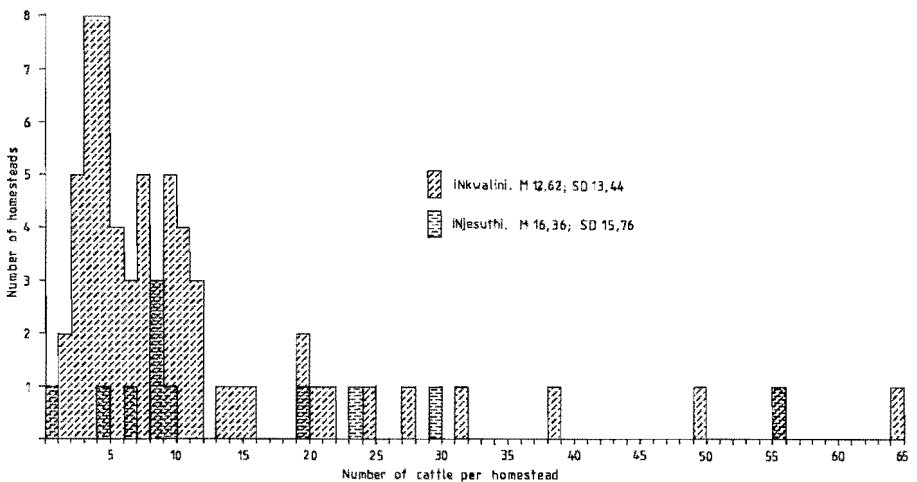


Fig. 16. Herd size.

pen size and *umuzi* size deserves some attention. If the statement is true, then this relationship would help to establish an indirect link between wealth and pen size. In general, there is a correlation between a man's wealth and the size of his home and the number of huts in it (Bryant 1949:74 412, Fynn 1950:289, Grout 1864:97, Samuelson 1929:249–250, Shooter 1857:15, Tyler 1891:151). The scatterplot in Fig. 17 does show some correlation between the size of the pen and the number of

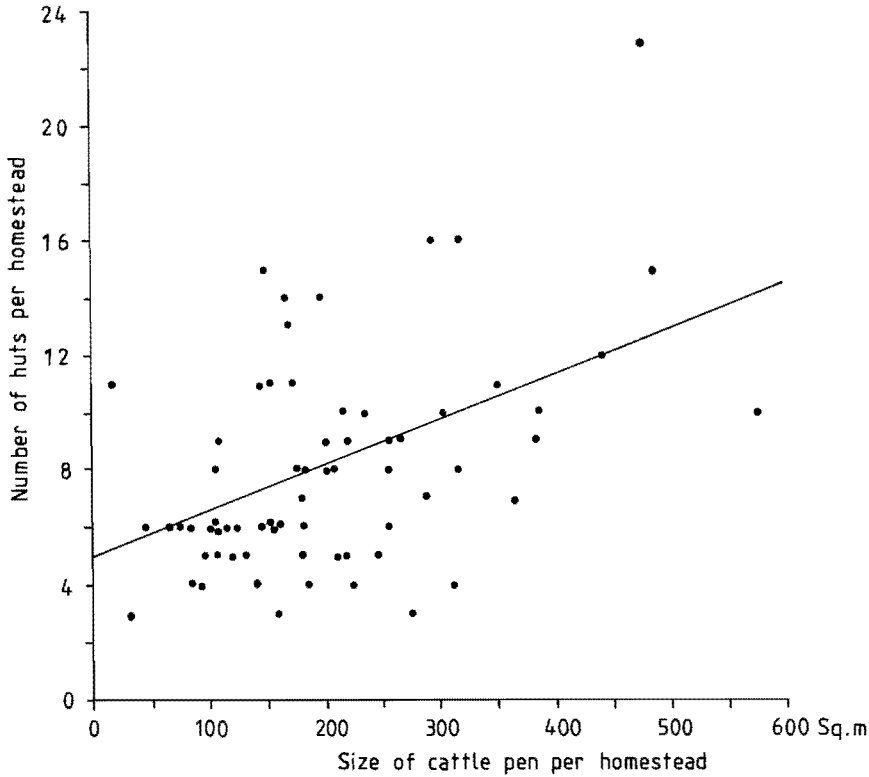


Fig. 17. Number of huts compared with the size of the cattle pen in iNkwalini homesteads.

huts in iNkwalini homesteads. Although the sample is small, the correlation is even stronger in the uplands (Fig. 18).

