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STYLE IN MAFA MATERIAL CULTURE

BY

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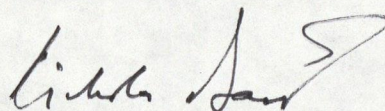
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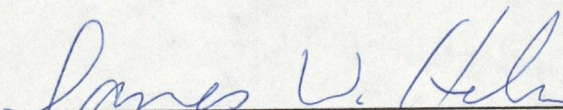
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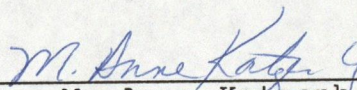
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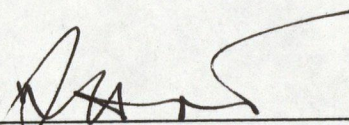
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ABSTRACT

This thesis studies the nature and variability of style in the material culture of the Mafa of north Cameroon (Map 1). The forms and typological variability of architecture, pots, metal objects, costume items and mortuary practices are described and explained in relation to the particular contexts of behaviour within which they are generated. Relationships that exist between Mafa social and ideological structures and material culture are emphasized as those types of relationships are not well known in archaeology. Results of the study provide information about the principal variables that influence stylistic variability in Mafa material culture.

The relevant data were obtained by me in 1986 during eleven months of fieldwork among five southern Mafa villages that I shall conveniently refer to as the 'core Mafa' as part of the Mandara Archaeological Project (M.A.P.) (David and MacEachern 1985; David and Sterner 1987; 1989). These data are analyzed in the perspective of what has been observed by other members of the M.A.P. crew as well as published reports on the material culture of other Mafa communities and historical changes that occurred in the region at large.

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The thesis is dedicated to the memory of my late father, Rev. E.O Kofi Gavua.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
LIST OF PLATES	ix
LIST OF MAPS	x
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	
1.1: The Study of Style in Archaeology	1
1.2: Theories of Stylistic Variation	4
1.3: The Theory of Mafa Style	14
CHAPTER TWO: THE DATA BASE AND THE MAFA CONTEXT	
2.1: Introduction to the Mafa	21
2.2: The Data Base	24
2.3: The Contexts of Core Mafa Material Culture ..	33
2.3.1: Geographical Background	34
2.3.2: Core Mafa Villages	38
2.3.3: Historical Background	41
2.3.4: Economic Background	46
2.3.5: Settlement Pattern	53
2.3.6: Social Organization	55
2.3.7: Cosmology and Religion	66
CHAPTER THREE: STYLE IN MAFA ARCHITECTURE	
3.1: Introduction	72
3.2: Traditional Buildings	74
3.3: Meanings of Traditional Architecture	92
3.4: Non-Traditional Buildings	96
3.5: Meanings of Non-Traditional Architecture	98
3.6: Taphonomic Transformations of Architecture ..	99
3.7: Summary	101
CHAPTER FOUR: STYLE IN MAFA POTTERY	
4.1: Introduction	104
4.2: Typology of Pots	107
4.2.1: 'Technomic' Pots	107
4.2.2: 'Sociotechnic' Pots	113
4.2.3: 'Ideotechnic' Pots	117
4.3: Production and Distribution of Pots	126
4.4: Function and Pot Form	138
4.5: Cognitive Structures and Pot Form	144

4.6: Taphonomic Transformations of Pots	151
4.7: Summary	156
CHAPTER FIVE: STYLE IN MAFA METALLURGY	
5.1: Introduction	161
5.2: Typology of Metal Artifacts	163
5.3: Production and Distribution of Artifacts	180
5.4: Summary	189
CHAPTER SIX: STYLE IN MAFA COSTUMES	
6.1: Introduction	194
6.2: Traditional Costume Items	196
6.3: Functions of Traditional Costume Items	206
6.4: Cognitive Bases of Traditional Costumes	207
6.5: Non-Traditional Costume Items	208
6.6: Meanings of Non-Traditional Costume Items ...	214
6.7: Summary	215
CHAPTER SEVEN: STYLE IN MAFA MORTUARY PRACTICES	
7.1: Introduction	218
7.2: Traditional Mortuary Practices	220
7.3: Processes of Traditional Burials	226
7.4: Meanings of Traditional Mortuary Practices ..	238
7.5: Christian Mortuary Practices	240
7.6: Taphonomic Transformations of Burials	241
7.7: Summary	243
CHAPTER EIGHT: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	
8.1: Style in Core Mafa Material Culture	246
8.2: Social and Ideological Functions of Style ...	250
8.3: The Maintenance of Style	255
8.4: Variations in Style	257
8.5: Implications for Archaeology	263
BIBLIOGRAPHY	269
APPENDIX 1: Groups of Core Mafa Clans	313
APPENDIX 2: Glossary	314

LIST OF TABLES

<u>TABLE</u>	<u>TITLE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
1:	'Ideotechnic' Pots and Agents they Represent ..	279
2:	Co-ordination of Pots and Decoration	280
3:	Decoration and Phenomena it Objectifies	282
4:	Price Ranges of Smith's Products	283
5:	Price Ranges of Clothes and Textile Prints	283
6:	Potters' Village and Clan Background	284
7:	Stylistic Variations (Mafa vrs. Neighbours) ...	285

LIST OF FIGURES

<u>FIGURE</u>	<u>TITLE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
1.1:	Profiles of Traditional Types of Buildings ...	286
1.2:	Plans of Traditional Compounds	287
1.3:	Plans of Modernizing Compounds	288
2.1:	'Technomic' Mafa Pots	289
2.2:	'Sociotechnic' Mafa Pots	292
2.3:	'Ideotechnic Mafa Pots'	293
3.1:	Metal Agricultural Tools and Utensils	296
3.2:	Metal Weapons and Ceremonial Items	298
3.3:	Metal Costume Items	299
3.4:	Forging Tools	300
3.5:	Forge Plans	301
4:	Traditional Non-metallic Costume Items	302
5:	Traditional Tombs	303

LIST OF PLATES

<u>PLATE</u>	<u>TITLE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
1:	Traditional Mafa Compound	304
2:	Floor to Hut loft	304
3:	Entrance of Loft	304
4:	Grinding Platform	305
5:	Kitchen Shelf with Pots	305
6:	Mafa Forge	305
7:	Unroofed Free-standing Granary	306
8:	Daub Dome Hut Ceiling	306
9:	Grass Roof Over Daub Dome	306
10:	Grass and Millet Stalk Roof Over Branches	307
11:	Pyramidal Thatched Roof	307
12:	Family of Mafa Potters	307
13:	Base of Pot in Bowl 'Turntable'	308
14:	'God' Potsherd	308

LIST OF MAPS

<u>MAP</u>	<u>TITLE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
1:	Cameroon, Indicating Mafa Territory	309
2:	Territories of the Mafa and their Neighbours ..	310
3:	Locations of Core Mafa and Other Villages	311
4:	Linguistic Map of North Cameroon	312

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1: The Study of Style in Archaeology

Major scientific attempts by archaeologists to define style and to understand variables that account for its nature and variability in material culture began in the 1960s when the explanation of the processes of human adaptation and culture change became a major objective of research (eg. Binford 1962; 1965; Binford and Binford 1968; Clarke 1968). Previously, style was arbitrarily used to define cultures and periods with little concern for how it is generated. Only where objects could be considered 'art' were there efforts to infer their meaning. Aside archaeology, ethnographic research has become important as a means by which contemporary researchers hope to understand style. Results of such research are expected to assist archaeologists interpret and explain stylistic variations in prehistoric artifacts (see Kramer 1982:1-5).

Style is generally considered by researchers to be an aspect of form that has social and ideological functions, including the distinction of individual and

group identity and the expression of social and ideological values (eg. Binford 1962; Hodder 1982a; 1982b; Sackett 1982; 1986; Wiessner 1983; Wobst 1977). However, variables that influence formal artifact variability are yet to be understood adequately as the scope of stylistic analysis has been generally narrow. Most researchers have studied the formal nature and variability of only single classes of artifacts with only a limited set of attributes regarded as being stylistic. Based on the assumption that style lacks practical techno-economic functions and is unaffected by the nature of materials and techniques used in producing objects (eg. Binford 1962:216), style has been located by most researchers in only attributes, such as decoration, that could be identified as lacking practical (techno-economic) functions.

Influenced by the nature of the types of materials - Upper Palaeolithic assemblages - he works with, Sackett (1982; 1986; n.d.) has observed however, that style is adjunct to functional form. He argues that in any given society, artisans choose the forms of their products from several viable alternatives ('isochrestic' options) on the basis of craft traditions that prevail in the society. And, because such traditions influence the manner in which form is manipulated, all formal artifact variability are intrinsically stylistic. To Sackett, therefore, even

aspects of form that have obvious practical functions are potentially stylistic. It should be noted that Sackett is mainly concerned with the question of where style is located in artifacts and not with how artifacts are used stylistically (Sackett n.d). His 'isochrestic' approach to style could permit the analysis of a wide range of attributes when style is studied, but is yet to become popular.

Irrespective of where researchers locate style in artifacts, several theories, developed on the basis of data on both prehistoric and contemporary material culture, are employed by archaeologists to explain stylistic variations in cross-cultural terms. Most have been evaluated extensively (eg. Hodder 1982b:3-7; 1986:18-33; Plog 1980:115-119; Shanks and Tilley 1987:138-146), and criticisms of their contents suggest that none is by itself adequate for explaining variations and similarities in style. Moreover, all cannot be applied successfully in all cultural contexts.

In the sections below, I shall first discuss a number of the theories of style that I intend to consider in my study and then outline the particular theoretical approach I intend to adopt.

1.2: Theories of Stylistic Variation

Theories of stylistic variation can be grouped into two categories - 'normative' and 'adaptive', on the basis of how they relate individual behaviour to culture. Since they have been evaluated extensively, my discussion of their merits is minimal.

1.2.1: Normative Theories of Style

Normative theories are influenced by the premise that the cultural behaviour of individual members of society is largely influenced by common norms and values that are transmitted between generations through learning, and between different groups of the same generation by diffusion (Binford 1962:202-5; 1965:203-5; Hill 1970:117). A homogeneous distribution of artifact styles is hence expected within given communities of people that adhere to similar norms and values. Spatial and temporal variations that occur, however, are accounted for in terms of events that could cause a breakdown in learning and diffusion. According to this perspective, therefore, the impact of individuals on stylistic variability and change is negligible.

Although the normative perspective could account for the existence of style zones, it is inadequate as a

basis of explaining processes that underly the generation of variations and similarities in artifact form and those that effect changes in stylistic attributes within style zones over time (Shanks and Tilley 1987:138-9).

Among theories that are based on the normative perspective are a) social interaction (Deetz 1965; Hill 1970; Whallon 1968), b) regional adaptation (Martin and F. Plog 1973; S. Plog 1978; 1980), c) stylistic drift (Binford 1972) and d) motor habit variation (Hill 1977)

a) Social Interaction

According to the social interaction theory, friendly and co-operative interactions between people are the main cause of stylistic similarity in material culture, and visa versa (Deetz 1965; Hill 1970; Whallon 1968). Thus, where interaction is based on competition for resources style may be used as a means of maintaining boundaries between groups and communities of people. The theory thus entails a normative proposition that interaction encourages learning and sharing and creates the opportunity for people to adopt or reject one another's material cultural style.

Studies of stylistic variations, including a number that have been based on the normative perspective,

have indicated, however, that social interaction cannot always explain material cultural variation as such factors as experimentation (Stanislawski 1969) and differences in individual motor habits (Hill 1977:117) could be influential.

b) Regional Adaptation

Developed on the basis of a study of prehistoric ceramics in the American Southwest (Plog 1980) the regional adaptation theory of style proposes that variations in material cultural style are explained by differences in the functions artifacts serve in different regions and the composition of the societies that occupy these regions. Plog (1980) concluded that the particular function ceramic vessels serve determines the primary characteristics of their form, and hence stylistic similarities and variations would occur when these vessels perform different functions at different sites and different areas of a site.

Function is thus the main element that influences stylistic variability according to the theory. The theory fails to explain, however, why similar types of artifacts serve in different contexts and why different types of artifacts function in similar contexts. It also fails to explain the extent to which the primary characteristics of

artifacts form relate to their function (Shanks and Tilley (1987:140)).

c) Stylistic Drift

The stylistic drift theory (Binford 1972; 1965:206) suggests that while generational continuity in learning between parent and daughter communities would minimize the extent of individual variations in material culture, discontinuity would maximize the variance. Thus, stylistic variation in material culture would occur when individuals or groups become separated from their parent communities by such factors as demographic change or segregation. The variation would be due to errors that the segregated persons would make when attempting to copy or sample the material culture of their parent community.

Although copying error may be made by different generations of artisans in the production of traditional items, stylistic drift cannot explain temporal and spatial changes in design variation that may be found within the same community (Plog 1980:135). In the American Southwest, for example, the colonization of new areas due to the augmentation and fission of prehistoric populations between A.D. 400 and 900 led to an increase in stylistic

similarity rather than causing marked variations (Plog 1980).

d) Motor Habit Variation

The motor habit theory of stylistic variation (eg. Hill 1977:100) postulates that differences in individual motor habits or the specific ways in which individuals make things are the primary sources of variation in some artifact attributes. These differences are supposed to be intrinsic to human nature such that variations in style are expected to occur subconsciously without being affected by the intensity of social interaction or context of learning. The theory thus recognizes, contrary to normative views, that individual action can generate stylistic variability.

If motor habits were subconscious and not shared, then a random patterning of artifact style would be expected (Plog 1980:120). Several cases of material cultural variation (eg. Hodder 1982a; Wiessner 1983; David et al. 1988) have indicated that the patterning of artifact style is not always random, and occurs according to established value systems. Shanks and Tilley (1987:141) noted that the theory could explain minor aspects of stylistic variation in a given social unit, but not long

term changes in style within and between groups that might be caused by variations in social strategies and social practices.

1.2.2: 'Adaptive' Theories of Style

The adaptive perspective of culture suggests that culture is manipulated differentially by both individuals and groups in relation to their needs and abilities. Artifacts may thus reflect adaptive strategies, including demographic, productive and organizational ones, by which individuals experiment in order to cope with their local physical and human environments (Cordell and Plog 1979:409-410). This perspective overcomes limitations of the normative one by allowing for the study of the influence of individuals on stylistic variation.

Some of the theories that are related to this perspective include a) information exchange theories (eg. Wobst 1977; Pollock 1984; Wiessner 1983), b) structural theories (eg. Hodder 1982a; 1982b David et al. 1988), and c) contextual theories (eg. Hodder 1985; 1986; Miller 1987; Shanks and Tilley 1987).

a) Information Exchange

The information exchange theory was introduced by Wobst (1977) to suggest that style has function and is a cost effective mode by which messages that enhance social integration or social differentiation are transmitted between interacting groups and individuals (Wobst 1977:328). Messages carried by artifacts are supposed to summarize the economic and social situations of individuals and hence make interaction predictable (Wiessner 1983:258). Artifacts are thus expected to vary stylistically according to the type of information they contain. As observed by Wiessner (1983:161), variations in style are created actively by the members of society to distinguish themselves.

One of the important tenets of this theory as formulated by Wobst (1977), is that variations in artifact style are influenced by the amount of social distance between the producers (transmitters of messages) and consumers (receivers or the target of the messages). The shorter the distance, the less obviously visible the variation that would be expected to occur (Wobst 1977:323). A second major aspect of the theory suggests that artifacts that are visible over intermediate and long distances would exhibit much variation in form, as they are the most

appropriate for the transmission of messages (Wobst 1977:330).

It has been observed, however, that variations in style could occur irrespective of how close people are socially and how invisible artifacts are (Hodder 1982a:54-6; Sterner 1989). Sterner (1989) demonstrated, for example, that among the Bulahay of north Cameroon, messages contained in pottery styles are usually directed at members of the Bulahay society and only incidentally at outsiders. Pots and their attributes that are only rarely visible were also observed by her to be those that contained much stylistic information. Information exchange does not also explain why a given set of stylistic features rather than another may be used to signal particular messages (Shanks and Tilley (1987:142).

b) Structural Theories

Structural theories are based on the premise that human behaviour, in any given community, is patterned according to specific social and ideological structures and principles (see eg. Leach 1986:5; Hodder 1982a:205-7; 1982b:4-6). Artifacts are supposed to objectify these structures and principles as they are products of human behaviour, although they could also transform behaviour by

serving as references for the generation, maintenance and redefinition of values (Hodder 1982a:12; 1985:5).

Researchers (using structural theories) thus seek to explain stylistic variability of material culture in relation to the ideological and social structures that underly artifact design. Hodder (1985:7), for example, suggests that although researchers cannot make general deterministic laws about human behaviour, they can identify the general principles that govern individual behaviour. Factors that have been observed, so far, as underlying variations in material cultural style include the legitimization of relations of power (Braithwaite 1982), the justification of behaviour and ideological commitment (Hodder 1982a:205) and the protection and insulation of humans and spirits against ill fortune (David et al. 1988). The decoration of pots has also been noted to be influenced by the notion that pots are formally related to the human body (David et al. 1988).

c) Contextual Theories

Contextual theories developed, to date, by students of material culture suggest that the particular manner in which artifacts are designed within a given community depends on the specific contexts in which the

artifacts are produced and consumed (Hanson 1975:10; Hodder 1982a:10; 1985:14; Shanks and Tilley 1987:132). The context of an artifact, according to Hodder (1985:14), is not limited to any particular scale of analysis. It may hence include all conditions and circumstances, such as social, cultural, ideological and ecological ones, that are relevant to the production, use and discard of an artifact. The particular conditions affecting the production and use of artifacts in any given community could, however, change temporally.

Although one may expect, on the basis of contextual theories, the formal nature and variability of material culture to be influenced by a network of several factors, researchers have placed emphasis on the relationship between artifact form and the social and ideological variables. Studies undertaken so far (eg. Davis 1983; Miller 1987; Shanks and Tilley 1987), have examined how the processes of acculturation and enculturation, including innovation and its diffusion, affected artifact form. For example, Shanks and Tilley (1987:172-245) demonstrated in a study of variations between British and Swedish beer cans that differences in social strategies between groups of people do influence the degree to which artifacts vary stylistically.

There are, however, major concerns about using

contextual theories in archaeological explanation. For example, Binford and Stone (1988) suggest that contextual analyses are not suitable for archaeological explanation because relationships between social and ideological variables and artifacts, for instance, cannot be observed in the archaeological record and cannot be measured scientifically, although they can be, more or less, ethnographically. Nonetheless, it is at present important for archaeologists to understand clearly the various dimensions, besides functional ones, in which artifact style relates to human behaviour and the factors that influence this behaviour if the effort to reconstruct past human activity is to mature.

1.3: The Theory of Mafa Material Cultural Style

In my study of Mafa material culture, I shall examine stylistic variability in relation to the particular contexts in which material behaviour is generated in Mafa society. As the Mafa often design objects according to specific traditional values and often use them to convey specific kinds of information that enhance interactions between members of their society (David et al. 1988; Gavua 1989), it is my presumption that style in the material culture relates to various dynamics of individual and group

behaviour. Mafa material culture can be considered, in part, to reflect a dynamic state of change as individual and group behaviour (in Mafa society) would change generally in relation to changing contexts. It is therefore necessary to examine variables that promote sociocultural change among the Mafa in order to understand variations that occur in their material culture.

