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**THE POLITICS OF LAND IN LEVUBU, NORTHERN PROVINCE
c.1935-1998**

MUKONDELELI MICHAEL NEFALE

Supervised by: Associate Professor Patrick Harries

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for Masters Degree
in the History Department at the University of Cape Town.

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree.
It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from
the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature

16/10/2000

Signed by candidate

October 2000

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Abstract

This thesis explores the development of capitalist agriculture and apartheid in the Levubu settlement, in the Northern Province. Capitalist agriculture was characterised by the quest for fertile land for white farmers while, at the same time, dispossessing indigenous communities. Land as the country's main political and economic resource has been manipulated to control people. The thesis shows how a system of political oppression has been used to deny indigenous communities access to viable land and water by different white supremacist governments.

The study examines how white settlers in Levubu were helped by the state in the development of commercial farming. In such an endeavour, a black landless working class was created. The material conditions of the white beneficiaries of the settlement are contrasted with those of the dispossessed blacks. The material conditions of the black population, both in the "homelands", and on the white farms, were characterised by poverty and overcrowding. On the other hand, white farmers were reaping enormous profits by producing food for local and international markets. The struggle for survival between white landowners and the landless blacks is the product of 20th century racialised capitalist development in the Levubu countryside.

The last part of the study looks at the new democratic government of South Africa and its endeavour to redress the unequal distribution of wealth created by the apartheid regime. It focuses on the market approach which has been adopted to deliver a better life for all, and it examines how such an approach shows continuities with past injustices.

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Introduction

My interest in land issues in Levubu grew after I had completed my honours thesis on the same farming area in 1998.¹ Whilst the thesis dealt specifically with the conditions of farm workers who are tied by a conflicting and unbreakable dialectical relationship with farmers, what emerged from that study was how workers perceived their brutal and harsh working conditions in relation to land expropriation.² This thesis, therefore, is an attempt to contribute to the debate on the history of land dispossession taken up by numerous scholars.³ It is also, on the other hand, an attempt “to reverse the situation” in South Africa, and in particular in the Levubu area.⁴ I intend to show how the South African State intervened in the countryside, through its land settlement schemes, both to promote the capitalisation of white commercial farming and to destroy the independent African chiefdoms.⁵ I also intend to show how policies introduced by the new democratic state of South Africa, to reverse or redress landlessness show, continuities and discontinuities with practices of the past.

“Revisionist” historiography has informed this study, more-especially the Marxist social history of the 1980s that emphasised “history from below”.⁶ However, concentrating on social history does not mean that this work will shy away from the structuralist scholarship of the 1970s whose primary concern has been with questions of theory, of state and capital accumulation, what Delius calls a “marriage of iron and rye”.⁷ In other words, this work is more interested “in the lives of Tom, Dick and Harry”,⁸ whilst at the same time not rejecting the role played by the State in shaping such lives. The lives of ordinary men are tied by a conflicting relationship with the state, particularly after the

¹ M. Nefale, “The condition of farm workers in Levubu, Northern Province, 1980-1997”, BA Honours, Univen, 1998.

² Ibid.p.38.

³ P. Delius et al, Putting a plough to the ground, Accumulation and dispossession in Rural South Africa 1850-1930, (Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1986); C. Murray, Black Mountain, Land, Class, Power in the Eastern Orange Free State, 1880s-1980s, (Wits University press, Johannesburg, 1992); R. Morrel, White but poor, Essays on the history of poor whites in Southern Africa 1880-1940, (Unisa, Pretoria, 1992).

⁴ M. de Klerk, A harvest of discontent, The land question in South Africa, (Idasa, Mowbray, 1991); R. Levin et al, No more tears, Struggles for land in Mpumalanga, South Africa, (Africa World press, New Jersey, 1997); A. Claassens, “Who owns South Africa? Can the repeal of Land Acts deracialise land ownership in South Africa?”, paper presented at the University of Cape Town, 1991; B. Cousins, At the crossroads, Land and agrarian reform in South Africa into the 21st century, (PLAAS, University of the Western Cape, 2000).

⁵ On this issue, see especially T. Keegan, Rural transformation in industrialising South Africa, The Southern Highveld to 1914, (Ravan, Johannesburg, 1987); Delius et al, Putting a plough to the ground, pp.1-2; H. Bradford, “A taste of freedom: Capitalist development and response to the ICU in the Transvaal countryside”, in B. Bozzoli, Town and countryside in the Transvaal, (Ravan, Johannesburg, 1983), pp.128-129.

⁶ Bozzoli, Class, community and conflict, (Ravan, Johannesburg, 1987), pp.xiii-xx; Bozzoli, Town and countryside in the Transvaal, pp.1-6.

⁷ Delius et al, Putting a plough to the ground, p.10. The argument was that the development of capitalism was not accompanied by the development of free wage labour in the countryside. Transformation of rural society involved severe restrictions on the mobility of farm labourers. The landed class, with significant state power, forged an alliance with industrialists based on a common need for cheap and controlled labour hence shaping industrialisation in South Africa.

⁸ Bozzoli, “History, experience and culture”, p.1, in Bozzoli, Town and Countryside in the Transvaal, pp.1-47.

demise of independent African chiefdoms that led many Africans to flock to the cities, their confinement to the reserves and forced to labour on white farms.