One limitation of this analysis is the absence of very large homesteads in the samples. Large homesteads are rare today but may have been more common in the nineteenth century; for example Fynn (1950:289) states that there were between 10 and 100 huts per home. Tyler (1891:45) and Bryant (1949:74) on the other hand describe the average homestead as having six and seven huts respectively which corresponds very closely to the mean number of huts in iNkwalini (Fig. 7). Without any cases of very large homesteads, however, we cannot say whether the cattle pen size continues increasing with homestead size or whether there is a threshold at which pen size levels off.

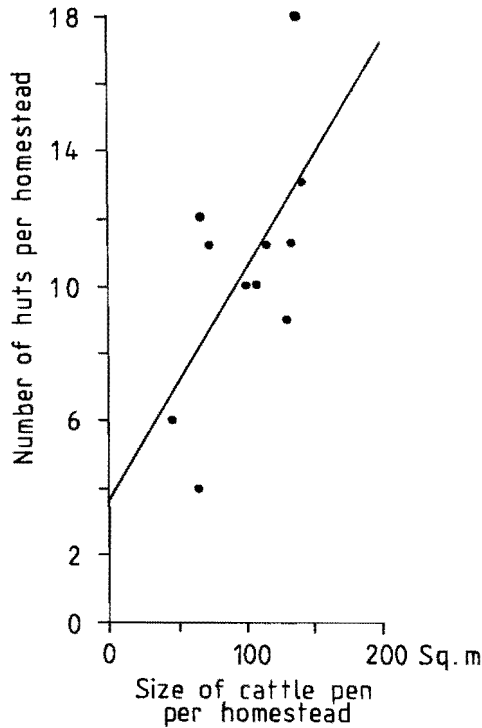


Fig. 18. Number of huts compared with the size of the cattle pen in iNjesuthi homesteads.

A further problem with this simple correlation is the lack of consideration given to the effects of the homestead developmental cycle. Various factors including the age of the homestead and *ilobolo* (marriage exchange) with cattle moving in or out, could affect the relationship between homestead and herd size.

Clearly there is some general relationship between pen size and herd size, at least at time of construction, as well as between pen size and homestead size. However, we have mentioned some factors which may affect these ratios and it is evident that no precise numerical formula can be applied. Further work, especially on the relationship of herd size to pen size at the time of construction is called for.

Cattle pen entrance width

The entrance width is a further attribute of stock enclosures that can be measured. Cattle pen entrances in iNkwalini (no measurements were made in iNjesuthi) are relatively uniform (Fig. 19). Most entrances permit only one or two animals to pass through at once (Bleek 1965:52, Shooter 1857:13). This pattern is similar to many Late Iron Age stock enclosures, which also have narrow entrances (Hall & Maggs 1979:163, Maggs 1982). None of the entrances in either the uplands

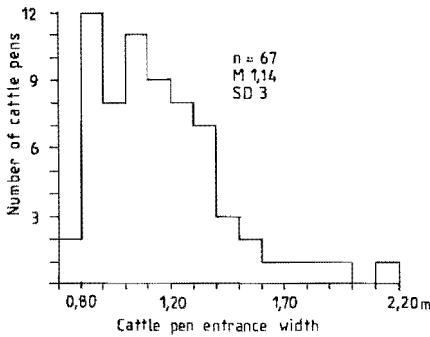


Fig. 19. Width of cattle pen entrances in iNkwalini.

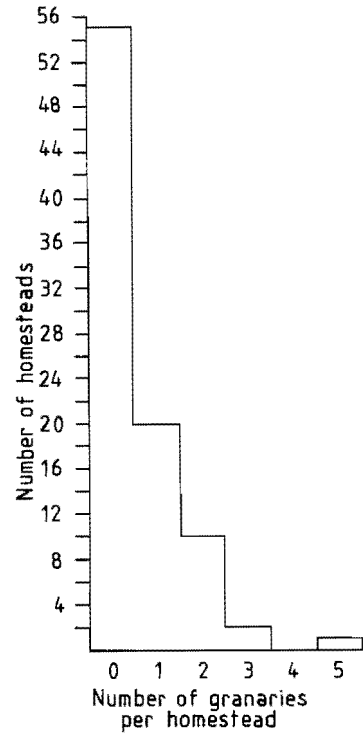


Fig. 20. Granaries per homestead iNkwalini.

or the lowlands has the narrow *and* elaborate entrances found at some Late Iron Age sites in the uplands (Maggs 1982, Maggs, *et al* 1986).