1.3.1: Mafa Material Culture and Socio-cultural Change

Socio-cultural change refers to alterations that occur in the function and structure of a society and its culture (Rogers 1969:3; Ryan 1969:3-5). While social change is effected when the behaviour and relations between people are modified, culture change involves alterations in the material conditions of people. A change in the behaviour and relations between people could influence culture change; people may, for instance, change their dress habits or homes as a result of their membership in new status groups. However, culture change does not always occur within the realm of social relationships (Ryan 1969: 3-7). Culture may change while social relationships remain the same. Members of families may, for instance, become wealthy and acquire new types of artifacts without any alterations in the manner in which they relate to one

another. But as material culture is capable of transforming behaviour (Hodder 1982a:12; 1985:5), it is possible for changes to occur in social relations due to alterations in culture (Ryan 1969:8). There is, thus, a close interrelationship between social change and culture change.

Material cultural style is expected to change through the invention of new items, the diffusion of inventions and the consequences of the acceptance or rejection of invention by members of society (Rogers and Shoemaker 1971; Rogers 1969; 1983; Ryan 1969). New items and designs may be created and incorporated into the cultural tradition, substituted for traditional ones, fused with them or completely isolated (Bee 1974:105-6).

One type of alteration that occurs in the fabric of a society and its material culture is that which derives from within the society with little or no external stimulus (Rogers 1969:5; Ryan 1969:11). Certain dominant ideals, values, conventions or principles may underly behaviour within the society, including specific mental templates or rules according to which particular artifacts ought to be made. But due to variables such as demographic and environmental factors that could alter relations and interactions between members and their choices, variations are likely to occur in the particular types of artifacts

the members would produce, acquire, consume and discard. In such cases, alterations in the nature of material cultural style within a society would be expected to arise from the peculiar manner in which the society is internally organized and how its members relate to one another and to the resources available to them.

A second type of alteration derives from relationships and interactions between the members of a society and outsiders (Bee 1974:102; Rogers 1969:5-6). These relationships and interactions would involve the establishment of communication links between members of the society and outsiders. They would be based on the nature of the intercultural links that exist between the two societies including social, religious, commercial and administrative ones, and on the content of the kinds of information they exchange (Bee 1974:102). This type of alteration, also known as contact change, may be selective or directed ((Rogers 1969:5). It is selective when new ideas and objects are introduced unintentionally or spontaneously by outsiders to members of a society, who subsequently select according their needs and wants those ideas and items they wish to adopt. Directed contact change is when new ideas and items are deliberately introduced by outsiders, through force and/or persuasion, to the members of a society.

Whether or not the type of change that occurs is generated from within a society, it operates at society, group and individual levels (Rogers 1969:8-15). Change at the level of society may be characterized by alterations in major social institutions, for example, religion and education (Rogers 1969:9), and environmental phenomena that affect society at large. The introduction of new systems of administration, state laws and foreign religions to a previously egalitarian society, and natural disasters in that society could, among other things, lead to significant changes in the types of artifacts the members are likely to use. New artifacts and designs that would be invented and spread as a result of the establishment of new social institutions, the modification of old ones, and natural disasters would hence reflect change at the societal level.

Change would occur at the individual level when traditional ways of life are substituted for modern and more complex lifestyles (Rogers 1969:14-5). The change, according to Rogers, is a synthesis of old and new patterns of behaviour and is a function of a combination of many variables such as the level of literacy, economic status, communication and individual choices. Rogers (1983:248-50) observed that human societies are characterized by different categories of members with varying attitudes to change, social status, or abilities to influence the

behaviour of other members. These include individuals and groups who are eager to innovate or be in a position to innovate, those who would adopt innovation, and others, particularly laggards, who would adhere to tradition and be adamantly against change. Thus, besides variations that may result from sociocultural change at the societal level, individuals and groups are differentially affected by and react to conditions and circumstances in which they make a living. This may lead to the creation of much stylistic variation.

Patterns of stylistic variation and similarity in the material culture of the Mafa, for example, including variations and similarities that emanate from sociocultural change at both individual and societal levels cannot, therefore, be accounted for simply by one variable. One is thus faced with enormous complicating factors in terms of individual and group behaviour and other forces that contribute to the totality of material culture observable at any particular time in Mafa society. The problem is to pull apart the complex whole and identify as many of the contributing variables as possible. The nature of these variables will depend upon specific contexts, for example, historical, economic, social, demographic, environmental, or ideological ones in which artifacts are produced, consumed and discarded in Mafa society.

I consider my approach to the study as suitable for providing a tangible basis for explaining the patterning of stylistic variation in Mafa material culture. This is because, the effect of other variables besides function and ideology on the material culture will be examined. Functional analysis alone would not yield adequate information as the functions of artifacts change frequently with changes in the sets of activities undertaken in Mafa society (see David et al. 1988). Artifacts could also camouflage or mask the behaviour of their users and their seemingly obvious functions may differ from their actual functions. Ideas underlying their form could change when the historical circumstances within which they are formulated alter.

The rest of the thesis is divided into seven chapters. Chapter two discusses the my data base and the general contexts within which material behaviour is generated among the core Mafa. Chapters three through seven present the study of architecture, pottery, metal objects, costume and burials respectively. The final chapter is a summary of results of the study and a discussion of implications of the study for research into style by archaeologists.

CHAPTER TWO

THE DATA BASE AND CONTEXT OF MAFA MATERIAL CULTURE

2.1: Introduction to the Mafa

The Mafa are the largest of several ethnic groups that inhabit the Mandara Mountains (Boutrais et al. 1984). Numbering about 115,000 people in the 1960s (Podlewski 1966:9; Martin 1970:60) they number over 200,000 persons presently. They live in a number of villages that spread over an area of about 1500 square kilometers (Map 2) and have a mean population density of about 120 people per square kilometer (Boulet et al. 1984:110). Their neighbours include the Wandala or Mandara in the north, the Zulgo and Gemjek in the east, the Mofu in the southeast, the Cuvok, Bulahay and Kapsiki in the south and southwest, and the Mabass, Hide' and Ngosi in the west on the frontier between Nigeria and Cameroon. The Mafa, in addition to the Bulahay and other non-Mafa ethnic groups on the Mandara Mountains, are also referred to generally as 'Matakam' by the Fulbe and some students of the Mafa (eg. Martin 1970). It appears that they are called as such because Matakam, a

Mafa village (see below) was presumably the first Mafa village met with by Fulbe advancing north from Zamay in 1895.

The Mafa speak a number of dialects of the Mafa language. Mafa is in the southern group of the A sub-branch of the Central branch of Chadic, a major family of the Afroasiatic phylum (Barreteau et al. 1984:167-8). A sub-branch includes dialects spoken by the Bulahay, Mofu, Cuvok and Zulgo and varies significantly from languages of the Kapsiki, Mabass and Wandala. While all Mafa dialects are mutually intelligible, Mafa and even their closest relatives, Mefeke (the Bulahay language) and Cuvok are not. Besides Mafa, Fulfulde and French are also spoken, generally poorly, by some Mafa as linguae francae. However, except in Mokolo, the capital of the arrondissement, only a few individuals are bilingual.

But for minor variations, the physical environment, social, religious and cosmological structures and material culture of the Mafa are generally similar. Most Mafa, however are, not conscious of an identity as a distinct ethnic group. Instead, they identify themselves with the respective villages from which they come and associate their dialects with these villages. Their society is characterized by exogamous named patriclans. Before the colonial period the largest political unit was

the dza, a term which refers both to a densely settled zone or village, usually located on and around a mountain or hill, and to the mountain itself. Dza comprises the compounds and fields of the members of several lineages and of at least two clans. On the dza, rites are carried out under the leadership of a ritual chief (bidza).

Several aspects of the traditional economic, social, and political organization and ideology remain, though much is disappearing as the modern state and cash economy, Islam and Christian missions, and Western schooling and health care increasingly impinge upon daily life. As a result, even in the village, people in their early twenties and younger are remarkably ignorant of traditional religion, and there appears to be little or no pressure on them to learn. Their values and beliefs differ from those of their elders.

The focus of the discussion that follows is two fold. First, a brief background to my study of core Mafa material culture and the nature of field data I obtained along with the methods and strategies by which they were collected are presented. In addition to this is a review of major publications that are relevant to the study. I shall, secondly, provide an overview of the context of the material culture, including the geographical, historical,

social, economic and ideological conditions under which the Mafa live.

2.2: The Data Base

2.2.1: Background to the Study

This study of Mafa material culture forms part of the Mandara Archaeological Project (M.A.P.) which is directed by Dr. Nicholas David of the department of Archaeology, University of Calgary. The project (David and MacEachern 1985; David and Sterner 1987) is intended to generate information about the culture history of ethnic groups that inhabit the Mandara mountains of north Cameroon and its adjacent plains over the last 12,000 years. It also investigates the nature of stylistic variation that is observable in the material culture of these groups. It centers on an area of approximately 2,000 square kilometers that is inhabited by 16 ethnic groups (Map 2).

To date, there have been three field seasons: the summer of 1984, the whole of 1986 and the summer of 1989. The first season (David and MacEachern 1985) involved a survey of the project area, including two test excavations at Blabli (M.A.P. 506) on the Bama ridge, and at Mehe Djiddéré (M.A.P. 523.).

The second season (David and Sterner 1987) was characterized by studies that investigated the contemporary material culture of a number of different ethnic groups. Included in these studies was a video recording of a Mafa traditional iron smelt (David and Le Bléis 1989).

The purpose of the third season was to continue some of the studies undertaken in 1986, and to record more videos about smelting, forging and pottery production (David and Sterner 1989).

2.2.2: Fieldwork Among the Core Mafa

I conducted fieldwork for eleven months in 1986 as an M.A.P. research assistant. My task was specifically to acquire data on the material culture of the Mafa people. Research focused on five main villages, Soulédé, Bao, Midré, Mazam and Matakam (Map 3). Each of the five villages covered is described below.

Soulédé was my research base as it had several logistical advantages over the other villages. Data were gathered intensively here and in nearby Bao during the first half of the study period; these subsequently provided the bases for further studies in other villages. Each of the other villages was visited regularly, at least once every week, except for Matakam where studies were

undertaken on only four occasions due to the difficulty of access.

My work focused on architecture, pottery, metallurgy, mortuary practices and costume. Other miscellaneous artifacts, including calabashes, ladles and plastic and enamel wares were also studied (but will not be discussed in this thesis). I also acquired, and studied in detail, samples of pottery, metal objects and costume items, as well as drawings and crafts made by children.

Data were collected on observable phenomena, including the morphology and function of artifacts and features, and the methods, techniques and modes of production, distribution, consumption and discard. In addition, information on the geography of my study area and the sociocultural practices of its inhabitants was obtained. Data on less tangible aspects of Mafa culture include oral accounts about the history of the core Mafa society, and beliefs, values, rules and principles that are supposed to govern the behaviour of its members. The specific kinds of data relevant to each class of core Mafa material culture will be summarized when the class is discussed below.

2.2.3: Research Methodology

In general, unstructured interviews, participant observation (Babbie 1986:238-250) and the measurement of selected samples (Williams 1984:130) were the main strategies I employed during research. Where possible, representative samples of artifacts were studied in each village for comparative purposes. While paying much attention to observable phenomena, I also obtained information pertaining to thoughts and beliefs common in core Mafa society piecemeal during discussions and conversations with individuals, and through personal observations of religious rituals.

I was assisted by a full time interpreter and aid, and a school teacher who volunteered his services occasionally. Information received in the local language was translated to me in French and I re-translated and recorded it in English. Every piece of information was cross-checked with other sources besides with the person(s) who provided it. My notes were supplemented by illustrations, photographs and maps.

The consent of community leaders was sought before any study was done in their respective domains. Chiefs of Soulede and Bao and their followers were briefed and discussions were held with them at least once every

month about the progress and findings of my research. I adopted this strategy in order to gain the confidence of the natives of the study area and to obtain additional information. In many cases, the chiefs and their followers described what they considered to be the rules, values and principles upon which their society ought to be organized. They also directed me sometimes to persons in their villages they deemed especially knowledgeable about specific phenomena.

A cross-section of informants, including both natives and foreign residents of the villages studied, were also consulted and interviewed formally or informally as the occasion arose. While many Mafa youths failed to explain the ramifications of their traditional culture, adults keenly divulged as much information as they could. The social, religious and economic background of each informant was noted. With the exception of payments made to my full-time interpreter, remuneration of informants was highly limited so as to discourage potential misinformation by greedy persons.

2.2.4: Limitations of Field Data

Due to the specific nature of my duties in the field, I failed to obtain data on the material culture of

other ethnic groups. There is probably more information to be gathered in my study area as I was preoccupied with several different classes of material culture within a relatively short field season. There are also many questions, for example, about the intricacies of Mafa social organization and cosmology that cannot be addressed fully with the data at hand. I did not undertake rigorous statistical analyses of data, not only due to the constraint of time but also because much of the data relevant to my study cannot be quantified and measured precisely.

The three-way translation of information, Mafa-French-English, is a potential source of misinformation, as there could be mistranslations. To limit the incidence of mistranslations, I referred to a transcription of the Mafa language being compiled by D. Barre~~tau~~ and Y. Le Blé^{is} (1984) and to an unpublished Mafa dictionary that has been produced by Le Blé^{is} and Barre~~tau~~ (n.d).

I am confident, nonetheless, of the quality of data gathered. Additional data may be required over several field seasons in order to answer adequately all questions pertinent to Mafa material culture. In the meantime, the data, in conjunction with data collected by N. David and J. Sterner from elsewhere among the Mafa and

their neighbours, and published information (which I shall outline below), should enable me to provide meaningful insight into the nature of stylistic variation in the material culture without bias.

2.2.5: Published Data

Published information about the Mafa can be grouped into a number of categories in terms of subject matter. One of these categories includes accounts that describe historical developments in northern Cameroon and its adjacent regions prior to their administration by colonial powers (eg. Azarya 1976; Denham et al. 1826; Kirk-Greene 1960; Nachtigal 1980). Such accounts rarely discuss the Mafa directly but refer to them indirectly as pagan or mountain tribes of the area. They are, however, useful references to the overall political history of the Mafa and their neighbours.

Another category of publications describes general aspects of the society and culture of the Mafa along with those of other ethnic groups in the region (eg. Boutrais et al. 1984; Gardi 1953; Lembezat 1961; Seignobos 1982; Wente-Lukas 1977). The publications do not discuss the Mafa in detail but contain comparative

information for evaluating the Mafa society and culture. For example, a few describe a variety of artifacts that were collected or observed by early visitors to Mafa territory (eg. Gardi 1953; Hinderling 1954; Wente-Lukas 1977).

Also available is a category of publications that focuses on the Mafa per se and discusses aspects of their culture in detail (eg. Boisseau and Soula 1974; Boulet 1975; David et al. 1988; Genest 1974; Hinderling 1954; 1955; 1984a; 1984b; Lavergne 1944; 1948; Martin 1970; Müller-Kosack 1987; Podlewski 1961; 1966). In this category, Hinderling's 'Die Mafa' (1984) and Martin's 'Les Matakam du Cameroun' (1970) provide detailed coverage of the Mafa, focusing on their history, social organization and practices, economic activities and aspects of material culture, religion and cosmology. But unlike Hinderling's, Martin's book embraces other ethnic groups besides Mafa such as the Bulahay. The content does not, therefore, reflect solely the social and cultural practices of the Mafa.

Examples of publications in the above category include analyses of the agricultural economy of Magoumaz (Boulet 1975), the role of women in Jinglia society (Boisseau and Soula 1974), the composition and functioning of the ngwazla, a professional group among Mafa (eg. Genest

1974; 1986; Podlewski 1961; 1966), and the sociology of Gousda (Müller-Kosack 1987). Many of these works provide only superficial discussions of material culture, although they contain informative descriptions of the nature and uses of many classes of material culture in the respective villages with which they are concerned. Other publications in the category examine specific aspects of Mafa material culture such as architecture (Seignobos 1982), iron metallurgy (Hinderling 1955; David and Robertson n.d) pottery (David et al. 1988; Müller-Kosack 1987) and costume (Gavua 1989).

In addition to the above publications are two transcriptions of Mafa dialects, one by Barreteau and Le Bléis (1984) and another by the Reverend and Mrs. Eichenberger of the district Protestant Mission. There is also Le Bléis and Barreteau's unpublished Mafa dictionary. Eichenbergers' transcription is based on dialects spoken by the core Mafa and has been used in the translation of the Bible from French into Mafa and in the writing of a number of Mafa texts. It is, however, yet to be compiled into a volume in which the French meaning of Mafa words could be obtained. I am, therefore, not using it in my study. Barreteau and Le Bléis's transcription and dictionary, though based on Mokola, a dialect that is spoken just west of my study area, are organized into volumes that contain

French translations of Mafa words.

While I am unable to fully and extensively use publications that are in German (eg. Gardi 1953; Hinderling 1954; 1955; 1984a; 1984b; Müller-Kosack 1987; Wente-Lukas 1977) due to my inability to read and understand the language, I will utilize parts of these publications, including illustrations and photographs and texts, that are directly relevant to my needs and which have been translated for me by Dr. N. David.

2.3: The Contexts of Core Mafa Material Culture

The Mafa of my study area are distinguished as 'core Mafa' mainly for the sake of convenience as, in reality, the people have no such identity (see below). The area they inhabit, however, coincides with the center of major recent migrations of Mafa clans over their present territory (Martin 1970:56). They also speak the same dialect and have close kinship relations. Numbering about 17,400 in the 1960s (Martin 1970:54), their total population may have increased sharply in the 1980s (David (pers. comm. 1990).

The core Mafa live in traditionally autonomous villages but belong to the South Matakam administrative

district. They are hence supervised by the 'Sub-prefect' of Mokolo. With the influence of the Cameroonian state and Christian missions, they have limited access to health, educational and commercial facilities. Many of their youth have acquired high school education and a few work as civil servants or merchants in their villages or in towns. Few Mafa, however, travel outside the Mafa territory and many aspects of their behaviour appear very traditional.

Active interaction occurs among members of the various villages I studied. They intermarry, trade with one another and meet frequently for beer drinking and other festivities. They have similar historical backgrounds and maintain, with minor variations, similar subsistence activities, material culture, settlement patterns, social organization, religion and ideologies. However, a certain degree of individualism on the household level seems prevalent, as each household is largely autonomous economically.

2.3.1: Geographical Background

a) Location and Topography

The core Mafa area, about 14 kilometers northeast of Mokolo, is between latitudes 10 degrees 42 minutes and

10 degrees 50 minutes north and between longitudes 13 degrees 53 minutes and 14 degrees 00 minutes. It is about 360 square kilometers in size. The land is an undulating plateau that has a mean height of 800 meters above sea level (Boutrais 1984a:25) and is characterized by rocky hills interspersed with plains. The highest hill, Soulede, attains 1,110 meters above sea level.

b) Climate

Like other parts of the Mandara Mountains, the area has a mountain climate with two main seasons, a dry season and a wet season, and a mean annual temperature of about 30 degrees Celsius (Boulet 1975:20). The dry season occurs from October through April and is characterized by hot and dry conditions. There is scarcely any surface water and soils becomes so dry that plant growth is largely inhibited. Storms are common towards the end of the season.

The wet season begins by the end of May and continues through September. During this period, the area is generally hot, wet and humid. An average of 950 millimeters of rain falls annually (Boulet 1975:20) with almost all of it occurring during the wet season. The

rains, usually of orogenic origin, are often heavy and torrential and sometimes preceded by wind or hail storms.

c) Soils

The soils are generally ferruginous, rich in organic matter and minerals, fine grained and loose (Boutrais 1984b:79). Along the slopes of hills, they are shallow in depth. In these places and elsewhere, the soils are subject to wind and water (run-off) erosion during the dry and wet seasons respectively. The erosion is, however, reduced and the depth of soil increased artificially by terraces.

d) Drainage

The land is poorly drained, although several seasonal streams flow rapidly during the wet season from hills rapidly into the course of Mayo Tsanaga, the major river of the area. The rapidity with which the streams flow contributes to erosion along their courses. By the middle of the dry season, all streams and the river are dry, their beds choked with deposits of sand. There remains little moisture within the soils.