* * *

A study seeking to portray history from below, of the experiences of ordinary men, is indebted to the use of oral sources. It is therefore, important to comment on them, because they give historians voices which are often absent in official sources:

“Ordinary people are not intellectual blank slates, receptive to the ideological overtures of intellectuals with the correct line, or possessing forms of consciousness which are simply to be dismissed as false—rather, they possess a complex and intertwined set of inherent ideas. This inherent, traditional element is a sort of mother’s milk ideology, based on direct experience, oral tradition or folk memory and not learned by listening to sermons or speeches or reading books”.⁹

The above evidence indicate that the role and potential of oral history as a source of historical evidence has become a scholarly force to be reckoned with, despite not being positively received as a methodology in certain academic circles.¹⁰ This section of this study attempts to show the problems and possibilities of using this source, especially by looking at the history of relocated communities from Levubu, who neither kept their own written records nor reported in the press. However, Harries has noted that “oral histories which give meaning to life in pre-removal localities are rapidly dying away”. They are disappearing because of fragmentation of communities and the fact that communities need to sink their roots in order to cope with the new geographical environment. The disappearance of these memories “is an incalculable loss to South African history.”¹¹ This study attempts to use oral sources and some of the songs particularly composed by Shangaans when they were removed from Levubu. Such recording of songs according to Harries “is a unique avenue to an understanding of rural history, particularly in times of removal, when other forms of historical record are destroyed”.¹² He convincingly argued that “songs are reliable source of oral history as their lyrics can not be changed by a group of performers in order to influence or accommodate the sensitivity of an interviewer”.¹³ Henige on the other hand, equally maintained that “it is the voice on tape that gives

⁹ Bozzoli, Class, community and conflict, p.9.

¹⁰ P. Thompson, The voice of the past: Oral history, (Oxford University press, New York, 1978), p.63. He saw the older generations of historians who hold the chairs and the purse-strings as opposed to the new method because it would imply that they would no longer command all the techniques of their profession. See also Vansina, Living with Africa, (Wisconsin University press, Madison, 1994).

¹¹ P. Harries, “A Forgotten corner of the Transvaal”, in Bozzoli, Class, community and conflict, p.95

¹² Bozzoli, “Class, community and ideology”, in Bozzoli, Class, Community and Conflict, pp.10-11.

¹³ Harries, “A Forgotten corner of the Transvaal”, p. 95.

oral history that extra dimension lacking in the written documents".¹⁴ Tape recorders therefore, are of vital importance for the historian, so that he or she can produce the exact words spoken by informants without colouring them.

Vansina has maintained that limitations of oral traditions such as lack of chronology, numbers and locality need to be "remedied by recourse to outside sources".¹⁵ Harries has also shown that, "oral testimony and songs provide a vivid and, when supplemented with written material, a reliable historical source".¹⁶ The lives of those relocated from Levubu are dominated by orality. Bozzoli noted this point by arguing that "just as historians of pre-literate society and cultures have had to resort to oral history to make sense of the past, so the historian and analyst of illiterate classes of people in an otherwise illiterate culture must make similar attempts".¹⁷

* * *

Very little work has been done on the history of Levubu. But more can still be written about this farming area. Hugh Stait wrote about the history of Vhavenda as a whole.¹⁸ What is interesting about his work is that it was written in the 1920s when anthropology was heavily influenced by developments in the discipline of the natural sciences with the aim of being objective. Such anthropologists immersed themselves in African cultures before they disintegrated. The result was that he concentrated much on food producing activities, circumcision, witchcraft and marriages. Although he concentrated much on "exoticism", his work gave a brief history of the fertility of land around "Luvuvhu". His book is useful because it portrayed Venda culture before it disintegrated due to contact with Europeans. However, it failed to recognise that the main cause of such disintegration was due to land alienation by whites.

In 1988, Victor Mphadzha finished an honours thesis on "the effects of the relocation of the Vhavenda from Luvuvhu."¹⁹ His work dealt with the hardship that people experienced during the actual process of resettlement and lack of facilities immediately after removals. He did not concentrate on the long-term effects. His work is also silent about the present and hardships endured by the Shangaans due to relocation. Though the work consulted extensive oral sources, it lacked strong analytical and theoretical approaches.

¹⁴ D. Henige, "In possession of the Author", *The problem of Source monopoly in Oral Historiography*, *International journal of Oral History*, Vol. 1, No.3, November 1980, p.184.

¹⁵ J. Vansina, *Oral tradition as history*, (James Currey, London, 1985), p.187.

¹⁶ Harries, "A forgotten corner of the Transvaal", p.95.

¹⁷ Bozzoli, "Class, community and ideology", p.9.

¹⁸ H Stait, *The Bavenda*, (Oxford University Press, London, 1931).

¹⁹ M.V. Mphadzha, "The effects of the relocation of the Vhavenda from Luvuvhu river valley in 1938, with reference to social, economic and political consequences," BA honours, Univen, 1988.

Carol Conerly also finished an honours thesis in 1990 on the “ Surrendering of lands in the Northern Transvaal”.²⁰ Her work dealt with land dispossession of Vhavenda until 1926, but she did not concentrate on Levubu per se. However, her work is useful because she dealt with the lands of Mphephu which include Luvuvhu and she has argued how private land ownership by whites as opposed to traditional communal ownership by Vhavenda led to land conflict.

The other literature informing my study is related to the poor white problem. In his work, Robert Morrel has shown that the “State has sponsored the idea that settlement in the countryside was the best available means to solve the problems of dislocation or the poor white problem.... the need for rural areas to be freed for resettlement of whites”.²¹ Despite the fact that Morrel ’s argument was about Middleburg between 1900-1930, Colin Murray has observed the same thing in the Orange Free State during the same period.²² These arguments of solving poor white problem by placing them in rural areas, whilst at the same time displacing natives would be applied in this study particularly in the section of the origin of landlessness in Levubu.

Land reform literature also informs this study and in particular the free market approach which the South African Government has opted to use to redress the unequal distribution of land.²³ The argument is that, as experience from Zimbabwe has shown, the free market approach would not redress the unequal distribution of land in Levubu.²⁴

* * *

This study places more emphasis on the history shaped by real life experiences of the ordinary people of Levubu. This study does not only attempt to fill some gaps which exist in the history of Vhavenda and Shangaans but it also attempts to view the history of Levubu in a comparative light. The works mentioned in the literature review highlight the diverse interests in some aspects of the history of Levubu, but they do not deal sufficiently with the issues that this thesis is attempting to address. More importantly, it is the differing interpretations we arrive at which are important.

²⁰ C. Conerly, “The surrendering of Lands in the Northern Transvaal of Mahosi Davhana, Mphephu and Sinthumule,” BA Honours, University of Cape Town, 1990.

