Rural Resistance in South Africa

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Rural Resistance in South Africa

The Mpondo Revolts after Fifty Years

Edited by

Thembela Kepe
Lungisile Ntsebeza

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2011

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Cover illustration: The banner for the 50th commemoration of the Ngquza Massacre, sponsored by the government of South Africa. Photo: Thembela Kepe

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Rural resistance in South Africa : the Mpondo revolts after fifty years / edited by Thembela Kepe, Lungisile Ntsebeza.
p. cm. -- (Afrika-Studiecentrum series ; v. 22)
Includes index.
ISBN 978-90-04-21446-0 (pbk. : alk. paper) 1. Pondo Revolt, South Africa, 1960-1963. 2. South Africa--Race relations. 3. South Africa--History--20th century. 4. South Africa--Politics and government--20th century. 5. Apartheid--South Africa. 6. South Africa--Rural conditions. I. Kepe, Thembela. II. Ntsebeza, Lungisile. III. Series: Afrika-Studiecentrum series ; v. 22.

DT1768.P66R87 2011
968.05'8--dc23

2011034524

ISSN 1570-9310
ISBN 978 90 04 21446 0

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This edited volume would not have been possible without the excitement and commitment of the chapter authors; so they deserve the biggest praise for its completion. Virtually all of them did not hesitate to participate when they were invited, and were very understanding during the many reminders and requests from the editors. There are many other colleagues and friends whose conversations with the editors gave birth and shape to the idea of a volume on the Mpondo Revolts. These include, but not limited to, William Beinart, Gillian Hart, Mark Hunter, Sukude Matoti, Luvuyo Wotshela and Fred Hendricks, who introduced the idea of including a chapter on Western Pondoland. The editorial staffs at SAVUSA and Brill deserve thanks for their professionalism, patience and understanding. All of these virtues are probably more important in a project that has many authors, such as in an edited volume. Comments from the anonymous reviewers of the individual chapters, as well as those of the two anonymous reviewers of the entire volume, were helpful. The financial support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) of Canada allowed Thembela Kepe to participate in this project. So too is the support of the National Research Foundation (NRF) of South Africa, through the Research Chair in Land Reform and Democracy in South Africa, which made it possible for Lungisile Ntsebeza, as Chair holder, to participate. Many of the chapters in this volume contain stories of pain and resilience of the Mpondo people. So the Mpondo people deserve praise for making this project possible.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Thembela Kepe and Lungisile Ntsebeza[1]

The year 2010 marked the fiftieth anniversary of major protests that took place in many parts of South Africa, followed by a major cleanup and the banning by the state of the major political organizations, the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), as well as the declaration of a State of Emergency. The best known of these are the Sharpeville and Langa marches that took place in March 1960, where protesters were massacred and arrested by the state. These protests were a culmination of resistance by the marginalized prior to 1960, ranging from passive to violent resistance, with some overt and others 'hidden'. They resembled the resistance by the marginalized – sustained or brief, and successful or not – against the hegemony of autocratic and repressive regimes that is found throughout history. Although the two marches referred to above took place in the urban areas of South Africa, others, as will be seen in this book, took place in rural areas.

There is little doubt that with regard to rural struggles, the Mpondo revolts rank among the most significant and best known in South Africa. The highlight of these revolts was the 6th of June 1960, when security forces of the apartheid government massacred, injured and arrested scores of defenseless rural people who had gathered on the Ngquza Hill, Eastern Pondoland, in the Eastern Cape. They were protesting against the government's policies on rural administration and governance. Eleven people were killed on the day, others badly injured; while more were arrested (TRC 2003). In the days and weeks that followed the day of the massacre, more arrests, beatings and harassments followed (Kayser 2002). At least 30 people were later sentenced to death (CGTA 2010). As indicated, these events represented the height of the

[1] The arrangement of editors (in the book and this introduction) is alphabetical and does not in any way reflect any hierarchy in terms of contribution. The contribution of the editors is based on equal authorship.

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Mpondo Revolts, which were a culmination of struggles that began in the 1950s. The most publicized reason for the resistance was the villagers' rejection of the introduction by the apartheid regime of Bantu Authorities and the implementation of Betterment planning (rehabilitation schemes) through unaccountable chiefs. While the commission of inquiry that followed the massacre concluded that actions of security forces were 'unjustified and excessive, even reckless', there were no prosecutions of those responsible among the security forces. Neither were any requests for amnesty made to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission during a hearing on the Mpondo revolts, held in Lusikisiki in March 1997 (TRC 2003).

The publication of Govan Mbeki's book on struggles in rural areas, which is reviewed by Allison Drew in this volume, has ensured that these revolts are immortalized. Similar struggles against Bantu Authorities also took place in other parts of the country, including Sekhukhune, Witzieshoek, Zeerust, Xhalanga (see Harsch 1986; Zondi 2004; Matoti and Ntsebeza 2004; Ntsebeza 2006), to mention a few. The Mpondo revolts by far represented the strongest statement by rural people against social, economic and political forces that came together to deny them of their right to democracy and equality. Yet, it is curious to note that the Mpondo revolts took place in one region of Pondoland, the East, and that nothing as such happened in West Pondoland. Hendricks and Peires (this volume) attempt to shed light on the possible reasons for the difference in reaction to the rehabilitation measures between the two regions of Pondoland.[2] In any case, it appears to be a misnomer to refer to these revolts as 'Mpondo' revolts because they were strong in quite specific geographical areas of Pondoland. However, even though the Mpondo Revolts only occurred in a rather small geographical area that included the districts of Mbizana, Flagstaff and Lusikisiki, they have gone down in history as one of the most significant reactions by ordinary people against the colonial and apartheid hegemony.

[2] Various authors, including the editors of this volume and other contributors to this volume, use different spellings for this region. These are the terms that are used in the literature: 'Mpondoland', 'Phondoland' and 'Pondoland'. These differences come about as a result of attempts to 'decolonise' the term. The editors of this volume initially wanted to standardise the term for purposes of this volume, but it has been difficult to decide which one to use, without causing tensions which may be unnecessary at this stage. For practical reasons, we use the term 'Pondoland' despite our differences. It is our wish as editors that this debate will be pursued in other fora.

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After almost 50 years since the Mpondo Revolts were crushed by the apartheid government, it is important to reflect on the significance and the different meanings of the uprising. The question that faces South Africans, as well as those who have an interest in South African issues, is how history features in post-apartheid South Africa. Critical questions include what is remembered, recorded, by whom, and, crucially, the manner in which the different histories of South Africa contribute or do not contribute to current understandings of nationhood. Indeed, this is a challenge that not only faces South Africans, but humanity as a whole. In many ways, this book provides an illustration of how these questions can be dealt with. This edited collection brings together over a dozen prominent scholars from a range of disciplines: history, sociology, anthropology, politics and geography. The contributions cover the broad topic of the revolts from different angles. The volume includes contributions that present alternative understandings of the uprising; individual figures connected to the revolts, and the roles they played outside of Pondoland; and an exploration of the historical and contemporary struggles around migrancy, land, traditional authority, development and rural politics in general.

As well-known as the Mpondo revolts are, there is not much consolidated published work in existence thus far. By far the best known published work on the Mpondo Revolts is Govan Mbeki's *South Africa: The Peasants' Revolt* (1984) (reviewed in this volume) that was first published in 1964 by Penguin, and republished in 1984 by the International Defence & Aid Fund (IDAF). Even then, Mbeki only devotes one chapter (Chapter 9) to the Mpondo revolts. But the title of the book and Mbeki's long history in the struggle against apartheid appear to have given his book an authoritative aura in regard to the Mpondo revolts. Besides Mbeki's book, the only other focused treatment of these revolts that we are aware of is through student theses (see Copelyn 1974; Mbambo 2000; Kayser 2002; Mnaba 2006; Müller 2003; 2009; Pieterse 2007; Fidler 2010). These works emphasize different aspects of the revolts. Some of the authors of these theses have contributed chapters for this edited volume (Müller and Pieterse). Yet, as this collection shows, the meaning and significance of the Mpondo revolts is subject to different understandings and interpretations. We argue that this is in part because of a limited understanding of rural struggles in South Africa, compared to struggles waged in the urban centres. For this reason, we hold the view that it is necessary to understand the

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marginalization of the rural areas in South Africa, particularly in contemporary political discourse.

The Marginalization of the Rural

Mabin (1991) has argued that the impact of apartheid and resistance to it in the rural areas of the country are less well-known. Mabin echoes the sentiments of many others, including those focusing on land and agrarian questions in South Africa since the advent of democracy in South Africa in 1994.[3] For illustrative purposes, we use the examples of Nelson Mandela's autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom* (1994), and a collection of volumes emanating from a project with the title, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, run under the auspices of the South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET). Mandela's book, perhaps owing to his iconic status, is probably the single most influential text to come out around the official end of the apartheid period. In the book's almost 800 pages, Mandela devotes a mere 70 pages to rural areas and this is about his childhood and early youthful life in rural Eastern Cape. The one reference to the politics of the countryside is a brief mention of his father Gadla's defiance of a local magistrate. Most of the book is devoted to numerous meetings and campaigns in urban areas. To be fair, even though the book focused on Mandela's life in the struggle, and even though he spent most of his youthful and adult life before going to prison for life in urban areas, it is remarkable that a leader of his stature, who had strong rural roots, does not say much about what was happening in rural areas. This can only highlight our point about the marginalization of rural struggles. It can also be yet another piece of evidence to support claims about the ANC's urban bias and orientation (see Ntsebeza's chapter in this volume).

The SADET series was launched in March 2001 to cover, as the title suggests, struggles against apartheid from the 1960s to the early 1990s. In Thabo Mbeki's words, the series aimed to 'record the history of our liberation struggle, keep track of the road to democracy and celebrate the heroes, the heroines and the masses that have built and are building, that have walked and are walking, along this difficult road of freedom and hope' (Mbeki 2004:xi). In many ways, the SADET series has been seen as the nearest thing to a complete history of the struggle against apartheid. Yet, in the first two volumes that have been

[3] See Ntsebeza, L., and Hall, R. (eds.) (2007).

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published, very little attention has been given to the countryside. For example, in the first volume, which focuses on the period between 1960 and 1970, only three of the 16 chapters deal with rural struggles. These are chapters by Zondi (2004); Matoti and Ntsebeza (2004); and Kayser and Adhikari (2004). The rest of the book focuses on urban struggles and those waged outside South Africa. The next volume, covering the period 1970 to 1980 had only two of its 17 chapters dealing with rural struggles. The first of these chapters is divided into two, with Part I by Ntsebeza et al. (2006) dealing with the Transkei and Ciskei, and Part II by Mbenga and Manson (2006) dealing with Bophuthatswana. The second chapter by Sithole (2006) dealt with KwaZulu.

What the above examples tell us, as already indicated, is that contemporary literature pays very little attention to conditions in the countryside in South Africa. Rural areas certainly do not receive a profile equal to their urban counterpart. This is even more ironic given that census after census in South Africa shows that rural areas are the regular home to almost fifty percent of South Africans (South Africa Info, 2010). This alone should be enough reason to stimulate scholarly interest on the countryside. Conditions in the rural areas are not insignificant and should be told again and again, as well as from multiple angles where possible.

A question that may arise given the above discussion is how to explain the marginalization of the rural. This question can best be answered by locating it within the political economy of South Africa, particularly the period following the discovery of gold in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The discovery of minerals, particularly gold, undoubtedly accelerated capitalist development in South Africa. Mining demanded cheap labour. At the time, the vast majority of the indigenous people of South Africa had already been conquered and restricted to tiny reserves which, in terms of the Natives Land Act of 1913, the first land law of the newly established Union of South Africa, comprised about seven percent of South Africa's land surface. Landlessness and limited access to land by the indigenous people was used by colonialists as a lever to compel the former into the labour market, initially as migrant workers. This spelt a death knell to any possibilities of establishing black African farmers.[4] Colin Bundy's book,

[4] This is by now a familiar account of the political economy of South Africa going back to studies by Wolpe (1972), Bundy (1988), Mafeje (1988), to cite a few.

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The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry (1988), is by far the best known work that tells the story of the rise and decline of black African farmers. This was followed years later by the work of Charles van Onselen, *The Seed is Mine* (1996), which essentially is about sharecropping in South Africa and how it was systematically done away with as part and parcel of efforts to discourage black African agriculture. The role of land as a livelihood strategy became less important. The growth of the manufacturing sector, especially after the Second World War and the decline of agricultural activities in the rural areas of the former reserves (later Bantustans), shifted the focus in terms of both economic and political activities to urban areas. This by and large is one of the main explanations for the marginalisation of the rural areas.

The above, however, should not be interpreted to mean that there were no activities and struggles in the rural areas. Indeed, the system in the rural areas of the former reserves never collapsed to the point where there was a situation where there was no longer any demand for land. Most importantly, the decline in agricultural production, including livestock production, was gradual and protracted. Ntsebeza's research in the former Xhalanga district in the Eastern Cape shows that the descendants of a targeted group of progressive African farmers in this district continued with the legacy of their parents and grandparents well into the 1960s (see Ntsebeza 2006). These descendants, though, were not immune to the rise of capitalism and the growing importance of the cash economy. They would spend their youthful lives in urban areas as migrant workers. But they would return home to the reserves, and take over from and/or assist their parents and embark on a land-based life style. It is by and large this group that reacted militantly against the Betterment Scheme when it was implemented from the 1940s onward. Land mattered and was an important source of livelihood. This is the backdrop within which the rural struggles that culminated in the Mpondo revolts should be located.

Over time, we argue, the role of land as a significant means of livelihood took a sharp decline. It is not possible to trace the origins of this rapid decline. More systematic research needs to be conducted in this regard. In his research on Xhalanga, Ntsebeza points to a number of factors that could explain the decline. For him, the main factor was the shortage of land in the rural areas of the former Bantustans, which was exacerbated by the growing population in these areas. Apart from natural population growth, congestion in rural areas was made worse by

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the influx of people who were evicted from white-claimed farms when farmers started to mechanise. Additionally, the apartheid government vigorously implemented provisions of the Natives' Land Act of 1913 which identified so-called black spots, that is, land that was occupied by black Africans outside the reserves as defined in the 1913 Land Act. This led to the notorious forced removals that led to the establishment of the Surplus People Project (Platzky and Walker 1985). The failure of the Betterment Scheme to maintain the basic infrastructure, including the fencing of grazing land, made it almost impossible for those who had fields for cultivation to grow crops. As one interviewee once remarked in a conversation with Ntsebeza: '*Silimela impahla*' (we grow crops for livestock). In other words, the tiny minority who had land, however limited, could not use it for growing crops. Ntsebeza's research shows that, by the 1980s, fields for the production of crops were being reduced to grazing land for the whole village. Under such circumstances, the rational thing to do for many rural people was to embark on other forms of livelihood.

Ironically, the apartheid system, one of whose main objectives was retribalisation through laws such as the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951 and the Self-Government Act of 1959, opened up avenues that would reduce the importance of land in the livelihood of villagers in the former Bantustans. The self-government of the former Bantustans created a need for the bureaucracy to be administered by black Africans who were classified as belonging to the Bantustan concerned. The jobs that emanated from this were non-agricultural. They were mainly clerical and professional (police, teachers, nurses, etc.) and included replacing white officials who were working in the Bantustans. Compared to the drudgery of agricultural life, these were lucrative jobs. This development led to the growth of schools, particularly high schools, producing the professionals needed to run the Bantustan bureaucracy (Southall 1982). Parents in rural areas ended up sending their children to schools where they would learn to make a living in non-agricultural activities. Agriculture as a school subject gradually disappeared from the school curriculum from the 1970s on.[5] Hyden (1986: 685) has made a similar observation. According to him, education 'continues to play havoc with attempts to improve agricultural performance in Africa … peasant household labour is alienated from farm work, because formal

[5] See Ntsebeza (2006) for a discussion of these developments in Xhalanga.

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education is generally regarded as a certificate to engage in off-farm employment."

Current scholarship, which marginalises the rural as pointed out at the outset, and government policies until very recently, seem to have been influenced by the above trend which scholars such as Bryceson (2000) has dubbed de-agrarianisation. Regarding government policies, after all these years of South Africa's democracy, the ANC-led government was, until very recently, still grappling with a rural development strategy. The land reform programme is a dismal failure. This is despite the fact that in the ANC's 1994 election manifesto, the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), land reform was identified as key for rural development.[6] However, we would argue that the recent economic and financial crises paint a bleak picture of the ability of the urban sector to absorb its labour force. It is thus not surprising that arguably for the first time since the inception of democracy in South Africa, the government appears to be taking rural areas more seriously than before. In the run up to, during, and after the ANC's national conference held in Polokwane in December 2007, rural development has featured prominently. Following this conference, and after the 2009 national and provincial election, rural development and land reform is now one of the top five priorities of the ANC-led government under President Jacob Zuma. That a new Ministry of Rural Development and Land Reform has been established after the 2009 election might be an indication of how seriously the question of land and rural development are being taken by the current administration.

There is every reason to argue that the two developments highlighted above, the current economic and financial crises, as well as the government's prioritization of rural development and land reform will once again call upon researchers and scholars to put research on these areas back on the agenda. When, rather than if, this happens, the rural struggles which culminated in the Mpondo revolts would assume new meaning and significance. At the heart of the struggles of the 1950s and early 1960s was the establishment of Tribal Authorities under the control of unelected and thus unaccountable chiefs who were an extended arm of the apartheid government. We are currently witnessing a similar development in the countryside of the former Bantustans. Apartheid-era Tribal Authorities have been resuscitated and form the

[6] See the various chapters in the volume edited by Ntsebeza and Hall (2007).

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basis of what are now called Traditional Councils. What is interesting is that these Councils resemble the Tribal Authorities in the sense that the majority of its members, sixty percent, are made up of unelected members made up of chiefs and their appointees (see Ntsebeza 2006). Unpublished research conducted by Ntsebeza shows that there are already tensions in some rural areas of Xhalanga over the establishment of these Councils. How these tensions would work themselves out, time will tell. What we can say for now is that a volume such as this one would be informative and an excellent starting and reference point for current and future research on South Africa's countryside.

About the Book

As editors we see this collection as a significant attempt to consolidate different works on the Mpondo revolts. In particular, we hope to encourage a broader understanding of issues that have tended to evoke confusion and debate among those who have interest in these revolts. These issues include, but are not limited to, the causes of the revolts; the broader political context in which they occurred; the organizational backing of the rebellion; the leadership behind the revolts; writings on the subject; and local beliefs, modus operandi and the role of the apartheid government. To accomplish this we have divided the book into three sections: contextual aspects of the revolts and the revolts themselves; their rural and urban connections; and the meanings and significance of the revolts.

The Context and the Revolts

This section opens with a chapter by Lungisile Ntsebeza which situates the Mpondo revolts in the broader context of the popular struggles against colonialism and apartheid. He argues in his chapter that the rural struggles of the late 1950s and 1960s were a culmination of struggles against systematic colonial and apartheid policies that were developed to deal with the 'Native question' throughout South Africa. Like many other authors, Ntsebeza traces the local rebellion in Pondoland to popular responses resulting from dissatisfaction with the introduction of rehabilitation schemes and Bantu Authorities by the state, in Eastern Pondoland and beyond. He notes that there was resistance to these policies as early as the 1940s outside Eastern Pondoland and that it is much later, in the late 1950s, that resistance shifted to Eastern

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Pondoland. Ntsebeza also reflects on possible external influences, in particular the role of two political organisations and urban influences in these rural struggles. Regarding political organisations, he focuses on the All African Convention (ACC) and the African National Congress (ANC), concluding that while these organizations did have links with local leaders of resistance in all the areas where this happened, including the Mpondo revolts, the struggles themselves were primarily driven by people who were directly affected by the policies of rehabilitation and Bantu Authorities. In this chapter, Ntsebeza places the agency of villagers in the foreground.

The third chapter by Jimmy Pieterse presents the historiography of the Mpondo revolts through a careful analysis of written sources. In particular, the chapter analyses the contributions and shortcomings of archives; mainstream Afrikaans and English newspapers; political newsletters/magazines; and student theses and other academic writing, over a period of 50 years. Pieterse argues that understanding the patterns of writing is essential to understanding the continued significance of the revolt. He considers early efforts by liberal historians to approach the revolt from a scholarly perspective, as well as the notable silence of Afrikaner nationalist historians in a highly fraught political climate. He continues to show how revisionist and social historians continued to build upon the work of liberal historians through close attention to issues of political economy. More recently, Pieterse contends, cultural historians have added to the literature through examinations of the importance of witchcraft (see Redding, 1996) and attempts to explicate how local people made sense of a time of political and social upheaval. Pieterse argues that scholars have generally agreed that the implementation of Bantu Authorities and rehabilitation policies were at the heart of the revolt. However, other aspects of their interpretations vary markedly, he contends. These disparities illuminate broader political and cultural contests over understandings of the revolt by showing how the revolt fits within a variety of ideological and scholarly frameworks. He concludes that the malleability of the meanings of the Mpondo Revolts has ensured its centrality in South African political culture.

In the fourth chapter, Allison Drew examines Govan Mbeki's writings on the Mpondo revolts. The chapter begins with a discussion of Mbeki's early childhood and schooling, his politicization, and his interest in writing as a means of education and political propaganda. It then discusses Mbeki's research for his study of the Mpondo uprisings,

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including his sources and methodology, and offers a critical evaluation of his arguments and findings in light of other perspectives at the time and of subsequent research. Drew argues that Mbeki drew on his close examination of the Mpondo rebellion, as well as his contact with some of its leaders, to contribute to the reshaping of political thinking about rural protest within ANC's military wing, *uMkhonto Wesizwe* (spear of the nation), otherwise known as the MK. However, she explains, this strategy was never implemented due to the subsequent arrest of key leaders in the early 1960s. The chapter also contains rich material on various aspects of the revolts to provide an illuminating context of rural strugglers in general.

In his chapter, William Beinart contends that there is very little evidence in the literature about the individual experiences and political trajectories of the leaders of the revolt. While agreeing with other writers concerning its limited involvement, he seeks to expand the evidence for ANC influence during some phases of the revolt. His chapter is based on the particular perspective of Leonard Mdingi and Anderson Ganyile who both are from Bizana, the epicentre of the revolt. The interviews took place in 1982 and Beinart remained in touch with them on subsequent occasions. He shows how these two played a role in linking the ANC to the rebels, and advising the leadership of the movement. Beinart believes that they provide a vantage point of intermediaries, as they were both in frequent touch with the rebels and thus closely aware of their concerns. While he says he does not cover all of the points that they discussed in the interviews, he believes Ganyile and Mdingi's memories provide some insight, still lacking in the published material, into the political issues and preoccupations of 1960. They tell us something about the language, the local political processes and the networks involved in the revolt. He emphasizes that they did not claim the revolt for the ANC and its political allies, but to a greater extent than most recent academic writing, they underlined the links between the rebels and nationalist movements.

It is curious to note that the role of the All African Convention or Unity Movement and its affiliates/offshoots hardly features in these interviews (see Ntsebeza's chapter in this volume). It is difficult to imagine that the two interviewees were unaware of the involvement of these organizations, particularly by the time they were interviewed. This might say something about the nature of South Africa's liberation politics and its sectarianism.

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The first section of the book concludes with a chapter by Fred Hendricks and Jeff Peires. In this sixth chapter, the authors explore some of the reasons why Eastern Pondoland was a hotbed of resistance against Bantu Authorities and Betterment planning, even though these government measures were introduced in all of Transkei, including Western Pondoland. Their particular concern is to try and explain the quiescence in Western Pondoland. They suggest that Western Pondoland did not experience the same scale of revolts as in the case of Eastern Pondoland because the timing and terms of annexation for the two regions were different. In the East the paramount chieftaincy was contested, while it was not in the West. At the same time, the West's paramount chief, Victor Poto Ndamase, was more aggressive in his collaboration with the state compared to his Eastern counterpart. In addition to explaining these differences, the chapter presents a rich history of the implementation of rehabilitation and Bantu Authorities in Western Pondoland.

The Rural in the Urban

The second section of the book reflects on direct and indirect influences of the Mpondo revolts on migrant workers from Pondoland. The question could be phrased thus: 'How did the Mpondo rebellion of the 1950s and 1960s impact on the politics and organizational abilities of Mpondo migrant workers in the urban areas?' Phrasing the question this way is important given the influence of modernization which views the rural (traditional) as 'backward' and the urban as 'progressive'. The logic of modernization suggests a linear approach where the rural learn from the urban and not vice versa. Two chapters in this volume explode this myth and clearly show how the rural influence of the Mpondo revolts enhanced the organizational capacity of trade unionists and activists in urban areas who became leaders in their own right. The chapter by Dunbar Moodie, with Hoyce Phundulu, is based on Moodie's interviews with Hoyce Phundulu, a Mpondo migrant worker who became one of the founding leaders of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), the biggest affiliate of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). In this chapter, Phundulu explicitly declares that his activism was influenced by observing the Mpondo Revolts as a child. In the narrative, Phundulu traces the difficult struggle of getting workers in the mines to support unionization, as well as the resilience that the leaders had to show in light of aggressive attempts

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by those in power to crush the initiative. Even though Phundulu was too young to participate in the rebellion itself, Moodie explains, he believes that it was as Mpondo that he learned that 'life must be respected by all.'

The chapter by Ari Sitas focuses on the Mpondo Revolts' devastating consequences for an already declining 'reserve' economy, and how, for the already disadvantaged in terms of land holdings and cattle, the immediate aftermath of the rebellion spelled hunger and rapid proletarianisation. Sitas explores how the rebellion and its '(re)construction' has endured within the imagination of the men and women who left the villages looking for jobs to rebuild their homesteads after the 1960–63 normalization and repression. He is concerned with how the experience of the revolt has been transcribed to be used in new ways in the interstices of industrial KwaZulu-Natal. Given that this issue has not been the focus of previous research, he relies on many years of observations, interactions and interviews with six migrant workers from Pondoland who worked in Durban factories, including, among others, Themba Alfred Qabula, a well-known poet and union activist.

Meanings and Significance of the Mpondo Revolts

In the fifty years since the rebellion in Pondoland was crushed by the apartheid government more information has come to the fore in terms of what this event meant then and means today, as well as its wider significance, both to local people and other concerned parties. As should be expected, the meanings and significance of this event vary widely. Different people read different things from what occurred fifty years earlier. An excellent example of how the past may be used or misused revolves around an episode in 2000, where a number of traditional leaders from Pondoland had gathered in Qawukeni, the great place of the Eastern Pondoland king, to protest against the municipal boundary demarcation affecting the areas in which they have jurisdiction. According to Daily Dispatch (2000), speaker after speaker warned government against enforcing this new policy in Pondoland. The Daily Dispatch quoted Chief Mwelo Nonkonyana of the Congress of Traditional Leaders in South Africa (Contralesa) as threatening that if the government wanted to see what he termed 'rural revolution', it should go ahead with the proposed demarcation. The Daily Dispatch quoted Chief Nonkonyana in these terms: 'But if we want to see peace prevailing in this area, let all the Pondo tribal authorities remain as

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they are, because Pondos by nature are inseparable from their paramount chief.' In all of this, the various speakers invoked the Mpondo rebellion of the 1950s and 1960s. What is ironic about the traditional leaders' invocation of the revolts in Pondoland is the fact that at the heart of the uprising in the 1950s and 1960s was the rejection of Bantu Authorities, which made chiefs junior partners in the apartheid system. These shifting meanings, contestations and understandings of the Mpondo Revolts are reflected in some of the writings on the uprising over the last five decades and are also captured in this volume.

In her chapter, Diana Wylie asks: 'What did the shootings at Ngquza Hill destroy, and what did they achieve?' She was prompted by a chance discovery of a list of 12 people who were admitted for gunshot wounds (from the shootings of the 6th of June 1960 at Ngquza Hill) at Holy Cross Hospital, Lusikisiki, Pondoland. Drawing from a number of sources, including the Commission of Enquiry that followed the Ngquza Massacre, she argues that the events at Ngquza Hill illustrate vividly the power of a shocking act of violence to destroy and to galvanize. She argues that what was lost were the traces of trust that had once characterized the paternalistic form of colonial government in the Transkei. What was gained, she argues, was a sense that people and organizations far beyond Eastern Pondoland – political movements, lawyers and international bodies like the United Nations, and other nations – might be of help. She concludes that in light of the massive social engineering to set up the Bantustans then being planned in Pretoria, the loss of trust was actually a gain in that Mpondo people gained pride in their ability to defy fiats from above.

Liana Müller's chapter analyses the role of the Ngquza Hill in influencing memories of the revolts. From the construction of the monument, to the reburial of people who were shot by security forces in June 1960, to local narrations of the rebellion, Müller reveals deep divisions among local people about what the revolts and Ngquza Hill mean to people today. These differences extend to local visions on how local people can and should benefit from the Ngquza Hill memorial.

Jonny Steinberg, in his chapter goes to the heart of the different meanings of the Mpondo revolts to ordinary Mpondo people today. He draws from the time he spent with a rural family in Lusikisiki between October 2005 and March 2007. The two family members, with whom he had conversations about the rebellion, had strong opinions about what those revolts mean today. This is despite the fact that they admitted that they were far removed from revolts – one was a teenager and away as a migrant worker, while the other one was not even born, when

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the revolts took place. They use the images of Botha Sigcawu's alleged betrayal of the Mpondo – by taking money and selling the land – metaphorically in reference to their own lives and fortunes. The images are also used to describe the fate of Mpondos collectively: as a defeated and dispossessed people who fail at collective action, and are thus unable to utilize their newfound freedom. Steinberg concludes that references to the revolts thus frame thoughts about collective loss, individual greed and break-up of community.

The chapter by Thembela Kepe uses the Mpondo revolts as a point of reference to try and understand why the rural Mpondo show discontent, and often violent reactions, to some outsider interventions affecting their livelihoods, but appear passive in some cases that to other observers deserve strong responses of disapproval. He uses the loss of land due to forced removals, and the subsequent faults in the land reform program, to illustrate that local people sometimes fight against what they think is unjust, but at times they do not fight, at least openly. Kepe shows that in cases where they fight for land rights, for example, the Mpondo Revolts are often evoked. On the other hand, the desire for jobs or wealth, and political blackmail, often result in people not fighting as strong as they could for their land rights.

Jacques De Wet in his chapter uses the Mpondo revolts as context to discuss contemporary resistance to imposed development in Eastern Pondoland. It follows the current conflict over proposed titanium mining in Bizana, the hotbed of the revolts in the late 1950s and 1960, showing how certain issues that were central to the revolts (land, consultation, representation by traditional authorities, etc.) are characteristic of current resistance against the mining that has received support from some government officials and politicians, with minimal consultation of villagers.

Looking Ahead

As much as we hope that this edited collection makes a significant contribution to a better understanding of the Mpondo revolts, and rural struggles in general, as well as what it means and signifies today, we are well aware that a lot more is missing in this volume. There are a few critical issues that have hardly been touched upon in this volume which may surprise the reader of a volume appearing in the twenty-first century. First, the role of and impact of women as well as youth in rural struggles in general and the Mpondo revolts in particular. It is

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unimaginable in this day and era that any analysis of societal issues and dynamics can be made without reference to these key social categories. Yet, the story of the revolts, even as represented here, is masculine in its narration, and barely touches on women and generational issues. There might be reasons for this bias, but these should be part of the analysis.

Equally, very little has been written about the role of informers in the liberation struggle in general. This volume also does not deal with this topic. Yet, the history of liberation will never be fully told without reference to the role of informers and the manner in which this had an impact not only on prolonging the liberation process, but on those who were detained, arrested and tortured, as well as the families and relatives of the informers and the families and relatives of those who suffered as a result of the activities of the informers. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) hearings provide a good platform to begin this kind of research.

Finally, but equally important, there is an urgent need to deepen research on the institution of traditional leadership and what Mamdani (1996) sees as the failure of post-colonial African governments to address the role of this institution in a post-colonial context. This path breaking work of Mamdani has had varied responses as can be illustrated by the two important books on this topic to have appeared in South Africa since the publication of Mamdani piece: Oomen (2005) and Ntsebeza (2006). One issue that, in our opinion, needs more research is the legitimacy of the institution of traditional leadership and its incumbents, with specific reference to whether it enjoys popular support among villagers or not. Most recently, Delius (2008) draws a distinction between the opposition to collaborating chiefs, on the one hand, and a temptation that this could mean the rejection of the institution of traditional leadership, on the other. He seems to suggest that opposition to these chiefly practises did not necessarily mean that villagers were/are opposed to the institution of traditional leadership. There is an urgent need to research this issue and back up such claims with credible evidence. As indicated earlier in this chapter, there are clear indications that there will be a return to the rural and these questions will inevitably crop up. At the heart of the issue is how possible it is to establish the popularity of chiefs and the institution of traditional leadership in a system that does not accommodate elections and where villagers are not provided with alternatives to choose from.

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PART I

ON THE REVOLTS

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CHAPTER TWO

RESISTANCE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE: THE MPONDO REVOLTS CONTEXTUALIZED

Lungisile Ntsebeza

Introduction

That the urban struggles which culminated with the Sharpeville massacres and the march in Langa in March 1960 could not overshadow the revolts in east Mpondoland in 1960, is clear testimony of the significance and popularity of the revolts. In fact, these revolts were sustained for a period longer than many urban struggles. The open resistance in 1960 lasted for about nine months and continued by other means well into the 1960s (see Kayser and Adhikari 2004). However, important as it is to acknowledge the popularity and protracted nature of the revolts in east Mpondoland, it is equally important to highlight that resentment to colonial and apartheid policies in the rural areas of the former Bantustans was not restricted only to east Mpondoland. They were fiercely contested in a number of areas in the former Bantustans of South Africa. Additionally, as will be seen below, east Mpondoland as a site of rural struggles came into the picture much later, towards the end of the 1950s. There were significant rural struggles before the revolt in east Mpondoland. Having said this, there is little doubt that the Mpondo revolts remain the most popular and enduring.

This chapter seeks to situate the Mpondo revolts within the broader context of popular rural struggles against colonialism and apartheid in South Africa. The chapter argues that in many ways the rural struggles of the late 1950s and early 1960s were a culmination of struggles against policies that were systematically developed to deal with the "Native question" going back to the colonial period, well before the advent of apartheid in 1948. Bantu Authorities, the immediate source of the rural revolts, which were introduced by the apartheid regime in 1951, as well as resistance to their introduction, thus built on foundations that were laid before the advent of apartheid. Viewed from this angle, the struggles were, contrary to what some scholars tend to allege, neither

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spontaneous nor parochial. While a case may be made about the isolated nature of these struggles from each other on a national scale, they were no doubt a calculated local response to policies that villagers found abhorrent. The policies themselves were the colonial response to the 'native question' and how, as Mamdani (1996) has observed, a tiny foreign minority could rule an indigenous majority. Worth noting though is that Tabata (1974) articulated this position well before Mamdani.[1] Chiefs, it must be said, played a critical role in the implementation of especially the apartheid policies. It is thus possible to argue that the resistance could also be seen as a rejection of those chiefs who collaborated with the apartheid system.

Finally, this chapter will consider the nature and character of the resistance, with specific reference to the issue of the driving force(s) behind the revolts. In this regard, the role played by political organisations will receive special attention. As will be seen in some of the chapters in this volume, the role of the ANC in particular in the revolts remains contentious. Additionally, the relationship between the urban and the rural will be explored against the backdrop of the urban influence on migrant workers and how this affected the organisation of the resistance. At the heart of this discussion is the question of the agency of the rural people.

The Rehabilitation/Betterment Scheme

There can be no doubt that the introduction of conservation measures in the rural areas of the former Bantustans is central to our understanding of rural resistance in South Africa. As early as the 1920s, the effects of overcrowding and overstocking arising out of restricting black Africans to Reserves totalling less than ten percent of the South African land surface were beginning to manifest themselves. This was mainly in the form of soil erosion. This issue became a subject of debate in the United Transkeian Territories General Council in the early 1930s.[2] At this meeting, Fred J. Kockott, the Chairman of the District Council of Xhalanga moved a 'Notice of Motion' aimed at 'combating the evils of soil erosion in particular and … improving the grade of

[1] More about Tabata later in the chapter.

[2] The account of Xhalanga is documented in detail in Ntsebeza (2006). This book was originally published by Brill Academic Publishers in Leiden in 2005.

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stock in the Native locations in these Territories and the pastoral conditions generally …' (Pim 1933:76). He pointed out that 'all classes of stock are increasing at a rate which has already burdened the commonages and further similar expansion of the numbers will be a calamity of the first importance.' He went further: 'Unfortunately our grazing grounds have not increased and I will prove that to-day they are already carrying twice their capacity' (Pim 1933:77). In the final analysis, Kockott argued that there was a need to 'frame legislation which would save the Natives' (Pim 1933:79). For Kockott, the natives would be saved by limiting their stock. Whether or not this legislation would indeed 'save the Natives' will be clear in the pages that follow.

The remarks by Kockott are a clear illustration of the damage done to land as a result of lumping black Africans in the reserves and making it extremely difficult for them to choose where to live. The extent of degradation depicted by Kockott above contrasts sharply to Sir Walter Stanford's observation of Xhalanga when abaThembu first settled there in 1865, about seventy years earlier:

> It had never been overpopulated or over-stocked and its condition after the seven years' rest was superb.[3] The pasturage was luxuriant everywhere. The forests were beautiful and mimosa trees were abundant in many a valley. With the grass so thick as to retain the rain water as it fell and allow it slowly to distil towards the main river channels there were no erosions of the soil and running streams and fountains were abundant in every part. Game had multiplied.[4] (1958:27).

The state's response to the state of affairs in the 1930s was two-fold. First, three land laws were promulgated in 1936, one of which was the Native Trust and Land Act. This Act established the South African Native Trust (SANT). The main purpose of the Trust was to purchase additional land which would increase the seven percent prescribed by the Natives Land Act of 1913 to 13 percent of the South African land surface. Three years later, the state embarked on a policy on conservation measures that were pretty much fashioned along the lines proposed by Kockott in 1933. Delius (2008) has argued that this policy, set out in Proclamation 31 of 1939, was also meant to guide the SANT. The policy became popularly known as 'betterment'. The other terms

[3] This refers to the period between the defeat of Sarhili in 1858 and the resettlement of abaThembu in 1865.

[4] The other areas covered by this description were the Fingoland districts of Butterworth, Nqamakwe, Tsomo and St Marks.

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used were reclamation or rehabilitation. Its key features were fencing, resettlements and stock limitation (Hendricks 1990; Chaskalson 1987; McAllister 1986; De Wet and McAllister 1983; Moll 1983).

The initial focus of Betterment was on stock control and improvement. This included rotational grazing, fencing of grazing land, improvement in the quality of stock, culling, regular dipping and promotion of department-sponsored cattle sales (Evans 1997:216). Already in 1937, even before Proclamation 31 of 1939 was issued, the Bhunga General Council took a decision to get rid of what they referred to as 'scrub bulls' (Bundy 1987: 268). Other soil preservation measures included the erection of contour banks to prevent soil erosion. By 1944, the government accepted that the Betterment Scheme had largely failed. Evans attributes this to lack of an 'intensive study' that would guide the implementation of this Scheme (1997:216). In that year, the Minister of Native Affairs announced a new programme referred to as 'A New Era of Reclamation'. In terms of this programme, closer settlements were established, meaning that areas targeted for Betterment would be divided into residential, arable and grazing portions (Evans 1997).

When the National Party came to power in 1948 and introduced apartheid, there were further shifts. The apartheid administration decided to embark on a more extensive, conservation system called 'stabilisation'. This followed the poor performance of Planning Committees which were set up in 1945. The shift to stabilisation was made in 1954, on the eve of the implementation of the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951 which set up, amongst others, the notorious Tribal Authorities which were at the centre of the rural revolts of the late 1950s and early 1960s. An important aspect of 'stabilisation' was that it dropped the controversial stock culling provision of previous policies (see Lodge 1983:262–268).

Reaction to the Betterment Scheme before the Introduction of Bantu Authorities

The first attempt to implement the Betterment Scheme was in the 1940s. The scheme was introduced to villagers by magistrates. They were apparently met with 'cold silence', which they interpreted as an endorsement of the scheme (Westaway 1997:23; see also Beinart 1984:81). The Magistrate of Xhalanga went to the extent of announcing

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in late 1942 that 'the majority of the headmen report that their people are in favour of the proposal'.[5] This was despite earlier fears that the Scheme would be rejected in Xhalanga, especially given the history of resistance against the District Council in the area.[6] However, the actual implementation of the scheme was delayed, largely due to the Second World War. According to Evans, the War 'brought the department's activities to a complete standstill in the reserves as resources and administrative personnel were diverted to the war effort' (1997:217). Serious efforts to implement the Betterment Scheme began soon after the end of the Second World War. According to Tabata, D.L. Smit, the then Secretary for Native Affairs, introduced the scheme to the Ciskeian General Council (iBhunga) in 1945. However, it is in the Transkei, in Butterworth, that the scheme was first implemented. This was in 1947.

Contrary to the optimism of the magistrates in the early 1940s about the acceptance of the scheme, there was resistance to its implementation. Stock-culling was by far the most unpopular provision of the Betterment Scheme. This measure affected virtually all social groups and classes in the countryside, be it landholders or the landless. Access to grazing land cut across social and class divide. The only requirement was membership of the community concerned. It is thus not surprising that the stock-culling measure met with fierce opposition from rural residents who were directly affected. According to Bundy, the stock-culling proposals, which were supported by iBhunga, were so unpopular that in 1946 half the members lost their seats (1987: 269). This however did not stop the colonial regime from implementing the rehabilitation scheme.

Most organised opposition to these measures in the Eastern Cape came through the Transkei Organised Bodies (TOB). The TOB was founded in 1943 and brought together a range of organisations (Bundy 1987: 270). Its General Secretary between 1943 and 1948 was Govan Mbeki, who was an ANC activist based in the Transkei at the time. According to Bundy, the TOB did not have a policy on the land question in its first two years of existence up to 1945 (1987: 270). However, the organisation could not avoid dealing with popular resistance to the Betterment Scheme when it met at its conference in 1946. At the time,

[5] Cape Archives, 1/XAA, 5/1/60. Letter to Chief Magistrate, dated 23 November 1942.
[6] See Ntsebeza (2006) for details.

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the ANC had no focus on land and rural areas as such. This was despite Govan Mbeki's efforts to convince the ANC about the importance of the countryside in the struggle for national liberation. As early as the 1930s and early 1940s, Mbeki observed that the ANC was 'politically in midnight slumber' (as quoted in Bundy 1987: 270). The militancy displayed by the TOB and the strategic role of Mbeki in the organisation did not do much to change the attitude of the ANC leadership towards rural areas. Mbeki continued to complain to Xuma, the ANC President at the time, that there were few ANC members 'in the Reserves and the problem of organisation is by no means easy …' (as quoted in Bundy 1987: 271).

Not surprisingly, the ANC had, by 1948, lost its grip on the TOB in favour of the All African Convention (AAC). This organisation, largely through its leader, I.B. Tabata, took the land question seriously. The AAC's initial response to the Betterment Scheme was through the publication of their own pamphlet, *The Rehabilitation Scheme: A New Fraud*, which according to Tabata, 'placed the scheme against the background of the whole 'Native Policy' of the rulers, with its system of laws for the regimentation of African labour' (1974: 68). Tabata, who in fact authored the pamphlet, following a tour of the Transkei in 1945, reasoned that fully implemented, the Scheme would render many families 'landless and driven out of the places of their birth' (ibid). Not only would the Scheme render rural residents landless, their stock would be radically reduced due to stock culling. Tabata's dramatic account deserves quoting:

> The stark facts showed that the people were suffering from malnutrition and the multitude of diseases traceable directly to sheer undernourishment, and the children were dying for lack of milk – all because of the shortage of stock. The few cattle themselves were dying from lack of grass. And the root of all this destitution of man and beast and the soil itself was *Land Hunger*. (1974: 68–9, emphasis in the original).

At the same time, Tabata and another AAC member, R.S. Canca, who died in August 2009 at e-Dutywa, where he lived and practised as a lawyer, conducted an extensive tour of the Transkei addressing a large number of meetings, presumably around the rehabilitation scheme that Tabata wrote about in 1945. By 1948, there was active opposition to this scheme in the Transkei and Ciskei. Tabata was actively involved in these struggles and was arrested (and subsequently acquitted) in Mt Ayliff in early 1948 for, according to him, 'inciting the people against the Rehabilitation Scheme' (1974: 70).

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The district of Mt Ayliff in the Eastern Cape showed early signs of opposition to the rehabilitation scheme as early as 1942. However, it is in 1947, after the district was designated as a rehabilitation area, that open resistance became manifest. According to Tabata, AmaXesibe in Mt Ayliff 'threatened to take up arms in defence of their stock' and the 'majority of the people repudiated their chief, who had accepted the Scheme'. Most significantly for purposes of this volume is Tabata's claim that amaXesibe 'held meetings in the hills under their newly-formed organisation, the Kongo' (1974: 70). This account seems to settle the long-debated issue about the use of the same term in east Mpondoland in 1960. As we indicate in the introduction, the origin and meaning of the term is still in dispute, even by some of the authors in this volume. Some suggest that the term referred to the ANC 'congress'.

There is little doubt about the influence of Govan Mbeki in this debate when he implied in his book that the term 'Kongo' in the context of Mpondoland referred to 'Congress' (1984: 120). This seems unlikely given, on the one hand, the almost passive role of the ANC towards rural issues and struggles and, on the other hand, the fact that the experience of nearby Mt Ayliff about 13 years earlier could have still been fresh amongst some in Mpondoland. Tabata's book was originally published in 1950, years before the Mpondo Revolts of 1960. It is important to note the contribution of Clifton Crais to the debate about the Congo movement. He has conducted archival research and analysed court records in reconstructing the emergence and growth of the 'Congo' movement (Crais 2002: 180–192). In many ways, his account corroborates that given by Tabata, which as shown above, was largely based on his own experiences as a political activist.

Opposition to the Scheme was not only restricted to Mt Ayliff. There seems to have been pockets of resistance in the Ciskei, too, as is attested by the following account by a delegate who reported about developments in Ciskei to the conference of the Non-European Unity Movement in 1948:

> To the cry of the people for more land, the Government can only answer with the so-called Rehabilitation Scheme, which confiscates their homesteads and reduces their cattle … The people are in desperate need of land and cattle. The people are kicking against this Rehabilitation Scheme. But in the fight they find their own headmen and chiefs and the Bungas ranged against them, as well as the Government officials. In their despair they resorted to violence against the officials who

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> carried out the Government order, failing to understand the real forces against them. At Kingwilliamstown three policemen were killed and as a result twelve men were condemned to death (as quoted in Tabata 1974: 69).

The delegate went on to report that having come to the conclusion that waging resistance from within Government-created institutions was not an option, '(t)he people have voluntarily formed Location Committees against their headmen and Bunga to assert their right to decide how they should own their land' (as quoted in Tabata 1974: 70).[7]

Tabata cites a number of other places where there was resistance to the Scheme: eDutywa, where people 'cut down the fences', followed by 'a number of arrests'; protests against a chief in Mpondoland; threats of armed struggle in Peddie; protests against dipping tanks in Sheshegu, as well as anti-Rehabilitation Scheme struggles in Debenek, Middledrift and Bessishoek Reserve in Harrismith, OFS (1974: 70). Crais, on his part, notes that there has been 'throughout the twentieth century … near-constant conflict over a variety of rural "betterment" policies' in Qumbu (2002: 165–6). He traces the origins of protest and resistance in this area to the killing of a local magistrate, Hamilton Hope at the beginning of the 1880s.

This section has dealt with popular reaction to the introduction and implementation of the Betterment Scheme in the period up to the introduction of Bantu Authorities under the apartheid regime. Most of the resistance took place in the Transkei and Ciskei. This is not surprising given that it is in these former Bantustans that the Scheme was tested. It is notable that not much has been written about what the situation was in Mpondoland in this period, not even by Hendricks and Peires in this volume. Tabata who would later be interested in developments in Mpondoland in the 1960s (see Kayser and Adhikari 2004) barely writes about Mpondoland. His focus at the time was emaXesibeni (Mt Ayliff), which disappears from the radar during the resistance against Bantu Authorities. More research needs to be done on South Africa's countryside to help us understand and explain these lacunas.

[7] It would be important to follow up the claims made by the delegate, particularly the killing of the police and the subsequent sentencing of the accused to death. Pressures of time make it difficult to do so in this chapter.

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Bantu Authorities and Popular Responses

The establishment of Tribal Authorities in terms of the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951, with chiefs as the extended arm of the apartheid regime, deepened and geographically extended resistance to the Betterment Scheme. In the aftermath of the Second World War, the South African white political parties were faced with the challenge of what to do with the reserves, as they were then called. The debate was to a large extent sparked by the rise of manufacturing, with its demand for a stable, semi-skilled and skilled labour force. Hitherto, migrant labour was the dominant system. Posel has argued that capitalists 'took strong exception to the migrant labour system, adjudged to be the root cause of the labour turnover and low productivity which beset the manufacturing sector' (Posel 1991:12). In response to this pressure, the Smuts government established the Fagan Commission in 1946. Its February 1948 report, published on the eve of the 1948 election, made proposals for the stabilisation of African labour in the towns which, as Davenport puts it, 'meant encouraging workers to bring their families with them' (1987:344). As Hendricks pointed out, the United Party's notion was that the migrant labour system would be systematically phased out in favour of a settled and stable African labour force in urban areas and an equally settled peasantry in the rural areas of the reserves (1990:125).

At more or less the same time as the Smut's government released its report, the National Party brought out its own report too, the Sauer Commission Report. The report reaffirmed the migrant labour system and categorically recommended that the reserves be consolidated, and a separate political system for Africans be established (Davenport 1987:357).[8] It even went so far as to suggest the establishment of ethnic 'national homes' in the reserves (Evans 1997:251). The National Party adopted this report in 1948, just prior to the election.

When the National Party came to power, the Sauer Report formed the basis of its apartheid policy. The Bantu Authorities Act, which established Tribal, Regional and Territorial Authorities, thus became a crucial piece of legislation in the establishment of a separate political system for Africans. Verwoerd, at the time Minister of Native Affairs, was determined to push ahead with his programme of 'stabilisation'

[8] See also Hindson 1987.

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(saving the soil) and 'rehabilitation'. In the final analysis, Verwoerd won. This meant that the National Party rejected the core report of the Tomlinson Commission, which sought to transform reserves into viable centres for small scale agriculture, at the same time, creating job opportunities for those who did not have an interest in land in the rural areas. This was despite the fact that at the time, as Delius notes, the population in the communal areas was growing as a result of the tightening of the influx control measures, forced removals and large-scale movement of people from white farms (2008: 228). The consequence of this was overcrowding resulting in reducing the size of allotments, with limited land available for cultivation and grazing.

The rejection of the Tomlinson recommendations thus set the stage for the implementation of the 1951 Bantu Authorities Act, which was achieved with the publication of Proclamation 180 of 1956. Traditional authorities and headmen were roped in as the extended arm of the apartheid government and were given greater administrative powers than during the segregation period. Their main function, as Evans put it, was 'to contain and discipline the reserve army of African labour: those Africans prevented by law from departing to the urban areas, the "idle or disorderly" evicted from the urban areas, and the "excess labour" skimmed off the white farming areas' (1997:260).[9] According to Hendricks, 'the state's policy was transformed from a stated commitment to "saving the soil" to an attempt to reinvigorate tribalism in the reserves as a cooptive device bringing African chiefs and headmen into the local machinery of government' (1990:122).

The role of chiefs in the implementation of the Bantu Authorities Act needs elaboration. Prior to the advent of apartheid, chiefs *qua* chiefs, were not accorded official recognition in rural local government. This was particularly the case in the Eastern Cape, where chiefs led wars against colonialists. When they were defeated, colonialists marginalised them. In cases such as Xhalanga, the two chiefs in the area, Stokwe and Gecelo, were dethroned of their chieftaincy as punishment for participating in the 1880–1 Gun War against colonialists. This has led scholars such as Hammond-Tooke to come to the conclusion that prior to the introduction of Tribal Authorities, some chiefs managed to

[9] See also Hendricks (1990). To ensure that unemployed Africans were restricted to the reserves, the National Party adopted the Unemployment Labour Preference Policy (ULPP). This policy was meant to serve both as a measure to curb African urbanisation and at the same time act as a social and political control over the youth problem (Posel 1991:131).

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maintain a degree of legitimacy amongst their people largely because they were not associated with government policies, including the Betterment Scheme in the period before apartheid. In fact, we have seen above that it is the Bhunga that was associated with the Betterment Scheme.

It would, however, be misleading to suggest that chiefs were not seen as important agents in colonial rule. Tabata's insights on the evolution of the Native Policy are useful in this regard. I have already remarked in the introduction of this chapter about the fact that what is often attributed to Mamdani in current scholarship was articulated by Tabata decades earlier. For Tabata, control 'of the subjugated Africans… occupied the minds of the rulers ever since the early stages of the military conquest'. He traces the development of this policy back to the early part of the nineteenth century and recalls:

> It was Dr Philip, the Liberal-Missionary, Superintendent-General of the London Missionary Society, and the most far-sighted agent of British rule in his time, who more than anyone else clearly formulated what was subsequently to be known as the 'Native Policy'. He posed the problem in this manner: 'We have conquered some of the tribes in the Cape Colony, but the problem is how to govern them. We have to annex the territory up to the tropics. We have to establish a system of civil administration. For this we need the chiefs' (1974: 79).

Later Dr Philip complained about the delay in implementing this policy in these terms: 'Had a few of the chiefs been subsidised by having small salaries allowed to them, we might by this time (1843) have had the affairs of Kaffirland in our own hands.'[10]

Another supporter of indirect rule through chiefs was Lieutenant-Governor Andries Stockenstrom, 'an Afrikaner who had come to an understanding with Dr Philip on the question of Native Policy' (Tabata 1974: 79). Stockenstrom wrote this to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: 'I believe that every measure tending to lower the importance of the chiefs is calculated to weaken the hold we have on the people' (quoted in Tabata 1974: 79–80). On another occasion he came back to the topic:

> Let us gain the confidence of the chiefs and they, with the power of the Government and the efforts of the missionaries will influence the masses

[10] This is a quote that Tabata attributes to W.M. Macmillan. *Bantu, Boer and Briton*. There is no page reference, neither are there details of the publisher and date of publication.

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> … These two forces combined (i.e. Church and Government) will not civilize unless they make the native chiefs *the principal levers in the operations on their people* (quoted in Tabata 1974: 80).[11]

Most scholars, including Mamdani, trace the project of 'indirect rule' through chiefs in South Africa to Theophilus Shepstone in the British Colony of Natal. Yet, it is clear from Tabata's account that similar thoughts were entertained by colonialists in the Cape too.

Although the system of rural local government in the reserves of the Cape took the form of the headman system and District Councils (*iBhunga*), some chiefs participated in this system of local government, although not in their capacity as chiefs (see, for example, Hendricks and Peires in this volume). Colonialists, it seems, regarded chiefs as important in their rule. From the 1930s, according to Delius, 'many chiefs found themselves under increasing pressure from the colonial state and this placed increasing strain on their relationships with their subjects' (2008: 225). In the case of Xhalanga, despite being dethroned as a chief, Gecelo and his descendants were involved in local government as headmen from the outset of colonial rule in that district. In the wake of the resistance against the Betterment Scheme, some colonial government officials, according to Delius (2008: 228), began 'to rethink the role of chiefs'. Already in 1945, before the National Party came to power in 1948, state ethnologist, N.J. van Warmelo, was urging the state to rope in chiefs in the implementation of its policies. For Tabata, chiefs were important in the policy of 'divide and rule' so as to 'recreate the old conditions of tribal antagonisms' (1974: 78). The introduction of Tribal Authorities and the recognition of chiefs was thus the culmination of processes that can be traced back to the British colonies of both Natal and the Cape.

Tribal Authorities created conditions for chiefs to be less accountable to their people. They also made it difficult for chiefs to maintain an ambiguous and ambivalent relationship with the apartheid rulers. Initially, according to Delius (2008), some chiefs were opposed to the system as they feared loss of popular legitimacy on their part. But others were very much supportive, as they were begging for recognition all the time. The system was vicious with those chiefs who were not supportive. They were either marginalised or replaced often by

[11] Emphasis in the original. The source for this quote is Andries Stockenstrom: Autobiography). I could not get the full citation of this autobiography.

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junior chiefs. The case of Paramount Chief Sabata Dalindyebo in the Transkei provides a good illustration of how difficult it was to fight the system from within, on the one hand, and the ruthlessness of the system, if you were critical of it. In the end, Sabata was stripped of his Paramount Chieftainship and forced to flee to exile where he died (see Ntsebeza 2006; Ntsebeza and Ndletyana 2009).

Attempts to impose Bantu Authorities led to waves of revolts in the 1950s and early 1960s. In many ways, resistance against Bantu Authorities was an extension of the struggles against the Betterment Scheme going back, as shown above, to the early 1940s. Apart from the resistance of the 1940s discussed above, there was organised resistance against the Rehabilitation Scheme in Zoutspansberg and Witzieshoek in the early 1940s and 1950s. The consolidation of the scheme by the apartheid regime made the reaction to Bantu Authorities even stronger. Organisations such as the TOB combined the struggle against Bantu Authorities with campaigns rejecting the introduction of Bantu Education in 1953. Geographically, the struggles spread to other parts of the country, for example, Zeerust, Sekhukhuniland and Zululand.[12] Most recently, Ntsebeza (2006) has written about rural resistance in the former Xhalanga district of Transkei which culminated in the burning of huts in one of the villages in what people in the area refer to as *Tshisa, Tshisa* (burn, burn).

Resistance against Bantu Authorities drew responses even from movements that did not have an overt political agenda at inception. One such movement is Makhuluspan, established in Tsolo and Qumbu as a reaction to stock theft in these areas in the 1950s. As Hammond-Tooke notes, the movement later adapted 'its functions in the direction of more directly political action' by opposing collaborating chiefs and headmen (1975: 106–7).[13] Rural struggles continued into the early 1960s, including a daring attempt by migrant workers in Cape Town to assassinate Paramount Chief KD Matanzima in his great place, Qamata (Lodge 1983: 283–8).

What the above shows is that resistance against colonial and apartheid policies in the rural areas of the former Bantustans had a long history and was geographically widespread. The revolts in east

[12] See chapters by Zondi (2004); Matoti and Ntsebeza (2004). For Sekhukhuneland, see Delius (1996).

[13] See also Crais 2002: Chapter 6. I am grateful to one of the blind reviewers for drawing my attention to this movement.

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Mpondoland can thus be best understood within this context. Having said this, though, there is, as already indicated in the introduction, no dispute that the best known of these struggles and the one that was sustained over a much longer period than others was the Mpondo revolts in 1960, the focus of this volume.

Who were the Forces behind the Revolts?

An issue that arises which is a source of contestation and is likely to be debated and contested for years to come is about the driving force(s) behind the rural struggles. More specifically, the issue here is about the agency of the rural residents weighed against external interventions, both in the form of political organisations and/or urban influence. There are those who argue that political parties, particularly the AAC and the ANC, were behind the revolts, while others contend that the resistance was spearheaded by the rural residents and their own leaders. I caution in this chapter against dichotomising the resistance in either/or terms. The best way of understanding struggles in general is through a closer understanding and analysis of the intricate processes and their interconnections. As far as the rural struggles in South Africa are concerned, it is important to take into account not only the role of political parties, but the urban connection as well.

The two most prominent political organisations that deserve discussion are undoubtedly the AAC and the ANC. Both organisations had their own affiliates and alliances, for example, the Transkeian Organised Bodies (TOB) for the AAC and the Communist Party regarding the ANC. As has already been indicated, the rural political scene from the 1940s to the late 1950s was, according to existing evidence, dominated by the AAC. As Bundy has noted, the ANC 'had never – since its formation in 1912 – established an effective presence in the Transkei' (1987: 255). The same could be said about the ANC in other rural parts of South Africa. The one thing that cannot be forgotten is the role of Govan Mbeki. His main organisational base was the TOB which was initially influenced by the ANC, but later swung to the AAC as an affiliate. However, we have seen from Mbeki's complaint to Xuma that the ANC did not take rural issues seriously. But it must be noted that the ANC was generally weak as an organisation in the 1930s and early 1940s. According to Walshe, it 'had lost its pre-eminence in African politics' and could not, for example, provide 'the organisation

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and leadership to co-ordinate opposition' to the 1935 Native 'Hertzog Bills' (Walshe 1987:119).

However, the above changed with the establishment of the ANC Youth League in 1943. The Youth League transformed the ANC from the moribund organisation of the 1930s to a militant movement. According to Simons and Simons, the Youth League called for non-collaboration, boycotts and a programme of action, 'and related its demand for equality and freedom to a vision based on traditional African values adjusted to the conditions of an industrial society' (1983:546). Its foremost spokesperson and first elected president was Muziwakhe Lembede. However, the Youth League's appeal to African nationalism was, despite its appeal to the pre-colonial past, not about a romantic return to tribalism. According to Lembede: 'Only a few dwarfish, stunted and antiquated individuals still cling tenaciously to tribalism' (quoted in Nash 1998:10). When the ANC Youth League adopted its 'basic policy' in 1948, it declared tribalism to be 'the mortal foe of African Nationalism', and called for a 'relentless war' on it (Karis and Carter 1979:330).[14] The militancy of the Youth League culminated in the adoption of a 'programme of action' in July 1949. The programme, inter alia, rejected 'segregation, apartheid, trusteeship and white leadership' (Simons and Simons 1983:602).