Granaries

Granaries are an architectural element with both social and economic significance since, among Nguni speakers, they are used to store the products of women's labour (Krige 1936:44, Raum 1973:71). As mentioned above, they indicate a woman's social and economic status for she does not have her own granary and kitchen until she is economically independent of her mother-in-law (Raum 1973:181 186 196). The data on granaries collected in this study have little potential for understanding prehistoric socioeconomic patterns because the sample is biased and the storage patterns have changed radically during this century. Nevertheless, these data do provide information on adaptation and culture change that may prove useful in further research.

Style of granaries

In iNkwalini one old man pointed out the remains of grain storage pits in his father's abandoned homestead, but no one in the research area has used such pits since early this century. People say that they no longer use this form of storage because they do not like the taste it imparts to the grain. The *inqolobane*, a thatched dome set on wooden framework, has replaced the grain pit in the

lowlands. These structures are normally located behind a woman's hut(s) near her kitchen.

The granary style in iNjesuthi is more variable and quite different from the lowlands. Informants said that the *amaNgwe* never used grain pits, at least, not since they have lived in iNjesuthi. Instead the *isilulu* (grain basket) is the oldest local storage style and some are still in use. In fact archaeological evidence suggests that they were used in the highlands in the Late Iron Age (Maggs 1982, Maggs *et al* 1986). These baskets are set on stone piles or wooden frames behind the huts, near the kitchens. Today this style is being replaced by a square structure resembling a miniature log cabin (*ihlaka*), but we are not sure whether this has exactly the same social and economic connotations as the *isilulu*.

Granary function

Although the primary function is to store crops, granaries are used in iNkwalini to hold a multitude of miscellaneous items such as shoes, shopping bags and pots and serve as chicken coops for broody hens. These other functions are normally confined to seasonal lulls in crop storage; however, the drought of the early 1980s produced a different pattern. People pointed out that they had no need for granaries because of repeated crop failures in these years. Several women remarked that 'the store is now our granary and we buy there when we want meal'. Consequently, at the time of the fieldwork, only 33 of the 88 homesteads in iNkwalini (38%) had granaries and many of these were in poor repair. Without yearly maintenance these structures quickly deteriorate to be repaired or rebuilt only when there is sufficient harvest to justify the effort.

In Fig. 20 we show the number of granaries found in each iNkwalini home we have examined. We have not examined this distribution further because of the extreme bias introduced by the drought and the market economy. In the past granaries would seem to have shown the same pattern as kitchens, because they were governed by the same social customs. There are two factors that would have modified this general pattern. Since some women may need more than one granary to store her crops, the number of granaries in a home would reflect the level of agricultural success as well as the social status of the occupants. On the other hand, the tendency to allow granaries to collapse during periods of crop failures means that the absence of a granary from a woman's group of structures is not a clear indication of her status.

Granary size

The amount of space allocated for crop storage in a precolonial settlement has been used as an indication of that society's dependence upon agriculture and its relative success in growing crops. The same is true today as demonstrated above. Despite the poor representation of granaries in iNkwalini, they were measured to define the size variation that exists (Fig. 21), the mean diameter being 1,88 m. It is going to be difficult to get dimensions of storage units that show how much space is necessary to store the crops needed to support a family which does not buy produce from a market. Even in the most remote parts of Zululand, people supplement their harvest with purchases from trading stores.

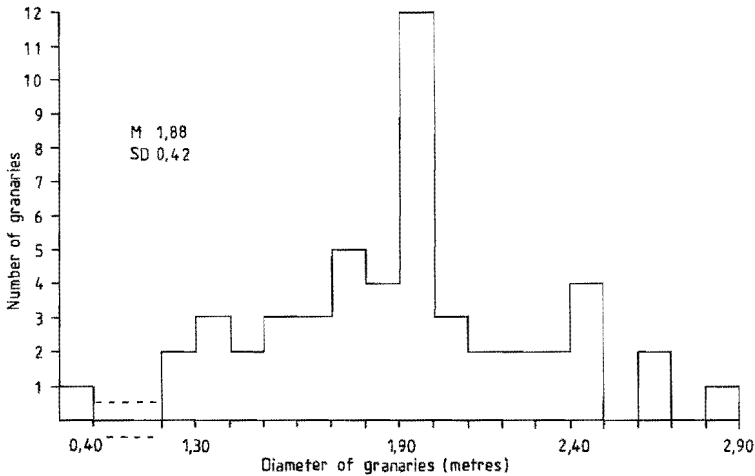


Fig. 21. Diameter of granaries in iNkwalini.