²¹ Morrel, “The poor whites of Middleburg, Transvaal, 1900-1930”, in Morrel, White but poor, p.17; Murray, Black Mountain, pp.52-84. Delius et al, Putting a plough to the ground.

²² Murray, Black Mountain, pp.52-84. Delius et al, Putting a plough to the ground.

²³ Claassens, “Who owns SA?”; de Klerk, A harvest of discontent.

²⁴ J. Alexander, “State, peasantry and resettlement in Zimbabwe,” in Review of African Political Economy, Vol 21, No 61, 1994, p.315.

Chapter 1 is about territoriality and chieftaincy in Levubu. What is important is that it does not talk of Levubu but rather of “chieftaincy and territoriality in Luvuvhu”.²⁵ It attempts to reconstruct the various places where chiefs and their subjects resided before removal. It also focuses on the arrival of Albasini and, later, Afrikaners in the area in quest of elephant hunting grounds.²⁶ It shows how competition for scarce resources gave rise not only to war over land but also for hunting grounds, and how these wars shaped territoriality in Luvuvhu. This chapter is important because it helps to place conditions of those removed in a historical context.

Chapter 2 examines landlessness in Levubu. In this chapter it is argued that State intervention in solving the poor white problem (by placing them in Levubu) involved the removal of the communities that originally occupied the area. On the other hand, chapter 3 looks at the impact of the establishment of the settlement by following relocated communities to where they have been resettled. It is argued in this chapter that the poverty that dominates people’s lives in Levubu is a result of unnecessary land reform policies of the apartheid period.

Chapter 4 deals with the changed political dispensation in South Africa. Here the focus is on land reform policies aimed at redressing the unequal land distribution produced under white supremacy. This chapter argues that the present market-led land reform policy will fall short of its objectives of distributing land to the poor and giving land back to its rightful owners. This is because a market is geared towards generating economic growth, and it contains a fundamental bias which benefits groups that are already in possession of assets. This study suggests that without direct government intervention there can be no effective redistribution of land in Levubu.

²⁵ Before removals in 1936 those who settled there knew Levubu as Luvuvhu.

²⁶ R. Wagner, Zoutpansberg: “ the dynamics of a hunting frontier 1848-67 ”, in S. Marks & A. Atmore, Economy and society in pre-industrial South Africa, (Longman, London, 1980), pp.313-349.

Chapter 1

Territoriality and Chieftaincy in "Luvuvhu"²⁷

Introduction.

This chapter focuses on the reconstruction of the various places occupied by various chiefs and their followers in the "Luvuvhu" river valley before removals. The intention is to show how these territories and chieftaincies changed over time because of the coming of whites in the area. Cultural practices that such communities were involved in will also be looked at.

Definition of the area

Levubu is derived from a Venda word "Luvuvhu" which is the name of a river that is dominant in the area. The name is now used to refer to the valley between the Zoutpansberg Mountains in the north to Luvhola and Mashau mountain ranges in the south. To the west, the area lies east of the town of Louis Trichardt on the Mohohodi river and goes as far as Tshitavhadulu and Tshakhuma in the East.²⁸ It was a rich ecological area where a variety of big and small game found a home in the tall and evergreen luxurious forest in the 1800s and early 1900.²⁹ Stayt argued that Luvuvhu comes from the Venda word "Mvuvhu" meaning hippopotamus. This implies that Luvuvhu river was once a habitat of hippopotamus.³⁰ On the other hand, Mphadzha described Luvuvhu river through its strength that dominated "Muhovha" river, which it joins in the south. "Muhovha" is the bigger of the two rivers. After the fusion of the two rivers, the name that is used is that of "Luvuvhu". The story goes that Luvuvhu has "bvuvhula" (kicked out) Muhovha and retained her name.³¹ These views cannot be denied as they both support the argument that the area was ecologically rich, but using "Luvuvhu" to mean different things either as a natural habitat for game, or a place full of perennial rivers and that make the whole country fertile. The present generation knows the area as a white farming area commonly known as "Mavhuruni".³² Most of the farmers there are Afrikaans speaking.³³ But, before the place was declared a white area it was dominated by Vhavenda and Shangaans. Chiefs in the area were Venda speaking and some of the Shangaans living there were under Venda chiefs.³⁴

²⁷ Instead of addressing territoriality and chieftaincy in Levubu, Luvuvhu is used as it was called even before whites were placed there. Levubu existed after 1936.

²⁸ M. Nefale, (interviews in the possession of the author), interview with E. Matumba, chief Matumba's grandson, 26 May 2000, Tshakhuma. Professor NV Ralushai, African Studies, Tourism and Conservation consultant, Thohoyandou, 06 June 2000. Names of places can be seen on map 2.

²⁹ Stayt, *The Bavenda*, p.4.

³⁰ Ibid.p.5; Interview between Shirinda and N. Manganye, Olifantshoek, 13 July 2000.

³¹ Mphadzha, "The effects of the relocation of the Vhavenda from Luvuvhu river valley", p11.

³² "Mavhuruni" means a place inhabited by Boers.

³³ M. Nefale, "The conditions of farm workers in Levubu", p.3.

³⁴ M. Nefale, interview with Professor Ralushai, Thohoyandou, 6 June 2000.

Chieftaincy as a traditional institution

Chieftaincies as traditional institution formed the basis around which Vhavenda in “Luvuvhu” were politically and socially organised. Gottschling argued that tribal constitution in each chieftainship of the Vhavenda was hereditary and only descendants of Thohoyandou were the rulers of the different chieftaincies.³⁵ Evidence from the Native Location Commission of 1907 indicates that the Vhavenda chieftaincy after the death of Thohoyandou was divided between his sons Mphephu, Sinthumule, Maemu, and Davhana; and most importantly between indunas and petty chiefs.³⁶

Though Gottschling’s point is to a larger extent correct, he did not explain how chiefs such as in Luvuvhu got their positions, though they were not Thohoyandou’s descendants. Such chiefs, according to chief Matumba’s grandchildren, got their positions as a result of the services they rendered to the great chief such as leading the “tshira” (army) and performing administrative duties like being gota (headmen).³⁷ This implied that the Vhavenda monarchy was not absolute as Gottschling has asserted, but chiefs performed their duties in consultation with their tribal council, which represented the people.