Noteworthy for this chapter is that the programme did not specify the Youth League's policy on the rural areas of the reserves. It is thus not surprising that when members of the Youth League became members of the ANC in the 1950s, the focus on the countryside was still missing. Although the Freedom Charter that was adopted in 1955 by the Congress Movement, which included the ANC, had a clause on the land question, this was never followed through.

Unlike the ANC, the AAC, as could be observed from the activities of Tabata outlined above, had a clearer policy on the reserves. During its initial years following its establishment in 1935, the focus of the AAC was the franchise. But this was to change in 1943, when radicals in the Workers' Party took over the AAC.[15] The Workers' Party was critical of the AAC policy, in particular, its silence on the land question. For them the land question was the heart of South Africa's social struggle. Tabata was one of its leading figures. They argued that Africans

[14] See also Nash (1999:10).

[15] The Workers' Party was a union of Troskyists in Cape Town and Johannesburg (Drew 2000:145).

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were predominantly a landless peasantry which could be mobilised for social revolution on the issue of land hunger. In the same year, the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM) was formed as a united front of 'non-white' organisations. The NEUM based its unity on a principled acceptance of non-collaboration and its Ten Point Programme. This programme linked the land question with South Africa's other socio-economic and political problems (Drew 1991:464).

Against this background, it is understandable why Tabata was so deeply involved in the rural struggles of the 1940s, after the introduction of the Betterment Scheme. As already shown, there was a flurry of activities in the Transkei in the 1940s, most linked to the activities of the AAC and TOB. Simons and Simons, it must be said, questioned the activist role of Tabata. They have argued that Tabata, together with Kies and Gool[16] 'dissipated their energies on denunciations of militants outside their ranks and turned "non-collaboration" into a synonym for inactivity' (1983:546). The activism of Tabata, though, as shown in the discussion above suggests that these allegations were exaggerated.

The above argument about the prominent role of the AAC over the ANC holds true for the period up to the late 1950s, the eve of the rural revolts which culminated with the Mpondo revolts. Archival records show that on the eve of the revolts, there was a definite shift in favour of the ANC. This shift is most evident in Xhalanga, where activists such as Mavandla Ntwana, who was associated with the AAC in 1958, re-emerged at the end of 1959 as an activist of the ANC (Ntsebeza 2006).

A question that forces itself on us is how to account for the demise of the influence of the AAC, however limited, and the emergence of the ANC. A widely held perception was that the AAC was essentially an organisation of intellectuals whose primary focus was political analysis, which was often polemical, and without any serious attempt to establish a mass base (see Simons and Simons 1983:546). Some scholars did not regard the AAC as an activist organisation, especially outside the Transkei. Lodge alleges that the activities of the AAC took the form of pamphleteering, holding public meetings and offering legal aid for those who ended up in court (Lodge 1983:87). This view of the AAC seems to get support from Sobantu Mlonzi, a former member of

[16] These were prominent members of the Non-European Unity Movement, together with Tabata.

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the Society of Young Africans (SOYA), the youth wing of the Unity Movement. These were his critical observations about the AAC/Unity Movement when I interviewed him:

> I was getting conscious that the Unity Movement was not at grassroots level, excluding what they did in Phondoland, of which I do not know, but otherwise, it was a paper organisation. If the Unity Movement had been consistent, it should have been part of the earth moving, epoch events, such as the 1952 Defiance Campaign, Sharpeville and Langa.[17]

While the above views may have some validity, coming as they did from an insider, it would be a tragedy if they were to overshadow the activist role that leaders such as Tabata and Tsotsi, a comrade and brother in law of Tabata, played in the struggles against the Betterment Scheme. Tabata's activism can be seen in the position he took on the Betterment Scheme. Left-wing critics within the AAC had insisted that the anti-Rehabilitation protests were anti-proletarianisation and hence appealed to the potentially conservative aspiring peasantry (Drew 1991:469). According to Drew, Tabata dismissed the critics, arguing for the need to mobilise people on the basis of their immediate needs and demands, rather than abstract goals. These needs and demands revolved around the right to buy and sell land, one of the demands of the NEUM's Ten Point Programme. Tabata was in favour of this land demand, while Benny Kies (see footnote 15) argued against it. At the same time, pressure for more militant assistance against Rehabilitation and Bantu Authorities was building up in the reserves. The response of some members of the Workers' Party and NEUM was for continued propaganda and education rather than agitation and mobilisation (Drew 1991:474). It is arguably this group that Mlonzi as well as Simons and Simons might have been referring to. Tabata seemed to belong to a class of his own.

The above disagreement seems to have led to a split within the organisation in 1958, something that could again explain the decline of the AAC in the late 1950s. This split happened largely on racial grounds, between the so-called 'Coloureds', following Kies and Jaffe,[18] and 'Africans', following Tabata.[19] It also was, in some way, linked to the

[17] Interview, Cala, 8 January 1999. A number of former and current members of the Unity Movement expressed similar sentiments in interviews and conversations with me. They include M. Mbulawa, M.P. Giyose, Don Kali and Justice Poswa.
[18] These were all leaders of the Unity Movement based in Cape Town.
[19] See Drew (1991) on this 'split'.

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broader issue of the political organisation and mobilisation of rural society. The nature of the rural population in South Africa has eluded both scholars and activists. Scholars such as Chaskalson (1987), drawing on accounts of rural resistance against Betterment, have argued that rural residents, including migrant workers, identified more with the land and the countryside than with the city (see Drew 1991:460). Beinart and Bundy (1987), on the other hand, argue that migrant workers in the 1940s were neither completely proletarianised nor peasants. Hendricks (1990) has characterised rural residents as a 'displaced proletariat' despite the apartheid regime's efforts to develop the reserves (by then called Bantustans). Even South African early communists in the International Social League had grappled with the nature of migrant labour. Early communists were intrigued by migrant workers as the latter did not seem to fit the communists' understanding of a classical proletariat, devoid of any control of the means of production (Ntsebeza 1987; Grossman 1985).

The ANC, by contrast, developed from a weak organisation in the 1930s to a mass-based organisation in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The establishment of the ANC Youth League in the early 1940s and the adoption of the programme of action in 1949 are critical to explaining the emergence of the ANC as a mass organisation. The 1950s saw the ANC embarking on a number of activities, including the Defiance Campaign of 1952 and other protests. It is also in the 1950s that the Freedom Charter was adopted. Although, as Lodge notes, in the 1950s the ANC was 'not a revolutionary organisation' and 'did not have a carefully worked out long-term strategy', its greatest strength, compared to the AAC was that it did not avoid 'mass action' (1983:77). For this reason, it was possible for ordinary people to relate to it. Although most of the mass-based activities of the ANC in the 1950s were in urban areas, when protests against Tribal Authorities in the rural areas accelerated, the ANC could no longer ignore these areas. The chapters of Sitas, Hendricks and Peires, as well as Beinart in this volume show the involvement of members of the ANC in the Mpondo revolts.

What does the above discussion tell us about the driving forces behind the revolts? Despite the role played by the AAC and ANC, close research shows that it is the rural residents, those who were directly affected by the policies of rehabilitation, who were in the forefront of the struggle. The resistance of the late 1950s appeared to have been driven by local interests. One interviewee, who was a member of the Unity Movement averred: 'The struggle was sustainable because of the

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people and what they were struggling for, rather than driven from outside by political organisations. That is why the struggle continued even when Ntwana and others had left'.[20]

Concluding Remarks

This chapter has shown that resistance against government policies in communal areas was neither started in Mpondoland nor was it restricted to this area. The chapter has also demonstrated that these struggles were not as spontaneous and/or parochial as some scholars make us believe. Lodge (1983:290), for example, has suggested that 'peasant' revolts are not sustainable precisely because they are 'parochial' in nature. Years later, this notion was supported by Bundy. This is what Bundy wrote:

> They were small-scale, sporadic, and dispersed incidents of social action; they were frequently limited in their resources and organisation and could be contained or crushed with relative ease by the state (1987: 255).

Bundy cites Rude (1980) as his authority. Viewed against the backdrop of the analysis of the rural struggles in South Africa which I traced to the 1940s, it becomes difficult to accept Rude's rendition of rural revolts uncritically. The account of rural struggles given in this chapter clearly suggests that these struggles were not sporadic and easy to crush. They were waged over a long period of time and were responding to sets of government policies that they found offensive. The struggles may not have been organised on a national scale, around movements with constitutions, membership and resources, something that could have ensured that the various struggles were coordinated. But this cannot mean that the struggles were 'parochial'. As Bundy observes in the same chapter, these struggles were not 'waged by "pure" peasant movements: there was a significant interplay between rural grievances shaping local resistance and the efforts of political organisations centred elsewhere to articulate, link and broaden these struggles' (1987: 255).

What Bundy does not say is that some of the rural residents who were involved in these struggles were themselves either migrant workers or former migrant workers. Migrant workers, as is shown in the various chapters of this book, are an embodiment of the urban-rural

[20] Quoted in Ntsebeza (2006: 205) in reference to the struggles of Xhalanga.

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relationship that is so evident in the development of capitalism since the mineral revolution in the latter part of the nineteenth century in South Africa. Some were involved in urban struggles. Other participants would be students at high school, teacher training colleges and universities. During holidays they would all go home, bringing with them their experiences in the urban areas and educational institutions. All the cases referred to in this chapter have this urban-rural connection and interaction.

Further, that the rural struggles in South Africa were crushed in the early 1960s must be seen against the background of the countrywide clampdown of political opposition to apartheid in the early 1960s, in the aftermath of the Sharpeville massacres on 21 March 1960. Rural struggles, it must be added, were also weakened by the almost total collapse of agriculture in the former Bantustans and the resultant proletarianisation which deepened during the apartheid period. Migrant workers, as the chapter by Sitas shows, went on to play important roles in trade unions and became less active in struggles in the countryside.

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CHAPTER THREE

READING AND WRITING THE MPONDO REVOLTS

Jimmy Pieterse

In 1974 John Anthony Copelyn noted that the Pondoland revolt was 'often mentioned but rarely discussed' (1974: 1). In a recently published biography of Oliver Tambo,[1] Luli Callinicos (2004: 242) writes that the Pondo uprising was ultimately to influence the African National Congress (ANC) in its decision to take up armed struggle two or three years after the revolt. Similarly, Ben Turok[2] (2003: 120, 122) writes that the Pondo revolt was 'the most important of the rural uprisings in the modern period' and that it influenced the Congress Movement to 'review our own approach to resistance in the country'. If Callinicos and Turok are correct, the ultimately unsuccessful revolt that took place in the rural backwaters of the northeastern Transkei in 1960 and 1961 could rightfully be described as 'the high water mark of peasant resistance in South Africa' (Kayser 2003: 95). It seems logical that this zenith of modern rural resistance is often mentioned, but why is it so rarely discussed?

An understanding of the ways in which discussions of the revolt have been politicized provides one answer to this question. Contemporary accounts, including newspaper articles, government reports, and the descriptions of eyewitnesses, fit the revolt into an existing framework of political and social upheaval. Indeed, these accounts did more than simply reflect observers' perspectives; their

[1] Oliver Reginald Tambo, who would become the secretary general of the ANC in 1955 and was charged with treason in 1956, was born in the Kantolo village of the Bizana district of Eastern Pondoland in 1917. He would, however, play no significant role in the revolt that swept through his home district in 1960 and 1961 as he left South Africa in the wake of the Sharpeville crisis to work as a political activist and leader of the ANC in exile. See Grobler (1988: 194–5).

[2] Ben Turok was born in Latvia in the late 1920s and moved to South Africa with his parents in 1932. He grew up in Cape Town, was educated there and joined the Congress of Democrats and the South African Communist Party in the 1950s. At the time of the Pondo revolt he was the African representative in the Cape Provincial Council. As such he visited Pondoland during the revolt. See Turok (2003).

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creators often hoped their readers would draw from them lessons applicable to continuing struggles. Scholars' analyses of the revolt, which have often drawn on these sources, have likewise derived from broader projects shaped by particular lines of inquiry.

This essay explores trends in writing on the revolt over the past fifty years and argues that understanding those patterns is essential to understanding the continued significance of the revolt. It begins with a consideration of the limitations of the published and archival sources pertaining to the revolt, and on which subsequent scholars have drawn in their interpretations of the revolt. This chapter then considers early efforts by liberal historians to approach the revolt from a scholarly perspective, as well as the notable silence of Afrikaner nationalist historians, in a highly fraught political climate. Subsequently, revisionist and social historians would build upon the work of liberal historians through close attention to issues of political economy. More recently, cultural historians have added to the literature through examinations of the importance of witchcraft and attempts to explicate how local people made sense of a time of political and social upheaval. Scholars have generally agreed that the implementation of Bantu Authorities and Betterment were at the heart of the revolt. However, other aspects of their interpretations vary markedly. These disparities illuminate broader political and cultural contests over understandings of the revolt by showing how the revolt fits within a variety of ideological and scholarly frameworks. The malleability of the meanings of the revolt has ensured its centrality in South African political culture.

Biases in Contemporary Accounts

Many pitfalls face an historian trying to cobble together a coherent narrative of the events that transpired in Eastern Pondoland between 1959 and 1960. Some of these difficulties, particularly the shortcomings of newspaper reports, archival material, firsthand accounts, and secondary analysis are common in attempts at historical reconstruction based on documentary evidence. Archival sources, for example, tend to paint a picture that corresponds with prevailing hegemonies. The voices of those in power tend to be articulated in these sources, while those of the weak or 'subaltern' are stifled. Once accessed, archival documents marked 'classified' or 'secret' can put this picture in perspective. On the whole, however, the story that emerges tends to be relatively one-sided.

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Archival accounts are often more revealing of the preconceptions of their authors than of the events they purport to describe. In the aftermath of the revolt, officials attempted to fit it into their understandings of alleged threats to the existing social and political order. A statement pertaining to the causes of the revolt by Assistant Chief Native Commissioner R.H. Midgley, housed in the National Archives Repository, serves as a good example. According to Midgley's account, those who 'instigated and incited this unlawful conduct have claimed that it is a demonstration of their opposition to Bantu Authorities and their rejection of the Chiefs and Headmen, who, they say forced Bantu Authorities upon them without consulting them'. This explanation notwithstanding, Midgley asserted that his office had 'on record' that 'all Headmen of the District held meetings of the people and explained the matter to them and took a vote on the constitution of the Tribal Authorities', and that Chief Botha Sigcau had held a variety of other meetings intended to elicit opinions in the 'Bantu customary method'. Thus, Midgley deduced that 'outside subversive influence' had played a pivotal role in the revolt 'since its inception is entirely foreign to Native custom and traditional behaviour.' He concluded: 'The whole pattern is well known to the Government and follows that of the ANC and kindred bodies who are inspired and incited by Communistic influence.'[3]

Newspapers and periodicals have problems entirely their own. In 1959, just before Pondoland erupted with violence, Morris Broughton[4] (1961: 5) wrote that the ethical and actual value of the freedom of the South African press had been vitiated. He felt that, instead of being an arbiter, the newspaper press had become, through varied historical, political and economic causes, the vehicle of one or other section of society. This sentiment is neatly borne out by a statement by *D[i]e Burger*'s first editor, the former Dutch Reformed Minister Dr D.F. Malan, in the paper's first issue in 1915: 'we recognise the existence of an Afrikaner nationalism with which we are in accord, and of which we hope to be a representative and interpreter' (Broughton 1961: 2). *Die Burger* would remain a 'representative and interpreter' of Afrikaner nationalism until well after 1960. Indeed, *Die Burger* was consistently the receiver and creator of information and policy. This direct influence only began to ebb after Hendrik Verwoerd came

[3] National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria, SAP 597, *Views as expressed by Mr R.H. Midgley: Assistant Chief Native Commissioner: Eastern Pondoland*, p. 3.

[4] Broughton edited the *Cape Argus* newspaper for more than a decade.

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to power (Potter, 1975: 45–6, 72–5, 144–51). Since the bulk of the Cape's white Afrikaans-speaking population read *Die Burger*, and as editorial executives at the time almost never sent staff members to check out stories that originated outside their own province, centre of publication and area of circulation (Broughton, 1961: 36), *Die Burger* was the main Afrikaans language newspaper to report on the events in Pondoland between 1959 and 1961. It uncritically accepted the reasons given for the revolt by Daan De Wet Nel, minister of Bantu Administration and Development. *Die Burger* printed Nel's claim that the 'trouble' in Pondoland had nothing to do with the implementation of Bantu Authorities in the area. Moreover, Nel was convinced that Bantu Authorities was 'what's best for the Bantu'. *Die Burger* also printed Nel's claim that 'Blanke agitators uit Natal en die res van Kaapland is daarvoor [the trouble in Pondoland] verantwoordelik' (white agitators from Natal and the rest of the Cape are responsible for it [the trouble in Pondoland]).[5]

English-medium newspapers differed markedly in their politics. Established in 1876 as South Africa's first daily newspaper, the *Cape Times* had a largely white English-speaking readership. It was conservative in Imperial matters, but progressive in local matters. By the 1960s it was one of only a few 'independent' (non-group affiliated) newspapers in the country, and thus relatively outspoken against the National Party and its policies (Potter 1975: 38–87). In December of 1960 the paper reported that 'a leading [white] citizen of Lusikisiki' said that 'the fact has to be faced that a large body of Natives here opposes the Government's Bantustan policy and what it means for them.'[6] A year later, article captions such as 'Grim diary of death in Pondoland: 22 Pondos killed: 363 huts, stores burnt'[7] showed clearly how National Party policy, to the minds of the *Cape Times*' editors, resulted in an escalation of violence. As the government clamped down, the paper printed a particularly scathing letter by the anthropologist Monica Wilson, in which she likened techniques of suppression in Pondoland to the terror perpetrated by the Nazis under Hitler:

> *I believe that a technique of terrorism has been developed and is being applied to one area after another. It involves setting African against African*

[5] 'Pondoland: niks te vrees nie, sê min. Nel', *Burger*, 14 December 1960.
[6] 'Pondoland whites in the dark', *Cape Times*, 13 December 1960.
[7] 'Grim diary of death in Pondoland: 22 Pondos killed: 363 huts, stores burnt', *Cape Times*, 2 December 1960.

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> *and goading 'Bantu Authorities' and their 'bodyguards', supported by special police, to intimidate the population.*[8]

The *Cape Argus* printed similar opinions. Established in 1857, it formed part of the 'English anti-apartheid conservative-liberal Press' and was linked to 'monopoly-mining-finance capital' (Tomaselli and Louw 1991: 5). As such it was pro 'modernisation' and stated that its reporters had collected 'a multiplicity of statements by Bantu and Europeans living in the area [Eastern Pondoland] that opposition to Bantu authorities is the cause of the unrest'.[9] Moreover, its editors found it 'hard to believe' that the 'serious unrest in Pondoland' can be ascribed to a couple of 'Communist agitators'. According to the paper, the structure of Bantu authorities as 'a method of implementing separate development' and the power it accorded 'chiefs and headmen who are the core of the various types of Bantu', were key to explaining the revolt. Though the system 'was inevitable if tribalism was to be restored to its condition of a century ago', the *Cape Argus* claimed, 'it was a continuation of early Bantu institutions and history but took no account of the changes which the institutions had undergone and of recent history. In the context of history long past, tribalism was the essence of Bantu life'. While formerly 'the chief acted in the closest sympathy with the feelings of the tribe, receiving orders from no one else [and] the tribe knew no system of justice save its own', in more recent times, 'the chief is primarily the servant of the Government: there has been experience of incorruptible courts'. Because of these changes, chiefs were viewed largely as 'the servants of an alien government'. Moreover, 'if the Pondos had not once had the right to choose the White man's civil courts, they might not equate corruption with oppression by their own people'. The editors concluded that it was 'the acceptance of Bantu authorities by the chiefs, not the tribesmen', that followed the 1956 Tomlinson Report's suggestions 'that would have broken down the tribal tenure of land and modernized the economic structure of the reserves' that culminated in the revolt.[10]

The *East London Daily Dispatch* was an 'independent' non-group affiliated paper that took advantage of its 'backwater' nature to criticize the government in a particularly scathing manner. In the 1960s the

[8] 'Technique of terrorism in South Africa', *Cape Times*, 13 December 1961.
[9] 'Failure in Pondoland', *Cape Argus*, 1 December 1960.
[10] 'Failure in Pondoland', *Cape Argus*, 1 December 1960.

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Dispatch had a sizeable distribution in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape and as such had a substantial black readership. The majority of the paper's shares were held by a charitable trust and the remaining shares in the controlling company were held by employees of the company, which enabled the paper to be one of the most outspoken in the country (Potter 1975: 76–7, 89, 158–519). It even entertained notions that Soviet Russia might help the Pondos in their struggle against the government. On 6 December 1960 the paper reported that Pondos had been picked up by Russian submarines and taken to Russia where they were trained for 'subversive work against established authority', and that the belief existed among Transkeians that 'Russia was showing the masses of Africa how to "liberate" themselves'. The article also asserted that the revolt 'revealed a degree of organisational ability which is … quite beyond the capacity of the simple peasants living there. A new element has made its presence felt and this new element could quite conceivably be Natives who have had training in Communist methods of subversion'.[11]

In marked contrast, the *Natal Mercury* was a fiercely loyal imperialist newspaper that, after Union, concerned itself with the defence of provincial English and – for an extensive period – British interests. Started by Sir John Robinson as Durban's first and only morning newspaper, the *Mercury* was controlled by members of the Robinson family,[12] who always either managed or edited it (Potter 1975: 34, 43, 76–77). The paper expressed the views and promoted the interests of large capitalists (Tomaselli and Louw 1991: 6).

However by 1960 the Mercury had adopted a critical stance towards the Nationalist government, attributing the disturbances in Pondoland to the flawed electoral process:

> *The method of appointment of the local 'tribal community' authorities in Eastern Pondoland is different than that in the other eight regions [that, together with Pondoland, comprised the Transkeian Territorial Authority]. In Eastern Pondoland, the tribal authorities – the lowest council on the four-rung ladder of the territorial authority – has three quarters of its members appointed by the Paramount Chief and the remaining quarter*

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[11] 'Evidence of Red subs off coast', *East London Daily Dispatch*, 6 December 1960.

[12] The Robinsons were members of a prominent settler family who migrated to Natal in 1850. Sir John, who was to become prime minister of the Natal Colony, edited the paper from 1860 and was knighted in 1889. His son, John Benjamin Romer, a prominent lawyer, took over management of the paper in 1932 and was, in turn, succeeded by his son, Rodney Romer, a successful businessman.

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> *appointed by the Bantu Commissioner. In all the other regions, one-third of the tribal authorities members are appointed by the chief and two-thirds are elected by the Native taxpayers.*[13]

The Mercury posited that this 'method of appointment of the local "tribal communities" in Eastern Pondoland' led directly to the violence that erupted there and put the blame squarely on the shoulders of government.[14] When the authorities acted to quell the violence, the *Mercury* accused the government of turning the area into a police state. As a result, due to what the government perceived as unfavourable reporting, *Mercury* correspondents were banned from Pondoland in 1960.[15]

While some newspapers generally took a critical stance against the government of the day, others had a more overtly political agenda and actively partook in the struggle against apartheid. Great distances between centres combined with large numbers of associate organisations and high levels of state repression to make physical movement of activists perilous. Writing thus became activism, and the organic leadership of the anti-apartheid movement, in a sense, media activists (Tomaselli and Louw 1991: 147). In May 1952 the anti-government newspaper the *Guardian*, founded in Cape Town in 1937, was banned (Merrett 1994: 23). During the 1950s the *Guardian's* successor, the *New Age*, acted as a link between organisations such as the ANC and their mass constituency. Some activists who wrote for and distributed the paper were in the Eastern Cape at the time of the revolt. The likes of Govan Mbeki and Joe Gqabi could consequently give almost first-hand accounts of the events that transpired despite the National Party government's concerted efforts to stifle their reports. Similarly, *Fighting Talk* was a political and literary magazine that published black writers in particular (Merrett 1994: 65). Writers like Mbeki contributed articles on Pondoland and, importantly, *Fighting Talk* reprinted sections of the memo that the Pondos had managed to smuggle to the United Nations to list their grievances. Anti-government newspapers like *Spark* also carried a substantial number of reports and articles on the revolt.

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[13] 'Mercury refused permit to enter Pondoland', *Natal Mercury*, 2 December 1960.

[14] 'Pondoland: 4 killed; 45 huts burnt over weekend', *Natal Mercury*, 6 December 1960.

[15] 'Arrest without warrant, detention without trial: police are absolute in the Transkei', *Natal Mercury*, 15 December 1960.

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Reporting by the print media on the revolt ranged from a pro-governmental bias to sympathy with the rebels, and can be read – when taken together – as representing a relatively even-handed account of the events. However, the fact of publication limits the value of newspapers and periodicals, as these sources contain only what was considered fit for public consumption. This is the case because a controlling principle exists which may limit, distort or falsify what is stated. What's more, reporters tended to be more highly educated than the people they reported on and may have privileged the views of certain segments of society.

An understanding of the revolt thus demands reading beyond the print media and archival sources. Ben Turok's eye-witness account (c. 1960), written during the final stages of the revolt, is a scathing attack on the National Party government's Bantu Authorities Scheme published by the Congress of Democrats in the form of a pamphlet in 1960 or 1961. Turok was the Africans' representative for the Western Cape in the Provincial Council until July 1961, when this position became redundant under the Bantu Self Government Act.[16]

Govan Mbeki's hugely influential account of the revolt, which was first published in 1964, describes the origins of the revolt which he sees as rooted in local grievances that included Paramount Chief Botha Sigcau's role in the 'breakdown of the whole tribal structure', the Bantu Authorities Scheme, Rehabilitation, the Bantu Education Act, increased taxation, and passes. Mbeki also details the methods of struggle that included mass demonstrations, the burning of collaborators' huts, refusal to pay taxes, and a boycott of local traders' stores, and methods of state repression comprised of mass arrests and deportations under emergency regulations and coercive measures by the army, police and headmen. He describes the revolt's progression and attempts to prove the development of links between the revolt and the broader national struggle by claiming that the rebel movement adopted the 'full programme of the African National Congress and its allies as embodied in the Freedom Charter', and also that the term for the popular rebel movement, *Ikongo*, had its roots in the word *Congress* (Mbeki 1964: 116–33).

[16] B. Turok, 'Africans no longer represented on any governing body', in *New Age*, vol. 7, no. 38, 6 July 1961.

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Historicizing the Revolt

These two early accounts notwithstanding, in the aftermath of the revolt, historians were notably silent on the subject. Afrikaner nationalist historians have contributed least to the body of literature pertaining to the revolt. In fact, the school did not produce a single study on the topic, and the revolt has not received any mention in even the most general of histories of South Africa.[17] This silence was probably due to the fact that the revolt occurred during the years leading up to '*Republiekwording*' (the moment of becoming a republic), and this momentous occasion in the history of the Afrikaner '*volk*' (this term loosely translates to nation) would have been tainted if large segments of the country's black population were shown to be desperately unhappy with policies forced upon them by the National Party government.

Liberal historians[18] have tended to pay more attention to the revolt in their general histories of South Africa. In *South Africa: A Modern History*, Rodney Davenport[19] and Christopher Saunders describe the revolt as the climax of rural violence in South Africa between 1956 and 1964. They attribute the revolt to 'peasant conservatism in face of official attempts to introduce not merely Bantu Authorities but agricultural betterment schemes', and a 'fundamental suspicion over Government intentions' (Davenport and Saunders 2000: 402). They also describe Botha Sigcau as the 'chosen agent of the new system' as well as his controversial appointment as paramount in 1939; they briefly describe the formation of the Mountain Committee (*Intaba*) as a rival administration to the state, the burning of huts of government informers, intimidation of 'waverers' in unofficial courts, and the imposition of fines on the 'selfish' to provide a defence fund for those charged by the police. Furthermore, they point out that the resistance organizers emerged from the ranks of people that neither belonged to the traditional leadership nor had contact with main political organisations in

[17] See, for example, C.F.J. Muller (red.), *Vyfhonderd jaar van Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedenis;* and F.A. van Jaarsveld, *Van Van Riebeeck tot P.W. Botha*.

[18] The term liberal denotes those historians who reject racial discrimination, but see capitalism as inherently progressive and able to ensure the well-being of all sectional groups in South Africa. Race and racial interaction (and not class) are the integral themes in their analysis of South African history.

[19] Davenport has described himself as a 'liberal Africanist'. See J. Lewin, 'Review: *South Africa: a modern history*', in *Journal of South African Studies*, 4(2), April 1978, pp. 272–273.

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the urban areas (the Congress of Democrats in particular). They also refer to the slump in the Natal sugar industry and infer that it probably released potential followers for the rebellious movement (Davenport and Saunders 2000: 401–2).

In Monica Wilson[20] and Leonard Thompson's[21] *Oxford History*, Leo Kuper[22] similarly describes the revolt as having been (like other 'peasant risings' between 1957 and 1962) 'a reaction to poverty, deprivation, and tension, heightened by the application of the Bantu Authorities Act, the deposition of chiefs, the imposition of rural rehabilitation schemes, the restriction on movement into the towns, and the requirement that women carry passes' (Wilson and Thompson 1971: 464–5). Kuper also describes its relatively large extent, the brutality of its suppression, and likens it to the Bambata rebellion in terms of the commonality of the widespread refusal to pay taxes. In addition, citing Govan Mbeki, he mentions that the revolt became linked with the wider national liberation struggle (Wilson and Thompson 1971: 465).

In *History of Southern Africa*, under the sub-heading *Other forms of black protest and resistance*, J.D. Omer-Cooper[23] ascribes the revolt to the introduction of Tribal Authorities under the 1951 Bantu Authorities Act. This new system, according to Omer-Cooper, caused Mpondo rebels to withdraw to the hills and establish 'a mountain committee as a nucleus of an independent alternative government. Huts of government informers were burned and widespread intimidation was

[20] The anthropologist Monica Wilson authored the now classic ethnographic study on the Pondo entitled '*Reaction to conquest: effects of contact with Europeans on the Pondo of South Africa*', under her maiden name, Hunter, in 1936.

[21] Leonard Thompson who helped found the Liberal Party of South Africa in 1953, co-edited with Monica Wilson the *Oxford History of South Africa* (1969, 1971). In contrast to previous Eurocentric accounts that stressed the role of whites, these texts emphasised the role of black communities. *Oxford History* was condemned by leading Afrikaner historians like Floors van Jaarsveld who saw it as subjective, anti-white and anti-Afrikaner; a tool in the hands of people engaged in the international onslaught against white-controlled South Africa. Those on the left criticised it for different reasons: revisionists shunned it because it explained South African history along the lines of race, and not of class. See A. Mouton, 'Voortreflike oorsig oor SA verlede', in *Beeld*, 7 Augustus 2006, p. 19.

[22] Kuper was an active member of the liberal party in the 1950s. He was a lawyer and sociologist and specialised in the study of genocide.

[23] In *History of Southern Africa* the author presents a synopsis rather than an interpretation of South African history, and a main feature of the book is that 'South African history is linked to the broader history of the whole region'. See L. Harding, 'Review: History of Southern Africa', in *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 28(3), 1995, pp. 611–612.

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employed against all who followed government instructions. White storekeepers were warned to co-operate with the rebels or have their premises boycotted. The insurrection continued for several months and was only suppressed with the use of armoured units and planes' (Omer-Cooper 1994).

Revisionists, Social Historians, and Political Economy

While liberal historians have offered accounts of the revolt in the context of general syntheses, which tend to offer only little by way of interpretation, revisionists[24] and social historians[25] have analysed the revolt in more depth than liberal historians and have written the bulk of specific studies of the revolt. The first truly academic study of the revolt was an honours dissertation submitted to the University of the Witwatersrand by John Copelyn in 1974. To this day it remains one of the most comprehensive investigations of the revolt. Citing the anthropologist Eric Wolf (1969), Copelyn argues that the revolt – like many other 'peasant revolts' – 'must be understood as the complex conjunction of both "local problems" and "major social dislocations"' (Copelyn 1977: 27). These 'major social dislocations' refer to the deterioration of the reserve areas during the twentieth century, and specifically to the effects on these areas of the National Party's implementation of the Bantu Authorities Act, which Copelyn calls the 'pillars of rural administration' (1977: 1), Betterment Schemes and Rehabilitation programmes that had as their aim the establishment of a reservoir of cheap black labour. Here the author leans heavily on Harold Wolpe's now famous theory regarding the symbiotic relationship between capitalism and apartheid (Wolpe 1972: 433). These 'reforms [that were]

[24] This group of historians rose to prominence in the 1970s and were heavily influenced by Marxist theory. They reject racial differences as the basis of conflict between groups, and explain conflict in terms of economic class differences.

[25] Social historians, like revisionists, use Marxist theory as their point of departure, but admit more readily that other forces besides the economic are also influential in shaping history. As the name indicates, their studies tend to focus on social themes. The social history approach seeks to bring individual social actors back into the analysis through detailed 'histories from below'. The thrust of this approach thus clearly differs from revisionism's victim-centred theories in that it seeks to show the development of working-class consciousness and how marginalised people developed techniques of survival and attitudes of resistance to the forces that oppressed them. See W.D. Hammond-Tooke, *Imperfect interpreters: South Africa's Anthropologists, 1920–1990*, p. 171.

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instituted through local administration, coupled with the authoritarian way in which they were executed, galvanized resentment into an intensive critique of local authority' (Copelyn 1974: 24). The 'local problems' centered on the unusual amount of power wielded by the Pondo paramount chief, Botha Sigcau, and his diminished legitimacy in the eyes of his people due to his unpopular, and government aided, succession in 1939. These issues were compounded by the prevalence of corruption and graft (especially after Botha had accepted Bantu Authorities against the will of his people in 1958) and high levels of internal class differentiation in Pondoland. As a result, the traditional political leadership in Eastern Pondoland was completely discredited, and the Pondo people consequently took it upon themselves to create new leadership structures.

Copelyn accounts for the revolt's relative success in terms of the degree of popular control that the revolt's leadership was able to establish in Eastern Pondoland; the ability of this rebellious movement to 'grasp the initiative in its dealings with the state and to manipulate local elites effectively' (1974: ii); and its success in replacing a broken down 'system of authority'. He attributes the revolt's strength to the leadership's lack of experience of bureaucratic forms of political mobilisation and also notes that its participants were mostly young migrant men present in the reserves at the time of the revolt due to a slump in the Natal sugar industry.

Copelyn describes the governmental reaction to the revolt in terms of the state as an instrument of class oppression. Drawing upon the language of Marxist-Leninist theory on the state, he explains the ultimate failure of the revolt in the following terms: '[t]he outcome of conflict between localized opposition and the state is in a sense a foregone conclusion. Isolated and unarmed pockets of resistance could not possibly have challenged the reliable and sophisticated instruments of coercion wielded by the administration' (1972: ii).

However, Copelyn's inability to consult government sources related to the revolt limited his study. When Copelyn undertook his research in the early 1970s, many archival sources that pertain directly to the revolt were inaccessible to him. These sources were classified as secret by the government and included the report of the Van Heerden Commission of Inquiry into the Disturbances in Eastern Pondoland, records of the South African Police, and some records of the Bantu Affairs Department. Copelyn therefore resorted to contemporary newspaper reports, interviews and court records.

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Copelyn's work still underpins a substantial amount of what has been written on the revolt. In *Black politics in South Africa since 1945*, Tom Lodge grounds much of his account of the revolt on Copelyn's dissertation and seminar papers.[26] Lodge also favours the idea that the revolt was, in large part, an articulation of the grievances of the poorest sections of the community: 'rehabilitation had laid a heavy burden on the poorest members of the community. For example, the prohibition on keeping goats … removed access to the cheapest form of livestock' (Lodge 1983: 281). He also discusses the importance of unemployed workers as participants in the revolt (1983: 279–83, 293). While Lodge depends on Copelyn's work, other sources (most notably Davenport and Saunders) rely heavily on Lodge's account.

Like most other commentators, William Beinart and Colin Bundy ascribe the revolt to resistance to Bantu Authorities and all that it entailed, to Betterment, and to Rehabilitation (specifically the shift from 'reclamation' to 'stabilisation'). This resistance, according to Beinart and Bundy, took on new organisational forms (Beinart and Bundy 1980: 305–8). Commenting on rural resistance in the Transkei in the period 1900 to 1965, they note that 'chiefs, headmen and some educated, locally employed people were forced or absorbed into broadly collaborationist positions … [and] for the most part ceased to reproduce themselves purely as a wealthier peasantry; although most of them kept a stake in the land, they were absorbed into the structures of dominance as bureaucrats and salaried employees. Their ability to command mass loyalty declined steadily…' (Beinart and Bundy 1980: 310). They also note that 'control over and access to rural resources – especially land and livestock – remained central objectives of those involved in resistance', that '[f]rom the 1930s onward, the core of militant resistance in the Transkei appears to have been provided by traditionalist middle migrants or peasant-migrants' and 'after World War II large-scale state intervention was met with political action aimed against the state as a whole, more violent in character than earlier episodes, and with some conception of an alternative political system' (Beinart and Bundy, 1980: 310–313). These broad patterns are also applicable to the events that took place in Eastern Pondoland between 1959 and 1961.

[26] He also cites Govan Mbeki's *'South Africa: the peasants' revolt'* and makes use of contemporary periodicals.

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Like Lodge, Beinart and Bundy see returned migrants as having played a significant role in the revolt. Unlike Lodge, however, they emphasise that the migrants were staunch traditionalists – and not that they were 'unemployed' and thus poor (Beinart and Bundy 1980: 308). In fact, Beinart argues that the revolt '… was not particularly a revolt of the poor, but of those protecting rural resources and … the leadership were probably above average in land holding and livestock'.[27]

In his *Twentieth-century South Africa*,[28] Beinart argues that the revolt took place because Botha Sigcau – whose chieftaincy had been disputed since 1938 – sided with the authorities in their homeland policy: '[d]isputes escalated about popular access to forests for firewood, about Betterment, plantations, and coastal grazing lands. As power was devolved to the unpopular paramount, so his opponents argued that he had 'sold the people to the government' (Beinart 1994: 158). He then observes that the rebels burned huts belonging to, and killed a few of, Sigcau's councillors, and that the government consequently sent in the police and the army who shot and killed people at a mass meeting at Lusikisiki. Beinart also notes that for Solomon Madikizela, a rebel leader, Methodist evangelist and 'peasant' farmer, the revolt aimed to establish a legitimate chieftaincy and a measure of local independence. Furthermore, Beinart mentions that the rebels linked with the ANC in Durban, that they attempted to acquire arms, and that there seemed to be potential 'for an anti-colonial struggle linking nationalists and peasants, town and countryside' (1994: 158). As a general history *Twentieth-century South Africa* presents a synopsis rather than an interpretation of the revolt. Recently, however, Beinart has analysed the revolt's environmental origins (Beinart 2002).

Beinart's analysis was firmly located within the political economy and focused particularly on protest and worker consciousness.[29] In 1982 Beinart believed that the revolt could serve as 'an important vantage point from which to analyse' issues such as 'the emergence of mass nationalist movements after the Second World War' and 'the links

[27] Email correspondence with the author on 2005/10/28.

[28] The organisational framework of this work is political history that 'frequent[ly] nods toward materialist and class analysis of the state'. See N. Clark, 'Review: Twentieth-century South Africa', *International Journal of African Historical Studies, 29(3), 1997*, pp. 633–636.

[29] See, for example, W. Beinart, 'Worker consciousness, ethnic particularism and nationalism: the experiences of a South African migrant, 1930–1960', in S. Marks and S. Trapido (eds.), *The politics of race, class and nationalism in twentieth-century South Africa*, pp. 286–309.

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between urban-based action and the series of rural rebellions which spread through the countryside, and particularly the African "reserves", in the 1950s.' He:

> *...soon became convinced, however, that the revolts could not be explained merely by reference to the broader nationalist movements nor by the specific state policies, land rehabilitation and the 'Bantu Authorities' which triggered them off. Ultimately, an understanding of the position of the African reserves had to be located in an analysis of the way in which formerly independent African chiefdoms had been transformed by the development of industrial capitalism in South Africa (Beinart, 1982: vii).*

The set of interviews Beinart conducted in Bizana in 1982 redirected his analysis to include the politics of gender and the symbolism of style. He consequently wrote on the vibrant strands of migrant culture that developed from the material conditions of mine migration before the 1970s. Of specific interest to him was the predominant youth organisation (the *indlavini*) that formed in Pondoland during the entrenchment of the system of oscillating labour migration. He concluded, however, that evidence of *indlavini* involvement in the revolt was 'not strong' (Beinart 1991: 121).

In *South Africa's Transkei: the political economy of an 'independent' Bantustan*, Roger Southall presents what one reviewer has called 'an excellent and well researched summary of previous Marxian analyses of the Transkei'. Southhall sees the revolt as the result of the process of transition to Transkeian 'independence'.[30] According to Southall, this 'process of transition' brought about the land question and Betterment and Rehabilitation Schemes, which led to the revolt (Southall 1982: 108). Although Southall's work is a summary and his analyses of the Pondoland revolt forms part of a larger project, it is cited by authors of general histories of South Africa like Paul Maylam (1986: 191–2) and should therefore be considered an important source.

The Complications of Culture

In the early 1990s scholarly interest in the revolt waned, and it was not until around the turn of the century that historians again started to

[30] F. Curtis, 'Review: South Africa's Transkei: the political economy of an "independent" Bantustan', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 2, April 1986, pp. 326–327.

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analyse it in any depth. In an article entitled *Government witchcraft: taxation, the supernatural, and the Mpondo revolt in the Transkei, South Africa, 1955–1963*, Sean Redding argues that one needs to grasp the political, social and cultural consciousness of the people involved in the revolt in order to understand its timing. Following on the work of Karen Fields (1982: 567–93), Redding maintains that the colonial government established and kept control over the African population by 'indirect rule through African political consciousness' and employing local idioms of power – in this case, beliefs in witchcraft (Redding 1996:555–79). According to Redding, this is a variation of what Jean and John Comaroff call 'the colonisation of consciousness' (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 4). In the late 1950s and early 1960s, at a time of increasing material deprivation, Redding argues that the Pondo people explained their material conditions in terms of spiritual beliefs that, in turn, 'strongly shaped the timing and the substance of the revolt'. In fact, she posits that the state's manipulation of 'supernatural powers through its taxation policies and law enforcement policies to maintain its control over Africans had historically helped make it possible for a small number of whites and the Africans they employed to rule a large number of Africans'. However, 'in the late 1950s and early 1960s, witchcraft beliefs played a role in an attempt to overturn that rule'. In particular, 'social destabilisation that undercut the state's legitimacy' demonstrated the malevolent nature of state witchcraft [which] became increasingly obvious to many Africans during the late 1950s' (Redding 1996: 577).

This, according to Redding, substantiates Philip Mayer's[31] 'argument that African rural culture provided a rallying point for resistance to the state in the late 1950s and early 1960s' (Redding 1996, 578). Robert Ross (1999: 127) seems to share Redding's sentiments to a large extent, stating:

> *[t]here [in eastern Pondoland], the increased presence of government agencies was seen as illegitimate, probably as an exercise of the state's occult powers in a much more direct way than previously. The poll tax, for instance, was known as impundulu, at once bloodsucker, and the lightning bird by which witches destroy their opponents. Moreover, the state's actions were clearly seen to be driven by malevolence. Stock theft, an endemic evil*

[31] Philip Mayer analysed social change in terms of a shifting balance between town-centred and rural-centred networks. See Hammond-Tooke, *Imperfect Interpreters*, pp. 145–151.

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> *in all cattle-owning societies, was increasing, and government was not doing anything to prevent it. To the contrary…*

In *The politics of evil: magic, state power, and the political imagination in South Africa*, Clifton Crais builds on Redding's argument and attempts to show how local people understood authoritarianism in their own cultural terms. Crais argues that insufficient attention has been paid to the problem of evil within the political imagination and consciousness of South Africa's 'subaltern' black population. In fact, he contends that 'since the nineteenth century, the majority of the colonised population of the Eastern Cape have viewed the state as an inherently evil and destructive force and have marshalled a range of resources, including their cultural knowledge of magic and supernatural powers, to defend themselves against it, to contain its influence, and ultimately to vanquish it' (Bank 2004: 912–5). According to Crais, rural Africans employed witchcraft beliefs as an idiom with which to create a space where the state could be portrayed as illegitimate and 'evil' (Crais 2002: 112). They thus used 'magic' as a means to try and rid themselves of what they found socially unhealthy or 'evil'. Crais' conceptualisation of the 'politics of evil' – a term that he uses to describe both the injustices of the state 'and of the state's subjects and victims that transcends a given political moment' – has been so well received that it now enjoys international currency (Bank 2004: 912–5).

Crais substantiates his theory using evidence from the Eastern Cape and dedicates a chapter entitled *The men of the mountain* to the revolt in Eastern Pondoland (Crais 2002: 178–208). The historian Timothy Keegan describes this chapter as a valuable and 'closely researched historical exploration' that provides a 'historically informed view of the complexities of subaltern politics' (Keegan 2004: 145). Crais locates the origin of the *Congo* movement in the 1940s and asserts that the movement developed in a linear fashion into the movement that featured so prominently during the revolt of 1960 (Crais 2002: 181–93). However, Robin Kayser convincingly argues that the term *Congo/Ikongo* could have had (and probably did have) many etymological sources and that the term was used to describe various groups at different junctions in time. The *Congo* movement is central to Crais' discussion and explanation of the revolt (2002: 191, 192, 193, 205), and he describes members of the *Congo* as

> *… imagining their world by 'looking over the shoulders' of the dominant forces in their lives, appropriating in often enigmatic ways symbols and*

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> *social processes that cohered in new, enduring and … potentially revolutionary forms.*

The Congo movement can be interpreted as a manifestation of a subaltern politics. At meetings of the Congo, people 'elaborated a critique of the state and its local collaborators' and 'gave voice to a politics at the center of which lay the ancient and enduring problem of authority and social health'. The Congo movement therefore 'emerged as a kind of polymorphous polity that had attained popular legitimacy'. In summoning collaborators and government officials to its meetings, and later through acts of violence, 'the Congo struggled to refashion a world that had gone terribly awry'. By 1957 the Congo had moved beyond political critique and became, in addition, 'a new and competing node of political authority' in Pondoland. Thus, in Crais' view, the Congo promised both a new political authority and a social cleansing. It 'was as much about getting rid of the Bantu Authorities system as it was ridding the world of the evil that had so overcome it'.

Diana Wylie makes the point that, in claiming that the inhabitants of the rural Eastern Cape used 'magic' as a means to try and rid themselves of what they found socially unhealthy or 'evil', Crais extends 'the individualistic purposes of witchcraft into the realm of social strategy' (Wylie 2002: 497). This is also true of, and raises legitimate questions about, Redding's argument. Wylie subsequently raises the important point that, if it is assumed that witchcraft accusations normally derived from wealth differences, evidence is needed regarding those who were not extremely poor, why they were not, what happened to them as a result of their relative wealth, and what their 'political imaginations' might have looked like (Wylie 2002: 498). Moreover, the paucity of Crais' data merely allows him to assert rather than to prove the truth of his hypotheses – however interesting and provocative they may be (2002: 497). The anthropologist Leslie Bank concurs, writing that 'while the arguments are interesting and the prose persuasive, Crais is ultimately let down by a lack of evidence… In his longer and fuller account of the Congo movement and the "men of the mountain" of Pondoland, there is more to latch onto – a religious slant to the language of power, stories of witches and nocturnal forces – but one is still left wondering whether this movement was not really more about the politics of chieftaincy than the question of evil' (Bank 2004: 915).

Although witchcraft frequently involved political contestation and although it was perceived as 'the destructive power of the subordinate, activated by emotions of envy and resentment', those in subordinate

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positions almost always lacked the capacity to employ witchcraft accusations to challenge injustice and inequality. Moreover, witchcraft accusations were frequently employed to entrench social inequality – witchcraft thus had both 'accumulative' and 'levelling' aspects. However, the 'accumulative' aspect was most apparent in West Africa while the 'levelling' aspect was more evident in east and southern Africa, and although witchcraft was used as an idiom with which to critique white domination, white people themselves were very rarely (if ever) imbued with magical powers of their own (Niehaus 2001: 2–11, 183–92). Seen in this light, Crais' and Redding's arguments thus become hard to sustain – and should be read only as interesting conjecture and speculation. Furthermore, Keegan makes the important point that Crais' 'nominal focus on witchcraft as a central element in African political consciousness runs the risk of relegating the mass of South Africa's people to a pre-modern world, in which magic and superstition rule supreme' (Keegan 2004: 143–5), thereby consigning certain aspects of culture to the atemporal.

Diana Wylie states that the revolt's causes lay 'explicitly in resentment against betterment and the imposition of Bantu Authorities'. According to Wylie, betterment and Bantu Authorities were underpinned by haughty perceptions regarding 'the other' (read Africans) and their 'unscientific' methods of production and consumption. This cultural arrogance manifested most acutely in the 'hubris of high Modernism', apartheid. Following Clifton Crais' argument, Wylie partly attributes the Pondo Revolt to 'the moral panic betterment caused by making it harder to control the movement of strangers who might be witches or stock thieves'. Wylie believes that 'Pondo resentment had been provoked by the intrusive social engineering that affected them simultaneously at the levels of political life and subsistence'. Importantly, she also believes that the rebellious *Intaba* (hill) required more well-off peasant farmers to financially contribute to the coffers of the movement (on pain of having their homesteads burnt down), but that they didn't single out poorer peasants (Wylie 2001: 232–4).

A younger generation of South African historians have also recently turned their attention to the Pondoland revolt, focussing on its political aspects. In his analysis of the Non-European Unity Movement and the land question, Robin Kayser describes the origins of the revolt, its course and its meaning, which he sees as 'the government's attempt to impose the Bantu Authorities system on the population' and, more importantly, 'the burning issue of the land question which reflected

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itself most acutely through the government's Rehabilitation Scheme' and 'the fact that the African population were denied representation in Parliament' (Kayser 2003: 96, 107). He pays particular attention to the role of the African National Congress, the All African Convention and the Cape African Teachers Association. Kayser contributes and adds value to the discussion around the revolt through excellent use of many archival sources, and insights gleaned from a series of interviews conducted with Gideon Mahanjana, Fanele Nxasana, Mpitsi Ncenjana, Pindiso Zimamabane and Mjungula Nonkwenkwe.

In a chapter on rural resistance in Pondoland and Thembuland in *The Road to Democracy in South Africa: Volume 1 (1960–1970)*, Sukude Matoti and Lungisile Ntsebeza, like most other commentators, ascribe the revolt to the introduction of the Bantu Authorities system and development plans linked to it, and to the coercive way in which it was implemented. They describe the course of the revolt, the state's response, methods of resistance, and the role of political organisations in the revolt. They provide new insights through the analysis of a series of interviews conducted with figures such as Anderson Ganyile, Leonard Mdingi, S. Slangwe, C.K. Gxabu, M. Mzobotshi and M. Mahlanga (Matoti and Ntsebeza 2004: 177–208). Thus, like Kayser, they bring to the fore many lesser-known activists to highlight the revolt's complexity.

Conclusion

In general terms there exists a broad consensus among scholars regarding the causes of the revolt. But while most revisionists and social historians emphasise the political economy, those of a post-modern or discursive disposition stress cultural factors. These efforts to understand the revolt have been further complicated by the challenges of interpreting the published and archival sources pertaining to the revolt, nearly all of which are highly politically charged. Regardless on which side of the scholarly divide one stands, there can be no disputing the fact that the heavy-handed way in which Bantu Authorities and Betterment were implemented in Eastern Pondoland is seen as having been the salient feature – the spark that lit the revolutionary embers in that erstwhile peaceful corner of the North Eastern Cape.

Yet the different ways in which scholars have arrived at that conclusion and the varying emphases in their interpretations illustrate the

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Pondoland revolt's ongoing political and cultural salience. The changing historiography of the revolt does not simply reflect changing academic trends. Efforts to narrate and historicize it have simultaneously reflected and reinforced its evolving meanings and the political and cultural claims staked on the revolt.

It bears mentioning, however, that writing on the revolt expresses a kind of 'South African exceptionalism' in the writing of South African history. Due in part to the politics of knowledge production in South Africa, very few scholars have attempted to draw comparisons with or insights from histories of other parts of the continent.[32] Drawing from John Lonsdale's discussion of Mau Mau, for example, might make it possible to move beyond 'the Western transubstantiations that have squeezed African responses to colonial rule into the prefabricated, imported, moulds of nationhood and class formation' (Lonsdale 1992: 317). Instead of focusing on class and nation, Lonsdale suggests an analysis of ethnicity as a platform for discussing civic virtue. Casting a wider analytical net will go a long way towards situating the Mpondo revolt in a wider historiography, whilst also possibly showing how it formed part of a wider colonial pattern in that it was a result of the articulation of systemic forces and an attempt to protect young men's threatened identities and serve the demands of an embattled ethnic group (Clough 1992: 650–652).

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[32] The Mau Mau uprisings that took place in Kenya, for example, shared many characteristics with the Mpondo revolt: both were consequences of the racism of settler regimes, which polarized already divided local communities; oathtaking, the formation of secret organizations and violence were common features of both cases; and both were violently suppressed.

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CHAPTER FOUR

GOVAN MBEKI'S *THE PEASANTS' REVOLT*: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION[1]

Allison Drew

Unusually among activists of the African National Congress (ANC) and South African Communist Party (SACP), Govan Archibald Mvuyelwa Mbeki dedicated much attention to rural conditions and struggles. Mbeki's research on the 1960 Phondo Revolt culminated in a book published in 1964 called *The Peasants' Revolt*. Much of the book was written while the revolt was ongoing and thus reflects a reciprocal dynamic between Mbeki the writer and the rapidly evolving conditions that were tantamount to war. In this respect the book is part of a tradition of engaged writing about social and political unrest that takes place contemporaneously with that unrest. This chapter examines Mbeki's analysis of the Phondo revolt and discusses its impact on Congress leaders during the early stage of armed struggle, suggesting that its influence on their thinking during this critical period has been underestimated.

Born on 8 July 1910 at Mpukane Location in the Nqamakwe district of the Transkei, Mbeki was the youngest child of moderately well-to-do Christian parents who stressed the importance of education. Mbeki excelled at his studies, won a bursary to Fort Hare University College and graduated with a BA and a diploma in education. He began teaching at Clarkebury High School in the Engcobo district and a year later joined the staff at Taylor Street Secondary School in Durban. There he became friendly with one of his colleagues, Nomaka Epainette Moerane, who was the second African woman to join the Communist Party and who influenced Mbeki politically. Mbeki turned to writing and in 1938 became editor of *Territorial Magazine*. The next year he published a short book called *The Transkei in the Making* that signalled his

[1] My thanks to Phyllis Ntantala Jordan, Thembela Kepe, Lungisile Ntsebeza and two anonymous referees for their comments.

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continuing interest in his home region (Karis and Carter 1977b: 83–4; First 1964: 9–14; Bundy 1991: ix-xxx; Bundy 1984: 24; Jordan 2009a; Office of the Presidency 2006).

Mbeki and Moerane married on 8 January 1940, returned to the Transkei and set up a cooperative shop in Mbewuleni near Idutywa. Mbeki became active in the Transkei African Voters' Association (TAVA) and the Transkei Organized Bodies (TOB) and in 1943 was elected to a four-year term to represent Idutywa in the *Bhunga*, a council of elected and nominated members. In 1955 he moved to Port Elizabeth to work as a full-time ANC activist and as editor-reporter of the Communist-aligned *New Age*; his wife remained at Mbewuleni. In the late 1950s the space for open democratic politics was shrinking; in 1956 meetings of more than ten Africans were banned throughout the Port Elizabeth magisterial district. Mbeki concentrated on building an underground ANC structure in Port Elizabeth (Bundy 1984: 22–23; Jordan 2009a).[2]

Mbeki began working on the manuscript that became *The Peasants' Revolt* around 1959–60. He intended to produce a training manual on Transkei politics for ANC organizers and members – a signal that the ANC hoped to expand its work in the region. But over time, Mbeki's vision of his writing project changed. The book he eventually produced was a seering exposé of the Bantustan scheme imposed by the apartheid state in the late 1950s and 1960s and an account of the Phondoland uprising.

This uprising was launched in Bizana in March 1960, the very month that South African police massacred unarmed Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) demonstrators at Sharpeville. A State of Emergency was declared on 30 March, and the ANC and PAC banned on 8 April. Most of Mbeki's draft was finished by then, but police raids meant that the final work was repeatedly disrupted. He somehow finished the manuscript while on the run from police, writing much of it on the kitchen tables of homes in Port Elizabeth's African townships. 'The work goes on', he wrote from Port Elizabeth, 'but always under the noses of the police and I am forced to move too often' (First 1964: 10). Over the next few years he gave much thought to the Phondoland revolt and its unusually intense and organized character.

[2] The TOB was a federal organization affiliated to the All African Convention, and the TAVA in turn was affiliated to the TOB.

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Economic Deterioration and Political Propaganda in the Phondoland

Phondoland was annexed by the Cape Colony in 1894, but not subjected to British military force. Capitalist influence was felt slowly there compared with nearby areas, but by the 1920s land shortage was evident, cattle numbers were declining and local people were increasingly dependent on migrant labour. Belief in magic and witchcraft was widespread; social ills were attributed to the violation of custom and 'associated with the weal or woe of the ancestors'. The rapid deterioration in living standards fuelled millenarian hopes that African-Americans would arrive in airplanes to overturn the existing order, hopes accompanied by a wave of hog-killing. Yet by the time organizers from the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union arrived in eastern Phondoland in the late 1920s people were ready for their message. Economic rationality mingled with long-held beliefs that pigs, scavenging animals raised by women, were evil: with land under pressure, tensions between pig-owners and plot-holders were rising, and in a state of widespread hunger, pigs were nutritious (Mqotsi 2006: 112; Bradford 1988: 213–14, 218–20, 224–40).[3]

During the 1930s depression, conditions worsened across the Transkei. In 1942 All African Convention (AAC) activist I. B. Tabata described the appalling poverty around Queenstown: 'all the people are starving and unclad….The other thing is that they are disease-ridden. All of them, practically everybody, is going blind. That is one of the most current ailments here' ([Tabata] [1942]; Crais 2002: 25). The devastation prompted Tabata to write an analysis of government policy in the reserves. *The Rehabilitation Scheme: A New Fraud* was published in December 1945. Tabata argued that the problem was not that Africans had too many cattle, which the government claimed as a rationale for cattle culling, but that they had too little land. Land scarcity was at the root of the poverty, malnutrition and illness that he had observed. In anticipation of Tabata's planned tour in October-November 1946, the pamphlet was widely distributed through local AAC affiliates such as the Cape African Teachers Association (CATA), which were sent batches of 50 or 100 copies. CATA teachers interpreted the pamphlet's argument into isiXhosa for local people (Tabata 1945; Ntantala 1992; Jordan 2009a).

[3] Mqotsi's study concerns the Ciskei, but he notes similarities with Phondoland.

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By the late 1940s, popular resentment towards chiefs, headmen and administrators responsible for implementing the Rehabilitation Scheme was on the rise. Tabata's pamphlet made an immediate impact. On 8 February 1947 the chairman of the Libode Planning Committee wrote to the Chief Magistrate, Umtata describing the pamphlet as an attack 'against the whole Government's Native Policy' and expressing his concern that its circulation 'can and will do much to create dissension among the native people'. The next year, on 16 September 1948, Tabata was arrested at Mount Ayliff after addressing a mass meeting, charged with entering the Transkei without proper papers. He was acquitted, but the local chief, Ntlabati Jojo, was banished from his home for life (Chairman of the Planning Committee 1947; Rassool 2004: 362–3, 445–6).[4]

That year signalled a significant hardening in South African politics, as the newly-elected National Party introduced apartheid, which continued and intensified racial segregation and oppression. In 1936, Cape Africans had been stripped of the qualified franchise they had acquired in the British Cape Colony. African political interests were then represented through the Natives Representative Council (NRC), a purely advisory body. Although the ANC and Communist Party initially tried to use the NRC as a political platform, it was soon derided as a 'toy telephone'. The AAC had affiliated to the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM) and was busily preaching non-collaboration, that is, the refusal of the black population to work the instruments of their own oppression – segregated, inferior, undemocratic institutions – by boycotting them. The TAVA and the TOB voted to boycott the NRC and expelled those members who were seeking election in it. The state's effort to engage Africans in the NRC's 'sham representation' backfired (All-African Convention 1948: 6, 8).

The AAC's 1948 annual conference was attended by delegates from across the Transkei. Chief Ntlabati Jojo and R.M. Tutshana represented an organization called Khongo. Formed in the 1940s, the Khongo rapidly became important in organizing resistance to state agricultural policies. Its members risked arrest for going into the forest to attend secret meetings. Yet despite this intimidation, its influence spread. Khongo branches were formed at Lusikisiki and Bizana in eastern Phondoland and at Dundee, Natal. 'In their secluded hilltop meetings

[4] The government appointed Chief Ntlabati as headman in 1925, but later stripped him of the position. He remained influential and became involved in the struggle against rehabilitation.

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the Congo became an alternative site of political imagining', argues Clifton Crais; 'it began to elaborate a structure of authority – polity even – that stood in opposition to the chief and, ultimately, to the apartheid state itself' (Crais 2002: 182–4, 186–7, 190–91; *All-African Convention* 1948: 1, 6; Lodge 1983: 283; Bundy 1984: 24).