Hearths

As with many societies the hearth is a focal point not only for food processing but also for warmth and company. Thus there are customary rules or behaviour associated with hearths (Tyler 1891:43, Raum 1973:150–151, Berglund 1976:103–104). Hearths are located at the centre of the hut or slightly off-centre towards the door, depending on the position of the poles supporting the roof (Fynn 1950:290, Shooter 1857:14). Since the *iqhugwane* has two or three poles (pl. *izinsika*; Grout 1864:96), hearths are set between the first two poles nearest the doorway. In rondavels hearths are central if there is no pole and off-centre towards the door if there is a central pole. In this sample there was only one exception to the centre position, where an old woman who owned the hut placed her hearth to the left of and behind the rondavel door in order to avoid the wind.

Regarding the three hearth stones or *amaseko* (Maggs 1982:97) no one interviewed in iNkwalini is familiar with the convention that the front and most important of the three hearth stones should not be moved (Berglund 1976:104, Krige 1936:46). Whereas Berglund's informants (*ibid*; Bryant 1949:195) named this stone *umlindaziko* (hearth-watcher), in iNkwalini this term is used for the flat part of the raised border of the hearth nearest the door. Two women commented that the hearth cannot be swept without moving the stones, and in any case, they say, the stones are moved outside for hot weather cooking.

Style of hearth

There is a surprising amount of variation in the hearth styles found in both study areas, ranging from no formal attributes to intricate designs. In iNkwalini nine homes had no formally constructed hearths, fires being built directly on the bare floor, on oil drum lids or other pieces of iron. Such informal hearths occurred in six private huts belonging to old people who enjoy a fire in winter (Raum 1973:150) or who like to do a little cooking for themselves. It is noteworthy that none of the

twelve square huts (including great huts, kitchens, and beer kitchens) has a formal hearth. They all have central informal hearths.

Despite the variety among formal hearths we have attempted to establish stylistic categories (Fig. 22). Group A is the simplest form with a circular or oval raised collar enclosing the fire pit. Hearths in Group B are somewhat similar as they have oval fire pits, but the collars are elongated at either end. In contrast, Group C hearths are more elaborate and almost every one is unique in its sample.

The few Late Iron Age hearths excavated to date in Natal are circular and would fit into Group A. This is true also of the Zulu capitals, Ondini 1874–79 and most of Mgunundlovu hearths 1829–38 (Parkington & Cronin 1979), the latter exceptions being scalloped as with iNkwalini Group C No. 7. It therefore seems