The Vhavenda in Luvuvhu were divided into smaller independent divisions called “Mavundu” of different sizes, each under its own petty chief (gota) such as Ravele, Matumba, Matidza, Ratombo, Rasikhuthuma, Mashau and Makatu. This mavundu were grouped around different important chiefs (vhamusanda) such as Mphephu, Davhana and Sinthumule to whom they owed allegiance. Mavundu, unless they were very small were subdivided into smaller districts (zwisi) under a petty-headmen (mukoma). According to Stayt these titles have been employed by Vhavenda in a more general sense, meaning that the great chief is Vhamusanda to all his subjects and the petty chief is Vhamusanda in his own district and in the sub-district of his headmen.³⁸

People were encouraged in Luvuvhu to settle in groups for protection purposes. This was because the society at that time was not stable since invasion and raids took place more often. However, such groups owed their allegiance to the great chief. These resulted in the emergence of various chiefdoms in Luvuvhu. Such chiefdoms were called after the name of the first petty chief, headman or conqueror to rule the area, with the majority of them owing allegiance to Chief Mphephu, and the remaining

³⁵ Reverend E. Gottschling, “The Bawenda, a sketch of their history and customs”, in Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, Vol.35, 1905, p.376.

³⁶ Transvaal Archives (henceforth TA), Governor’s Office (henceforth GOV) 1087, PS50/8/07, Location Commission, History of Makhado or Ramabulana tribe pp.1-2.

³⁷ M. Nefale, interview with W Ratombo.Tshakhuma, 26 May 2000; M.Nefale, interview with Matumba, Tshakhuma, 26 May 2000. The founder of Matumba community got his position because he led Ramabulana’s army.

³⁸ Stayt, The Bavenda, p.237.

belonging to his rival brothers such as Sinthumule and Rasikhuthuma. The result of this system of naming, was that chiefdoms such as Ha- Mashau, Ha-Ravele, Ha-Matumba, Ha-Matidza, Ha-Makatu, Ha-Davhana and Ha- Rasikhuthuma became well known amongst the local inhabitants.³⁹ Stayt on the other hand, has noted that, besides naming places after the first petty chief, headmen or conqueror, the Vhavenda also used the dynastic title of the chief with prefix (Ha) denoting the place.⁴⁰ This also applies to Levubu, because such places took the name of the first ruler and the dynastic name of the given community. A closer look at such chiefdoms warrants attention so that the goal of examining territoriality in this study may be achieved.

Matumba

The history of chiefdoms in Luvuvhu has not been recorded in any detail. However, most scholars have devoted their attention to the history of great chiefs, such as Mphephu and Sinthumule and their followers.⁴¹ According to their testimony Matumba, who lived from the 1820s, founded a place called Matumba, which lies above Piesangkop.⁴² Matumba led chief Ramabulana 's warriors, and therefore, Ramabulana encouraged him to establish this chiefdom for strategic purposes. The purpose was to counteract the movement of the Portuguese and their followers under Albasini or "Juwawa" as he was commonly known among the Vhavenda from crossing Luvuvhu river and disturb the chief 's stronghold at Songodzwi. Van Ryneveld has noted this point when she wrote that Albasini suggested to people to go and fight for the country and that he "placed people" as chiefs.⁴³ The people of Ha-Matumba argue that chief Makhado gave Matumba Vuvha that included Maungani presently Schoonuitzicht and Matondoni presently Klein Australia as his area of jurisdiction. In support of this argument, they indicated that Makhado 's mother was Matumba 's daughter Limani⁴⁴ and therefore, when he assumed the throne he gave them Vuvha.

The area of Ha-Matumba was bordered by Lutanandwa river on the eastern side; on the southern side Tshipene river separated it from the people of Ratombo. On the western side they were separated from the people of Matidza who occupied Luonde/Piesangkop by Mulozwi river and on the Northern side they used ploughing fields belonging to Ramabulana as a boundary. According to them the people of Matidza were their brothers and they shared same sacred groves at Luonde before they had their own at Maungani. Maungani therefore, became the royal graves of Matumba, with leaders such as

³⁹ Names of places can be seen on map 2.

⁴⁰ Stayt, *The Bavenda*, p.215.

⁴¹ Conerly, "The surrendering of lands in the Northern Transvaal"; H. Nemudzivhadi, "Conflict between Mphephu and the South African Republic", MA thesis, Unisa, 1977.

⁴² M. Nefale, interview with E. Matumba, Tshakhuma, 26 May 2000.

⁴³ T. Van Ryneveld, "Remembering Albasini", MA thesis, University of Cape Town, 1998.p.152.

⁴⁴ Matumba indicated that Limani was Matumba's daughter. However, this contradicts Nemudzivhadi's view that Limani was Matumba's sister. Generally, both parties agreed on the fact that Limani gave birth to Makhado. See Nemudzivhadi, "Conflict between Mphephu and the South African Republic", p.19.

Matumba, Makaulule and Tshipfula Mmbwa tsha ha Matumba laid to rest there. However, after the death of Makhado in 1895, and after Mphephu had deposed Maemu, the area of Ha-Matumba was divided into two. The northern part, which includes Vuvha, was given to Makaulule who was also from the Matumba family. Makaulule owed allegiance to Mphephu. On the other hand, Mutheiwana who participated in the installation of Maemu ruled the southern portion of Vuvha owing his allegiance to Sinthumule who at that time wanted to assume the chair as chief of the Mphephu tribe. Mphephu strategically placed Makaulule at Vuvha. He used Makaulule's position as a buffer with Sinthumule. He feared that friendship between Mutheiwana and Sinthumule might lead the two joining forces against him. Therefore, Makaulule would inform him in case an army was being mobilised against him.⁴⁵

Mauluma

Like the history of the Matumba community, that of Ravele was also not recorded in detail. However, according to local testimony Denga, who was succeeded by Nndwa ya miomva in 1864, founded the Ravele community. The founder of the Ravele was descended from the Ramabulana royal family and lived at Vuvha. However, in the 1860's Makhado sent Ravele together with his followers to Mauluma mountain on the present farm Barotta 17 LT for security reasons. The purpose was to guard against possible attacks from his half brother Davhana whom he had defeated in a war of succession.⁴⁶

Mauluma lies between Tshakhuma and Tshidzivhani. It consisted of the present Barotta 17 LT, where the Ravele royal graves were located and where leaders like Denga, Matsheketsheke, Ndwa ya Miomva, Vele and other members of the royal family were laid to rest.⁴⁷ It also included Levubu 15 LT, Klein Australia 13LT (Entabeni), Lisbon 12 LT (Entabeni Forest), Nooitgedaght 14 LT and Appelfontein 35 LT.