The ANC also made forays into the Transkei. Its 1946 annual conference noted 'strong [Congress] activity in eastern Pondoland'. Generally though, the ANC's leaders acknowledged that they were neglecting the countryside. However, the 1952 Defiance Campaign was quite successful in Port Elizabeth and East London, where migrant workers and recently urbanized Africans maintained close links with their rural kin in nearby Ciskei and western Transkei and presumably brought back ANC literature. The ANC's 1958 conference referred to work in Ciskei and Transkei. It was in this context that Mbeki, who reported on the Transkei for *New Age*, began working on the manuscript (Bundy 1984: 26–7; Lodge 1983: 44–56; Crais 2002: 189, 212; Ntantala 1992: 149; Jordan 2009b; Southall 1983: 108–14).

By the 1950s, political literature produced by national organizations, some in *isiXhosa* and much of it promoting the AAC's views on non-collaboration and uses of the boycott, was circulating around the Transkei. In addition to *The Rehabilitation Scheme*, two other works by Tabata, *The All-African Convention: The Awakening of a People* and *The Boycott as Weapon of Struggle*, were widely disseminated. Phyllis Ntantala Jordan translated the latter as '*uKwayo: isiKrweqe ne Khaka*', making it even more accessible. The Society of Young Africa, an AAC affiliate formed in 1951, published a pamphlet on Bantu Education entitled *Yemk'imfundo* [There goes Education!]. The occasional contact with representatives of national organizations and the dissemination of their literature undoubtedly had an impact on local thinking: at a meeting in Bizana to investigate the causes of the Phondoland uprising, for example, local people 'quoted concepts' from the *isiXhosa* translation of *The Boycot as Weapon of Struggle*. Yet there is no doubt that the rural protests that escalated over the decade were organized directly by the local people and reflected their own perceptions and aspirations (Tabata 1950; Tabata 1952; Ntantala, *Life's Mosaic*, 149, 167; Matoti and Ntsebeza 2004: 177–208, 207; Mbeki 1964: 129; Jordan 2009b).

Political Authority and the Cooptation of Chiefs

One of the book's central themes is the changing nature of the chieftainship. Mbeki clearly believed that its time was over. 'If Africans have

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had Chiefs,' he argued, 'it was because all human societies have had them at one stage or another. But when a people have developed to a stage which discards chieftainship, when their social development contradicts the need for such an institution, then to force it on them is not liberation but enslavement' (Mbeki 1964: 47).

The Transkei's tradition of chiefly resistance to colonization was eroded with the imposition of the *Bhunga* established under Cecil Rhodes' Glen Grey Act and implemented gradually across the Transkei. The Glen Grey Council was set up in 1895, the Western Phondoland Council, in 1911 and the Eastern Phondoland Council, in 1927. The Transkeian Territories and Phondoland General Councils were amalgamated in 1929 into the United Transkeian Territories General Council (UTTGC). Over time chiefs were squeezed between government, on one side, and local *Bhunga* councils, on the other. But that the *Bhunga* was never truly legitimate, Mbeki states, was evidenced by its popular nickname, *Utata Woj' Inj' Emsini* [Father has had dog's meat blackened by smoke]. 'The least that one may expect from eating raw dog's meat, covered with soot so as to give the impression that it has been grilled, is severe constipation,' he explains (Mbeki 1964: 33–5).

Following the launch of apartheid, the government restructured political authority in the reserves into 'a hybrid of direct and indirect rule' known as the Bantu Authorities system. This was imposed in the Transkei in 1955, following the *Bhunga*'s disbandment. Premised on the retribalization of rural Africans, which was to serve as the basis for their political representation, Bantu Authorities had a pyramidal structure. At the base were Tribal Authorities, composed of chiefs and headmen. Over these were District Authorities, then Regional Authorities, Paramount Chiefs, and finally Territorial Authorities, composed of all members of all Regional Authorities and which nominated a head approved by the South African President. Territorial Authorities were given expanded powers to serve as the basis for eventual independence of separate African states – the Bantustan system intended to govern Africans in reserves (Mbeki 1964: 38–42).

Chiefs became the pivotal intermediaries by which the government was to obtain African acquiescence. In fact, Mbeki notes, government efforts to gain the support of chiefs 'coincided with the swelling popular opposition to the Bunga or Council system'. Under Bantu Authorities chiefs were given greater rewards. A resolution passed by the Transkei Territorial Authority select committee stipulated: 'That a special extra allocation of arable land be made to each chief and

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headman in stabilized or reclaimed areas as a consideration for the additional responsibility and dues devolving to them.' Through their authority to allocate land and trading licenses, chiefs controlled both land-holders – the 'privileged class of peasantry' – and traders, and for this they were handsomely rewarded (Mbeki 1964: 38, 75, 109).

In other words, Mbeki explains, the government was prepared to create 'a class of favoured land-owners' in order to impose its Betterment and Rehabilitation Schemes, while chiefs fined peasants who opposed the policies. By contrast, some 300,000 families or 1.8 million people were to be relocated, and implementation of Betterment relied on forced unpaid labour; men dug holes and erected barbwire fences, and women supplied and cooked food for the forced labour teams – even if this meant that their own children went hungry (Mbeki 1964: 75, 97–9).

Bantu Authorities fused judicial and administrative functions – Mbeki anticipates Mahmood Mamdani's idea of the colonial state's 'clenched fist' (Mamdani 1996: 23) – continuing the ongoing erosion of African access to legal counsel. The government finds it 'desirable to eliminate lawyers altogether from the machinery of law administration in the reserves,' Mbeki observed. 'On the other hand, the peasant believes that by taking advantage of available legal processes, he delays the evil day when the government will have subdued him altogether.' The saying '*ngaphandle kweGqwetha usisisulu setilongo*' [the surest way of going to jail is to appear in court without a lawyer] – expressed an African perspective of this judicial administration (Mbeki 1964: 100).

Mbeki concludes that 'though the whip has remained in the hand of the White government, it has been the Chiefs, the new jockeys riding the reserve horse, who have applied the spurs. The Chiefs are now well in the saddle', supported by the headmen who represent them in the villages. This explains the intense resistance across the reserves against Bantu Authorities and the chiefs who collaborated with it. The roots of rural revolt in the Bantustans, he contends, lie in the enforced lack of land that led to extreme poverty, together with the abuse of power by chiefs who collaborated with this process and enforced a system aimed at retribalizing and fragmenting Africans (Mbeki 1964: 109, 113).

Fury at collaborating chiefs swept across the Transkei, compounded by anger at stock theft. In western Phondoland residents of Qumbu and Tsolo, who had organized themselves as the *Makhuluspan* to combat stock theft, burned the huts and kraals of those believed to

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be collaborating with Bantu Authorities. In Mount Fletcher, popular pressure forced the resignation of Bennet Zibi as acting chief of the Hlubi and the installation of his older brother Frank Zibi, who opposed rehabilitation. In 1953 the government began enforcing Bantu Authorities in eastern Phondoland. In Lusikisiki, people adamantly rejected both Rehabilitation and Bantu Authorities. Residents of Msikaba Location complained: 'The people do not want tribal authorities…. They prefer the government of the time before the tribal authorities. The first system of government prevented bloodshed. Now through the system of tribal authorities too much blood is shed.' When a contingent of police moved into Lusikisiki, Mbeki recounts, one Mngqingo 'took a large peasant army with him to the thick forests'. When things quietened down, 'Mngqingo emerged and disbanded his impi'. He was later arrested and deported. In September 1957 a meeting of thousands at Bizana rejected Rehabilitation, Bantu Education and Bantu Authorities. By 1959 Bizana was seething (Matoti and Ntsebeza 2004: 183–4; Mbeki 1964: 118–20; Southall 1983: 109; *Ikwezi Lomso* 1959:1; Jordan 2009b).

The Revolt Against 'Cancer in the Heart of Tribal Justice'

In 1960 eastern Phondoland had still not suffered the full brunt of the government's policies. Driving through the region, Congress of Democrats activist Ben Turok noted 'the startling difference between East Pondoland and West Pondoland, where Bantu Authorities have been in force for some time. Here, large tracks of land have been fenced off, huts are clustered together in controlled villages, few cattle are to be seen and very little land is now under plough. By contrast East Pondoland presents a picture of vast stretches of lush vegetation where the cattle are fat and much land is under cultivation. There is a general air of greater activity and prosperity' (Turok [1960]: 4; Turok 2003: 120–21).

Thus, the particular intensity of the Phondoland uprising was not a result of economic decline, but fear of the decline suffered in other parts of Transkei undoubtedly played a part. Mbeki argued that the explanation lay in the nature of authority. The Mphondo had not fought the British and were 'well known in South African history for their allegiance to authority'. Compared to chiefs in other areas of the Transkei, Phondo chiefs traditionally had more authority, including civil authority and the power to distribute land, and they initiated

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modern administrative and procedural methods similar to those in civil courts. Many Phondo were influenced by Methodist missionaries and sent their sons to be schooled by them (Mbeki 1964: 117; Mnaba 2006: 11–12, 17, 73).

Precisely because of the greater authority of Phondo chiefs, Mbeki argues, once people lost confidence in them the entire system collapsed. In 1939 the government had chosen Botha Sigcau over his half-brother Nelson, whom most Mphondo felt was the rightful heir. Botha Sigcau faithfully implemented the government's policies. Councillors became corrupt – their position depended on their relationship with Botha Sigcau – and people lost confidence in the courts. The earlier tribal practice of consultation broke down, and 'in its place there was now the autocratic power bestowed on the more ambitious Chiefs, who became arrogant in the knowledge that the government's might was behind them,' Mbeki writes. 'This cancer in the heart of tribal justice was one of the main reasons for the breakdown of the whole tribal structure, and for the subsequent development of a new system during the Pondo revolt' (Mbeki 1964: 119–20).

Mbeki's reference to 'cancer' is apt. While he presents the revolt in rational and secular political terms, belief in magic and witchcraft was still widespread, and this included the use of cleansing rituals to rid society of evil spirits. Some Khongo leaders were 'native evangelists' and practitioners of witchcraft. The rebels saw their movement as a purifying force to cleanse society of corruption and evil and used prayer and magic rituals and medicines to empower themselves. Even government officials sometimes commented on the movement's 'religious slant'. Yet this magical or religious element was not fully in contradiction to the rational and secular: both were firmly opposed to corruption, even though some of the methods they used to understand and fight it differed (Crais 2002:, 205–6; Mnaba 2006: 57, 78, 100; Mqotsi 2006: 70, 78–9, 112, 191).[5]

The Phondo revolt began in the Isikelo tribal authority, Bizana in early March 1960 on the very day the authority was due to begin functioning – the aim was precisely to make the system unworkable. In Mbeki's account, thousands 'came on foot and on horseback to chosen

[5] Mqotsi (2006) argues that science and magic reflect different understandings of causality and attributes continued belief in magic and witchcraft, which crossed educational lines, to impoverished social conditions.

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spots on the mountains and ridges. This is how the movement became known as "Intaba" (the Mountain), when it was not referred to as "Ikongo" (Congress)'. Although Mbeki translates Ikongo as Congress – a reference to the ANC – this was the same Khongo that had affiliated to the AAC; the *isiXhosa* word for Congress is *Nkongolo*. Individual Khongo members had links with the ANC – one such activist being Congress Youth Leaguer Anderson Ganyile from Bizana – and with the AAC. But just as Khongo affiliation with the AAC did not mean that every Khongo member supported the AAC, there is no evidence that Khongo itself had any formal relationship with the ANC (Mbeki 1964: 120; Jordan 2009a; Beinart and Bundy 1980: 304–10; Southall 1983: 108–14; Crais 2002: 178–208).

Because the rebels met on mountains, their movement became known as the mountain and its committees as mountain or hill committees. At Bizana people initially met at Mount Nonqulwana; later meetings were held at three other mountains, Ndlovu, Ngquza and Nqindilili (Truth and Reconciliation Commission 1997; Mnaba 2006: 77–8: Mbeki 1964: 125, 128).[6] Mountains, spiritual places where rituals were performed, provided protection during wars and were places where people could meet undisturbed. Well before the revolt, the Mphondo met in mountains to show their dissatisfaction with decisions taken by the *Bhunga*, particularly those concerning the concentration of power in the hands of chiefs, who could attend mountain meetings only if they came as an equal, a commoner, not a chief (Mnaba 2006: 43–5, 75–7).

Once the revolt was launched in Bizana, it rapidly developed a hierarchical structure that organized well-attended clandestine meetings and coordinated a range of activities across the district. The uprising soon spread to Lusikisiki and Flagstaff, where local groups communicated with the original mountain committee by foot and horseback, although the Bizana committee was evidently the strongest and most militant. The movement's social composition was complex: there was undoubtedly a class division between those who enforced Bantu Authorities and those who suffered from its impact. Wealthy

[6] Mnaba (2006: 77–8) writes that the Bizana committee met at Mount Nongqulwana and another committee at Mount Nqindilili. Later the Bizana committee and others met at Ndlovu due to security issues. Mbeki (1964: 125, 128) writes that Ndlovu Hill was the movement's headquarters and that Ndlovu [elephant] was the name given to the political leadership of each African Location and signified that unity made people as strong as an elephant.

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individuals such as chiefs and traders were expected to make financial contributions to the movement, which was strongest in areas that provided most of the migrant sugar workers for the Natal plantations, many of whom had been sent back to the reserve. Local intellectuals, both evangelists and teachers, politicized as a result of Bantu Education, played important roles (Mnaba 2006: 77; Mbeki, 121; Southall 1983: 110; Beinart and Bundy 1980: 308–10).

The mountain committees soon found that 'government agents' had infiltrated their meetings and that their activities were being reported to the local magistrate (Mbeki 1964: 121). Those individuals were generally warned that if they did not cooperate their dwellings would be burned and they would be forced from the area or killed. In April 1960, for example, the Bizana Khongo advised its followers that 'we should not start burning immediately… we should first go to the chiefs, headmen and Tribal Authority Councillors and invite them to the mountain'. Only those who refused twice would have their kraals burned. But the movement became more violent, as people decided that 'if we want to fight the Bantu Authorities, we should kill the appointed members' (Crais 2002: 193–4). From March to June 1960, Mbeki reports, 27 kraals were burned. Some 22 people died in this manner, including two chiefs, five police informers and various headmen and bodyguards. Yet precisely because hut burnings were public affairs, it was easy for the authorities to pinpoint the leaders (Mbeki 1964: 121, 134; Southall 1983: 110).

On 6 June government forces attacked a mass meeting at Ngquza Hill, near Flagstaff. Airplanes dropped smoke bombs and tear gas while armed police surrounded the meeting. The people raised a white flag to signal peace; nonetheless, the police opened fire. The official death toll was eleven; other accounts suggest that up to thirty people were killed and sixty seriously injured. At the inquest that followed the massacre, the magistrate condemned the police force as 'unjustified and excessive, even reckless', but there were no prosecutions (Southall 1983: 112).

Far from putting an end to the struggle, the Ngquza massacre strengthened and broadened resistance. Around June the young ANC Youth League activist Anderson Ganyile, who had been expelled from Fort Hare in February and then detained for four months, returned to Bizana and became involved with the mountain committee (Mbeki 1964: 123; Southall 1983: 110; Matoti and Ntsebeza 2004: 185). Mbeki himself was detained for five months around this time. After his release

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Ganyile invited Mbeki to visit him in Bizana. By this time the revolt was well established, and in order to slip past police patrols Mbeki posed as a chauffeur, driving white South African Communist Tolley Bennun. During this trip Mbeki made contact with some of the Mphondo rebels, including migrant workers whom he later used to meet in Durban.[7]

Mbeki describes the mountain committee as disciplined and moving systematically from one method of struggle to the next. In his account it remained open to negotiation throughout the revolt, seeing armed struggle as a means, rather than as an end in itself. Mbeki emphasizes the avoidance of random terror: 'even at the height of the hut-burning campaign, those who waged the struggle against Bantu Authorities did not shed their humanity….in by far the most instances, the people whose homes were to be set alight were given due warning to leave, and once outside were not beaten or injured physically. On the whole the burning of huts was a warning, if harsh, that the owners should mend their ways… This is the difference between a people's organized force and a band of thugs collected for the sole purpose of sustaining a tyranny that lives in perpetual fear of its own failure' (Mbeki 129–31). Nonetheless, the efforts to avoid random terror did not preclude the murder of some of those operating the Bantu Authorities system.

Working through the Anti-Bantu Authorities Committee the mountain committees submitted a memorandum of grievances to a commission of inquiry composed of Bantu Authorities officials. They demanded the withdrawal of the Bantu Authorities and Bantu Education Acts; relief from passes and rising taxes; removal of paramount chief Botha Sigcau and representation in Parliament – political demands that, as Mbeki stressed, indicated awareness of the relationship between local and national struggles and some of which reflected contact with national organizations (Mbeki 1964: 122).

The commission of inquiry met in mid-July to investigate the mountain committee's demands. By then the Bantu Authorities system had collapsed in Bizana and much of Lusikisiki and Flagstaff, and most chiefs had fled. The mountain committee took over local judicial and

[7] Magubane et al. (2004: 60, 115) write that Mbeki visited the area twice with Bennun. Mbeki (Truth and Reconciliation Commission 1997) states that he dressed as a chauffeur for an Uitenhage factory in order to pass through security checks in Phondoland: 'I sat at the wheel of the manager's big American car dressed in a white dust coat and a cap. The manager sat in the back seat smoking a long cigar.'

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administrative functions. It set up people's courts in the absence of chiefs, arbitrated over civil disputes, allocated land and hut sites and meted out punishments for informers and those who supported Bantu Authorities. Moreover, it organized a census boycott and in September sent a petition pleading the Phondo cause to the United Nations (Southall 1983: 111; Mnaba 2006: 76).

The commission of inquiry issued its findings on 11 October, announcing to a meeting of some 15,000 that the complaints were largely unacceptable. Undeterred, on 25 October a meeting of 6,000 rejected the commission's findings and initiated a tax boycott. On 1 November they launched a boycott of Bizana traders, showing a sophisticated awareness of this tactic. As one local explained: 'We boycott the traders because they helped the government in trying to break us. When we boycott them, we are boycotting the government.' The one white trader who agreed to submit to the judgment of the mountain committee was exempted from the boycott (Mbeki 1964: 122–3; 131–2; Mnaba 2006: 93).

That the movement remained strong was suggested by the constitution of a local Khongo branch dated 19 November, which opened with the words, 'Obey the Congo'. It demanded that all civil cases and land and kraal site allocations be handled by the Khongo, warning that it would fine those refusing to join and 'see to' those who failed to pay. But its mission was not only political. It strove to purify society, opening and closing its meetings by prayer, prohibiting dances and parties and regulating marriage contracts: if a woman refused to marry a man, the *lobola* or bride-price was to be returned to the man; if the man refused, the *lobola* would be retained by the woman's family (Congo 1960).

The government finally crushed the uprising in an all-out effort. Police reinforcements were brought in, and on 30 November 1960 a state of emergency was imposed across the entire Transkei. The authority of chiefs and headmen was expanded; people were subjected to draconian repression, and even to call for a boycott became illegal. This was followed by mass arrests and the incarceration of some 5000 people. Eventually, 30 were sentenced to death; nine of these were later given reprieves. Through brute force the government hoped that Bantu Authorities could at last be implemented in eastern Phondoland (Southall 1983: 113).

Mbeki provides a compelling account of these events, stressing the mountain movement's discipline, rationality and humanity. While

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noting Ganyile's role, he does not provide any further evidence of ANC activity in the uprising, although individual ANC members or sympathizers were undoubtedly involved in the revolt, as were AAC supporters (Turok 2003: 120–21; Kayser and Adhikari 2004: 319–39, 325, 328). Nor does he mention that the rebels requested arms both from the ANC and from the NEUM, requests that were turned down by both organizations on the grounds that it was not yet time for armed struggle (*South Africa: An Analysis* 1961 in Drew 1997: 355–57; Mqotsi 1996; Turok 2003: 121; Magubane et al. 2004: 58–60; cf. Slovo 1995: 149). Indeed, as one Mphondo rebel recalled: 'when we met on the hilltops, we had nothing by way of arms except assegais' (Kayser and Adhikari 2004: 330).

Analyzing the Revolt – Strategizing Armed Struggle

Although the Phondo revolt captured the attention of urban activists, Turok has argued that they did not fully appreciate its significance. This may have been so, particularly while the revolt was unfolding (Turok 1971: 341–76, 355; Secretary, National Consultative Committee 1960; Congress Alliance 1961; Yu Chi Chan Club 1963 in Drew 1997: 384–86). A NEUM leader who described the revolt as 'ill-prepared', reported that before it began, 'the peasant leaders had come all the way to the Eastern Cape to consult the Executive of the All-African Convention. They were advised against the revolt. However the masses ignored the advice, with disastrous results' (*South Africa: An Analysis* 1961 in Drew 1997: 356). Despite the AAC's rural activism, the NEUM's urban-based leaders still saw themselves as the ones dictating the pace of change. However, as Mbeki revised his manuscript over the next few years, his analysis of the revolt shaped his thinking both about the relationship of urban and rural struggle and the nature of armed struggle.[8]

At the time Mbeki was writing, Marxism gave primacy to the urban proletariat, and Marxist thinking on rural struggles was generally framed in terms of the Russian and European experiences. Mbeki highlighted the importance of understanding local and regional specificities in developing a political strategy that encompassed town and

[8] He subsequently indicated that he sought to apply what he had learned from the Phondoland revolt to his work within the ANC (Magubane et al. 2004: 60).

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countryside. His observations indicated to him that rural struggles could last far longer than those in urban areas. The design of urban townships meant that 'vast masses of the workers are concentrated in a comparatively small area which is easily sealed off by the police and army,' he noted. As a result, 'urban-based struggles are more difficult to sustain for much longer than a few days.' Thus, the urban struggle, 'which starts on a high note after very intensive and costly propaganda work, consumes itself by the intense energy it generates to carry the masses to the climax – usually a general strike.'

By contrast, a reserve-based struggle 'had a much greater capacity to absorb the shocks of government repression and was therefore capable of being sustained for a much longer time than a struggle based on the urban locations….The struggles of the peasants start from smaller beginnings, build up to a crescendo over a much longer time, are capable of pinning down large government forces, and are maintained at comparatively much lower cost' (Mbeki 1964: 130–31). This idea that the relative autonomy of peasant life can be a source of strength vis-à-vis state power anticipates Eric Wolf's (1987: 371–2) concept of tactical mobility, namely, that leverage over resources like land or factors such as physical autonomy enables peasants to sustain long-term revolts.

Mbeki was again arrested in 1961. By this time, SACP and ANC activists were planning the launch of *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (MK) or 'Spear of the Nation', a new organization charged with armed struggle. It was launched in November 1961, with Nelson Mandela as commander in chief and Joe Slovo, Walter Sisulu, Andrew Mlangeni, Raymond Mhlaba and Mbeki on the national high command. MK's leaders considered four types of armed struggle: sabotage, guerrilla warfare, terrorism and revolution. They lacked the military and political resources for revolution and thought that terrorism would undermine their attempts to gain public sympathy. Thus, they began with sabotage, launching their campaign on 16 December 1961 (Mandela 1994: 262).

Mbeki returned to Port Elizabeth and set up a sabotage group. He was picked up again in 1962, charged along with Harold Strachan and Joseph Jack under the Explosives Act. He spent five months in prison, three of them in solitary. Amazingly, he rewrote his manuscript in prison on rolls of toilet paper. By the time he was acquitted and released he had two manuscripts, one, written before the ANC's banning, taking 'the peasant story up to 1960', and another, 'an improved version of the first, taking the story two years further'. Ruth First was given the task of

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integrating the two versions and editing the final manuscript. Friends in Cape Town checked the references, while Mbeki's contacts in the Transkei monitored developments in the Bantu Authorities system, in local development schemes and in the chiefs' courts and sent him information via ANC networks (First 1964: 9–10).

In the meantime, Mandela had been sent out of South Africa in early 1962 to attend a conference for the Pan-African Freedom Movement of East and Central Africa hosted in Addis Ababa in February. In March Mandela and Robert Resha met members of the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN), which had fought a war of more than seven years against French colonization. The Algerian armed struggle had begun as a rural guerrilla uprising, and by the time Mandela and Resha met with the FLN the war was at an end. The South Africans were very impressed with the FLN's success. But the political situation in South Africa was deteriorating: the General Law Amendment Act – or Sabotage Act – which authorized solitary confinement for 90 days and penalties ranging from five years imprisonment to death, was passed in June 1962. Thus, on 20 July Mandela returned to South Africa. There he met with other MK leaders at Liliesleaf Farm at Rivonia, outside Johannesburg. Mbeki was already there, having come up from Port Elizabeth where he had been served with a 24-hour house arrest order after his release from prison (Mandela 1994: 276–7, 286–8, 293–5, 299–300; Mandela 1962: 385/33/17/14).[9]

By late 1962 the sabotage campaign was generally seen as counter-productive. Far from influencing the government to negotiate, sabotage had led to greater repression. As but one example, around early 1963 Mbeki and First were both prohibited from writing, preparing or compiling any material for publication, and left-wing newspapers like *New Age* and its successor *Spark* could no longer appear. As First recounts, they 'had more time to work on the Bantustan book, but it had all to be written under cover, both to secure the manuscript and to guard ourselves against arrest, prosecution, and imprisonment for writing in defiance of the government ban' (First 1964: 10–11).

Influenced by the Phondo revolt, Mbeki proposed that the High Command consider moving to a more active form of armed struggle. As he himself put it,

[9] I am very grateful to Razia Saleh at the Nelson Mandela Foundation, Centre of Memory and Dialogue, for her help in accessing Mandela's 1962 Africa Diary.

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> sabotage activities were not proving very successful as from '61 through the end of '62. And I knew very well. So I get to Jo'burg. We meet as a National High Command and I said, 'Comrades, let's take it a step further. The sabotage fails….It's no longer successful, and we think this is going to peter out…we can't allow that. Let's get on to the next phase, which is the armed struggle itself' (Magubane et al. 2004: 138, 60).

Mbeki and Slovo were instructed to draft a discussion document on how to develop the armed struggle. The two men had complementary views. Mbeki emphasized the peasant aspirations of the rural population. Slovo believed most rural dwellers were actually peasant-workers, but he acknowledged land hunger and, influenced by the Chinese experience, felt it was necessary to appeal to rural people on the basis of their aspirations (Sanders 1953 in Drew 1997: 321). Their collaboration resulted in *Operation Mayibuye*, MK's first strategic plan. It was written sometime between 24 March 1963 – it referred to the abortive insurrection announced that day by the PAC's Potlake Leballo – and 11 July 1963, when police raided Lilliesleaf Farm and found the document (Karis and Carter 1977a, 671–3; Clingman 1998: 313).[10]

The 'Bantustan book' was almost complete by the time of the raid; it lacked the final chapter on the Transkei constitution and elections. Detained along with the others at Lilliesleaf Farm, Mbeki was placed in solitary confinement for ninety days, to be charged with attempting to overthrow the government by violence. Several weeks after the raid, First was detained and held for 117 days. Comrades in Cape Town completed the manuscript and sent it out of the country. First was released in December and made her way to London where she prepared the book for publication (First 1964: 10–11).

While Mbeki's analysis of the Phondo revolt may have been influenced by the ongoing discussions within the MK High Command, without doubt the revolt influenced his thinking about armed struggle, and this was reflected in his strategy documents. In his words, the Phondo revolt 'succeeded by example in accomplishing what discussion had failed to do in a generation – convincing the [ANC/SACP/MK] leadership of the importance of the peasants in the reserves to the entire national struggle' – precisely because of their tactical mobility. 'A proper blending of the peasant and worker struggles,' he maintained, 'coupled with skilful timing of joint action, is a matter which

[10] Bernstein (1999: 249) states that Operation Mayibuye was written while Mandela was still abroad, but Mandela had returned the previous year.

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must engage the serious thinking of the leadership' (Mbeki 1964: 130–31).

Mbeki's insistence on the strategic importance of rural struggles is seen in *Operation Mayibuye*, which drew on the Cuban and Algerian experiences to support this emphasis (Umkhonto we Sizwe 1963a; Magubane et al. 2004: 138–9; Slovo 1996: 146; Mandela 1994: 336, 343–4; Pinnock 2007, 217–20). Acknowledging the unlikelihood of a general popular uprising, it argued that 'the uprising must be sparked off by organised and well prepared guerrilla operations'. But before such operations could take place, the liberation movement would have to establish an external political authority capable of supervising both the internal and external struggle.

Although large parts of South Africa were 'not classically impregnable', the document observed, the Afrikaner use of guerrilla warfare during the South African War indicated that conditions were nonetheless 'suitable for guerrilla type operations'. More important than the lack of 'friendly borders' and 'impregnable natural bases', was 'the support of the people who in certain situations are better protection than mountains and forests. In the rural areas which become the main theatre of guerrilla operations in the initial phase, the overwhelming majority of the people will protect and safeguard the guerrillas and this fact will to some measure negative the disadvantages' (Umkhonto we Sizwe 1963a in Karis and Carter 1977a: 762).

Thus it proposed the progressive increase in sabotage activity across the country as a prelude to guerrilla struggle. Four groups of some thirty guerrillas were to infiltrate the country at Port Elizabeth, Port Shepstone, the Limpopo and Bechuanaland borders of northwestern Transvaal and the northwestern Cape. The aim was that they would be joined by 7,000 individuals ready to assist them – 2,000 in the Transkei, Natal and northwestern Transvaal each and 1,000 in northwestern Cape. The problem of collaborators raised in *Peasants' Revolt* was noted in this document, which stated that 'enemy forces' and 'irredeemable Government stooges' would need to be pinpointed; in the reserves this included 'the location of trading stations and chiefs and headmen's kraals' (Umkhonto we Sizwe 1963a in Karis and Carter 1977a: 766).

Operation Mayibuye's status remains unclear. Mbeki and Slovo claimed that it had been approved by the MK High Command and by the ANC and SACP leadership. Rusty Bernstein, though, claimed that the SACP's Central Committee was 'deeply divided'. He thought that

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the communists on the MK High Command – Slovo, Mbeki and Mhlaba – supported the plan, while he, Fischer and Ahmed Kathrada – none of whom were in MK – opposed it. However, he contends, the MK High Command wanted to proceed. It delegated Slovo to go to Dar es Salaam and seek the approval of the exiled ANC and SACP leadership. His recollection was that by the time of the Rivonia trial only the MK High Command had approved the plan and it was still under discussion in the ANC and SACP. Most likely the MK High Command approved *Operation Mayibuye*, but the SACP and ANC leadership had not reached a decision (Bernstein 1999: 231, 251–2, n. 2; Clingman 1998: 287, 313, 414; Mandela 1994: 344, 355; Magubane et al., 2004: 139–41).

Another document seized at Rivonia, *The Speakers' Notes: A brief course on the training of organisers*, reflected Mbeki's research, both in its reference to links between sabotage and guerrilla struggle and in its admonition to distinguish sabotage from terrorism (*Assegai* 1963 in Drew 1997: 376). Similarly, the SACP's ephemeral journal *Assagai* observed that the Phondo struggle was still active, that it had 'entered a new phase' and that 'the Tribal Authority…exists in name only'. Mountain committees – the 'real tribal authority' – continued to call for democracy, land, no taxation without representation, scientific education, and seeds, tractors and ploughs. The ultimate success of such armed uprisings depended on their alliance with the urban working class, it urged. It also underlined the problem of unity: the peasants had demonstrated that there was no place 'for sell-outs and quislings. Either you are with the people or with the government' (*Assegai* 1963 in Drew 1997: 364–5).

An article entitled 'The Peasants' Revolt' compared the Phondo uprising with other international experiences and argued for the interlinking of the urban and rural: 'sabotage in the towns destroys the property of the rulers, disturbs their communications and forces them to employ large numbers of men in trying to track down the attackers [sic]. Like-wise guerilla [sic] activities in the country harasses [sic] their army and breaks down the machinery of administration. In both cases the people are rallied to the cause….This two-pronged strategy formed the basis of the successful Algerian Revolution. A similar unity of workers and peasants…was the way in which the Chinese people defeated the forces of imperialism'. It reported the intensification of struggle in the Transkei, noting that resistance leaders warned those

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they intended to strike that they must make clear 'whether they stand with the people or with the Government' – again, the problem of how to deal with collaborators (*Assegai* 1963 in Drew 1997: 371–2).[11]

Intellectuals and Political Practice

As a politically engaged intellectual, Mbeki engaged in first-hand observation of the Phondo revolt, met some of its leaders and drew on this experience to reshape political thinking about rural protest within MK. His observations of rural conditions and struggles fed directly into political strategy. This strategy was never implemented: any possibility of linking rural protest with urban working-class struggle was foreclosed by the waves of arrests that followed over the next several years. The harsh sentences meted out to the Phondo rebels were a harbinger of the sentences imposed on the urban activists picked up at Rivonia and of the subsequent political crackdown.

Like other formally educated activists with first-hand knowledge of rural Transkei, such as Tabata and Ganyile, Mbeki stressed the political rationality of those engaged in these protests. Yet the Phondo revolt, like the late 1920s millenarianism, was also imbued with a mission to promote the society's moral regeneration. Moral values and magical beliefs were expressed alongside rational political thinking. People expressed themselves in familiar ways, but changed circumstances gave new meaning to traditional ideas and practices. The aims of the movement for moral regeneration converged with those of the movement for political democracy.

Sophisticated political ideas were heard in remote, seemingly backward settlements. At a commission of inquiry into the Phondoland revolt, one Albert Somadlangati, a teacher and Khongo member at Vlei Location, Lusikisiki, argued that 'it is the wish of the United Nations that the smaller nations should be given freedom these days… the big powers like England and France have granted independence to their former colleagues [sic]….there was a big conference at Accra – many South Africans were present. Among the resolutions taken…was that colonisation should be wiped out in Africa…The whole Africa is moving'. Subsequently, continued Somadlangati, a conference in Addis

[11] Crais (2002: 208) indicates that unrest continued and the Khongo may well have met in 1963.

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Ababa 'decided that the African states should be united' (Crais 2002: 191, 201–2).[12] This was hardly a parochial perspective, and it is no accident that it was voiced by a teacher, as teachers introduced country folk to urban and international ideas. Mbeki's experience of researching and writing the *Peasants' Revolt* and its influence on MK thinking demonstrates the complex and reciprocal relationship between intellectual and practical work and between urban and rural struggles.

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[12] The first All-Africa People's Conference took place in Accra, Ghana, in December 1958. In June 1959 a conference of independent African states took place at Addis Ababa. The Pan-African Freedom Movement of East and Central Africa was launched in Addis Ababa in January 1962, and the Organization of African Unity, in May 1963.

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CHAPTER FIVE

THE MPONDO REVOLT THROUGH THE EYES OF LEONARD MDINGI AND ANDERSON GANYILE

William Beinart

Introduction

Understanding an event such as the Mpondo revolt requires analysis of a number of different participant groups and also of longer term changes in rural society and the state. Should we see it as a localized rural rebellion, or as a component in the broader nationalist movement? Early discussions, such as Govan Mbeki's *Peasants' Revolt* (1964), saw the rebellion as an off-shoot of the surge of African struggle in the 1950s. In fact, his book is very largely a history of oppression in the Transkei in general and touches only schematically on the revolt in one chapter that deals with rural uprisings in South Africa as a whole. While Mbeki did not claim that the ANC had been centrally involved in the revolt, he thought that:

> the Pondoland struggle had its origin in local grievances… But very early on, new features made their appearance, and the aim of resistance became the attainment of basic political ends. Towards this end the movement adopted the full programme of the African National Congress and its allies as embodied in the Freedom Charter. Consequently the struggle in Pondoland became linked with the national struggle for liberation (Mbeki 1964:128–9).

My chapter, based largely on interviews with two participants, addresses these issues.

Mbeki's view at the time, the written version possibly filtered through the lens of his editors, Ruth First and Ronald Segal, has not generally been supported by subsequent writing on the revolt. Tom Lodge's (1983) chapter in *Black Politics* also provides a nationalist context but is more hesitant about close connections between 'the rebellion in the countryside and the political movements of the towns'. Brief discussions of the revolt during the 1980s, framed by analysis of peasant

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movements and hidden struggles more generally, tended to note its traditionalist and defensive characteristics (Beinart and Bundy 1980; Beinart 1987). While it was clear that the revolt coincided with major national upheavals, and that there were some links with the ANC, nevertheless its aims, focus and concerns were discussed as essentially particularist. Recent work tends to confirm this view. Matoti and Ntsebeza (2004) emphasize popular discontent with tribal authorities, the 'parochial' nature of the rebellion and the relative absence of local intellectuals who could make effective links with other rural protests and with broader movements. Crais (2002) and Redding (2006) have asserted the centrality of rural culture in analysing events such as the Mpondo revolt. They are critical of earlier writing on rural resistance for dwelling too much on the reactive, and political, elements of consciousness. In a preliminary discussion of the conflicts behind the rebellion, I have also touched on another neglected feature, namely the contestation over rural natural resources (Beinart 2002).

One reason why we should remain a little cautious about writing out the nationalist connections of the rebels is that few of the above sources have been based on detailed research. There is very little evidence, in the published material at least, about the individual experiences and political trajectories of the leaders of the revolt. Moreover, Delius (1996) has found quite deep interconnections between town and countryside, and between the ANC and local rebels, in the Sekhukhuneland rebellion of the late 1950s. My chapter does not provide an overview or any conclusive argument about the leadership as a whole, but does expand the evidence for ANC influence during some phases of the revolt. It is based on the particular perspective of Leonard Mdingi and Anderson Ganyile. Both are from Bizana, the epicentre of the revolt, and both are still (2009) living there. I interviewed them in 1982 and have been in touch with them on subsequent occasions. They were not typical rural people: by 1960 both had, through different routes, become members of the ANC. Both played a role in linking the ANC to the rebels, and advising the leadership of the movement. They provide a vantage point of intermediaries. On the one hand, unlike the rebel leadership, both were reasonably well educated and fluent in English. On the other hand, both were in frequent touch with the rebels, and they were closely aware of their concerns.

This approach may add something to the analysis of the revolt itself, and also its links with external ideas and movements. I agree that an understanding of these events must rest on a longer term view of social

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change and rural political culture. However, Mdingi and Ganyile placed particular stress on the essentially political, and reactive, character of the rebellion. They suggested that political consciousness was layered and contested but their versions were political narratives about state imposition and rural response. Going back over the interviews, it is clear that I was trying to elicit local social and contextual detail and texture, while they – especially Ganyile – were essentially developing a nationalist political analysis that they had rehearsed before. In this respect, their views differ somewhat from the prevailing academic opinion.

Background to the Interviews

When I began research for a master's dissertation at the University of London (1972–3), my comparative reading in African Studies suggested that the South African literature on resistance dwelt too much on elite and urban-based nationalism. I was attracted to the Mpondo revolt because it was clearly one of the most important rural rebellions. However, very little written material was available in the UK and at that moment we were reading new literature on the emergence of the peasantry, the origins of migrant labour, underdevelopment and rural impoverishment. So I focused on these processes in Mpondoland up to the 1920s, and became so absorbed that I went further back in time, rather than forward, for my doctoral dissertation (1975–9). At that time, the archives were only open till the 1930s.

I spent about seven months in Mpondoland in 1976–77 at a time of great political unease. Transkei was at the forefront of the apartheid government's policy of separate development. Kaiser Matanzima had recently taken Pretoria's offer of independent homeland status against widespread opposition; Soweto had erupted. Opponents of the regime were subjected to draconian security legislation. Under the watchful eye of the magistrate of Lusikisiki, I was assigned, and did much of my interviewing with, a retired police sergeant, Frank Deyi. He provided me with many connections, and was skilled at building trust with older informants. But his political position was well-known and, as a policeman, had served briefly as part of the guard for the paramount chief's homestead during the revolt. While people were not silent about the revolt, and rehabilitation was still an important issue, it was more politic to focus on an earlier period (Beinart 1982).

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Subsequently I became absorbed in new research on the period 1860 to 1930 which seemed so formative in South Africa's history (Beinart and Bundy 1987). But the revolt continued to beckon. In 1981 I interviewed Rowley Arenstein, the banned Durban lawyer who had been a staunch Congress and Communist Party member in earlier years and an important Durban-based link for the Mpondo rebels. He was also involved in their legal defence. He put me in touch with Mdingi whom I interviewed over a week in May/June 1982. There are about 15 hours of taped material, all in English. About half of the transcript includes both Mdingi and Ganyile, and half is with Mdingi alone, mostly on his earlier experiences. The interviews formed the basis for an article on Mdingi's life as a youth association member, migrant worker and political activist, mostly in the period before the Mpondo revolt (Beinart 1987).[1] Together with Mdingi and Ganyile I also interviewed around 20 other people in Bizana, partly about the revolt and partly about the male association, the indlavini, of which Mdingi had been a member.

It was then my intention to research and write a second book on Pondoland, covering the period from 1920s to the 1960s, and I returned to Bizana and Lusikisiki in 1988. With Mdingi as guide and interpreter, I interviewed a few other key participants. But I was waylaid again by other projects. This chapter is an opportunity to tell more of Mdingi's story. It is important to emphasise that both their memories, and my questions, were generated 27 years ago. The interviews, while long, were not exhaustive. I am presenting their points of view with a commentary. Both have been interviewed since, and some of their insights are included in the SADET volume 1 chapter on the rebellions in Mpondoland and Thembuland (Ntsebeza and Matoti 2004).

Mdingi and Ganyile

Leonard Mdingi was born in 1925 and brought up at his family homesteads first near Bizana town, and then in Amadiba Location, towards the coast. His father was poor and traditionalist. As a youth, he worked for a few years as a migrant worker on the sugar fields and at the mines, and then, in the 1950s, in Durban (Beinart 1987). Although he kept in close touch with Bizana, he settled in Durban and became involved

[1] Mdingi chose not to be identified in this article and he is referred to as M.

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with the ANC, the South African Communist Party (SACP), the ANC-aligned South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) and later the armed wing of the ANC, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK). He went to evening classes, gained a theoretical training and became a grass-roots trade union organiser. For a time in the late 1950s he rented a room on Arenstein's property. In 1960 he was a major avenue for communication between the ANC and the Mpondo rebel leadership. He moved between Bizana and Durban quite frequently and was sufficiently inconspicuous to avoid being picked up by the police, despite the fact that other ANC members were targeted.

After the rebellion, he spent most of his time in Durban and continued to work underground in the ANC when this was possible; he was detained on a few occasions. In the mid-1970s he was in a small ANC cell with Jacob Zuma (now President of South Africa), who had been released in 1973 after ten years on Robben Island. When Zuma fled to Swaziland in 1975, Mdingi stayed on, was exposed and detained in prison for periods during the late 1970s. After release he was sent back to Bizana and warned by the police not to return to Durban. Although he is a staunch Zuma supporter, he was not entirely happy with the behaviour of people around him in the ANC in the 1970s, especially Harry Gwala. In some respects, he regretted that he was not chosen to go into exile. It meant that he was neither able to further his education, nor gain political influence in exile. He did not secure any significant political position in post-apartheid South Africa. He is a remarkable man, thoughtful, measured and generous. But he benefitted little from his long role in the struggle – although he did get a payout as an MK member (which he spent on a tractor.)

Since the late 1950s, when his trade union activities made it difficult for him to find employment, Mdingi had run a small tailoring business, making – amongst other things – semi-traditional clothes for Mpondo women in the sugar fields and in Durban. By 1982 he had set up shop in a back room in Bizana town, hired from Freddie Fondo, a local businessman and butchery owner. The room was rather dark, often crammed with visitors, as well as his assistants, a few sewing machines, and colourful shawls and skirts. (In 2009 he still made clothes and lived in his workshop in the small industrial estate on the edge of Bizana town.)

When I interviewed Mdingi in 1982, he was of course well known to the police as an ANC man. It was difficult for him to go to Durban – he said if the security police found him there they would detain him

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immediately. But he was not isolated. He was part of a network of dissidents in the Transkei, the internal opposition movements were gaining ground, and loyalties in Transkei were deeply split. He felt reasonably comfortable in talking about his early life and the revolt – but not subsequent underground activity.[2]

Anderson Ganyile was born in 1935 in Amanikwe Location, Bizana. He came from a wealthier family, more committed to education, who were earlier converts to Christianity. They could pay for some of his education and he won scholarships to St Johns in Umtata, to Lovedale and to Fort Hare in 1959. He was politicized as a young man in these famous educational institutions, and joined the ANC Youth League's small branch in Umtata in 1954. (There was no branch in Bizana then.) He became involved in the Fort Hare ANCYL and was a protégé of Govan Mbeki, who wrote a paragraph on Ganyile in his book.

Ganyile was in a group of 24 students expelled from Fort Hare for political activity at the beginning of 1960. He returned to Bizana by chance at the very time that the revolt began and threw himself into support activities. As a known activist, he was detained almost immediately in March 1960 and held for a few months as part of a general clamp down on the ANC. He then re-engaged with the revolt from July 1960. After the rebellion subsided, he escaped to Qachas Nek, Lesotho, where he was supposed to provide a longer term logistical link for rural activists in the Transkei and Eastern Cape. For a short period, he was able to sustain networks of kind. Then, in August 1961, the South African police captured him in a cross-border raid – an incident which caused a small international furore. Ganyile was released and stayed on in Lesotho and Botswana for some years – he did not cope well personally with exile. On his return to Bizana in the 1970s, he had difficulty finding appropriate employment. But he is now far more comfortable than Mdingi, living in a large, modern homestead about 5km from Bizana town in Amanikwe. In 1982, Mdingi was somewhat suspicious of Ganyile. Nevertheless he invited him to join in the interviews and they shared sufficient solidarity and memories to talk together. Ganyile was particularly articulate and tended to dominate the joint interviews; Mdingi had a better knowledge of grassroots politics.

[2] He spoke about these in an interview in 2008.

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Causes of the Revolt

I asked what they remembered causing particular dissatisfaction in the period before 1960. They immediately spoke of rural issues. While clearly rehabilitation (which had not reached Eastern Pondoland) and Bantu Authorities were central, they saw the key problem as 'the Bunga' taking repressive decisions. 'This,' they recalled, 'was a foreign institution where decisions were made without [the people] being consulted.' The Bunga referred to the United Transkeian Territories General Council, established in its initial form in the early twentieth century, to which some local state functions were devolved, even before Transkeian self-government in 1963. It included white officials and African representatives, both appointed and partially elected or nominated by district councils. In the 1950s, however, the character of the Bunga changed significantly. Under the Bantu Authorities system, it became a Territorial Authority with enhanced representation for chiefs and headmen. It became increasingly unpopular both locally and nationally. African nationalists saw it as a divisive government strategy promoting unrepresentative traditional authorities, and a platform for the balkanisation of South Africa (Mbeki 1964; Southall 1982).

They frequently mentioned lack of consultation, echoing this recurring concern of those supporting the rebellion. 'People were used to going around to the inkundla, getting things discussed and then taking a decision'; now they found 'it has been decided'. Lack of consultation is sometimes a metaphor for a determination to refuse. The idea that local meetings had been able to shape decisions freely, sixty years after annexation (1894), or to refuse state directives, was of course hardly tenable. But they were expressing local concerns about the incorporation of African intermediaries, who were considered unrepresentative, into the state's decision-making process. Moreover, in the 1950s, rural communities were confronted simultaneously with the restructuring of local power in the Bantu Authorities, and with more systematic state intervention.

A longer term, and 'very important' process that they mentioned, exacerbated by the Bantu Authorities, was perceived corruption on the part of chiefs. Ganyile noted: 'You know in the olden days, chiefs were fair. They did not charge anything for allocating land. But now bribery had set in.' People could bid for a field and get nothing unless they paid. 'It was very rife, very rife.' I asked if they really thought that things changed that much, and chiefs were 'fair' in some earlier period.

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Mdingi responded with a comment on the commodification of local relations: 'With the economic changes and the cost of living higher, people were having to pay in money.' At the same time there were not as many livestock are there used to be. 'In the olden days they did not have to pay money – a beast was slaughtered at the kraal' for a visit by the chief or the headman when they came for an important purpose such as the allocation of land. Chiefs then started to 'take sheep away. Take the sheep for themselves and their family. And that was wrong'. The archival and oral historical record indicates that charges were being made for the allocation of land from the 1930s (Beinart 1982; Hendricks 1990).

Ganyile generalized out from this point: 'Most of our chiefs could not do anything for the people. Brandy, bribery, brandy. You don't pay [only] once.' We discussed the issue of alcohol at greater length. They noted specifically that African beer was no longer sufficient for the chiefs in the period leading up to the revolt. It was 'Viceroy, Mellowood, which in those days cost around 12 shillings'. Either the chiefs demanded this in cash so that they could purchase or, because sales of brandy were prohibited to most people in the Transkei, you got it on the 'black market'. Coloured people were allowed to buy any amount and they resold it.

Their comments about chieftaincy reflected a more general perception about the characteristics of benign traditional authority. The parallel point about commensuality – the chief sharing beer and meat at a commoner's house – is also a vivid evocation of a specifically African and less hierarchical approach. Whatever the actual position in pre-colonial times, it expresses an ethos about popular leadership that remains significant to this day, as Zuma has recognised. This conception of a good chief failed to recall the duties and commitments from subjects that had been required in 'the olden days'. In 1960, ordinary Mpondo people may not have been happy to serve in armies, pay death duties, provide labour for the chiefs' fields, go down on their knees, or khonza more generally – all expected in pre-colonial times. Nevertheless, such concepts of chieftaincy, and ideas about the betrayal of the institution, remained an important element in African rural politics. The archives of the magistrates and of the enquiries into the revolt suggest that political tensions over appointments of chiefs, and over succession, ran high.

The contested Eastern Mpondo paramountcy was at the heart of debates over chieftaincy. This came up in a few different contexts.

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One followed my question as to why Eastern Mpondoland was different, why the rebellion had become most intense in the three districts of Bizana, Lusikisiki and Flagstaff. Ganyile kicked off by saying that: 'Here in Eastern Pondoland the government made a grave mistake. They wanted to take the whole of Eastern Pondoland and introduce this [rehabilitiation] scheme.' They were relying on Botha Sigcau and his pro-government chiefs to implement this scheme. The Bantu Authorities gave them new power to do so. 'The people… never accepted Botha Sigcau, it is still a big issue.' They did not dwell on the issue of Botha's legitimacy and his installation by the government instead of Nelson Sigcau in 1938. But they reported the story that Botha was responsible for the death of Mandlonke, the young paramount in the 1920s. (This was followed by a long regency before Botha was appointed.) 'The belief is that Chief Botha Sigcau was responsible for his suicide.' There are other versions of Mandlonke's death, but this rumour – perhaps to be interpreted symbolically rather than literally – indicates the character of popular interpretations of succession disputes, personal politics and responsibility.

Ganyile added: 'People were more militant in Eastern Pondoland and more traditional. Here people have always had a feeling of being themselves and nobody else.' The major problem then, was that they felt there was increasing 'interference in the traditional system'. He and Mdingi differed somewhat about the attitudes to chiefs in general. They both agreed that 'by 1960 it was not a question of Nelson being restored. It was just… that now the time had come for the devil to be eliminated'. 'In my opinion,' Ganyile said, 'the people had not come to the stage where they were saying "away with the chieftaincy" but they were now saying chiefs have now become government stooges.' Mdingi, in contrast, thought that:

> people were attacking the chiefs, there is not one chief who was sided with the people. In most places people were openly saying "the chieftainship must come to an end", and in fact they are government paid and they are only giving orders which they get from the government… They were not working through the chiefs any more. [They were] going away from the chiefs; turning away from the chiefs.

We discussed some specific measures, affecting livestock and land, that alarmed people. For example, they remembered a great deal of unhappiness about the government's attempts to introduce pedigree bulls: 'People were forced to castrate their own bulls… They were not used to that.' Mdingi explained further that these were imported bulls and that

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the government wanted to improve the stock by changing the breeds. But the people 'claimed that it was a method to eliminate their own stock'. The chiefs and members of the Bunga attempted to collect money and buy bulls that would be owned communally. Conditions did not suit the introduced stock, which had to be purchased, and some died. People 'felt that it was another way round of limiting their stock as one bull cannot go round all these herds of cattle'.

Stock limitation and rehabilitation had not been introduced in Bizana, but Mdingi recalled the imposition of these policies in Mt Ayliff, a severely eroded area in which rehabilitation was introduced early. There were 'rumours' from Mt Ayliff that people were 'kicking against it'. Interestingly, in this respect, resistance in Mt Ayliff had coalesced around a shortlived movement calling itself the Kongo in the late 1940s. The Mpondo revolt was sometimes called the Congo or Kongo. Matoti and Ntsebeza, in their SADET chapter, debate as to where this name came from. Some believe it is a version of Congress, but they dispute this. They suggest, on the basis of their interviews, that it was a reference to the Congo. I did not pick this up from Mdingi and Ganyile but in my interview with Rowley Arenstein. He recalled discussing African politics in some detail with members of the rebel leadership when they came with Mdingi to Durban in 1960. This included the position in the Congo, where Lumumba was an inspiration to the international left, and Arenstein thought that the name came from this source. In fact, it is much more likely that it was picked up from the Mt Ayliff resistance. Ikongo was the term used for a reed mat put up over a door and, also – possibly derived from the mat – a term for young men's dances. It is also translated in Kropf and Godfrey's Xhosa dictionary (1915) as an ambush. Perhaps it was a term with these connotations and with an additional punning reference to the Congress.

Dipping, which had been introduced in Mpondoland in the 1910s to combat tick-borne diseases in cattle and scab in small stock, became another issue in 1960. By this time it was deeply embedded in rural life, and intensive opposition had subsided. Yet once government authority was challenged, Mdingi explained:

> the people decided that they would not send their cattle to the dip because the dip was water, it was not strong at all, it was not effective… and of course we were linking that with the movement out in Natal… where women stoned the dip tanks. It was in Ixopo Location and in most areas of Natal… I don't think the stuff they put in was effective. And people wanted to buy their own medicine, their own dip and that was refused by

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> the government, and the people suspected that then the government had some other motives.

In other words, the people thought that the government wanted to kill the cattle by ineffective dip.

These memories about bulls and dipping are fascinating not only because they address cattle, that perennial preoccupation of rural men. Firstly, they suggest that views of dipping had changed. In the early twentieth century, some had rejected it outright, but by 1960, Mdingi reported, people were more concerned about the inadequacy of the dip. Secondly, Mdingi's memories indicated the level of suspicion of the government on the part of rural communities. With regard to dipping, it is likely that livestock owners were unknowingly experiencing the early effects of resistance by ticks to arsenic-based dips (Whitehead 1973). People still complain about the weakness of the dip, when they can get it, fifty years later.[3] Now (2008–9), however, with ticks rampant in Mpondoland, most people are calling for a return of the fully subsidized dipping service, which eroded during the homeland era, and has not been fully renewed. A major problem both now and then was muddy water in the tanks, which greatly reduced the effectiveness of dipping. In 1960, however, the issues were framed by a more general interpretation of a malevolent state, aided by the chiefs, attempting to undermine Mpondo society.

Mdingi recalled the conflicts around settlement along the coast of Bizana. These are extensively documented in the archives and I will be expanding on them elsewhere. He put the date around 1957 – in fact the dispute started earlier. In essence, settlement was expanding in this sensitive ecological zone, much of it in Amadiba Location. This area had been less densely populated in the past and the state was attempting to reserve forests, and coastal zones. Mdingi recalled: 'the government wanted to take a strip of land near the coast and to fence off about 11 miles. They did not consult the people… Anybody talking about fences was an enemy of the people.' People were told not to plough there, even if they had already moved their homesteads.

> The people were not consulted on anything now; people were being driven out of the land and they resented that… At one stage the police

[3] Information from interviews on these issues in 2008–9, William Beinart, 'Report on Preliminary research in Mpondoland on Livestock Diseases and Local Management/Knowledge', unpublished paper, April 2009. ESRC funded project with Dr Karen Brown.

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> went down and were attacked by the people there and had to flee – those were the beginnings of this Congo movement, of this Pondoland revolt, 1957, 58, 59. The dispute was getting hotter and hotter.

There was a stand-off in Amadiba Location, near Xolobeni store, where Mdingi's father had moved. One man was convicted and spent six months in prison.

In this context, the local educated elite such as Saul Mabude, a key member of the Bunga and advisor at the great place, who lived in Isikelo Location in Bizana, came under strong criticism. The attack on his homestead in March 1960 signalled the beginnings of the revolt. I asked why Mabude was singled out. They said that he was known as a 'sell out'; he was an educated man but was seen as a protector of the chiefs instead of being a protector of the illiterate. He was a very prominent government supporter, who was not elected by the people and never reported to them: he just told them 'to do this and that and people were not used to that'. I asked if he was seen as arrogant. Ganyile said: 'He was not arrogant, but he was just adamant. He spent years at the great place as an advisor to Botha Sigcau.' They also told me the story that is recorded in the article by Matoti and Ntsebeza: 'He even said at a mass meeting called by the chief that if a child does not eat, then there is the old method of forcing the child to eat.' People resented this because they understood it to mean they would be forced and that he regarded them as children.

While in some senses the rebellion had begun slowly in resistance to forest and coastal land protection, and similar measures, the incident in Isikelo in March 1960 was the spark for a sustained and organized movement. 'He was blamed for every move. People got fed up in his Location – they decided to go and kill him in broad daylight. He managed to escape and rushed to town.' People 'started to apply the same method, taking action against chiefs, burning their kraals… the hunt was on for every government supporter… There must be no neutral Location'.

The Hill Meetings

After Isikelo, they recalled that the next place for direct action was Amangutyana Location, the site of Ndhlovu (elephant) Hill which became the 'headquarters' of the movement. I asked why the meetings were held on the hills. Mdingi recalled:

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> people used to meet at the chiefs' places, since now there were no chiefs so the people had to go to any place where they could hold their meeting. Traditionally people always regarded a place like a hill as important to them. In the olden days, and even now, when there is drought, people go up the hill and pray for rain. Traditionally they always go to the hill where they think their ancestors are supposed to dwell.

As he explained further, it could be any hill. Ndhlovu Hill was not of particularly symbolic or religious importance – but it was more or less in the centre of Amangutyana. On another occasion, when we were discussing the indlavini meetings that also took place on the hills, he made a comparison:

> The hill was and is still regarded as a place where you can discuss your things peacefully and without being interfered with. People always feel that if you discuss your things on the hill then the almighty will bless you. And when this Congo broke out the people felt: 'No, we will go to the hill where we will discuss all these things.'

Ganyile may have attended early Hill meetings in March 1960 before he was detained, but his main memories come from July onwards. Mdingi travelled from Durban when he heard about the outbreak of violence, but he could not recall exactly when. He visited sporadically from April and then stayed in Bizana after the Ngquza Hill shootings on 6th June 1960. When I asked why he escaped detention, Mdingi said he was 'not vocal' and he 'did not talk in public'. He was very careful and was already in fact trained to work underground in Durban in preparation for the banning of the ANC. In effect, he 'was already underground'.

Mdingi had been involved in political work in Bizana beforehand, specifically with Theophilus Tshangela in Amadiba, who became one of the five key leaders of the revolt. But he was not a local leader himself. He recalled vividly:

> Just before I left Durban I already had wind there was going to be a mass meeting at Ndhlovu Hill… I went straight to the hill… Of course it was my first time. There were hundreds of Pondos there. They were all talking – I mean the leaders were talking. At question time I raised a few questions. I was shouted down by the Pondos. They wanted to know where I came from. What did I know about this thing? Do I come from Durban? So in Durban you people have heard that we are making [collecting] a lot of money here so you are coming here to grab our money, steal our money. Anyway that was nothing to me. I knew that, if the people do not know you, then they are sure to be hostile to you.

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Soon after the beginning of movement, Solomon Madikizela established himself as the leader of proceedings at Ndhlovu hill. He was in some respects an unlikely rebel leader, a Methodist evangelist who also ran a small rural butchery. Ganyile recalled:

> People used to gather there in hundreds on horseback from far away; some of us were from this end [town] and people from nearby places came on foot. Now what was significant, because Solomon was an evangelist, all meetings were opened with a prayer first… He would just ask the almighty to be with us, to guide this meeting… and to open the eyes and ears of the government, to listen to us. Even if you go to gatherings where there are sixty percent non-Christian there is never any objection. Although people are not Christian they accept the importance of a prayer. There were always more non-Christians than Christians… it is mostly the women who go to church.

Neither knew much about Solomon's background, but they knew he could not advance in the church because he lacked formal education. He had only reached Std 2. In Ganyile's opinion: 'Solomon Madikizela became the leader of the whole movement because of his eloquence and outspokenness and fearlessness. Solomon was a man of outstanding leadership in the church and was respected in local affairs…he would talk … name the Pondo grievances – it was educational, talking about these measures, a repetition of the harm they would bring, the hardships.' To their knowledge (and mine) the rebels kept no written records of the meetings.

I asked whether women were allowed to attend: 'No. No women were there… I think this stems from the traditional point of view that men will decide and discuss the affairs of the community and women are only told what has been decided upon.' They missed the irony about lack of consultation.

I asked questions about the decision-making process at the Hill meetings (ekongweni or entabeni). They recalled that 'the nerve centre of the whole thing was Ndhlovu hill, and people from Flagstaff and Lusikisiki often came to these meetings at Ndhlovu hill'. At Ndhlovu Hill the leadership generally focused on overall issues and strategy, not specific discussion about how to deal with particular chiefs and informers. They both thought that the central leadership did not actively encourage the burnings of homesteads that came to characterise the movement. (They may still have been cautious about divulging such information to me.) But a number of Locations held their own gatherings: 'People used to sit around the meeting place and decide on a target.' Decisions were reached collectively rather than by vote.