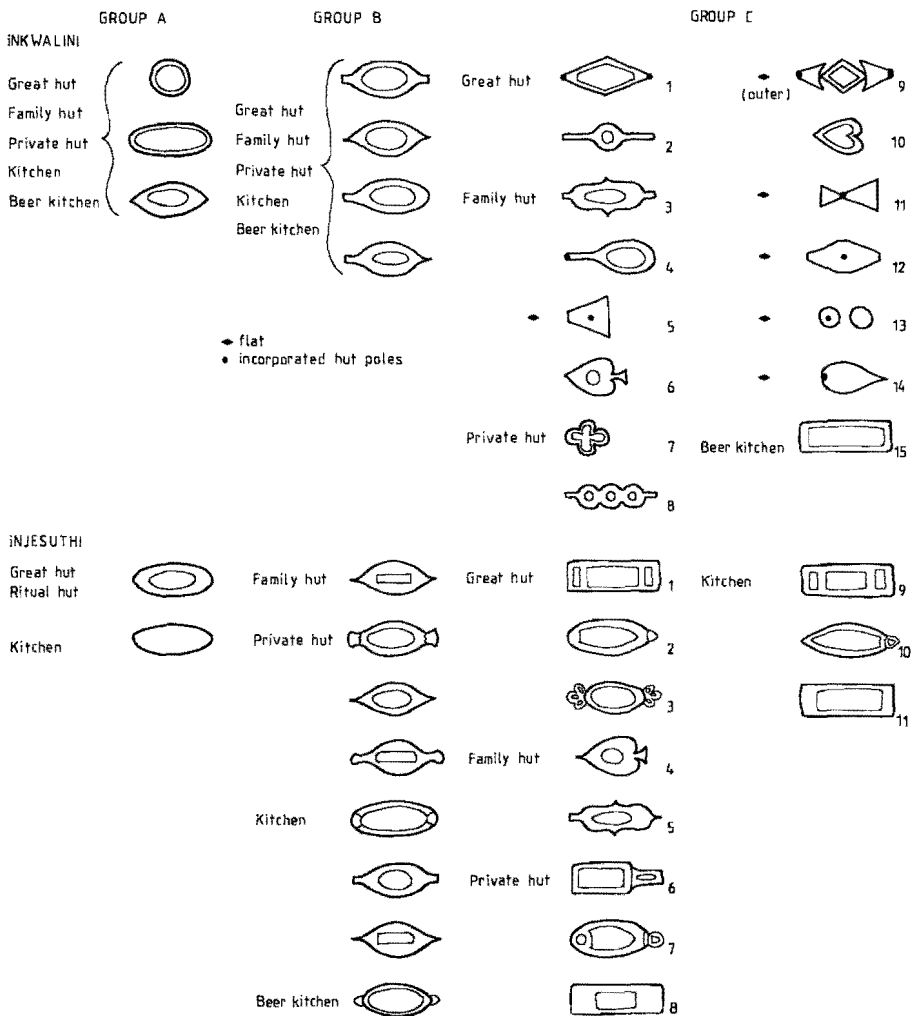


Fig. 22. Stylistic categories of hearth shape.

that the variability observed today dates to the present century and, that with few exceptions, hearths of the nineteenth century would have fitted into Group A.

Hearth function

Working on this assumption, that Group A would previously have been the norm, we examined our samples to see how they diverge from this position, and to what extent this divergence may reflect the function and context of the hearths.

Since hearths serve for several purposes, it seems likely that functional differences are one source of stylistic variability. Informants told us of a major dichotomy in that some hearths are for fires and some are simply for decoration. Private hut hearths, for instance, are said to be primarily decorative, for fires in them will cause personal possessions to smell of smoke. If, however, a fire is made in a private hut in cold weather, people said that all the clothes are piled on a mat on the floor to keep them from smelling of smoke (Raum 1973:150) and the fire is made in a potsherd.

To test hearth style against function (Tables 12 & 13) we examine the distribution of the different styles against the different functional hut types in iNkwalini and iNjesuthi despite the small size of the latter sample. Another factor to consider is that family huts provide an ambiguous context for hearths because some people cook in family huts, while others never build a fire there.

In the large iNkwalini sample Group A hearths occur in all hut types but they comprise a much higher proportion of the hearths in kitchens, beer kitchens and great huts. The largest proportion of Group B hearths is found in family huts. The relatively rare and elaborate Group C hearths are confined to great, family and private huts, while the flat, essentially non-functional hearths (Fig. 22 Group C 5,

TABLE 12
Distribution of stylistic hearth groups among the functional hut types in iNkwalini

	Great hut		Family hut		Private hut		Kitchen		Beer kitchen		Total	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
Group A	35	59	6	26	38	47	51	68	5	62	135	54
Group B	23	38	11	48	29	35	24	32	2	25	89	36
Group C	2	3	6	26	15	18	—	—	1	13	24	10
Total	60	100	23	100	82	100	75	100	8	100	248	100

TABLE 13
Distribution of stylistic hearth groups among the functional hut types in iNjesuthi

	Great hut		Family hut		Private hut		Kitchen		Beer kitchen		Total	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
Group A	1	25	—	—	—	—	3	23	—	—	4	15
Group B	—	—	1	100	6	75	4	31	1	100	12	44
Group C	3	75	—	—	2	25	6	46	—	—	11	41
Total	4	100	1	100	8	100	13	100	1	100	27	100

11–14) are confined to family and private huts where fires are least likely to be lit. In this sample, therefore, there is a clear tendency to build Group A styles for functional hearths and the more elaborate styles where few or no fires are intended.

The small iNjesuthi sample, however, does not reflect the same functional pattern (Table 13). Although the only plain (Group A) hearths were found in great huts or kitchens—that is, they were functional hearths—the more elaborate Groups B and C are found in all hut types and indeed most cooking hearths are elaborate.

The difference between the two samples extends beyond the functional and can be seen in other attributes such as length of hearth. The mean hearth length in iNkwalini is much less than that of iNjesuthi (Fig. 23). The substantial size

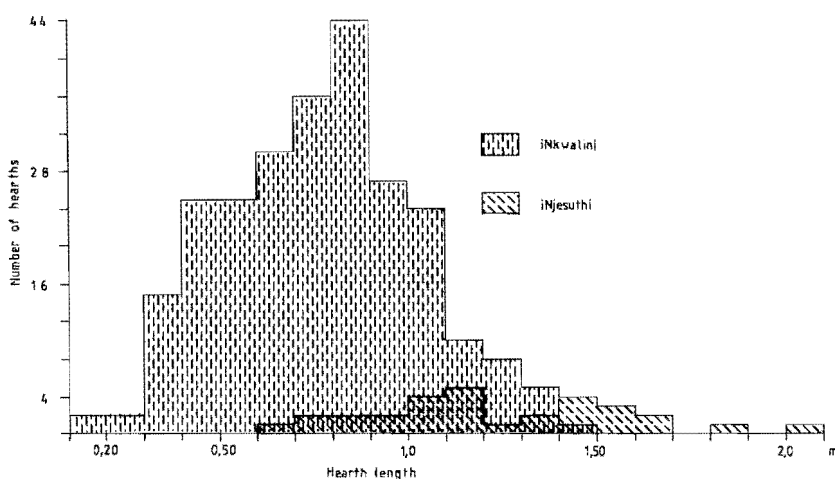


Fig. 23. Lengths of hearths.