Wells dug by state agencies between 1966 and 1967 (Boutrais 1984b:70) and by CARE, a Canadian-run development

agency, and a number of waterholes dug locally provide water. The wells and waterholes are extremely important during the dry season when surface water is absent.

e) Vegetation and Wild Life

The vegetation of the area is characterized by a generally thin cover of low and widely dispersed trees and grass, including trees that are protected in villages. The trees, grasses and weeds grow rapidly and become luxuriant in the wet season, but by the middle of the dry season most of the grasses and weeds die back.

The sparse vegetation is attributable to the nature of the climate and the absence of enough soil cover. But, according to sources quoted by David (1976:230), intense agricultural activities and the use of wood as fuel by generations of inhabitants of the Mandara Mountains have also contributed to the depletion of trees.

Wild life is rare. The few species that exist include antelopes, rodents, birds, and reptiles. These are common only in the wet season. Tilapia, carp and other fish species are found in dammed rivers. Fresh water crabs are found along stream beds during the wet season. Plant and animal domestication will be discussed below.

2.3.2: Core Mafa Villages

But for Matakam, which is accessible only by footpath from the other villages, all the core Mafa villages are linked by one feeder road. They have contiguous territories separated by seasonal streams. Each is officially subdivided into various quarters for tax purposes. The subdivisions are mostly traditional ones representing territories of founding clans that have been recognized by state officials. The villages are each described briefly below with their locations shown in Map 3.

a) Soulédé

Soulédé is about 20 kilometers northeast of Mokolo at the center of core Mafa territory. The population of its inhabitants was about 5,369 in 1982 (David per. comm. 1990) but may be close to 6,000 presently. There are seven subdivisions among which is a leprosarium.

This village is the center of commercial, health, religious and educational activities in the area. There is a Protestant Mission with elementary (primary and middle) schools, a seminary for local catechists, a chapel, and a clinic. In addition, there is a government primary school

and a central market place. Every Saturday is market day, a day on which both commercial activities and festivities take place.

b) Bao

Bao is immediately west of SouléDé, about 14 kilometers from Mokolo. It is the largest of the five villages and has ten subdivisions. Its total population may be about 5,000 people; there were 4,057 inhabitants in 1982 (David pers. comm. 1990).

In spite of the presence of government (primary and middle) schools and a Protestant Mission chapel, Bao lacks many modern facilities compared to Soulede. There is, for instance, no large market center, but merely neighbourhood or quarter markets, mainly devoted to beer drinking, which operate every Sunday. While some SouléDé youth attend the schools in Bao, many inhabitants of Bao utilize the commercial, health, religious and educational facilities present in SouléDé. Residents of both villages also participate actively in each other's festivities. Local accounts indicate, however, that there has been rivalry between Bao and SouléDé and until recently (after the independence of Cameroon in 1960) natives of both villages frequently fought one another over land and women.

c) Midré

Midré is northwest of Bao about 10 kilometers from Mokolo. It has seven subdivisions and a population of about 4,000 inhabitants. According to local residents, Midré and Souléde share close kin relationships and have been allies in times of war.

The village has a Mission primary school, a government middle school, a chapel, and a central market that operates every Thursday.

d) Mazam

Mazam is about 12 kilometers east of Soulede. Its total human population, about 3477 in 1982 (David pers. comm. 1990), and may be about 4,000 presently. With six subdivisions, this village is traditionally autonomous, although its residents pay tax to the state through the chief of Roua, a Mafa village with whom Mazam shares its eastern boundary. The residents also use health, commercial and educational facilities present in Roua.

e) Matakam

Matakam takes its name from a 700 meter hill, about 16 kilometers by footpath south of Souléde on the

border between the Mafa and the Cuvok. There are about 2,000 inhabitants including a number of Cuvok women married to Mafa men. It has no subdivisions. A number of Souléde clans and families claim descent from this village and several Matakam families have residences in Souléde to which they come occasionally.

Although there is a chapel, there is no school or central market place and its inhabitants depend on Soulede for educational and commercial facilities.

2.3.3: Historical Background

There is no cogent account of Mafa history. But some information can be pieced together from such sources as archaeology, (eg. Marliac 1973; David and MacEachern 1985), the linguistic prehistory of north Cameroon (eg. Barreteau et al. 1984:159-180), historical accounts (eg. Azarya 1976; Denham 1826; Kirk-Greene 1960; Nachtigal 1980) and from oral accounts compiled by Martin (1970) and those I recorded during fieldwork. These sources collectively suggest that there has been a generally in situ development of the ethnic groups that inhabit the Mandara Mountains with mainly local migrations and resettlement of members.

Archaeological research on the Mandara Mountains

has been minimal and no excavations have been made directly in Mafa area. The survey data indicate, however, that populations were very small until relatively recent times - perhaps no more than 200 years ago (David pers. comm. 1989). Polished stone axes recovered from nearby sites such as Sirak (Marliac 1973:17) and found quite commonly in Mafa compounds on forked branches (cegelek) suggest, however, that small scale human settlement has had a fairly long antiquity on the Mandara Mountains.

In addition to the archaeological evidence, the distribution pattern of major language families found in northern Cameroon (Barreteau et al. 1984:171, 173; Barreteau 1988:467) suggest that the Mafa and their neighbours are native to the region they occupy. The linguistic map of the area (Map 4) shows that speakers of Chadic languages once dominated northern Cameroon and were displaced in certain areas subsequently by Nilotic and Niger-Congo language speakers and to a lesser extent by Kanuri and Shuwa Arabs. There also were local shifts in the distribution of various Chadic languages on the Mandara Mountains. For example, the Wandala group languages of Gevoko, Xedi and Mabass are separated from each other and other Wandala group languages by Mafa (Barreteau 1984:173); a probable indication of local expansions and resettlements

by Mafa speakers.

Displacements of Chadic language speakers by other language groups in northern Cameroon, and local shifts in the distribution of Chadic languages on the Mandara Mountains were influenced, in part, by the emergence of early central Sudanic states between the 8th and 19th centuries (see eg. Wolff 1984:25). Armies of emerging states and kingdoms, such as Bornu, Baghirmi, Mandara and Fulbe', are known to have attacked inhabitants of the Mandara Mountains at various times for slaves and goods (Azarya 1976:12; Denham et al. 1826:111, 117; Natchigal 1980:265). These attacks probably led to the relocation of settlements by various groups of people.

Much of the oral history of the Mafa summarized by Martin (1970:32-7), and those histories I collected among the core Mafa, attribute movements and resettlements of Mafa communities on the Mandara Mountains to conflicts between the Mafa and Islamic warriors intruding into their territory. The accounts identify Gudur or Kudol, a Mofu village (Barreteau 1988), as the place of origin of many Mafa clans, as well as other ethnic groups such as the Mofu and Cuvok, prior to their spread across the Mandara Mountains. Although the emigration of certain Mafa, and other clans, from Gudur has been attributed to an autocratic administration by a Gudur chief (Seignobos

1988:5), an invasion of the Gudur area by crickets and to famine (Martin 1970:37), core Mafa oral historians blame their emigration on harassments by Islamic warriors, particularly the Fulbe.

Martin (1970:35) reports that the earliest Mafa clans to leave Gudur, Jélé and Vouzi, moved initially to the neighbourhood of Souléde and to other areas subsequently. Indeed, older members of several core Mafa clans refer to Souléde as the center of the most recent dispersion of many Mafa clans, Matakam is recalled by them as the village where their ancestors had first settled when they moved into their present territory. Accounts given by these persons suggest also that parts of the core Mafa area were inhabited by members of a clan that is known to the core Mafa as Gouzda or Vouzi when migrants from Matakam arrived.

Many Mafa clans are said to have met by chance (Martin 1970:65). This is supported by core Mafa oral accounts which suggest that several foreign lineages and clans were incorporated into a core Mafa entity. The Mandakar clan, for example, is supposed to have joined the Mafa from Nigeria. The reasons why these lineages and clans were incorporated is not clear in the accounts but, the need for common security in times of warfare might have been a factor. Core Mafa oral historians indicated also

that wars were fought not only between the Mafa and their Muslim neighbours but also between Mafa clans and villages due mainly to disputes over land and women.

The earliest state officials to administer Mafa territory were Germans. Under German jurisdiction, which lasted between 1902 and 1916 the Mafa and their neighbours were ruled indirectly through Fulbé chiefs (Lembezat 1961:2-3). Occasional joint military expeditions by Germans and Fulbé, for example, had been made against mountains groups that included the Mafa (Azarya 1976:26). Earlier, between 1885 and 1902, Germans obtained slaves from the Mandara Mountains through the Fulbé (Mohammadou 1965:64-66).

The political administration of Mafa territory shifted from Germans to the French in 1922 when the League of Nations gave the French mandate over this part of northern Cameroon. This shift in administration led to substantial changes in the sociocultural set up of the Mafa. Besides the founding of the town of Mokolo in 1922 (Martin 1970:44) and its subsequent establishment as an administrative capital, canton chiefs were appointed to administer groups of villages which were subdivided into various quarters for tax purposes. The first school in Mafa territory was established at Mokolo in 1934 (Martin 1970:45). French rule also encouraged the establishment of

Christian missions in the Mafa area. The Sudan United Church, for example, was established at SouléDé in 1949 and its first school began in 1950 (Martin 1970:45).

With the independence of Cameroon in 1960, the Mafa were persuaded by force and other means by the state to gain formal education and to abandon their traditional costumes which comprised few items (Gavua 1989). Some were also forced to vacate their mountain habitats and resettle on nearby plains in order that they might be supervised effectively by state officials. But core Mafa families were also motivated to abandon their mountain locations due largely to the presence of peaceful conditions, lack of water on mountains and to the establishment of health, educational and commercial facilities on the plains by the Christian Mission and the state. Currently, many Mafa have gained formal education, work as civil servants or merchants; and much of their culture has been modernized.

2.3.4: Economic Background

The core Mafa are predominantly subsistence farmers who cultivate a variety of millet species in addition to some maize, legumes and vegetables and keep livestock on a small scale. Other activities that

supplement farming include beer production and petty trading.

Most of the activities of the core Mafa, including traders and civil servants, are focused on the production, storage and use of millet which they generally call daw. Millet is so vital in their nourishment and general upkeep that many 'traditional' Mafa (see below) consider it to contain spirits. While mature grains are eaten fresh, flour made from dry millet is essential as the main ingredient in the staple food, daf (cooked grain flour), and the staple alcoholic beverage, zum. The flour is used in all sorts of rituals for preparing sacrificial meals. Fresh leaves of mature grain crops are collected, dried and stored as fodder (kusaf) during the dry season. Stalks (pandar) serve multiple functions, such as fuel, building and roofing material and as toilet wipes.

Various species of legumes and other crops such as sesame, pumpkins, calabashes and tiger-nuts are grown to supplement the grain diet during the wet season when the supply of grains is limited. Vegetables, like okra, different spinaches and leaves of pumpkins, are used in preparing sauces with which cooked grain flour is eaten. Groundnuts are cultivated on a large scale by many people, and cotton is grown by a few, for commercial purposes.

Arable land is very limited due to the presence

of rocks, boulders and thin soils, as well as to water-logging during the wet season. Farming is therefore intensive around homesteads, and all available space is cultivated. Other distant uninhabited fields inherited by household heads are also cultivated. All places along the slopes of hills are terraced in order to limit erosion and to create cultivable space. Old terraces inherited with plots of land are renovated annually and new ones built where necessary. They are built with rocks removed from the soil when it is prepared for cultivation and with stones removed from abandoned buildings. Manure from livestock pens is spread on plots to fertilize the soil.

Farmers generally use locally made hoes for weeding and turning soils, while they use special planting tools of wood, shod with iron tips, or of iron for sowing. Draught animals (bullocks and donkeys) are sometimes hired and used on commercial cotton and groundnut farms.

a) Crop Production

Crop production involves cultivation, harvesting and the threshing and storing of grains. These activities are scheduled according to an annual twelve-month calendar that is similar to that known in the Mafa village of Magoumaz (Boulet 1975). Cultivation occurs during the wet

season. Fields are prepared, when the first rains fall, by the removal and burning of old millet stalks and weeds, the hoeing and removal of stones from the soil and the repair or building of terraces. Grains and other crops are sown by the middle of June. Cultivated fields are weeded and hoed twice, in June-July and in August, before the crops are harvested, as weeds grow and soils risk rapid erosion during the period.

Harvesting commences with vegetables and legumes between the months of August and October when there is general shortage in the supply of grain. Leaves of grain crops are also collected. From the end of October onwards, mature and drying grain heads are harvested piecemeal so as to prevent grain loss through the action of wind and birds. The main harvest period, however, is between November and December when all crops are harvested. Heads of grain are allowed to dry after the harvest and stored until they are threshed and the winnowed grains stored. Threshing usually occurs from January through March.

Except for Matakam, where only sorghum is usually cultivated besides legumes and vegetables, there is a biennial rotation of sorghum and pennisetum. Farmers claim this strategy enables crops to grow well. The cultivation of pennisetum is said to be more arduous and exacting than that of sorghum. All other crops are cultivated

irrespective of the particular crop year. Mixed cropping, whereby different crops are grown in the same field is normally practised. The rationale for doing so, according to farmers, is for the legumes and vegetables to enrich the supply of soil nutrients. These crops also prevent erosion by providing more ground cover.

b) The Mode Of Cultivation

Farming is done on a household basis. Each household cultivates plot(s) of land inherited by its head usually with the labour of members who are of working age. Children start to assist as early as five years of age. Threshing and storage of grains is done mostly by men while winnowing is undertaken by women. The production of legumes and vegetables is supposed to be done exclusively by females, but some men cultivate groundnuts and vegetables.

Household labour is supplemented by sons-in-law (meshe'). They are customarily required to assist their fathers-in-law on their farms three consecutive years after marriage. Additional labour is sometimes provided by neighbours and friends of a household head as well as by volunteers from his clan. Such volunteers are rewarded with pots full of beer and with food. Paid labour,

provided usually by young boys and girls, is also solicited when necessary, by civil servants and some functionaries. Labourers are paid either in cash or in kind with beer or grain.

c) Livestock Keeping

Livestock, including goats, sheep and chickens, are kept on a small scale by all households. Cattle and donkeys are also kept by many Mafa and a very few household heads keep horses. Goats, sheep and chickens are supposed to be reared by females and young boys while the rearing of cattle, donkeys and horses is supposed to be done exclusively by men. In practice, however, members of households, irrespective of age and sex, collectively take care of their livestock.

All livestock, except chickens which are kept in women's huts, are housed in pens specially built for them. They remain in these pens most of the time while the fields are under cultivation and are led by young boys to streams to drink water.

Apart from horses, which are strictly prestige items, livestock serve many functions. Goats, sheep and cattle in particular are recalled by older core Mafa as being kept in the past mainly for a celebration called

maray in which many are slaughtered for feasts. In modern times, these livestock sometimes provide meat for domestic consumption. They are also sold live or their meat sold for cash in time of need. Of much importance to the core Mafa, however, are the skins of these animals which were once used as costume items but which are now used as such only at burial (Gavua 1989). Although donkeys usually serve as draft animals for transporting heavy loads, they are slaughtered and their meat sold, usually when they become old or sick.

d) Beer Brewing and Petty Trading

Beer is brewed throughout the year, although there is most during the dry season when there is less farm work and grain supply is abundant. Brewing is undertaken by women. There are a number of regular brewers, but brewing is done as well by many women on market days. Both fermented and unfermented beer are produced. The former is sold on the compounds of brewers or at specific places, 'cabarets', where drinking continues until late at night. The unfermented beer (kondroha) is usually sold at market centers, usually to children and devout Christians who would not drink fermented beer.

Besides the sale of potters' and smiths'

products, petty trading involves the buying and selling of dried fish, meat, tobacco, salt, natron and factory produced items such as textiles, clothes, canned foods, enamel and plastic wares. Trade in factory items promotes the replacement of some traditional artifacts by foreign ones and the adoption of nontraditional lifestyles by merchants.

2.3.5: Settlement Pattern

a) The Compound

Compounds (qiy) for households are the primary units of settlement among the core Mafa. They are built on land inherited by heads of household from their fathers, or acquired as gifts from family friends.

Settlement is generally patrilocal. Married men usually build their homes near those of their fathers. But with increasing population, there is pressure on young marrieds to exploit lands that are unutilized in their villages, or otherwise to emigrate and settle on unoccupied lands elsewhere.

Compounds are generally dispersed, although there is increasing clustering around commercial and mission facilities. This clustering is most pronounced in Soulédé.

According to local home owners, dispersed settlement and the location of homes on high ground are means of ensuring family privacy and more importantly, ways of protecting family members and property against floods during the wet season. High ground is also said to be a convenient observatory from where grain crops can be protected against birds and thieves during the farming period, whilst wide spacing between compounds also allows for intruders to be noticed easily.

b) The Village

The core Mafa are much more conscious of their village identities than of their Mafa identity. Prior to the resettlement of many of them on plains, a village, according to local sources, consisted of the compounds of members of close kin groups that spread around a hill (dza). Villages now cover both hills and plains, and settlement by kin group affiliation has been disrupted in many places due to resettlement. Settlement is still by clan at Mazam and remote parts of the other villages.

c) Public and Ceremonial Centers.

Public and ceremonial centers I observed are mainly open, uncultivated places that are used for

commercial activities, dancing and beer drinking sessions. Many of these centers are created temporarily during the dry season when there is little farming activity. They are located on plots of land offered by individual families. In the wet season, they are cultivated and hence closed to public functions. School grounds and soccer fields are used in the absence of these centers.

A cemetery established by the Christian Mission at Soulede for converts is the only common burial ground in the study area. The dead are normally buried near compounds of their respective families.

2.3.6: Social Organization

a) Kinship

The social organization of the Mafa has been analyzed in detail by Martin (1970:63-83). His analysis shows that the basic social unit of the Mafa, which is also the primary economic and religious unit, is the household (gay). A household among the core Mafa consists of a patrilineal nuclear family; a man, his wife or wives, and resident, generally unmarried, children. It is autonomous and headed by the man (babgay). The eldest son within is heir to the head and assumes his responsibilities during

his absence. When more than one wife exists, the first is senior to her co-wives and supervises their behaviour. Wives are supposed to be subservient and responsible to their husbands or their representatives, however, they participate actively in the maintenance of the family and it is common for them to abandon their husbands for other men.

Men marry when they are capable of doing so, that is, when they inherit or lease land and can provide a wife with accommodation and own livestock. Females are married when they are about the age of puberty and older. Younger ones are betrothed and remain with their parents or the parents of their prospective husbands until they are mature enough to bear children (see Martin 1970:148-153 for detailed discussion of marriage procedures among the Mafa).

The Mafa family is extended beyond the household. Martin (1970:72) observed that there is first, a minimal lineage (gidbulom) which, according to Müller-Kosack (1987) refers to the patrilineal descendants of the father's father of the oldest male in the senior surviving generation. A union of related minimal lineages forms a major lineage called the godar (Martin 1970:74). The maximal kinship group, comprising supposedly all descendants (living and dead) of one male ancestor is the clan or gwali (Martin 1970:75). Although a clan may assimilate

strangers, it is exogamous. Among the core Mafa, however, the distinction between the minimal and major lineages and the clan is blurred. All members of a clan, including those that can be classified as minimal lineage members, are referred to broadly as gwali and the term 'gidbulom' is not used.