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Ganyile emphasized on a different occasion that 'the national nerve centre was Nhdlovu hill. Ndhlovu Hill didn't take any decisions on whose kraal was to be burned. It was only the meetings in that locality. They decide. Local issues were always taken locally.' If there were larger issues, the local leadership sent a message or raised them at Ndhlovu Hill so that the central leadership who would 'voice these out now as a general grievance'.

The Mpondo revolt was very largely a pre-literate resistance movement and personal appearance at the meetings was important as a sign of loyalty. Mdingi mentioned that the Amadiba chief, Gangatha, wrote a letter to the Hill meeting saying that he wanted to talk to the people: 'This letter was read at the meeting, and of course people said he should have come. They wanted him to come and explain the whole thing personally instead of writing a letter… I think he was more or less afraid to go to the meeting.' Dissidence at meetings became difficult. There was 'no question of anybody in the movement taking the other line, that is the line of being an informer, because they knew what would happen to them'. To use Mdingi's characteristic and ominous formulation: 'They would be dealt with.'

Ngquza Hill had become the headquarters for the Lusikisiki branch of the movement:

> On June 6th a big meeting was planned at Ngquza and people from other areas were coming to attend. It was no secret, the chiefs knew about it… It was an ordinary meeting because people now were holding meetings to educate themselves what was going on… The police were called by Botha Sigcau… and in fact he wanted to turn people away from the meeting. And while the people were assembling there and more were still coming, the police arrived, police vans. People saw the police, they were just opposite… the police were this end and the meeting was held on the other side. The people saw that the police were in fighting mood and they hoisted a white flag as a sign of peace. But the police lined up and without a word they fired and the people started running away, some were killed and… that is how the meeting was dispersed. Eleven people were left dead and of course people ran away… After a day or two people went to the place – by this time the dogs were already there devouring the corpses. And no doctor was called. When somebody dies mysteriously or otherwise the district surgeon is called, examines the body and all that, and it was not done. Meantime, the police arrested a number of people and they were charged for holding an illegal meeting, and of course those people won the case and it ended there.

One of the justifications by the police for shooting was that the people were going to burn huts in Lusikisiki. Mdingi took issue with this.

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'No, in fact nobody could have known if they were going to do that because that was never discussed. I also know that paramount chief Botha said that people were preparing to burn down his Great Place. And we asked how he had come to know that and he couldn't say how… people were just holding a meeting.' Ganyile added, 'In all fairness because of their dissatisfaction people at Ngquza would have loved to see the Great Place in flames, but I am sure that this was never discussed; it was not the intention of the meeting.' Mdingi also argued that 'Ngquza Hill is very far from the Great Place and there were other meeting places nearer the Great Place. It would have been the decision of those meeting there, not this one. Buthlanyanga [hill] – the movement was there too and it was nearer'.

After the shooting at Ngquza Hill in June 1960, the Hill meetings were bigger. Action was agreed against the traders. This arose partly because of concerns that the white traders were giving information to the government, but largely because the movement attempted to collect money from the traders to support their legal costs. Ganyile recalled:

> There were whites who, when we approached them for money – money for defence – did pay. Some refused but others did pay – Mr Lewis at the big store. We decided that those shops where they did not pay would be boycotted – just telling the people at the meeting and of course bush telegram, very effective. There was no picketing, but the boycott was the best there has ever been. And we decided that all the shops [in town] would now be boycotted, nobody should come to town.

Mdingi added:

> That blanket boycott came about because the leaders of the people were charged by the government and they lost their case. There were two decisions taken on that particular day. The first was to bring back all the Pondos working in the mines and to boycott any recruiting agencies for the mines – that the Pondos would not go to work in the mines. And the second was to boycott the stores in Bizana [town] and only use those stores outside Bizana, those stores who are friendly to the movement… On that day people were assembled that side of the Roman Catholic Church, outside the hospital. Hundreds of them, from most of the areas of Bizana. The leaders were accompanied to be handed over to the authorities at the law courts and it was made clear to the government that the people from that day would not co-operate with the government since the government would not co-operate with them. After that day nobody came into the stores in Bizana till December, almost six months.

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We discussed the development of an alternative legal process, with some legitimacy and authority, when some chiefs' courts were boycotted. Mdingi recalled:

> The meeting decided that stock theft should come to a stop. I remember one time somebody's sheep were stolen – about 11 of them. And then he went to the meeting and the meeting said whoever has stolen these sheep must bring them back or we will go out and find out for ourselves, and if we find out who did this, then he'll be guilty; he'll be dealt with. And the following day the sheep were grazing just across the river but minus one – then it was clear that they had already slaughtered it.

In Mdingi and Ganyile's memories, it is clear that most of the strategic momentum, especially up to this time, came from the local leadership.

Links with the ANC and the Scale of Demands

I asked a number of questions concerning the nature of links between the ANC and the rebels, and whether the movement had expanded its demands and incorporated more general issues. One of the most interesting points to arise was that prior to the revolt, Mdingi had been a regular visitor to Theophilus Tshangela who lived near him in Amadiba Location, Bizana. Like Mdingi's father, Tshangela had moved down to Amadiba because the land was more open. He was a relatively wealthy livestock owner (Beinart 1987). He was also an unlikely rebel leader. Tshangela served as a councillor for the Amadiba chief, Gangatha Baleni, on the district council, and as a dipping foreman. But he moved away from the chief when the government put pressure on them to restrict settlement and to consider rehabilitation. Mdingi recalled:

> I went to see him at his house, his kraal… We talked a lot. Brought copies of New Age [the SACP publication]. He was very interested and we discussed and he kept every copy. I will say that we had a great influence on Tshangela. By this time the ANC was already concerned about the rehabilitation scheme. Sekhukhune was news and coming back to Pondoland and there was much talk about rehabilitation, Bantu Authorities, fencing off and all these things.

Mdingi thought that Tshangela 'did not like the idea of being hated by the people'. One of the reasons that Mdingi came down from Durban was that he had heard that Tshangela had been detained. As he had 'struck friendship' before the revolt, he felt he should try to find a

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lawyer for him. Mdingi was very committed to legal process and interestingly, laid great stress on the legal victories won by the rebels. Mdingi also became a close associate of Mgidingo Leonard Madikizela, Solomon's younger brother, who was a key rebel. Solomon once said to Mdingi: 'This boy had more brains than me and if it was not for him I would not be where I am today.'

As another example of wider influences on the rebels, Mdingi recalled that the indlavini in his area had already composed a song, before the revolt, *Asifuni masiphathi* – we don't want Bantu Autorities/ self-government. Ganyile said it was not only the indlavini, but 'everybody felt that there was going to be trouble… Even the amaqaba [traditionalist youth] composed their own song'. In Amanikwe, his home Location, there was a song (which they sung together in the interview): 'We the Amampisi, we say we don't want dompas.' When he was detained, he found the same song was sung in prison. Some of these songs were in general circulation. People 'have experienced the pressure [at work], come back and compose the songs, or import them from their workplace'. He was sure that there was ANC influence on the more general ideas in the songs.

Ganyile was not aware of other students from Fort Hare involved in the rebellion. He became involved in March 1960 in his individual capacity but was then given instructions by the ANC and when he came out of detention in July, he maintained underground links to the ANC. Other members of the Ganyile family were also politicized, sympathetic to the ANC, and involved in the rebellion. Daniel Ganyile joined the ANCYL at Lovedale in 1957. He was expelled from the school in 1959 over a school strike, along with Thabo Mbeki. He also joined the revolt initially on his own initiative because he believed that the ANC should be 'going to the masses'. He became a local leader in Amanikwe and later linked up with Mdingi, Arenstein, and Anderson Ganyile.

Mpondoland fell under the Cape ANC leadership, and while Durban soon became the major link, because of Mdingi, Arenstein, and its proximity, Anderson Ganyile tried to keep Govan Mbeki informed. 'You must know,' Ganyile mentioned,

> that Govan Mbeki is a Transkeian born and bred. And there is no better authority than him on peasant revolution. He was based in PE but his main concern had always been that there will never be a revolution in South Africa without the peasantry being politicized… He saw this as an

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> opportunity of his dream… I was very close to him… he saw that this was a unifying action and… had to exploit it.

Mbeki was involved in networks in the Transkei, particularly in Thembuland. But he was being closely watched. The evidence about Mbeki's direct involvement is unclear. Ganyile said in 1982 that he advised Mbeki against trying to come to Mpondoland and Joe Gqabi, a journalist, later also imprisoned on Robben Island, visited instead. However, Ganyile may have been reluctant to reveal Mbeki's involvement during the interview as Mbeki was still imprisoned on Robben Island. Other evidence suggests that Mbeki came to Mpondoland twice, disguised as the chauffeur of Tolley Bennun, an Eastern Cape businessman and activist (SADET, Vol. 1 2004: 115). The Eastern Cape ANC sent a newsletter to Ganyile who was responsible for distributing it. He recalled handling hundreds rather than thousands of copies. Nevertheless he felt that this was a way of imbuing people with 'the national demands'. Ganyile and Mdingi said that even if they had been able to keep copies of these newsletters, they would not show them to me, because they were still worried about the consequences of keeping banned literature.

Ganyile saw it as his main task to broaden the demands of the movement. He vividly recalls how he felt when he came out of prison in July 1960. 'I had no option but to seize the opportunity… there was no standing back we had to lead with the organization, with the movement, put in political ideas and political demands… I was able to explain a number of things to them because of my education and they had that trust in me.' Elsewhere he mentioned: 'We did not want that Pondoland should fight its own battle. We had to bring in national demands you see.'

While Ganyile felt that even the leadership had not fully internalized the broader ANC programme, he saw ANC influence gradually spreading:

> It was the same spirit, the gospel was spreading. One unified gospel among the Pondos was spreading, starting from the grievances, local grievances then… things broadened out to a national scale… There were local issues like people being charged… But now in the national spirit they had to be defended nationally by collecting fees from all the tribesmen but at the same time not losing sight of the fact that there was that politicising influence which was the main thing. We had to defend these people and at the same time the main thing was that the seed had to be

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> sown, the seed of nationalism because now it was felt that this could not just be left. It had to be grasped.

At the same time, he was aware that they needed to be cautious because by directly associating the leaders of the Mpondo revolt with the ANC, they would also be further endangering them. So at the time, he sometimes deliberately cut out language that he thought could be too closely associated with the ANC.

There were also unpredictable consequences of the ANC's involvement: the idea that Russian submarines would provide assistance spread briefly in Mpondoland. Mdingi recalled that: 'People thought some Russians were coming in to help them – one would think that was coming from the ANC. No it was not. The government was telling people that the ANC was under the command of the Russians. So the Pondo people thought that [if] the government is so much scared of the Russians,' then it would be valuable to have them on side.

Mdingi felt that Ganyile exaggerated the impact of the ANC and we had an interesting discussion on this issue. 'Throughout the revolt,' he argued,

> people never advocated changing the government or saying well, we don't want this government. All they wanted was for the government to change its mind, to come and talk to us and attend to our grievances. And that is why they kept coming to the magistrate's court to say please send word to the government that we don't want this, we don't want that. And that is that: people never advocated changing the government… The leadership, yes, but we are now talking about the general mood.

Rowley Arenstein went to Mpondoland in June 1960 to set up the legal challenges to the government's handling of the Ngquza Hill shooting, treatment of prisoners, and legal defence more generally. The ANC was called in because the local lawyers who had been defending the rebels were perceived to be charging too much. The ANC could provide free legal services. It was difficult for Arenstein to travel; as a political activist he had gone underground at the end of March 1960. So he organized replacements, Michael Mitchell, Albie Sachs from Cape Town and George Horrocks. Politically this proved to be an inspired move. Mdingi, as also Arenstein, saw the ANC's legal involvement and its occasional victories, especially in the Ngquza Hill inquest, as critical in winning broader support.

Arenstein was struck that the top five leaders were 'all peasants with no education', but he was impressed that 'they had great organizational

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ability. The whole area was organized and they knew how to handle things'. Mdingi took some of the leaders to Durban on more than one occasion. Arenstein remembered that they:

> discussed events with the ANC leadership and the latter could place it in African perspective… Discussed the Congo and they were very interested; they were able to see the wider perspective, the pan-Africanist angle. They came up to Durban frequently after that and wanted to discuss the political situation… One of the Congress members in Durban was Ernest Gallo… who was also a Xhosa, spoke the language of the peasant and became their confidant.

The Mpondo leadership, he recalled, told Mdingi and their ANC contacts that 'they needed money to fight legal cases and guns. Durban was transmitting messages to Johannesburg. The Johannesburg people misread what was happening in Pondoland. They didn't know their strength: the rebels wanted to take over the whole of the Transkei and get rid of white government'.

By the time I interviewed him in 1981, Arenstein had moved away from the ANC and was critical of its practice especially in relation to rural areas. Arenstein himself had quite extensive legal experience in the rural areas, starting in1941 when he was an articled clerk in the Northern Transvaal and became involved in defending Alpheus Maliba. He felt that the Johannesburg ANC headquarters talked down to the rebels (although of course a number of key leaders came from Transkei). On one occasion Solomon Madikizela 'came and said that he wanted £500 but he would not give the reason'. The message went through via SACTU channels. 'There was then a meeting at which the top men in Johannesburg met with the Pondo leaders… Solomon was furious afterwards. They said it was too much.' Solomon thought that the ANC was not prepared to trust the rebel leaders, despite the scale of their organization. Arenstein thought in retrospect that the ANC had been too cautious. Clearly, the Mpondo revolt was one of a number of episodes that affirmed the move towards armed struggle. But the ANC did not explicitly encourage violence in the Mpondo revolt.

Conclusion

The interviews with Mdingi and Ganyile in 1982 provide an intriguing perspective on the Mpondo revolt from the vantage point of intermediaries. I have not covered all of the points that they discussed, but

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their memories provide some insight, still lacking in the published material, into the political issues and preoccupations of 1960. They tell us something about the language, local political processes and networks involved in the revolt. (The actual language used in almost all local meetings was Xhosa.) They did not claim the revolt for the ANC and its political allies, but to a greater extent than most recent academic discussions, they underlined the links between the rebels and nationalist movements. In this respect, they echo analyses such as Delius (1996) on Sekhukhuneland. Of course, they themselves constituted some of the most significant links and their position is unsurprising. It is also important to emphasise that they did not entirely see eye to eye in their analysis of the rebellion. Ganyile felt that the ANC had made deeper connections than Mdingi. Despite his radical hostility to chiefs at that time, Mdingi was less certain about the scale and depth of nationalist influence.

My sense from other interviews, and from the archives on the revolt, is still that a more rounded analysis would lead us to the conclusion that local and particularist, rather than nationalist, issues, ideas and consciousness were uppermost in the minds of most participants. It would be interesting to compare the Sekhukhuneland and Mpondoland movements in this respect. ANC activists seem to have been more important in the core leadership in Sekhukhuneland. Yet as research progresses we may find wider connections between students, migrant workers and nationalist activists, including the PAC and Unity movement. The Transkei as a whole produced a significant number of nationalist leaders, and was the original home of many of those involved in radical protest action in the cities of the Cape at the time. Some members of the ANC, such as Govan Mbeki, were taking rural issues more seriously. And while Mbeki and Ganyile overemphasised the extent to which 'the movement adopted the full programme of the African National Congress and its allies', nevertheless, the general radicalization of protest in the late 1950s clearly provided an important context for the revolt. Rural deference, respect for chiefs, as well as the constraints against deployment of direct action and violence in politics, was breaking down.

These questions concerning the relationship between rural and national movements remain significant in analysing the historical character of the ANC in South Africa, and its capacity (or incapacity) to mobilize mass support. They may also remain significant in understanding the constituencies that have emerged at the heart of the ruling ANC alliance since 1960 and their relative strength after 1994.

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CHAPTER SIX

ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT: NYANDENI[1] ACQUIESCENCE IN THE MPONDOLAND REVOLT

Fred Hendricks and Jeff Peires

Introduction

While Eastern Mpondoland was in the throes of a thoroughgoing rural revolt in the early 1960s, Western Mpondoland was relatively quiet. There were a few pockets of rural resistance, but nothing approaching the wholesale repudiation of government policies and the establishment of an alternative militant leadership structure which had emerged in the East and which was sustained for almost ten months until it was violently crushed by the government. This chapter seeks to understand the relative quiescence of Western Mpondoland in the face of the all-encompassing rebellion in Eastern Mpondoland and it argues that while these differences are real enough, the contrast is not as clear-cut as might first appear.

It begins with an historical overview of the divisions in the chieftaincy of the Mpondo people, with a special focus on the origins of the differentiation between Western and Eastern Mpondoland. It goes on to provide a picture of Paramount Chief Victor Poto, who dominated Western Mpondoland for more than fifty years, and whose personality and policies are fundamental to any understanding of its historical trajectory. Here was a chief who was finely tuned to his own interests and who managed to negotiate the space between collaboration with the government and legitimacy amongst his people far better than most. His role in keeping things quiet in Western Mpondoland and keeping his paymasters happy cannot be under-estimated, but there are other factors as well. Firstly, while Western Mpondoland was relatively quiet, it is not as if nothing happened at all. Aaron Majali, a Chief and Headman in the Majola Location of Post St Johns, was killed in 1960

[1] Nyandeni is the Great Place of the Western Mpondo Paramountcy.

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and the chapter provides a detailed account of his murder by examining it within the context of the revolt in the East.

Secondly, the implementation of the government's rural development policies of Betterment, Rehabilitation, Reclamation and Stabilisation, and their connection with Bantu Authorities, is crucial for appreciating why the West was relatively unaffected by the ongoing rural resistance in the East. Yet, even here, Poto's role was crucial. While he cosmetically rejected the homeland system, and he often argued eloquently in favour of universal franchise for all, he was a staunch supporter of the government's plans for rural development. The chapter argues that there was as much hostility to these schemes in the West as there was in the East, but Poto's support for them prevented this hostility from translating into open rebellion.

The Mpondo Kingdom During the Reign of Faku

The Mpondo kingdom, one of the four kingdoms of the precolonial Eastern Cape,[2] was entirely reconstituted during the reign of its greatest king Faku, who ruled for about fifty years, from before 1820 to his death in 1867 (Brownlee, 1923: 111; Moodie, 1960:426; Ndamase, 1929, Soga, 1930).[3] Playing the part of '*ikhaya lezizwe* [the home of the nations]', Faku accommodated and ultimately absorbed numerous small chiefdoms on the run from Shaka Zulu's state-building, and the Mpondo kingdom emerged strengthened and expanded from the chaos of the Mfecane wars. Faku was equally astute in his dealings with colonial agents, more especially the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, and in 1844 he secured the British government's acknowledgement of 'the rightful claim long since made by Faku… that he is the paramount chief of the whole territory lying betwixt the Umtata River… and the Umzimkhulu… and from the coast inland to a line to be drawn along the base of the Kahlamba (Drakensberg) range of mountains' (Cited in Brownlee, 1923: 92–95).

[2] Oral sources and shipwreck records concur that the Xhosa, Thembu, Mpondo and Mpondomise kingdoms were all in existence before the year 1700.

[3] There is a biography of Faku in English, the interpretations of which are heavily influenced by its author's adherence to the controversial Cobbing hypothesis (Stapleton, 2001). William Beinart's PhD thesis, *Production, Labour Migrancy and the Chieftaincy: Aspects of the Political Economy of Pondoland, ca.1860–1930* (1979) remains the most insightful academic perspective on the early Mpondo kingdom. The revised thesis was published as *The Political Economy of Pondoland, 1860–1930* (1982).

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At the height of Faku's reign in 1846, the Mpondo kingdom had fractured along the line of the Mzimvubu River, a division which hardened to such an extent during the nineteenth century that when Mpondoland was annexed by the Cape Colony in 1894, it was not a single kingdom but two different paramountcies, related by culture and history but politically distinct. Political fragmentation was nothing new or unexpected in Mpondo history, but the status acquired by Ndamase, Faku's son of the Right-Hand House, was entirely unprecedented. Ndamase, who was some twenty years older than Mqikela, Faku's Great Son, had fought in all of Faku's wars since before the first Zulu invasion of 1824. As Faku got older, Ndamase got stronger, and jealousies arose between Ndamase and Faku's direct adherents. Things got so bad, according to the Ndamase version of events, that Faku dared not sleep in his house at night for fear of his own son, an unhealthy situation which could only be resolved by Ndamase leaving the country. Ndamase therefore relocated westwards across the Mzimvubu river (Ndamase, 1929:19–22).[4] These lands were already well known to the amaMpondo. King Faku had once lived there himself, and two important branches of the royal family, the amaTshomane and the amaKhonjwayo, were already well established on that side. Much of the territory was occupied by small independent chiefdoms, collectively known as the Mthwa (Kurkertz, 1990).[5] Ndamase famously crossed the river on a bundle of sticks (*iinyanda*), from which event the name Nyandeni was given to the Western Mpondo Great Place. He greatly expanded Mpondo territory at the expense of the declining Mpondomise kingdom, and fought battles against the amaKhonjwayo, who consistently refused to recognise his authority.

The exact extent of the powers delegated to Ndamase by Faku are still a matter of heated debate.[6] According to the Ndamase version,

[4] M. Madulini, interviewed by J. Peires, Marubeni A/A, Libode District, 23 Sept. 1993.

[5] Chapter one of Father Kuckertz's detailed study of Caguba A/A in the district of Port St Johns, is far and away the most brilliant historical reconstruction based entirely on oral sources that we have for any part of the former Transkei. It is to be hoped that he will one day see fit to publish the whole of his research.

[6] The Commission on Traditional Leadership: Disputes and Claims, commonly known as the Nhlapo Commission, was tasked by President Mbeki to investigate which of the twelve current Paramount Chiefs should be recognised as Kings. The Commission heard evidence in both Qaukeni and Nyandeni. It ultimately determined that the Mpondo (as well as the Thembu and the Xhosa) were entitled to one King only. The Western Mpondo have challenged this finding, and the matter is not yet finalised.

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Faku expressly conceded that the tails of all royal game (such as leopards) killed west of the Mzimvubu should go to Nyandeni, and it is clear that Ndamase enforced his authority as a king over the lesser Mpondo chiefs of the west. On the other hand, it is equally clear that in all matters touching the Mpondo kingdom as a whole – white encroachment, for example – the two houses worked in close consultation with each other, for example the Harding cession (1850) in the east and the Mdumbi incident (1855) in the west (Stapleton, 2001:82, 100–101). But on the death of Ndamase (1876), Faku's son and successor Mqikela asserted very strongly that all such concessions were personal in nature and had expired with the chief. The Mpondo kingdom remained one and indivisible and Nqwiliso, Ndamase's successor, was expected to submit. But, though the amaMpondo were still technically independent in 1876, the colonial presence had become so overwhelming that it was bound to play a decisive role.

Colonial Intervention and Annexation

Colonial expansion was driven in the first place by settler land-hunger, and settler pressure on Mpondo territory resulted in the surrender to Natal in 1850 of the land between the Mzimkhulu and the Mtamvuna. Further pressure in the 1860s arbitrarily redefined half of Faku's territory as 'Nomansland' and availed it to colonial clients such as Adam Kok's Griqua. (Saunders, 1976:19–21; 70–71; Stapleton, 2001:79,109). The core of Mpondoland remained untouched, however, until the British government resolved to acquire control of Port St Johns at the mouth of the Mzimvubu. The Cape Government twice offered Ndamase substantial sums of money for Port St Johns (1869 and 1874) and were twice refused. But after Ndamase's death, they found Nqwiliso, threatened as he was by the Great House, much easier to convince. In 1878, he ceded Port St Johns to the Cape government in exchange for official recognition and £1000 (Saunders, 1976:70–71).[7] After this shabby deal, the division of the Mpondo kingdom into the two independent Paramountcies of Western and Eastern Mpondoland was never seriously questioned even by the Eastern Mpondo Great House.

It was now only a matter of time before Mpondoland was annexed to the Cape Colony. The scramble for Africa was in full swing, and it was

[7] Amazingly, there is still no detailed account of this transaction more recent or objective than that of Theal (1919:175–182).

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'contrary to the spirit of the age' to allow an independent African kingdom anywhere on the African continent (Saunders, 1976:165).[8] The two white officials who implemented the annexation on behalf of Cape Prime Minister Cecil Rhodes did not even attempt to justify their action, but simply informed Sigcawu, Mqikela's successor, that 'a decision had definitely been taken by the Government' (Callaway, nd: 91; Stanford, 1962: 155). Sigcawu was left with no option but to submit. He was subsequently arrested on Rhodes's orders and, although freed on appeal, eventually intimidated into acquiescence.

The Western Mpondo were no better disposed towards annexation than the Eastern Mpondo. Nqwiliso's Great Son Bokleni was sidelined by a stratagem to give his father an opportunity to capitulate in peace, which he did by signing an agreement with Henry Lock, Governor of the Cape of Good Hope that:

> Nqwiliso, with the consent and approval of his council and tribe cedes, assigns and makes over to Her Majesty the whole territory over which he is chief, and he for himself and his tribe agree to obey the commands of Her majesty's said Governor…and to live in submission to the general laws of the said colony (Cited in Hendricks, 1990:47).

For the purposes of this chapter, however, the important thing to note is that the colonial authorities treated Eastern and Western Mpondoland as entirely separate entities even before the formal imposition of colonial rule. Sigcawu signed with one colonial official at Maqingqo on 15 March, and Nqwiliso with another colonial official on 19 March at Tyara. The gap widened when Eastern Mpondoland was placed under the Chief Magistrate of East Griqualand in Kokstad, while Western Mpondoland was placed under the Chief Magistrate of Transkei in Mthatha. Western Mpondoland accepted the Council System (Bunga) in 1911, while Eastern Mpondoland held out until 1927 and even then only submitted to force.

The Privileges of Paramounts

The peaceful submission of the amaMpondo to the *fait accompli* of colonial rule protected them from the kind of wholesale political

[8] For the annexation of Mpondoland, see Saunders (1976) and two vivid contemporary accounts, G. Callaway, *Pioneers in Pondoland* (Lovedale, n.d.), Chapter X; W. Stanford, *The Reminiscences of Sir Walter Stanford*, ed. J.W. Macquarrie, Vol. II, (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 1962),

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disruption and land dispossession (Hendricks, 1990:62–63). But it also protected the Mpondo paramountcies. Indeed, outside of Mpondoland, the colonial authorities only recognised one other Paramount chief – Dalindyebo of the abaThembu – anywhere in Transkei. Magistrates outside Mpondoland ruled through their appointed headmen without any help or hindrance from any Paramount Chief whatsoever. But the Paramount Chiefs of Mpondoland enjoyed direct access to the Chief Magistrate himself as 'officials began to recognize that a strong paramount in Pondoland, if co-operative, could be an invaluable asset in implementing state measures and entrenching Colonial rule' (Beinart, 1982:111). One index of the special privileges of the Mpondo Paramounts is that in the Mpondo districts, the Paramounts nominated the African members of their district councils, whereas everywhere else in Transkei the district headmen selected their own representatives from among themselves. In the same vein, the Mpondo Paramounts nominated three-quarters of their Tribal Authorities after the introduction of Bantu Authorities in 1956. Naturally, there was a price to be paid for these privileges: ultimate obedience to the colonial overlord. As Hendricks (1990: 48–49) puts it, '…the once proudly independent Mpondo paramountcy had been reduced to a crouching institution. Within this limited context Poto vigorously campaigned… generally for conveniences that would allow the Mpondo chieftaincy a niche in the new circumstances'.

Of the two Mpondo Paramountcies, that of Qawukeni (Eastern Mpondoland) was much greater than that of Nyandeni (Western Mpondoland). It had four magisterial districts (Mbizana, Ntabankhulu, Flagstaff and Lusikisiki) whereas Nyandeni had only three (Libode, Ngqeleni and tiny Port St Johns), and more than double the population, 245,550 to 120,000 in 1958.[9] But whereas Western Mpondoland enjoyed unparalleled political stability during the long reign of Paramount Chief Victor Poto Ndamase (1918–1972), the converse was true of Eastern Mpondoland.

King Sigcawu had died relatively young in 1905, and his son Marelane had succeeded in 1909 after four years of unsuccessful regency. But Marelane lasted only twelve years before succumbing to pneumonia in 1921. Another regency followed and people rejoiced when Mandlonke,

[9] File 3/8/2/1 Chief Magistrate Transkei to Secretary of Bantu Affairs, 14 June, 1 July 1958. The disparity in area and population gave rise to a substantial disparity in salary between the two Paramounts, ever a sore point with Victor Poto.

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Marelane's Great Son, ascended the throne in 1934. Sadly, Mandlonke shot himself after only three years. Some Mpondo say that Mandlonke was frustrated because the Agriculture Department interfered with his allocations of land, others that he was a hopeless profligate who could not pay his debts. In any case, Mandlonke left no sons of his own and the succession was contested by two of his brothers. One contender, Nelson, was backed by Mandlonke's inner circle while the other, Botha, was backed by the elite, naturally including Victor Poto. Nelson had the better claim in customary law, a point accepted by the government commission which nevertheless awarded the throne to Botha (Swana, 1993):

> As regards the merit of the two claimants, there is a consensus of opinion that Botha bears a better character than Nelson. He is more mature in years, has a good reputation for straight dealing among both European and Natives and is progressive. Under his charge, the Pondos will have a reasonable chance of developing. Nelson on the other hand is a weakling under the sway of hangers on at the Great Place.[10]

Botha Sigcawu was installed in February 1939 with a 'mobile squadron of the South African Police… in the vicinity as a cautionary measure.' Nelson's supporters went to law, and the case dragged on for nearly five years, ending up in the Appeal Court where judgement was eventually given in favour of Botha. Thus, by the time of the Mpondo revolt, Botha Sigcawu had been in power for half as long as Victor Poto, imposed on people, many of whom deemed him illegitimate. This is the crucial difference between Eastern and Western Mpondoland, and lies at the heart of an explanation for the different responses to the crisis of the early 1960s. The political stability of Western Mpondoland stood in sharp contrast with the contestations over the paramountcy in the East. The very division of Mpondoland which facilitated the initial autonomy of the west provides an indispensable background to understanding the unfolding revolt in the east and why it did not happen in the west, and here Potos' role is crucial.

Paramount Chief Victor Poto Ndamase

In his eternal quest for a salary increase, Victor Poto was wont to emphasise Western Mpondoland's long tradition of collaboration with

[10] This quotation comes from a report to the Secretary of Native Affairs, 30 September 1938, File 3/9/2/1 in the Mthatha Archives.

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the colonial authorities. Grandfather Nqwiliso complemented his surrender of Port St Johns by aiding the colonial army to crush Mhlontlo's amaMpondomise in Hope's War of 1880–1881. Father Bokleni embraced the Council system in 1911, and sent two of his sons to the Native Labour Contingent in France and death on the *Mendi* in 1917. His own words are tellingly revealing:

> ...the chiefs of Western Pondoland have never fought against the government. They assisted the government during the Pondomise rising of 1880. They voluntarily surrendered their country in 1894 and the Pondos responded to the call of the government for labour volunteers during the late Great War (cited in Hendricks, 1990:48).

In so saying, Poto greatly downplayed his personal role in weaning the Western Mpondo away from the traditions of their forefathers. However avidly Nqwiliso may have courted colonial support for his own benefit, he by no means welcomed the diminution of his own powers which accompanied direct colonial rule.

Victor Poto was different, not least because the circumstances of his early childhood made him so. He was the sixth of his mother's nine children but the first to survive infancy. While still very young, Poto was afflicted by a dangerous skin ailment and was baptized as Manduluka (McDougall), named after the ointment which saved his life. Bokleni believed his posterity was targeted by sinister forces and chose, quite literally, to hide his young son among white Christian missionaries, where witches feared to tread. Little Poto joined the Barrett family at the age of five, moving wherever they moved, right out of Mpondoland, first to Clarkebury, then to Queenstown, and finally to Leribe in Lesotho. In 1913 he was summoned home to his father's deathbed. Bokleni confirmed Poto as his Great Son and heir to his twelve Great Places, adding sadly, however, 'I know you will give them [the twelve Great Places] no wives. You will be like a white man and marry one wife, and not like me who has many wives.'[11]

In so saying, the dying Bokleni sanctioned not only a new reign but an entirely new regime. Poto was rushed to Healdtown and Fort Hare to finish his education, returning to Nyandeni to assume his duties in 1918 at the age of only twenty years. From the first he strove to combine

[11] File 3/8/2/1. 'Personal history of Victor Poto', written up by an official from notes provided by Poto himself. This is the most complete account, and much of it is corroborated in oral tradition.

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the best elements of chiefly tradition, as summarised in his excellent book *AmaMpondo: Ibali neNtlalo* ['History and Customs of the AmaMpondo'] (1927) with the most beneficial elements of European culture, exemplified not only by his adhesion to Christianity, at a time when fewer than 5% of amaMpondo belonged to mission churches (Beinart, 1982:138), but also by a 'new Dodge Car driven by a Native chauffeur', which cost him over 20% of his annual stipend.[12] He built a fine house in Libode, complete with gables in the Cape Dutch style (Bellwood, 1964:80).[13]

Agriculture had been Victor Poto's favourite subject at school and, in 1924, he founded the Nyandeni Farmers Association of which he became the first President. Early attempts to initiate a Western Mpondoland Development Fund and a co-operative store both came to grief, and Poto's economic efforts thereafter centred on his personal farm at Marubeni, where he produced maize, pumpkins and beans for the market. He invested heavily in this, spending no less than £132 out of a subsidy of £500 per annum in 1937 to pay farm salaries which, in all likelihood, never produced much more than £100 in income.[14] Poto was thus able, at a very early stage of his reign, to infuse his chieftainship with an ethos of modernisation and development to such an extent that, when the rehabilitation schemes were first proposed some twenty years later, they appeared in Western Mpondoland not as an unprecedented alien intrusion but as the natural extension of these supposedly progressive policies long established in his paramountcy. This sense of continuity is clearly present in Poto's 1960 boast to the Minister of Bantu Development, M.C. De Wet Nel:[15]

> I made it my business in Western Mpondoland to take the initiative [in rehabilitation]. I realised that the scheme offered many opportunities of self-improvement on the part of the people. I appreciated the demarcation of a rural Location into the residential, arable and grazing areas… I appreciated the conservation of water in the dams for use by stock, and the provision of wattle and gum plantations… in addition to the schemes for the reclamation and conservation of the soil to preserve it for posterity.

[12] For the car, see file 3/8/2/1 Chief Magistrate Transkei – Secretary of Native Affairs, 20 Nov. 1924; Statement of Income and Expenditure, 13 Aug. 1937.

[13] See the photograph in Bellwood (1964: facing page 80).

[14] Poto employed at his own expense an Agricultural Demonstrator, a Farm Foreman, an assistant Foreman and a number of full-time agricultural labourers. File 3/8/2/1 Statement of Income and Expenditure, 13 August 1937.

[15] File 3/8/2/1 Poto – De Wet Nel, 13 May 1960.

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Besides the benefits promised to the community as a whole, Poto fervently hoped that the Betterment of his home Location would include irrigation works on the Mhlanga River, from which he was otherwise obliged to haul water to his Marubeni farm by sledge (Hendricks, 1990:84–85).[16]

Victor Poto was willing to adopt new methods in administration as well as agriculture. In 1926, he built a modern office block where a full-time secretary assisted him to handle correspondence and keep proper records of court proceedings. He was one of the first chiefs in the whole of South Africa to secure civil jurisdiction under the 1927 Native Administration Act (Beinart, 1982:122; Hendricks, 1990:51).[17] But his ongoing quest for increased powers under European law did not preclude him from expanding his authority in traditional terms. He was not only the Paramount Chief of Western Mpondoland, he was the *only* recognised Mpondo chief in Western Mpondoland for many years.[18] Although, as we shall see, he found it expedient to recognize the hereditary rights of non-Mpondo headmen, he brooked no opposition from his half-brothers, the sons of Bokleni in other houses, reducing his brothers Gibisela and Moshi to humbly beg his pardon in a protocol battle that lasted more than two years.[19] He was less successful in his attempts to gain parity with his cousin of Eastern Mpondoland (Botha Sigcawu from 1939). The continual applications for salary increase which litter his personal file echo with near-hysterical indignation that he, Victor Poto, the most progressive and hardest-working Paramount Chief in the whole of the Transkei should earn so much less than his ineffective and retrograde counterparts in Thembuland and Eastern Mpondoland. His lowly salary, he felt, 'reduced him to the ruck of lesser chiefs'. But the other two Paramounts ruled much larger populations than Poto did, and he got no joy out of Transkei's white bureaucracy[20] – until the advent of Bantu Authorities.

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[16] File 3/8/2/1 Request for interview with the Chief Magistrate, 25 September 1950.

[17] File 3/8/2/1 Statement of Income and expenditure, 13Aug. 1937.

[18] The only other chief recognised by the colonial authorities in Western Mpondoland was Chief Gwadios of the amaKhonjwayo who consistently refused to recognise the superiority of the amaMpondo.

[19] File 3/8/2/1 RM Ngqeleni – Chief Magistrate Transkei, 14 October 1932 and subsequent correspondence for the full story.

[20] File 3/8/2/1 Chief Magistrate Transkei – Secretary of Native Affairs, 14 June 1958, 1 July 1958, 8 June 1959. The population of Eastern Mpondoland at this time was 245,550, whereas that of Western Mpondoland was estimated at 120,000 only.

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Bantu Authorities

In 1951, three years after it came to power, the National Party passed the Bantu Authorities Act. It was the most far-reaching piece of legislation in respect of the role of traditional authorities in South Africa. They were no longer to be chiefs in a traditional sense, as rulers of an independent people, but government appointees, answerable to those above, charged with implementing government policy and paid a salary.[21] More specifically, the Bantu Authorities Act sought to entangle the chiefs into the system of social control by enlisting them in the task of local policing. The relevant proclamation prescribing the 'Duties, Powers, Privileges and Conditions of Service of Chiefs and Headmen' warrants lengthy citation:

> He shall maintain law and order in his tribe or community and bring to the notice of the Native commissioner, immediately he becomes aware thereof, any conditions of unrest or dissatisfaction or any other matter of serious import or concern to the Government… He shall disperse or order the dispersal of any assembly of armed persons in his area, held without authority, or any riotous or unlawful meeting or gathering… He shall not become a member or take part in the affairs of any political organisation or of any association whose objects are deemed by the Minister to be subversive of or prejudicial to constituted government or law and order. He shall have powers to search without warrant any Native or any kraal, homestead or other place within his area occupied by a Native (cited in Hendricks, 1990:55).

Bantu Authorities was accepted by the UTTGC in 1955 reaching Mpondoland by proclamation the very next year. Following similar concessions of the council system mentioned above, in Mpondoland, unlike other Transkeian Territories, the paramount chief nominated three quarters of the members on any tribal authority. Yet again, the Mpondo paramountcy had negotiated an amendment to Bantu Authorities in its favour. It is clear that Bantu Authorities worked in Western Mpondoland in as much as it failed in the East. Victor Poto's stature and prestige played a pivotal role in smothering incipient protest. While the grounds for revolt were very fertile indeed in Eastern

[21] For a detailed discussion on the differences between so-called Native Administration prior to 1951 and Bantu Administration afterwards see Ivan Evans (1997) *Bureaucracy and Race: Native Administration in South Africa*. (London: University of California Press)

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Mpondoland, the legitimacy of Poto's authority prevented opposition from spreading to the West.

Poto took his role as the main agent of social control in Western Mpondoland very seriously indeed. Visiting Pretoria at the height of the revolt in May 1960, the Paramount Chief had promised the Minister of Bantu Affairs that 'I feel and am determined that whatever the government expects from me I will do it. I am not prepared to allow disturbances in my area' (cited in Hendricks, 1990:48). He succeeded. In 1960 his area remained largely unaffected by the unfolding rural revolt in Eastern Mpondoland. It is not the fact that he succeeded in preventing disturbances in his area that is under discussion here but how he accomplished this feat.
Poto's pledge affirms his unfailingly loyalty to the government:

> I have pledged my loyalty and trust to Dr Verwoerd's government which has brought so many benefits for the enjoyment of the Bantu people.

Moreover:

> …I stand behind no one in the Transkei in loyalty to the present government and in my appreciation of the benefits which the present government has conferred unto the Bantu people (cited in Hendricks, 1990:48).

It is remarkable that Poto managed to maintain widespread popular support and legitimacy amongst his people when he was clearly an arch collaborator with both the segregationist and apartheid regimes. He saw himself as a modernising chief, firmly committed to integrating the Mpondo people into life under the new circumstances of apartheid, and he propagated his civilising mission with enormous energy and crusading enthusiasm. Poto had managed to play this double game so successfully that by the late 1980s Govan Mbeki was thoroughly surprised by Poto's crass statements of allegiance to the apartheid government and his acquiescence to apartheid rule.[22] The ANC had always thought of him as being different to other chiefs. His genius resided in his ability to straddle the worlds of indigeneity and of the colonist, giving the impression of loyalty to both.

Before the advent of Bantu Authorities, only one chief besides Victor Poto was recognised in the three districts of Western Mpondoland, namely Chief Gwadiso of the defiant amaKhonjwayo in Ngqeleni district. Six of the headmanships in Libode District were in the gift of

[22] Fred Hendricks interviewed Govan Mbeki in Port Elizabeth in 1988.

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Victor Poto but outside these six, despite Poto's immense personal influence, the headmen were legally speaking subject only to the Resident Magistrates of their respective districts. Whatever the administrative theory, headmanship was in practice hereditary, and almost all headmen were looked upon by their subjects as traditional chiefs. Some of them were descendants of Ndamase or his brothers; others were heads of the smaller chiefdoms which, except for the amaKhonjwayo, had submitted to Ndamase when he crossed the Mzimvubu in the 1840s. When a headman was dismissed for disobedience by the colonial authorities, a not infrequent occurrence, he was usually replaced by his oldest son. If the oldest son was a minor, again not an infrequent occurrence, another male relative acted as Regent until the heir apparent turned twenty-five and married.

Victor Poto's Paramountcy was unanimously accepted by all the headmen of Western Mpondoland except the amaKhonjwayo, with whom he enjoyed a reasonable working relationship during Chief Mpiko Gwadiso's lifetime. While still newly appointed and very young, Poto had tried unsuccessfully to impose Tolikana Mangala, son of the former regent, on Lujecweni Location in Ngqeleni district. 'Chief Poto is acting very foolishly,' remarked the Magistrate, but Poto learned his lesson and came to respect the right of a community to choose its own traditional leader (Beinart, 1982: 118).[23]

The destabilizing factor in Western Mpondoland traditional politics was not Poto himself but the other sons of Bokleni. But their destabilization was localised and therefore actually ineffectual in respect of Poto's overall rule. Eventually, however, all the half-brothers found a place, except for Paraffin Bokleni who was foisted on Nkantini Location in Ngqeleni, the majority of whose inhabitants were amaNqanda, a branch of the amaTshomane. The amaNqanda never took to Paraffin and, when a vacancy arose in the neighbouring Bomvana Location, Paraffin moved across. Only to find that when the Bomvana heir came of age, he was not wanted there either, and in 1931 Paraffin returned to Nkantini. A complex series of faction fights ensued which did not end until 1955, by which time Paraffin and both his sons had been jailed for public violence and finally dismissed. Poto, significantly, did not automatically support his brother Paraffin, the Mpondo standard-bearer. When the amaNqanda eventually emerged victorious at Nkantini, and

[23] File 3/16/3/1 R.M. Ngqeleni – Chief Magistrate Transkei, 15 October 1920.

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the Location split in two, Poto did not resist. He fully accepted the amaNqanda's right to their own headman, secure in the knowledge that they fully acknowledged himself, a Mpondo, as their Paramount Chief.[24]

Thus by the time Bantu Authorities were proclaimed in 1956, the patterns of authority and subordination in Western Mpondoland were all fully established with the solitary and inevitable exception of the amaKhonjwayo. Bantu Authorities offered no threats to Poto, but opportunities only. The authority of all three Transkei Paramount Chiefs was, for the first time, legally recognised but, better than that, Poto was for the first time recognised as the full equal of Botha Sigcawu in Eastern Mpondoland. Better still, his salary nearly doubled to equal that of Botha, a holy grail that had eluded him since 1930 as the frequent supplications in his personal file amply attest.[25] Nor did the inner members of his circle suffer in any way. Poto's nephew D.D.P. Ndamase, the senior Mpondo royal in Ngqeleni District, had long begged in vain to be promoted from headman to chief. The Bantu Authorities provided for his aspirations by creating a Mpondo Chiefship in Ngqeleni to match the Chiefship of the amaKhonjwayo. Headmen salaries likewise increased exponentially. If Western Mpondoland's headmen had lacked popular legitimacy, none of these increases in wealth or status would have much impressed the commoners. But, by 1960, Victor Poto had been ruling for over forty years. The Western Mpondo had become accustomed to his modernising tendencies and to the other traditional leaders (such as Tolikana Mangala, ruling since 1924 and D.D.P. Ndamase, ruling since 1936). The only deep animosity to the Western Mpondo establishment was nurtured by the amaKhonjwayo, and when this eventually surfaced in 1962, it appeared merely as an old grievance rather than as a challenge to the institutional structures of the Region.

[24] File 3/16/3/23, especially R.M. Ngqeleni – Chief Magistrate Transkei, 14 March 1952

[25] File 3/8/2/1 Secretary of Bantu Affairs Department-Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner, Umtata, 21 July 1960. Poto's personal salary went up from £800 to £1500 almost overnight, and that of the chronically bankrupt D.D.P. Ndamase more than doubled. It is relevant that Western Mpondoland's financial breakthrough occurred as a result their visit to Pretoria in May 1960, at a point in time when the apartheid government was desperate to prevent the further spread of the Mpondoland revolt. The Secretary explicitly described Poto's financial windfall as a 'direkte uitvloeisel [direct consequence]' of the Pretoria discussions.

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Betterment and Rehabilitation[26]

Addressing a meeting in Libode on 23 June 1961, the Deputy Commissioner of the Transkei Police congratulated Paramount Chief Victor Poto and the headmen of Western Mpondoland on the fact that the Mpondo Revolt had never spread from the east to the west.[27] It was a perception fostered by many, not least by Paramount Chief Poto himself:

> My identification with the [Rehabilitation] scheme enabled its smooth operation in all parts of Western Mpondoland, in those districts or Locations in which it has been introduced, with no opposition from any section of the people. The cutting of fences and other forms of opposition which resulted in deaths in other areas did not occur in Western Mpondoland.[28]

Periodising rural development schemes in South Africa reveals a great deal about the unfolding nature of government policy. Official development thinking in the 1930s was heavily influenced by widespread fears about the ecological decline of the reserves of the Transkei. The Report of Native Economic Commission (UG22/1932) and other reports[29] encapsulated these fears and further highlighted the dangers of environmental deterioration. There was agreement by the government and its official opposition that the abysmal conditions in the reserves required state attention to ensure a certain degree of productive capacity and thus stem the tide of African urbanisation. The environmental destruction of these areas through soil erosion was invariably attributed to overstocking and their betterment thus required destocking or a limitation of stock in relation to the carrying capacity of the soil.

[26] For a detailed discussion of the similarities and differences between the Betterment Programme and the Rehabilitation Scheme, see Fred Hendricks, 'Loose Planning and Rapid Resettlement: the Politics of Conservation and Control in Transkei, South Africa 1950–1970', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, (1989) Vol. 15, No. 2, pp. 306–325.

[27] Mthatha Archives File 3/8/1. Quarterly Meeting of Chiefs and Headmen, 23 June 1961. All archival references are to the Mthatha Archives, unless otherwise indicated. It is interesting to note that this meeting was chaired by George Johnson, the Magistrate of Libode and principal figure of Shaun Johnson's 2006 novel, *The Native Commissioner*. Nowhere in the novel does Shaun Johnson indicate that his father was part of the administrative machinery that put down Transkei's greatest ever anti-colonial revolt, though he does (p.128) show George Johnson's growing frustration at his own servility.

[28] File 3/8/2/1 Victor Poto – Magistrate Libode, 15 September 1958.

[29] Report No. 9 of the Social and Economic Planning Council UG32/1946 and the Report of the Tomlinson Commission.

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The so-called Betterment Programme of 1939 was the first concerted state attempt to reform the reserves by reducing stock pressure on the land. In opposition, Africans claimed that:

> The essential problem of the reserves has always been, and still is, too many people on too little land, rather than too large a stock population (Mbeki, 1964:68).

Wracked by practical problems of implementation, the interruption of the Second World War as well as concerted African opposition, the Betterment programme was quickly replaced by the Rehabilitation Scheme in the mid-1940s and the appointment of the Transkei Planning Committee. But Rehabilitation did not fare much better. It envisaged a separation of peasants and proletarians, and considered a revised version of the communal land tenure system, as it had become clear that there simply was not enough land in the Transkei for all its residents to be self-supporting agricultural producers. Victor Poto was utterly convinced by this perspective and he enthusiastically supported these schemes in a speech to the Transkei General Council as early as 1945:

> There is nothing that the general Native people are so opposed to as this scheme we are considering now, but the facts compel us to come to the decision we have taken on account of what we see as a result of soil erosion when our lands are being carried away by water (cited in Hendricks, 1990:116).

His conviction of the necessity for conservationist intervention coupled with his traditional legitimacy and stature played a crucial role in ensuring that popular hostility to Betterment and Rehabilitation did not translate into open rebellion as in Eastern Mpondoland. There was an evolving national context which both circumscribed and facilitated the kind of position adopted by Poto. He was catapulted to the forefront in justifying and implementing Bantu Authorities as well as the Betterment and Rehabilitation Schemes.

Following the victory of the National Party in 1948, apartheid was pursued with much greater vigour. In the Transkei in particular, the conservationist ethos of the local administrators was overtaken by the drive to compel a more rigid separation of whites and blacks. While the Rehabilitation Scheme as well as the Tomlinson Commission had suggested the possibility of a concentration of land-holdings for some reserve residents and a differentiation of the population into full-time farmers and full-time proletarians, the National Party insisted on the universal application of the one-man-one plot system in the reserves.

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This pseudo-egalitarianism was vaguely reminiscent of the pre-colonial form of land tenure, but it was now thoroughly distorted by its confinement in reserves and its administration by colonial and apartheid magistrates and commissioners. The idea of creating a stable middle peasantry in the reserves was doomed by the unfolding necessity of these areas to be reservoirs of labour for urban industry. The distorted version of the communal land tenure system lies at the heart of the continued separation of the reserves from the rest of South Africa. Even though, in the post-apartheid era, we have a new geographic dispensation of nine provinces, the reserves remain differentiated by this form of land tenure and the accompanying distinctive form of local government, involving traditional authorities. This differentiation echoes the spatial distribution of poverty under apartheid.

The painstakingly detailed plans of the conservationist era gave way to 'Loose Planning' and 'Rapid Resettlement' in the 1950s in order to squeeze as many people as possible into the reserves. The groundwork was done to accommodate the forced removal of people from 'black spots' urban areas and the white farms, and for them to converge as a veritable flood of humanity in the reserves. The distorted version of the communal land tenure system served this purpose admirably and the traditional authorities fitted neatly into the overall plan. Poto accepted Betterment and Rehabilitation and he facilitated the implementation of its planning prerogatives in a number of administrative areas by separating the land-use types into residential areas, arable allotments, woodlots, irrigation areas and grazing commonages. This reorganisation of land use obviously involved massive movements of people, as they were removed from their traditional homesteads and resettled in regimented villages. The fact that Poto could preside over such fundamental changes without widespread opposition is a clear indication of the degree of legitimacy that he enjoyed in his rule. While people were reluctant to move, they did so under the prompting of their chief.

Stock-culling was an entirely different matter. It remained the most repugnant aspect of rehabilitation as far as the people were concerned. The stockowners of Western Mpondoland somehow managed to evade the extremities of culling (Hendricks, 1990:77–78). The transition from detailed planning to 'stabilisation' implied the prioritisation of control over conservation and, by June 1957, Transkei's Chief Agricultural Officer more or less threw in the towel. Culling remained most sensitive, however, and a glitch in the normal procedures during 1962 all but precipitated a revolt in Libode. 'I am very upset,' declared Headman

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Jiyajiya; 'There are ideas of rebellion in my Location.' Headman Dawana Benson complained that, for the first time, people were refusing to attend meetings. 'Why go to meetings?' they reportedly asked. 'All one hears there is of new laws which oppress the people.' Sub-headmen were staying away lest they identify themselves with the oppressor. Even Tutor Ndamase, Victor Poto's son and heir, who had proudly asserted in December 1958 that 'the residents of Libode District have always been in favour of rehabilitation', strongly condemned the change in culling procedures. The Magistrate of Libode [George Johnson, hero of Shaun Johnson's novel, *The Native Commissioner*] could only apologise, and promise that the mistake would not be repeated the following year.[30]

While Poto was successful in ensuring the reorganisation of land use and the villagization of the population, he realised that it would be foolhardy to insist on the most unpopular aspect of the scheme. Hence, stock limitation never happened in Mpondoland (East and West) despite the ostensible conservationist thrust of the plans. Poto conveniently side-stepped the most despised piece of the plan. By implementing one aspect of Rehabilitation, he gave the impression that he supported the government plan and by turning a blind eye to stock limitation, his people could believe that he was on their side. From all of this, we may deduce that culling of cattle was the bridge too far, beyond which even the collaborationist elite of Libode were not prepared to go. And that the coming of Bantu Authorities in Libode, far from strengthening the hand of rehabilitation, actually lightened its load by removing the Agricultural Demonstrators and Rangers.

But why did the revolts happen in Eastern Mpondoland? In the first instance, there was no legitimate champion for government policies and the people simply refused to reorganise their land-use patterns and to forsake the homesteads and arable lands which they had occupied for many years. Many of the districts of Eastern Mpondoland remain unplanned to this day. Their homesteads continue to be scattered all over the beautiful undulating hills that were the site of the revolt. Turok's (1960:4) impressions are worth noting:

> In travelling through Mpondoland one is struck by the startling difference between East Mpondoland and West Mpondoland, where Bantu Authorities have been in force for some time. Here large tracts of land

[30] File 3/8/1 Quarterly Meeting Libode, 29 June 1962.

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> have been fenced off, huts are clustered together in controlled villages, few cattle are to be seen and very little village land is now under plough. By contrast East Mpondoland presents a picture of vast stretches of lush vegetation where the cattle are fat and much land is under cultivation. There is a general air of greater activity and prosperity.

This impressionistic view does not tell the whole story. In Eastern Mpondoland, a decade after the introduction of Betterment, 8 out of a total of 23 Locations (subsequently called, Administrative Areas) in the magisterial district of Bizana and 20 out of a total of 46 Locations in Lusikisiki had been declared Betterment Areas (Hendricks, 1990:111). While the process of implementing Betterment was far more advanced in the Western Mpondoland Magisterial Districts of Libode, Ngqeleni and Port St Johns, it is not as if nothing at all had been done in the East. In reality, the situation was much more uneven.

Libode was second only to Butterworth District in accepting Betterment Areas, with three out of Transkei's eleven planned areas located there. By 1949, the three districts of Western Mpondoland had 58 Betterment Areas in its 94 Locations by comparison with Eastern Mpondoland which had only 28 Betterment Areas in 95 Locations (Hendricks, 1990:109–111). By the end of 1958, just before general unrest swept the Transkei, eight of Libode's 29 Locations had been fully planned, two planned on the fast-track 'stabilisation' model and the other nineteen had all applied for stabilisation.[31]

The minutes of the Libode Quarterly Meetings, give the impression not so much of opposition to Rehabilitation, but rather of frustration that the positive aspects of Rehabilitation had not been executed, that the promised tractors and fencing had not arrived, that certificates of ownership had not been furnished to those whose sites were excised. Delays in implementing Rehabilitation made it difficult to allocate new ploughing lands, a circumstance manipulated by the authorities to engineer popular consent. The main downside of Rehabilitation in the eyes of the headmen was the staff of the Agriculture Department (Rangers and Demonstrators), who interfered with their control over land allocation. When these were done away with,[32] the headmen's reservations disappeared in favour of a general desire to get the whole process over and done with. As the headman of Mbalisweni, possibly

[31] 3/8/1 Libode. Quarterly Meeting of Chiefs and Headmen, 23 December 1958. Input from Tutor Ndamase.
[32] Quarterly Meeting of 22 March 1960. No new rangers to be appointed.

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the most conservative Location in the whole of Libode, remarked in October 1958, 'I hope my Location will be planned shortly. The adjoining Locations on my boundary are being fenced, and we are being hemmed in.'[33]

By 30 March 1962, the Magistrate of Libode triumphantly announced that 26 out of the 29 Locations in Libode had been declared Betterment Areas, but, ironically enough, the faster Rehabilitation spread the less effective it became. As soon as the Rangers were withdrawn, grazing camps and other controls were rendered ineffective and the critical assessment of carrying capacity fell into abeyance.[34] By 28 September of the same year, all 29 Locations had been planned with 40 kilometres of fencing going up every month, but, at the same time, restrictions on stock movement were even further relaxed. Cutting of fences did occur in Libode, but these may be taken as symbolic resistance – akin to damaging telephone poles and obstructing the roads with stones – rather than objections to fences as such.

The practical problems of implementation combined with the unambiguous pursuit of apartheid policy and the migrant labour system after 1948 put paid to any localised notion that the soil could be saved in the Transkei and that a self-sufficient peasantry could be developed. There is a huge gap in South Africa between policy and implementation, but the segregationist objectives of the Tomlinson Commission were very clearly spelt out. The Commission was appointed in 1952 to inquire into '…and report on a comprehensive scheme for the rehabilitation of the Native Areas with a view to developing within them a social structure *in keeping with the culture of the Native*' (cited in Hendricks, 1990:126). The halting and ineffectual effort at relaxing influx control of Africans into towns by the previous United Party government was swept aside by the new National Party regime. It is not surprising, therefore, that all the Commission's recommendations that reflected the paternalistic development thinking of the previous regime were roundly rejected by the apartheid government. The Tomlinson Commission, for example, had proposed the creation of an African agricultural class making its living exclusively from farming, who could own land under title deeds. Instead, the National Party made it explicitly clear that it, '…was not prepared to do away from tribal tenure of

[33] Quarterly Meeting of 3 October 1958.
[34] Quarterly Meeting of 23 June 1961. For decline of grazing control, see Quarterly Meetings of 9 December 1960 and 8 March 1961.

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rural land and to substitute individual tenure based on purchase…' (cited in Hendricks, 1990:128). Yet, the idea of creating a stable peasantry lingered on, even though it was clearly incongruent with broader political and economic priorities. Hendrik Verwoerd, Minister of Bantu Affairs and Development at the time, subsequent Prime Minister of South Africa and one of the primary architects of apartheid, expressed the contradiction succinctly:

> One of the basic principles in the planning of the Bantu areas is the creation of a true farming community on economic agricultural units, but this principle may not clash with the other important principle of the *maintenance of tribal unity* (cited in Hendricks, 1990:128).

Propping up 'tribal unity' or reinvigorating tribalism had become the priority for state policy as a co-optive device bringing chiefs and headman into the local machinery of government, hence, the refusal to tamper with the already distorted version of communal tenure in the reserves. Poto's ostensible modernism rested on the shaky traditional grounds of Bantu Authorities.

The Murder of Headman Aaron Majali[35]

According to Copelyn (1974:19) '…even in Western Mpondoland there were outbreaks of militant opposition: most notably the murder of a Chief and headman in the district of Port St. Johns'. On 26 September 1960, Headman Aaron Majali of Majola, a Location in Port St Johns District immediately adjacent to Libode, was attacked and murdered by fifteen youths from Ntlanjana and Guduza, two sub-Locations of his own area. The Magistrate of Port St Johns hastened to report to his superiors that the murder was a 'personal matter', unconnected to the introduction of Bantu Authorities. The murder deserves special attention, not only because Majali was the only Western Mpondoland headman to die during the Mpondo Revolt, not only because the same tensions led to a second, even bloodier outbreak nearly forty years later, but because sufficient detailed documentation is available to enable us to discern the interplay between local factors and the overall context of the Mpondo Revolt.

[35] The evidence on which this discussion is based is all to be found in File 3/18/3/6 at the Mthatha Archives.

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Aaron Majali, aged just over fifty at the time of his death, was an educated man, a graduate of Lovedale and a teacher by profession. He was Chairperson of the Port St Johns District Authority, brother-in-law to Ngqeleni strongman D.D.P. Ndamase and, by any definition, a member of Victor Poto's elite. Majali must have agreed to the declaration of Majola as a Betterment Area in 1946, but, in subsequent years, he flatly refused to support rehabilitation in public and, when reproached by the Magistrate, straightforwardly asserted that his people were not ready to accept it. When in 1957 the Magistrate forced a vote on stabilisation, the Majola people rejected it overwhelmingly by 154 votes to two.