Tshitungulu

The area known as Tshitungulu lies between Luvuvhu and Lutanandwa rivers in the South and northern sides respectively. To the west it is bordered by the river Tshipetane. Their neighbours were Ravele and Ratombo. According to Matumba, Rasikhuthuma owned the larger portion of the present Levubu farms. Mphadzha showed that eleven headmen ruled different parts of Tshitungulu.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ M. Nefale, interview with E. Matumba, Tshakhuma, 26 May 2000.

⁴⁶ M. Nefale, interview with R. Maimela, former forestry worker, Nzhelele, 29 May 2000.

⁴⁷ TA, Natives Affairs Department (henceforth NTS), 17/12/2, vol.1/1/49, Tribal burial ground, Ravele family.

⁴⁸ M. Nefale, interview with E. Matumba, Tshakhuma, 26 May 2000; Mphadzha, "Effects of relocation of Vhavenda from Luvuvhu", p.3.

Therefore, the large number of headmen was an indication that Rasikhuthuma's territory was large. It is also at this capital Tshitungulu that the royal graves of the chiefs of Rasikhuthuma can be found.

According to Mphadza, Rasikhuthuma was one of the many sons of Chief Rasithu Ramabulana. After the death of Ramabulana in 1864, he fled from Tshirululuni and crossed Luvuvhu river to Tshitungulu in fear of succession disputes brought by Makhado.⁴⁹ According to Venda culture if one fled from the enemy and crossed a river, one is considered pardoned. He is forgiven for whatever wrong he has committed. Rasikhuthuma therefore, subjected all the inhabitants of Tshitungulu and put them under his Jurisdiction. Upon his death, his son Masakona and Tshinange Rasikhuthuma succeeded him respectively.

Ratombo, Makatu and Mashau

Ratombo was a staunch supporter of Mphephu. Mphephu sent Ratombo to kill Mutheiwana, since it was alleged that he killed Makhado. He settled at Ha-Ratombo. He was also one of the most wanted man by the late Transvaal Republic because he killed 22 Tsonga people in an attempt to kill Mutheiwana.⁵⁰ Despite the fact that Ratombo was a warrior, he did not get his position because of that, but because he was from the Ramabulana royal family, a brother to Rasikhuthuma and son of Rasithu. He shared common boundaries with Matumba on the western side and Mauluma on the eastern side.

Makatu was one of Makhado's sons. Makhado installed Makatu as a ruler of Tshivhodza for military and strategic reasons. Makatu was to check and monitor the military activities taking place at Albasini's stronghold from interfering Makhado's capital. This area lies on the western side of Luonde/Piesangkop, and on the eastern side it borders Ratombo's territory.⁵¹

The area that lies between Luvuvhu and Middlefontein rivers in the north and south respectively, is known as Mashau. Headmen Mashau ruled the area. In the eastern side Mashau shared common boundaries with headmen Masia of Ha Masia. This territory to the east stretches as far as Beaufort and to the west, it borders Davhana of Mpheni near Elim. Evidence indicates that, nine of Frank Mukhaswakule Mashau's ancestors are buried at Driefontein.⁵² Then if we follow Lestrade's method

⁴⁹ Nemudzivhadi, "Conflict between Mphephu and the South African Republic", p48; Mphadza, "Effects of relocation of Vhavenda from Luvuvhu", p.2.

⁵⁰ Conerly, "The surrendering of lands in the Northern Transvaal", p.52; Nemudzivhadi, "Conflict between Mphephu and the South African Republic", p.75.

⁵¹ Mphadza, "Effects of relocation of Vhavenda from Luvuvhu", p.6.

⁵² TA, Bantu Administration and Development, (henceforth BAO), 90,7-4-76, Letter from du Plessis, 20 May 1977.

of periodisation of assigning three chiefs to a century,⁵³ it might imply that Mashau occupied the area in the 1700s. But chief Mtshethweni indicated that Albasini gave Driefontein to Nwamanungu and his grandfather Mavusana. It was a gift because they “defeated Magoro whom every one was failing to defeat”.⁵⁴ He argues that Mashau came and asked for a place to stay from his grandfather Mavusana. Then, if Lestrade’s method of periodisation is correct, it might imply that Mashau occupied the area before Mavusana, since Albasini came in the area later.

The responsibilities of the Luvuvhu chiefs

Chiefs had various duties to perform within their tribes. People’s traditions were rural, and this meant that their lives revolved around the land. The great chief through his gota (petty chief) apportioned land to mukoma (headmen) for dispensation to the people. The chief only allocated and ruled the land but did not own it as his private property. It is property inherited from his forefathers. At times, he is referred to as “mavu” (soil) meaning that he is the highest authority in the territory.⁵⁵ This has sometimes been misinterpreted as meaning the owner of the soil in a literal sense. The chief merely held land in trust for his people.⁵⁶ Letsoalo, with regard to the connection of the chief with land ownership amongst the North-Sotho, asserted that “the chief is not a separate individual from his subjects”.⁵⁷ One therefore, may argue that the tenure system that was practised was communal whereby land belongs to everybody and therefore, nobody.