Several clans are present in the core Mafa villages (appendix 1), although the Mafa society is said to be characterized by two main clans, Jélé and Vouzi (Martin 1970; Boulet 1975:27). These clans are grouped into two groups, Jélé and Sessak, except in Mazam where no such groups exist. While marriage is prohibited and is taboo among the member clans of the Jélé group, it is permitted between Sessak clans.

Particular categories of relatives are distinguished by the core Mafa. First, there are the brothers and sisters of a wife. They are related to a household as in-laws (meshe) of its head and as uncles and aunts (gwalikuiko), of a given wife's children. They have various obligations to their related household as in-laws and as uncles and aunts respectively, including the provision of agricultural services and the performance of funeral rites. Household heads also appoint younger male and female members of their families to perform special duties. There is first the demgodoma, a young girl who is

selected to be responsible for ceremonially carrying costumes and sheaths (godoma) of knives and swords belonging to a deceased household head, and for performing special ritual dances upon his death. Such a girl is expected to lead the funeral procession of the deceased to the burial ground, and has a specific share of the ritual meal that is prepared during the funeral. The male counterpart of the girl is a grandson of a household head who is known as the kra-dem-dzana. His role is to keep the axe (dzana) with which his grandfather's grave is dug.

Wives also have special friends, mondok, whose duties involve the counseling of wives in times of stress, particularly when they lose their husbands. When a woman loses her husband, her special friend assists her to prepare special sacrificial beer and drinks some of it with her as part of the funeral rituals.

b) Formal Categories of Mafa

Various categories are distinguished by the Mafa on the basis of traditional social and cosmological ideology. Members are bound by rules, regulations and norms and membership is inherited. Included are a) the vavay, b) the ngwazla, and c) the tsakaliy.

1: Vavay

The vavay are non-professional members of society. They do not participate in the local metal and pottery industries and rarely undertake social services that they consider to be dirty and demeaning such as the interment of the dead.

2: Ngwazla

The ngwazla is a professional group whose members constitute between three and five percent of the total Mafa population (Podlewski 1966). Members usually have small families when compared to the vavay and are traditionally endogamous. Marriage outside the group, even in modern times, is actively discouraged by the vavay.

The ngwazla monopolize pottery and metallurgy and serve as midwives, undertakers, seers, native doctors and musicians (Podlewski 1966:10; Genest 1974;1976). They have an internal division of labour in that men are responsible for metallurgy and for the interment of adults, while women engage in pot making and the interment of children and act as midwives, although they often assist their husbands in forging. In very few cases, some male ngwazla make pots, but the kinds of vessels produced are very different from those made by their female counterparts and are mainly

designed for non-Mafa customers. However, not all nqwazla participate in every profession with which they are associated (Podlewski 1966:12). Among the core Mafa, some men do not forge or undertake burials and funerals.

As I observed, the difference between the vavay and nqwazla is buttressed by various practices: members of both groups rarely intermarry and when they do, the vavay spouse is regarded by members of society as nqwazla and is shunned by other vavay. Vavay and nqwazla do not eat or drink together, and sit separately at formal gatherings. Each group has different seasons for undertaking specific socio-cultural activities. For example, the nqwazla perform their individual family religious sacrifices and marriages between July and the end of August while the vavay do so from September through November. Goats are used by the vavay for sacrifices while the nqwazla use sheep, as sheep are traditionally associated with the nqwazla.

3: Tsakaliy

The word 'tsakaliy' refers to persons considered by the Mafa as being born 'abnormally'. They include twins, triplets and those born in breech presentations. Due to a general belief among the core Mafa that 'abnormally born persons' have spiritual links with certain

trees, fog, water and grass, such persons are often named after these items. As I observed, some tsakaliy are named after the borassus palm (gangar), grass (matasay), and fog (n'dodokw or kusa). Tsakaliy are regarded as spiritually dangerous and, therefore, respected and treated with caution. They are supposed to be capable of rendering those who offend them barren, blind or poor. Special offerings are made annually in each traditional household that has them in order to appease their spirits. During the ceremonies, parents of tsakaliy act as priests on behalf of other members of society, who contribute towards the costs of beer and food used (David pers. comm. 1989).

b) Informal Categories of Mafa

Membership of what I refer to as 'informal categories' of Mafa is acquired and not inherited. It is based on economic, social and religious behaviour and not subject to any specific rules or regulations. Those identified include 1) 'rich' Mafa and 2) 'poor' Mafa, 3) 'traditional' Mafa and 4) 'modernizing' Mafa. The 'traditional' and 'modernizing categories' emerged mainly as a result of the adoption by some Mafa of foreign cultural practices and ideology such as Christianity, formal education, commerce and salaried work.

1,2) 'Rich' and 'Poor' Mafa

Richness among the core Mafa is associated with men and is measured primarily not in monetary or fiscal terms, but by the size of one's household. Different degrees of wealth among the Mafa have been defined (Martin 1970:145), but the core Mafa generally distinguish, in broad terms, the 'rich' from the 'poor'. A man is considered rich (wala) among them when he has several wives and children, a large number of livestock and a large homestead; otherwise, he is poor (ndombalay). The nqwazla are thus regarded conventionally as poor, as they usually have relatively fewer wives, children and property.

3,4) 'Traditional' and 'Modernizing' Mafa

Persons classified by the 'elite' among the core Mafa as 'traditional' within their society are those who adhere to the traditional Mafa religion and other indigenous cultural practices. Led mainly by the nqwazla, traditional Mafa are commonly adamant against change in their culture. Some refuse to send their children to school or seek clinical attention for sick ones, not because they cannot afford it but because they do not recognize the merits of doing so.

'Modernizing' Mafa are either Christian, or

Muslim. Among them are local civil servants, merchants and the 'evolues' or those with high school education, and other Mafa who dwell in towns and cities. They scorn and reject most aspects of their traditional life styles and substitute foreign ones for them. Although many modernizing Mafa maintain elements of Mafa traditional life, they are a major source of change in the Mafa society and culture. They accept innovation from external sources much more readily than traditional Mafa. In 1986, a group of these persons was responsible for organizing the first ever youth festival in Soulede-Bao amid clamours for modern economic development.

c) Property and Inheritance

Inheritable household property among the core Mafa consists mainly of a homestead including the plot of land and buildings on it, stored grains and livestock. Inheritance is partilineal. Upon the death of a household head, his property is inherited by his children who are led by the eldest son. The compound is, however, inherited by the youngest son. The eldest son and heir administers fully the property and is responsible for the upkeep of his younger brothers and sisters until they marry. He is required to share the property with his married brothers

but not his married sisters unless they are divorced. Failure to share could result in serious discords and fights among brothers. Women do not inherit any property from their husbands' homes, as they are not members of their husbands' lineages or clans. They are expected to remarry upon the death of their husbands or return to their fathers' or married sons' homes empty-handed.

d) Social Leadership

There is no strong political leadership among the core Mafa. Traditionally, leadership is related primarily to moral and religious guidance rather than to political administration. It is only within the household that there is active exercise of authority and power by a leader. A head of household has jurisdiction over his family practically and ceremonially. He represents them whenever necessary. Decisions that affect an entire community must be endorsed by a household head before members of his family comply with them.

There are, however, a number of leaders who command the respect of most members of the core Mafa society. The most prominent of these leaders is the 'rain chief' (biyam). He is responsible for conjuring or stopping rain. The amount of rain that falls at any given

time is attributed to him and, as a consequence, he could be impeached in the event of drought. When the wet season and farming period begins and yet rain delays in falling, militant groups of men from different clans march this chief's compound and demand rain. As part of his duty, the chief settles inter-lineage or clan and serious within-family disputes that could result in fighting and the loss of life and property. Such disputes are considered by the core Mafa as phenomena that could cause drought.

A leadership position that was once important among the core Mafa was that of the 'mountain chief' (bidza). This chief was important when the Mafa settled on particular hills according to clan membership (see below). He was the spiritual leader of his clan and performed annual sacrificial ceremonies on behalf of members. He also assisted the rain chief by settling disputes within his clan.

Leadership and its related roles changed among the Mafa with the coming of French and Cameroonian State jurisdiction over the region. Regardless of their traditional leaders, each village now has a state recognized chief (bikokwar). Appointed and supervised by the Sub-prefect of the South Matakam canton in conjunction with the Prefect of Mokolo, this chief collects taxes from

members of his village on behalf of the state. He also judges disputes that may be brought to him and imposes fines on the guilty as a way of raising funds and resources to maintain his office. He has little effective control or influence over his people and often requires the assistance of law enforcement agents such as the gendarmerie to execute his duties.

Each quarter also has a divisional chief (ndosak) who acts as a representative of the village chief bikokwar. Divisional chiefs are appointed by the bikokwar and are responsible to him. There is also a market chief (biloma) appointed by the bikokwar, who collects taxes from vendors on market days.

2.3.7: Cosmology And Religion

The conception of the core Mafa about the structure of the world and of humans' place in it pervades much of their material culture and social behaviour. The existing concepts are influenced mainly by the traditional religion, Christianity and, to a limited extent, Islam. Although Christianity in particular has contributed effectively to the transformation of traditional beliefs, culture and social behaviour, daily practices of many core Mafa, including Christians, reflect several aspects of the

traditional religion and cosmology.

Probably, the majority of core Mafa follow the traditional religion. This religion combines belief in a creator god, zhikile, with animist belief in various spirits that could cause or prevent good and ill fortune. According to Hinderling (1984a:86), people are regarded in the traditional religion as having three spirits or souls namely the 'breadth of life' (meshéfé), the spirit in the body (mezheb), and an external spirit that resides in a pot (gidpats or zhikiltef) that is specially made for it. A belief that is common among the Mafa is that ill fortune results from the abuse or disrespect by humans of their own spirits or those of their ancestors and other metaphysical entities. Thus, human beings ought to relate to the spirits cordially. In order to ensure such a relationship and to solicit the blessing of the spirits, periodic offerings are made with beer, grain flour and livestock.

Although the spirit of each person is supposed to be capable of incurring ill fortune or endangering other people, the nqwazla and tsakaliy are believed to be much more powerful spiritually than other members of society and can, as a result, do extraordinary things. Persons who consider themselves, or who are considered by others to be vulnerable to ill fortune, protect themselves with various items (Gavua 1989). Also, married persons own specific

pots that supposedly contain their spirits (see below) as a means of protecting themselves and their families.

Besides the rain chief, the mountain chief and other vavay diviners, the ngwazla offer much spiritual leadership. Their religious duties include communicating with supernatural spiritual beings (through divination and ritual) on behalf of other people, transforming the natural into the cultural, for example by producing iron and iron objects, and pottery, transforming the cultural into the supernatural, for example by burying the dead who are thought to continue living in an underworld. They also preside over funeral, tsakaliy, and healing rituals.

The core Mafa attach much importance to the souls of their ancestors and revere them. The main ancestral spirits that are honoured and with whom communication is maintained include those of the deceased father (baba), the deceased grandfather (bababa), the deceased mother (mama) and the deceased paternal grandmother (mambaba). They are supposed to live in an underworld where sorghum is the staple source of food. The paternal ancestors (baba and bababa) are considered the most powerful. They are united with the spirits of household heads in a trinity of son, father, and grandfather. Eldest sons are required to order sacred pots (see below) to represent the spirits of their deceased fathers and grandfathers. Pots representing late

mothers and grandmothers are optional. A sacred pot is not ordered for a living father, however, one known as chekwed is sometimes made by grandsons for their living grandfathers and placed in their courtyards.

Apart from the spirits of the living and the ancestors, the core Mafa also distinguish a number of spirits which either protect against or cause ill fortune. There is, for example, the head god of household, zhikilé gidqala or zhikilé mpalama, the god of the fields, mbulom gidaw, and such spirits as madzaqay and zlazlak, which attack people who have once murdered or killed wild animals, and fakalaw, a spirit responsible for convulsions. Livestock are also supposed to have spirits. Although offerings to the gods (zhikilé and mbulom) are performed within compounds, they are made to the disease causing spirits (madzaqay, zlazlak and fakalaw) outside compounds, as these spirits are regarded as too dangerous to be dealt with within compounds.

According to both ngwazla and other persons who follow the traditional religion, the dead are supposed to live in two different underworlds, an underworld where only sorghum is grown (veved-daw) and one in which Eleusine (mbretak) is the only source of nourishment (veved-mbretak). Each person is believed to die twice. When one dies for the first time and is buried, his or her

soul is believed to rest behind hureb, a tree that resembles Euphorbia unispina, until his or her final funeral rite are performed when the soul of the deceased person enters the world of sorghum. Most of the dead are supposed to live in this world and hence overpopulation and shortage of farmland are expected. Sorghum is said to be cultivated here on pieces of potsherds due to the rarity of land. While in this world, the souls of deceased persons are supposed to be in direct contact with the living. The souls of persons that had been married when they died are believed to wait for those of their spouses in this world. Upon his or her second death, the soul of a deceased person is said to descend into the underworld of Eleusine which is a permanent resting place. This soul no longer contacts the living and, as a result, it is no longer presented with offerings.

A major aspect of core Mafa cosmological thought is the dichotomy between males and females. Males are considered to be physically and spiritually superior to females. Females are hence expected to be subservient to males, and it is the duty of males to protect them. Social behaviour and material objects are patterned in relation to this dichotomy. For example, females do not make religious offerings in their husbands' homes; men and women sit separately at formal social gatherings; males occupy a

different section of compounds from females; the cultivation of millet is supposed to be a male activity while that of vegetables and legumes is a female activity, although both males and females do cultivate millet. Cattle, donkey and horse rearing is supposed to be a male function while goat, sheep and chickens ought to be reared by females; the left hand and odd numbers are associated with males and even numbers and the right hand with females.

2.3.8: Christianity and Islam

Christianity was introduced to the core Mafa (of Soulede) in 1949 by the Sudan United Church (Martin 1970:44). This religion is now promoted by a Swiss Protestant Mission with Souléde as its headquarters. The Mission has established a seminary, primary and middle schools, and clinics in Souléde and other core Mafa villages. Although a number of people claim to be Catholics, Protestantism is more popular.

Islam is generally abhorred by the core Mafa, as it is considered the religion of the Fulbé and the Wandala, who they refer to as their traditional adversaries. It is practised only by a very few inhabitants of Roua and those who have migrated to urban centers like Mokolo.

CHAPTER THREE

STYLE IN MAFA ARCHITECTURE

3.1: Introduction

Architectural structures (buildings) constructed by the Mafa comprise mainly household compounds, market stalls and sheds, stores, and elementary school buildings. Most, particularly compounds, are built of local materials on plans and designs that express aspects of traditional Mafa social, religious and cosmological ideology - besides being practically and technically convenient to the Mafa. The plan and design of buildings have altered, however, from traditional to non-traditional styles, and buildings constructed of industrial materials have become common with the 'modernization' of Mafa society.

This chapter describes the main types of buildings the Mafa construct and suggests that the formal nature and variability of these buildings are influenced by the ecological, economic and ideological conditions under which buildings are constructed and used. Divided into three main sections, the discussion first looks at the typology, construction and purpose of traditional

buildings. The second section analyzes the types of non-traditional buildings observed, while the third highlights how buildings are transformed taphonomically.

Observations I have made of both old and newly constructed buildings, and of abandoned compounds are the main bases of the discussion. While several compounds were visited their plans and construction observed in each village, floor plans of 26 compounds in the Soulédé-Bao area, four compounds at Midre, three compounds at Mazam and two compounds at Matakam were drawn. Measurements (to the nearest five centimeters) of the floors, walls, doors and windows of a minimum of thirty buildings in Soulédé, Bao and Midre were taken. Studies were also made of constructional processes, and of relationships that exist between different categories of buildings and the demography, economic, social and religious backgrounds of people who occupy them. Supplementary data on traditional compounds observed in other Mafa villages were provided by David (pers. comm. 1989;1990), Seignobos (1982) and Boisseau and Soula (1974:539-547).

3.2: Traditional Mafa Buildings

Other than temporary market sheds (gwarambay) and farm huts, compounds are the only buildings the Mafa construct traditionally. The sheds are erected by volunteers mainly in the dry season. They are made with forked and other branches that serve as poles and cross bars respectively, and with millet stalks as roofs and walls. They provide shade for patrons of the markets. Sheds are also built in compounds (see below). At the beginning of the wet season, they are dismantled. No significant variations were observed in their construction.

Farm huts are constructed like huts found in Mafa compounds. They are used for the storage of farm equipment, and as resting and eating places during the farming period.

A traditional Mafa compound (qáy-Mafa) (Seignobos 1982:36-42) is characterized generally by at least five functionally different circular huts (giy) with conical thatched roofs, at least one courtyard (gala), and a granary (wav). It may also include a threshing floor (hedak) and a drying rack or shed (gwarambay). The compound usually has strictly controlled access. It is commonly built on a rock promontory (Plate 1) and along slopes of hills, has internal passages between huts, and is

partly enclosed by a wall or a fence (zlazlar). Fences are built especially in plains where stone is rare.

Walls of huts and of other buildings in the compound are constructed of untrimmed rocks and daub (a mixture of clayey earth, water, and grass binders). Roofs are of thatch (grass and millet stalks) over frames of branches (fig. 1.1a), or over daub domes (fig. 1.1b;) that enclose lofts (gejek) built on top of huts. Their tops are consolidated and decorated with cords of plaited Sporobolus pyramidalis (hubat), necks of large pots, tyres and holed baskets and enamelled pans.

3.2.1: Components of Traditional Compounds

1) Huts (Giy)

Huts found in a traditional Mafa compound each have a practical purpose and function in relation to subsistence activities undertaken by the household that inhabits the compound. Particular huts, however, are associated with specific members of household and have social connotations.

The particular construction of a hut depends mainly on the practical functions the hut serves. Huts usually have circular floor plans averaging about 3.5 meters in diameter. They are built on foundations of stone

set in trenches dug down a few centimeters below ground surface, or rock outcrops, stone platforms, or on bare ground. Their walls are about 2 meters high and they have narrow doors that average about 1.5 meters in height and about .80 meters in width. Windows are small and generally circular (about 10 centimeters in diameter) with potsherd rim frames, or sub-rectangular. Many huts are windowless.

The observed types of huts are locally named according to their functions. They include a) an entrance hut (dzawdzaw), b) a household head's granary hut (húzhéb), c) a first wife's bedroom and granary hut (húdókw), d) a kitchen (húcéd), e) an spare hut (kálák), f) a livestock pen (kudam), and g) a barn (qiy-kusaf). A smith's compound also includes h) a forge (gezla).

a) Entrance Hut (dzáwdzaw)

This hut regulates access to the compound as a whole or to some of the inner sections of the compound. It is, however, the most commonly used hut within a compound, being a dining and living room for household members, and the household head's bedroom and storeroom for some sacred pots. A lower-level, dug down on one side of the hut (fig. 1.1c), serves as pen (qudomba) mainly for goats. Small numbers of sheep may also be kept in this pen.

The dzáwdzaw is usually the largest hut in the compound, and has two more doorways that lead to different huts or courtyards. It seldom has windows. It lacks a loft and has a roof of thatch over branches.

The pen on the side of the hut (gudomba) is up to a meter and a half deep. Its walls are well lined with stones, and its top is covered with a platform of daub and stones (about 50 centimeters high) that serves as bed or seat.

b) Household Head's Granary Hut (húzhéb)

Associated mainly with household heads, this hut contains one or two granaries (of the household head), and stores some sacred pots (see chapter 4). It is rarely used as a bedroom.