The immediate cause of Majali's murder was a feud between himself and two sub-Locations loyal to the memory of former regent Ndombe Buje, who had ruled Majola for all of 37 years before Majali's accession in 1946. The Daily Dispatch (29 September 1960) reported, '…according to headman Meyiya, the murder was the result of an old dispute'. In revenge for his murder, about 200 followers of Majali retaliated by raiding and burning down 50 huts in the area where his alleged murderers resided (Daily Dispatch, 29 September 1960). The virulence of this squabble, together with Majali's refusal to promote rehabilitation do lend some credence to the Magistrate's claim that the murder was 'not connected with Bantu Authorities'. But the evidence which came out in subsequent investigations reveals a somewhat more complex reality. Headman Majali was not, indeed, a supporter of rehabilitation, but he was the census enumerator for Majola, and he was carrying census cards on census business on the day of his murder. It was later established that the hostile sub-Locations had deliberately spread rumours that Majali was the very person who was urging the government to reclaim the Location, and that the purpose of the census was to bring on fencing. Moreover, Majali himself had told a colleague that the people of Tyeni, another hostile sub-Location, were threatening to take action against the Tribal Authority because it was 'in favour of stabilisation and reclamation'. In the light of this evidence, the magisterial contention that the Majali murder was 'not connected' with Bantu Authorities cannot be sustained.

It remains true, nevertheless, that Majali was guiltless of promoting Rehabilitation and that, in any case, no Betterment Schemes had ever been implemented in Majola Location. The exact nature of the connection is not therefore immediately clear and requires some analysis. Moreover, analysis of the Majola case has significant implications for

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our understanding of the Mpondo Revolt in its broadest dimensions. First, it shows that the basic perception which underpinned the Mpondo Revolt in Mbizana – that Bantu Authorities were oppressive structures bent on imposing Rehabilitation – extended all the way to Paramount Chief Poto's backyard. Second, it is clear that the death of Aaron Majali was brought about by the fatal combination of two factors, neither of which was sufficient in itself to precipitate an explosion. On the one hand, the example of the Mpondo revolt created a climate of opinion for thinking the hitherto unthinkable, that a chief could be killed. On the other hand, it took a fifteen-year old local grievance to generate the anger necessary to cross the line from sullen discontent to violent action. Third, and from the viewpoint of Aaron Majali himself most tragic of all, the murder was provoked by the fear of Betterment and not by Betterment itself. No comparable outbreak occurred in Libode District where communities had lived with Betterment for years, and had – except for the lurking threat of cattle-culling – successfully bared their teeth.

Conclusion

The Majola case forms part of a body of evidence that reminds us that Western Mpondoland, though relatively unscathed by the Mpondoland revolt, was not wholly different in its nature. The same dread of cattle-culling wracked Western Mpondoland and stoked resentment against traditional leaders. The Libode Locations of Mkankato and Mqingwana, fief of veteran Poto ally Tolikana Mangala, experienced 'serious unrest' against which the Transkei police took 'stringent measures', concerning which we know very little.[36] The leading chief of Ngqeleni district received anonymous threatening letters addressed to 'Quisling Douglas Ndamase', which frightened him very much (Redding, 2006:193). Sporadic but widespread cutting of fences, sabotage of telephone poles and the obstruction of roads with large stones took place over the whole period.

It is apparent, therefore, that widespread hostility to Rehabilitation and Bantu Authorities existed in the West as well as the East but was insufficient in itself to trigger a comparable revolt. The rebellious spirit in Western Mpondoland was greatly inhibited by the influence of

[36] File 3/8/1 Quarterly Meeting, Libode, 23 June 1961.

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Victor Poto and his cohorts, though the experience of Majola and perhaps Mqingeni shows us that inhibition alone is unlikely to deter the rage of the people when it gets white-hot. The Majola case certainly highlights the importance of local triggers, and it is pertinent in this respect to remark that the Mpondo Revolt proper was confined to a relatively small portion of Eastern Mpondoland. Significantly, this portion consisted primarily of the district of Mbizana, inhabited almost entirely by chiefdoms of non-Mpondo origin, and to those parts of Flagstaff which had followed Chief Mhlangaso into rebellion against the Mpondo paramountcy in the 1890s.

While the rural revolts of Mpondoland in the 1960s were isolated, this does not mean that we should view Mpondoland in isolation from the rest of the country. Instead, the role of the reserves as reservoirs of labour provides an important reference point for the analysis. Influential local administrators and agricultural officers in the Transkei were deeply committed to conservation, but their efforts were overtaken by national segregationist priorities of locating as many Africans as possible in the reserves. Human residence rather than agricultural production became the main preoccupation of these areas, and Poto's role was to shore up traditional authority and mediate unpopular government policies.

It would certainly help us to unlock the distinction if we could identify more precisely those things which happened in Eastern Mpondoland and which did not happen in the West at all. We may here briefly note the more unique and positive aspects of the Mpondo Revolt, its duration, its organisation and its capacity to conceptualise a viable alternative to a dead tradition and an oppressive status quo. The difference between West and East may well be partly due to divergent patterns of labour migration. Western Mpondoland migrated mainly to the closed compounds of the Rand. Eastern Mpondoland, more especially Mbizana on the very border of Natal, migrated to a much more open political environment and came into contact with national influences to a far greater extent. There is an ideological component in the East which was entirely missing from the West. Eastern Mpondoland had the influential activist Anderson Ganyile, but Western Mpondoland had no such activist to rival Victor Poto. Ideologies may indeed emanate more from structures than from accidents.

There are thus three inter-related issues of crucial importance in understanding why the West was different. Firstly, the initial separation of East and West Mpondoland provides the background to the very

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possibility of different responses, despite the protestations of the East regarding the indivisibility of Mpondo identity and sovereignty. These differences also ensured that they would be separately annexed with separate treaties signed for each and that Western Mpondoland would accept the council system in 1911, sixteen years before it was adopted in the East Mpondoland (Hendricks, 1990:48). The differences of the West in the early 1960s can only be explained in relation to its initial autonomy. Secondly, the unquestioned seniority of Victor Poto secured the personal loyalty of Western Mpondo traditionalists, whose counterparts in the East never accepted the legitimacy of Botha Sigcawu's contested succession. Thirdly, Poto's long reign had already prepared the ground for the central government's programmes for rural development, as they rapidly changed from an ostensibly conservationist commitment in the 1930s and 1940s to an all-encompassing effort in the 1950s to prop up traditional authorities as the local arm of the apartheid state. Poto himself played a central role in this unfolding drama by persuading or compelling his people into acceptance and submission, and he did this as a loyal representative of the government's Bantu Authorities programme.

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PART II

INFLUENCE OF THE REVOLTS

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CHAPTER SEVEN

HOYCE PHUNDULU, THE MPONDO REVOLT, AND THE RISE OF THE NATIONAL UNION OF MINEWORKERS

T. Dunbar Moodie (with Hoyce Phundulu)

This chapter is based on interviews in 1998 and 2006 with Hoyce (Hoyisa) Phundulu in Klerksdorp where he lives and works. While I have spoken with many of the leaders of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) over the past twenty-odd years, many of them in or from Pondoland, Hoyce is the only one who explicitly mentioned the influence of the Mpondo Revolt on his life and work. While the paper (as much his as mine: he has read it and approves it) focuses on his personal experience, neither of us would want to imply some sort of heroic status for him. He was one of many from a range of ethnic backgrounds as wide as the citizenry of South Africa itself who made possible the rise of the union. But this is his story, his perspective on a collective struggle that demanded sacrifice and commitment from all who participated.

Personal History

When I first met Phundulu in 1998, we talked for a couple of hours about the difficulties getting the union established in the Klerksdorp area. That will indeed be the subject of this essay. Since Hoyce was from Lusikisiki, however, I mentioned at the end of the interview the fun it had been to walk the hills there with Vivienne Ndatshe, talking to ex-miners. Phundulu laughed out loud. “It started for me at home,” he said:

> Yes, it definitely started for me when I was a very young boy during the Pondo Rebellion in 1960. I was very young, looking after cattle at home. I had not yet gone to school at that time, but I was still learning to look after cattle, to fight with sticks and so on, enjoying the very important culture for a young boy to become a man. We heard guns, and the old people said that people are being shot at that mountain where they were assembling. We used to see a lot of vans driving in the mielie-fields,

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> destroying the mielies [maize] as they drove. Very, very cruel brutal people who are looking at blacks as total animals to kill. We saw them harassing mothers, harassing old people, old mothers; we saw them arresting them.
>
> We grew up knowing many people were taken by the helicopters of the Boers. When they came to your home they kicked everything, destroyed everything in the house. So you just came to understand what the old people were talking about – the cruelties of whites. Definitely they were true because you could see. They were destroying our homes, destroying property at our homes, looking for old people who ran away in 1960. We grew up understanding that these people are not good people – but we can't help. It was a very terrible thing at that time.
>
> We grew up with that motivation, up to the stage, up to 1972, when they were moving around our area looking for… actually going to us when we were coming from school, asking, "Hey, do you know so and so, where is he?" And we were really motivated; "No, I don't know. I don't know him. I have never heard anybody talking about him. I don't know what you are talking about. There is no such person, called so and so."

In 1974, having completed Standard 8 (tenth grade), Hoyce was obliged for financial reasons to leave school in Lusikisiki and sign up for the mines. He started work at Hartebeestfontein Gold Mine (henceforth Harties) as a worker in the gold plant. In August 1976, he was promoted to be a clerk in the crush office. The crush is at the entrance to the shaft, where people are clocked in and out when they go down to work every day. From the point of view of union organizing, the crush office was an important center because crush officials saw every underground worker every day. Phundulu worked as a crush clerk at Harties for eighteen years before leaving to become a full-time union official in the Klerksdorp office in 1994.

Early Years of the NUM

I interviewed him at that office in 1998 while his memory of the struggle at Harties was still fresh in his mind. At that time he was regional secretary for the union in the Klerksdorp district which also included the little towns of Orkney and Stilfontein. The gold mines in the region were the huge Anglo-American (henceforth Anglo) Vaal Reefs complex (perhaps the largest gold mine in the world), two Gencor mines, Stilfontein and Buffelsfontein, as well as the very wealthy Hartebestfontein mine, run by Anglo Transvaal Mines Consolidated (henceforth Anglovaal), where Hoyce worked.

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Anglovaal was the smallest of South Africa's mining investment houses but it vied with Goldfields and Gencor as one of the most repressive and least reformist (despite being chaired by Clive Menell, a foremost white liberal figure).[1] Anglo was the most liberal in terms of labor relations. Unsurprisingly then, when the NUM was formed in 1982, its initial growth in the Klerksdorp region was at Anglo's giant Vaal Reefs complex rather than on Harties. Anglo created an office for the NUM at each of the nine shafts at Vaal Reefs, and recruitment proceeded apace. Anglo also established low percentage requirements for union recognition, enabling recognition for union branches on several of its mines during wage negotiations in 1983 and 1984. On Harties, however, despite substantial union enrollment, the NUM was refused recognition.

"Recognition" by a mine was fundamental for orderly unionization. Recognition was technically granted whenever the union had at least 30% representation in any job category. Mines on which any category of worker was recognized were able to be represented by the NUM in the annual wage negotiations with the Chamber of Mines. Once recognized, workers in a particular job category were able to negotiate with local mine managements over conditions of employment, appointment of shaft stewards, retrenchment and dismissal as well as grievance procedures. Recognition also gave workers a legal right to strike. Perhaps most important, from the union's point of view, recognition permitted members to sign a stop order permitting the mine to take their union dues off their monthly pay and remit it directly to the NUM.[2] Different mining houses, however, interpreted "sufficient representation to enable recognition" differently, demanding very different percentages of signed-up membership before recognizing the union in the various job categories on the mine. In this regard Hartebeestfontein Mine was one of the most intransigent in accepting the representativeness of union members. Hence the ongoing "struggle for recognition" at Harties that was so important to Phundulu.

On September 14, 1984, the NUM voted to strike over wages. At the last minute, the Chamber of Mines settled for minimal increases. The union called off the strike on Sunday, September 16, but was able to get

[1] For Clive Menell, see Anthony Butler (2008).
[2] For a useful discussion of the recognition agreement, see Allen (2003), pp. 102–105.

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workers back on the job only over the vehement objections of many them.[3] Some indeed struck anyway. In the runup to the strike, union recruitment soared, not only on Vaal Reefs, but also at Harties. On Monday, September 17, 1984, two-thirds of the day shift (8,000 of 12,000 workers) at Harties came out peacefully, not for wages, but instead demanding immediate recognition for the union. Since the union was not recognized at Harties and there had been no strike ballot (despite union strength on the mine), this was an illegal strike. Management, taking a hard line, confronted the strikers with an ultimatum: back to work or immediate dismissal. Both local management and Anglovaal head office refused to talk with NUM officials, let alone give them access to the mine to help talk workers back underground.

Three shaft stewards were arrested along with Puseletso Salae, the regional organizer. Then, striking workers were driven underground by mine security armed with tear gas, rubber bullets and batons. Golding quotes one worker who said: "They forced us underground. We did not even have our proper clothes on. They just wanted us to go to work. Although underground we just sat and did nothing." In the end recognition was granted only to supervisory staff and not to the general work-force. Salae told me that he was cruelly harassed whenever he visited Harties.[4]

At the all-night regional congress of the NUM on Saturday, December 3, 1984, however, Harties was well represented. According to a Vaal Reefs spy report (VRE/NUM Mins), Oliver Sokanyile from Vaal Reefs No. 2 shaft, the most prominent union leader at Vaal Reefs East mine, was obliged to stand down as regional chairperson. Sokanyile's reputation had no doubt been damaged by the 1984 wage settlement which many workers considered a sellout. A senior Personnel Assistant from Harties, Vitalis Ngoae from Lesotho, was elected to the chair. Thuso Ralekoata from Harties became regional secretary, while Sokanyile was elected regional treasurer. Both branch representatives were from Harties. Stilfontein elected a couple of representatives, but workers from Hartebeestfontein mine (indeed, they were all from Harties #2 shaft where Vaal Reefs activists had been recruiting hard) dominated

[3] For the early years of the NUM and 1984 strike at Vaal Reefs, see T. Dunbar Moodie (with Vivienne Ndatshe) (1994).

[4] He reported one incident, for instance, when mine security forces sprayed the inside of his car with tear gas while he was meeting with union members at the mine. For weeks it was torture to use the car.

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the regional committee.[5] Sokanyile told me that the Harties activists were recklessly militant. Hoyce Phundulu said the Harties union leadership believed they had no real option since management was so "very resistant, very anti-union. They refused to process our stop orders for union dues and so on." The principal demand continued to be a recognition agreement that granted union access to all the workers. At Harties the union was struggling for what Vaal Reefs West and East already had.

1985 Dismissals

On January 19, at the Third Annual NUM Congress at Thabong in Welkom, the union openly declared war on apartheid in the mining industry, focusing especially on the South African state's racial job reservation laws but also expressing the general militancy of the rank and file – especially younger workers – against the entire system of racial authoritarianism in management. At this Congress, union officials devised with the shaft stewards a series of strategies to target special areas of concern in different localities on various mines. Decisions were made to confront what were perceived as excessive profits from mine liquor outlets and concession stores, the fact that the TEBA savings bank[6] paid no interest, the establishment of separate messes for senior personnel and team leaders, toadying by consultative committees, and a number of grievances about the organization of work underground, such as the picannin system, blacks handling explosives and charging up without additional pay, racial preferences in queuing while waiting to be hoisted after work, and underground assaults. As Phundulu told me it had been decided that "each branch of the union must identify their demands and submit them to the management and start taking action so that management would meet them." Wage demands were always negotiated with the Chamber of Mines, but local branches were told to list their other demands and take action to bring them to local management's attention. One very common action was to boycott liquor outlets, concession stores, savings banks, and other

[5] VRE/Strikes, February 1985. The reference here is to Industrial Relations files from Vaal Reefs East Mine, which I was given, and copies of which are now available on microfilm at the Sterling Library African Studies Collection at Yale University.

[6] The Chamber of Mines recruitment arm, The Employment Bureau of Africa, enabled workers to open savings accounts at all its branches.

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secondary mine business. Workers erroneously believed that the mining companies were making vast profits out of such secondary businesses. What upset management most profoundly, however, was a decision on some mines to work short shifts. This totally disrupted production.

In February, 1985, unionized workers at Harties organized a boycott against price-gouging by taxis taking workers to town. They also started to boycott the liquor outlets on the mine, demanding recognition for the union. This boycott, Phundulu told me, was "about the recognition agreement, that other categories must be recognized, not just the staff. We were not convinced that management was having valid reasons not to recognize all other categories other than the staff. That was the major impetus for the boycott." The boycott tactic itself may have come from the NUM Congress, but the demands were about access and recognition, whereas at neighboring Vaal Reefs similar tactics were more generally aimed at matters of discrimination as described above.

Management at Harties allegedly ordered an induna to bribe "Mpondo" at #4 shaft hostel to drink at the bar and break the liquor outlet boycott.[7] Whatever the actual situation, it quickly deteriorated into a faction fight between Xhosa- and Sotho-speaking workers. In three days, the fight had extended to four shafts and others were threatened. "Tribal" conflict was always a potential problem in ethnically segregated mine hostels and ran directly counter to NUM policies of racial solidarity against management. At Hartebeestfontein, Hoyce Phundulu, who was at #2 shaft but not yet a leader, asked permission from the stewards on his shaft to negotiate a settlement of the faction fight. Coming as he did from an area of Pondoland seriously riven by faction fights, he told the union leaders: "Let me advise you, we must stop this now. If they are defeated now, they are going to plan another action. I don't know what they are going to do, but they are going to get back at you. I have experience from activity at home. I understand that faction fighting will not stop faction fights." The branch committee agreed, telling him, "Go ahead, do it."

Phundulu and a comrade brought together key people from different ethnic groups to discuss the matter. "There are in the mine people

[7] Traditionalist "Mpondo" were often persuaded by management to act against the union during these years. Such reactionaries were not even always from Pondoland, but "the Mpondo" had a reputation for being tough and opposed to the union. Phundulu, of course, was Mpondo himself.

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who are highly respected from their tribes because of their age, because of their popularity," he told me. "They are highly respected by their own tribe in the mine situation." He and his colleague brought together such people from each shaft and asked them, "What is the problem?" They discovered the main grievance; some of the shaft stewards who had led the liquor outlet boycott had taken to selling liquor outside the hostel. Phundulu and his friend called together the shaft stewards, two per shaft, from all shafts on the mine. It was an illegal meeting but they went ahead anyway. Everyone agreed that no union member would be allowed to sell liquor outside the hostel. People were authorized to confiscate any such liquor found and drink it free of charge. There was one other complaint. People from #4 shaft said that the indunas must be dismissed because they were collaborating with management. The meeting decided, "Let's not call anyone a collaborator. Let's persuade that person to become a member of the union and support the union, whether it be the induna or whatever." The following day the faction fight ended and the liquor boycott continued.

After a week, management started arresting union committee members and firing them. Security forces from the mine transported them to the borders of their respective homelands and dumped them there. Security raided the hostels time and again. Dismissals created chaos in union organization. Workers started working short shifts. The union's new policy of directly attacking authoritarian management with boycotts and short shifts was fraught with difficulty, requiring ability for strategic maneuver that implied disciplined capacity to act collectively.

Sokanyile had told me that part of the problem at Harties was the recklessness of the union leadership under Vitalis Ngoae. Phundulu agreed that this kind of action compounded the problem of an intransigent management, saying:

> All of us can testify that we didn't have a type of leadership that was capable of analyzing the situation and the time and accommodating themselves as workers because we were dealing with a very determined management. You needed to have strategies that would protect the workers, rather than strategies that would open them to harassment, victimization and so on. Such strategies were justified by saying that when you are dealing with a very brutal management like Harties, there was no middle ground. We were looking at whatever was effective to fight the management. There was strong leadership, but a strategic approach to activities and themes needed good leadership that would calculate the politics of every aspect. The people were guided by

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> anger most of the time. So, I'm sure that was Comrade Sokhanyile's argument.

The new policy of confrontation on local issues tapped into deep resentments of black workers subject to intense humiliations. On the one hand, this became a powerful source of appeal for union recruitment. On the other hand, it was difficult for union leaders to negotiate successful compromises with management if "the people were guided by anger most of the time."

Phundulu explained that this was "a learning stage for the union." Management had much to learn also. "It was not the same as today where people are able to have meetings," he said:

> At that time a group of workers would come – a group would speak out a strategy against the regime and that direction would be adopted [without much discussion], because people had had no experience of trade unionism. The development was not there. Education was not available to people about how to run a meeting. At the same time it was a time of attempting to bring everyone into the union and management was insisting the opposite.

The struggle, then, was for public space as well as organizing ability and negotiating skills. Wrenching space from management was no guarantee of democratic discussion, but any space to speak out was better than none:

> We were making demands because the mining industry had terrible conditions and people were beginning to have a space to air their grievances, and people were beginning to see different ways of organizing their comrades. So then yes, you can criticize that, but anything was better than it had been.

In April 1985, 3,200 workers at Harties were dismissed. The union there was annihilated. Phundulu explained:

> Workers became divided in terms of how to deal with this. Some were saying workers must remain inside the hostel. Others were saying workers must go outside the hostel because management was using tear gas, rubber bullets and so on. Many people were injured. As a result 3,200 workers were dismissed out of a workforce of 18,000. That was the end of the union at Harties. Very, very few people remained members – not even as many as 50. Management was so very anti-union and was ignoring union representations. Anybody who was a wearing a T-shirt must be dismissed without a hearing. We were left with fewer than 50 members and we had had more than 6,000 members. We were claiming that we had about 50% which was about 8,000; management was saying that

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> we had peaked at 4,000 or 5,000. But according to us we had had about 8,000.

The situation at Harties was not unique in early 1985. At the same time as the Harties mass dismissals, Anglo's Vaal Reefs South mine dismissed their entire workforce of 14,000. For several months, as at Harties, workers at Vaal Reefs South had been deliberately disrupting mining operations. There too, the union was virtually destroyed.

Rebuilding the Union at Harties

At Harties, it was back to basics after the 1985 dismissals. Phundulu explained:

> Harties was a hot place I can tell you. At a meeting it was difficult to raise 50 people out of 18,000 workers, because those 3,000 workers that were dismissed were replaced by others. Very few came back. Very, very few came back. Anybody who was known as activist, as a steward and so on, was wiped out. Very few stewards were left at the end and very few activists were left. So we struggled. Brutal oppression of the mine… everybody being afraid to join the union on the mine. Anyone joining the union was expected to be dismissed or be locked up in jail.
>
> So that was the situation and it took us a long, long, long time to reorganize and have a union at Harties. Management was so very, very, very brutal at that time, I can tell you. But we managed to develop many strategies, such as not putting on T-shirts, talking person to person, having groups in each hostel, say five, five, five per hostel. Just appointing those very few to motivate them and explain the union and the tactics necessary to draw people in: to sign up union members without visibility, to be seen by the management only when the stop orders are processed. Meetings were not allowed at all. We used other strategies to take out groups of workers, say ten per shaft out. We started with just five per shaft, taking them out and holding gatherings outside of the hostels in the townships and in the regional office where we were planning together. Organizing busses, taking out money, taking workers out to the townships, using township halls, churches, using the regional office hall. That's how we were organizing workers – and recovering.

Phundulu had been fired with the 3,200 in 1985, but because he was not yet known to be a union leader, he was able to return. He rose rapidly in the ranks of the union: "Since I dealt with that faction fight in 1985, in 1986 I was elected as shaft secretary. In 1987, I was branch chairperson of the branch." I asked him how he managed to survive as an activist in such a repressive atmosphere. It was hard,

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he told me, but the experience helped. He learned from the mistakes of his predecessors:

> You see the experience helped, I can say. Because the dismissals of 1985 were so very painful, we learned a lot. I was one of those dismissed, but it was fortunate that I was brought back because I was not visible to mine management. I was just an ordinary member in those days. I was not part of the leadership. I was just acting among others. So I had to learn a lot, when I became a leader now in 1986. Looking at the experience of other leaders, where did they miss the point, where did they go wrong, and how should I conduct myself? I tried, when I took up leadership in 1986, to come up with a great number of strategies together with the other stewards to deal with the management. The first thing we started to discuss was "What were the mistakes?" We started to analyze the mistakes of the union leadership on the shaft and the branch. We started to plan now how we would handle the management, how we would handle the membership, and we started playing any number of tactics. Those who didn't follow our strategies and tactics inevitably risked dismissal. We were discovering that (instead of going straight as shaft stewards to management at a particular time) it was unplanned actions taken by groups of workers unknown to other workers that were resulting in dismissal. So the first thing we realized was that the union could only exist when we had leadership. We were making sure that before doing anything the stewards must meet and calculate all tactics and strategies. Those who were difficult because of their anger or confrontational attitude were dismissed. But they were acting as individuals. We convinced our members always to plan each and every activity because we were already aware of how management hated the union. We were very aware.

Union meetings were always one of the flash points on the mines. Groups of workers were wont to march through the hostel, singing and dancing the toyi-toyi. Similar performances would occur after the meeting. Of course this was a wonderful recruitment technique. Hostel managers and non-union workers regarded the technique as disruptive and invasive of privacy and strenuously opposed it. Phundulu was aware of these tensions:

> One of the strategies was to say, "How do you organize a meeting? What is management's reaction when you organize such a meeting? Also when we end those meetings, what must we do? And what strategies must we develop to bring to that meeting?" We knew that management had their people inside who could pick up information and so on. How to address that particular meeting? We had already had experience with the SAP how they acted; the experience of security, how they acted; the experience of line management, how they acted towards the union. We were

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always translating the strategies and techniques of management before adopting a particular strategy and tactic at the time. If you acted without permission from management you would be a target. If you led the workers in a wrong way, you could be sure management would react. If we acted in a certain way, management would act in a certain way. If management was going to provoke us, we were already aware that it was going to provoke. We were able to take hard action only when we saw that the workers were definitely together. Management wouldn't take out all the workers, otherwise they would have to close the mine.

Those were the tactics that we played. So we definitely managed to survive with each other under those hard conditions.

The 1987 Strike

During 1987, more than 300,000 members of the NUM came out on strike. All but one of the nine Vaal Reefs shafts were out for three weeks. Buffels was quite hard hit too. With its local branch still in complete disarray as a result of the 1985 mass dismissals, however, Harties was unable to participate. In the words of Hoyce Phundulu:

> When the 1987 strike took place, the union was paralyzed at Harties. Couldn't move at all. We discussed at the regional level with the regional secretary at that time and said, no, Harties was definitely crippled and nothing could be done. We could suggest that Harties must not go to work, but we should not publicize it. They must realize that we were paralyzed. When we were going for the strike, I was already chairperson. We could not strike. But we were able to go and see what was happening at Vaal Reefs. I was ex officio a member of the regional committee. So we were picking up experiences from other mines and trying to utilize them at Harties.

Eventually Anglo declared a lock-out and started to dismiss striking workers *en masse*. To Phundulu from his vantage-point at Harties, it looked like a repeat of what he and his comrades had been through in 1985:

> Anglo American was prepared to destroy the union totally because they used their security, getting inside the hostels, hitting workers, beating workers, using teargas, rubber bullets, dogs, everything. As a result of that strike, 18,000 people were dismissed – out of 50,000 at Vaal Reefs, by that time. The union decided to call off the strike. Everybody was being wiped out from the hostels, divided at the gate – if you want to go to work this side, if you don't want to go to work, that side. You had to sign up that you were no more going to be union members, no more

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> involve yourself with any union. [The workers called this agreement an "nkomati."[8]]

The strike was broken. As had happened in 1985 at Harties, union representatives were black-listed and could not return. Selective dismissals at the conclusion of a legal strike/lockout were contrary to South African labor law, however. The matter was taken to arbitration. Anglo agreed to take back half of the dismissed workers and was obliged to pay out millions of rand in compensation to union members (Moodie 2009). Phundulu gave me an account of this process from the union point of view:

> Out of 18,000, after a lot of engagement and negotiations, Anglo said: "OK, we can adhere to your request to bring 50% of them back – 9,000. But it is going to depend on the availability of vacancies and people must be ready to accept whatever position we offer." We soon became aware that those workers would be given lesser positions and therefore less money. Those who were recalled came back. Those who came back were compensated one week's pay per each year of service. Those who did not come back were compensated two weeks' pay per each year of service. That was the situation. There was a list of those who were never compensated because they were defined as criminals. They were charged in their absence with very limited evidence – in most cases of intimidating, assaulting people, damaging property, and so on. Those people were never paid anything; no employment, no payment, nothing. So there were two options for the union. You call them to come back and face criminal charges in the state court or you allowed them to stay at home. The best was to let them stay at home. Those who were available and wishing to confront, let them confront.

After the strike, Anglo, which had always been the most tolerant mining house, indeed took a much more repressive path at the local level, attempting to limit union activities, sometimes closing union offices. Although the union was never completely banned on Anglo mines, Phundulu, whose vision was widening as he moved up through the union, was correct in saying that "even at Vaal Reefs [especially at Vaal Reefs East and South], management tried to break the union. They didn't want anyone trying to promote any trade union in any manner":

[8] This had reference to the agreement signed at Nkomati between the Mozambican and South African governments agreeing that the ANC should leave Mozambique. This was widely regarded by the black opposition in South Africa as a forced concession.

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> Conditions became more and more terrible, and I can tell you it was serious. We must admit that the union was definitely crippled. Therefore, Anglo in particular was so very aggressive against the union – they were determined to destroy the union – but they could not succeed. Then, immediately, they recruited from KwaZulu and locally here. What happened thereafter was that for those who were left at the mine, who chose to go to work, the repression was even more. One could be dismissed for any minor thing. If someone management knew was active chose to go back to work, he would be easily dismissed even if he had signed an nkomati. He would be picked up from work and told: "We know you were an activist in the union, off you go!" There were no stewards, no one to talk for you. Secondly, at work everybody was pushed extra hard at work to recover the twenty-one days of lost production. That was a second critical thing. Everybody in the line management was so very rude, against the union and the workers at work, pushing them as fast as they could. They raised their targets, saying that they must cover the work that would have been done by the 18,000 who had been dismissed – and even more. Thirdly, people were not allowed to move from one shaft to another. Freedom of movement was totally prevented. People were obliged to come from work straight into the hostels. If they wanted to go to the shops they had to come right back. If you went anywhere else on the property, they claimed that you trespassed. Fourthly, people were forbidden to be seen talking about union matters or being seen wearing a union T-shirt. You were taken head on immediately.

Recovering from the 1987 Strike

Virtually all the shaft stewards at Vaal Reefs had been dismissed. Phundulu explained:

> Almost all the stewards were among the 9,000 who were not going to be re-employed. After settling that, getting their own money and so on, many of them were not employed. There was a lot of suffering. Others experienced divorces and so on. Their wives were taken by the men who were working and having money. Many bad things happened. I can make volumes of bad stories.

Because Harties had not been involved in the strike, Phundulu found himself playing a more central role:

> As the union was revived at Vaal Reefs in 1987 and 1988, the original shaft stewards were not there. I became acting regional chair in 1988, when it became clear that the entire leadership had already been dismissed. So there were no leaders in the region. I was acting, because the time for elections had not yet come. It was called the "interim committee" in 1988.

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Many of the shaft stewards who had been dismissed did not return home. Instead, they were accommodated by the NUM near the mines so as to help revive the union and recruit new members. The compensation money helped support them and donations flowed in from overseas, but the situation was very difficult for them nonetheless. Phundulu explained:

> The strategy adopted by the union was that the stewards should not go home. We must find places to accommodate the stewards so that they could give relevant information to the union. Also they should become organizers, penetrating under the boundaries. The mine entrances were closed. The security was bad – the shift bosses and mine overseers were called in to close the entrances. [These were white miners who formed voluntary "protection units."] And when things were difficult, of course, they were helped by the SAP. The stewards were accommodated in the Roman Catholic Church in Joubertin, next to Klerksdorp, where the union was formed. They were kept in that hall. Others were kept in the union offices, even though it was against the law. The union was taking a risk. They had to be careful not to put lights on so that the police patrolling outside would not see. In the morning somebody would come and open and you'd see more people going out from the building. The union had to feed those people and transport them to various areas. Donors assisted with that. Those comrades made a major contribution to the union. Some remained in the union. Some remained around. Some were just acting, building their own methods and tactics with the committees in the region. Others were just volunteering, saying that they wanted the union to be stronger than before. Helping us. Penetrating certain levels. Building the union. Making sure that the union survived.

For Phundulu the situation was reminiscent of his prior experience at Harties. He provides a graphic account of the problems faced by the union as it reorganized:

> We had already used lots of tactics and strategies to bring workers in. It is simple that the most important way to organize workers is to focus on their immediate needs. That is key. You can't organize a person about the long term when he is suffering today. You address what is his problem – the ill-treatment at work and how that can be resolved. It was so very difficult because people could not accept that there can be changes. Even if a person was joining, if you call a meeting you find fewer than twenty people in the meeting, because people were afraid to be seen going there.

The arbitrariness of management repression eventually aided recruitment:

> In the end, people asked, "What is the use? Are we in jail? We feel more pain. I might as well be dismissed as live under that regime." Some loyal

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> to management were simply dismissed at a snap anyway. So the repression from the management itself organized for the union, as long as there was still a union that was talking for the people. People initially joined the union to have representation on the personal level – not the collective bargaining level. That was a major thing. That's how they joined. We were showing them, capitalizing on the numbers of people from their shaft who were dismissed, asking: "Where is so-and-so? Where is so-and-so? How can you say you are not going to be a member of the union? He was loyal to the management, but where is he? He was dismissed. So what is the use?" So people joined because it was better to have somebody to talk for them if they joined rather than to have nobody to talk for them. So that is how we revived. Then people began to join. Others would stay and watch people toyi-toyiing. There were strict regulations by the management about meetings. No singing at the meeting, no singing when coming and going from the meeting. No weapons, nothing. No T-shirts – just go there. They wanted to turn the union into an association. Then it was discovered that they had bugged the union offices and the halls where we were holding meetings. They were very strict about the office keys being signed in and out. After the key was returned, the office would be inspected. If things were not in good condition the union must pay for it. We had to sign terrible, unacceptable rules in the [recognition] agreement just to show workers that there is a union, there is an office. All the agreements were very tight.

As the years went on, however, there was one important difference from Phundulu's early Harties experience. The general political climate in the country was changing:

> On the mine level, the first phase was to revive the union by recruiting people back to the union. We were trying to develop tactical strategies to do that. Secondly, when we were having reasonable representation (it took time, mind you), we approached the management for recognition again. That process continued up to the early 1990s. One critical advantage to revive the union spirit was that by 1990 the union had regained a little strength. One must, however, mention the release of the political prisoners. When first Sisulu and then Mandela were released, people (including the management) were not sure about what type of SA was coming along, what type of approach to employ at work in dealing with people. A black government was being negotiated. A negotiated settlement was imminent by that time. Nobody would stop it. In 1991, 1992, 1993, by the general election in 1994, all the shafts at Vaal Reefs had recognition agreements already. The most motivating factor was the country turning point of 1990, when the prisoners, particularly Mandela, were released. Everybody sought to toe the line, work to forget the past, and bring new things.

The changing climate emboldened the union to act more decisively. Confrontation itself became a recruitment tool. On mines where

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management was more conciliatory, Phundulu believes, union recruitment lagged:

> You will find that tactics differ at different shafts. We were able to check the situation from one shaft to another. That's why you will find one shaft very strong. It will depend on the management of that particular shaft – how repressive it is. If it is too strong against the workers, the workers will fight to resist this oppression. If a manager is soft – as on Vaal Reefs West where the manager, Dick Fisher, had that tactic, trying to be soft and not harsh to people, and Andre Wilkens – that's why the union at Numbers 3, 6, and 7 shafts at Vaal Reefs would not be strong. After 1987, when demands were presented by workers on those mines, management would see how best they could enable workers to gain something. But if you go to other managers, to the other side, you'll find they are dismissing everything and making workers angry. The union will become stronger there.

On some mines the repressive tactics of the security forces actually aided recruitment. Phundu explained:

> Other Anglo mines were the toughest. That was the situation until we reviewed all the agreements – until all the agreements were more conducive to the union. People were always challenging, challenging. Toyi-toyiing. There were a lot of sporadic challenges to the management as the union began to grow again. The strength of the union had to be gauged in action. If the union does not take action, you cannot know its strength. The union would identify a few actions that are not dangerous. You calculate the actions that are not dangerous – say taking a march after working hours but for no more than thirty minutes. Just at the hostel. Workers group immediately, go there, give a list of demands to the management. One time you do that without singing and dancing. Next time when you do that you sing and dance. When the police come to shoot – the mine security – we deliberately provoked the security so that they will come to use tear gas and rubber bullets. The mine rule is that they must act. When they act we will run away and mix ourselves amongst the people who don't want to participate. They will shoot at those people because they are unaware. The small group that has planned will penetrate and run and disappear, and only the innocent people will be shot with teargas and rubber bullets and so on. People will become angry, and we will turn around and say: "Look, you have done nothing, but they are shooting at you because you are too loyal to them. Join the union!!" Those were the tactics we were using: making management unknowingly organize for us. Sometimes we even run to the bar. We know that security will follow us into the bar, chasing us. People who are drinking there are made even more angry. We could then call an illegal meeting right away!

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Ethnic Violence

Matters did not go entirely smoothly, however. Such provocations were dangerous tactics in the volatile hostel arena with thousands of men packed together in single-sex living spaces. Ethnic violence increased on the mines.[9] Some unionists suspected that management was involved in fomenting faction fights. Phundulu did not make such charges, but he did believe that attacks on Mozambican workers (Shangaans) at Harties, just before he left in 1993, was because of management unwillingness to place unionized workers in responsible positions there. He told me the story:

> At Harties, by 1988, when there was a new labor bill, we organized marches. Our marches were so very poor, it was still very bad. In 1988, people were still very scared. Again we tried to organize marches in 1989, and management was still using teargas. But if you have had experience of teargas, you are not afraid of it. We realized that the best way to organize people was to take marches because when they are attacked people who are not members of the union are included in those being attacked. That's how we started to use management to organize for us, in a way, because there was no other strategy.
>
> Then in 1990, we started to have recognition agreements in many categories [the date is important here] and in 1992, we attained some fully fledged recognition agreements. But in some categories, management was still resisting giving us recognition. In 1993, there was a faction fight by all tribes against the Shangaans because the Shangaans were in total cooperation with the management – giving them information, charging workers and union activists in the workplaces every day. Shangaans were occupying senior positions at work, supervisors, team leaders, senior team leaders and so on and so on… the majority of them. Now the wind changed. Inside the hostel, we were already starting to take control on our own without having redress to management. We were managing to say a person wanting to move into a room, whether or not he is a member of the union, should first get permission from the union. We managed to take it on our own. The indunas as indunas were starting to move closer to the union because they saw that the management didn't help them.
>
> When we came from one meeting at #2 in 1993, people were toyi-toyiing up to the hostel, they were very, very angry after that meeting because of a number of problems that had been asserted. They went into the kitchens, switching off TVs in the recreation areas, making everything upside down because of their anger. They were challenging the

[9] For ethnic violence at Vaal Reefs in the 1980s, see Moodie (1994).

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> management to act. They were saying that management does not want to give us meeting facilities, they don't want to recognize other categories within the union, they are pressurizing our members, charging them. They were singing about grievances. That action was challenging the management because those TVs were controlled by the management, and so on and so on.
>
> One induna charged one of the shaft stewards, and that's where the faction fight came about. When he was charged, immediately it was announced throughout the whole mine that the Shangaan induna had charged one of our members for obstructing the hostel. It was announced in a mass meeting. It was a mistake. When I arrived there, it was being announced. I immediately ran to exert my authority on the regional level – by then I was assistant regional organizer. When I was walking to the meeting I heard it being announced that the shaft steward was charged by the Shangaan, and it was a very serious case and so on and so on. People were so very angry. I ran to the courtyard to say, "Hey, correct this statement." But workers had already taken a decision: "Away with the Shangaans." After the meeting things became ominously quiet. It was Monday. On Tuesday a faction fight started. All sides were wiping out the Shangaans from the hostel. We were told that 21 people were killed there. It took us more than four months to talk to our members debating whether Shangaans should be allowed back. Management agreed that among all tribes in the hostel Shangaans were constituting 75% of the senior positions in the company. They realized that that was unhealthy. It took us more than four months. The ANC and the Communist Party and COSATU were brought in to address the masses, but they couldn't make it. The problem was eventually solved by NUM and the management. Management then agreed to recognize all job categories across the spectrum.

In this atmosphere of ethnic tension there was little future for Zulu workers brought to the mines as replacement workers during the 1987 strike. The violent struggle between Inkatha and COSATU in KwaZulu/Natal and then on the Rand between hostel-dwellers and township people did nothing to further their cause. Zulus were always in a minority on the gold mines and other workers were hostile to them, even if they joined the union. In this case, ethnicity – "tribalism" – almost always trumped worker solidarity. Phundulu was quite sympathetic to their plight:

> It was true that Zulus were recruited on Vaal Reefs during the 1987 strike. We regarded that as politically motivated because their leader was Gatsha Buthelezi who was more loyal to the white government of the day. It was our opinion that management had made a feasibility study and had decided that people from Zululand were obedient people. Another intention with the Zulu was to have a tame union that could replace the

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> NUM – UWUSA. When people began to rejoin the union in the 1990s, they also began to demonstrate against the cultures of Zululand which encouraged the ill winds that the Zulus were bringing in opposition to the new South Africa. That affected the mines.
>
> Even in Kwa-Zulu Natal you will find that not all Zulus belonged to Inkatha but UWUSA was quoted as belonging to Inkatha. Some Zulus, in fact, also belonged to the ANC. Some were shaft stewards. Others were even marshals of the NUM. But due to the notion of a Zulu, every person who was picked up as being Zulu was being attacked. All of them, they left, even if one begged them to stay because they were active in the union, even stewards. They would say: "No, these people don't know that. They know Zulus. I'm a Zulu. They are going to kill me." They were running away. That's how the Zulus came and left the mines.

Militant union recruitment strategies in the face of implacable and often forceful management opposition thus bred an atmosphere of violence on the mines that continues to be disturbing to Phundulu with his own deeply entrenched commitment to union solidarity and principles of negotiation.

Retrenchments and Threats to Union Solidarity

Nineteen eighty-seven was the high point for employment on the gold mines. After the strike, Anglo in particular started a process of retrenchment of mine workers that decimated the union. Other mining companies followed some years later. While the rapid growth of platinum mining has picked up some mine workers, overall employment in the industry has dropped drastically. Moreover, Anglo-American has sold many of its mines to so-called "contractors" who pay lower wages to non-unionized workers and on whose mines the union is fighting its battles all over again. When I interviewed him for a second time in 2006, Phundulu told this story from his point of view:

> Nineteen eighty-seven was the starting point of the retrenchments in the mining industry. Retrenchment became their answer where they were not making production. They were taking the mine workers away and putting sub-contractors in. That was cheaper. They checked and discovered they were allowed to out-source. This process continued in the 1990s – even up to today. The same people who run things for the contractors – a group of managers – are those who had previously left the mines for various reasons. The closure of certain shafts or the reduction of certain operational areas affected even the whites, particularly the shift bosses and mine overseers and lower level managers. So they started their own mining contracting businesses and have an agreement with the

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> mine owners. They recruit people and pay them less. Therefore, you get cheap labor operating in these areas. These people are given refresher courses in the same training centers used by the mines. They go back to the same shafts and work the same jobs they were doing, but with lower wages. There was no retraining, just a refresher to remind them, although they have already been several months or even years without work. So they take what they can get. The union has not been able strategically to stop these practices because the labor laws in SA allow all the companies to outsource to other companies and avoid the Labour Relations Act. Business laws in SA have a bias toward employers. Section 189a of the Labour Relations Act – on the matter of giving notice of retrenchment – means that all you can negotiate is how it is to be done. If the union sees fit, it can strike, but the employer does not care if he is already preparing to close.

Even although he had moved to the Klerksdorp regional office in 1994, Phundulu's heart was still at Harties. He used it to illustrate for me the disastrous effects of retrenchment and liquidation as mined-out mines were taken over by contractors (see Bezuidenhout and Buhlungu 2007):

> Look at what happened at Harties. Anglo-Vaal in 1998 just called the union and said: "Look, this is your new employer. As from today you report to Durban Roodepoort Deep (DRD). The meeting is over." There is nothing obliging them to negotiate with the union regarding a take-over or a merger or an amalgamation. That is a disadvantage. Similarly with liquidation. DRD can take over liquidated companies. But how can you liquidate a company but not the company that takes over? When you argue they say: "But that's a separate entity." For example, in 2005 both Harties and Buffels were taken over by DRD and renamed DRD North-West Operations. Then that company was liquidated. The decision to liquidate was from the board of directors of DRD – although DRD was not itself liquidated. There was indeed a seismic event [a massive earth movement centered on Harties], but first of all they had already on the 3rd March, 2005, issued the union with Section 189a of the Labour Relations Act. Now on the 9th there was a seismic event that rocked the whole country from here up to Pretoria. Then everybody in the country, even the police, came over to see what was happening. They thought it was a bomb. Now, on the 22nd the court finalized provisional liquidation. Retrenchment is enemy No.1 across all the mines.

While retrenchment is indeed a colossal problem for the NUM, there are also internal tensions that Phundulu did not discuss with me – at least on the record. The establishment of paid shaft stewards (and training in industrial relations for union officials like Phundulu) has created distrust from ordinary members who feel that their representatives are

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increasingly removed from addressing day-to-day struggles on the mines themselves.

Conclusion

As more and more mine workers move from the mine hostels into residential housing in the townships, different groups of workers become alienated from one another, perceiving their interests somewhat differently and thus developing different conceptions of their struggle. Thus, in this difficult period for the mining industry as a whole, internal divisions are fragmenting the solidarity of NUM members (Bezuidenhout and Buhlungu 2007). Phundulu himself has recently resigned his union position.

Current tensions within the NUM are simply yet another case study of a nationwide process of work restructuring associated with the political transition in South Africa. Webster and Von Holdt's (2005) recent collection of examples, for instance, examines multiple cases of what they call "the crisis of social reproduction" in the transition. Unions like the NUM are necessarily having to adapt to new challenges facing unionized workers in South African industry more broadly, even as they have also to deal with the gradual and staccato demise of gold mining in the country.

I have no doubt that Hoyce Phundulu in his own way will continue to be involved in this process. His commitment has been life-long. It goes back to the Mpondo revolt, as he told me:

> The Congo was strong in our area – there were lots of Congo activities. It was known as Congo. Even today, every year there is a celebration of the people who were killed. Eleven people were killed there. You see they were fighting with sticks, fighting helicopters, moving around in the air, using their sticks and spears to fight those aeroplanes. It was a very terrible thing at that time. I was very young and I was conscientized by it, definitely conscientized by it.
>
> I was obviously aware. Even during the years at Harties when I was not a leader, I was saying, "Look, we are defeated here from stopping faction fights, but let me advise you – I was telling the leadership – let me advise you, we can stop this now. If they are defeated now, they are going to plan another action – I don't know what they are going to do, but they are going to get back at you. I have experience from activity at home. I understand that faction fighting will not stop faction fights." I was not a leader, just an ordinary member. But I was saying we must stop faction fighting and sit down to plan.

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> At home the old people would come. We wouldn't know from whence they came – only the old mother would know. An old man would return home and spend the night and then be gone in the morning. Sometimes they would come on horseback, sometimes on foot. They would not stay. They would come and we would see them and then they would be gone again.

Whatever his future, Phundulu articulates his struggle for justice, careful and strategic but nonetheless dogged and lively, to that time when he was a boy herding cattle in the hills around Lusikisiki, and men defied helicopters with sticks and spears, and then the survivors melted away to return with an indomitable obstinacy that continues to inspire his life work.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

THE MOVING BLACK FOREST OF AFRICA: THE MPONDO REBELLION, MIGRANCY AND BLACK WORKER CONSCIOUSNESS IN KWAZULU-NATAL

Ari Sitas

I

The Mpondoland Rebellion was a profound event that still resonates in South Africa's political and academic life. For political leaders in the liberation movement it marked a symbolic act of resistance against Bantu Authorities and by implication, resistance to the Apartheid State. Such a large-scale rural uprising would be seen as emblematic of a revolutionary or insurrectionary current in rural South Africa.[1]

[1] Although such an instance of open and violent resistance has often been filed as just another happening on the long march to freedom, Govan Mbeki's (1964) book has given the rebellion a serious and significant status in the liberation struggle. In his words, the revolutionary potential of the countryside, the militancy of migrant workers could not be doubted, what was in question was whether a guerilla strategy should prioritise the Bantustans or the city or, as strategy was still vague then, *both*. I have also been made aware of another two dynamics in Mpondoland: firstly, elders who had participated as rebels then are demanding from the current government the event's cultural and symbolic recognition (nationally and provincially). Groups in Bizana, Lusikisiki and Flagstaff, want respectively Ndlovu Hill, Ngquza Hill and Ngindilili Hill to be somehow valorized further. The installation of a commemorative plaque on the site of the first massacre seems not to be enough. Although Bizana networks seem more organized, such members of the Hill's activities now in their post-70s or 80s or participants as young shock troops of the insurrection, now in their 60s, seem to demand more monuments commemorative resources, a museum and development funds. A few are already in place including the memorial at Ngquza Hill – a lot of the plans/proposals are with the Tambo Metropolitan Council. The second has to do with the strengthening of the South African Communist Party in the area, especially in the greater Flagstaff and Lusikisiki areas where its support has been boosted by thousands of dismissed miners who have availed themselves for local political contestation. Discussions with them over the prospects of a Migrant Labour Museum highlighted the rebellion as a proto-communist phenomenon- it is remembered as for its insurrectionary power and for the brutality of its repression. Within this recent reconstruction effort though, other political organizations and formations- the PAC or the Non-European Unity-movement are beginning to be effaced from popular narratives. See also, Copelyn, John (1974).

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For scholars the event has provided a rich trove of data to demonstrate a range of patterns that help theorize both identity and struggle. For a while, after William Beinart's and Colin Bundy's *Hidden Struggles in Rural South Africa*[2] the academic focus on rural struggles waned somewhat until Mahmood Mamdani's *Citizen and Subject*, where the political dimensions of customary and by implication, the 'rural' are re-emphasised. The event under discussion is seen by him (Mamdani 1996: 18ff) as a rural/peasant response to this indirect rule and a response to the tightening of customary authority in the 1950s.

Then a number of cultural readings tried to shift away from an over-politicised reading of it: Sean Redding (Redding 1996: 556) emphasized some of its more 'enchanted' aspects and how African acquiescence was nurtured and how witchcraft beliefs may have informed covert unrest or even open rebellion in the 1950s and 1960s. Clifford Crais (Crais 2002) adds a new dimension in his portrayal of the event as an instance of a subaltern nationalism 'from below' – a nationalism that was imbued with robust indigenous and messianic moral codes.

For historians and sociologists involved in labour studies, such an event marked the devastating consequences of an already declining 'reserve' economy and had serious winners and losers. For the already 'disadvantaged' in terms of land holdings and cattle, the immediate aftermath spelled hunger and rapid proletarianisation. My concern here is with such 'losers' and how the rebellion and its (re)construction over the years has endured within the imagination of the men and women who fanned out looking for jobs to rebuild their homesteads after the 1960–63 repression.

What was important was that for the first time in the twentieth century a movement of such migrants to manufacturing proper found them at work beyond the sugar plantations that used to be their mainstay. Furthermore, it found them residing in hostels and shack-settlements on the outskirts of Durban, as the enormous expansion of Natal's industrialization in the 1960s coincided with the large-scale absorption of amaMpondo workers who had moved en masse after the rebellion.

The first phase, the phase of the subjects of this investigation was one of 'rooting' as shall be seen below, as their presence in Natal was not

[2] See Beinart, William and Bundy, Colin (1987).

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uncomplicated – it was followed by an even larger influx in the late 1970s, the majority of whom could only find such a 'rooting' in the peri-urban areas of Durban. Lawrence Sclemmer and Valerie Moller (Sclemmer and Moller 1981)[3] calculated that of the 676,000 formal black (African) workers in Durban by the end of the 1970s, no less than 242,000 were from the Transkei, of whom the majority recruits were from Mpondoland. Managements welcomed the influx – even up to the late 1980s managers still believed that the amaPondo were 'decent and reliable' workers – 'the Pondos are conscious of ethnic groups and stick together. They do not want to be regarded as Zulus, as they are proud Pondos. Pondos are like Jews, proud of their background and very united' (Christensen 1988: 164).

Here these young men and migrants, the 'losers' of the rebellion and of the socio-economic upheavals of the early 1960s, who were on the wrong side of the Bantu Authorities system, helped the establishment of significant urban cultural formations in Durban's and KwaZulu's working-class.

II

The concern here, therefore, is how the experience of the revolt has been transcribed and used in new ways in the interstices of industrial KwaZulu-Natal. My focus is on the reconstructions and fabrications that followed the event rather than the event itself.

Most of my understanding of the rebellion arose out of the everyday conversations with shop stewards in Natal's labour movement – a disproportionate number of them being first or second-generation migrants and, within that category, there was a very solid showing of AmaMpondo workers. I could muster six in-depth interviews with black-worker leaders from Mpondoland and not surprisingly all on the receiving end of the rebellion's repression.[4] They had all migrated in the early 1960s.

What I will be adding to the understanding of the event depends on the narrations of Ezekiel, Phumzile, Langa, Simon, Lovemore and

[3] For a broader discussion of settlements, see Giliomee, H. and Sclemmer, L. (1985)

[4] These interviews are part of broader qualitative work – it was not about Pondo shop stewards or trade unionists but part of broader labour movement-linked work: see Sitas (2004).

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Themba.[5] The first five are pseudonyms, the last cannot be hidden: Alfred Themba Qabula has written on the event itself in his autobiography and he was famous enough not to need 'protection'. He was to write a complete story of the rebellion after he had finished researching migrant workers on the East Rand and had permission to do so by all the Bhalasi-based surviving rebels. Unfortunately, a serious stroke put an end to his mobility. I was to meet such rebels during the contestations over his funeral in 2003.[6]

What I intend doing is firstly lay out the stories of their proletarianization and how they invoked the event in relation to their worker experiences in the Greater Durban area and Natal's South Coast. Thereafter I will attempt to draw out some analytical points about the role of the 'rural in the urban' and how the construction of an antinomic consciousness in the labour movement was helped by it.

Key to all accounts was the prowess of the Hill as a centralized organization in Bizana, which (despite the relative autonomy of the Lusikisiki and Flagstaff areas with their intricate structures) commanded up to 180,000 people over 4000 square kilometres.[7] This level of cohesion over such a large countryside of dispersed settlements and households was and remains remarkable.

III

Ezekiel

Ezekiel was part of the battles of Lusikisiki – he was involved in raiding parties against the 'amajendevu' (the 'others', the 'collaborators') and he did get arrested twice and was released twice without many serious repercussions; his elder brother's hut was raised to the ground. He was not on the Hill when the bombing occurred though. He had to be on the run in the 'forests', as the 'system' led by local collaborators was searching for young men. He could not stand around to get arrested a third time.

He always accompanied his father (a healer) in the forests and learnt a lot about herbs but also learnt to distinguish what was edible from

[5] Themba, Phumzile and Ezekiel have passed on in 2003, 07, 08, respectively.

[6] See Sitas, A. (2007). The current Mayoress of the Tambo Metro Council and the Deputy Minister of Agriculture in the Eastern Cape were also present, also involved in the rebellion and Umkhonto we Sizwe officers.

[7] See Copelyn (1974).

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what was not. It stood him well when they had to hide in the forests. 'There were forests still in the early 1960s,' he mused, bemoaning the fact that they had been depleted and cut down in the interim. He had never been a Christian, even though his wife and children were and are devout Zionists.

The early 1960s were years of 'starvation', as subsistence livelihoods were unsteady for lengthy periods of time. He managed to procure seasonal work on the sugar plantations near Port Edward and stayed for three years during the seasonal peak times in cane-cutting work and lived in the company compounds. He experienced first hand how many young Mpondos were crossing or trying to cross over to Lesotho.

He raised enough for bridewealth before another relative helped him get a job at Coronation Brick and Tile in Durban. He worked there for three years, living again in the company compound. He had left by the time of the Durban strikes in 1973, where the Coronation factory featured prominently. He was part of the working committee there which operated under the 'izinduna' – although respected for his herbal knowledge by them, he was found to be too disrespectful and troublesome with their authority. He did not respect 'corrupted' izinduna and amakhosi and spoke openly of his hostility that they accepted to be Apartheid's lackeys just because their salaries were doubled.

His next job was as a security worker for a plastics company close to 'Coronation'. By then he had negotiated a place to build a 'jondolo' near Bhambayi in the Inanda area. The local 'shacklord', a junior headman, was making good money from the outflow of people from KwaMashu given the housing shortages of the time. There were quite a few people from Mpondoland in the broader area (Bhambayi was to become the link with the Transkei/Mpondoland dagga trade in the years to come) and some of them had been freehold tenants in Inanda proper.

In the beginning he witnessed no difference between 'Zulus' or 'Mpondos' in the area – according to him, all this started with homeland consolidation later. And, when Inkatha was formed, as a member of the Residents Association, he joined it believing at that stage that he was joining the African National Congress. He was to join SAAWU (South African and Allied Workers' Union) later and he was to remain loyal to 'Mr Kikine's union' until his retirement.[8] When the conflicts

[8] Sam Kikine, the leader of SAAWU in Durban. He refused to bring SAAWU Natal into COSATU because it would be a conformist, counter-revolutionary move. Kikine is of Sotho-descent but has been one of the most powerful orators in labour gatherings in isiZulu.

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erupted in the early 1980s between Zulu traditionalists and democrats, he joined the UDF (United Democratic Front) but kept the Inkatha card 'just in case'. It is then that 'the Zulu-Pondo stuff' started because the Inkatha warlords, led by Thomas Tshabalala from Lindelani, accused the UDF and later COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions) as a 'Xhosa plot' to divide the Zulus. As the conflict increased Inkatha supporters were not as he insisted Zulus; they were Apartheid's 'Amagundhane' and 'Theleweni'.

For him, the Mpondoland rebellion was a point of no return. Ezekiel was a 'traditionalist', a 'red' in the Eastern Cape parlance, and a 'traditional healer', terms I never use without discomfort. I would rather describe him as a healer or a herbalist who values the integrity of pre-colonial traditions which he considers as African rather than peculiar markers of the Mpondo polity. For him, too, the core problem was not the Bantu Authorities system as such but the issue of rehabilitation, Betterment and land. It was not about 'rehabilitation' of existing (already unequal, reserve/bantustan) land holdings 'but… about more land'. For him taxation was indeed evil and buttressed to serve the colonial structure. A quick conversation with him brought out the exact amounts in shilling and pound that doubled over the period between 1955–9: hut tax, general homeland levy, stock rates (per head of cattle), ploughing, dipping and grazing fees, voluntary and compulsory 'tribal' levies.[9] It is in this sense of outrage that one would find why he opposed the increased power of (government-paid) chiefs and headmen, and why he joined the Hill.

What occurred during the Mpondoland rebellion was the destruction of the 'homestead's pillars', 'Umkhumulansika' – a term used later by Beauty Mahlaba to describe what was going on in the 'Natal Violence' of the 1980s (Mahlaba et al. 1992). Chiefs were violators of deep culture; 'the whites were too clever: they seduced the chiefs to do the dirty work for them'. But 'the wheel was to turn'. Africa would be returned. 'Mayebuye Africa' was not enough; it would be actively returned (through their struggle). What was happening, through the years after the rebellion, the degradation of the defeat and the time of 'wandering in the Wilderness'. 'The Hill,' in his words, 'was being revived in the Movement.'

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[9] For a lengthy discussion of these changes in taxation see Copelyn, J. (1974).

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Themba Qabula

'Run black boy run/ bullet's coming/ run to Edolobheni/ find the kitchens/ clean the pots/ clean the pans/ dance for the baas/ your kraal is ashes/ your goats are ashes/ the burning horseman from the hill has died'... (Qabula, 1992: 2)

As was to be expected, Alfred Themba Qabula (Qabula, 1986: 6) wrote and rewrote the experience of migrancy and came to define much of the popular aesthetic of the labour movement of the 1980s. The technique was obvious: taking a particular experience and making a polysemic, yet general/universal expression of it. To an audience unaware of his involvement in the Mpondoland rebellion the verse is universal: it is about black working life and repression in South Africa. The last line of the 'burning horseman' would be an ambiguous but powerful image about its violence. His most famous, 'The Migrant's Lament', could be read as totally unrelated to specifics as well: 'If I have wronged you Lord forgive me/ all my cattle were dead/ my goats and sheep were dead/ Oh my creator forgive me if I had done wrong to you/... I went to WENELA/ to get recruited for the mines/ I went to SILO/ to work at sugarcane...'[10] The difference, though, was that his and 'their' cattle, sheep and goats were really dead, and that there was nothing metaphoric about the content to start with.

Qabula, unlike Ezekiel, had been recruited to be part of the ANC Youth League in 1959, when still 17 years old and still at school in Flagstaff. Most of the people in the 'forest' hiding from the authorities were also members; half of his cohort followed the one road that led via the sugar plantations of Southern Natal, through the Natal Parks Board Drakensberg reserves and into Lesotho. This was facilitated by 'Ncaca's brother', a driver for a sugar estate. (Ironically, Ncaca was not a Congress man but part of the AAC and Unity movement networks). What Ezekiel described about young Mpondos crossing over, Qabula corroborates.

He did not cross the border, though; he rather followed the road to the mines – he worked at Carletonville as an apprentice plumber. There was also a third option: to Inanda on the outskirts of Durban. He joined relatives there after a decade on the mines. Ironically for such a hero of the trade union movement, he was a scab at Dunlop; he was

[10] Qabula, *ibid*, p. 9.