difference between the two areas exists in every functional category (Fig. 24), especially in private huts where the hearths in iNjesuthi are twice the size of iNkwalini hearths. One factor here could be the far colder winter climate of iNjesuthi.

Comparisons of size differences among the functionally specific structures within each area show a different pattern. In iNkwalini the cooking hearths found in great huts, kitchens and beer kitchens are similar in size, and as a group they are 28% larger than the decorative hearths found in private huts. The hearths in family huts are of medium size, which is, perhaps, a reflection of the ambiguity attached to the function and style of hearths in family huts. iNjesuthi has the opposite pattern; kitchens and great huts have smaller hearths than do private huts. However, the size differences are not as strong in iNjesuthi as in iNkwalini.

All the attempts to correlate the physical attributes of hearths with their functions have been inconclusive when the two study areas are compared. The iNkwalini sample alone is less ambiguous since cooking hearths are generally larger

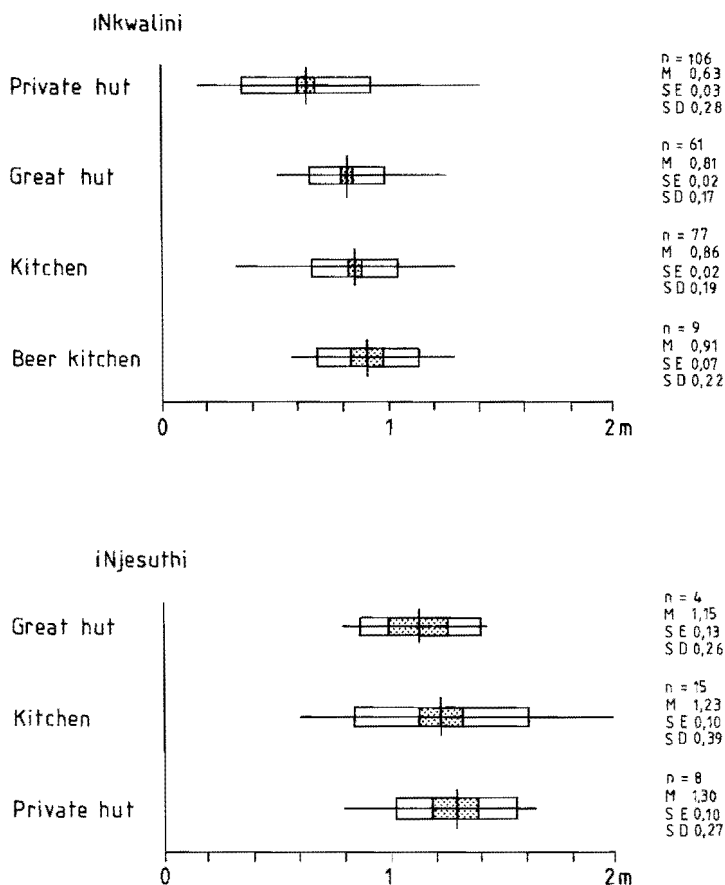


Fig. 24. Lengths of hearths in functionally specific hut types.

and plainer than decorative hearths. However, this is not the case in iNjesuthi, where variation in length and style show little correlation with hearth function. The only exception is the tendency for cooking hearths to be wider than decorative hearths.

Further research would be needed to establish whether the study areas are representative of their regions and whether hearth styles are related to hut styles.

Ash heaps

The disposal of domestic debris is of crucial concern to archaeology as a major source of information on past societies. Therefore, in this study we recorded the number and location of ash heaps in the homesteads and examined conventions relating to disposal.

A significant dichotomy immediately emerged for, when people in iNkwalini were questioned about rubbish (*izibi*) disposal, they asked whether ash (*umlotha*) was meant. The people implied that ash is the only material that is systematically discarded. They say that ash is collected from the hearths and discarded on the

appointed ash heap, while our fieldwork observations showed that other debris and yard sweepings are merely thrown into the bushes around the edge of the settlement. Ash heaps have a ritual significance (Raum 1973: 145–147 152) which does not apply to rubbish in general. Because of this customary respect due to the household ash heap, we did not investigate them. However, our visual inspection suggests that iNkwalini families do not mix rubbish with the ash to any great extent (Bryant 1949:194, Raum 1973:153).