Erosion of the powers of the chiefs

Owing to its rich ecological environment, which was a habitat for both big and small game, Zoutpansberg hosted groups of new arrivals in the area both as hunters and traders with the Vhavenda. Succession disputes within the Thohoyandou tribe, resulted in Ramabulana requesting help from Louis Trichardt and Doris Buys against his brother Ramavhoya in 1836.⁵⁸ As a token of gratitude and fulfilment of the previous promise, Ramabulana openly declared “all this country you see with your eyes, and much further, right up to Limpopo belonged to my father...I will make over to you any part you may choose for you and your people to dwell as your very own”.⁵⁹

⁵³ G. Lestrade, "Some notes on the ethnic history of Bavenda and their Rhodesian affinities", in N.J. Van Warmelo, Contributions towards Venda history, Religion and tribal ritual, (Government printer, Pretoria, 1932), p.xxiv.

⁵⁴ Harries’ Tapes stored in the History Department, University of Cape Town (henceforth HT), interview between Harries and Chief Mtswetweni, 13 May 1979.

⁵⁵ M. Nefale, interview with Prof. NV Ralushai, Thohoyandou, 6 June 2000.

⁵⁶ Stayt, The Bavenda, p.166.

⁵⁷ E. Letsoalo, Land reform in South Africa, (Skotaville, Johannesburg, 1987), p.18.

⁵⁸ Wagner, “Zoutpansberg: the dynamics of a hunting frontier 1848-67”, p.329.

⁵⁹ D. Moller-Malan, The chair of the Ramabulanas, (Central News Agency Johannesburg, 1953), p.74; Conerly, “Surrendering of Lands in the Northern Transvaal”, p.8.

This indicates that the chief has the powers to allocate land to anyone, including “strangers”, such as Buys and Trichardt, but on condition that they would abide and follow the rules of that tribe.⁶⁰ Furthermore, the people were free to choose where they wanted to reside and permission was required only when they were moving from one chief to the other. If the movement was within the same chiefdom no permission was needed. Giving permission to move to other chiefdoms served as a regulatory measure intended to discourage large numbers of people from joining other chiefdoms as this would have had a detrimental effect on their former chiefdoms. In the first instance, it would undermine the military strength of their former chief and it would reduce the amount of tribute they got from their subjects. People also moved to other chiefdoms due to natural hazards like droughts or floods, and as refugees from wars. This has been the practise in Levubu.

The coming of whites in the early 1820s therefore, disrupted the age-old tradition of giving land to strangers.⁶¹ This was because the Vhavenda and whites had different perceptions about private ownership of property. To Vhavenda land is not private property. Items such as household utensils, livestock and proceeds of agriculture were regarded as private property. People could not leave the land upon which they resided unless they had committed a serious crime or had violated some of the laws of the chiefs and his headmen. On the other hand, to the whites land is privately owned and the owner can evict anyone at any time with full support of the law. Such law undermined the tradition and culture of the Vhavenda. When Ramabulana promised land to the Boers, he knew nothing about the conception of white land ownership. It has also been shown that beside promising land to whites Ramabulana also promised to be their vassal.⁶²

Circumstances surrounding the relations between Ramabulana and the Boers can only be explained in economic terms since the Zoutpansberg economy was based on hunting before the discovery of minerals. It was estimated in 1864 that 85% of annual ivory export was from Zoutpansberg.⁶³ Elephant ivory and “cat skins” were exchanged for beads and guns with Africans especially with the Portuguese, English, Belgians and Asians. The Dutch on the other hand, were against the exchanging guns for Ivory. They feared that such guns might be used against them in case a war broke out with the natives. Most of the hunting grounds in the Zoutpansberg were controlled by Vhavenda, whilst Wagner has noted that “four main trade routes converged at Elim”.⁶⁴ The use of guns in hunting led to the scarcity of animals because they were killed in large numbers without giving them the opportunity to reproduce. The scarcity of Elephant resulted in the Dutch formulating laws in the early 1860s to control the trade. To make matters worse, hut tax was levied on natives to force them to work.

⁶⁰ M. Nefale, interview with Matumba, Tshakhuma, 26 May 2000; Stayt, The Bavenda, p.166.

⁶¹ Wagner, “Zoutpansberg: The dynamics of a hunting frontier”, p.318.

⁶² TA, GOV 1087, PS50/8/07, Native Location Commission, History of Ramabulana tribe, p4

⁶³ Wagner, “Zoutpansberg: The dynamics of a hunting frontier”, p.315.

⁶⁴ Ibid. p.324.

Wagner has made a point that those who were described as doing the service “were thereby relieved of the obligation to pay the hut-tax part of the opgaaf”.⁶⁵ Those given guns to hunt elephant for the Boers refused to hand them back to their owners, but instead took them to Venda. They maintained that they had earned them through the service they offered and that rewards and conditions of service were inadequate.⁶⁶ This inevitably led to conflict that resulted in the abandonment of Schoemansdal. The Vhavenda saw the presence of the Boers at Schoemansdal as a threat to their political and economic independence.

Joao Albasini, a Portuguese adventurer settled at Piesangkop/Luonde, near Louis Trichardt. He built Goedewensch in 1853 as his fort. Goedewensch became a terminus in ivory trade.⁶⁷ The Spelonken branch of Tsonga/Shangaans owed its existence to Albasini. He persuaded a number of down trodden Bathonga, including refugee bands of Thonga that entered the Transvaal from Portuguese East Africa, to come across the border and live under his protection. The result was that he consolidated the Shangaan refugees into a strong and formidable tribe and built a chieftainship for himself.⁶⁸ The influx of the Bathonga continued until the first half of the 1860s. More refugees came to the Spelonken in order to escape the horrors and menace of the war between Umzila and Mawewe, the sons of the Zulu chief Manukosi in Bilen.⁶⁹ Albasini also encouraged conflict between Mawewe and Umzila. This was because Mawewe was disturbing Portuguese elephant hunters. Therefore, when Umzila sought refuge at Albasini’s fort, the Portuguese encouraged him to fight and overthrow Mawewe so that they could hunt elephant without disturbances. The result of this conflict was that Mawewe was driven away and therefore, his followers sought refuge at Albasini’s fort. On the other hand, harassment from Magwamba of Albasini and attacks from Ba-Ngoni of Umzila left no option to the Thongas, but to join Albasini in his fort where they would be safe.⁷⁰

Albasini also led his people against the Vhavenda of Ramabulana. The result was that the Vhavenda did not appreciate his presence. His presence therefore, contributed much to the establishment of chiefdoms in Luvuvhu, designed to counteract his activities. Consequently, conflict between the two was unavoidable. In a conflict that followed, it was reported that many Vhavenda drowned in the Lutanandwa river.⁷¹ But, before Albasini built a strong chiefdom for himself, evidence suggests that, there were peaceful and economic relations between the two. It was only when he became strong and

⁶⁵ Ibid.p.333.