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recruited in 1974 to replace troublesome and militant workers (Qabula 1989: 53).

He was to emerge as one of the key shop stewards at the Dunlop factory and a key participant in creative work in the trade unions. Much has been written on the Dunlop leadership, its trial of strength strikes and factory occupations, and how it formed an epicenter of leadership in COSATU (Baskin 1989:261ff). Qabula dedicated his life to the cultural movement, where he was one of its key public poets, reviving forms of oral poetry and performance. As one of the most anthologized of the poets of the 1980s, he had a major role to play in the self-understanding of the movement.

A key aspect of his writing and performance was that it occurred in isiZulu – there never was a separation between the various communities and for him, no matter what the language, his priority was *national*. He had no objection to his work's translation into English or Afrikaans; he only bemoaned the fact that he lacked the linguistic finesse to perform it himself. It is through isiZulu that events around the Mpondoland experience started becoming metaphors and symbolic figurations for new struggles.

The youth warriors were in perpetual hiding then: 'We left our homes and found new homes in the forests,' Qabula recalls; 'during the daytime we always stayed in the forest until dark. Then we divided ourselves into two groups to patrol around our homes and to check if everything was still in order. There were comrades in the police force who used to inform us when there was going to be an attack… two groups, one group to face the attackers and the other group to burn the attackers' houses…' (Qabula 1989: 10) For a while the balance started tipping towards the rebels until the state upped the repression, the violence and the mass arrests.

The forest experience grows in his work in the labour movement as his enticing Hlathi'limnyama and hlathi elihambayo: 'Escape into that forest/ the black forest that the employers saw/ and ran away from for safety/… deep into the forest they hid themselves and/ when they came out they were free from fear' (Qabula 1986: 14). This 'moving forest of Africa' – the Movement and this time in particular FOSATU is the forest of Mpondoland, of Africa, ('where I took shelter with all the wild beasts/ the mosquitos fed on me but did not harm me' – 'S'Thanda') – became through his work a defining metaphor of struggle. Oral poets of Zulu descent like Hlatshwayo and Ntanzi take on Qabula's lines about the forest to embellish it further, invoking the

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necessity to follow through it and through the thickets the spoor of armed columns of men.[11]

The rebellion against Bantu Authorities was so deep in his bones that it affected everything, his politics and most importantly his craft: 'I reject the idea of praising the kings and rulers because in most instances in the past the kings and chiefs proved themselves most willing to be co-opted by the colonial rulers at the expense of their subjects…' (Qabula 1989: 5). In his Autobiography he concludes: 'I shall keep on praising my brothers and sisters in the factories and shops, mines and farms – and I shall praise no chiefs.'[12]

The sense of experience of the grand betrayal is everywhere in his poems: 'After we had appointed them, we placed them/ atop the mountain/ and they turned against us/ they brought impimpis in our midst to inflict sufferings upon us'…[13] The trauma of betrayal and the traumata of suffering are key to the understanding of his work.

Qabula was to be deeply disappointed by the post-Apartheid period; he felt deeply betrayed by his comrades and found himself jobless and abandoned, a hero one day, a marginal, the next. It did not help that he trumpeted his criticism of the movement in poems that started appearing in the press and in official publications. A poem like 'Where are you Now?' (Qabula 1992b: 2) castigated the ANC leadership and bade it farewell, marking a return to Flagstaff and to local struggles. Nevertheless, his disrespect for customary authorities and the upper classes continued to his deathbed. He was buried as a liberation hero in 2003.

Phumzile

Phumzile found work in the sugar plantations as many women did in the 1960s. Later as the textile industry expanded rapidly she moved to 'Ijelimani' (New Germany). There she stayed in the hostels and worked as a spinner in a mill. Unlike Ezekiel and Qabula, she was an active participant during the Durban strikes. She recalled how, like many of the young women who were newly recruited for such work and who were 'stacked' into hostels, there were two routes: the sexual one or the

[11] The S'Thanda poem appeared in *Writers' Notebook*, vol. 1 no. 2, 1990; Mi Hlatshwayo's 'The Trail' appeared in ibid. vol. 1, no. 3, 1990. Madlizinyoka Ntanzi's version has not been published.

[12] *ibid*, p. 109

[13] Qabula, Interview in *Writers' Notebook*, vol. 1, no. 2, p. 3 op cit.

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Christian one. The former would pair off such young girls with local men and lead to a vulnerable life outside the hostel. The latter would lead to women-centred activities around the church.

So she started being an active community woman in church-linked choirs; they were serious – rehearsals took place three times a week. As the union grew stronger in the Pinetown local, she shifted towards union-linked choir work. In fact for a while there was little separation between hostel, church and trade union-linked choir work – the personnel was more or less the same. But as she shifted from the hostel to a more permanent township life, she prioritized trade union-linked choir work.

Her account of the rebellion was about its extreme forms of suffering and brutality – it was in her mind an example of the lengths that whites would go to suppress blacks: 'to starve them, to destroy their life, their cattle and their livelihoods (my word)'. Her description of her migration is full of Biblical metaphors, of wandering in the wilderness, of the life of the Israelites; whilst back home near Lusikisiki, starvation increased. Her imagery is one of lost men and women, victims of the bottle and of dagga. But, 'usuku'; 'the' day was to come when the rebellion would resurface, a day of judgement. It is not surprising that by 1984 the two most popular worker plays were also filled with Biblical reference as they were titled 'Koze Kuphe Nini' and 'Why Lord?'[14]

Phumzile claims that she never sensed 'foreignness', not in the textile mills as a shop steward and not later as a gradual township resident, a student and a teacher. Her case was one of 'upward mobility'; even as a senior teacher she remained a trade union member and a very strong presence in SADTU. She did marry a 'Zulu man' from Claremont. The first talk of her Xhosa-ness was of the 1980s, when her children were seen to toyi-toyi with the 'Amaqabane', the comrades. The talk started from conservative in-laws who, although in agreement 'that wives move out of their clans and join the husband's lineage, started pointing fingers at obvious and stubborn Pondo genetic traits. Such sentiments were quickly stamped out in Claremont, as a strong amakholwa middle-class and a robust trade union leadership rolled back any forms of Zulu fundamentalism.

She slipped into UDF politics as if it was the most natural thing to do – her husband, also a church-going man was very fond of Archie

[14] For the plays see Astrid Von Kotze, (1987).

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Gumede and he was very happy to see more and more women get into the movement – Phumzile became a member of the civic association and the Natal Organisation of Women (NOW). There was extreme tension in the township because of the Inkatha leader being a well-known Inyanga and because people around him were ready to kill. They did kill Mrs Tshabalala one of the most prominent business women in the township from a Congress-linked family.

The difference with all the other people in this narrative was that she was lost to the 'rural' forever after her parents passed on. She attended weddings and funerals of close kin but her homestead was urban; she had been a longstanding Claremont resident and later, when the white areas were opened up, a New Germany one.

Langa

Langa started work for a hotel in Port Edward. He was a cleaner. He started moving northwards (Umzumbe, Hibberdene) until he reached a chemical plant in Umbogothwini by the mid-1970s. The industrial development to the south of Durban pushed hard against the customary areas of Ubumbulu and Malukazi. These areas, sites of faction-fighting in the past between the subjects of Chiefs Makhanya and Mkhize turned into attractive shack-settlements for people trying to work in Durban. Both Chiefs and their headmen made land available to such incumbents primarily from Mpondoland. Langa was part of a settlement of about 120 homesteads that paid rent to the amakhosi.[15]

The shop floor in the chemical plant was a mix of highly skilled and 'fetch and carry' unskilled workers. The skilled cohort would be composed of workers from the more 'settled' parts of Umlazi and Lamontville; the less skilled from the peri-urban areas south of Durban all the way down to Umkomaas. Most of the Mpondo migrants were of the latter variety, even if they had had solid education. Langa joined the FOSATU-linked chemical trade union and served as a shop steward. At first there was no 'division' between Zulu and Pondo workers. The main division on the shop floor was between the NACTU-linked chemical trade union and Langa's one: the division in other words was not ethnic at all.

[15] On this see Christensen, F., *op cit.*

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The trouble started in earnest in the 1980s. Towards the end of 1985 (November, December and early January 1986) 'faction-fights' erupted in the South, in the areas around Amanzimtoti.

According to Chief Makhanya, 'Zulus decided there were too many Pondos in the area. Before the trouble, Zulus liked the Pondos as they brought in money in the form of rents. However, the Pondos became greedy and wanted to all come and live in the area…This was due to Mantanzima not having work for his people…The Zulus wanted first option on the jobs in the area, and on the water and land. The Zulus said that the Pondos were killing the Zulus, as the Pondos were stealing Zulus' jobs, and the Zulu people were getting thin and sick because they had no work and no money. Some of the Zulus called a meeting to see what could be done about the Pondos. It was decided at this meeting that the Pondos should be told to leave the area and move somewhere else, less crowded…The Pondos got very cross and said that they were not going…The Zulus decided that the Pondos must leave the area in two weeks. After two weeks… there were hundreds of Pondos still in the area…When these Pondos refused to leave, the Zulu people got cross and decided to show the Pondos how strong the Zulu people are'…[16]

Langa was caught in the midst of this violence and lost six weeks-worth of work through injuries he sustained in combat. But he did not lose his job, and here was the rub: all of a sudden the enemies on the shopfloor of the two competing unions ganged-up against the Zulu fundamentalists. At first, thanks to a chauvinist Human Resources (HR) practitioner, Mpondo workers were at risk of not only losing their homesteads in the periphery of the factory but also their jobs themselves. The fight-back was decisive and by the late 1980s he left the shopfloor to specialize as a heavy-duty driver in the firm that did most of the carting of 'stuff' from the factory. He therefore changed trade union affiliation to the Transport and General Workers' Union. Yet he knew that the shop floor he left was impervious to 'tribalism'. He subsequently, on the cusp of the transition, started a transport company with a few of his friends from Ubumbulu, '2 Zulus and a Pondo', and graduated towards a more middle-class existence where he did not have to drive at all.

[16] *ibid*, p. 131–2.

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For Langa the defeat of the rebellion 'way back then' was a military setback, a painful and humiliating setback. Although people were quiet on the 'outside' and ready to make extreme 'compromises with the devil', it was not to be long before the struggle would restart. The countryside's politics – and a politics he did support fully in the newly independent Transkei – was one of avoidance: no participation in elections, no cooperation with officials and a stubborn refusal to honour imposed chiefs. The misery of the time was often retold to their children.

Langa was proud of their fight-back in Durban South, where they managed to resist the attempts to divide Mpondo and Zulu workers and to break the trade unions. He was proud of the fact that COSATU was launched in Durban and that the youth, the generation of his children, were regaining power at grassroots level through the civil war. The metaphors of the Hill, of the Forest, of the great suffering of the Israelites (like in Phumzile's account) and of the steeling of people's resolve against the Puppets like Matanzima and Gatscha and 'their Wizards' (those Abathakathi) have been and continue to be his everyday vocabulary.

Lovemore

Lovemore was also caught up in the violence of the rebellion. His father was accused of passing information to the Hill about who were supporters of the anti-rebellion headmen and the chief of his area. He gathered the family and moved to Mount Frere, finding shelter at his sister's place.

He intended to return and lead his cattle away from the area but all of their livestock were redistributed. The men who came looking for them rounded up whatever was on legs and burnt down whatever wasn't.

To get to Mount Frere, Lovemore and his elder brother rode the family horses over three days, whilst their father, mother and sisters took the bus there. Father had a bad leg from a mine accident so he could not ride a horse or walk the long distances necessary to keep in touch with the Hill. Once a week, Lovemore would ride out to Ndlovu Hill to collect information and news.

Gradually, like Langa above, Lovemore gravitated towards the Southern Industrial areas of Durban and lived on customary land in a settlement primarily made up of Mpondo migrants. He worked in the construction industry and was amazed how easily the chief there

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(either inkosi Makhanya or Mkhize) gave land up for industrial development. Lovemore's company was involved with the building of factories, warehouses and silos. The land near the factories was still part of the 'tribal area' and that is where migrants were allowed to set up shacks and homes by the Amakhosi.

Lovemore remained a contractual migrant and a skilled bricklayer well into the 1980s. His trade union involvement started in the early 1980s when he was told he could not join MAWU (Metal and Allied Workers' Union) because he was not a metalworker. He could not understand that; a worker was a worker and that trade union was making 'great strides'. He knew amaMpondo from his settlement who were in Metal Box and at Slazinger (Dunlop Sport Equipment) and they were very happy there with the trade union. He grudgingly joined a construction union which was in its infancy and part of the black consciousness-linked (later NACTU) movement. He didn't like that.

His elder brother had already left the country – he was in Lusaka or thereabouts as an Umkhonto sergeant – so he could not stay with a trade union that was anti-ANC. So he joined the Workers' Project in Gale Street (a structure for unorganized workers in FOSATU) because he knew from other Mpondo workers that it was being run by 'Rev Magau's' niece.[17]

He was also caught in the 'faction fighting' of 1985/6 in Ubumbulu and Malukazi. His homestead was raised to the ground, his wife was injured and two of his friends died in the clashes. They temporarily moved to Inanda before returning to the Southern Basin after the troubles subsided. He was by then a member of the construction workers' union affiliated to COSATU and at work, after so many years of experience, he was made a foreman. He served on the executive of his trade union branch until his retirement.

He always spoke of the ancestors and the system, of a Nguni past made up of peaceful people but that the Amazulu forced them into militarism. They had to defend their kraals because Shaka and his friends were bothersome. 'They did not know how to come to us in peace'.

[17] Rev Magau was a General Workers' Union organizer from Cape Town who had spent years on Robben Island. He started organizing dockworkers and did so all the way to Durban. His niece referred to must be Nise Malange who ran that Project for FOSATU from Gale Street, a general structure for unorganized workers.

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In his universe there was the socialism of the cattle economy, and wealth was measured in people, not goods. There was a time when chiefs were of the people. 'Zulus at first laughed at us for accepting Independence: they pointed to Durban and said, "ours". We will never let it go…We responded by saying we did not accept independence, and spoke about our tragedy. And it was a tragedy that would happen to them because they believed too much in chiefs. That is why Pondos are committed to the union. Kudala Sisebenzi Amaqhawe (he sings)… We were not born freedom-fighters we were forced to become by fire'.

The irony is that those who supported the system during the rebellion, save a select few, never benefited much from Homeland Independence. For him the entire area from Port Edward to Port St John and inland to the main highway is one big township for Durban and Johannesburg. People can never return to the world of his grandparents; they cannot become what is in their 'true humanity': 'people of the soil'. 'The pride we have,' he insists 'is that we resisted their Trusts and their Bullshit…We rebelled against Sigcau, we rebelled against Mbeki- with bazookas in the forest (ehlathini)' (Quoting a verse from a freedom song an adaptation of the *Shonamalanga* song).[18]

Simon

Simon was supposed to become a man of the cloth until his involvement in the violence and his growing aggression against locals who tried to 'sit on the fence' cast a bad light on him. He was sent to Durban to be with his uncle in Lamontville and complete his high school. As his father and his two brothers were miners, the pressure was not as immediate as in other households; money trickled in. His religious background helped, but he joined the Catholics because 'they were more socially engaged'.

As black working-class life was brutal and short, the uncle passed on from lung-related problems so Simon had to get out there and work. He found work in Mobeni at a non-ferrous basic metalwork where he worked as a messenger. There he sensed the first stirrings around the Durban strikes and, once that summer of discontent was over, the vicious struggle between trade unions and izinduna in the workplace.

[18] The song has a prior incarnation as 'Pinkie's song' sung about domestic workers' days off. I only know the 1980s version which was also about forests and bazookas.

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Being a messenger absolved him from the immediate shop-floor tensions; to survive, as he confessed, he joined groups that were very active in the Young Christian Workers' Movement of the Catholics. Although MAWU made great inroads in the foundry, he felt that he had little in common with the 'raw' heavy metal workers who were uneducated and rather unsubtle. But he knew he would have his bones broken if he did not, as a messenger, carry messages from the shop floor to Gale Street where the union was located. He also spent time translating the material developed by the Young Christian Workers into isiZulu and trying to explain it to his co-workers in the foundry.

He was fired for negligent driving and for the wrecking of the Company scooter, and spent two and a half years doing odd jobs as a gardener and as a caddy before he found a more permanent job in a medical supplies' packaging firm. There he met some elders who were reviving trade unionism and fighting for union recognition. One of them was heavily involved in trade unionism in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and was a 'Luthuli Volunteer'. He joined the trade union (FOSATU's Chemical and Industrial Workers' Union) and was elected as a shop steward. But there was no management recognition of their committee forthcoming for the next seven years.

Simon was proud of his contribution to the trade union movement and of the suffering it had involved to sustain it. He saw shop-steward structures and the democracy of mandates in the trade union movement as an extension of the Hill organization of the rebellion. As youths then, their voice was more limited than the elders they had entrusted with the fate of the movement. It was no different in the trade unions or the civic associations: 'the youth were and are the shock-troupes of the revolution'. He feels strongly that what the Mpondo people taught everyone was to be stubborn in their hope for freedom.

IV

What must be clear is that I am not claiming that all amaMpondo who were part of the hardships of the early 1960s were at the core of the construction of a radical cultural formation in KZN's industries. What I am claiming though is that those who did once join trade union and community organizations *did so*, and did so by using the rebellion and metaphors about it as key ingredients in the construction.

This they did in isiZulu and alongside Zulu people. Rather the presence of Mpondo migrants in the interstices of Durban's and Southern

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Natal's industrial life constructed in *conjunction* with Zulu workers an understanding of the relationship between class and notions of nationalism, ethnicity and race that inflected the symbolism and understanding of workplace and urban struggles. The construction was of an antinomic consciousness: against 'bosses' and against the apartheid state, including black chiefs and leaders who buttressed it.[19]

I argue therefore that the event, and its recall and retelling as an overwhelmingly intense experience, provided an emotional grammar which combined three elements:

1. A justification for the continuance of struggles;
2. An injustice that violated the natural order of things and an organic community;
3. A shared trauma based on the brutality of the 'experience'.

All three have been woven together through the metonyms of the Hill, the Forest, the Suffering.

In this narrative, continuance is obvious; the descriptions provided by the six people here thread a story of total continuity, as if the Hill, the Movement, the Trade Union, the Urban Struggles are all one uninterrupted 'march to freedom'. The Forest is often a partial retreat but in its foliage people are healed to 'emerge free from fear'.

That such a violation of Africa, seen romantically as a natural balance between people and nature and people in nature, according to Qabula is a violation of nature itself: 'in your face now/ we see the railway tracks/ the highways, the buildings, and factories/ the structures/ they fought battles scrambling over you/…' and to the poet's despair: 'and they are making such a NOISE!' (Qabula 1986: 19). But more than this natural abomination is the violation against an organic community of care, of a pre-capitalist Mpondo/Nguni socialism that Lovemore or Simon constantly reconstruct and refer to.

So if we must understand a strong figuration 'from below' – a subaltern consciousness without the fashionable trends of the day that ignore organizational history and struggle – we need to explore carefully how black worker experience used the story of the Mpondoland rebellion creatively.

[19] For a more detailed account of the broader construction see Sitas 1998/9, republished in Robert Kriger and Abebe Zegeye (ed.) 2001.

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Rural sociologists, too, have to depict how these new migrant constellations inflected the 'rural' struggles that were to follow. The continuum between the 1960s to the 1990s is obvious if we follow the permissible studies of trade union history and struggles; but the 1960s involved the unwritten history of yet another strand: the travels towards the sugar plantations. But there, through a secret system of trust and transportation a passage to the Drakenensberg and through there, to Lesotho, 'we were told that all the Youth League members were going to be trained to use guns inside the country, by the Russians. Then they told us that we had to leave the country for training. In our local not a single person was trained' (Qabula 1989: 11). These 'trails through the thicket', hiding the spoor of 'armed columns of men', get also reconfigured: by the 1990s, guns from the Transkei were moving to Port Shepstone and the hostels of Umlazi to counteract the counter-revolution.

Part of the attempt to smash the Amapondo in 1995/6 in the Malukazi and Ubumbulu areas, in retrospect, reads like a last ditch effort to break an emerging cultural formation of alterity and resistance. It was led by the very same chiefs and headmen who had allowed the residential growth of Mpondo settlements to start with. The growth of trade unionism and the UDF, powered by people like Langa or Lovemore alongside other non-Pondo leaders, was decisive. They survived the 'faction fight'. They had managed to resist a powerful drive by Inkatha to forcibly recruit a mass-base to kill off the 'Amakomanisi' (Communists).

The defining story evoked by migrants from Mpondoland was that black people ('Bantu 'mnyama') in South Africa were condemned to share the same fate and were called on to resist Bantu Authorities by going into the 'forest', the only way to challenge corrupt chiefs, and wait for the messianic moment of the return. This is shared by all above: Ezekiel, Themba, Langa, Lovemore, Phumzile and Simon.

V

So what does an account like this offer the broader scholarship of the 'rural' in South Africa?

Mahmood Mamdani (Mamdani 1996) insisted that scholars had to search for the rural in the urban and vice versa. Yet, his understanding of how Mpondo migrants might have shaped outcomes in proletarian Durban or how urban amaMpondo could have shaped aspects of

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rurality is sadly lacking in his work; it is, rather, theoretically assumed. As for the purity of the 'rural' in Mpondoland, it is suspect and accounts get more complicated as the 'rural' had schools (Qabula), churches (Lovemore), bureaucrats (Langa), nurses, doctors, traders and artisans (all the interviewees state this), all of whom had some role to play in both the organization and the defeat of the resistance.[20]

But if Mamdani's work did not help the empirical contours of such work, at least it speaks of the necessary to and fro between the customary and the urban. Both rural struggles and labour struggles are unthinkable without each other.

Where the lives and stories of Ezekiel, Themba, Langa, Lovemore, Phumzile and Simon are unhelpful is in the fascinating work on magic, evil, 'the' messianic and what anthropologists and social historians return to, the Kongo/Congo/Khongo movement.

Unfortunately, despite my efforts I have found no oral evidence of the movement's existence. I even came to metaphoric blows with Alfred Qabula, who insisted that it was a white man's fabrication. That the first mention of it comes from a local white official in the 1940s – and later repeated by a white magistrate, who told communist lawyer Rowley Arenstein, who in turn informed white scholars, who in turn used this fact without much documentary or oral evidence – is worrying in its own right. We are speaking about the legacy of hundreds of thousands of people on evidence with very shaky foundations.

The stand-off continues: I am instinctively drawn to work 'from below', to qualitative accounts of how subaltern communities construct meaning and resistance, and therefore Clifford Crais's work has been very compelling. He starts the story from 1947, situating it within migrant workers' cultural formations and he states that, 'Congo groups represented one among a number of similar and overlapping associations that emerged in this period, typically formed by male migrants from local areas'... and 'who had become a powerful force in local political society'.[21] For Qabula, and for the other amaPondo rebels in this piece, this is as clear as day: Khongo as in 'ipi loKhongo?' or Kongolese or Khongolose or iCongeless are acoustic variations of Congress.[22]

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[20] See this discussed in detail in Sitas, Ari (2008).

[21] See Crais (2002).

[22] Qabula (1989). A recent theological study about the role of the church during the Pondoland rebellion sides with the Qabula version: Mxolisi Mnaba (2005: 15),

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They might be wrong. What is not evident from the narratives above is how decisive it is in the years beyond the rebellion.

That there was Congress involvement, there is no doubt. Already in 1957 and again in 1959, the Hill leader Ganyile reported to the ANC at Lakhani Chambers in Durban about the unfolding resistance in Pondoland. Mpanza's oral testimony of his role as an Umkhonto we Sizwe cadre recollects how, in support of it, he and his cohorts started burning sugar plantations in Natal/KwaZulu and how Sisulu had to be sent from headquarters to stop such anarchic forms of resistance.

To quote verbatim from Mpanza's testimony: 'Around '55, '56 I heard lot of stories about action, people wanting action and all that. Hence, I think it was around 1957, when the revolt began in Mpondoland, eNgquza Hill, and I heard that Anderson Ganyile was at Lakhani Chambers. He told people about the events in Mpondoland. Hence I was also informed about the Mpondoland Revolt… I felt like going there to join the battle immediately. But others discouraged me and said that amaMpondo would not allow that to happen. Moreover, this was their battle. I replied and said, even though this was the case, we must also do something. We were tired of folding our arms… were tired of the ongoing shop-talk, listening to old men.'

According to Mpanza: 'It was suggested that we should adopt a position that would highlight our anger and simultaneously support the revolt in Pondoland. That is how we began our action by burning sugar cane. This was during 1957… *Hayi*, the concerted action to burn the sugar cane, proceeded relentlessly. I remember that others went to burn forests at kwaNgubomnyama at Harding. Others went to kwaNongoma – cutting down the fence demarcating King Cyprian [Bhekuzulu]'s place…We burnt the sugar cane from 1957, 1958 until 1959 when Sisulu was brought down to stop the action in Natal.'[23]

The Role of the Church towards the Pondo Revolt 1960–63, Masters Thesis, Pretoria: University of South Africa, reasserts the Congress/Kongolose interpretation. The obvious and pragmatic narrative is that, whether in the 40s or the 50s, local migrants and rural people formed and structured their version of the 'Congress'. Unrelated as it was to the structure and function of the organization (and the Congress was a loose agglomeration of offices throughout the country, hardly the democratic centralism of later years), the local dynamics and priorities gave it a profound shape and direction.

[23] Justice Gizenga Mpanza's account is part of the oral testimonies for the SADET collection coordinated by Ben Magubane and Jabulani Sithole. It can be accessed online as 'Chapter 32', www.sadet.co.za- p.338 ff.

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But if a discrete messianic movement might have been a productive fiction, what were not fictional were messianic beliefs, liminal rites, rituals and apocalyptic expectations (40);[24] some of their ferment is found in the way Phumzile, Langa, Qabula and even Ezekiel define their labour struggles. But, the imagery is also Biblical and Christian. Alongside these beliefs there were others too: that the Russians were not only "coming" but that they were spotted in submarines off Port Saint John's has echoes in the Eastern Cape since the Crimean War (Qabula 1989: 12). And so was the widespread belief that the chiefs used powerful muti that needed matching. But we must resist the temptation of tribal stereotypes and denying ordinary people the ability to distinguish between metonymy and metaphor, and the distinction when 'the' song is struck. 'Bulal' abathakathi' in trade union contexts, now as it did then, does not mean that the witches are to be killed (modern-day managers *are* witches) or that they will be killed at all, and Zulu Phungula was not Jesus Khristu, even though he is named as such in a praise poem, as much as Botha Sigcau was or was not uSatane.[25]

What I also want to resist is an anthropological essentialism: left to themselves, Africans were and are about a tribal consciousness. Any institution, political formation for rights, trade union and so on is an externally imposed 'violation'. This paternalistic and racist notion and construction has a long pedigree: it formed the ideational backdrop for the formation of Reserves and Bantustans in the first place. But although the language has been 'neatened' up, it has reappeared as a post-colonial preoccupation.

The migrant workers here were capable of other and complex 'thinkings' as well; they understood well that the denial of their right to be considered as 'employees' under the Industrial Conciliation Act and its Amendments had very little to do with tribe and custom, that the withdrawal of the franschise to select groups in the Western Cape was not an act of enlightenment, that the critique of the Bunga system in the Eastern Cape was not a betrayal of normative adaptations and so on. All such 'thinkings' were part and parcel of migrant and peasant

[24] Indeed very few poets get as 'messianic' as Qabula, or for that matter as 'traditional', invoking isangoma, imbibing love potions, quoting from the Bible and so on. There has not been a confrontation in the trade union movement without either prayer or muti, or the eternal love/hate four-way relationship between Marx, Gandhi, Shaka and War Medicines. In such discourses, Jesus makes important guest appearances too.

[25] See Hlatshwayo, Mi (1990).

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consciousness as much as witchcraft and more complex indigenous knowledge systems. Finally, knowledges about white lives were not imbued with 'the magical'; they were also based in their minutest on intimate non-magical detail, a detail that was retold and redescribed ad infinitum by domestic workers.

The stories at my disposal were gathered at a time of a growing euphoria about the prospects of freedom and transformation. Their experiences of three decades of migrancy and proletarianization could not have been so 'unilinear'. They must have also involved lengthy periods of unheroic subservience and multiple re-editions of their past. Yet it did not stop them from separating between good and bad chiefs. Indeed, their relation to customary authorities was double-edged: acceptance of their authority allowed them access to land to the extent that some even joined the Inkatha movement. But they were also 'stubborn', 'insubordinate' and 'dangerous'; many of them were also attentive, good workers, management's 'good boys'. But they did make history and managed to nurture a 'post-tribal' consciousness with their compeers as Zulu, as Mpondo, and as Abasebenzi and as the Poors.

The last words are from Qabula and of his daily work at Dunlops: 'There in my head: those forests!… They lingered in my memory… the source of refuge for the homeless and the frightened… the Mpondo resisters… a retreat from the wilderness of the world outside… the world of beatings and interrogations; the so-called normal word marked with murderous lists of names. And in my head those forests, those songs. And when the metalworkers union got entry at Dunlop I knew that the march through the forests had restarted' (Qabula 1989: 67).

Qabula, Phumzile and Ezekiel have passed on; their generation, of the youth cohorts of the insurrection is in their late 60s and early 70s. It is crucial that the oral history of the rebellion, of the subsequent move to the cities and back, of the everyday struggles and conflicts of such a vital part of the country, is undertaken before it is too late. All that was offered here is a minute part of the vital narrative. Fifty years on, the story resonates; how it does is the responsibility of the scholars of today.

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PART III

MEANINGS AND SIGNIFICANCE

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CHAPTER NINE

THE SHOCK OF THE NEW: NGQUZA HILL 1960

Diana Wylie

When the police opened fire on a gathering of Amampondo men on 6 June 1960, they sent shock waves through Pondoland, the Transkei, and greater South Africa. It was as if the events at Sharpeville – unprovoked shooting at a crowd of unarmed people – were happening all over again, less than three months later, this time in a famously remote rural area.

Given the sudden and unexpected nature of this deadly event, it is fitting that my own introduction caught me by surprise. Twenty years ago – that is, nearly thirty years after the event itself – I stumbled upon a vestige of the shooting as I was researching another issue. I found an inpatient register in a storeroom at Holy Cross Hospital and began combing through it in search of data on the seasonal occurrence of malnutrition. When I reached the pages listing patients admitted between the 6th and 8th of June 1960, I came to an abrupt halt. The names of 11 men and one woman were listed alongside the notation "gunshot wounds."[1]

This story of my initiation to the revolt should alert the reader not only to my theme – the shocking and provocative nature of the event – but also to a couple of biases: my data refer mainly to Lusikisiki district, where Holy Cross Hospital is located, and they were gathered with an eye to subsistence issues. In 2009, rereading my interview notes plus pages photocopied from the report of the commission of inquiry and other state documents, new perspectives come to mind. While it was appropriate and strategically shrewd for Govan Mbeki in 1963 to celebrate the Pondoland Revolt as a sign of the increasingly revolutionary nationalism of South Africa's peasants, the passage of time and South Africa's new political order seem to call for a less instrumental point of

[1] I list the names of these 12 victims in the appendix so that, if the in-patient register has been lost in the intervening years, there remains in the public sphere some record of who was wounded that day.

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view and questions.[2] I want to ask simply: what did the shootings at Ngquza Hill destroy, and what did they achieve?

The Local Background

Subjects of Paramount Chief Botha Sigcau began meeting on eastern Pondoland hills in 1959 to discuss his legitimacy in particular, the new system of Bantu Authorities in general, and policies meant to "rehabilitate" the land. Whenever they heard about schemes labeled "betterment" [*hlaziyo* or "refresh"], "stabilisation," or "rehabilitation," people went on guard: they feared they would be forcibly gathered into villages and their land divided into separate zones for crops and rotating grazing. They felt their land and their way of life were being stolen, or sold by their chief and his "henchmen" for personal profit. The new, bureaucratized system of local government called Bantu Authorities had enhanced the power of these increasingly unpopular political figures to the point where they could disregard local opinion. Each affected, unhappy area of Eastern Pondoland sent out to neighboring hills a couple of men with remarkably good memories to report back on what they learned from other dissidents. These "men of the mountain" set up a lively regional network.

The violence began in Bizana on 9 March 1960, when the people of Isikelo Location seriously assaulted three of the paramount chief's councilors, and eleven days later burned down the home of his major advisor Saul Mabude. Lusikisiki's "men of the mountain" sent delegates to Bizana to bring the news home because they were experiencing their own crisis: people – from the famously well-watered and grassy land of Lambasi, along with people in nearby Vlei – were to be moved to make room for a sisal development project.[3] The official rationale was that such projects would create local jobs, crucial if the Bantustans were not to be an economic burden on white South Africa.[4] The local magistrate,

[2] Govan Mbeki's *The Peasants' Revolt* was first published in the Penguin Africa Library in 1964.

[3] The liaison between Lambasi and Vlei was facilitated by the recent transfer of the headman of Lambasi (Sigwebo Mhlanga) to Vlei; Sigwebo was replaced in Lambasi by the more compliant Zifunele Stephen. BAC Lusikisiki (J. Fenwick) to CMT [Chief Magistrate Transkei], Annual Report for 1958, 6 May 1959, KAB [Cape Archives Depot]: 1/LSK 142 File N2/11/3/4-1.

[4] A Phormium tenax (New Zealand flax) plantation was to be located in Lambasi. The crop required 3 to 4 years to mature, but thereafter a ton per acre would ideally be

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J. Fenwick, naively believed that since Lambasi was the traditional winter grazing ground of the paramount, his permission alone was needed. His subjects' opinions didn't matter.

The tension began to turn murderous on Saturday, 21 May 1960, when Fenwick brought four Land-Rovers of armed European policemen to a meeting in Lambasi where he intended to announce plans for the area's lush grazing land. According to District Surgeon Bruce Buchan, who was present, people were prepared to talk, but Fenwick was more interested in asserting his own authority. He ordered the arrest of one sub-headman for disrespectful behavior. A European policeman, probably sensing the volatility of the situation, refused to comply.[5] As the armed crowd grew more menacing, about six local men who supported, or perhaps were simply dependent on, the magistrate drew near him for protection. Fenwick swore that a gun was fired at them. A policeman said, "Let's go." Nearly everyone remembers that, as the Europeans were beating a hasty retreat, one of their sten guns went off by mistake, piercing the roof of their Land-Rover, and a Saracen armored car got stuck in the mud.

As a display of European power, the meeting at Lambasi was a humiliating debacle. As provocation to revolt, it was highly successful. The next day the homes of three of Fenwick's African allies – S.B. Dana, Lambasi sub-headman Julius Gule, and the new Lambasi headman Zifunele Stephen – were burnt. After killing two of his attackers, former constable Dana was shot, and the police took him to the hospital.[6]

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reaped, worth £50 per ton. The over 2000 acres of grazing land at Lambasi would be rented for 10 shillings an acre by the Bantu Development Trust, and the revenues would be paid into the treasury of the new Qaukeni Regional Authority which at the time had no other income. C.B. Young, department secretary, Bantu Areas and Development, to J. Fenwick, BAC Lusikisiki, 7 Nov. 1959; Fenwick to CMT, 24 Nov. 1959, KAB: 1/142 File 2/11/3/4-1.

[5] Sub-headman Malishe from Cutwini in Lambasi Location had gone off "noisily" to relieve himself and when he returned Fenwick heard him say in Xhosa, "It has now come to the stage when I will stop all this rubbish that the Magistrate has been talking." Fenwick angered Malishe by pointing at him and then ordered the sub-headman's arrest under section 2 of the Native Administration Act. J. Fenwick, "Disaffection in the Lusikisiki District," 1 June 1960, KAB: CMT 3/1479 File 42/9. Bruce Buchan, Interview, Durban, 7 April 1989.

[6] Simpson Bethoe Dana became "permanently disabled" due to his wound and wrote to the Chief Magistrate in Umtata asking that he be given "the ground I occupy at Lambasi Location as a free-holding in recognition of my services." He added that he "greatly admire[d] the developments planned by the Government for my Location." S.B. Dana to "Commissioner-General (Xhosa unit)," nd (1961), KAB: CMT 3/1614 File 93/9.

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George Cele, born and bred in Lambasi, was killed. I have found little information on why Cele was singled out. Some suggest he was viewed with suspicion because he had learned Afrikaans, English, and Italian during the Second World War, and so could readily serve as an interpreter and thus facilitate the planning process. Local people were particularly incensed that Paramount Chief Botha Sigcau seemed about to claim Lambasi land as his private property. Eight days later the home of the chief's brother Gladwin was burnt to the ground, though his granary was spared in order not to punish his wife and children. One man, reflecting the common sentiment that greedy people were threatening popular subsistence, explained, "Bantu Authorities is like a cow with some milk – they say Gladwin should not be able to milk this cow."[7]

The memories of Nodada Ndengese, an articulate and discursive Lambasi farmer, aged in his seventies in 1989, give a vivid sense of how local distress was experienced and understood. "A headman from another area was sent to demarcate our land into separate grazing areas. He was cheating us by promising fatter cattle. We told him our land [already] had tall grass and our cattle were fatter than on European farms so that people from other areas used to bring theirs here…. Botha Sigcau and the magistrate came here to steal land. They succeeded because they were assisted by police and soldiers."

Before examining exactly what the police and soldiers did, we should look at the details of Mr. Ndengese's complaint so that the violence may be understood in local terms: as an all-out assault on Amampondo values and subsistence. My questions encouraged him to speak only of subsistence issues, rather than about who had been the rightful paramount chief, also an important issue at the time.[8] He concluded that

[7] Albert Somadlangati, a teacher from Vlei, evidence given to the Departmental Committee of Enquiry into Unrest in Eastern Pondoland [Van Heerden Report], 9 August 1960, p. 128.

[8] Limitations of space prevent me from discussing the issue of chiefly legitimacy here, although it was hotly debated at the time and played a role in the violence. I also do not discuss the possible role of witchcraft allegations in the revolt because, in contrast to some recent scholarly claims, I see little evidence of it in either my 1989 interviews or in the evidence given to the Van Heerden commission. The very few references to witchcraft have to do with individuals trying to take advantage of or to harm other individuals. For example, Botha Sigcau was said never to urinate near any settlement for fear that an enemy would try to harm him by mixing the wet soil with herbs; Kaiser Matanzima's son was said to have the power to cause death by giving those who spoke ill of him a dirty look (Vukani Xabo, Interview, 18 June 1989). I can find no reference to supernatural causation in the Van Heerden evidence except for when the head of Qaukeni Tribal Authority, Mdabuka Cetywayo, blamed some traders for spreading

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"betterment" had had a "pathetic" effect on his area. It arbitrarily decreed where people must build their houses, even where the land was damp and unhealthy. It reduced the grazing so cattle grew thinner, and goats and sheep died. With less manure, his crop size had shrunk from as many as 13–20 bags prior to Betterment, to five bags, if he were lucky, in 1989.

He broadened his complaints against "rehabilitation" to target other vexing constraints on land use such as "fences [that] surround us, preventing us from moving freely." Free access to the forests was also denied. Guards arrested people who entered them, even women collecting firewood. "If I go to the forest and cut one branch and am seen by the chief or his representative, I will be fined a lot of money. Look at this thatching grass. Before you could cut it in the veld, asking only the sub-headman [for permission]. You were not expected to pay. Now you will be fined… If you kill [forest game] today, you are in shit… There is no reason to throw people out of the forest [after] they had approached chiefs and asked to settle [there] and were accepted… If no one occupied [the forests], they would be frightful places where wrong-doers like murderers would live." Mr. Ndengese's memories expressed his sense of having been cheated by the government: it never did anything without an ulterior motive; it was "aiming to strangle us." "The whites have killed us," he concluded.[9]

Mr. Ndengese's reference to race sets his testimony apart from those recorded in 1960. At that time people either did not dare to mention it or, more likely, focused on Botha Sigcau and his supporters as their main enemies because they saw them trying to become rich at their own expense. In any case, it seems that the vast majority of people did not understand "rehabilitation" as a development strategy. Virtually no one was willing to go on record as crediting the state with any neutral development goals.

These grievances had given rise to the meetings on hilltops and the attacks on Sigcau's "spies." The first meeting on Nqolwani Hill, Bizana, had led to another at Ndlovu Hill. Two meetings at Ngquza Hill had followed, at which people discussed issues like whether to boycott certain traders like one Oosthuizen, known ironically as "*Thandabantu*"

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rumors among gullible people that "the Europeans would go" if the Amampondo bought papers from them and got rid of their pigs' lard. Van Heerden Report, p. 271.

[9] Nododa Ndengese, Interview in Lambasi, 5 March 1989. I am grateful to Solly Solinjani, a superb interpreter and humane gentleman, for assisting me with these interviews.

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(one who loves people) though he ill treated them. They had set up courts to discipline those who supported the new Bantu Authorities, deciding, for example, to burn the house of Gladwin Sigcau. They enjoyed the camaraderie of sharing vivid stories: after Gladwin's house was burnt, a helicopter containing two white policemen flew overhead and, they said, one man defiantly struck at it with his stick.

Wana Johnson, a Coloured man who had a "brilliant" memory, walked to Ngquza Hill on the morning of June 6, prepared to share what he had learned from the previous meetings. Seeking protection from a whirlwind, the rebels gathered in the hollow of Ngquza Hill. Wana Johnson climbed a tree and sat in his black coat taking snuff while people gathered. Mbambeni Madikizela led an opening prayer. A small helicopter flew around and around, drawing closer, then left. It returned with a brown companion, filled with soldiers, and landed 100 yards away. A big truck filled with soldiers pulled up and parked next to the helicopter. Without telling anyone why, a man called Sihlungu took a pillowcase, fixed a stick on an anthill, and tied the case to it. Still the troops massed. Another helicopter arrived, throwing out canisters which spread smoke. Ignoring the white cloth, the police fired, branches and crows fell down, and the crowd scattered. Wana Johnson fell head-first out of the tree, blood streaming from his nose. Soon more than a dozen men lay dead in the grass.[10]

What did the Shootings at Ngquza Hill Destroy?

The shootings at Ngquza Hill swept away the residue of paternalism still persisting in local social and political relations. The idiom of government in the Transkei had long been framed in terms of a father and son relationship. Magistrates and Amampondo habitually spoke of each other as if they were, respectively, stern but devoted parents and dutiful, though occasionally restive, children. That fiction, and whatever substance lay behind it, became harder to sustain after the sixth of June. The final loss of basic trust occurred in two phases: first in the

[10] This paragraph and the preceding one are paraphrased from pp. 232–3 of my *Starving on a Full Stomach* and are based on the memories of Sikutshwana Mkovana, Gqatshula and Shusha Fikeni, Mchilizwa Hanxa, Jameson Mgoduka, Majayiya Mgwili, Vubeni Xabo. I have most of these interviews on tape and would be happy to share them with other researchers.

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immediate aftermath of the shootings, and then in reaction to the government's report.

The initial shock is apparent in the testimony of one Lucas Somidzela who said, "Tell us where we can send our complaints now… How can we go to [Government] now with our grievances, because it is the Government who causes our death."[11] The violence destroyed any residual local trust that magistrates could serve as an occasionally reliable buffer between local people and arbitrary power. It is true that magisterial government had already come under suspicion, especially in the 1950s: a couple of notoriously arrogant, "autocratic," and even unstable men had served as magistrates; Betterment Schemes had been proclaimed without regard for local opinion or the interests they would damage; and efforts to control the use of forests alarmed people who needed them for fuel and housing.

And yet, despite the real anger that these high-handed policies provoked, the sense persisted that magistrates were more "impartial" than Bantu Authorities were likely to be. (The commissioners of enquiry complained that while collecting evidence they heard this contention repeated "ad nauseam."[12]) The shootings damaged but did not immediately destroy this trust. People had recently seen paternalism in action: when one magistrate fought with a local agricultural supply shop to get defective plough parts replaced; when another magistrate rescinded a prior judgment that Lambasi Location was eroded and needed to be vacated; or when the police had *not* shot at prior meetings (Wylie, 2001: 228). This degree of trust in magisterial government was doubtless based on a strong sense of being a "subject nation," that is, of having to obey, but it was nevertheless real.[13]

Shortly after the shootings, the department of Bantu Administration and Development commissioned J.A. van Heerden, Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner of the Ciskei, and two other men to inquire into what had actually gone on and why. With remarkable speed, they reported only two months later, having recorded about three hundred pages of first person testimony from 108 local men (25 Europeans, and 83

[11] Evidence of Lucas Somidzela, Mxopo Location, Flagstaff, Van Heerden Report, 9 August 1960, p. 155.

[12] Van Heerden Report, p. 21.

[13] Memorandum submitted by Gilbert Macingwane, Nkunzimbini Location, Van Heerden Report, p. 191. Macingwane was referring to the government forcing Botha Sigcau on the Amampondo as chief and they had no choice but to submit as a "subject nation."

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"Bantu witnesses"). The interviews took place over a fortnight, between 13 and 28 July 1960.

What is striking is the respect that many Amampondo initially showed for J.A. van Heerden and their apparent belief that he was trying to represent their views faithfully. It is said that the leaders of the "mountain" movement boycotted the commission, but a substantial number of people did not. On 20 July, the commission's first day in Lusikisiki, between 350 and 400 people crowded into the local hall to appoint their spokesmen. Five thousand people showed up at the Bizana aerodrome to "air their grievances and submit their complaints."[14] These men told Van Heerden in clear and vigorous terms what they found wrong with their society, as if they expected their candor and clarity might redress their ills.

A range of individuals gave their opinion: preachers and teachers, people who had migrated to work elsewhere as well as those who had not, AmaQaba or "red" people as well as Christians.[15] The range of opinion was correspondingly diverse: some AmaQaba proudly took full responsibility for the violence leading up to the shooting, denying that the African National Congress had played a role; Botha Sigcau lashed out at a United Party politician (Gray Hughes) and an Anglican minister (probably Rev. F.E.C. Vaughan-Jones of Holy Cross); others, like his half-brother Makasonke Sigcau, his secretary Saul Ndzumo, and some, but by no means all, white traders, did blame the ANC, particularly because Oliver Tambo was originally from Bizana.

People expressed very little rancor toward the authorities. They seem to have been trying to *explain* the causes of the unrest. They appear intent on expressing what they were feeling. Many apparently still trusted the Transkeian authorities enough to speak their minds. They expressed their resentment freely.

Remnants of trust in magisterial government may be glimpsed also in the way nearly all of Van Heerden's informants spoke about J. Fenwick, the Lusikisiki magistrate. They found him aberrant, not typical. They spoke of him as an unstable and "autocratic"[16] man who was clearly aching for a confrontation: he drank heavily and was

[14] Van Heerden Report, p. 18.
[15] "AmaQaba" connotes people who had maintained local religious beliefs rather than convert to Christianity; they were called "red" because they continued to decorate their skins with ochre.
[16] Albert Somadlangati, testimony, Van Heerden Report, p. 132.

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unkempt; he dared local people to defy his authority; no white person spoke in his favor and at least two – District Surgeon Bruce Buchan and trader T.E. Strachan – blamed much of the turmoil on this one unbalanced individual, saying that Fenwick admitted wanting a "show down" and going to Lambasi as "bait" so the police could justify opening fire.[17] G. Macingwane presented a memorandum bearing a boldly chastising message, "The Magistrate is paid to carry on administration in his Magistracy and not for going about with a rifle in his hand."[18] I. Godlwana, an assistant Bantu Information Officer, reasoned that Fenwick had in fact been the main cause of the intitial blow-up in the Lambasi-Vlei area: Fenwick, he said, had failed to communicate to the Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner an important decision regarding a highly contentious headmanship – one disputed by Gladwin and Sigwebu – which had been laboriously negotiated and agreed to by all the members of the royal family.[19]

Amampondo seem at least partially sincere in saying that their quarrel is not with whites but with Bantu Authorities, Botha Sigcau, and Saul Ndzumo. Ten days after the shootings when Chief Magistrate V. Leibbrandt toured affected areas, he held public meetings at which various speakers said, "If the Pondos are in trouble the European should help us… It was much better when the Government ruled us." When Leibbrandt replied that reclamation would not be introduced unless the people asked for it, he was greeted with "great cheers."[20]

While the failure to blame whites was surely a sign of caution in the presence of Van Heerden, it is also likely that the black and white residents of Pondoland knew each other well enough to discriminate.

[17] Testimony of T.E. Strachan, trader at Magwa Falls, Lambasi, p. 226, and Dr. Bruce Buchan, District Surgeon, Lusikisiki, p. 256, Van Heerden Report.

[18] Testimony of G. Macingwane, Van Heerden Report, p. 191

[19] Testimony of I. Godlwana, Van Heerden Report, p. 289. Vlei was one of seven Locations comprising Mhlanga, over which Gladwin and Sigwebo were both claiming to be sub-chief.

[20] V. Leibbrandt, Meeting held at Nkunzimbini at 1 pm on 16 June 1960, KAB: CMT 3/1479 File 42/9. When the new Bantu Affairs Commissioner in Lusikisiki toured Lambasi in November 1962, he was reminded by "an old greybeard" at a meeting attended by over 150 residents that "at a meeting attended by Chief BAC and Paramount Chief they had been assured that their kraals would not be moved and they could stay where they were." G.H. Warner, BAC [Bantu Affairs Commissioner], Lusikisiki to Chief BAC, 28 Nov. 1962, KAB: 1/LSK 142/1 File N2/11/3/4-1. The recently completed census revealed that in Lambasi there were 256 kraal owners in legal occupation of kraal sites and arable lands, and 345 illegal occupiers of kraals which mostly had cultivated gardens, some rather large.

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They lived together in face-to-face communities where a degree of mutual understanding and even sympathy could grow and be expressed. Some white traders and officials sympathized with the plight of the Amampondo. Over their counters, traders heard their customers complain, and several repeated to Van Heerden, without negative embellishment, what they had learned.[21] A few traders – Meth Heathcote, Mr. Wyatt – even sold guns to the rebels, a sign that they appreciated the chance to make a sale, but also that they didn't fear becoming targets themselves. The "men of the mountain" knew which traders talked "tripe" and were abusive, like the ironically named Thandabantu, so they chose to avoid their shops. Selective boycott, not murder, was the Amampondo weapon of choice against both shopkeepers and magistrates.

People mainly expressed rancor toward collaborators: those they believed stood to profit from Botha Sigcau's regime; those who by supporting the rise of private property would shrink the commons and impoverish others. Botha Sigcau, his headmen (who were said to be "nearly all [his] relations"), and his councilors (especially his secretary) bore the greatest blame and were in the greatest danger.[22] They were almost uniformly depicted as greedy tyrants, grabbing land for themselves while raising taxes. Sigcau and his councilors were targeted for verbal abuse even by African agricultural officers who supported other unpopular aspects of government policy like "rehabilitation."[23] The commander of the Flagstaff police station, Sgt. B.S.H. Lehkmuhl, derided the paramount for arriving in a village in his big black Buick, accepting meat as a gift, installing a headman, and then hurriedly leaving.[24] Certainly Botha Sigcau won no local friends when he told Van Heerden, "I wish the Government to adopt drastic measures to stamp out the trouble irrespective of the outside world's opinion."[25]

The residual trust allowing this frank testimony was quickly dissipated: first by the report itself, and then by the way the government treated those who protested its findings. Before the report was issued, some Amampondo believed Van Heerden would recommend the

[21] Testimony of T.M. Goss, Goqwana Trading Station, Ntafufu, Van Heerden Report, pp. 218–221.

[22] The quote comes from Buchan testimony, Van Heerden Report, p. 254.

[23] Testimony of Muir Ndamase, Bantu Agricultural Office at Mt. Ayliff, Van Heerden Report, p. 164.

[24] Testimony of Sgt. B.S.H. Lehkmuhl, South African Police, Station Commander, Flagstaff, Van Heerden Report, p. 183.

[25] Testinony of Botha Sigcau, Van Heerden Report, p. 273.

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removal of Botha Sigcau from office and the end of Bantu Authorities.[26] Perhaps they were encouraged in this wishful thinking by the fact that the paramount had already dismissed his widely disliked secretary Saul Ndzumo from office. Van Heerden acknowledged that "the malcontents are lying low until the result of the committee's enquiry is made known."[27] But thereafter hopes plummeted. People discovered that Van Heerden had not investigated the shootings at Ngquza Hill, an extraordinary failure in light of the shock they caused.[28] Only in October was an inquest held; that same month many thousand Amampondo heard Van Heerden's findings at a mass meeting and discovered that his report blamed the ANC for inspiring the unrest: "it is clear that the people of Bizana were the victims of the insidious propaganda of the African National Congress and associated organisations."[29] Even while hearing the evidence, Van Heerden betrayed this preconception: when five hundred people at Flagstaff tabulated their grievances, he saw, not a common spirit, but a "mastermind" at work.[30]

Most important, the report did not suggest how the grievances – against Bantu Authorities, rehabilitation, or the level of taxation – were to be redressed. As a result, those at the mass meeting rejected the report and decided to stop paying taxes. A deputation of twenty-two headmen was sent to the Bantu Affairs Commissioner at Bizana to state that any attempt to punish Amampondo would be met with total non-cooperation. The government reacted by detaining more partisans and denying them all bail. After Botha Sigcau's brother Vukayibambe was killed, a State of Emergency was declared. Detentions, beatings, fines ensued; 4769 men and women were put in prison in 1960, and 2067 were eventually brought to trial. Govan Mbeki wrote that thirty Pondo were sentenced to death between 24 August and 28 October 1961 (Mbeki, 1984: 117, 125).[31] If about fifteen people were killed at Ngquza Hill, then at least forty-five people were killed by the South African

[26] Ken Harvey, Bantu Affairs Commissioner, Lusikisiki, to Chief Magistrate, Umtata, 23 Sept., 1960. KAB: CMT 3/1479 File 42/9. Harvey noted in this letter that the two hundred "very suspicious and agitated" Amampondo who gathered to watch the exhumation "said they had no quarrel with me, had stated their grievances to the Commission of Enquiry and were now awaiting the results."

[27] Van Heerden Report, p. 11.

[28] Rev. F.E.C. Vaughan-Jones to CMT, "Request for a Judicial Inquiry," 25 July 1960. KAB: 1/Lsk File N. 1/9/2.

[29] Van Heerden Report, p. 11.

[30] Van Heerden Report, p. 215.

[31] Govan Mbeki was quoting data given in the House of Assembly Debates, 27 January 1961, c. 226.

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authorities during the entire revolt, fewer than at Sharpeville.[32] The Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner V. Leibbrandt announced in April 1961 that "perhaps the most significant feature" of the Pondoland disturbances was that they were "quelled with very little loss of life."[33]

What the shootings at Ngquza Hill marked was the loss of the vestiges of moral authority among those behind the shooting. As time passed, it would become increasingly difficult to regard the June 6 shootings as aberrant, and easier to see them as a harbinger of tough times, when the state would not hesitate to unleash its brute force on African dissent.

What did the Shootings at Ngquza Hill Achieve?

The violence at Ngquza Hill, and its aftermath, encouraged the Amampondo participants to broaden their conceptual grasp of what was happening around them and to adopt more expansive tactics. The story of Nofitshane Tshumane (also known as Pindiso Zimambane), a man born in about 1920, who grew up in the Vlei and later spent seven years in prison, including on Robben Island, suggests how this happened.

Before 1960 Mr. Tshumane worked in Durban and on Johannesburg mines rather than go to school. After he stopped working in cities, he returned home to live by ploughing mealies and engaged in no notable political activities. Then he was visited by people from Lambasi who told him about having to move so that their land could be used to "create work opportunities" like sugar and tea plantations; their houses had already been demolished by soldiers and they said they had been beaten. He and his neighbors in Vlei justified their refusal to obey a similar evacuation order by using time-honored arguments about political legitimacy: they said they could not comply as they were still in mourning for their late chief; and, in any case, they did not believe Botha Sigcau was the rightful heir to the paramountcy because he had

[32] According to Majayiya Mgwili, other bodies were taken to their homes, and some may have been eaten by dogs, a story that was commonly told. Interview, 18 June 1989. District Surgeon Bruce Buchan, who performed the post-mortems, remembered there were 14 or 15 corpses; N. Tshumane remembered about twelve dead; Ken Harvey counted eleven.

[33] Minutes of the United Transkeian Territories General Council, Thursday 20 April 1961, Minute No. 31: Unrest in Eastern Pondoland, Quelling of, p. 45.

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been born to an unmarried daughter, rather than to a wife, of a chief. The succession issue was "a matter to be rectified by the Amafaku themselves," not by *Maziphathe*, as Bantu Authorities was locally known.[34] The Lambasi people suggested that the people of Vlei should join them in going to Qaukeni where, armed, they would surround the Great Place.[35]

Rather than act immediately on this suggestion to take up arms and launch an attack on Qaukeni, people held "meetings to discuss all the bad laws not made by us, [and we] decided to stand together and resist [*ukwayo*] government, *to take a step so government would listen to our grievances*, not to have anything to do with laws of government, to go to the hills like people without homes."[36] Some worried, Mr. Tshumane said, that the government would look on them "as animals if we stayed in the forest." The people of Vlei unanimously decided not to go to government anymore, but to oblige the government to come to them. "The government was using chiefs as a ladder [*ileli*] to reach us." At the meetings where these stands were taken, Mr. Tshumane became inspired by the popular unanimity: he "decided then to resist government forever until [it] took me to Robben Island [in 1972]." (Prior to the shootings at Ngquza Hill, he says, "I was not active myself then, just a listener.") His commitment deepened when the government "opened bloodshed" by starting the fighting against a people who had sat down at Ngquza Hill "all [in] peace and order, saying there should be no quarrels."

The tactical strategies of the Amampondo grew. Before the shootings, "we said we shouldn't have a leader or we would be practicing as chiefs. We should rather elect *abaququzeleli* [messengers and organizers]." At the same time they established courts to discipline people who either supported Bantu Authorities or who simply did not join their protest; they went no further, he said, than warning those people who approached them pleading not to be punished. They did decide to burn the huts of people like Gladwin Sigcau because he had not only burned a local man's house, but brought the police with him for protection when he did so.[37] When Gladwin's houses were burnt, there were

[34] Maziphathe translates as "self-government," though the word was generally used to refer to the ten Bantustans.
[35] Interview with Nofitshane Tshumane, Taweni, 19 June 1989.
[36] The stress here is mine.
[37] The man whose house was burnt was called Pompotha Majola, but I know nothing else about him.

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policemen inside who had to flee; their presence made the government decide "to suppress the whole thing." That is why, Mr. Tshumane believes, the troops and police came to Ngquza Hill as men gathered to discuss what to do in the aftermath of the burning of Gladwin's house. The meeting hadn't even begun when "war" came to the hill.

Mr. Tshumane notes that the deaths "didn't stop us holding meetings," though they were held now at night. "We called one to discuss Ngquza" and decided to engage lawyers. Local people then working in Durban arrived home to advise the hiring of Durban lawyer Rowley Arenstein. "We wanted to investigate the government's action." Another lawyer from Port Elizabeth was sent by people working in Cape Town. These lawyers tried to put pressure on the government to tell the truth about the shootings: to admit that more than six people had been killed and that they had not been killed by their own kin, as the government was alleging. "[The government] didn't [even] come to perform post-mortems" until this legal pressure was exerted. When Ken Harvey, the new BAC, arrived with District Surgeon Bruce Buchan to open the graves, he tried to stop an African photographer from taking pictures. Mr. Tshumane's memories of what ensued illustrate richly how unbowed the Amampondo felt themselves to be: "the Magistrate was chased away by the people after being told that he shouldn't interfere. He had had his own time but he did not use it." The photographer stayed, Mr. Tshumane said.[38]

Mr. Tshumane remembers the aftermath of the shootings as a time of Pondo growth, achievement, and power. When a case was opened in the Lusikisiki court, "the police couldn't defend themselves satisfactorily," he remembers. Even though Arenstein and his colleagues were eventually "locked up" under the Emergency regulations, "white boys on whom the lawyers put pressure used to cry when coming out of the courtroom." In perhaps his most prideful statement, Mr. Tshumane concluded, "We started these things on our own. Others came with their own views and called it Congo for Congress. These people wanted to say the whole movement derived from Congress. That is not true at all. We started it as AmaQaba." If the identities of the wounded brought to Holy Cross Hospital reflect accurately the nature of the wider group,

[38] Dr. Buchan's memories were different: when Harvey asked the two- to three-hundred Amampondo present if they wanted the "outsiders," the two African reporters from Johannesburg, "listening to our troubles," the crowd responded "No!" and the photographers were "chased away." Buchan Interview, 1989.

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he is right: eleven of the twelve patients are listed as "red." Another informant, Vubeni Xabo, later a Methodist evangelist, but at the time "far from Christianity," confirmed that he saw few Christians present at Ngquza Hill.

Mr. Tshumane's political education subsequently took off in 1962 when he was convinced by APDUSA organizer Benjamin Madikwa to join the Unity Movement. "Madikwa stressed that it was stupid just to shoot whites in ignorance. We should first know our rights that we should claim from the government." He added that people didn't immediately take up arms after Ngquza Hill, but the shootings and the government's response had made them ripe for harvesting, in his case, by a nationalist organization with socialist goals and revolutionary ideas. On Robben Island, he was educated further.