The húzhéb usually has a loft the floor of which is constructed by plastering daub over branches (Plate 2). On the floor are compartments (métév) made from ridges of daub where grain is supposed to be left by husbands for (first) wives to collect (David pers. comm. 1989), and where a household's animal fat container (see chapter 4) is normally kept. Entry to the loft is by a sub-circular hole (Plate 3) within the loft's floor. The húzhéb is commonly roofed with thatch over a daub dome. Though often

windowless, the hut may have one or two tiny, circular windows.

c) First Wife's Bedroom/Granary Hut (húdókw)

This first wife's bedroom and granary hut contains a granary or two (belonging to the wife). Chickens reared by the wife are also kept in the hut in addition to other such property as groundnuts, beans, and a paste of roasted tiger-nuts (mataway) which are normally stored in pots or in the loft of the hut.

The hut's construction is similar to the húzhéb, although it often has a bed that is made from daub.

d) Kitchen (húcéd)

The kitchen is where food is cooked, beer is brewed and where grain is usually ground into flour. It is also used to store water and beer jars, cooking pots (see chapter 4), and other domestic utensils.

No kitchen was found with a loft, although one was observed having a roof of thatch over daub (David pers. comm. 1989). Most are roofed with thatch over branches. The kitchen has several tiny circular or sub-rectangular windows. Its floor is commonly depressed a few centimeters below ground surface.

Among the features found within the kitchen is a hearth (rúwéc) that is made of either two to three medium sized stones or small sized pots turned upside down. In the core Mafa area, a hearth on which food is cooked is commonly set to the right hand side of the kitchen's entrance, while another hearth for brewing beer may be located elsewhere in the kitchen. In Mavoumay, Ziver, Mendeje and Jinglia, the hearth, however, is placed on the left of the kitchen entrance (David pers. comm. 1989; Boisseau and Soula 1974:345). When two cooking hearths are present in a core Mafa kitchen, they are usually built side by side; the one to the right is used when grain flour is cooked, while the other serves during the cooking of vegetable soups and sauces.

Always present in the kitchen is a stone and daub platform (yava) (Plate 4) on which grain is ground into flour. Most are built in the core Mafa area along the hut wall on the left hand side of the kitchen entrance and opposite hearths, but to the right elsewhere. The yava has an almost level top on which at least two lower grinding stones are inserted from right to left according to the increasing degree of smoothness of their surfaces. The stones are separated by low ridges of clay that are perpendicular to the kitchen wall. These reduce the spread of flour ground on each of the stones. In compounds of

followers of the traditional Mafa religion, a shallow depression on the platform for holding a flour storing pot (shidef gufa) or a sacred pot (rivava) is found. The wall of the platform is smoothed and slipped occasionally, with ochreous oil, a solution of red ochre (mbesak) and Khaya senegalensis oil (mbartsanad) that is locally called mbar mbesak.

One or two shelves (balak) may also be found in the kitchen. A shelf is made of about five branches that are inserted into the kitchen wall a few centimeters from the top (Plate 5). On it are kept pots, enamelled and plastic pans, calabashes, condiments and other petty items.

c) Spare Hut (kálák)

This hut may provide a bedroom (shewene) for a head of household, or for his mature but unmarried sons and daughters, or his second wife (in which case it is referred to by the core Mafa as zloma), or for his third wife. It may also be used occasionally as a beer parlour (qiy-zum), a store house (qiy-kolongway) for miscellaneous household items, or as an ordinary granary hut (qiy-way or qiy-daw).

Except when it contains a granary, the kálák is constructed without a loft, and is roofed with thatch over

a frame of branches. It may have a daub bed within, and a shaded verandah in front of it.

f) Livestock Pen (kudam)

The kudam is a type of hut in which goats, sheep, cattle, donkeys and, in a very few cases, horses are kept. Its use allows for the movement and feeding of the stock to be controlled (especially during the wet season when the fields are covered with crops), and to facilitate the accumulation of manure and dung.

The hut's floor is usually depressed about half a meter below the ground surface to cool the pen, to enhance the accumulation of manure and dung and, according to some household heads, to hide the stock. A low wall always separates goats and sheep when both are kept in the same hut. For keeping cattle, donkeys or horses, the kudam usually has a wall that is constructed of very large stones and boulders with daub as mortar. It is always roofed with thatch over branches.

g) Barn (giy-kusaf)

The barn is used for storing hay and newly harvested millet heads during the wet season and at the beginning of the dry season respectively. When not being

used for these purposes, the hut functions as a bedroom for guests.

This hut is often built like the pen with large stones, though usually on a raised stone platform. The stones are for preventing stock from breaking into the hut, while the platform protects against termites and run-off.

h) Forge (gezla)

The forge contains a fire place, smithing tools, anvils and stones that serve as seats (see chapter five). It usually has a low wall (about 1.50 meters high) that is built with boulders and large stones and little or no daub (Plate 6). Most of the forges observed in the core Mafa area have roofs of millet stalk over branches the tops of which are bound loosely for purposes of ventilation. Doors are very low and narrow (about 80 meters high and 55 centimeters wide). Windows are absent.

2) Granary/Silo (wav)

The term wav refers to both granaries and silos. A granary is used by the Mafa for storing and preserving millet grains, while a silo is usually a store for groundnuts and beans.

Constructed on a circular floor plan that

averages about 150 centimeters in diameter, the granary is always set on a raised stone platform under which sacred pots for 'abnormally born persons' and the spirit of millet (see below) may be kept. Its walls are usually made of small-sized stones and fine, clayey daub with lots of grass binder. These are thinner than walls of huts. The way is often partitioned internally up to about half its height from the floor to separate different types of grains. A depression found on the partition functions as a calabash rest, while the partition itself facilitates entry and exit (David pers. comm. 1989).

The granary is built in huts, including the household head's granary hut, the first wife's bedroom hut, and (occasionally) the spare hut, and in courtyards. In a hut, its top and entrance are usually in the floor of the hut's loft (fig. 1.1b). It is hence entered only by climbing through a circular opening in the loft floor. The openings of the loft and the granary are plastered with daub, and are smoothed and plastered sometimes with mucilaginous materials from local plants (David pers. comm. 1989). A few granaries have openings on their sides.

When built in a courtyard, a granary is referred to by the core Mafa as nzongoma. It has a loft that is enclosed by a daub dome which serves as frame for a thatch

roof. Underneath a sideways protrusion (Plate 7) of the loft floor is an opening through which access is gained into the granary (fig. 1.1d).

A silo is always built in a courtyard on bare ground or on a stone platform. Unlike the nzongoma, it rarely has a loft, and its entrance is always located on the side of its wall.

3) Courtyard (gala/zlirdigay)

The gala is the courtyard found beyond the entrance of a compound. This court is used for dining and recreational purposes, and as a ritual site where religious offerings are sometimes made, and where some sacred pots are kept. A smaller court between huts, known to the core Mafa as zlirdigay, is where members of household bath, and where stock are normally slaughtered (or kept out of the way). It may be found elsewhere within the compound.

The gala and the zlirdigay are enclosed by huts and stone walls, and may be covered (during the dry season) with branches, millet stalks and plants such as calabash vines.

4) Threshing Floor (hédák)

This structure is used mainly for threshing dry grains. However, pots are often lined along its walls to collect rain water. It is built on a lobed sub-circular floor plan, usually on a wide and almost level-surfaced rock outcrop. Where such an outcrop is absent, daub is used to construct a hard floor. The floor is enclosed by a low wall (about 50 centimeters high) on which daub spikes, grouped into sets of fours or three, may be found (Boisseau and Soula 1974:473). None of the threshing floors I found in the core Mafa area have spikes.

5) Shed (qwarambay)

Sheds are erected during the dry season over courtyards or in front of compounds to provide shade where people relax during the day. They also provide roofs on which freshly harvested millet heads, groundnuts and fodder are dried and kept away from stock. Those within courtyards are rarely used for drying millet heads. Sheds are also used as shaded verandahs.

6) Wall/Fence zlazlar

Besides providing household privacy, walls and fences built around Mafa compounds function as wind breaks. Walls are also built to enclose courtyards, and to control access to the interior sections of compounds. Underneath a wall that is adjacent to a kitchen is a narrow outlet (zlokwar) through which women urinate and pour dirty water away. When built around a compound, a wall may comprise large stones and boulders that are laid without mortar. Several small daub spikes are sometimes moulded on top of daub plastered walls that enclose compounds.

Fences are constructed with Zyziphus mauritiana and other thorny plants, or with millet stalks. Thorny plants in particular are commonly used to build enclosures where stock are kept during the day during the wet season.

3.2.2: Constructional Processes and the Form of Buildings

Building is a male activity and every man is expected to be capable of undertaking it. The knowhow is acquired by young men from their seniors through observation and participation in building activities. Children often build model huts in their playtimes when their parents build. Some men are, however, more adept at

building granaries, lofts with daub dome ceilings, and grinding platforms than others. Although, among the core Mafa, household heads often build hut walls with the assistance of usually one other person, they usually invite up to ten volunteers that include friends and relatives to roof their huts.

Most buildings are constructed or renovated in the dry season. Besides the re-plastering of weathered walls and the re-roofing of huts, old huts are sometimes demolished and new ones built in their places. New compounds are planned according to specifications of their owners but, in at least one instance at Soulede, a compound was built on the floor plan of an abandoned compound due to the desire by the household head to maintain tradition.

The geographic location of a compound influences the types of materials with which it is built. In hilly terrain, due mainly to the abundance of rocks, the presence of thin soils, and lack of water, walls of huts and other buildings are, for example, constructed mainly of rocks with daub as mortar and plaster. While rocks are piled up gradually at constructional sites by household heads before building begins, daub is usually prepared at the sites in the process of building. Since rocks are less common in the plains, walls of most buildings found are mainly of daub, although rocks are carried to plains from hills for

the construction of pens and barns in particular. In locations such as Midré, Gousda and Jinglia where grass is scarce, thatch consists of millet stalks, while grass is commonly used (along with millet stalks) at places like Bao, Souléde and Mazam where it is available. Because grass is abundant at Matakam, most roofs have only grass as thatch.

The forms of buildings are influenced, to a large extent, by the types of materials used. In each village, walls constructed with large stones and boulders are coarser than other walls, but no differences were observed in construction between villages. Differences are found, however, in the construction of roofs within and between villages due to differences in the type of thatch used, and to whether branches or daub domes serve as frame.

Daub domes usually enclose lofts but are occasionally built as mere ceilings. They are built of a special daub that contains a high amount of potters' clay and a binder of selected grasses. In the construction (fig. 1.1b; Plate 8) of a dome, small sized stones are first arranged along the top of a hut wall at intervals that provide additional ventilation when the top is sealed. A layer of daub (about 30 centimeters high) with very high clay and binder content is then built on the stones and left for a day or two to harden. Successive layers of daub

that contain considerably lower amounts of clay and binder are subsequently built on the first gradually until a dome-shape is attained. The dome is covered with thatch, when it is very hard, usually a number of days after its completion.

When a dome is covered with millet stalks alone, the roof has a steep pitch and is sub-conical (fig. 1.1b). This is due partly to the difficulty of making millet stalks follow the contour of the dome. Also, because the stalks do not bunch together tightly enough to be impermeable to rain when set at a low angle, several rolls are used during roofing, and are aligned steeply on the frame. A roof over a daub dome constructed with grass, on the other hand, usually has a lower angled pitch, and is slightly dome-shaped (Plate 9). Grass is flexible enough to follow the contour of the dome.

Branches that serves as roof frames are first arranged at intervals on top of a hut wall conically and bound and kept in position with plaited grass and ropes (hubat). Rolls of millet stalk and grass are then spread around the frame and fastened. Unless grass is unavailable, thatch usually consists of a combination of grass and millet stalks. Millet stalks are laid on the frame prior to grass which covers either the entire length of the roof, half, or a third of it from its top downwards.

Due to the shape of the frame, and to differences in the thickness of the rolls of millet stalk and grass, the roof is generally conical, but has a more flaring bottom (Plate 10) than a roof that is constructed over a daub dome frame.

In Midré, and in Jinglia, Gousda and other villages outside the core Mafa area, where grass is scarce and roofing is done with millet stalks only, roofs are generally more conical and steeper than roofs found in core Mafa villages where grass is commonly used as thatch. Pitches of roofs at Matakam are also generally lower than the pitches of roofs elsewhere as grass is the main thatch used.

3.2.3: Plan of the Traditional Compound

Most traditional compounds (eg. fig. 1.2a-c) are enclosed by a wall or fence behind which a few buildings are found, and household garbage is discarded. Within the enclosure, the compound curves from a single entrance (a gate (ntamagay) of rocks with a flat stone lintel or the entrance hut) to the kitchen (the last hut in the compound). The curve, mainly defined by the positioning of the first wife's bedroom hut, the household head's granary hut and the kitchen in relation to the compound entrance, is generally anti-clockwise in core Mafa area, though

clockwise in Ziver, Mendeje (David pers. comm. 1989), Gousda (Muller-Kosack 1987:90) and elsewhere in Mafa territory (Seignobos 1982). A household head's bedroom hut (kalak-babgay) is normally located close by the compound entrance, while huts for mature but unmarried sons and daughters, and wives are found elsewhere within the compound. Pens for cattle, donkeys and horses are built near a household head's bedroom hut or near the entrance hut, while those for smaller stock are commonly found by women's huts.

Outside the enclosed section of the compound, a barn, a threshing floor and a shed may be found close by, and overlooking the entrance. The gwéjévé, a ritual spot where remnants of filtered ash from a filtering pot (durqwatsay) is deposited, may also be found by the entrance. This spot, and hence the entrance, are supposed to face the direction of the burial ground of the household head's lineage. The entrance of a compound built on a sloping surface is often located uphill in Mavoumay and other Mafa hill settlements (David pers. Comm. 1989), but not necessarily among the core Mafa.

Bedroom huts for a newly married son and his wife may be attached to the compound (eg. fig. 1.2a).

3.3: Meanings of Traditional Architecture

Aspects of traditional Mafa architecture which are stylistically meaningful include plans of compounds, the particular construction of individual buildings, and from the size of compounds. Although compound size reflects mainly the wealth of household heads, compound plans and construction indicate the desire by the Mafa to protect household members and their properties against both the elements and human aggression (during warfare, feuds and burglary). They also express (and reinforce) gender and power relations (within households), and village identity.

Generally, wealthier household heads own larger compounds than poorer ones, as they usually have larger families and property. Compounds of most nqwazla are, for example, smaller than those of the yavay as the nqwazla have smaller families and cultivate little.

The strict control of access, and the reduction of visibility within huts with narrow doors, small windows and the absence of windows, and the sealing of granary entrances in lofts are presumably means by which traditional architecture protects households against human aggression and generally unwanted, uncontrolled interaction. The location of both entrance huts and barns

(where visitors are received and where they lodge respectively) by the entrance of compounds may protect households from aggressive visitors, although it ensures household privacy.

The construction of buildings on raised platforms and on rock outcrops protects property against flooding, waterlogging, termites and rodents, while daub domes shield property from fire and storms. In general, the walls of pens for keeping larger stock and barns are built of boulders and large stones to prevent stock from breaking through. Besides facilitating ventilation, forge walls are supposed to protect forges from collapsing under the impact of vibrations caused by hammering. There are, nevertheless, daub-walled forges among the Mafa and elsewhere that do not collapse.

Although raised platforms on which granaries are constructed protect against termites and run-off, the need to prevent millet grains from resting on the ground surface is a traditional motive behind their construction among the core Mafa. Building a granary on the bare ground is, according to followers of the traditional Mafa religion, an invitation to the millet stored in the granary to disappear and re-enter the underworld and the source of millet. Platforms also provide space underneath granaries for the storage of sacred pots with which sacrifices are made to

the spirit of millet, the pots hence intervening between the ground and the grain.

In relation to gender differences among the Mafa, a traditional compound is supposed to have top and bottom halves. The top half is associated with males as they are considered traditionally to be superior to females. It is supposed to consist of the entrance hut, the household head's bedroom hut and pens for cattle, donkeys and horses (if present). The bottom half, on the other hand, belongs to females, and is composed mainly of the kitchen and wives' bedroom huts. Pens for sheep and goats are also supposed to be located in the bottom half. The division of the compound expresses the superiority of household heads and their mature sons over females within households, and enables husbands to exercise much control over their wives (as part of their properties). In view of the division, the reason for locating the household head's granary hut by the kitchen is not clear. However, the close association between the household head's granary hut and the first wife's bedroom hut, in my opinion, symbolizes the union between a household head and his first wife, and their power and authority over other members of household.

The location of grinding platforms and hearths is another means by which gender is expressed among the core Mafa. The location corresponds to the association between

males and the left hand, and between females and the right hand. As explained by a number of traditionalists, platforms are generally located on the left hand side of kitchen entrances because they are male features. In a compound headed by a Jélé woman at Souléde the platform is, however, located on the right hand side of the kitchen's entrance supposedly as a symbol of the woman's status as a household head, since the right hand is the hand of females. This suggests a feminist use of platform location by the woman. Hearths on which grain flour is cooked are sited to the right hand side of those on which vegetable soups and sauces are cooked due to a traditional Mafa norm that grain flour ought to be cooked by a woman for her husband with the right hand (female hand).

Gender is expressed in Mafa traditional architecture also by the particular number of daub spikes found in each set that are moulded on walls. According to Boisseau and Soula (1974:544) the presence of three spikes on a wall (of a threshing floor) in Jinglia indicates that the first born in a household is a boy, while two pinnacles indicate that a girl is the first child. The spikes are, however, representative of fingers (ráy) or bull's horns (ntsulokokwa) among the Mafa and express the cultural and economic success of household heads (David et al. 1988:375). They are also means by which the fertility

of millet is invoked towards better future grain harvests among the core Mafa. A grass with very tiny seeds, which is supposed to increase the yield, was associated with some of the spikes I observed.

Socio-cultural differences between the core Mafa and other Mafa are marked by mainly the location of the first wife's hut next to the kitchen, and by the location of the grinding platform to left of the kitchen's entrance. They are also marked, in part, by the (up, or downhill) location of compound entrances, and by the curvature of compounds. Although there are differences in roof construction between core Mafa villages, no conscious attempt is made by members of the villages as a whole to distinguish themselves in architecture. Individuals may, however, use roof construction to assert their village identities. In Soulede, for example, two residents who originated from Midre constructed roofs of their huts in typical Midre manner, with only millet stalks that are arranged at a steep angle, in order, according to them, to distinguish themselves from natives of Soulede.

3.4: Non-traditional Mafa Buildings

Buildings referred to as non-traditional are generally associated with modernizing Mafa, including

Christians and followers of the traditional religion. They include compounds (eg. fig. 1.3a-d), stores, market stalls and elementary school buildings. Most non-traditional compounds are composed of traditional types of huts, but differ in terms of organization. They are constructed on sub-circular or sub-rectangular floor plans and have a relatively open access with huts commonly facing and opening into large courtyards. The first wife's bedroom and granary hut and the household head's granary hut are often absent. In most of them, granaries are found in the courtyard, although they may be found in some huts.

Individual buildings that are non-traditional include those constructed of bricks, cement, sawn lumber, corrugated iron and aluminium, and paint (which are bought in towns), as well as of locally made sun-dried bricks. They are built on square or sub-rectangular floor plans and have pyramidal roofs when thatch is used (Plate 11), and angular ones when lumber, corrugated iron or aluminium and nails are used as roofing material. Although masons are hired (locally and from towns) to construct buildings with foreign materials and design, the majority of buildings are of local construction in terms of material and plan.

3.5: Meanings of Non-traditional Buildings

Non-traditional Mafa buildings are generally symptomatic of the 'modernization' of the Mafa society and culture. They are hence concentrated in nucleated settlements along roads where Christian missions and modern facilities are commonly found. Although school buildings, stores and market stalls are constructed for practical purposes, the construction of non-traditional compounds is influenced mainly by ideological and economic factors.