⁶⁶ Ibid.p.335.

⁶⁷ Wagner, “Zoutpansberg: The dynamics of a hunting frontier”, p.325.

⁶⁸ Archives of the South African Institute of Race Relations, Wits University (henceforth SAIRR), JD Jones papers, AD843/RJ/C4: 2, Tribal land in the Transvaal, p.64.

⁶⁹ TA, GOV 1087,PS50/8/07,Native Location Commission, History of Ramabulana tribe, pp8-9.

⁷⁰ H. Junod, “The Bathonga of the Transvaal”, in South African Association for Advancement of Science, Vol.3, 1905, pp.233-235.

⁷¹ TA, GOV 1087,PS50/8/07,History of Ramabulana tribes, Native Location Commission, p.9.

wanted to control the Vhavenda who were living in the area. For him controlling Vhavenda would mean controlling the hunting grounds.⁷² This strained the relations between Albasini and Vhavenda. This may support Stayt's argument that an unhealthy relationship between the Spelonken branch of the Shangaans/Tsonga and Vhavenda existed.⁷³ Evidence seem to suggest that, since Albasini was a native commissioner and chief of the Shangaans of the Zoutpansberg, he was hated by the Vhavenda because he collected tax from them using his Shangaan followers as policemen and tax collectors. Furthermore, Shangaans in the Transvaal had never fought with the Europeans, instead they assisted the Boers to fight other tribes. An example can be that of Chief Mavambe who in 1898 assisted the Boers against Mphephu with 800 men who, according to JD Jones, "did an excellent service".⁷⁴ To worsen the situation, the Native Location Commission of 1907 gave Shangaan induna Sigalo 500 morgen of land along the banks of Luvuvhu. This was because Native Commissioner Schiel had given Sigalo the place in 1888 in order to act as his buffer against the Vhavenda who occupied Luvuvhu in large numbers. However, since the defeat of Mphephu in 1898 the necessity of having a buffer against Vhavenda no longer existed, since Mphephu (who was hostile to the Afrikaners) was crushed.⁷⁵

Wagner has also made the point that "boom times attracted more whites to the district".⁷⁶ The result of this was that too many people as from 1864 had received homesteads in the Luvuvhu river valley. Nevertheless, such people were only staying in such homesteads during the hunting season. The result was that the farms Beaufort was granted to Petrus Weeber in 1871. Welgevonden was granted to Jan Weeber in 1873. Driefontein to Jan Venter in 1872 but, later deeded to Gerd Borchers and Wilhelm Borchers in 1904. Verzameling of Waters was granted to Jacobus Botha in 1872 but as from 1902 it was the property of the Transvaal Consolidated Land and Exploration Limited. Levubu was granted to Hendrikus Van Boeschoten in 1870, but as from 1889 it was the property of John Cooksley.⁷⁷ Despite the fact that these lands were granted in this manner, the Vhavenda and Shangaans already inhabited these lands and they were soon paying rent to absentee landlords.

On the one hand, the Swiss Missionary Society, seeking to service the spiritual needs of the hunters, and to extend its membership by converting the natives to Christianity, was also given the farm Valdezia in 1875.⁷⁸ On the other hand, the Berlin Missionary Society was stationed at Tshakhuma. The presence of these whites in Luvuvhu undermined the powers of the chiefs, because they did not follow

⁷² Wagner, "Zoutpansberg: the dynamics of a hunting frontier", p.328.

⁷³ Stayt, *The Bavenda*, p.19.

⁷⁴ SAIRR, AD843/RJ/C4: 2, Rheinallt Jones Papers, Tribal land in the Transvaal, p.65.

⁷⁵ TA, GOV 1087, PS50/8/07, Report of Native Location Commission on proposed location for chief Sigalo, 1907, p.2.

⁷⁶ Wagner, "Zoutpansberg, the dynamics of a hunting frontier", p.334.

⁷⁷ Archives of the Department of Land Affairs, Pretoria (henceforth DLA), M.Nkatingi papers, 199/7, deeds history, pp.18-33. Such farms can be seen on map 3.

⁷⁸ Minutes of evidence of the Eastern Transvaal Land Committee, 1918, pp.62-63.

the rules of such chiefs. Instead, they wanted these chiefs to pay tax and to supply labourers to them. This also reduced the extent of the areas that the chiefs controlled particularly after the defeat of Mphhephu in 1899 and his confinement to Nzhelele.

Post-war overview: Anglo-Boer war

Following the Anglo-Boer war, a South African Native Affairs Commission 1903-1905 was appointed.⁷⁹ The Commission gathered evidence in the Zoutpansberg particularly from farmers who were unable to make a living because of competition with natives, who were able to make a living by renting land from companies, absentee landlord and squatters on government land.⁸⁰ However, Harries has noted that, "the production of maize in the Zoutpansberg by natives exceeded production in other areas and thousands of bags of maize were supplied to Pretoria and Pietersburg annually".⁸¹ In a different context, Van Onselen has made the point that, "in racist societies, where dominant groups greeted failure with salient satisfaction because they fitted stereotypes, success, too, could be fatal for a black man".⁸² Gathering evidence from the Afrikaners in the Zoutpansberg, who suffered severe farm destruction under the scorched earth policy of the British, was an attempt at reconciliation, though at the expense of the natives. It was at their expense because the Commission was held specifically to find out how native labour could be exploited for the benefit of the whites, and what laws could be implemented to attain such objectives.⁸³

However, the Commission coincided with the first implementation of the land settlement scheme in 1903. Milner initiated the scheme, as part of his reconstruction and development strategy following the war of 1899-1901. Through this scheme, whites were given land in the Transvaal and Orange Free State by the government over a period of 50 years, with low interest rates.⁸⁴ The purpose was to help those who suffered during the war to re-establish themselves. The result was that about 12 farmers were given land in Luvuvhu.⁸⁵ Gradually the land of Luvuvhu was being alienated from the control of Vhavenda and Shangaans to being controlled by whites.