Conclusion

The events at Ngquza Hill illustrate vividly the power of a shocking act of violence to destroy and to galvanize. What was lost were the traces of trust that had once characterized the paternalistic form of colonial government in the Transkei. What was gained was a sense that people and organizations far beyond Eastern Pondoland – political movements, lawyers and international bodies like the United Nations, Ghana, Russia, and America – might be of help. In light of the massive social engineering to set up the Bantustans then being planned in Pretoria, this loss was actually a gain: Amampondo gained pride in their ability to defy fiats from above. And, in fact, though the government failed to admit so publicly, the revolt caused "betterment" schemes to be implemented slowly in some areas of Pondoland and in other areas not at all.[39]

A cautionary note is in order. The "shock of the new" also has the capacity to camouflage the diversity of local opinion and make it appear uniform. Not all the people of Lusikisiki were opposed to agricultural innovation. The drama of the shootings and their aftermath give rise to the false impression that everyone was united against "rehabilitation" except for the corrupt minions of Botha Sigcau. In fact, some

[39] In 1989 I was told by Mr. J. Jack, Chief Agricultural Officer, Planning and Development, Umtata, that of the 55 administrative areas in Lusikisiki District, only ten had had their plans implemented and twenty areas had not even had their plans drawn up. Interview, 16 June 1989.

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local people, including women whose voices are conspicuously absent in these testimonies, did later admit that they would have found it appealing to live in villages near schools and clinics.[40] Further, some people were named collaborators and had their homes burned, not because they were in league with the police, but because they had fallen out with a chief who was waging a succession dispute.[41]

While the lines drawn on 6 June are too stark to reflect the range of local opinion accurately, the shootings at Ngquza Hill and the Van Heerden Report do nevertheless demonstrate an obvious political truth: shooting an unarmed gathering and then failing to investigate the incident was a splendid way to provide a radical political education.

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[40] One woman who moved from a valley near the Msikaba River to Lambasi due to "betterment" told me in 1989 that she could see the advantages and disadvantages of closer settlement. She noted that her family was able to bring their fruit trees with them and received productive new lands of the same size so there wasn't much difference in the crops they harvested. Animals were no longer able to range freely, but it was convenient to live in clusters especially in cases of illness or death. Vina Manikwe Sifo, Interview, 1989.

[41] Albert Somadlangati lost all his property in a fire set by supporters of Sigwebu because he protested that Sigwebu had failed to give him the registration allowing him, a MoSotho, to live in Vlei, even though he had paid the chief four sheep and ten shillings. Testimony of Albert Somadlangati to Justice of the Peace Burger, 2 June, 1960, Flagstaff, KAB: 1/LSK 114 File N.1/9/2.

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APPENDIX

Admitted to Holy Cross Hospital with Gunshot Wounds, 6–8 June, 1960 (Source: In-patient Register)

Sokwequ Kwanyaza	Modokana, Lusikisiki	76 days in hospital
Mhlazwa Gwebityala	Sigwebo, Lusikisiki	76
Mlotwane Qantsi	Mokokane, Lusikisiki (amputation)	76
Gibisela Basa	Mangengu, Flagstaff	43
Ginyamate Pemeshe	Sigwebu, Lusikisiki	90
Xaselwayo Gangelaze	Zipathe, Lusikisiki	11
Olivier Melane	Sigwebu (aged 20; Christian)	20
Silo Mbodlela	Sigwebu	117
Qogwana Manashu	Sigwebu (28 years old)	42
Ntsonyana Nigi	Modokana (female)	43
Nkonkoni Dodo	Sigwebu (aged 32)	10
Mancwini Malipani	Bala (aged 50)	86

In addition, one man with a lacerated hand came to the hospital but absconded. And on 13 June, another man arrived with gunshot wounds; he was 33 years old and from Sigwebo Location. None are recorded as having died.

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CHAPTER TEN

TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE NGQUZA HILL: A STUDY OF LANDSCAPE AND MEMORY

Liana Müller

The dirt road creates a red scar in the otherwise green landscape as it continues down the slope of the hill. The imizi[1] *along the road dwindles to only a few, eventually none, in celebration of a topography accommodating veld grass, small shrubs and young boys herding cattle. One catches a glimpse of the Mcosane River and the verdant valley that envelopes it. The setting is dwarfed by the highest point of Ngquza Hill to the east. Its gentle slopes are emphasized by the yellowing grass contrasting against the azure sky. In this context you acknowledge the small monument and the scattering of red-and-white graves clinging to the slopes of the hill. The plaque on the monument reads: 'List of heroes who died at Ngquza on 6 June 1960'. What story does this landscape have to tell?*

The valley and hill of Ngquza has witnessed a number of key events within the Mpondo history. Studies on the Mpondo Revolt primarily focus on the history of the event, with some addressing contemporary political, social and economic issues. Not much has been devoted to the understanding of the Pondoland landscape and its relationship to the memory and representation of the Revolts.[2] This chapter aims at connecting the intangible dimension of narrative and memory to the tangible fabric of Ngquza. A spatial narrative of the event differs from existing archival or historical narratives as it is located within, invoked through and confirmed by the spatial dimension of landscape. This narrative will serve to reflect upon the significant role this monumental landscape plays in the collective memory of the Mpondo Revolt.

The introductory paragraph represents a personal description of the landscape of Ngquza. The description primarily focuses on the

[1] Homesteads.

[2] The seminal works of Beinart (1984, 1989, 2002) did, however, contribute significantly.

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biophysical environment, but alludes to another dimension of memory which the observer does not have access to. This example clearly illustrates the concept of the term landscape, which does not only refer to the environment or nature, but also an expression of particular ways of perceiving the environment (Darvill 1999:105; Duncan and Ley 1993:262; Scazzosi 2004:337; Bender 1993).

Landscape is seated in perception and does not only exist as a material object (Ucko and Layton 1999:1, 7). The term *landscape* implies human beings as its key element: human ideas and concepts about a certain landscape differentiate it from the environment and usher in the cultural. Physical features and relationships in the landscape are socially mapped through cultural or cognitive factors, and meanings or values are attributed to them (Allison 1999:276). We consequently perceive, understand and create the landscape around us through social and cultural filters, as well as through specific time, place, material and historical conditions (Schama 1995:12). In most cases, therefore, the term *landscape* may have different significant meanings and interpretations for different cultural groups or individuals (Todeschini 2003; Mbangela 2003:1; Cooney 1999:46). Occasionally, the cultural significance of such landscapes is understandable to outsiders, but typically, even in those cases, concealed meanings and levels of significance (the intangible dimension) are attainable to only a few. The response to landscape is therefore not necessarily universal (Green 1996:31).

I experienced this concept when I first encountered Ngquza years ago. Even though I could appreciate and understand the physical landscape, I had limited resources to illuminate the intangible dimension of meaning within the landscape. The monument erected by the Ngquza Hill Commemoration Committee in 1998 provided scant information on the event, but did not contribute to any personal emotive resonance. The initial hunger to understand this profound landscape on a more intimate level led to a number of studies.[3] I set out to spatially understand and document the Ngquza event as part of the larger Pondoland Revolt of the 1960s through accessing its intangible dimension through contact with the veterans and witnesses of the actual event. By reading or perceiving the landscape of Ngquza as an expression of meanings

[3] Culminating in a Masters Degree in Anthropology at the University of South Africa (Müller 2009).

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Figure 1: Monument erected by the Ngquza Hill Commemoration Committee in 1998 together with graves after the Reburial Ceremony of 2003

Source: Liana Müller 2007

and memories seated in past or present, I had to 'identify[ing] a community's reference to external features that we can also perceive' (Ucko and Layton 1999:11).

The theoretical background of the study followed the concept of cultural landscapes and its relationship to numerous other disciplines and bodies of thought concerning memory landscapes and the manifestation of memory in landscape. The works of Edward Casey proved most significant. He included the concept of landscape in the basic definition of place. 'When we are in a landscape setting… we are very much in the presence of place in its most encompassing and exfoliated format, a format in which we are sensuously attuned to its intrinsic spatial properties rather than imposing on our own site-specific proclivities' (Casey 2000:198). According to him, landscape can be seen as the full spectrum of body sensing in conjunction with perception (Casey 2000:197). Supporting the premises of Steward and Strathern (2004), Lowenthal (1985; 2007), Holtorf (2000–2007) and Halbwachs (1939; 1990), Casey

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continues to establish that place and landscape serve to 'situate one's memorial life, to give it a name and a local habitation' (Casey 2000:183–184).

An essential part of any discussion of landscape and memory is the efficacy of mnemotechnics. It had its inception during the Greek and later Roman times, and was primarily a sub-discipline of speech making, that is, the 'art of memory' (Parker 1997:147). Place analogies were used extensively by classical orators as an aid in memorising arguments or speeches. 'Study of mnemonic theory – including constructs of modern art theory, philosophy and cognitive psychology, along with ideas developed by classical orators – suggests that mental organization structures itself in a fundamentally spatial manner' (Parker 1997:147). This concept was originally explored by Jan Vansina, the Belgium anthropologist who worked in Central Africa (1985:45). He advocated that memory often needs mnemotechnic devices (mnemonic = designed to aid the memory) to be efficiently activated. These can be objects, landscapes or forms of music (Van Vuuren 2005:59).

In line with the concept of mnemotechnics, where landscape elements can serve as devices to trigger memory (Vansina 1985), Casey (2000) discussed the role of the body in the process of memory 'as psycho-physical in status, the lived-body puts us in touch with the psychical aspects of remembering and the physical features of place' (Casey 2000:189). He described the function of living bodies as giving direction, level and distance to landscapes and places, which, in turn, serve as anchoring points in remembering. Continuing the idea of the 'art of memory' described previously, remembering is thus not merely a form of recollection, but rather a process of 're-implacing and re-experiencing' past places (Casey 2000: 210). One gains access to the past, as described by Archibald (2002:68), though emotional resonance, where landscapes, places and objects stimulate memory. These places support the continuity of memory.

This concept is summarised by Spiegel (2004:8) as follows:

> …landscape "out there" does have autonomy when it is inscribed in memory in ways, and through parts of the body, whereby cognitive processes (the intellect) appear to be bypassed in the recollection process… The very ways in which landscape occurs "on the ground" – the lay of the land – can determine the extent to which its inscription as bodily memory enables or hinders recollection. And by doing that, it demonstrates again that the landscape 'out there' does have an autonomous existence, an inscriptive capacity, and the power to affect, even to determine, the intellectual process of representation that is memory construction.

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The landscape can therefore either be a place of memory (carrying the memory of an event past) or part of the memory itself. Both these concepts can be seen as processes involving individuals or societies, where the past is reinterpreted or recomposed through cognitive processes (Spiegel 2004:3, 7), and where past places are re-implaced and re-experienced through psycho-physical processes (Casey 2000:210). One might therefore understand landscape and the perception thereof as a result of the process of memory, that is, from a cultural process of remembering to a personal and measurable capacity (Kuchler 1993:103). The practices that perpetuate memory are inscribed on the landscape and inscribe the landscape itself into memory (Spiegel 2004:8).

Accessing the Spatial Narrative

By applying the theory above, the story of Ngquza began to take form. A number of veterans and eyewitnesses of the tragic event that occurred within the context of the Pondoland Revolt were located and interviewed to access the intangible layers of memory and meaning of Ngquza. During a seven year period, individual and focus group interviews were conducted and participant observation employed during not only various events, but also day-to-day activities within the region of Ngquza. A key event included the ceremony where the remains of executed men[4] who were exhumed at the Mamelodi Cemetery outside Pretoria were reburied at the site of the Ngquza monument on 6 June 2003. This event provided ample opportunity to converse not only with veterans and witnesses of the event, but also members of the community.

Even though the interviews allowed me to understand the basic tenets of the event, why and how it occurred, its spatial relationship with the landscape of Ngquza remained elusive. Consequently, I endeavoured to encourage a number of veterans to accompany me to the site. The main reason for this exercise was to establish the relation between memory, the landscape and the event: to walk the site with the veterans and utilise landscape features to serve as mnemotechnic devices triggering memories of the event. The veterans pointed out all the major

[4] Please refer to the Narrative section of this chapter.

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Figure 2: The reburial ceremony with the coffins being carried to the graves

Source: Liana Müller 2003

points on the site where the events transpired on 6 June 1960, and these were documented visually and spatially. The general positions of the victims' graves were also identified. The story was further clarified by the discovery of a large, open-ended drum that was used by Mr Sipolo[5] to transport some of the wounded to his hut after the event in 1960 (see figure 4).

After spending time on the slopes of the hill and in the valley, a thorough understanding of the tangible aspects of the landscape was obtained. However, by listening to the eyewitness accounts of the veterans, documenting the locations of individual events and understanding the consequences of the day, the intangible dimension of the landscape that was seated in the memories of the veterans was accessed.

[5] During my initial fieldwork in Pondoland, I interviewed Sitywaka Sipolo. This old man witnessed the Ngquza events first-hand as his *umzi* is located on the northern slope of Ngquza Hill, in the immediate vicinity of its crest. Mr Sipolo died of old age during 2002 (see figure 4C for the location of the kraal and Mr Sipolo's house).

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Figure 3: Clement Gxabu with interpreter in Mcosane River valley

Source: Liana Müller 2003

An attempt was made to spatially illustrate and interpret the events of the day after assimilating the data from the literature review and fieldwork – walking the site with the veterans, and conducting informal and formal interviews. Topographical maps were used in conjunction with Google Earth satellite imagery to prepare a base map of the terrain. Photographs taken on the site visit at the specific points as identified by the key informants were spatially linked to the prepared base maps. These points proved to be mnemotechnic 'triggers' or anchoring points for the informants to remember the event and the site. By utilising photographs in conjunction with aerial photographs, the site is illustrated to the reader in its most poignant form. Additionally, landscape elements such as trees, the river, and the slopes of the hills, valleys and erosion gullies are clearly visible. This process is thus a way to combine the tangible aspects of the landscape with the intangible dimension of embodied memory, and spatially illustrate this relationship in a graphic form.

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A video of the site visit with the veterans in 2003 was also produced. This video clearly augments the representation of the relationship between landscape and memory, and has the added benefit of expressing the metadata (language, knowledge) contained within the oral traditions as related by the key informants. Highlights from this video, and its chronological order, are contained within figures 4A and 4B as the visual interpretation of the event. In conjunction with the visual spatial representation, the narrative of the event was constructed based on the various sources (literature and oral histories). The following section is a revised and condensed version[6] of the events that lead to and transpired on the day of Ngquza massacre of 6 June 1960.

The Narrative of Ngquza[7]

When not referred to as *Intaba* (The Mountain), the organization known as *Ikongo* started assuming the functions of chief's courts and applied great pressure on chiefs and headmen to condemn Bantu Authorities. Their area of influence included the towns of Flagstaff, Bizana and Lusikisiki, and the areas adjacent to them (Lodge 1985: 60). The first committee was formed at Nonqulwana Hill near Bizana. Other committees were formed at Ngqindilili Hill, Indlovu Hill and Ngquza Hill in the area between Flagstaff and Lusikisiki (see figure 3). During the TRC hearings, it transpired from the numerous oral recollections that the Pondoland Revolt was called *Nonqulwana*, referring to the first Hill committee (TRC 1998: section 74).

According to Clement Gxabu[8] (Gxabu 2003: pers. comm.), the flagship branch of the *Ikongo* held its first meeting at the Mhlanga School within the district. After subsequent meetings at 'Mr Joynes's shop' and Hlabatini, Ngquza Hill became the preferred meeting place. It was decided at one of the gatherings that they would meet Miaga Lenda, secretary of the Tribal Authorities. All the chiefs of the area attended this meeting, but the secretary was unable to attend.

[6] Refer to Müller 2009 for a more elaborate investigation and description.

[7] It is assumed that the history and the context of the Pondoland Revolt will be dealt with in other chapters of the book; therefore, this section will only deal with the Ngquza Revolt and the event of 6 June 1960.

[8] Mr Gxabu is an Ikongo veteran and a participant in the Ngquza event. He resides within Ramzi district, is an ANC Councillor and member of the Ngquza Hill Commemoration Committee (at the time when he was interviewed in 2003).

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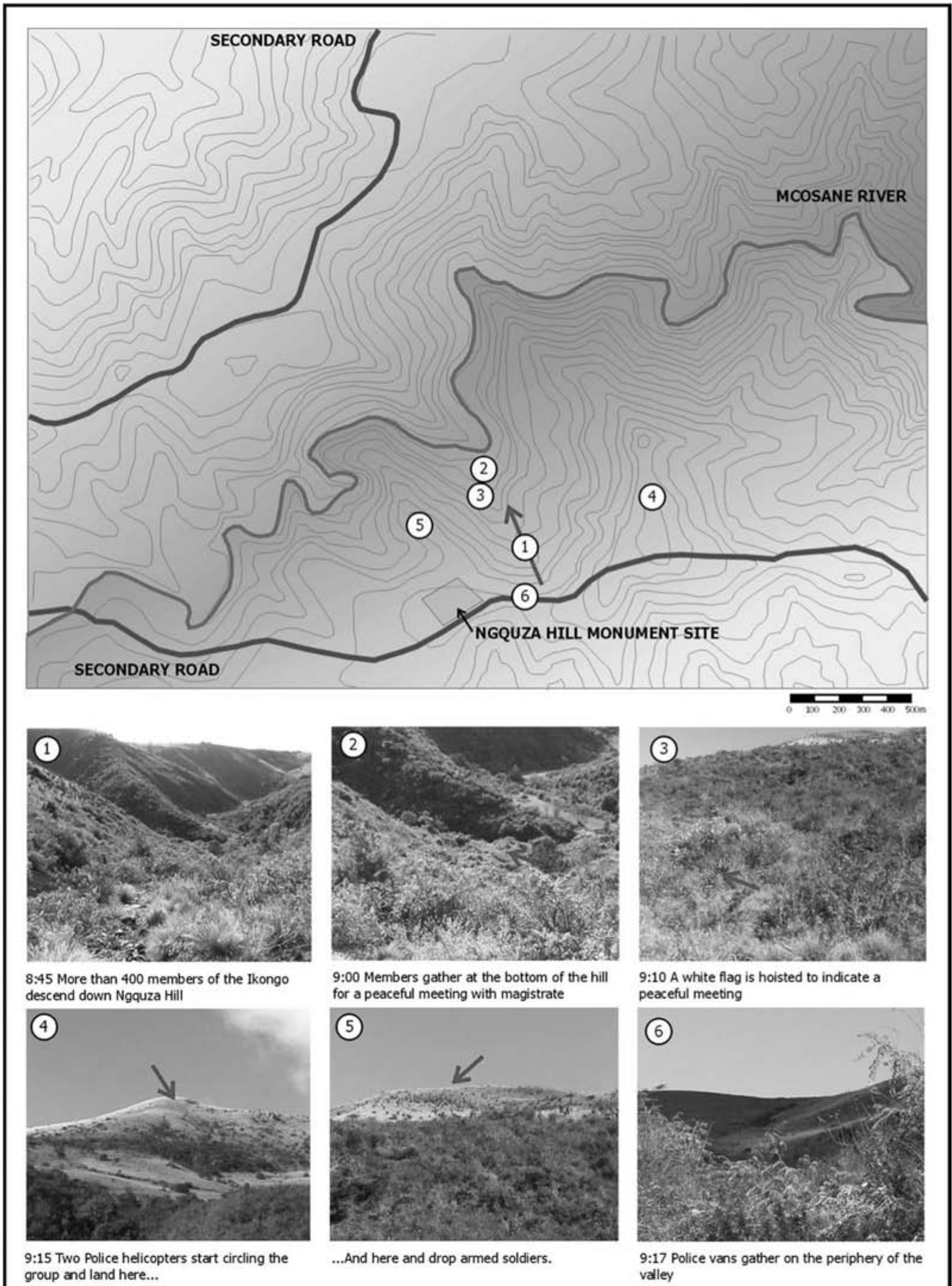

Figure 4A: Visual Interpretation: 6 June 1960.

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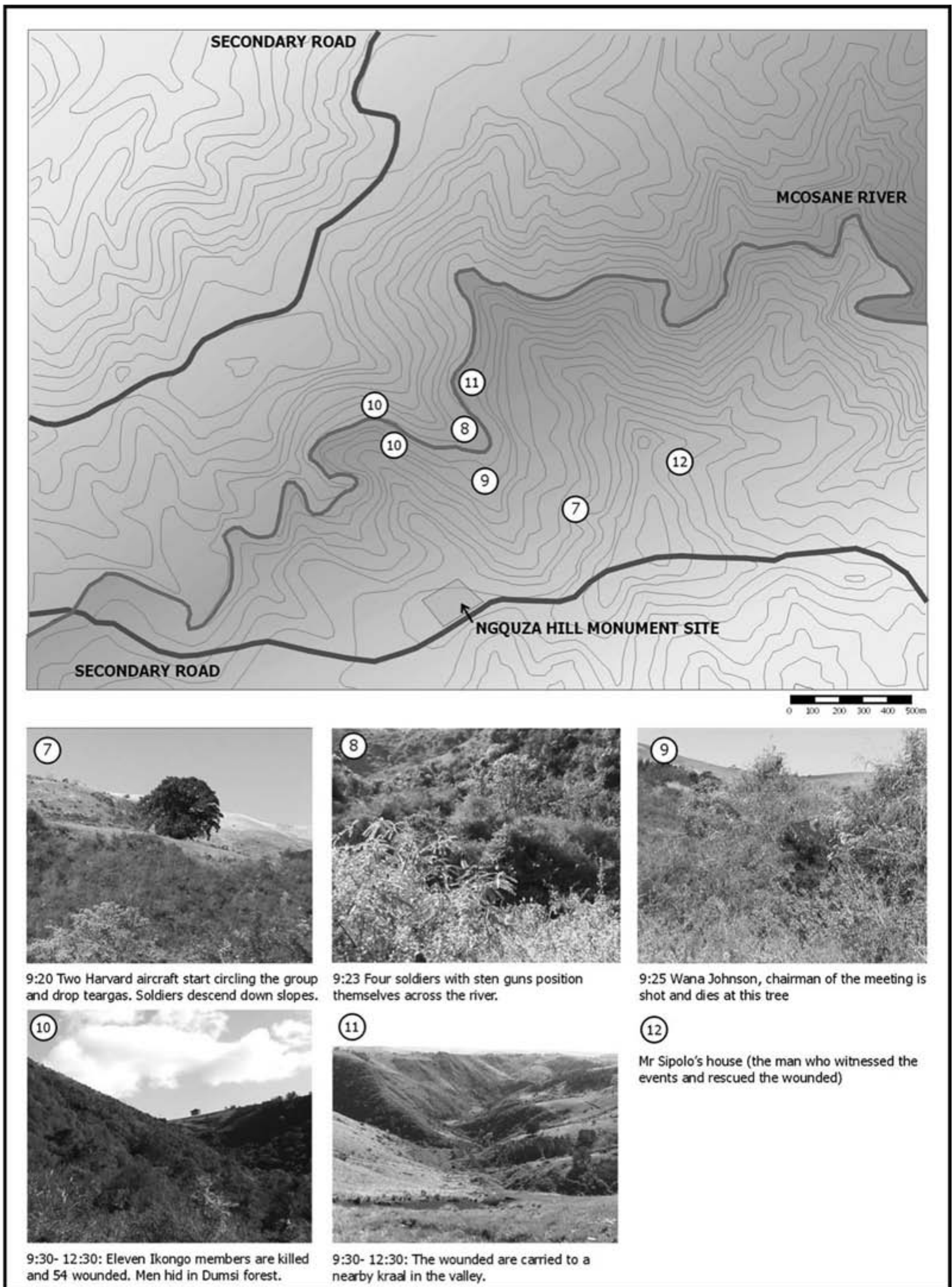

Figure 4B: Visual Interpretation: 6 June 1960.

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Figure 4C: Spatial event recreation.

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Only four chiefs were not part of the meeting, namely Chief Nelson Sigcau, Chief Sgwebo, Headman Motokari and Chief Hlamandana. Another meeting was held that night at Sixontweni where they took the decision to convene at the top of Ngquza Hill on 13 May 1960. This strategic decision was taken in view of the fact that police vehicles could not reach that location (Gxabu 2003: pers. comm.).

The choice of Ngquza Hill was not only strategic, but also symbolic. According to Mbambo (2000:35–36), the people he interviewed indicated that the Hill was chosen due to its geographic location and that it represented the centre of Pondoland. Symbolically, the Hill had a ritual and cultural meaning for the Mpondo, establishing a connection with their ancestors. They believed their ancestors inhabited the Hill and that they would aid them while they were fighting for a worthy cause (Mbambo 2000:35–36). This Hill had also been regarded as the place where people went to announce news to the community and where the coming of age ceremonies for girl initiates (*umngquzo*) were conducted (Sipolo 2001: pers. comm.).

On 13 May 1960, four speakers (i.e. Wana Johnson, Matshibini Bodoman, Pakela and Mtshayelo Pompota) attended the meeting. During the discussions, they saw an aircraft approaching from the direction of Lusikisiki. It circled Ngquza Hill where they were holding their meeting. Another aircraft arrived and did the same as the first. Because of the noise, they had to disband and search for another venue. While moving out, they saw approximately 50 police vehicles moving in from the direction of the Holy Cross Mission. They met the police vehicles next to 'Mr Finiza's shop' (Silangwe 2003: pers comm). Both parties carried firearms and weapons, but the group dispersed peacefully. As the *Ikongo* members and the police vehicles were departing, an aircraft flew past them and dropped teargas. They tried in vain to fight back by throwing their knopkieries[9] into the air (Gxabu 2003: pers. comm.). *Ikongo* members who were armed fired at the helicopter. Earnest Gwede Pepu was shot and killed by the police and Nkosayipheli Msukeni was wounded. He died on the way to hospital (TRC 1998: section 79).

After this event, it was agreed that all the parties would meet at Ngquza Hill on 6 June 1960, and Clement Gxabu told the TRC Commission that although some of the *Ikongo* members had been

[9] A local fighting instrument closely resembling a short walking stick.

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armed at the May meeting, they were not armed at the 6 June meeting because they 'intended convincing them that we were not at war with them but only needed a government delegation to talk to us about our grievances' (Gxabu 2003: pers. comm.). They had been expecting a representative from the government to come and meet with them at Ngquza. Prior to the meeting at Ngquza Hill, the *Ikongo* members decided at a short gathering at Ngquza Village that no one would be allowed to carry any weapons to the meeting including the traditional knopkieries or 'two wooden sticks' (Mbambo 2000:51).

Through interviewing a number of sources, another dimension to, or another version of why the Ngquza meetings occurred was discovered. Mr Sipolo (Gwazi 2002: pers. comm.) related the following:

> The Afrikaner forced us to pay tax for the land we lived on, for the goats, the cattle, horses, everything, and we revolted because this was our forefather's land. The Ikongo had representatives from Bizana, Lusikisiki, Flagstaff, Port St. Johns. At *Nonqulwana* they had their first meeting and discussed the problem. The aim was to go to King Botha Sigcau with the problem. He didn't bother as they suspected that he was bribed by the Afrikaner. Then they sent representatives to Ngquza from Bizana and Flagstaff. For the first day of the gathering they discussed the situation and decided to send people to King Sigcau's brother, 'Gladwell', and murder him. During this time, Afrikaner police came, but only looked. So they went to 'Gladwell's' huts, finding him missing, and burned his huts. A police helicopter circled above them, and they immediately suspected spies among them, sent by King Sigcau. On the second day they came back to Ngquza again, reporting that they couldn't find 'Gladwell'. Then they sent a messenger to King Sigcau, informing him that if he wasn't quick about the affairs, they would murder him that same day.

The *Ikongo* members consulted a diviner (*igqwira*) before the planned meeting.[10] This *igqwira* prophesied that they would meet a black cow on their way to Ngquza. If this cow fell down as they passed it, it would mean that they would be defeated during this meeting and that they should move back. The group from Ngquza actually did see a black cow fall down and wanted to abandon the meeting (Gxabu 2003: pers. comm.; Sipolo 2003: pers. comm.). A group from Bizana was already

[10] The religious beliefs fuelled the actions of the *Ikongo* members, but, as seen from the example quoted by Copelyn (1974:38–39), these distinct Christian beliefs were fused with beliefs in witchcraft. Some *Ikongo* members therefore consulted *amagqwira* to assist them against the supernatural powers of state officials as 'they believed the witchdoctors could treat them so that they would be immune from arrest and prosecution' (Redding 1996:72).

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on their way and there was a debate about whether the meeting should still take place. Since the Bizana group had no knowledge of the *igqwira* or the prophecy, they pushed ahead and the meeting continued (Gxabu 2003: pers. comm.). Mbambo (2000:38) also relates another incident where the *Ikongo* group consulted a traditional healer from Nyandeni in Libode before the meeting for herbs to protect them.

At nine o'clock on the day of the meeting, everyone was well aware of the police presence in the area, as 18 police vehicles containing 100 policemen had taken position three miles away. At the start of the meeting where more than 400 Mpondo gathered, Wana Johnson[11] hoisted a big white flag made of sackcloth. This sack was used to carry the bread for the men to be consumed during the meeting. The white flag was used as a strategy to show the police that they were having a peaceful meeting. Another man suggested raising another flag, this time a red one, just below the white flag. Red means war, but it was decided that only a white flag would be hoisted (Gxabu 2003: pers. comm.).

There is some discrepancy in the sources consulted on the actual time the security forces descended on the meeting. While Copelyn (1974), Turok (1960) and Mbeki (1963) state that they descended around midday, Gxabu (2003: pers. comm.) and Silangwe (2003: pers. comm.) insist that it started around nine o'clock. Two Harvard aircraft and a helicopter painted in red, black and white dropped tear gas and smoke bombs on the crowd, and police vehicles approached from two directions. The helicopters landed on the hills and dropped soldiers. The police, armed with revolvers and Sten-guns,[12] took up positions on the surrounding hillside. Four soldiers with Sten-guns came down the Hill and positioned themselves across the river facing the group ten meters away. A big helicopter swooped down on the gathering and they could see people inside taking photographs of them. It is believed that the people in the helicopter were taking pictures to determine how many weapons the Mpondo group had with them, but it was clear that they had none (Gxabu 2003: pers. comm.).

A command came from the helicopter and the shooting started. The first person to be killed was Wana Johnson. During all the interviews with the veterans, everyone acknowledged the fact that a spy,

[11] One of the Ikongo leaders and chairman of the Ngquza Hill meeting.
[12] Machine guns.

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allegedly a prominent chief (later referred to as 'the spy'), was present in the helicopter. It is also clear that most of the veterans knew the identity of the spy, but were unwilling to disclose the information. The spy in the helicopter pointed out the ringleaders. The second person to die was English Ncanda, followed by Sigwebo Mfuywa, Ntamehlo Sipika, Khoyo Chagi and Ndindwa Popotshe (TRC 1998: section 80). A trumpet was blown and Magxagxa pulled down the white flag, thus indicating that they should fight. One of the policemen positioned on the opposite side of the river was called Matthias, and he shouted: 'Skiet hom!'[13] (Gxabu 2003: pers comm). Altogether 11 people died and 58 were wounded (TRC 1998: section 84).

The wounded were taken to the kraal further down in the valley. The kraal belonged to Sitywaka Sipolo, the old man who lived at the top of Ngquza Hill, who witnessed the events and rescued the wounded. He transported them to his hut by using his sleigh, a large drum and an ox-band. He said that the blood flowed freely out of his hut while he waited for the families to come claim their kin (Sipolo 2001: pers. comm.).

Mr Gxabu was shot in the lower leg, but refused to go with the wounded, because he was afraid of being arrested. Gxabu and five other men collected all the corpses and hid them under branches (Gxabu 2003: pers. comm.).

Ngagana, an *Ikongo* member, told Gxabu that he pretended to be dead by covering his face in blood and lying next to Johnson. He saw the helicopter land close to them and 'the spy' climb out. He came straight to the corpse of Wana Johnson and knew exactly where he carried his firearm. He shot the dead man six times with his own firearm. This firearm was later discovered at Lusikisiki, so the testimony was considered truthful. The police later stated that the *Ikongo* used the firearm to defend themselves. This contradicted the fact that the *Ikongo* explicitly decided not to carry firearms to the meeting. It was later ascertained that Wana Johnson did indeed carry a firearm to the meeting. Before the meeting, Johnson travelled to Kokstad to pay bail for Mr Stoffela, another leader of the *Ikongo* who was arrested for illegally possessing a firearm. He carried a firearm for personal protection during this mission. He apparently never intended to use the firearm during the meeting (Gxabu 2003: pers. comm.).

[13] Literally translated as 'Shoot him!'

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Silangwe related that the forest on the opposite slope of the river, Dumsi Forest (see figure 4C for the location), had no leaves remaining because of the shooting. He also reflected that the whole valley was covered in forest[14] during that time, and this saved many lives that day as they sought refuge in the forest.

> When they started shooting, I started to run down the stream and climbed up the valley to the road. We hid ourselves under stones to escape. As I ran up the stream, past the shop, the police arrested me. I was detained at Lusikisiki and Reverend Van Johns (Mfundisi) came and bailed me out (Silangwe 2003: pers. comm.).

After the incident, the *Ikongo* group sent eight men to the Holy Cross Mission in order to phone the magistrate in Lusikisiki and inform him of the casualties. The magistrate ordered the burial of the bodies. The Flagstaff Station commander and a number of other policemen were present at the burial of the bodies (Silangwe 2003: pers. comm.).

During the court hearing at the magisterial court in Lusikisiki, the police stated that only five men were killed. This fact was, however, disputed by the community and it was decided that a commission would go to the site of the graves in September 1960, to determine the number of victims and how they died. The following is Mr Silangwe's eyewitness account (2003):

> There was a case about what happened at Lusikisiki in July 1960. Mr. Arenstein from Durban acted as their attorney. There was a dispute about whether eleven people were killed and buried. It was said that a post-mortem was required, and so in September 1960, a commission led by the magistrate, Mr. Harvey from Port St. Johns, came to identify the graves. His interpreter was Mr. Somhlahlo. The community did not want the graves to be reopened, and the magistrate even failed to address the people at the event. Mr. Eliyah Lande insisted on prayer, and afterwards Mr. Harvey thanked him. At the identification of the graves, the bodies were taken out of the graves and photo's taken of where the wounds were. The deceased relatives identified all graves after two days and bodies were reburied after the identification. It was confirmed that eleven people died of gunshot wounds.

It is clear that the community did not want the graves to be reopened, possibly because they were reluctant to disturb the dead and invoke the

[14] Presently, the valley has been cleared of most natural vegetation and traces of forest in lieu of agricultural fields along the river.

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wrath of the ancestors. Their request was ignored and this governmental disrespect was compounded by the fact that the magistrate failed to address the community present at the event.

Following the exhumation in September 1960, a doctor from Pietermaritsburg described the way in which the men died (Silangwe 2003: pers. comm.). The inquest concluded that the post-mortems on the 11 exhumed bodies confirmed that 6 had died from bullet wounds. Three of these men died from bullets in the back of the skull, indicating that they were possibly shot from the back while running away from the police (TRC 1998: section 82). The people I interviewed and the TRC report (TRC 1998: section 83) confirm this fact. Because the exhumations only took place some time after the massacre, the cause of death could not be determined for the remaining five men (TRC 1998: Section 82). The exhumed bodies were reburied by their families after the exhumation.

Today, the graves of the victims are still located within the Mcosane River valley. Their exact positions are guarded by the families of the deceased. For the members of these families, but also the larger community of Ngquza and even Pondoland, the landscape – the hills, slopes and river valley – have an ingrained additional dimension of meaning based on the memory of the tragic event that occurred many years ago.

Conclusion

The biophysical environment is mapped or perceived through cultural or social filters. These filters are, however, not the same for everyone. This fact was elucidated by my involvement with Ngquza since 2001. During my first site visit to Ngquza, I had no access to the intangible meanings and values connected to the landscape. I did not understand the significance of the hill and the valley and what they meant to the community. I had a vague concept of the significance it held in the history of the Mpondo, but could not understand it spatially. It was only after walking the site with the veterans and the community, spending time with individuals and actually living in the area for intermittent periods, that I began to ascertain the depth of meaning encompassed within this natural landscape.

The same landscape, therefore, has different meanings for different people or societies. In the same way, certain meanings or values attributed to a landscape by a society or community are hidden to outsiders.

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The cultural or social filters through which the landscape is perceived are continuously subject to change, as evident in the process of memory. The perception, value and treatment of landscape therefore continuously changes. The cultural landscape of Ngquza was originally perceived through the cultural filter of hills traditionally considered meeting places and significant initiation sites with connection to ancestral forces. An additional dimension was added to these meanings due to the events that transpired on 6 June 1960. This dimension encapsulated the 'struggle' process in South Africa, but more specifically Pondoland at the time. It symbolised the battle against the apartheid regime, the forces of oppression. Today, these multiple and layered filters have been amalgamated with the ideals and promises of the new political dispensation; although they still represent the battle against oppression, they now also represent the pursuit of development and social upliftment.

The tangible and intangible aspects of culture are inseparable. In this regard, the biophysical setting of a cultural group or society (the tangible dimension) is integrally linked to the intangible cultural traditions, norms and social practices that define a group. Going back to the concept that landscape is seated in perception, it may be concluded that landscape provides and defines this link between the tangible and the intangible. Landscape is a representation of meanings and memories seated in the past, but based in the present.

This statement is well-illustrated in the case of Ngquza. Most members of the community, of all generations, are aware of an event that occurred at Ngquza during the Apartheid years. This knowledge was gained through oral traditions – veterans and older family members who experienced those turbulent times – relating their stories and experiences. These vicarious memories passed on from one generation to the next carry significant emotions. They are based on a landscape feature – the hill – and this in the broader landscape serves as a mnemotechnic anchoring point to remind the community about what occurred in their midst more than fifty years ago. However, few members of the community can relate the exact narrative of the event. They can identify the setting for the story, but that is only the uppermost layer of this multi-dimensional narrative.

The individuals who experienced the event, that is amongst others, the veterans of the *Ikongo* whom accompanied me to the site of Ngquza in 2004, had embodied knowledge of the landscape. In the panning out of the events on 6 June 1960, certain landscape elements were

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identified as anchoring points for the memory of the day. These are illustrated in figures 4A, 4B and 4C, and included the top of the hill, the decision by the *Ikongo* to gather at the bottom of the hill, the positions where the helicopters landed, where the soldiers and policemen ran down the hillsides, the position of the Sten-gun, hidden soldiers across the river and the tree where their leader, Wana Johnson, died. On the day of our site visit, when we walked down to the valley, these landscape elements triggered memories in the veterans' minds and unleashed a series of embodied memories which would previously have been inaccessible.

I stated previously that the only way that the intangible values encompassed within a landscape by a specific culture can be made known, is by 'identifying a community's reference to external features that we can also perceive' (Ucko and Layton 1999:11). In this case, the above landscape features were identified and documented together with the oral traditions connected to them. The landscape is therefore part of the process of memory and therefore a living document where the past and future are combined. Landscape subsequently makes memory through intellectual and cognitive processes by reinterpreting and 're-composing' the physical environment in order to recollect previous experiences.

In the case of Ngquza, the natural landscape – the valley and the hill – represents the seat of its significance. The entire landscape serves as a visual reminder of the incident and individual landscape elements served as mnemotechnic devices triggering the recollection of specific details. The intangible dimension of the landscape, however, is only clear to the veterans and those familiar to the narrative of the event. An outsider, who has no insight into the event, would only admire the beauty of the natural environment (as described in the introduction of the chapter). The deeper, intangible meanings would be completely lost to such a person. With the erection of the monument in 1998, the focus of the heritage site shifted from the entire landscape to the site of the monument. Here, a tangible object was placed in the landscape to provide access to the meaning of the site. Unfortunately, in so doing, many of the details surrounding the event became lost. In the present transmission of the history of the event from older to younger generations and in referring to Ngquza, community members generally refer to the monument site or the hill. The significance of the valley is therefore slowly disappearing. Furthermore, with the dawning of 'development' prospects and the potential exploitation of the tourism industry, the

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meaning of the site has shifted from its original significance to that of monetary value and political gain.

Erecting a tangible element within a landscape with an essentially intangible heritage could destroy part of its heritage and meaning. In developing and managing these types of landscapes, it is preferable to highlight those aspects intrinsic to the intangible heritage and integrate them into the design and future planning of the site. The purpose of this would be to retain those landscape elements which serve as mnemotechnic devices, thereby ensuring the conservation of the intangible dimension.

It is clear that landscape and memory are fundamentally interconnected. Both form part of a continuum and both are equally susceptible to change. The context of Ngquza illustrates the interrelationship between the intangible and tangible landscapes, and the fact that they are inseparable. The tangible landscape guides, informs and shapes the intangible landscape, and vice versa. Without a thorough understanding of this relationship, the significance of Ngquza within the broader context of the Mpondo Revolts would be lost to future generations.

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

A BAG OF SOIL, A BULLET FROM UP HIGH: SOME MEANINGS OF THE MPONDO REVOLTS TODAY

Jonny Steinberg

Introduction

Between October 2005, and June 2007, I spent a great deal of time with a father and son in an outlying Lusikisiki village. I have called them the Magadlas, and their village Ithanga.[1] Buyisile Magadla was 64 years old when I met him in 2005 and was a practising *igqira* (diviner-healer). Sizwe, the oldest of Buyisile's three sons, was 29. He was a nascent businessman; drawing on a welcome and unexpected fund of capital, he had opened a spaza shop (general store) in his village a year earlier, and its prospects seemed promising.

For a historian of the Mpondo Revolt of 1960, neither Buyisile nor Sizwe would make for good witnesses. Sizwe, of course, was not yet born. And Buyisile, although a young adult at the time, was doubly removed from events. First, he was not there: in 1960 he went to Johannesburg for the first time to work on the mines. He came home in December of that year and witnessed some of the Revolts' aftermath. Second, he was 19 years old in 1960, and points out that this placed him on the margins of events. On several occasions, he spoke to me at great length about his involvement in Mpondo youth associations. But he insisted that the associations had absolutely nothing to do with the Revolts. '*iKongo* was an affair of married men only,' he said, 'of men with households and children. This had nothing to do with *abafana*. As a nineteen year old, I was not privy to what was happening.'[2]

And yet both father's and son's relation to the events of 1960 turned out to be interesting for other reasons. Buyisile told me several stories about what had happened, particularly at Ngquza. His accounts have

[1] These are pseudonyms. I have written about the 'Magadlas' at greater length elsewhere. See Steinberg, 2008a and 2008b.
[2] Author's interview, 11 November 2005.

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about them a fable-like starkness and are heavily loaded with symbolism. I do not know whether he first heard these stories when he returned to Mpondoland at Christmas time in 1960, but they do not feel like fresh reports. They feel more like tales that crystallised in subsequent years; more like interpretations, embodied in narrative, of what the Revolts came to mean.

When Buyisile told me these stories, he was of course not telling them for the first time. He and others had told them around his homestead for years. They were thus stories that Sizwe had imbibed as a child. For my purposes here, that is important. In all the hours Sizwe and I spent together, we did not directly discuss the Revolts. But on two occasions, he invoked *iKongo*, unsolicited, as a metaphor to describe aspects of his life and the world around him. Both metaphors were drawn from the stories Buyisile told. And yet he used them in ways Buyisile never would have, since they were very much the expressions of a young man and his predicaments. Indeed, he used the Revolts to invoke startling, painful things; to cut to the very heart of his understanding of Lusikisiki and his anxieties about his place in it.

In this chapter, I describe these two moments and discuss some of their meanings. My aim is thus to shed some light on what the Revolts have come to mean today, at least in so far as they figure in the metaphorical repertoire of a young Mpondo man making his way in the world.

I begin by recounting the stories about the Revolts that Buyisile told me, and go on to discuss Sizwe's two metaphors.

Buyisile and the Revolt

As mentioned, Buyisile was not present for the events of 1960, as this was the very year in which he made his first trip to Johannesburg as a gold miner. He was 19 years old at the time. He recalls quite vividly what he saw when he returned home in December.

'There were no men to be seen when I got back to Ithanga,' Buyisile remembered. 'I asked my mother where all the men were and she said that they were hiding in the forest. She said that soldiers had come through all of the villages to punish the men; the soldiers were saying that all the men had participated in the rebellion and so they were all guilty. I asked whether this was true: did all the men participate? She said, yes, for many months the men had all attended secret

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meetings in the forest, and that some of the Chiefs had been chased away.

'Talking to other people,' Buyisile continued, 'I discovered that many of the men, including my father, were not in the forest; they had already been arrested. And those who were in the forest were soon caught and taken to jail. And it was the same in the other villages I visited. It was very unsettling: the villages empty of men. They were all in jail.'[3]

Buyisile wanted to share another story about the Revolt. Although he had not been there, he told me, he had been informed many times about the massacre at Ngquza, and he wanted to share what he knew with me. He insisted that it was only possible to tell the story within eyeshot of Ngquza, that if we remained in Ithanga, he would not be able to tell the story well. So we got in the car and drove for some distance, and when Ngquza was in sight, Buyisile signalled for me stop. We got out, and he told the story by the side of the road.

'The rebels had gathered at Ngquza,' Buyisile said. 'It was the middle of winter. I was not there. I was at the mines. What I am telling you now is what I myself was told. The whites took Botha Sigcau, king of Eastern Mpondoland, up in a helicopter. They flew him to Ngquza, and there the helicopter stopped, hovering just over the rebels. Then the white commander put a rifle in Botha Sigcau's hands, and he said: 'Whether we end this rebellion is your decision to make. We can do nothing if you do not fire the first shot. The choice is in your hands, not ours.' Botha Sigcau thought for a little while, took the rifle from the white man, aimed it at the rebels below, and fired the first shot. It hit a man in the chest and killed him. That is how the massacre began.'[4]

Buyisile spoke of another exchange between Botha Sigcau and white people. This time, the white person was the District Commissioner. 'The Commissioner,' Buyisile said, 'held two bags in front of Botha Sigcau. The one was filled with soil, the other with money.

'The Commissioner said to Botha Sigcau: "One of these bags is for you, the other is for us. It is for you to decide who takes the soil and who the money." Botha Sigcau thought for a while, and then he took the bag of money, leaving the bag of soil with the whites. The problem is that the soil was not his to sell; it was the land of his people.'[5]

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[3] Author's interview, 11 November 2005.
[4] Author's interview, 14 December 2005.
[5] Author's interview, 15 December 2005.

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Buyisile mentioned the Revolts just once more in my company. It was an offhand reference, made in the course of describing a subsequent event in his life. But it was very striking.

Some time in the mid-1970s, when Buyisile was now a husband, a father and a householder, fighting broke out in and around Ithanga. Buyisile was vague about the causes of the fight, but said it was 'very bad: a person was killed'.[6] Transkei Defence Force soldiers entered Ithanga and arrested every adult man they could find. Buyisile happened to be home when the soldiers came. He tried to hide without success and was captured and thrown in jail. He had had nothing to do with the fighting. He spent nearly a year behind bars, but was never charged, let alone tried.

I asked Buyisile if the injustice of it did not infuriate him, to which he replied: 'That is how life has been since *iKongo*. After *iKongo*, it was possible for soldiers just to come and take any man any time he wishes. That is life after *iKongo*.'[7]

This idea of total defeat, of grown men utterly helpless, is one of the meanings of the defeat of 1960 that Sizwe has inherited. What he has done with this meaning, though, is very complicated indeed.

Milk and Wisdom: Sizwe's First Reference to the Revolts

When I met him, Sizwe's life was in something of an interregnum. His new business, a spaza shop that he ran from his home in Ithanga, was doing extremely well. His bank balance was growing by several thousand rand each month. He was thus adapting to the idea of being wealthy, relative to his peers, and imagining the sort of life he would plan with his newfound income. He was also wondering how his village would receive the news of his success. The signs of his new wealth – a car, a fence around his property to protect his car, a new rondavel – were not yet in place, and so the extent of his success remained, for the moment, his secret.

Not least of all, Sizwe worried about how his father, Buyisile, would respond to his prosperity. Buyisile, as mentioned earlier, was an *iqgira*. He had undergone his *thwasa*, or training, late in life, when Sizwe was at high school. Buyisile's late change of vocation had been so financially

[6] Author's field notes, 12 June 2006.
[7] Ibid.

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ruinous as to force Sizwe to abandon high school at the end of Standard Nine to look for work. The older man's poverty and his son's growing wealth were a constant, nagging theme in my conversations with Sizwe.

In a sense, I was lucky to meet Sizwe when I did, for the trajectory he was marking embodied the answer to an interesting question: what does this young Mpondo man living in the first years of the twenty-first century do when he suddenly discovers that he can do more than just get by? What does he build with the resources that have come into his hands? When he used stories about the Revolts as metaphors to describe his place in his world, these questions were very much in the foreground.

The occasion for Sizwe's first reference to the Revolts was a shortage of Long-Life Milk, which does not require refrigeration, in the villages of Lusikisiki. The shortage was in fact nationwide, and lasted for much of the winter of 2007. At home in Johannesburg, I drank fresh milk and had thus barely noticed the shortage. In Ithanga, by contrast, it was very serious. There was no electricity in the village, and thus no refrigeration, and none of the villagers had owned a dairy cow in generations. No long-life milk thus meant no milk. Sizwe felt the shortage particularly acutely, for, as a spaza shop owner, it was from his shelves that the milk was missing, and thus on his premises that his neighbours discovered that there was no milk to be had.

Sizwe asked me whether I knew what had caused the shortage, and I told him that I had no idea. To which he replied: 'When I go to town, there is a lot of talk about what has happened to the milk. The story people mostly are telling is this: Black people have thrown the white dairy farmers off their land and taken over the farms and ruined them. Since the blacks took over, the farms no longer produce milk. If this is right, milk was something to enjoy only in the apartheid time, not under democracy.'[8]

My thoughts immediately turned to Zimbabwe. South Africans were deeply preoccupied at the time with the state seizure of white-owned farmland north of the border. I presumed that in the reservoir of talk from which Sizwe had drawn this story, the border between South Africa and Zimbabwe had vanished, and events in the two countries had melted into one another.

[8] Author's fieldnotes, 19 June 2007.

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This may have been right, but before I could question Sizwe about it, he added another comment, one that gave the whole story a sharp, local inflection.

'We are the children of the people who were defeated in *iKongo*,' he said with a rue smile. 'We lost everything. Even our wisdom. Now, we fuck things up.'

Sizwe's reference to the events of 1960 is abstruse but powerful. For a start, his reference elides the difference between the amaMpondo and all black South Africans. The people who ruined the farms are not necessarily Mpondo, but they are necessarily black. So, when he says, 'the children of the people who were defeated in *iKongo*,' he is using an Mpondo exemplar to tell a national story. And what is the story he tells? In essence, that the long years of white minority rule stole not just people's land but their knowledge of how to work it. The defeat of 1960 symbolises this loss. For the idea that black farmers have taken over white farms does not, of course, come only from contemporary events in Zimbabwe. In the context of those who came of age in the aftermath of *iKongo*, it also invokes a much-dreamed-of reversal. Nineteen-sixty is remembered as a moment when whites prevented blacks from farming. Now, Sizwe is saying, the time of reclamation has finally arrived; democracy has come, and the land can be taken back. But it is already too late; the amaMpondo were so thoroughly defeated that they lost a great deal more than their land; they lost their wisdom too. They can have the land back, but they can no longer farm it.

Sizwe's comment is better understood in the context of other things he and I were discussing at the time. We had spent much of the preceding period visiting Lusikisiki's clinics with the purpose of seeing an antiretroviral treatment programme that had begun some two years earlier. Our responses to the programme were very different. One exchange in particular comes to mind. We were standing outside a clinic early in the morning waiting for it to open. Already, a long queue of HIV patients had formed outside the door.

'What is happening here is wonderful,' I said. 'Two years ago [before the antiretroviral programme], all of these people would either be sick or dead. Now they have medicine. Most will live.'

'What *I* see is not wonderful,' he replied, 'I see so many sick, black people, shamed out here in the open, queuing for the white doctor's medicine. And it is not even a cure that they are queuing for.

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It is just these pills that remind them every single day that they are sick.'[9]

During the time we were visiting clinics, Sizwe insisted always that we see traditional healers too, especially those who claimed to cure AIDS. Two people in his immediate family were secretly ill, and whenever we visited such a healer, Sizwe bought medicine for his ailing family members. Each time, the traditional medicine failed to cure AIDS; he would take the patient off to re-test, and she would test HIV positive each time.

Sizwe regarded each failure as a cultural humiliation. One of the healers whose medicine did not work was a cousin of his, Mabalane. 'You think that Mabalane is a fool,' he said to me after his relative once again tested HIV positive. 'You think that we are all fools.'

And so, for Sizwe, the AIDS epidemic is also a sign that 'we are the children of *iKongo*': Just as the evisceration of his culture has robbed his people of their capacity to farm, so the amaMpondo cannot find a cure for a great illness in the reservoirs of their collective knowledge. They must instead stand humiliated in front of the clinics, waiting to receive a foreign medicine that will not even cure them.

Wealth and Theft: Sizwe's Second Reference

This idea that he was the inheritor of a culture losing its foundations entered Sizwe's life in deeply personal ways. And it is very closely connected to the question of what he planned to do with his newfound wealth.

When Sizwe and I met, he had a girlfriend of several years standing. She was pregnant with his child. As the money from his spaza shop accumulated in his bank account, he began calculating when he would be able to pay bridewealth. He desperately wanted to marry before the birth of his child; if it was a boy, he wanted very much for it to be a Magadla, and not a Mabaso, which was his girlfriend's surname. Eventually, he resigned himself to the fact that he would be unable to pay bridewealth by the time his child was born, that, at very soonest, he would be able to marry only when his child was nearly a year old.

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[9] Author's fieldnotes, 12 April 2006.

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'In that case,' he told me, 'it is important that we have another child soon. The second one must be a Magadla.'

When I pressed him on why this was so important, he told me that he would use the money he was making to save himself from the fate of having children who were not Magadlas. To fail to have progeny who would continue one's family name after one's death was a prospect that preoccupied and scared him. A life without progeny, he remarked, would be 'the life of an ox: you labour on this earth for some time, and then you drop dead one day leaving only your corpse.'[10]

It was a stark, vivid metaphor, and very bracing too, when one considers that most of his peers would never afford bridewealth, and thus never sire children who bore their names. To live amidst an eviscerated culture, Sizwe appeared to be saying, one whose political economy no longer supports institutions of patriarchal continuity, is to live the life of an ox. With his wealth Sizwe planned to escape that fate; in contrast to his peers, he would live the life of an Mpondo patriarch, the sort of man, one might suggest, who inhabited these parts before the defeat of *iKongo*.

Sizwe was deeply aware that he was choosing to avoid a fate that befell his peers. He felt great discomfort about the money he was accumulating. He was concerned, indeed somewhat obsessed, with the idea that those who envied his wealth were out to destroy him. And at his lowest ebbs, he appeared to believe, from deep within himself, that he was only getting wealthy because he was stealing from his fellow villagers. These feelings of guilt took the form of a recurring nightmare: a customer of his wakes up one morning and suddenly realises that all the wealth Sizwe is accumulating – a car, a big fence around his home, a large rondavel – has been bought, not with his own money but with the money he has taken from his customers. Word of this revelation spreads, and by evening Sizwe has no customers. They are all taking their money elsewhere.

This was the context of his second reference to the 1960 Revolt. I was writing a book about Lusikisiki's antiretroviral treatment programme. Sizwe figured in the book. We had decided to give him a pseudonym, primarily to protect the identities of the HIV-positive members of his family. Now, much later, when the book was almost written, I told Sizwe that I didn't believe it necessary to retain his pseudonym,

[10] Author's field notes, 2 May 2007.

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that there were many other ways to disguise the identities of his family members. He recoiled at the idea, saying that there were other reasons why he wanted to conceal his identity. He was reluctant to tell me why, and the conversation was difficult, but finally, he said this. 'I have told you what is happening inside me. That is not something to share with whites. It is a black people's secret. When people read what I have told you, they will say that I have sold you something that is not for sale.'

'Not for sale because it isn't yours to sell?' I inquired. 'Because your interior is part of a collective black person's interior, and thus belongs to others too?'

'I will be seen as Both Sigcau,' he said. 'The whites put in front of Botha Sigcau a bag of money and a bag of soil. They asked him to choose. He chose the money and gave away the land, the land on which his people farmed… Botha Sigcau and Sizwe Magadla are the traitors of Lusikisiki.'

It was a devastating comparison. Sizwe was an entrepreneur. When he chose to work with me, he gambled that something good for him of our association. Yet whatever comes his way as a result is poisoned, for the thoughts and feelings he has traded with me do not belong to him.

Similarly, Sizwe opened a spaza shop to make money. And yet, the money he makes in his shop rightly belongs to his customers. To be an entrepreneur is to steal from those around you. To be an entrepreneur is to be Botha Sigcau.

The irony is bitter when one considers what Sizwe wanted to do with his wealth. He wanted to shore up a modern version of the Mpondo institution of patriarchy. His personal project was thus in part a project of cultural restoration, to retrieve something of what he believed manhood to have been before the defeat of 1960. And yet, he seems to be saying, to become a patriarch among the people defeated in *iKongo* is to steal from those around you. There cannot be a collective restoration. One can only look after oneself, as Botha Sigcau did. Such is the fate of living among the defeated. One either rises above them, or sinks with them.

Later

I said earlier that I met Sizwe Magadla at a fortuitous time for the choices he was making answered an interesting question: what does this young Mpondo man in the early twenty-first century do when

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he suddenly acquires agency? In other respects, though, it may have been an unfortunate, or, perhaps, an unrepresentative time, to meet Sizwe. He was in a transitional moment, a time of much uncertainty. He feared what those around him would make of his wealth once they discovered it. He was feeling that the world was unstable, and it was perhaps this moment of instability that caused him to compare himself to Botha Sigcau.

My research in Ithanga ended in mid-2007. Since then I have been in touch with Sizwe largely by phone. Time of writing is April 2009. It appears that much has changed during these 20 or so months. Sizwe has bought a car. He has put a fence around his house. He has begun construction on a rondavel. He has performed several expensive ceremonies to bring those of his children who do not bear his name under the protection of his ancestors.

And yet, the growing visibility of his wealth has not alienated him from his village, as he feared. On the contrary, he has become something of a civic leader. There have been longstanding complaints in Ithanga about the conduct of its chief. The community collectively owns a share in a tourism site close to Ithanga. Villagers complained that the chief would not show what he had done with the proceeds. The provincial government planned to build a tar road in Ithanga and consulted with the chief. It turned out that the road would go no further than the chief's section of Ithanga, and would not go to the section in which Sizwe lived. Similarly, angry complaints were levelled from Sizwe's section of the village about access to cattle dipping.

Sizwe has played a leadership role in standing up to the chief on all of these matters. He has become a trustee in the tourism site and is involved in passing control of the proceeds to a community trust. He is secretary of a committee raising concern that the community is not being represented when consultations about new infrastructure take place. He is part of a group that has appealed to Ithanga's ward counsellor to oppose the chief's gatekeeping role.

Sizwe's role as businessman has indeed recalibrated his relationship to those around him, but not in the ways that he feared. He is fast becoming a figure of respect associated with the defence of common interests. I suspect that were I to remind him that he once compared himself to Botha Sigcau, giving away his community's birthright for money, he would laugh.

Yet the transitional period of high anxiety in which I found Sizwe remains deeply instructive. That he used imagery from the Revolts to

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express his fear speaks powerfully to at least some of what the Revolts have come to mean today. The suppression of the Revolts is a signifier of cultural evisceration and rural poverty. And the fact that they so signify embodies the knowledge that evisceration and poverty are sharply political, that the pain of the present has been delivered by the cumulative injustices of the past.

More than that, the Revolts seem to have entwined themselves in the difficult question of how a community understands new inequalities; how it accounts for the wealth of some and the deprivation of others; its deep moral unease when it comes to explaining how some have gotten rich while most remain poor; its scepticism about the moral sources of new wealth.

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CHAPTER TWELVE

DISCONTENT AND APATHY: POST-APARTHEID RURAL LAND REFORM IN THE CONTEXT OF THE MPONDO REVOLTS

Thembela Kepe

Early writing on the politics of land rights, land-use planning, and livelihoods in Pondoland is important for understanding resistance against the state. Some of these writings, including those by Hunter (1979) and Stapleton (2001), leave two seemingly contrasting images about resistance by the Mpondo people against outsider intervention. On the one hand, historians have argued that the Mpondo, being the last southern African state to fall under colonial rule in 1894, and by avoiding direct and violent confrontation with colonial powers, arguably escaped from the worst impact of colonial take-over suffered by other states (Beinart 1982; Stapelton 2001). This they did by not resisting trade with colonizers, and by allowing missionaries to live and work among them. On the other hand, new laws governing land occupation, forests, grazing, burning, and livestock movement and livestock numbers have, historically, been seen by the Mpondo as threats to their livelihoods, and therefore were vigorously resisted where possible (Beinart 1982; Kepe 1997). Beinart (1982) cites at least three occasions where Mpondo people turned against their traditional leaders, who they accused of compromising their livelihoods. The first incident was during the 1880s, when Mhlangaso, a chief councillor to the paramount chief of Eastern Pondoland, pursued trading with whites. The second case happened almost twenty years later, when Sigcawu, the paramount chief, became unpopular when he helped organize migrants from the Pondoland area, to work in the mines. The third occasion came almost fifty years later, when Chief Botha Sigcawu agreed to the rehabilitation schemes and Bantu Authorities. On this third occasion, peoples' dissatisfaction was expressed through violence, in what became the Mpondo Revolts (see also Mbeki 1984).