In the lowland research area the position of the ash heap follows a particular pattern which is symbolically related to the position of the homestead entrance. It is situated *esangweni* (at the entrance), that is, at the downhill edge of the site (Raum 1973:146) below the cattle pen. Within the general pattern individuals exercise a degree of flexibility in positioning their ash heap, especially as to whether they are to the right or left of the entrance (Table 14). A slight majority (40 %) are situated on the left of the entrance, even though four people maintain that the

TABLE 14
Position of ash heaps relative to the main homestead entrance
(*isango*)
iNkwalini: 78 homes with one ash heap

left		right		central	
no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
33	42	31	40	14	18

correct place is on the right. The right side is specified because it is the side of *inkosana* (eldest son), and he is the owner (heir) of the *umuzi*. One man says that his ash heap is not to the right of the entrance because 'the cattle walk out just there and then the rain would wash away the ash; the place where it should be is not a good place'. Others say that it does not matter on which side the ash is thrown, so long as it is at the gate. There are, in fact, 31 (37 %) homes with the ash heap in the customary position on the right.

Homes with two ash heaps are rare but of interest (Raum 1973:174 179). Of the three examples in our sample one has two heaps on the right of the entrance, another has a heap on either side and in the third the ash heaps are at the top of the cattle pen, one inside the fence, the other outside. Raum (1973:193) shows that multiple ash heaps can indicate the incipient segmentation of the homestead. We recorded this situation in one home where in 1979 there were two ash heaps, one on either side of the entrance. The homestead was in the process of splitting because of friction between the head's wives, according to the neighbours. Subsequently, a separate homestead was built for each wife. A visit to the senior wife's home in 1984 established that there were still two ash heaps, for which situation the occupants could offer no explanation; however, they did say that the wife used the one closest to her hut and her daughters-in-law used that closest to their huts.

The well established lowland pattern of placing ash heaps near the formal entrance contrasts markedly with the situation in iNjesuthi where ash disposal

appears to be a practical rather than a customary concern. In two iNjesuthi homes the ash heaps were placed near the cattle pen so that the ash can be mixed with manure to make fertiliser. Some women throw their ash directly on to the vegetable garden (*izala*). Multiple ash heaps here do not seem to be a sign of any threatened split in the home; in fact it is not uncommon for each woman to throw her ash in front of her own kitchen, resulting in several ash heaps in each homestead. It may well be that the casual upland approach to ash disposal follows from the opening up of the settlement pattern itself, as discussed above but on this point we have no specific evidence. As a result of these discard patterns, the visible mounds of ash probably hold limited information. Most of the debris from daily life is not concentrated in one place.

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper we take a new look at the spatial organisation of rural Zulu homesteads. Our approach is in the first instance ethnoarchaeological since the motivation for the research was primarily to provide an improved basis for interpreting archaeological information on settlements from the last few centuries of the precolonial period. However we feel that this research looks forward as well as backward by examining current changes in the built environment against a socioeconomic background.

We have attempted to give more precise parameters to generalisations contained in the earlier literature as well as to point out specific errors, such as the widely accepted but incorrect notion of a fundamental easterly orientation to these homesteads. Where much of the ethnography searches for a fixed ideal, our approach has been to examine homesteads in terms of family dynamics. For example where earlier literature stresses a rather rigid subdivision of huts into left/right, female/male sides we found a degree of flexibility. In one of our lowland homes the sides had been reversed because the husband had found that the roof was leaking on his side.

The results have contributed to improved archaeological comparison and interpretation in a number of ways. For example our conclusion that the orientation of the Zulu homestead is fundamentally according to direction of slope and *not* cardinal direction supports similar findings for the precolonial period (Maggs *et al* 1986). Since this has been the norm in our region for several centuries, the contention by anthropologists that there is fundamental easterly homestead orientation among Nguni-speaking communities requires review. Indeed this preference, where present, may be of relatively recent origin. Clearly the numerical basis for our conclusions carries weight over the impressionistic generalisation of an earlier generation of fieldwork.

On the other hand our findings confirm Kuper's (1982) structuralist argument for the importance of the central axis of the homestead, which largely determines the position and alignment of the buildings. Along the axis are the great hut, cattle pen, homestead entrance and ash heap—all of spiritual importance to the family. That the principles of alignment are still so strictly adhered to in the lowland sample is perhaps surprising in view of socioeconomic changes. However this is not the case

in the uplands where alignment along with several other characteristics has undergone a series of related changes.