The compound plan and location off the hills reflect the relative peace and security (in terms of warfare, feuds, and burglary) that currently prevail in Mafa territory. Access to compounds is loosely regulated with huts facing into a central courtyard, although it is more restricted in compounds of modernizing animists (eg. fig. 1.3a,b) than in compounds of Christians (eg. fig. 1.3c,d). The compounds also express the rejection by some Mafa of traditional values, and religious and cosmological beliefs. Christians in particular would not build or live in traditional compounds as to do so would associate them with the traditional religion.

In spite of the influence of ideology and the change in attitudes, the construction of compounds is

affected by the economic capabilities of household heads. While affluent civil servants and merchants are, for example, able to afford compounds constructed entirely of imported materials, modernizing persons who are too poor to own foreign types of buildings own compounds with traditional components. Some of the poor may include one or two buildings of foreign construction (in terms of plan) in their compounds.

3.6: Taphonomic Transformations Of Mafa Architecture

Most Mafa buildings begin deteriorating not long after their construction. Walls constructed with daub and stones, for example, are weathered by rain, run-off and wind, while termites, storms and fire destroy roofs. The buildings are, however, renovated annually and on occasions when renovation is necessary.

As compounds are inherited by youngest sons in households after the death household heads, they may survive several generations of family members before being abandoned. The size of a traditional compound may diminish or expand, and the compound plan may change depending upon the wealth and religious background of the son who inherits the compound.

The total destruction, by human or natural agent,

of a compound occurs, however, when the compound is completely abandoned. A compound is abandoned when the household head is advised to do so by a seer, when the head converts to Christianity or Islam, when he acquires new lands, and when there is the need to move closer to better sources of water, health and commercial facilities.

When a compound is abandoned, branches used as frames for roofs are removed by household members and reused elsewhere, while thatch (unless new) is either burnt or collected by potters (for fuel). Walls are not broken immediately but left to disintergrate gradually. The compound floor is normally cultivated and when walls eventually collapse, the rocks used in building them are removed and used in constructing agricultural terraces when necessary.

The site of the compound is marked, in most cases, by piles of rocks from walls. Floor plans of huts and courtyards with foundations of stone that are set in the ground may preserve, though often obliterated by erosion and deposition, as well as by cultivation and other human activity. Plans of the foundations of compounds that were identified by mature persons as having been abandoned at least forty years ago were observed in many locations in the core Mafa area.

3.7: Summary

It has been suggested in the above discussion that besides differences in size, the formal nature of Mafa architecture varies in terms of the plan and composition of compounds, and the construction of individual buildings. Traditionally, compounds are planned and particular features are constructed with regards to gender relations and to the size of households. The association between males and the left hand and between females and the right hand accounts, for example for the location of grinding platforms to the left of kitchen entrances among the core Mafa. The location of men's huts near entrances of compounds also emphasizes the status of household heads in Mafa society. Plan and construction thus reify relations between male and females in households on the one hand, and between household heads and their wives on the other. They are also protective of households and their properties, and are symbolic of village identity.

Variations in traditional buildings within villages are explained in part by differences in ecological conditions, and the economic backgrounds of individual household heads. They are also influenced by the efforts of individual household heads such as the Midré residents at Souléde, and female household heads, to distinguish

themselves. Differences in social status between, for example, chiefs and other members of society is another factor explaining within village variability; chief's compounds are generally larger than compounds of other members of society. Evidence suggests that differences in family relations may also cause variability in compound plans. Huts for wives may be isolated from one another, for example where there is tension between wives, and may be close by one another where there is cordial relationship between wives.

Although ecological conditions influence differences in roof construction between villages, variations in building between the core Mafa and other Mafa seems to be generated by the desire by members of various Mafa communities to distinguish themselves. They may be explained also by differences in meanings the core Mafa and members of other Mafa villages assign to specific features of compounds such as the curvature of compounds, the locations of grinding platforms and the location of household heads' and their wives' granary huts in relation to kitchens.

The extent to which a compound is traditional or non-traditional is a function of both the religious and economic status of a household head. In general, followers of the traditional Mafa religion and Christians can be

associated with traditional and non-traditional compounds respectively. However, a wealthy and modernizing animist may incorporate a few non-traditional buildings in his compound, while a poor one may not. Compounds owned by poor Christians may comprise traditional buildings in non-traditional relationships, while those owned by wealthy Christians may include buildings that are mostly of foreign construction.

CHAPTER FOUR

STYLE IN MAFA POTTERY

4.1: Introduction

Ceramic vessels, which I shall refer to conveniently as pots, remain popular among the Mafa, despite the availability of plastic, enamelled and aluminium wares. Besides being relatively cheap to produce and acquire, they are required for various traditional cultural purposes. There are, for example, at least 37 functionally different types recognized in the core Mafa area.

In the following discussion, an attempt is made to show how the stylistic nature and variability of Mafa pots within and between villages are conditioned by various aspects of traditional Mafa cultural, social and ideological behaviour, and by interactions between the Mafa and other peoples. I suggest that although the pots are designed according to the particular functions they are intended to serve, the typical nature of their form is influenced by production processes as well as by traditional social structures and beliefs. Typological variation in the pots is generated (besides by functional

requirements) by differences in production methods and techniques used by potters and in design elements chosen by different Mafa communities, individual potters and (occasionally) non-potters. Variation is augmented by the incorporation of methods and design elements used by potters of other ethnic backgrounds into the Mafa pottery tradition.

Data I obtained in my study area constitute the main basis of the discussion. Seventeen out of 32 active potters that produce in the area were studied closely. Among them are thirteen Soulede potters (including ten adults and four children who were between the ages of eight and fifteen years), two Bao potters, one Matakam potter, and one Mazam potter who relocated to Soulédé during the course of the fieldwork. Observations concerning production and marketing processes and the nature and significance of pots were made both in the compounds of both potters and non-potters, and at local markets. Pot samples were also obtained and measured, while the types of pots used in several compounds at Soulédé, Bao and Midré were observed.

Comparative data derive, in part, from studies made at Mokola and in other Mafa villages by David (pers. comm. 1989; 1990). Other data include descriptions of Mafa pottery in general (eg. Hinderling 1954; 1984a;

Martin 1970), and of Jinglia pottery (Boisseau and Soula 1974) and Gousda pottery (Müller-Kosack 1987) in particular. An account (by Genest 1974; 1976) of methods by which Mafa pots are made and an unpublished video about the processes, "Potières Mafa", that was produced by Y. Le Bléis provide additional information. A preliminary analysis of the Mafa data and data gathered on Bulahay pottery by J. Sterner in which the question, "why pots are decorated", was addressed (David et al. 1988) is also referred to.

My discussion is divided into six main sections. After presenting the various types of pot that were observed, the processes by which the pots are produced and distributed and how these influence the nature and variability of pots are addressed. The third section discusses the impact of traditional Mafa cognitive structures on pot form, while the fourth analyzes the relationships between the functions and forms of pots. The ways in which pots are transformed into archaeological artifacts are described in the fifth, and the sixth and final section summarizes observations made in previous ones.

4.2: Mafa Pot Typology

Although each Mafa pot serves a practical function at one time or the other, particular types are used specifically in either economic contexts or to maintain and reify traditional social relations, religious and cosmological beliefs. The pots thus fit conveniently into Binford's (1962) 'technomic', 'sociotechnic' and 'ideotechnic' functional categories although the functional contexts of some of them may change (David et al. 1988). Due to the 'modernization' of Mafa society and culture, the production and use of sociotechnic and ideotechnic pots is declining.

4.2.1: Technomic Pots

Technomic pots function mainly in daily economic contexts in which households and the general public are involved. They are used for fetching, serving and storing water or beer, for cooking and brewing, or for storing miscellaneous items. Used by both traditional and modernizing Mafa, they are the most common and widely exposed pots in the Mafa territory. The different types are as follows:

1) Shidef

The shidef is a cooking or storage pot with five different variants. The shidef-daf is for cooking grain flour; the shidef-lak is for cooking vegetable sauce and soup; the shidef-kondroha is used occasionally to store unfermented sorghum beer and drinking water; the shidef-gúfá stores millet flour; and the shidef-nqiyimkra serves as pot for boiling water for newborn infants to drink and be bathed in.

The flour cooking pot is generally ovaloid and neckless with a wide mouth and a thickened lip (fig. 2.1.1a). Occasionally, it is sub-spherical and has a flaring rim (fig. 2.1.1b). The pot is commonly decorated with banded rouletting which covers its shoulder or a part of its body, though often decorated with stamped or dragged comb impressions immediately below its lip (fig. 2.1.1a).

The sauce and soup pot is also ovaloid, but is long-necked with a wide mouth and an everted rim that has an unthickened lip (fig. 2.1.1c). It is always decorated with a band of rouletted impressions on the shoulder. Samples made by the Mazam potter are, however, shaped like the sub-spherical flour cooking pot but have two horizontal loop handles on their shoulders (eg. fig. 2.1.1d). This type is distinct in Soulede and Bao where it is associated

by many potters and non-potters with Mazam.

The flour storage pot and the infant's water pot differ from the above pots mainly in terms of function. The bodies of a few flour storage pots that have comb impressions below their lips are, however, burnished and polished (with groundnut or Khaya senegalensis oil mixed with red ochre or grog).

The unfermented beer pot (fig. 2.1.1e) resembles the flour cooking pot in shape, though larger with one vertical loop handle on its shoulder. Banded rouletted impression is the usual kind of decoration found on the pot, however, an unfermented beer pot that I observed at Soulede had a band of grooved and punctate zig-zag impressions on its burnished body. The production and use of this pot in the core Mafa area commenced, according to older informants, with the establishment of Christianity among the Mafa and the consequent prohibition of fermented beer by some converts, and hence the popularity of unfermented beer.

2) Duwzлак

This type of pot is used for fetching either water, in which case it is known as duwzлак-yam, or for transporting and serving beer and hence called duwzлак-zum.

While the use of the water pot is limited to the members of households, the beer pot is often used in public forums.

The duwzлак is necked and narrow-mouthed and has an everted rim with a thickened lip. It usually has a single vertical loop handle on its neck. Most of this type of pot I observed in core Mafa territory are ovaloid, although the beer fetching type is occasionally sub-spherical. The water pot also differs from the beer pot in decoration. While the it is, in most cases, decorated only with rouletting (fig. 2.1.1f), it is usual for the beer pot to have an applique belt between its neck and shoulder and applique pellets or vertical ridges on its shoulder. The beer pot, nonetheless, has the most varied kinds of decoration, including stamped comb, rouletted, grooved and incised impressions (fig. 2.1.1g; 2.1.2a-c). The duwzлак made by Roua potters (fig. 2.1.2d) is, however, different from the core Mafa type in morphology. Apart from being sub-spherical, it has a wider mouth and a more flaring rim.

3) Barvak

The barvak (fig. 2.1.2e) is used mainly by children for fetching water. It is always ovaloid, neckless and narrow-mouthed with a thickened lip. It also

has a single vertical loop handle on its neck and is decorated on the shoulder with banded rouletting and, occasionally, with comb stamping.

4) Kore búlóm

The kore búlóm (fig. 2.1.3a-b) is the largest type of Mafa pot. Five locally named kinds are distinguished, although the pot performs other functions. There is the kore búlóm-yam for storing water; the kore búlóm-zava for soaking sorghum grains; the kore búlóm-voqwa for brewing; the kore búlóm-zum for storing beer; and the kore búlóm-kolongway for storing precious items. The kore-búlóm is also used to store grains and manure ash and, in a few cases, filled with water and used in cooling bottled beer and soft drinks.

The pot is ovaloid, wide-mouthed and neckless with a thickened lip. Rouletted impressions always cover its shoulder, while its base is always coated with a solution of red ochre or grog. The largest kore-búlóm, which is known as tété (fig. 2.1.3b), often has one or two fingertip impressed applique belts on its body. It is also decorated occasionally with one or two applique knobs and an applique rouletted chin.

5) Gandaf

The gandaf (fig. 2.1.3c) is a bowl for serving food or for making bellows. It is ellipsoid and neckless with an inverted rim. Although the bellows bowl (gandaf-gezla) is rarely decorated, the food bowl, simply called gandaf, is always blackened and burnished and has a thin band of comb impression immediately below its lip.

6) Durqwatsay and dem-durqwatsay

These pots consist of a colander (durqwatsay) and a collecting vessel (dem-durqwatsay) and are used for filtering salt solutions from soaked ash that is derived from burnt manure. They are identical to the bellows bowl except that they are rouletted and their lips are sometimes comb stamped. At least 10 holes, each of which measures about 0.5 centimeters in diameter, are made in the base of the colander.

7) Kizléd

The kizléd (fig. 2.1.3d) is a bowl that is used either as a potters' turntable or as a water basin for livestock. It is ellipsoid and neckless but, unlike the gandaf, has an everted rim. Except for the occasional

presence of rouletted or stamped fingertip impressions on its lip, the pot is undecorated.

8) Shemteleo

The shemteleo (fig. 2.1.3e) is a sub-spherical beer and water cooling pot that has two spouts and a single loop handle separating the spouts. No decorated kinds were observed. The pot is not common, and is said by potters to have been copied by the Mafa from their Muslim neighbours. Similar pots are typical of the Fulani among whom they are called ngarqulel (David and Hennig 1972:13).

4.2.2: Sociotechnic Pots

The functioning of sociotechnic pots is largely associated with the maintenance and reinforcement of the status of household heads within their families, and of relations between the heads and their in-laws and guests. Household heads own, keep and use different types of the pots (occasionally) for cooking and serving meat, for storing livestock fat and crushed marrow laden bones, and for serving in-laws and guests with beer. First wives are sometimes permitted the use of some of the pots. According to followers of the traditional religion, the use of

sociotechnic pots traditionally relates to the maray celebration when many livestock are slaughtered and when households feast with their relatives and guests. Due to the contexts in which the pots are used, their public exposure is restricted. The observed types are:

1) Kizluwtéré

This pot is a meat serving bowl that is used exclusively by traditional household heads. Its use in compounds is declining; only two out of the five that were found in compounds (at Bao and Matakam) were still actively used. It is, however, commonly found on tombs of deceased traditional household heads.

The kizluwtéré is similar to the kizléđ in shape, though smaller and with a flat base (fig. 2.2a). A legged kind (fig. 2.2b) was observed by N. David elsewhere in Mafa territory (David et al. 1988). A thin band of stamped comb impression is found below its lip. None of the meat bowls I found was blackened.

2) Nnshengelek

This is a traditional meat cooking pot that is mainly used by a household head and (occasionally) by his first wife.

The meat cooking pots I found among the core Mafa (fig. 2.2c) are generally similar in shape to the sauce cooking pot but are larger and have either one vertical loop handle or two horizontal ones on the shoulder. Some of the pots have tripod feet (fig. 2.2d) and are hence known as nshengelek nsak aa va. This type is used exclusively by household heads in their bedrooms, as fire can be set directly between its legs. Elsewhere, the meat cooking pot has a collar around its shoulder that serves to collect overflowing soup, which is redirected into the pot through a small hole or holes (David et al. 1988). Decorations commonly found on the pot include various combinations of rouletted and grooved impressions and applique pellets.

3) Hurdada

The hurdada (fig. 2.2e) serves as a container for fat and crushed pieces of marrow laden bones obtained from slaughtered livestock, a delicacy that the Mafa use occasionally to flavour sauce. It is commonly used by both modernizing and traditional Mafa. According to persons with whom it was found, fat stored in this pot following maray celebrations is eaten only after a year.

The pot is ovaloid, neckless and narrow-mouthed.

It has no handles and is decorated on its neck with rouletting or comb stamping. It is blackened occasionally and its body is often burnished and polished (with groundnut or Khaya senegalensis oil).

4) Lúwdara

This pot is used occasionally by household heads to serve their in-laws and guests with beer. It is currently used in only a few traditional households.

The pot is identical to the duwzlak in shape but is distinct in decoration. It is typically characterized by specific arrangements of applique pellets, belts and ridges. The decorations appear to vary between potters. One of the few samples observed (fig. 2.2f) is decorated on the shoulder with three applique belts, each of which has 20 applique pellets superimposed on it. Other samples have two belts that enclose several pellets (eg. fig. 2.2g), or two belts between which are found a number of vertical ridges that are decorated with incisions (fig. 2.2h).

5) Zaqayak

This pot is supposed to be used by newly-married traditional women in transporting water for the first time to the compounds of their husbands. It is very rarely used

presently and no sample was observed. Different descriptions of it were provided by potters. It is said to be like the simple meat cooking pot (fig. 2.2c), the children's water fetching pot or the sauce pot in both morphology and decoration.

4.2.3: Ideotechnic Pots

Locally called veray (sacred or offering pots), ideotechnic pots function in contexts of traditional religious behaviour on personal, household and community levels. They supposedly hold or represent the souls of living persons and the ancestors as well as the spirits of God, millet, livestock and disease respectively. Offerings are made to most of them on behalf of the souls and spirits they hold annually or upon the advice of seers. The pots are usually visible only when offerings are made to them, and only to their owners and relatives, not to the general public. The various types are listed in Table 1 and are described below.

1) Zhikilegidqa

The zhikiléqidqa refers (among the core Mafa) both to pots that are supposed to hold the souls of men

(zhikiltef) and women (gidpats) respectively and protect them daily against the misuse of power. When a person emigrates from his or her village to an unknown destination, his or her abandoned soul pot is used for the mvité, a special ritual in which a seer supposedly recalls (magically) the person home. During this ceremony, the pot is dressed with a cap and a goat skin bag. Besides this occasion and other occasions during which offerings are made to it, the pot is kept in one's bedroom, close to the head position of a bed. It is hence known generally outside the core Mafa area as gidpats, 'head of a bed' Boisseau and Soula 1974:667; Le Bleis 1986:17; David pers. comm. 1989).

The male's personal soul pot (zhikiltef) (fig. 2.3.1a) is strikingly different from the female counterpart (gidpats) (fig. 2.3.1b), although both are jar-shaped. The male's soul pot has a row of upturned spikes that are attached to a belt on its shoulder, and an applique rouletted chin below the row of spikes. A similar pot in Jinglia is, however, called di mbulom and is used for communal rituals (Boisseau and Soula 1974:716). Although the soul pot of a male in Jinglia and in a number of other Mafa villages (fig. 2.3.1c) has a rouletted chin, it generally resembles the female soul pot (see below).

The (core Mafa) female's personal soul pot

(fig. 2.3.1b) differs its male counterpart by lacking spikes and having two applique knobs ("breasts") on its body in addition to a single row of applique pellets around its shoulder. Also, its shoulder is rouletted in many cases.

2) Tsakaliy

Tsakaliy comprise pots that 'hold' the souls of 'abnormally born persons' and a bowl from which these persons are supposed to eat during tsakaliy ceremonies. The most common of these pots is the tsakalay manta pokwa chew (fig. 2.3.1d) which 'holds' the souls of twins. It is double-bodied but with a single neck and mouth. It has an applique belt between its neck and shoulder and numerous applique pellets that are superimposed on rouletted impressions on its neck and shoulder. Triplets have a triple-bodied variety of the above kind (fig. 2.3.1e). The soul of a person born through breech presentation is 'held' by a small sized jar called dé-dé-a (fig. 2.3.1f) which is decorated with only one applique belt that is attached to between the neck and shoulder. In some villages outside core Mafa territory, the pot has a bar across its mouth (fig. 2.3.1g). The food bowl or digindef (fig. 2.3.1h) is always associated with each of the other tsakaliy pots.

Besides being blackened, none of the observed specimens had any form of decoration.