When I began my doctoral work in Lusikisiki in Eastern Pondoland, my brief introduction to the Mpondo in general were writings by Hunter (1979), Beinart (1982), Mbeki (1984), Kuckertz (1990) and

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Hendricks (1991). These writings, which focused on the periods before and during apartheid rule, encouraged me to research post-apartheid dynamics in regard to the relationship between rural governance, land-use planning, and livelihood activities in Khanyayo village, Eastern Pondoland. The research data on which this chapter is based was collected over several years, initially beginning with a nine-month full-time residence in Khanyayo, and followed by regular visits to the same village and the nearby Lambasi area since then, up to August 2009. Local land-use planning and village administration histories were investigated mainly through archives (Cape Town Archives), interviews with local people, as well as other secondary material. Details about contemporary land, livelihoods, and natural resource use and management issues were collected using a range of methods, which included life histories, semi-structured interviews, transect walks, and participant observations (see Kepe 1997; 2005a; 2005b; 2008).

Many years since my initial research in Pondoland, the two contrasting reactions to outsider intervention by the Mpondo, which I have mentioned above, can still be observed. While conducting several research projects in Lusikisiki, Flagstaff, Bizana, and Port St Johns, I remained curious to understand why the rural Mpondo showed discontent, and often violent reactions, to some outsider interventions affecting their livelihoods, but appeared passive or resigned in some cases that, to other observers, deserved strong responses of disapproval. In all these musings I have tried to use the Mpondo Revolts as a point of reference. To reflect on this issue I draw from my field research in Khanyayo and Lambasi areas in Lusikisiki. I do this by using the case of land and resource rights, as well as land reform in these areas. But before I proceed with the discussion on cases of discontent and apathy concerning land reform, I believe it is important to briefly share the story of my first few days in Khanyayo village, where I quickly learned that the Mpondo Revolts were still a recent powerful presence among the people.

'Who gave you authority to come here?'

One Monday in April 1996, I drove for four hours from Mthatha to Khanyayo village, with the hope of being accepted by villagers to spend a year with them, doing research on land and natural resource rights. The people I met by the side of the road within the village advised that I talk to the different leaders, including the local headman and

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representatives of the South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO).[1] They also suggested that I should start with the headman. After meeting the headman the next day, and explaining why I was there, he told me I should come back two days later, when there would be a gathering of villagers at his place. On that Thursday there were thirty men and nine women at the meeting, who had come for various reasons, including dealing with community disputes. My request for research permission was the first item on the agenda. The headman asked me to repeat what I had told him two days earlier, and I did. I took about five minutes to introduce myself, explain my goals, and ask for permission to conduct research. What followed was man after man asking me questions. The main question that was repeated several times was '*Ngubani okunike ilungelo lokuza apha?*' (Who gave you authority to come here?). Clearly I did not understand the question, nor the context in which it was asked, because I kept repeating that 'Nobody gave me authority; I am here to ask for your permission to conduct my study'.

After almost an hour of the same thing, I could see that most of my questioners were heating up, clearly frustrated that I was, in their view, not forthright with them. Things that had given me confidence when I chose Pondoland for my research, such as shared racial identity, fluency in the local language, some similarities in culture, my research training, and field-work experience in other rural areas in South Africa, clearly did not help that day. I realized this when the questions from the men turned into '*Asimfuni lo mbemi apha*' (We don't want this person here.). Scared, frustrated, disappointed, and ready to run to my vehicle, I decided to ask why they did not want me there. Two or three men took turns to tell me, in rather aggressive tones, that the last time they allowed people to come and 'study' land, grazing land, and forests, the government came and forced '*Ucando*' (Betterment or rehabilitation

[1] During the early two-thirds of the 1990s, like in many other parts of rural Eastern Cape, there was a power struggle between elected village leadership under the banner of SANCO, and the unelected traditional authorities. In Khanyayo, SANCO existed in name only, but was never formally affiliated to the national body (See Kepe 1997). Villagers who were opposed to the local headman simply called themselves SANCO members and met by the old clinic, which was by the main road in the village. These meetings ended up being easily accessible to people in terms of distance, as well as appearing to deal with issues that were seen as important to local livelihoods (e.g. assisting people to apply for old age pension; land allocation; dipping tanks; land claim; access to thatch grass, sand and forest resources). On the other hand, meetings at the headman's place mainly dealt with neighbours' disputes, land allocation and announcements from various government departments.

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schemes) on them, and that as a result many people died fighting to save their land. They told me that '*Abantu bakaRhulumente abananyani. Beza bethembisa oku noku, kanti bafuna ukuthatha amalungelo akho*' (People who are from government are full of deceit. They promise this and that, so that you become tame, and then they steal your rights.). To them, it appeared, I was sent by the post-apartheid government to try to do what the previous governments (colonial and apartheid) tried to do. They made it clear that by mentioning 'studying' (or research) and land in the same statement, I had put myself in the same category as untrustworthy government people of decades earlier. When I was given another opportunity to speak, I used the next half an hour to talk about my own political involvement, my understanding of land dispossession in South Africa and how their own grievances were unlikely to receive favourable attention unless they were understood by those in power, through studies like mine.

After my explanations, where I also challenged them to monitor my activities closely while spending a year living full-time in their village, I was allowed to conduct my study. Some men from the meeting even gave me advice that I should also attend a SANCO meeting by the 'old' clinic and introduce myself. One man told me that people who attend SANCO meetings do not usually come to the headman's place, but they are very powerful and can make things difficult for me if I do not get their approval also. Needless to say, I followed this advice and attended a SANCO meeting. I was by then very prepared in terms of introducing myself and the research I wanted to do. Fortunately, some of the men who had seen me at the headman's place were there, and they even stood up to testify that they interrogated me enough earlier and that I appeared to be alright. The year I spent in Khanyayo, learning about land issues and rural livelihoods, turned out to be the best research experience I have ever had to date. My introduction to the village constituted a crash course in the local history of resistance against hegemony of the ruling class. It also provided insight into how people dealt with land reform and other land-use planning initiatives by state agencies.

Land Reform in Eastern Pondoland: Whither the Mpondo Revolts?

In Eastern Pondoland, like in the rest of the Eastern Cape Province (Lahiff 2005), one of the prominent legacies of colonialism and apartheid are injustices relating to land and natural resource rights. In

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addition to land alienation through various legislation such as the 1913 and 1936 Land Acts, which restricted the amount of land available to black people, forced removals for conservation and other 'development' projects were wide spread in Eastern Pondoland (Kepe 2009). For example, large tracts of land along the coast of Pondoland are still under the control of the state in the form of protected areas; either as nature reserves or indigenous demarcated forests (Kepe and Whande 2009). Thus, the post-apartheid government's land reform efforts in this part of the country have tended to focus more on dealing with land claims, rather than land tenure reform or land redistribution.[2] The coastal area of Pondoland has been subject to over 65 land claims by local rural communities since 1994 (Webb 1997). Some of these land claims were never officially lodged with the Land Claims Commission, but have been sources of discontent in many coastal villages. This is in addition to research findings that show rural land restitution is complex and therefore extremely slow (Kepe and Cousins 2002; Walker et al 2010).

My research in Khanyayo, near Mkambati Nature Reserve, and in Lambasi, near the town of Lusikisiki, revealed how differently villagers responded to the implementation or non-implementation of the land reform programme. I will next discuss these contrasting positions, beginning with instances where villagers showed discontent concerning land injustices or the unfolding of land reform; where they mostly invoked the Mpondo Revolts.[3] This will be followed by a discussion of instances of what appeared to be passive responses to what could be conceived to be unsatisfactory land reform outcomes.

Invoking the Mpondo Revolts

Khanyayo village, a community of about 1500 households, about 50 kilometres from the town of Flagstaff, has a long history of conflict with the state, relating to land and resource rights. This history has its origins in the nineteenth century when, in 1899, Paramount Chief Sigcawu of the Mpondo kingdom agreed to a government proposal to allocate 18,000 hectares of land in Eastern Pondoland for use as a leper

[2] This does not mean there were no attempts to implement land tenure reform or land redistribution in this area. In fact, concerted efforts were made by the state to organize villages to form legal entities, such as Land Trusts, to hold land for communities in preparation for anticipated economic development in the area (Kepe 2008).

[3] Even though land struggles in the area predate the Mpondo Revolts by several decades, many of the interviewees appeared to see the Revolts as *the* signifier of their struggle against tribal authorities and state interference in their land rights.

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colony. The Khanyayo people had been occupants of the area since the late nineteenth century, but their settlement area stretched about 15 kilometres inland.[4] In October 1920, those among Khanyayo people who were resident in the area demarcated as a leper colony were forcibly removed, and many settled among fellow villagers further inland. In addition to the forced removals, grazing, hunting, and the collection of various plant resources were forbidden from land demarcated for the leper colony. Soon after the leper colony began operating, it was stocked with large numbers of cattle, in order to supply the needs of the leper colony. From the time of these forced removals to 1956 the people of Khanyayo fought a long campaign with the managers of the institution for their rights to land and resources. They ignored the institution's regulations, cutting the fence of the reserve to allow their cattle to graze. Brushwood, timber, and thatch grass were also 'stolen' on a regular basis. According to archival sources and local oral testimony, the intensity of the clashes between the Khanyayo people and the managers of Mkambati Leper Reserve were serious enough to trigger the proposed return of 5,500 hectares of grazing land to Khanyayo. However, the handover of this land to Khanyayo was delayed by several decades.[5]

Following 'independence' of the Transkei in 1976, the leprosy institution was closed, and the land handed over to the Transkei Bantustan's Department of Agriculture and Forestry. The seaward one-third of the former leper reserve was established as Mkambati Game Reserve in 1977. The remaining area (including the still-unrestored 5,500 hectares of community grazing land) was converted into a state farm, managed by the Transkei Agricultural Corporation (TRACOR). In 1983, a sugar cane project began on the TRACOR land. When this project failed, eucalyptus was planted in 1990. During the tenure of both projects, TRACOR management impounded cattle belonging to the people of Khanyayo. This tension remained for almost three decades, until there was official restitution of the disputed land in October 2004. However, as pointed out elsewhere (Kepe 2004; 2008), and discussed later in this chapter, the land restitution agreement did not satisfy all the relevant stakeholders.

When I began my research in Khanyayo, I was made aware of, as well as observed, several instances in which local people, in their fight for

[4] Cape Town Archives, 1 LSK 13/2/5/2
[5] Cape Town Archives, 1 LSK 177 file N2/7/3/13

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land rights, drew strength from their knowledge of, and personal experiences during, the Mpondo Revolts. The Khanyayo had been centrally affected by the Revolts in many ways. First, several interviewees stated that their headman during the 1950s and 1960s, Makita Jama, '*Waye hamba nabantu*' (He walked with the people.), perhaps to save himself from the fate of other government collaborators. So, when government officials approached him, twice in the late 1950s and early 1960s, to propose rehabilitation, he apparently did not even call a meeting to announce this to the people. He told the government officials that the Khanyayo people would never accept further division of their land, because they were already angry over the land they had lost to the Mkambati leper colony. Second, Khanyayo men regularly met in Mgwedlweni, a hill near the settlement area, or crossed Mtentu River to meet with other rebels in Zangotshe, in Mpisi village, Bizana. Third, on the day of the Ngquza massacre on June 6, 1960, the government security forces arrived and camped in the Mkambati leper institution for several weeks. This camp was used as a temporary holding cell, as well as a torture camp,[6] for men arrested during and after the Ngquza massacre.[7] The meetings that the Khanyayo men attended in Zangotshe, Bizana, as well as the witnessing of the Ngquza massacre on June 6, 1960, and the presence of security forces in Mkambati, who also tortured Mpondo Revolts rebels, were mentioned by interviewees as a sign that their village shared in the defiance and pain of those years.

With this background of discontent and resistance against the state, before, during and after the Mpondo Revolts, Khanyayo activists, many of whom were former migrants, engaged in at least three acts of defiance to force the state to deal with their land issue following the Mpondo the Revolts. In the first act in 1990, with the political changes sweeping the country, following the unbanning of political organizations by the apartheid government, Khanyayo villagers confronted TRACOR state farm managers over their grazing rights. The result was that they secured the return of 3500 hectares of grazing land (Kepe 1997). With that achievement providing momentum, close to a hundred villagers occupied the Mkambati Nature Reserve on the 3rd of August 1992. The occupation lasted for nine days, with villagers

[6] Robin Kayser also reports first-hand accounts from people who were tortured in the Mkambati camp (Kayser 2002).

[7] Interviews with Stoni Khanyayo, Bhulu Pesa, Mavenkileni Makita, Flayi Gxabu, and Batata Nzonzo, April 1996-August 2009.

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demanding their land rights, as well as asking for a fair treatment of people who worked there. This action forced the Transkei Bantustan government, which was represented by Minister Ngangomhlaba Matanzima, to negotiate with the villagers, where promise was made to create employment opportunities,[8] as well as to restore land rights to the villagers. By 1996, after almost six years since the nine-day occupation of Mkambati Nature Reserve, and with no action in sight from the state, the village leaders began doing their own research in preparation for lodging a formal land claim. In their research they established that there were 49 households that were evicted from Mkambati in 1920. Using these names, and arguing that the land that they occupied (Mkambati) was in fact an extension of their village, as well as the area they used for grazing and collection of natural resources, they lodged a land claim on behalf of all the Khanyayo villagers in July 1997.

The second series of acts of defiance by the Khanyayo lasted between 1990 and 2004. Given that the land claim was not being resolved soon enough, and that TRACOR and Mkambati Nature Reserve officials continued arresting and fining people for trespassing in these state-controlled environments, villagers resorted to using fire (Kepe 2005a). Week after week, almost throughout the year, the grasslands of this area, which are designated as having one of the highest conservation value in the world (Nel, 2003; De Villiers and Costello, 2006), were continually burned. Both TRACOR and Mkambati institutions had to use their own resources to deal with the fires.

The third related act of defiance against the state involved the allocation of settlement sites and crop fields, as well as forceful grazing by livestock on the 11,000 hectare TRACOR land. Between April 1996 and December 1997, the Khanyayo villagers carved out seven small farms on the TRACOR land to give to people who wanted to farm with maize, beans, cabbages, and cattle. Not all the new farmers on this land were from Khanyayo. Some of these people were business people from as far as the Flagstaff and Bizana areas. People who wanted sites for agricultural purposes approached the SANCO grouping, which by late 1997 had evolved into a Khanyayo-Mkambati Development Forum

[8] In a move to mollify the protesters, the provincial Department of Health also decided to reopen a small section of the old leper institution as a clinic for local communities in 1996.

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(KMDF)[9] (see Kepe et al, 2001). When I asked them why they gave away hundreds of hectares to people from other villages, when they were at the same time complaining about being denied their rights to land and resources on this land, they had clear responses for me, represented by this statement from one of the interviewees:

> First, we are burning and allocating this land to see who is going to come out and say: 'Why are you doing this on my land?' For years now nobody has come forward to say this is my land, but our livestock is impounded by TRACOR. When we ask them, TRACOR say they do not own the land. So, who is the owner? Is it us or somebody else? Second, if we allocated land to Khanyayo villagers, they would only use small portions of the land. That would not attract attention from the state. But by allocating so much land to wealthy people from outside the village, we want to make sure that they use a lot of the land. That way there is bigger impact of our actions.

According to the villagers, while they welcomed the political changes that were taking place in South Africa since 1990, the fact that they continued to struggle to regain their land rights years after the fall of apartheid, made them suspicious of the provincial government.[10] But the villagers made it clear that these acts of defiance were only possible because they no longer feared violent repression from the state, such as what they experienced during 1960 during the Mpondo Revolts.

'While graves mean a lot to us, they are not food. Our children need jobs now'

The defiance and militancy discussed above could also be observed in other neighbouring villages in Lusikisiki. In Lambasi area, for example, Betterment planning was implemented against the will of the people. According to Harrison (1988), a senior agricultural officer and avid nature lover, Miles Roberts, who was impressed by the traditional use of Lambasi as grazing land, feared that there would be an influx of people to the area, so he convinced Paramount Chief Botha

[9] By 1997 the Khanyayo headman had been co-opted to KMDF, but still ran his traditional meetings at his homestead.

[10] Somehow local people's references to, or discontent with, the government targeted the provincial government, rather than the national government under Nelson Mandela, and later Thabo Mbeki. I was never able to understand why that was the case, except to speculate that Bisho, the provincial capital is much closer than Pretoria, the national capital. Additionally, it may have been that the Transkei Bantustan that they had lived under for many years had gradually taken focus away from Pretoria.

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Sigcawu[11] that a survey of the area was necessary for conservation reasons. Therefore a study was conducted to prepare for Betterment.[12] In Ndengane sub-village of Lambasi, livestock owners, such as one powerful and respected Gxobela, were in the forefront of resistance against Betterment planning. In general, they argued that the move posed a threat to their access to and control over the coastal rangeland and marine resources on the coast (Kepe and Whande 2009). In other parts of Lambasi, such as the sub-village of Ntlavukazi, however, success in resisting Betterment was limited.

In almost four decades since Betterment was enforced on residents of Lambasi, there is still widespread resentment over its implication. In an interview that I did in 2000, one man had this to say: 'We still don't understand why we were forced away from our fertile fields to these barren lands. That is why we were prepared to fight. We are also still crying for the graves of *obawomkhulu* (our forefathers) which were destroyed by whites and no compensation was given.'[13] What interested me, however, was why the people of Ntlavukazi did not follow the same path of defiance and militancy taken by the Khanyayo people, just across Msikaba River, about five kilometers from their village, to resist Betterment or to force the state to deal with their land grievances after the end of apartheid. As I wondered about this issue, however, the explanation was clearly evident from what I observed and heard in interviews with villagers in Ntlavukazi in July 2000.

In Ntlavukazi, Magwa Tea Company had been forcefully established on land belonging to Lambasi villagers. Negotiations and planning for this venture took place at about the same time as the introduction of Betterment planning. Johan Mills, who was then the secretary to the Chief Minister of Transkei, made the initial suggestion that Pondoland needed a commercial venture to provide a local alternative to migrant labour in the sugar cane fields of Natal. Mills discussed this idea with the Paramount Chief, Botha Sigcawu, and his councillors in Qawukeni (the Great Place), and it is said that it was well received.[14] What

[11] According to Mbeki (1984) Botha Sigcawu had already long been a supporter of Betterment planning and was for that reason unpopular among Mpondo in Eastern Pondoland. The first attempt at introducing Betterment in areas around Lusikisiki during the mid-1950s had failed following resistance by local people.

[12] Cape Town Archives 1/LSK, Vol. 142.

[13] An elderly man during a community workshop in Ntlavukazi, Lambasi Administrative Area, 17 July 2000.

[14] Prime Minister K.D. Matanzima visited the area but remained in favour of cattle farming rather than tea production (Harrison 1988).

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remained was to convince the local villagers to move off the land that Botha Sigcawu had set aside for the venture. Following the Ngquza Hill massacre on 6 June 1960, where Mpondo rebels were killed or arrested, resistance in Magwa area subsided and residents finally gave way to the tea plantation and Betterment. Despite their discontent about losing land to tea and Betterment, neighbouring villagers appear to have initially welcomed the opportunity to have jobs in Magwa (Kepe 2005b). People in the area make it very clear that if economic opportunities emerge, they will be met with enthusiasm. The following comments reflect the urgent need for secure livelihoods in the area, which in my view also explains the complacency regarding land rights and land reform:[15]

> We are still crying for our forefathers' graves which are now on the other side of the fence. But we would go and work there if jobs can open up. While graves mean a lot to us, they are not food. Our children need jobs now.
>
> We don't necessarily want to move back to where our forefathers' graves are. What would we do with the graves we have now? If they can bring this development that they have been talking about for so long now, we are not likely to be as bitter as we are at present.

To put these comments into context, it needs to be noted that from 1996 the South African government promised to implement a number of Spatial Development Initiatives (SDI) in parts of the country where there was both need in terms of poverty, as well as opportunity in terms of what could attract private sector investment (Kepe, 2005b). Magwa Tea and its beautiful coastal environment were earmarked as one of the SDI nodes. However, by the time of writing of this chapter, more than ten years since the plans were publicized and expensive studies conducted, these large-scale SDI plans had not materialized, and Magwa Tea continues to experience viability problems, with employees going for months without wages. Nevertheless, the promise of, and hope for, jobs clearly mollified people into not following a militant strategy to voice their discontent about the non-implementation of land reform in their area.[16]

[15] Group discussion at headman's place, Lambasi, 17 July 2000.

[16] By 2009 the land claim had been resolved, but there were major disagreements between state agencies and local people, as well as among local people themselves (Daily Dispatch, 2009).

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In fact, even in Khanyayo, where villagers used militancy to fight for their land and resource rights, there are also clear examples of apathy and resignation that can be observed. For example, following the formal lodgment of the land claim by Khanyayo leaders, on behalf of the whole village, government officials, seeking a speedy end to the land dispute in the area, coerced the villagers to withdraw the group village claim and have the descendents of the original 49 households that were removed from Mkambati to be the only claimants (Kepe 2008). These descendents numbered 326 household heads, and received financial compensation when the land claim was formally resolved on 17 October 2004. Each person was given R38,000 (about US$5500) compensation. Of course this left more than a thousand other Khanyayo household heads, who were part of the original claim as members of the village community, without financial compensation. These villagers were told that they would benefit from future eco-tourism development in Mkambati Nature Reserve. Significantly, many of the leaders who campaigned for the return of land rights in Khanyayo were part of the 326 household heads who received financial compensation. This fuelled discontent among the rest of villagers, including accusation that their own leaders were silenced with cash.

Perhaps the clearest sign of resignation by villagers in the Khanyayo land claim is the fact that officials of the former Department of Land Affairs (renamed in 2009 the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform), facing political pressure and intimidation from other villages within the Thaweni Tribal Authority in which Khanyayo falls, coerced the Khanyayo to accommodate six other Thaweni villages as co-owners of the returned land. Before the government's intervention this would have been impossible. This is because there is detailed research that documents that between 1993 and 1999 the Khanyayo fought a fierce battle against these six other villages to prevent them from forcing their way as stakeholders in Mkambati Nature Reserve and TRACOR land (Kepe 1997; 2008). My own recent interviews with the Khanyayo leaders who led the fight for land rights reveal that they have fully accepted the status quo, despite the widespread discontent within their village. The villagers who did not get compensation from the successful land claim also remain unhappy that, following the resolution of the land claim, Mkambati Nature Reserve is still controlled by the state's conservation authority (Eastern Cape Parks), as a designated management authority, as required by the land claims settlement

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agreement in 2004 (Kepe 2008). Additionally, they are unhappy that there continue to be restrictions on use of both the reserve and the TRACOR land to collect natural resources. They have indicated that, with their leaders no longer interested in fighting for village rights, they feel powerless, but they do not see the resolution of the land claim as bringing peace to the area. One villager said: 'The people who started this fight on our behalf now walk with government officials and investors. They even get to fly in airplanes to look at our land. But they can look and point down all they want; this is our land.'

Another major factor contributing to apathy concerning land rights and land reform is party politics. Between 1990 and about 1997, many of the villagers who led the fight for land rights in Khanyayo belonged to the African National Congress (ANC), the current ruling party in South Africa. Most of the villagers, whether ANC or not, appeared to appreciate the political backing of this organization in their fight. However, by late 1997 a new party, the United Democratic Movement (UDM), led by former Transkei Bantustan ruler, General Bantu Holomisa, had made inroads in Lusikisiki villages. Villagers, who differed with ANC local politicians on how to deal with the land dispute, were often labeled as UDM, and subsequently marginalized from discussions, or 'shamed in public', particularly in front of ANC politicians who visited the area to try and deal with the land issue. Given that the ANC was in power at national, provincial, and municipality levels, ANC local leaders working on the land issue did not experience much opposition from other local people, including those who belonged to the UDM. In 1999 two elderly villagers hinted that there was also intimidation of non-ANC members who had different views on the land question in Khanyayo. They related that, just before the national elections in 1999, ANC women from Lusikisiki, who worked in government offices there, but were in the village campaigning for the ANC, suggested to them that they should not resist ANC strategies on the land issue, otherwise their old-age pensions will be under threat. To these men, the message was clear – they should keep quiet or lose their pensions later. By late 2009, many of the villagers who had joined UDM, or the newer party formed in 2008, the Congress of the People (COPE), had returned to support the ANC again. The reasons for these back and forth switches in party affiliation are many and various, and fall outside the scope of this chapter.

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Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to show that land and resource rights, among other things, continue to be important to rural people in Pondoland. As one of the causes of the Mpondo Revolts, rural people's discontent over loss of their land rights through conservation projects, including forest conservation and Betterment planning, continues to be a rallying point against state hegemony over rural people. Several decades since the Revolts, state interventions affecting land and other natural resource rights are still viewed with suspicion. Yet, unlike during the Mpondo Revolts, rural people's responses towards state intervention affecting their land and resource rights vary. They range from localized militancy and defiance, to being passive. This chapter attempted to explore some of the reasons for these disparate responses.

The case of defiance and militancy by Khanyayo people concerning their land rights in Mkambati Nature Reserve and TRACOR land, during and after apartheid, is an illustration that while fighting apartheid injustices was central during the Mpondo Revolts, the defense of livelihoods was probably among the chief things that energized ordinary villagers. That ordinary people are grateful that apartheid does no longer exist, yet still feel the need to draw on the memory and experience of the earlier revolts to show their discontent with post-apartheid policies that have negative effects on rural life, could be an indication that rural struggles do not necessarily rely on national political trends.

Land reform, one of the key post-apartheid policies in South Africa, has been slow in terms of meaningful implementation in many rural areas, including Pondoland. It has thus been easy for rural people who have suffered because of the loss of their rights to be skeptical of land reform, as well as many other policies whose stated goals relate to land or land-use changes. Therefore, despite being aware of legal routes, and in fact making use of these to regain their land rights at times, some villagers appear prepared to use militant means to draw attention to their plight. Occupation of government property, burning of forests and allocation of sites from land controlled by the state were just of a few of many examples of what people can do to defend their livelihoods.

On the other hand, despite the memory and experience of the Mpondo Revolts, the cases of Lambasi villagers who have been relatively passive about the land they lost towards the establishment of Magwa

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Tea; and the weakening of the fight for land rights in Khanyayo, illustrate that rural people do make choices that are the opposite of confrontation and militancy. In both the case of Lambasi and Khanyayo, the desperation for cash and/or promise of jobs appears to encourage some villagers to take the path of least resistance to secure their livelihoods.

There is also evidence that party politics do play a role in silencing people not to challenge the state in ways they may have done during the Mpondo Revolts. The case of conflict between the UDM and ANC supporters in Khanyayo indicate that, while it might have been easier to get support for challenging the state during apartheid, fighting for land rights in ways that are seen as challenging the state is frowned upon by ANC loyalists as an attack on the organization that has a history of fighting for liberation.

Finally, memories and experience of the struggle against colonial and apartheid hegemony, as demonstrated by the Mpondo Revolts, can be used in different ways by different people, and of course with different results. It appears that gradually, at least for now, the current political establishment in South Africa is unlikely to tolerate defiance and militant campaigns against the state, that are of the same magnitude as the Mpondo Revolts. Rural people may have to confine their revolts to what James Scott (1985) calls 'The Weapons of the Weak', whereby resistance and defiance are visible in small activities and are not always immediately detectable by those who could crush them. Rather, its impact is more on those who take this path, as they gain confidence and a sense of gaining numerous victories.

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

WE DON'T WANT YOUR DEVELOPMENT!: RESISTANCE TO IMPOSED DEVELOPMENT IN NORTHEASTERN PONDOLAND

Jacques P. de Wet

Introduction

> *Asilufuni Uphuhliso lwenu!* (We don't want your development!)… *If this mining takes place and the government issues a licence in this area there will be war. There will be an uprising as it was in the [last] Mpondo Revolt.* (Nonhle Mbuthuma, Executive member of the AmaDiba Crisis Committee, 2009)
>
> *I'd rather die than allow this land to be mined!*
>
> (Tat' uSamson Gampe, resident of AmaDiba in the district of Mbizana, 2009)

Nonhle Mbuthuma (in her 30s) and Tat' uSamson Gampe (in his 80s) were two of almost a thousand people from Mbizana in North Eastern Pondoland (and further afield) who took part in a protest march on 20 July 2008. The protesters were expressing their opposition to a government-supported proposal by Mineral Commodities Ltd, an Australian company, to mine their communal land (SABC TV2 50/50, 2008a). The mining venture, Xolobeni Mineral Sands, proposes to strip away indigenous vegetation, so they can mine valuable titanium along a 22 km stretch of coastline in Mbizana, south of Port Edward. The AmaDiba Crisis Committee (ACC), local residents who oppose this form of neo-liberal development, argue that the proposed mining enterprise undermines their livelihood strategies and control over their land. Both Nonhle and Tat' uSamson are members of the ACC, which has charged the Australian mining company and its local black empowerment partner, Xolobeni Empowerment Company, with human rights violations. The ACC has taken its complaints to the South African Human Rights Commission.

Protest and resistance to impositions in the name of development are not new to the Mpondo people of the Mbizana area. Young and old know their history. Today's young activists like Nonhle Mbuthuma

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refer to the Mpondo Revolt of 1959–1960 in their public speeches, and there are veterans of that revolt, like Tat' uSamson Gampe, who oppose the mining venture.

Mbizana was a centre of resistance against Bantu Authorities and Betterment in the 1950s and early 1960s. Since the end of the last of the Mpondo revolts in 1960, fifty years ago, the Mpondo people of the AmaDiba[1] area in Mbizana have for similar reasons continued to resist imposed development of their communal land. Tat' uSamson (in an interview in 2009) recalled that between the 1960 Mpondo Revolt and the current resistance to mining there have been numerous instances of resistance to imposed development in Mbizana. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, for example, there was opposition to the government-sponsored Mbizana sugar cane plantation project and in the late 1990s there was the Gum Tree Rebellion. In a study of the Mbizana sugar project undertaken in 1985–1986, the Institute for Management and Development Studies (IMDS) reported that local people were 'antagonistic' towards so-called development projects, which they perceived benefitted only a few members of the community and which had led to forced removals, the loss of their land, and undermined their livelihood strategies (IMDS 1986: 7, 28). Tat' uSamson explained that in the case of the Gum Tree Rebellion of 1999 there were two weeks of violence in the AmaDiba area when 14 homesteads, that had planted gum trees for South African Pulp and Paper Industries Ltd (SAPPI), were burnt to the ground. The South African government facilitated the project and the community was supposed to be paid to plant more trees under a rental system. The intervention divided the community: some wanted trees and 'development', while others questioned this land use and preferred to keep it for growing crops and for livestock grazing (Schutz 2007). Schutz (ibid.) argues that the ensuing conflict was caused by SAPPI and the state (who were regarded as outsiders by the community) 'ignoring local concerns, pushing their own agenda and sowing division'.

[1] AmaDiba features in the history of the Mpondo Revolts. This is confirmed by the 'Departmental Commission of Inquiry into the Unrest in Eastern Pondoland during 1960' (1960). Sgt. E.M. Warren, the Bantu Affairs Commissioner of Mbizana, wrote that the AmaDiba Location, under the leadership of Theophilus Tshangela, had gone over to the rebels (see Van Heerden, 1960, Annexure C). Tshangela was the local chief's counsellor, but 'began to move away from chief Gangatha in the late 1950s as the state started to put pressure on the chiefs to support their rural programme' (Beinart, 1984:106). According to Beinart, Tshangela subsequently became one of the most important leaders in the Mpondo Revolt of 1959–1960.

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An examination of local resistance to these development projects by the author has revealed certain patterns (De Wet 2009). In each case outsiders (either the government or the government and the business sector) had attempted to impose development. There was little or no consultation with the local people; and the local community's control over communal land and their livelihood strategies were undermined. In each case ordinary people of the Mbizana district resisted. Resistance is understood to mean publicly demonstrated opposition. Similar patterns have emerged in the current opposition to the Xolobeni Mineral Sands Project.

The protesters, in their public demonstrations against the mining of their land, have made reference to the Mpondo Revolt of 1959–1960. This reference locates their struggle to retain the right to decide how best to develop their land in a history of resistance that started in the era of Apartheid, and has continued in the new democratic South Africa. At the heart of their activism is a collective consciousness that is best described as collective agency. By agency I mean that people are active participants in their development, because they take responsibility for their own well-being. The concept of agency is central to Sen's (2001) understanding of development as freedom. For Sen, development must be characterised by participants having opportunities to reflect on what they consider valuable, and by their active involvement in shaping their own lives (ibid.). Collective agency refers to situations in which a group of people combine their knowledge and expertise in order to achieve a shared goal (Bandura 2001:14). It is not merely the pooling of individual goals; rather it is the expression of the goals of everyone in the group (Schmid 2005: 58–59), and it implies that group members are willing to defend their right to shape their lives in accordance with goals based on what they value, and what they have together decided after collective and reasoned reflection (Sen 2001). Development that is imposed on poor communities violates their right to shape their own lives. Collective agency is fundamental if development is to be sustainable; sustainability requires that the poor be treated as fully human, active subjects of history, not passive objects to be manipulated by oppressive social structures.

In this chapter we examine the ACC's resistance to the Xolobeni mining venture. Fifty years after the last of the Mpondo Revolts, ordinary people of Mbizana continue to exercise their collective agency to defend their right to shape their own lives.

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I now turn to a description of the Xolobeni Mineral Sands Project, the target of current resistance.

Xolobeni Mineral Sands Project

Heavy minerals mining has been proposed by an Australian company, Mineral Resources Commodities (MRC), its South African subsidiary Transworld Energy and Mineral Resources (TEM), and a small black economic empowerment (BEE) venture, Xolobeni Community Empowerment Company (Xolco). They plan to strip away indigenous vegetation on communal land in order to mine titanium along a 22 kilometre stretch of coastline in Mbizana. Over a period of 22 years it is expected that 13 million tons of minerals would be mined annually (Barradas 2008). The mining company has applied for a licence to mine for titanium-bearing minerals in Xolobeni in the AmaDiba area. Xolobeni has the tenth largest deposit of titanuum in the world, worth an estimated R11 billion (Hofstatter 2008a). Titanium is used in the manufacture of aircraft engines and paint.

The operation would require the building of the following infrastructure: access roads, water supply and pipelines, a wet separation plant, a dry minerals separation plant, and storage facilities (Barradas 2008). The National Department of Minerals and Energy (DME) supports the mining venture mainly because it promises to create job opportunities[2] in the area (Khuswayo 2008). The latter is one of the objectives of the national government's foreign investment-led, growth-orientated development policy (ibid.). From the DME's perspective it makes sense to support the mining venture because there is high demand for titanium, and it fits the government's development policy. In May 2005, the Eastern Cape Department of Minerals and Energy Affairs granted TEM provisional prospecting rights, and in July 2008, the DME awarded TEM limited mining rights to a third of the area they want to mine, which was to have been signed and issued on 31 October 2008 (ibid.; Legal Resources Centre 2008). The DME granted the mining rights despite a warning from the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism that mining would permanently

[2] In the official application, mention is made of 347 permanent jobs, but no details are provided.

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damage local ecosystems in an area acknowledged as one of the most important centres of plant diversity in South Africa, and an internationally recognised centre of endemism (Naidoo 2003; Clarke 2008; Hofstatter 2008a).

In 2007 local residents established the ACC in order to oppose the mining venture, and to promote the existing community-based ecotourism business, which runs along the same 22 kilometres. The ACC's resistance is informed by four interlinked issues: the lack of consultation about development strategies, communal land rights, threats to livelihood strategies, and the lack of legitimacy of those who ostensibly represent the community.

Rationale for Resistance

Inadequate consultation and communal land rights

> *We just saw this mining thing happening without the people being properly consulted. I will never agree to something that the community has not agreed to… If development comes in a way that does not consider the people, then it is not acceptable.* (AmaDiba Community member[3] 2009)

On a fact-finding visit to Mbizana in 2007, the South African Human Rights Commission (HRC) stated that the 'complaint… is broadly around lack of consultation by the mining company regarding the development[,] and the fact that the land on which the development is planned is communal land[,] for which the community should have given consent' (South African Human Rights Commission 2007: 2).

According to the Grahamstown Legal Resources Centre (2008):

> *The AmaDiba community… has a right to legally secure tenure of their communal land under the Constitution and the Communal Land Rights Act 11 of 2004. Therefore mining can only take place once a mining company has acquired a Community Resolution, which is issued by the Department of Land Affairs and the traditional authorities of the community, consenting to the mining and setting out the compensation to be paid to the community. Such a Resolution was not obtained.*

The HRC's fact-finding report (2007: 8–9) concludes that, 'despite a chronic lack of information, the majority of the communities [affected

[3] All the interviews by the author with residents from the AmaDiba area were conducted in isiMpondo (an isiXhosa dialect). The quotes are English translations.

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by the mining] are not in favour of mining, while the mining companies consistently claim otherwise, saying that support is unanimous'. The right to adequate consultation on matters pertaining to the development of communal land is one of the ACC's complaints to the HRC.

The King and Queen of Pondoland, Mpondombini and MaSobhuza Sigcau, have held meetings with AmaDiba residents, who are on both sides of the divide created by the mining venture, because they were concerned about the resulting division and conflict within the community (Kockott 2007). At one of these meetings in August 2007, Queen Sigcau accused the Australian mining company of misleading its shareholders and the Australian Stock Exchange about community support for the project (Kockott 2007). The mining company, Minerals Commodities Ltd, had claimed in its October 2006 quarterly report that the AmaDiba community 'continues to unanimously support the project and has formed a consultative forum supported by the traditional leaders, King and Queen of Pondoland, as well as local government authorities' (ibid.). Queen Sigcau stated: 'That is a big lie' (ibid.). King Sigcau warned that forcing the mining development on the AmaDiba people without their consent would be viewed as 'nothing less than invasion' of their land (Legalbrief Environmental 2008). The King's sensitivity to the will of the people stands in stark contrast to the support his father, Botha Sigcau, gave to the 'Bantu Authorities' in Pondoland (and the former Transkei Bantustan) and the imposition of Betterment. Perhaps King Sigcau is mindful of the fierce opposition experienced by his father, who collaborated with the Apartheid Government, and does not want to be labelled an enemy of the Mpondo people.

In their submission to the HRC the ACC argues that the scoping and environmental impact assessment reports do not go far enough in assessing the impact that the proposed mining venture will have on the local communities, in the short term, or for generations to come. They further argue that their environmental rights (in Section 21 of the Bill of Rights) have been violated and that the legally required public participation process is fundamentally flawed as a result of intimidation in public meetings by the mining company, which denies their freedom of expression and right to information (Myrtle 2007b; Marshal 2007; South African Human Rights Commission 2007:2; Hofstatter 2008a:56).

The HRC (2007:2) notes that the law requires that communal land users give their consent if their land is to be used by any other parties.

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Outsiders cannot be granted mining rights to communal land without the consent of the communal land owners. In this case the AmaDiba community is co-owner of the land with the State,[4] in whose name the land is registered (Schultz 2007).

'Consent' must be freely given, not coerced. Hence an important part of the HRC's mandate is to find out whether intimidation by the pro-mining lobby has unfairly prejudiced others. Such intimidation has included attempts to sabotage alternative livelihood strategies, such as the community-based eco-tourism venture (SABC TV2 50/50 2008a). Additional complaints against the mining company for the HRC to investigate include: the failure to tell people living in the immediate area of the mining operation that they will lose grazing land and that they will have to put up with 40-ton trucks transporting ore every hour, every day, for 22 years, and the company's refusal to disclose the financial details of a deal struck between MRC and Xolco (Hofstatter 2008b: 43; Hofstatter 2008a: 58; De Milander 2008).

In September 2008, the then Minister of DME, Buyelwa Sonjica, acknowledged that there was substantial opposition to the Xolobeni Mineral Sands Project and admitted, for the first time, that the consultation process was 'flawed' (Kockott 2008b; Daily Dispatch 2008).

Mining Undermines Livelihood Strategies

It is debateable whether the mayor of the OR Tambo Municipality, Zoleka Capa, is correct when she claims that the tensions between the AmaDiba Crisis Committee, on the one hand, and Xolco and the pro-mining local government officials, on the other, could have been avoided had the AmaDiba people been properly informed and consulted about the mining proposals (Kockott and Gobingca 2007). It seems quite plausible that by labelling all the problems as 'consultation' issues, the mayor is trying to paint the mining option as the best community development option. In other words, she is reducing all the problems to matters of procedure, which is not the case according to the ACC.

Aside from the faulty consultative process, changes in the way people go about trying to survive have to be considered. (Exactly what the negative consequences will be is as yet unknown, as is the degree to which the consultative process could mitigate any negative

[4] The Department of Land Affairs holds communal land in trust for communities.

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consequences.) Mining communal land along the coast will significantly affect the livelihoods of many local people whether they are farmers, fishermen, gatherers from the veld, or those employed in eco-tourism. As an example, many of the residents' food gardens lie right next to the mining area and some residents will be cut off from parts of their grazing lands (Carte Blanche 2008):

> *The mining will affect the community here because the development will pass through some homesteads. It will also interfere with grazing areas. People feel threatened.* (Tat' uSamson Gampe 2009)

It is quite clear that tourism, in particular community-based eco-tourism, will be affected negatively by mining. While discourses of 'concern for the environment' are often said to be the preserve of white urban liberals who put 'conservation' ahead of 'people', the pro-mining group has used this as an argument to discredit local community activists (for example, see Hofstatter 2008b: 42). Conservation and people are deeply intertwined. The promise of jobs does not equate to a livelihood strategy, as some economists have argued. Damage to the environment affects not just tourism (and eco-tourism in particular); farming is affected badly too.

One aspect of the conflict, a clash of development perspectives, is between the two government departments, the Department of Minerals and Energy (DME) and the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) (see Hofstatter 2008a). DEAT – together with private interests and the European Union-sponsored Wild Coast Community Tourism Initiative – have already invested in the AmaDiba area, and this investment would be threatened by any mining venture. Normally the final approval of environmental impact assessments (EIAs) must pass through DEAT's offices; however, the government has deemed that the DME has the relevant expertise to assess the environmental impact of the mining operation, so the decision lies with the DME – a clear case of conflict of interest (Kockott 2008a; Naidoo 2003). DEAT's own EIA argues that the mine will have significant ecological and environmental consequences. Furthermore, a study (undertaken by the European Union and submitted to DEAT) found that eco-tourism in the area 'beats mining hands-down in terms of sustainable economic delivery to the community' (SABC TV2 50/50 2008a).

Ntshona and Lahiff (2003: 15) report that the AmaDiba Adventures Horse and Hiking Trail, a local community-based eco-tourism initiative, was perceived by many of its staff members as a good income base that would support livelihood activities such as crop cultivation and

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livestock that are important to local people. The trail increases the range of livelihood sources without impacting negatively on any older ones (ibid.:16). In 2000 Amadiba Adventures received the Community Public Private Partnership Presidential award as the most outstanding eco-tourism initiative.

Mining will force some people to relocate and seek agricultural land elsewhere; such relocation will also require that they move ancestral graves:

> *The area affected by mining is from Mzamba River to Mtentu River. We were informed that we would have to move to a site nearby, where we will have to build new homesteads… Our forefathers' grave sites are all here; we are not prepared to dig them up.* (Tat' uSamson Gampe 2009)

The noise of mining operations could scare livestock. It is quite likely that the local water supply and the botanical diversity of the region will be affected. Schutz (2007b) says that environmentalists have pointed out that an area larger than that which is actually mined will be negatively affected by dust, water shortages, and pollution; that landfill will be widespread. The mining operation will create a strip of desert on what is now pristine coastal area.

These are some of the negative effects on the environment and the livelihoods that will result from mining. Families are likely to become more dependent on wages (which are obviously attractive to cash-poor residents) and less dependent on the diverse natural resources that currently support livelihoods. When the mining company leaves after 22 years, it will leave the local communities with many problems.

Illegitimacy of Xolobeni Community Empowerment Company as a Representative of Local Interests

Very little is actually known about Xolco, the BEE company which claims to represent the affected communities, because it manages a number of local trusts. Xolco is said to hold a 26% stake in TEM (Carnie 2008b).

Hofstatter (2008b: 43) writes that by holding secretive elections for bodies which it claims represent the communities' interests, Xolco has sidelined legitimate community structures. Furthermore, in December 2007, the mining company bussed local people and some traditional leaders to Pretoria to deliver a pro-mining petition to the then Minerals and Energy minister, Buyelwa Sonjica. Sarah Sephton, from Grahamstown's Legal Resource Centre, has said that she was informed that:

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> *the majority of the supporters were from an inland group and not from the community who'll directly be affected by the mining. …People have been told that they are signing up for electricity, when in fact they were signing up for a petition in favour of the mine* (Carte Blanche 2008).

Chief Lunga Baleni is also convinced that the mining petition was fraudulent (Hofstatter 2008b: 45).

Chief Lunga Baleni, the traditional leader of five of the designated mining blocks, has yet to be consulted. He wasn't invited to the DME offices in Pretoria (the mission to the DME offices was led by one of his junior headmen) and he is not aware of any public trust elections which would have been held at the mining area's only community hall (Hofstatter 2008b: 45). The local community was not invited to take part in trustee elections, nor was it involved in Xolco appointments (ibid.: 44). Neither was it given the chance to examine Xolco's books (ibid.). Kockott and Gobingca (2007) quote a local shopkeeper, Scorpion Dimane:

> *How can a structure like Xolco that has been formed outside the tribal authority represent our community? …You can't just form a private company to benefit from taking things from the land that doesn't even belong to you. People behind this are hiding some information because they want to feed themselves big money. That's what started this whole problem.*

At a community meeting organised by Xolco representatives, and attended by Zamile Qunya, a businessman and previously an ANC senior municipal councillor (Hofstatter 2007), Scorpion Dimane publicly questioned Xolco's integrity. He said:

> *It is written in a document that all of you here have elected Xolco. It is said in the document each and every household in the community has a share in Xolco, in this mining. But that is not formally recorded anywhere. It is just something they have verbally claimed. They are lying.* (SABC TV 50/50 2008a)

Scorpion Dimane, an outspoken member of the AmaDiba community and anti-mining activist, died under very suspicious circumstances in 2008. In a 2008 Carte Blanche TV documentary members of the community claimed that he had been poisoned.

There is also some evidence to suggest that Xolco's members are either being misled or left in the dark because the mother company has failed to share information. Zeka Mnyamana, the Xolco secretary and spokesman, has claimed that:

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> *What we need is the truth… We welcome what the AmaDiba Crisis Committee is saying. They are asking questions about the mining, which we can't answer. We need to have those answers before people can decide whether the mining should go ahead or not*. (Kockott and Gobingca 2007)

In March 2007, Zamile Qunya held a management position at the Amadiba Coastal Communities Development Association (ACCODA); at the same time he was apparently the head of Xolco (Carnie 2007). Holding these two positions meant that Mr Qunya was faced with conflicts of interest. (Subsequently he resigned as a director of Xolco, and now serves as the liaison officer between the mining company and the community.)

ACCODA controls, among other initiatives, the Amadiba Adventures Horse and Hiking Trail – the major eco-tourism alternative to mining (Schutz 2007b; Ntshona and Lahiff 2003).

> *ACCODA had been on the verge of signing a 'lucrative contract' with Wilderness Safaris in a partnership that would have injected money and professionalism into [the local] eco-tourism initiatives… ACCODA was ready to sign the deal when Zamile Qunya, then chairperson of ACCODA, rejected it at the last minute*. (Schutz 2007b)

At the same time Qunya had teamed up with a Port Elizabeth-based attorney, Max Boqwana (one of the original BEE partners), to set up the Xolobeni Community Empowerment Company (Pty) Ltd (Xolco) (ibid.). Qunya then changed the composition of ACCODA so that 11 of the 12 members supported the mining venture (ibid.).

In a 2006 SABC TV 50/50 documentary, accusations, which include bribery, corruption, and even murder,[5] were levelled at ACCODA. According to informants interviewed for the documentary, over a long period money that was supposedly meant for the community had not been finding its way through ACCODA structures to the intended beneficiaries. ACCODA accountants found evidence of gross mismanagement and lack of accountability on the part of its committee members (50/50 TV 2006). Soon after the documentary was made, the Amadiba Trail Adventures headquarters burnt down under mysterious circumstances. All these happenings, if accusations are to be believed, could create the perception that eco-tourism simply did not work.

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[5] The 2003 murder of a headman, Madoda Ndovela, has been ascribed to his opposition to mining (Hofstatter 2007).

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As far back as 2004 Zamile Qunya openly championed the mining venture, rather than the 'failing' eco-tourism venture, as a viable option which could provide employment for local people. Njobeni (2004) reported Qunya as saying that 'people want to see the creation of employment opportunities, poverty alleviation and improvement of health services'. Qunya went on to argue that current eco-tourism ventures were simply not sustainable (ibid.).

Xolco and Xolobeni Minerals Sands seem to have had strong backing from local councillors and the district mayor, Zoleka Capa (Hofstatter 2008a). In an interview with Carte Blanche TV Mayor Capa demonstrated her support for the mining when she said:

> *Let the process go. Why would you want to stop it? …The people* [Zamile Qunya and others] *that were with the tourism are now with the mining and they are the people now who are saying, 'No man, change your mind. We have changed ours.'* (Carte Blanche 2008)

Xolco's lack of transparency has been a major concern, and this concern, in part, resulted in the ACC lodging an application against it with the HRC. It remains unclear when Xolco, let alone the people whose ancestral land is being dug up, will receive a share of the mining revenues (Hofstatter 2008b: 44). There is no evidence of a legally binding agreement which will oblige Xolco to cede shares, or any revenues to the trusts; or that the trustees have the right to appoint the directors of Xolco and its operating company (ibid.). One of the leaders of ACC voiced his concern: 'We own the land… if we lease our land to you, or partner up with you in a project that will affect our land, we must surely know how we will benefit' (Interview with the leadership of ACC 2009). Neither MRC nor Xolco have provided evidence of a 'procurement contract' or 'preferential treatment of locals', both of which had been promised (Hofstatter 2008b: 44). Kockott and Gobingca (2007) conclude that 'the people who [are] directly affected by the mining proposals have no legal share in the planned mining operation'.

As with Betterment and Bantu Authorities, it seems that much of the present day unrest in the AmaDiba area of Mbizana is the consequence of threats to livelihood strategies, and a lack of due consultative process mediated through local power structures – both formal and informal. This has arisen because the opportunities for self-enrichment and power are great. This has led to the splintering of opinion, rumour mongering, and conflict refracted through local elites, who themselves are often as much in the dark as their ostensible 'constituencies'. Some

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local elites have been co-opted into supporting the mining interests and have, in turn, tried to co-opt others, including municipal officials.

Resistance

From its inception the proposed mining came under heavy criticism from members of the community. The community was divided into pro-mining and pro-community-based eco-tourism groups. Resistance to the mining has taken the form of mass meetings, legal submissions (in particular the HRC submission), media publicity, marches, and demonstrations; and there has been the threat of violence.

At the forefront of resistance is the ACC, currently with almost 3000 members who reside in the AmaDiba area (email correspondence with the leadership of the AmaDiba Crisis Committee 16 November 2009). While ACC's raison d'être is to oppose the imposition of the mining development, they are informed by an understanding of development that is endogenous:

> *Development that is real development must go together with that which ordinary people say they want. There is a saying in the Mpondo language: Development starts at the feet and progresses upwards, it does not start at the head and move downwards. It's bottom-up… The government can come with something from the head, but they won't know whether we would want it or not. …if the government was to come with something from the head in a manner that stifles us,* [we would say:] *'No, this is not development.'* (Interview with the leadership of the ACC 2009)

The ACC has been able to garner considerable media attention, not only because they occupy the moral high-ground, but also because of the natural beauty of the area, the possible destruction of which obviously draws much attention – especially from environmentalists. Organisations such as Sustaining the Wild Coast and the Wilderness Foundation, and their myriad of network partners, wage an information war through the internet. Such technological linkages have made it possible to harness support of concerned urban residents, nature-loving tourists, and activists from other parts of the country and the world. Some of this has translated into help, in terms of volunteerism and expertise, as well as support for the affected communities (Nonhle Mbuthuma 2009).

In 2007 the AmaDiba residents sent several petitions to Government, demanding that the DME reject the mining company's application,

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because they fear they'll lose rights to their ancestral land and become squatters on a mine dump (Hofstatter 2008a: 56; Hofstatter 2008b: 43). Petitions have also been sent to the MEC for Eastern Cape Economic Affairs and Tourism, and the Department of Public Enterprises. The petitions stated:

> *Many of us are employed in the tourism sector, and are therefore affected by the development. The most sustainable and preferable way to develop the area is with tourism, nature conservation, that also employs local communities working in the tourism sector, and sustainable farming… We would not support any venture, which would lead to the displacement of people from their land. We would like to continue the development of established farming practices, cultivation practices, and develop tourism… We would also like to see the fostering of sustainable development which is owned by the communities, and directly benefits the rural communities, and honours their rights to natural resources. The plans to mine have had, and will continue to have, the effect of discouraging tourism enterprises established here*. (Sustaining the Wild Coast 2007a)

Opposition has also been voiced at public meetings. At one such meeting, which took place on 18 June 2007, about 150 local residents, including headmen from the areas affected by the proposed mining, gathered at the Xolobeni Traditional Authority. At this meeting two municipal ward councillors and representatives of Xolco were severely criticised by residents, including members of the ACC, 'for failing to either consult or fully inform the AmaDiba community of agreements they had made with the mining company on their behalf, and apparently indicating support for the proposal in municipal structures' (Schultz 2007; Sustaining the Wild Coast 2007b). Nonhle Mbuthuma voiced the concerns of many, when she said, 'We can no longer trust our ward councillors to speak on our behalf; and the Xolco directors were never elected or mandated by us to negotiate on mining' (Sustaining the Wild Coast 2007b).

In 2007 ACC lodged complaints with the South African Human Rights Commission as was mentioned earlier; and on 20 July 2008, there was a protest march along the coast through the areas affected by the mining. By most accounts, the march was a success, about 1000 residents participated and there was considerable media attention (Carnie 2008a).

Despite the ACC petitions to the DME, the public protests, and an investigation into human rights violations by the Human Rights Commission, in August 2008 the DME informed the mining company that it had been granted the mining rights to a third of the

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area which had been requested in the original application (Barradas 2008). The DME minister's subsequent announcement, at a community meeting in the AmaDiba area, that the mining would go ahead, was met with further demonstrations from ACC (Kockott 2008b).

> *It [the mining venture] just arrived, confusing and with many stories. It did come to the people. We showed our discontent with it to the government, but our objections were not considered. These people just said they would go on with the mine despite our objections that the people did not want it.* (AmaDiba Community member 2009)

When it became apparent to the minister that there was substantial opposition to dune mining, she agreed to meet with the protesters and the affected communities (Van der Merwe 2008). These meetings took place amidst growing conflict. A pro-mining headman was beaten up and consultants, which the mining company had appointed to broker offers of compensation to the families who would lose their homes and land to make way for the mining development, were chased out of the area (Kockott 2008b).

> *The whole situation has the potential for violence and there were already rumblings in the community. There were some who had pointed out that in the Mpondo Uprisings of the 1960s some chiefs had been killed because they were perceived to be giving outsiders land that belonged to the people.* (Myrtle 2007b)

The mining licence was to have been signed into effect on 31 October 2008; however, on 2 September, a lawyer from the Legal Resources Centre who was acting on behalf of the AmaDiba Crisis Committee, filed a notice of appeal which requested that the Minister of Minerals and Energy suspend the licence and reconsider the award of the mining rights (Van der Merwe 2008 & Legal Resources Centre 2008). In their appeal the ACC submitted that the mining rights had been granted 'without sufficient and reasonable notice to, consultation with[,] or invitation for comments from the community, as an interested and affected party[,] which was unlawful' (Legal Resources Centre 2008). The Legal Resources Centre noted that some traditional leaders, in particular the King and Queen and Nkosi Lunga Baleni (the chief of the AmaDiba administrative area), had been sidelined in the mandatory consultation process because they too opposed mining in the area (ibid.). The minister subsequently informed the legal representative of the ACC that because of the appeal she would not go through with the signing of the mining licence. According to a

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ministerial spokesperson, the appeal process would need to run its course, and the minister would consult further with traditional leaders and the various stakeholders who had claimed that they had not been consulted on the mining issue (Daily Dispatch 2008). This response from Government contrasts radically with the deterioration of relations between the Apartheid authorities and the Mpondo people, which culminated in the Apartheid government's extremely violent reaction to resisters, especially those involved in the Mpondo Revolt of 1959–1960. In 1960 South Africans were not protected by a Bill of Rights. Furthermore, the government viewed the Mpondo Revolt of 1959–1960 as part of a broader national struggle for liberation led by the African National Congress (Wood 1993:31). The accuracy of this view can be debated, but this belief was real enough to prompt the security forces' violent response to the protest march on 6 June 1960.

Linking Present Resistance to Past Resistance

Mbizana features prominently in historical accounts of the Mpondo revolts of the 1950s and early 1960s. For the Mpondo people of Mbizana the history of imposed development and resistance did not end in 1960 with the last of the Mpondo revolts. Resistance to imposed development still today is a feature of their lives. This chapter focuses on the current resistance to imposed development and its connections to the Mpondo revolts. While there are some obvious differences, not least among them the very different responses from the governments of the day, a number of similarities[6] emerge from a comparison of contemporary resistance to mining and resistance to Betterment in the same area fifty years ago. These include:

i. Resistance to outsiders' attempts to impose externally driven development. In the Mpondo revolts local people resisted the government's imposition of Betterment. The ACC has resisted the imposition of dune mining by an Australian mining company and also the National Department of Minerals and Energy.
ii. The illegitimacy of those claiming to represent the people affected by the development. With few exceptions, the traditional leaders supported Betterment and the Bantu Authorities, and they were

[6] Similar patterns also emerge in the resistance to the Mbizana Sugar Project and Gum Tree Rebellion, but they are not discussed here.

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targeted for collaborating with the enemy by Mpondo resisters. Similarly protesters from AmaDiba have identified Xolco, their local government supporters, and some traditional leaders as collaborators with the mining company. One cannot avoid noticing that today far fewer traditional leaders are prepared to ignore the views of local residents who oppose the mining development. One also notices that local government officials seem to have taken on the notorious role previously played by the Bantu Authorities, albeit for different reasons.

iii. Inadequate consultation. In the history of Betterment (and the establishment of Bantu Authorities) in Pondoland the traditional leaders might have been consulted, but the people at grassroots never were, and they objected vehemently. It would seem that the introduction of Betterment without consultation was a significant departure from forms of participatory decision-making that were common practice in these rural communities (McAllister, 1989:355). Lack of consultation by the mining company and the government is one of the main complaints raised in the ACC's submission to the HRC and, subsequently, to the minister of Minerals and Energy. Participatory development is obviously not a new concept in Mbizana.

iv. The local community's control over communal land and their livelihood strategies are undermined. The Mpondo revolts can be viewed as rural peoples' defense of their land and customary livelihood strategies. For similar reasons ACC has protested the violation of their communal land rights and the undermining of their livelihood strategies.

v. Years of low-level resistance leads to threats of war. The Kongo social movement (or iKongo), which is said to have played a vital role in the build up to the Mpondo Revolt of 1959–1960, was 'born in resistance to the "rehabilitation scheme", [and] tempered in the fight against small allotments and cattle-culling[;] it led to the fight against Bantu Authorities and called for armed insurrection' (Hirson 1977: 128). While resistance to the mining venture has taken the form of non-violent mass meetings, marches, legal submissions, and media publicity; angry protesters have recently threatened violence with talk of 'war'.[7]

[7] Public violence would solicit a response from contemporary security forces, but current legislation on the use of firearms by the police is informed by the new South

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vi. The use of images of the Mpondo Revolt of 1959–1960 in contemporary public protests. At recent public meetings in Mbizana, protesters have made frequent reference to the Mpondo Revolt of 1959–1960, thereby explicitly linking the current protest to a past movement of resistance. Interviews with leaders of the ACC and Tat' uSamson Gampe reveal that discourse about current protest draws on narratives which are part and parcel of popular memory around questions of development, decision-making, and communal land use. Veterans of the Mpondo Revolts, such as Tat' uSamson Gampe, inspire young activists, such as Nonhle Mbuthuma, with stories of resistance.

> *We never consented to the betterment schemes on our land and now they want to bring the mining in the same way. ...I am prepared to die for my forefathers' land.* (Tat' uSamson Gampe, 2009)

These stories shape their collective identity and sense of agency, in that the community and its individual members have never seen themselves as victims, that they have and still do exercise a measure of control over their situation and take responsibility for their own well-being. Following the example of their forebears, today's activists choose to defend their right to shape their own lives according to goals that they value.

Concluding Remarks

Bongani Bingwa, the narrator in the 2008 Carte Blanche TV documentary, has said:

> *The people of this stretch of the Wild Coast may not have much, but they do have their land. A huge part of the opposition to the mining project is that it will dispossess them of their birthright, and they are intimately connected to this land.*

He could have added that they also have a proud history of collective agency that they have inherited from their parents and grandparents. It is this sense of agency that seems to give generations of Mpondo people

African Constitution, which requires that they exercise extreme restraint (see the 1998 revisions to Section 49 of the Criminal Procedures Act). Thus, the response of the state is not likely to be extremely violent as it was in 1960.

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in Mbizana the confidence to resist the imposition of 'development', which undermines endogenous, people-centred processes, whether it comes from powerful government officials, paternalistic development planners, or greedy businesspeople.

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Leadership of the AmaDiba Crisis Committee, 30 March 2009.

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