Also of value to archaeology is the finding of a twofold waste disposal system—ash at the entrance and rubbish radially to the edge of the homestead. This helps explain the rarity of middens on archaeological settlements of the past few centuries in Natal. While a few ash/rubbish concentrations have been excavated (Hall & Maggs 1979, Maggs 1982, Hall & Mack 1983), the rarity of such concentrations suggests that the normal pattern of discard was radially dispersed. This is in clear contrast with the situation on the Highveld where, during the same period, homesteads normally accumulated several well-defined middens around their peripheries (eg. Maggs 1974). There may indeed be a long-standing difference here between Nguni and Sotho-speaking communities.

The evidence relating human and livestock populations to number and size of structures shows that in both cases there is a wide range of variability. This would preclude the possibility of establishing population numbers for individual homesteads in the past. However patterns do emerge, particularly in terms of people per hut, which if used with a sample of homesteads should give an acceptably accurate figure. In the case of livestock, however, further work should be concentrated on establishing how close a link there is between herd size and stock pen size at the time of construction.

In the case of human population it is likely that our figure of 1,4 people per hut is somewhat less than would have been the case in precolonial times. This is because the archaeological evidence as well as the earlier ethnography does not indicate the presence of specialised kitchen huts separate from the normal family or personal huts. Indeed specialised huts have been recorded only from the Zulu royal capitals of Mgungundlovu (Parkington & Cronin 1979) and Ondini but not from commoner homesteads of the 19th century and earlier.

Several of the findings of this project, however, relate to recent and current changes and are therefore of anthropological rather than archaeological interest. During this century there has clearly been an emphasis on above-ground granaries rather than the grain pits that are stressed in much of the early ethnography. The archaeological evidence also suggests that grain pits were by no means ubiquitous in our region. Hut style, which has undergone so much change since around 1950, has previously received little attention. We show in this study that while there is a widely stated ideal that great huts in particular should be of the most traditional form—*iqhugwane*—in reality the style of construction does not determine the practical or spiritual function of the hut. The crucial spiritual factor is evidently the belief that the ancestors should be suitably informed of change.

Likewise the twentieth century proliferation of different styles of hearth and their different functions has previously received little attention. Although our results are inconclusive it is at least clear in the lowland sample that the more elaborate and in some cases non-functional hearths are largely confined to family, private and great huts while the simple circular to oval shape is used for most hearths that see regular use, particularly in kitchens.

The most important recent development that we document is that of the 'opening out' of the homestead plan from circular to linear form. While we recorded such

homesteads only in iNjesuthi, where they have become the norm, similar linear forms are common in many other rural Zulu communities. Contemporary social, economic and political pressures would seem to be broadly favouring the opening out process despite, and perhaps partly because of, the stated preference of senior family members for the circular form which they perceived as giving them greater control of the household.

If we look at the archaeological evidence as well, it appears that there has been a sequential change in homestead form from circular with fairly evenly spaced huts all around (Maggs *et al* 1986, Maggs 1988) to circular form with huts concentrated in the upper half, as in iNkwalini, to linear. The fan shape noted for some homes may indeed represent a form transitional between circular and linear, although further work would be needed to confirm this suggestion.

Clearly the 'opening out' process implies more than merely a change to a linear plan. With it the central axis and its attendant alignment is weakened or lost. Elements of the homestead are thus released from their recognised positions. Cattle pens and their entrances can be placed in a variety of positions while ash heaps find a practical rather than spiritual position in front of individual kitchens. Second wives may build on a terrace separate from the rest of the homestead. Clearly this process represents a deliberate move away from the traditional pattern where the settlement pattern is a visual manifestation of the traditional spiritual and social order. Yet our information on homestead heads suggests that those from iNjesuthi are no less conservative than those from iNkwalini. We still do not adequately understand the underlying social mechanism that affects the change in homestead form.

In conclusion we would point out the need for more research on understanding settlement patterns through fieldwork on samples of homesteads from local communities. Such research provides better insight for archaeological interpretation. It also forms an important part of the ethnographic record. However, if we look forwards, there is also a real practical need for such research as an input into the design stages of housing projects. Impoverished communities, not only those in apartheid South Africa, are seldom seriously consulted about their perceptions of accommodation needs. Instead they are squeezed into dwelling units based on the Western concept of the primary family. This failure on the part of most planners to consider spiritual and cultural needs must have caused untold anguish and family strife.

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