3) Baba

This pot represents the deceased father. Core Mafa baba (fig. 2.3.2a), which is also jar-shaped, is decorated with downturned applique spikes that are superimposed on three consecutive applique belts on its shoulder. The spikes are grouped into various sets of threes or fours on each belt. Between them are a number of short vertical incisions. Also found on the body of the pot is an applique rouletted chin. In Gousda (Müller-Kosack 1987) and elsewhere however, the deceased father's soul pot has two rows of spike that are not downturned (fig. 2.3.2b).

4) Bababa

The bababa (fig. 2.3.2c) 'holds' the soul of the deceased paternal grandfather. The type observed among the core Mafa is similar in form to the deceased father's soul pot but has two belts of spike instead of three. The deceased father and grandfather's soul pots of Jinglia and Gousda (Müller-Kosack 1987) are identical to one another in form.

5) Mama

This is a deceased mother's soul pot. It (fig. 2.3.2d) resembles the female personal soul pot but always has an applique vulva below the 'breasts'. The vulva is covered with rouletted impressions stated to represent hair.

6) Mambaba and Mammama

The mambaba is the soul pot of a deceased paternal grandmother, while the mammama represents a deceased maternal grandmother. Both pots are identical to the deceased mother's soul pot.

7) Gidndo

Gidndo, 'a man's head' (fig. 2.3.2e), is a core Mafa pot that temporarily represents a deceased household head during a funeral ritual known as zum-digidawda in which in-laws present the soul of the deceased with a beer as their last respect. It is used by members of all clans besides the members of the Gousda clan.

Also shaped like the duwzlak, the pot is decorated with a number of applique pellets that are

arranged in sets of three columns around its shoulder. Pellets are also attached to its lip and handle.

8) Zhikile

The zhikile is also called mpalama or mbulom-ma-gay by the core Mafa. It 'holds' a supreme spirit that usually guards a compound and its occupants but which may guard an iron smelting furnace (David et al. 1988) and a forge (David pers. comm. 1989) against sorcerers and ill fortune.

The jar-shaped pot has features that depict parts of the human body. These features vary occasionally in relation to recommendations made by seers and clients when the pot is made. In most cases, the pot has a head (fig. 2.3.3a), on which are found applique pellets, with a face and an opened mouth that contains quartz teeth. It also has an applique rouletted chin and (usually) a raised left hand on its body. A few of the samples observed lack a head (fig. 2.3.3b), have a raised right hand, or have a row of applique pellets around the shoulder. In one instance, the pot was blackened.

Two 'God' pots that were made at Lum-Ziver, to guard a furnace and as a present to N. David and J. Sterner respectively, differ from the core Mafa types. Both have a

belt of applique spikes on the shoulder and a single ear on the head. But while the furnace guarding one (fig. 2.3.3c), a man's 'God' pot (David pers. comm. 1989), has a rouletted chin on its head and quartz teeth in its widely opened mouth, the other pot (fig. 2.3.3d), a woman's 'God' pot, lacks a chin and teeth and has a round pedestal base. However, it is uncertain the two pots are typical of the Lum-Ziver Mafa.

In addition to the above god pots is the lúwdara-gidqala which 'holds' a spirit that is supposed to guard the courtyard of a compound. The pot is, according to older traditional persons, hoisted on a forked branch (cegelek) within the courtyard. No sample was observed and it is not known precisely how it is decorated.

9) Vurvurway

Known to the core Mafa as vurvurway or mbulom-daw and to other Mafa as nnqerzla (David et al. 1988a:374) and sekwetev (Boisseau and Soula 1974:730), this pot (fig. 2.3.3e) 'holds' the spirit of millet. It is always kept under a household head's granary to prevent stored millet from damage or from 'vanishing', and to ensure a good grain harvest. Offerings are never made to it, but anytime beer is brewed in a compound, some is reserved in

the pot and drunk only after the rest has been consumed.

The pot is jar-shaped and is decorated with numerous applique pellets that are superimposed on rouletted impressions around its neck, shoulder and body. A rouletted chin is also found on the body of some.

10) Vurvurzle, vurvurbok and vurvurtambak

These pots 'hold' the spirits of cattle, goats and sheep respectively. They are kept in livestock pens to protect the stock against disease and theft. Like the millet spirit pot, special offerings are not made to them, although they are filled occasionally with beer.

The pots (eg. fig. 2.3.3f), which are very rarely used presently, are designed like the millet spirit pot, though the example seen was very tiny with pellets that are slightly larger than those on the millet spirit pot

11) Pots of the Spirits of Disease

Included in this type is an array of pots that are made and used (only when required by a seer) to entrap spirits that supposedly cause disease and various kinds of sickness in order to heal the sick or protect them against sickness. Among them is the madzagay, a pot that entraps the spirit responsible for high fever and mental disorders

and the fakalaw which entraps the spirit that causes convulsions. The rest include the gwoda which entraps the spirit responsible for swollen bellies, and the zlazlak, a pot that entraps the soul of a person killed by another.

Only the spirit of high fever and mental disorders is specially made among the core Mafa. Its form seems to vary between potters. One of two samples that I obtained from two ngwazla (including a male) resembles a core Mafa 'God' pot, while the other (produced by the male ngwazla) is enigmatic (fig. 2.3.3g). None of the other disease spirit pots was observed, however, some seers claimed their shapes and decorations depend on their recommendations.

12) Other Ideotechnic Pots

Other types of pot that are classifiable as ideotechnic are undecorated technomic or sociotechnic pots that are offered as presents to the souls of deceased adults prior to and immediately after their burial. Most of these pots are broken near the entrance of the compounds (on the gwejeved) of the deceased or on their tombs. A few duwzlak and shidef are sometimes filled with beer and grains or groundnuts respectively and buried with the

deceased, while the rest of the pots are broken or placed on tombs.

4.3: Production and Distribution of Pots

All female ngwazla (except for the very few students and civil servants amongst them) produce pots. In Soulede, however, a male ngwazla makes and sells flower vases and other atypical pots to missionaries and tourists, and another made a madzagay pot for me on behalf of his wife from whom the pot was ordered.

Potters learn pottery in their childhood from their mothers, step-mothers and grandmothers (Plate 12). When they relocate to different villages, they often learn how to make ideotechnic and sociotechnic pots that are specific to their new villages from co-wives, customers, friends and seers who are often their husbands.

Although technomic and sociotechnic pots are made by all adult potters, ideotechnic pots are made only by potters who keep to traditional ways. Modernizing potters refuse to make these pots since, according to them, to do so would violate their new religious (Christian) commitment. Pots that entrap spirits of disease are also made only by elderly potters (with enough children) due to

a belief that these pots could render potters barren. Children usually make shidef only.

Apart from ideotechnic pots, which are always produced on order and are paid for in kind (with goats, sheep, salt, millet or beer), pots are produced for sale. Up to about twenty-five different pots are made per week by most adult potters while children make at least six shidef.

Pots are usually sold on market days by potters in their compounds immediately after they are fired. Cash is the main medium of exchange and pots are sold for between 100 Fr. C.F.A. and 650 Fr. C.F.A. (There were approximately 250 Fr. C.F.A. to the US\$1 in 1986). Grains, groundnuts, salt, beer and cakes of cow dung (for fuel) are, however, accepted sometimes by potters. Customers, who are usually the immediate neighbours and friends of potters, sometimes acquire even unfired and cracked fired pots because these pots are sold cheaply. Usually, only pots that potters fail to sell from their compounds are sold in markets.

The cost to potters of materials is relatively low. Clay and fuel (discarded thatch and matting, dry cow, sheep and goat dung and millet chaff) are, for example, obtained by potters easily and cheaply. Clay is found within a radius of about 500 meters from potters' compounds. It is dug, with the consent of land owners, by

pottery and sometimes by volunteers who are rewarded with pots, food or beer. Sizeable amounts of dry cow dung cakes are often bought by potters from their neighbours for between 25 Fr. C.F.A. and 100 Fr. C.F.A. a basket load, although it is common for potters to gather the dung and the other kinds of fuel freely from the fields. In some cases, potters are provided with fuel by customers in exchange for pots.

Most pots are made during the dry season when demand is high, fuel is abundant, and when pots can be dried and fired outdoors without disturbance by rain. Food bowls, whose firing requires a limited amount of fuel, are, however produced mainly in the wet season.

4.3.1: Production Methods and Pot Form

Potters use, with only minor variations, similar tools and methods and select from a finite set of design elements when making pots (Genest 1986:147-150; Le Bleis n.d; David pers. comm. 1989), although the specific manner in which they manipulate the design elements vary.

The kizléd (fig. 2.1.3d) and the bases of large old pots that serve as turntables for adults and children respectively are among the tools used by potters. Other tools include the tuwa, a section of tree trunk with its

ends carved into concave surfaces that serve as both anvil and a mold; a ceramic tamper (ńtótá); the m'pizhé, a scraper made of pieces of coarse and smooth surfaced potsherds; the kezlazla, a piece of calabash for smoothing; the ngeshengesh, a piece of twisted (Borassus palm frond or plastic) strip roulette (Soper 1985) for decorating; and the sambak, a comb made by inserting at least four tightly packed pieces of straw into lumps of clay for decorating. A few leaves (semday) and pieces of stick and millet stalk are also used for making and smoothing the rims of pots and for making incisions and grooves respectively. Besides the turntable and the anvil-mold, all tools are kept in an old pot that is known as manatsh.

More than one of each tool are owned and used by each potter. At least two different sizes of the anvil-mold and the turntable are used by most potters for making pots of various sizes, however, the anvil-mold and turntable used by the Mazam potter are considerably larger than those used by other core Mafa potters. It is not known whether or not the sizes of this potter's anvil-mold and turntable are unique to her or to Mazam potters in general, as other Mazam potters were not studied. The potter claimed, however, to have followed her mother in the choice of the sizes of the tools.

Pot making (ńréme) is consistent with the

manufacturing processes outlined by Rice (1987). It involves four basic stages: a) forming, b) smoothing, c) decorating, and d) firing. The repair of cracked pots (e) is also done actively by both potters and non-potters. Before potters begin manufacturing, they moisten and age their clay in old pots for at least two days before using it. The amount of clay they intend to use on each day is once again moistened and wedged with feet and hands on rock outcrops. No tempering material is used until manufacturing begins.

1) Forming and Pot Morphology

Pots are always formed from their bases upwards. Their bases are molded while other parts are coil built.

When making the base of a pot, grog (hézai), is first spread on an anvil-mold and a lump of clay is rolled on it to form a cone. The cone is supported on the anvil with one hand and hammered with tamper while more grog is sprinkled on it until a (shallow) bowl is formed. Grog prevents the wet clay from sticking onto the surface of the anvil, but eventually becomes a temper in the paste of the mold. After the bowl is made, it is transferred into a turntable that is lined with ash (Plate 13) and its inner section is tapped delicately to conform to the desired

morphology.

Between about three to five minutes after a base is made, its edge is trimmed with a piece of sharp edged millet stalk and thinned with the fingers. Lengths of coil (about 4.5 centimeters in diameter) are then plastered on the inner surface of the thinned portion and pulled up, while the turntable is turned around slowly, to produce a section of wall that is at least six millimeters thick and 8 centimeters high. In the case of large pots, thinner coils are added on the outside at the join of the coiling to the molded base. Other consecutive layers of coil are built in a similar (overlapping) manner up to the rim of the pot, with potters pausing for about three minutes between the building of each layer in order that a previous layer harden enough to hold the next. Finally, the lip of the pot is formed and smoothed at the same time with a piece of wet leaf. The wet leaf is held firmly along the edge of the mouth of the pot with one hand while the pot is turned around gently. Short cylinders of clay are attached to the necks or shoulders of some pots as handles after the pots' lips are formed.

Due to the use of the turntable, the bases of most Mafa pots are not symmetrical to their bodies. Relatively large pots have bases with smaller radii than that of their bodies, while the bases of relatively small

pots have larger radii than the bodies of the pots. Most Mafa pots thus have bases that jut distinctly underneath their bodies and hence have an ovaloid configuration.

Occasionally, however, potters form both the bases and bodies of smaller sized pots on the anvil-mold alone without using the turntable. In this case, there is a symmetry between a pot's base and its body and the pot maintains a sub-spherical configuration. The wall of a pot formed in this way, as in the case of shidef and meat cooking pots made by the Mazam potter, is usually thinner than that of a pot formed in a turntable.

The use of the anvil-mold alone when a pot is formed by Mafa potters and the sub-spherical configuration of pots have been adopted, according to potters, from Cuvok potters, who do not make use of a turn-table and whose pots are generally sub-spherical and considered by some Mafa as being beautiful. The method is used as well by Bulahay potters (J. Sterner pers. comm. 1989).

2) Smoothing and the Surface of Pots

Both the inner and outer surfaces of a pot are smoothed when the pot is formed. While the inner surfaces of the base and body of the pot are smoothed with a piece of calabash, a piece of millet stalk is used in smoothing

the inner surface of the neck. The smoothing of the outer surface of the pot is, however, done only after the pot has hardened sufficiently. A coarse potsherd is first used to scrape the surface, sealing pores and cracks. The surface is then smoothed with the palm of one hand that has been frequently immersed in water while the other hand supports the pot. The rubbing of the palm on the pot's surface often leaves striations that render it rougher than its inner surface.

3) The Techniques and Nature of Pot Decoration

Decoration, with regards to Mafa pots, is used broadly to include even aspects of form that may be considered as features. It comprises impressions, appliques and burnishes, and is applied routinely to the external surfaces of a pot immediately after the pot is smoothed. The pot for high fever (madzagay) and other disease spirit pots (as indicated by seers and persons who once used such pots) and occasionally 'God' pots, personal soul pots and ceremonial beer jars are, however, decorated according to specifications made by seers or clients.

Rouletting, stamping, incising and grooving are the main techniques by which Mafa pots are impressed. The particular surface area of a pot to be impressed is first

dampened with water and smoothed well with fingertips when the desired decoration is made.

When rouletting a pot, the roulette is usually rolled continuously around the pot's shoulder with the tips of fingers of the right hand forwards (and thus anticlockwise) or in a back-and-forth movement but in the same direction. The spirally twisted impression is continuous when the roulette is rolled forwards and is discontinuous and characterized by a series of ridges when the roulette is rolled back-and-forth. The impression is usually banded irrespective of the rouletting technique.

Stamping is usually done in a narrow band with the sambak comb at very close intervals directly below the lip of a pot or around the lower end of the pot's neck. In some cases, the comb is dragged rather than stamped. The comb impression often resembles a rouletted one especially when the fingers of the comb are very tightly packed and when the stamping is at very close intervals. Impression is also done with the tips of two or three fingers, particularly on the applique belts attached to the body of large water storage pots (tété) and ceremonial beer jars, and on the lip of potters' turnatables.

A piece of stick or millet stalk is used when a pot is grooved or incised. Grooving is done horizontally to the edges of banded rouletted impressions, vertically,

sub-circularly or in zig-zag patterns across rouletted impressions or around applique knobs (as on some beer fetching jars). Incision is occasionally done in short vertical lines in between applique spikes (as found on 'God' pots and pots for the deceased father and grandfather), and on applique belts (on some beer jars). Grooved and incised impressions are thus found only in conjunction with rouletting or appliques.

Appliques found on Mafa pots are in the form of pellets, spikes, ridges, belts, knobs and such human features as the head, chin, hand and the vulva. They are attached usually to the neck, shoulder and body and, in the case of the 'man's head' pot (gidndo), for example, the lip and handle of a pot. The surface to which an applique is attached is first roughened with a piece of stick or with rouletting.

Burnishing is usually done with a piece of smooth pebble on both the inner and outer surfaces of the food bowl and on the outer surfaces of the flour storage pot and the unfermented beer pot, for example. Before being burnished, the surface of a pot is first dampened with a solution of water and groundnut or Khaya senegalensis oil.

d) Firing and the Colour of Pots

Pots are fired at least two days after they are made when they are dry enough. Unfired pots purchased by non-potters and ideotechnic pots that are ordered during the wet season are often fired on hearths within kitchens. All other pots are fired by potters in shallow pits that are up to 50 centimeters deep in the center and about 2.5 meters in diameter. Pit firing is begun usually on the eve of a market day and continues through the night.

Before firing, the floor of the firing pit is lined with flattened cakes of cow dung. Pots are then arranged on the floor systematically; the lips of pairs of large pots touch one another while those of small pots touch the bodies of the large pots. Dung is also inserted between the pots and spread on top of them. The pots, with the dung, are then covered with thatch and matting. Most core Mafa potters use grain chaff to seal the entire heap in order to prevent rapid burning.

Unless disturbed by rain, the well fired pots are reddish with a few black carbonaceous clouds. When rain falls while pots are being fired, it disturbs normal combustion and pots become blackened with soot, and are often not well fired.

Well fired pots may be blackened deliberately,

however, during a second phase of firing. After the first load of fuel is almost totally burnt, the pots are covered completely with pulverized goat and sheep dung, a little cow dung and thatch (if available). This second load of fuel limits air supply to the firing pit, burns slowly and causes carbon to be deposited on the pots. After firing, the pots are rubbed with the leaves of ebony to further blacken them.

e) The Repair of Cracked Pots

Only cracked technomic pots are repaired. Unfired ones are repaired prior to firing with a mixture of wet clay and ground Acacia nilotica (nduvnohw). The mixture is smeared on the cracked surface(s) of a pot and hammered gently with a piece of potsherd into the crack(s). Wet fingertips are then used to smooth the surface. Pots that crack after firing, including old pots, are repaired with cement, discarded rubber shoes and inner tubes and plastic wares. Mortar is plastered on the cracked surface of a pot thickly and left until it hardens. When rubber and plastic are used, they are melted partially with a red-hot knife or sickle and pressed rapidly and firmly onto the cracked surfaces.

4.4: Function and Pot Form

In spite of the influences manufacturing methods have on pot making and the structures that underly it, the morphology of Mafa pots is largely dependent on the functions the pots serve. Most technomic and sociotechnic pots vary in size and shape but bear similar kinds of decoration. Ideotechnic pots are, however, identical in shape but vary in size and decoration.

4.4.1: Function and Pot Morphology

Bowls (gandaf, kizléd and durqwatsay) are ellipsoid while jars (eg. duwzlak, shidef and kore-búlóm) are ovaloid or sub-spherical. The practical functions a jar serves are closely related to its size and rim configuration.

Depending upon its particular function, a jar is small, medium or large in size, narrow-mouthed or wide-mouthed and has or lacks a neck. On the basis of measurements I made, a pot can be referred to as small-sized when its maximum height and breadth are less than 35 centimeters and 25 centimeters respectively; medium-sized when its maximum height and breadth are between 35 and 55 centimeters and between 25 and 35 centimeters respectively; and is large-sized when its

maximum height and breadth are greater than those of a medium-sized jar. When the internal diameter of its lip is less than ten centimeters, a jar is, in my opinion, narrow-mouthed and is otherwise wide-mouthed.

Pots such as beer and water fetching jars, children's water jars, fat containers, ceremonial beer jars and most ideotechnic pots which are narrow-mouthed are small or medium in size and are, except for the children's water jar and the fat container, necked. The morphological characteristics of the pots seem to be due to the use of the pots in the fetching and serving of liquid (water, beer and liquid fat). While the sizes of the pots permit sufficient amounts of liquid to be fetched with the pots, the pots' narrow mouths and necks could limit spillage when liquid is transported or poured.

Jars that are wide-mouthed, including vegetable and meat cooking pots and water storage jars, are small, medium or large in size. Except for the soup and sauce cooking pot and the meat cooking pot, the pots lack necks. Unlike the narrow-mouthed ones, these jars serve mainly in cooking and brewing and in the storage of liquid and solid items. Cooking pots are small or medium in size and are hence easy to carry from one place to another when being used, washed or stored. The water storage jar is probably large because it is used to brew on a large scale and to

store fairly large quantities of water, beer and other items. It is not normally moved; fire is built around it when used in brewing, and its base is buried when used for storing. The soup and sauce cooking pot and the meat cooking pot are necked probably because of their functions; their necks could limit the overflow of boiling sauce and soup and could help to lift and carry the pots when hot.

Most ideotechnic pots are identical to one another in shape. Like the duwzlak, they are narrow-mouthed and necked. They seem to have such a shape mainly because they are used to store and serve beer when rituals are performed. Although there is a structural basis for variations in the size of personal and ancestral soul pots, the size of each ideotechnic pot varies generally in relation to the amount of beer that owners of the pots can afford when offerings are made.

4.4.2: Function and the Decoration of Pots

Traditionally, only pots offered by the Mafa as presents to the souls of deceased persons during funerals are supposed to be plain, as the dead, presumably, require less protection than the living. Decoration thus distinguishes pots used by living Mafa from those offered to the dead, and it is an anomaly when pots besides those offered to the dead are plain. However, as many Mafa, including both potters and non-potters, have become christianized and no longer believe in a lot of traditional values, plain pots, including the bowl used as livestock water basin, the beer and water cooler and the bellows bowl, as well as some of the pots sold by Mafa potters at Mokolo market (David et al. 1988) are commonly being used outside the context of funerals.

As expressed by Table 2, there is a strong variation between decorations found on the various categories of Mafa pots. Technomic and sociotechnic pots are, for example, decorated mainly with impressions, while ideotechnic pots are mainly decorated with appliques. Pots used to fetch and serve beer are also commonly decorated with applique decorations in addition to impressions.

Besides for the protection of the items they contain and the persons who use them, most technomic and sociotechnic pots are decorated with impressions, probably because they rarely serve in social and ideological contexts. Those pots used in fetching beer have pellets as they are used socially; the ceremonial beer jar, for example, serves in the maintenance of ties between household heads and their in-laws and guests, while other beer fetching jars are used at social gatherings such as at beer 'cabarets'.

The association between ideotechnic pots and appliques could be explained by the fact that most of the pots function in contexts in which specific relationships are expressed. Depending upon whether they hold or represent males or females, the pots are decorated with appliques that express their masculinity or femininity. Male personal and ancestral soul pots thus have applique rouletted chins on their bodies while female personal and ancestral soul pots have applique breasts and vulva. Also, the 'God' pot (zhikilé) is commonly decorated with a raised left hand and a rouletted chin because it represents God who is thought by traditional Mafa to have a male identity.

Male personal and ancestral soul pots are decorated with spikes probably because the pots represent men (with whom bulls' horns are associated). The personal

soul pot (zhikiltef) is, however, decorated with upturned spikes as it represents a living person and the deceased father and deceased grandfather's soul pots have downturned spikes because they represent deceased persons. Informants, including potters and owners of personal soul pots, claimed that the male personal soul pot has a single row of spikes because it represents an individual person, and the deceased father's pot is decorated with three rows of spikes as it links a household head to his deceased father and grandfather. They claimed also that the deceased grandfather's pot has two rows of spikes because the pot commemorates two persons, the deceased grandfather of all members of a lineage and the deceased father of the pot's owner.

The 'man's head pot' (gidndo) is decorated with pellets instead of spikes mainly because it represents a soul which is not classified by traditional Mafa among those of the ancestors. A deceased household head becomes an ancestor only after his final funeral rites (zum-digidawda) are performed. The pot is thus decorated with pellets (presumably) to protect the soul of the deceased during the funeral ceremony.

It appears that pots that represent twins and triplets and the spirit of millet are decorated with numerous pellets first, because both pots are kept under

granaries. With the pellets, the pots would protect stored grains and ensure a good grain harvest. However, since the souls and the spirit held by the pots are thought to be potentially dangerous, the pellets are also be a means of curbing dangers that may be caused to or by the souls and the spirit. Informants explained that pots that hold the spirits of livestock are also decorated with numerous pellets not only to protect the stock, but to ensure a good harvest of grains whose leaves serve as fodder.

4.5: Traditional Cognitive Structures and Pot Form

As suggested by David, Sterner and Gavua (1988), there is a formal relationship between Mafa (and Bulahay) pots and the human body. Besides having parts that are named after parts of the human body, pots are decorated with motifs that are similar in design to costume items worn by traditional Mafa (Gavua 1989; Hinderling 1984b:217-19,224-27). Cosmological beliefs and social and ideological structures also influence pot colour and decorations, and are important in determining how large or small some personal and ancestral soul pots are.

4.5.1: Cognitive Structures and Ideotechnic Pot Size

The sizes of personal and ancestral soul pots are influenced, to a significant extent, by relationships between sons, fathers and paternal grandfathers, and by sex gender differences. It is, for example customary for a household head's personal soul pot to be smaller than his father's soul pot as, according to household heads and seers, a son is subordinate to his father. The deceased father's soul pot is usually larger than the deceased grandfather's soul pot and other ancestral pots because a father (household head) is superior to all other members of a family. Since Mafa society is patrilineal and males generally wield more authority than females, the male personal (zhikiltef) and the deceased father and grandfather's soul pots are normally larger than the female personal soul pot and the deceased mother and grandmother's soul pots.

4.5.2: Cognitive Structures and Pot Colour

Traditionally, red represents the 'blood of life' and is regarded as a deterrent to ill fortune (David et al. 1988). Thus, the reddish colour of most Mafa pots is, according to traditional persons, a means by which the contents and users of the pots are protected and insulated

against ill fortune, although the colour of the pot is basically a function of firing method. The reddening of pots thus relates, for example, to the wearing of red ochre and reddish costume items by traditional persons for protection (Gavua 1989). It is also due to the supposed power of red that the base of the large water storage pot is coated with a solution of red ochre or grog (mondoz) to protect it from damage when buried in the ground in the course of the pot's use (David et al. 1988:371) as the underground is the realm of the ancestors.

The food bowl (in particular) and other pots are blackened due, in part, to the belief that black is attractive to the ancestors and hence a means by which the ancestors are invited to meals by their living relatives (David et al. 1988:371). The blackening of pots relates, according to observations made by some natives of Soulede, to the painting of faces with charcoal by young men who chase and restrain bulls that are let loose during maray celebrations in order to solicit the assistance of the ancestors.

Nevertheless, the reddish and black colours of Mafa pots are also associated with the distinction between vavay and ngwazla (David pers. comm. 1989). A legend about the origin of the ngwazla and the vavay (Martin 1970:79) proposes that two brothers were each given a ripe z'kad, a

local fruit, by their father (who was about to travel) to bury in the ground with the understanding that the brother whose fruit turned black would become responsible for all mortuary duties required by the other. When the fruits were recovered, one of them has turned black and the brother who had buried it was declared the ngwazla by his father. The other brother became vavay as his fruit remained reddish. Reddish Mafa pots are thus supposed to represent the reddish fruit and are associated with the vavay, while blackened pots represent the black fruit and hence the ngwazla. The association between the fruits and the vavay the ngwazla, on the one hand, and between them and pots, on the other, is supported by the fact that reddish Mafa pots are more common than blackened ones, just as the vavay are more populous than the ngwazla (Podlewski 1966; Genest 1976). Moreover, the morphology of the gandaf bowl is identical to that of the lower part of a z'kad fruit.

4.5.3: Cognitive Structures and Pot Decorations

Most decorations found on Mafa pots are icons of given cultural phenomena or depictions of parts of the human body (Table 3). By virtue of the phenomena they represent, many are supposed to protect and insulate the

contents and users of pots against ill fate (David et al. 1988). Depending upon the manner in which they are combined and patterned as motifs they also symbolize social and economic success and express specific social relationships.

Generally, impressed decorations are much less immediately meaningful than appliques to the Mafa. Only rouletted ones are clearly iconic. David, Sterner and Gavua (1988:372) have suggested that being spirally twisted, rouletted impressions are formally similar to such spirally shaped items as twisted bracelets and necklaces and the Borassus palm which are supposed to have protective powers among the Mafa. The impressions are hence apotropaic, although they represent the beard and hair when found on applique chins and vulva respectively.

In view of the data available, no definite structural basis can be assigned to stamped or dragged comb and fingertip impressions as well as incised and grooved decorations. Potters referred, for example, to grooved zig-zag and circular decorations in particular as being alien to the Mafa pottery tradition and as having no meaning besides being aesthetic. N. David (pers. comm. 1989) was informed, however, that incisions on an applique belt in conjunction with the belt represent a

string of beads, in which case the incisions are the gaps between beads. Nevertheless, because the Mafa rarely wear beads (at least presently), the association between incisions and beads is a moot point.

Pellets, the most common applique decorations, are icons of millet grains and are hence referred to generally as daw. They are supposed to have the power to protect as millet is believed to be spiritually powerful and is, for example, capable of hiding from and punishing sorcerers and thieves. When they occur in abundance on a pot, they are supplicative; being a means by which the spirit of millet is invoked to ensure a good harvest (David pers. comm. 1989). However, a cluster of them on the head of the 'God' pot represents divine hair, and they depict a necklace when they occur in a row on a pot. Single pellets on the edges of applique chins also represent the moustache. In terms of their form and power, the decorations are related to raised scars that are worn on the lower back by traditional Mafa against pain and to small bumps that occur on Mafa rawhide war shields which are supposed to magically deflect arrows (David et al. 1988:374). The scars are also referred to by some Mafa as daw.

Spikes represent either fingers (ray) or the horns of (maray) bulls (ntsulokokwa). They occur in sets

of even or odd numbers. Odd numbers indicate that the first born in a family is male, while even numbers show that the first born is female (Boisseau and Soula 1974:697). The orientation of spikes symbolizes life and death among the core Mafa. Upward or downward pointing spikes express the existence or death of the person whose soul is held by the pot on which they are found. It has also been suggested (David et al. 1988:375-6) that by depicting bulls' horns, which serve as burial costume items for traditionally rich household heads, spikes express cultural abundance and social and economic success.

Applique belts (ndengelay), are related to bracelets, anklets, armlets and waist bands that are worn by many traditional Mafa to protect against diseases, sorcerers and other forms of ill fate (Hinderling 1984b:217-27; Gavua 1989) and to plant fibre cords that are sometimes fastened to the necks of beer fetching jars and large beer storage jars. Although they physically reinforce pots against breakage, some potters believe the belts also protect pots metaphysically.

Besides the depiction of the navel by a single knob, appliques that depict human features express the masculinity or femininity of a pot among the core Mafa. An applique chin (bozozom) and a raised left arm express, for example, a pot's masculinity, while a raised right hand, a

pair of knobs (which symbolize breasts) and a vulva express the pots femininity. In Jinglia, a raised right hand is, however, a male feature, while a raised left hand is a female feature (Boisseau and Soula 1974).

The burnishing and polishing of Mafa pots is also related to the anointing by traditional Mafa females of their bodies with Khaya senegalensis oil during ceremonial occasions (David et al. 1988). Just as the anointing of the body is a mark of beauty, the burnishing and polishing of pots are aesthetic.

4.6: Taphonomic Transformations of Pots

The particular context in which a Mafa pot functions determines how and where it is discarded. Prior to their discard, most pots are recycled and may lose their original functional status. Some ideotechnic pots may become technomic, while some technomic pots, such as those broken at funeral, become momentarily ideotechnic and are discarded in special ways. Many potsherds are also used as lids for pots or to keep in heat of hearth fire when food is cooked. The form of some of pots, particularly ideotechnic ones, is altered before the pots are reused.

Old flour and sauce cooking pots are, for example, used as termite traps before they are discarded.

With their bases partly broken away, the pots are filled with manure and other organic materials and partly buried in the fields to attract termites. Eventually, the pots are abandoned in the fields where they may be covered with soil or removed and used as terracing material. Occasionally, the unfermented beer jar breaks on trails to streams, waterholes and wells and markets and its sherds spread along the trails and around the markets where they are abandoned.

Similarly, water fetching jars often break along trails that lead to streams, waterholes and wells, while beer fetching jars break on the way to and in beer markets. Although these pots are rarely reused, rim sherds of water and beer fetching jars are used to represent mbulom-gidaw (Plate 14), a spirit that guards cultivated fields, and mbulom-ntamaqay which guards compound entrances. When it holds the former spirit, the rim is hoisted on a boulder of rock in the fields with a piece of stone covering its mouth. When it represents the latter spirit, it is kept on the lintel of a gate in association with the bones of sacrificed domestic and hunted wild animals. Some of the sherds are also used to perform a ritual in which a spirit that is held responsible for neck and joint pains (zluwed) is supposed to be entrapped. Because the ritual is performed at the intersection of footpaths, sherds may be

found isolated along paths, close to intersections.

Damaged water and beer storage pots (kore-búlóm) are reused as containers of potters' clay and ash obtained from burnt manure. Their rims are also commonly used to consolidate and decorate the tops of roofs. Sherds of the pot are thus almost always distributed around compounds.

Although food and meat bowls and fat containers break accidentally or when they are old, some are broken deliberately during funerals of deceased traditional household heads by clan undertakers in order to make round pendants from the sherds. The pendants are worn by the undertakers and members of the deceased persons' families to maintain contact with the souls of the deceased, and also to distinguish themselves as mourners. They are removed during special ceremonies and discarded close by the compounds of the deceased. They are neither spindle whorls nor Islamic weights.

The ideotechnic status of a personal soul pot changes to sociotechnic or technomic after it is replaced by an ancestral soul pot. When its status changes, the pot is used to fetch and serve beer privately and publicly until it is damaged and subsequently discarded. In the process of its replacement, the undertaker who interred the previous owner of the pot breaks a sherd off its lip and drops it into the newly made ancestral pot full of beer.

The falling of the sherd into a calabash when the beer is served signals the acceptance of the new pot by the deceased. The spikes on the a male personal soul pot (zhikiltef) are also broken away as part of the pot's transformation. In other Mafa villages, a sherd is knocked off a personal soul pot before an ancestral pot is made. It is ground and the grog mixed with clay during the production of the ancestral pot (David pers. comm. 1989). Thus discarded sherds of the pot would rarely maintain its decoration fully.

The 'man's head' pot (gidndo) is also altered formally and functionally immediately after its use. During the final funeral rites of a deceased household head, the pot is filled with beer and its mouth is sealed with a paste of roasted tigernuts (matáwáy) and covered with a bonnet of the deceased. A goat skin bag (of the deceased or a newly acquired one) is then worn on its neck. After the beer and the paste are consumed, a sherd is broken off the lip of the empty pot by the presiding undertaker and the pot ceases to represent the deceased. The pot is from then onwards used by the deceased person's sons for fetching water until it breaks or is abandoned.

Offerings made to ancestral pots and the 'God' pot partly alters their forms. When offerings are made, the pots are filled with beer and their bodies are coated

with a solution of Pennisetum flour, the blood and the stomach and intestine contents of sacrificed livestock. Pieces of meat are also placed on top of them. The beer is consumed by persons who are directly associated with the sacrifice, however, the items with which the pots are coated are not removed; they dry up and eventually discolour parts of the pots.

The 'God' pot and the millet's spirit pot are, according to older Mafa, passed on to the youngest son in a family when his father dies. The pots may thus survive a number of generations within a family when well kept. Tsakaliy pots are kept upon the death of their owners or abandoned under granaries. Their sherds may thus spread around the compound when the pots eventually break.

Rituals in which pots that hold the spirits of disease are used are always performed at various locations outside settlements where the pots are abandoned. In Soulede, for example, the ritual for healing mental patients and persons suffering from high fever are said to take place on a sacred hill, while the ritual for killers is performed beside large boulders under which the sacred pot used is tucked away.

In spite of the various locations mentioned above where pots break and their sherds are abandoned, the majority of pots break on compounds and their sherds are

discarded with other household garbage on the immediate periphery of compounds. But, although middens of the sherds are eventually scattered across settlements, the likelihood of finding the sherds in their primary archaeological contexts and well preserved conditions is remote. Mafa fields are cultivated intensively and potsherds are often removed from the soil and incorporated in agricultural terraces. Besides, decorations on the sherds are likely to be obliterated by erosion, particularly in hilly areas. Ideotechnic pots that are tucked under rocks, left on sacred hills or buried with deceased persons may also be found wholly or in part in less disturbed contexts, although these locations will not normally be considered as sites.

4.7: Summary

The information presented in this chapter suggests that the morphology, colour and decoration of Mafa pots are the main attributes of form that are stylistically meaningful. The characteristic features of these attributes derive from a combination of three major factors that include the methods and techniques by which pots are manufactured, various social and ideological structures and the functions pots serve.

Function determines, to a large extent, the size of a pot, how the pot's rim is shaped and how it is decorated and fired. However, the pot's configuration, smoothness, decoration and colour are also dependent upon the particular methods and techniques by which it is formed, smoothed, decorated and fired respectively. Pot decoration, colour and size, as in the case of ancestral and personal soul pots, for example, also relate to gender and social relations, relationships between the dead and the living and to beliefs concerning the protection of life and property. Thus, the form of Mafa pots objectifies, in addition to reflecting technology, phenomena that provide the Mafa with economic, psychological and social means of adaptation.

I have also suggested that the various types of Mafa pot are generally similar in style between villages due to the use by potters of similar production methods and design elements. Variations that occur, with regards to the configuration of pots, for example, result from the adoption of non-traditional methods of forming pots by individual potters. The similarity in the style (particularly in decoration) of technomic pots can be accounted for partly by the fact that the pots are widely exposed and hence potters have a vivid reference in terms of decoration and the opportunity to copy design elements

from one another when they make the pots. Variation in style among sociotechnic and ideotechnic pots are minimized, in spite of the limited exposure of the pots, partly because indigenous potters and their husbands in particular could reject design elements that they deem to be alien to their villages, as they are the main custodians of tradition (see Table 5 for the village and clan backgrounds of some Mafa potters and their husbands).

While the morphology of duwzlak, for example, differs between the core Mafa area and Roua partly because of the use of different pot forming methods by potters of both communities, variations between core Mafa pots and pots produced in other Mafa communities relate mainly to the decoration of ideotechnic pots. Many Jinglia and Gousda ideotechnic pots differ, for example, from similar types in core Mafa area, due to differences in the choice and meaning of decoration between the core Mafa and the inhabitants of Jinglia and Gousda. Although Mafa potters generally select from a finite pool of decorative elements, it is likely that each community would decorate its ideotechnic pots in specific ways in order to differentiate itself from others. The spatial separation between core Mafa territory and Jinglia and Gousda, as well as the lack of close interaction between the members of these communities may also explain the variation in decoration of

ideotechnic pots between the communities.

The style of Mafa pots is thus multifaceted and is characterized by specific morphological attributes, colour and decoration. It derives from traditional production methods, relates to function and is maintained by traditional cognitive structures. Its variation, though promoted by differences in the choice and meaning of decoration, as in the case of ideotechnic pots, and by differences in manufacturing methods between potters, is encouraged by increasing interactions between the Mafa and their neighbours, particularly with regards to technomic pots.

Mainly due to geographical factors, the intense cultivation of fields by farmers, and to the reuse of pots and potsherds, the primary context of most potsherds may not be observed when excavated. It may also be difficult for one to reconstruct all the contexts in which pots had been used prior to their discard. However, assuming that well preserved sites are found, the spatial distribution of sherds could reflect some parameters of Mafa cultural and ideological behaviour. Sherds of technomic pots are, for example, likely to be widely distributed within settlements while sherds of ideotechnic and sociotechnic pots could be found in middens close to where compounds of traditional

persons once stood. The sherds of pots offered to deceased persons may also be found near abandoned compounds as traditional Mafa are buried by their homes or the abandoned homes of their paternal fathers and grandfathers. The madzaqay and other disease spirit pots could also be found in the sacred places rituals are performed with them and where they are abandoned.