The Transvaal agricultural union gave evidence before the Commission. Complaints from the union were that the natives living on government land, private land and on locations had too much land.

⁷⁹ South African Natives Affairs Commission 1903-1905, p.11.

⁸⁰ Surplus People Project Report, Forced removals in SA, Vol. 5, The Transvaal, (Cape Town, 1983), pp.346-47.

⁸¹ Harries, "Exclusion, classification and internal colonialism" in Vail (ed) Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa, (James Currey, London, 1989), p.96.

⁸² C. Van Onselen, The seed is mine, The life of Kas Maine, A South African sharecropper 1894-1985, David Philip, Cape town, 1996, p.4.

⁸³ South African Natives Affairs Commission, 1903-1905, p.11.

⁸⁴ Murray, Black Mountain, pp.58-64.

⁸⁵ Report of the Natives Land Committee, Vol. 2, 1916, p.384.

Therefore, if the government increased that area, the original objective would be lost. The objective was that, since they could not force the natives to work for the farmers, conditions should be made impossible for natives to live in the location so that they could assist farmers. These natives were also not responsible because they moved from one farm to the other, especially Mphephu and Sinthumule's followers who refused to work for the farmers.⁸⁶ What was evident was conflict between native and European cultures, because when Vhavenda were not satisfied with what their chiefs were offering they "voted with their feet" to other chiefs where conditions were favourable. The argument therefore is that there was nothing wrong for Vhavenda to move to other places, as it was their culture. They did not just move, but they were looking for better opportunities, which is a normal and acceptable phenomenon in every society. Even such farmers who came to the Zoutpansberg were involved in that practise, since they came looking for ivory as a means of living.

Therefore, to make natives responsible, the Commission recommended steps to this end by limiting their purchase of land to the reserves and condemning the practice of staying on white farms.⁸⁷ This led to the promulgation of the 1913 Land Act by the Union government. The Act was the first legislative attempt to divide the Union of South Africa into areas for blacks and areas for whites. Blacks were therefore, prohibited from acquiring land outside the reserves, which only comprised about 7,5% of the total landmass of South Africa.⁸⁸ The aim of giving the majority of blacks only a portion of land was to ensure that they would not have place to farm and to stay and therefore, they would be forced to work for the whites in farms and mines. However, Letsoalo asserts that whites justified giving blacks a small portion of land because they "have superior needs and blacks have primitive needs for the land ". These determined how much land was needed by each race.⁸⁹ What was not clear was how such needs were determined. If they determined such needs by checking the method of farming and implements used then they were wrong. What mattered was that everyone regardless of the method used, earned a living from the soil and it was supposed be to divided according to the number of the population.

However, the Act also recognised that areas of African reserves needed to be clearly defined and enlarged. The result was the appointment of the Beaumont Commission in 1914 with the purpose of enquiring and reporting on:⁹⁰

- What areas within the union should be set apart as areas within which natives shall not be permitted to acquire land or hire land or interest in land.

⁸⁶ South African Native Affairs Commission, 1903-1905, p.530 and p.177.

⁸⁷ J.D. Omer-Cooper, History of Southern Africa, (David Philip, London, 1994), p.163.

⁸⁸ F.Wilson and M. Ramphele, Uprooting poverty: The South African Challenge, (David Phillip, Cape Town, 1989), p.207.

⁸⁹ Letsoalo, Land reform in South Africa, p.35.

⁹⁰ Omer-Cooper, History of Southern Africa, p.163.

- What areas within the Union of S.A should be set apart as areas within which persons other than natives shall not be permitted to acquire or hire land or interests in land.⁹¹

The contested terrain: chiefs versus farmers

On 20 May 1914 the Beaumont commission held its session in Pietersburg. The purpose of the commission was to gather evidence from white officials and farmers concerning areas in the Zoutpansberg, Louis Trichardt and Sibasa to be set aside for white use. Such areas, according to Stubbs, had been in possession of the Vhavenda for 200 years. The area had also been in possession of the Shangaans for 40 years.⁹² Both Vhavenda and Shangaans were granted native locations in 1907. Such locations included among others Mphephu, Davhana, Sinthumule and Shigalo. Though Vhavenda and Shangaans were to settle in those locations, the majority of them were living in Luvuvhu. During this period, Luvuvhu was owned privately by individuals and the government. Nevertheless, it was not yet clear whether Luvuvhu was to be set aside either for white or native settlement.⁹³

Colonel Stanford proposed that a native area should include farms South of Mphephu's Location. His proposal included Luvuvhu. He indicated that 75% of the indigenous people lived there and that the Europeans owners were practically doing nothing on these farms. The area was unhealthy for them because of the prevalence of malaria.⁹⁴ Most such Europeans occupied the area as traders and absentee landlords renting out land to natives. However, he suggested that Europeans could only occupy areas to the west of the proposed native area, since the proposed native area was "looked by Mphephu as his tribal land". Mphephu placed great sentimental value on that land, but the Europeans living there had no sentimental attachment to it. Demarcating Luvuvhu as a native area would also ensure homogeneity of the native population because no disturbance would occur to European settlers, since 99% of them resided to the west of the proposed area. The west offered great advantages from the point of view of health, railway communication and possibilities of cattle ranching. The homogeneity and material prosperity of both Europeans and natives would be assured.⁹⁵ Stanford's views of leaving Mphephu's followers in Luvuvhu were valid, since the Vhavenda were attached to that land on account of their ancestors who were buried there. This also concerned their spirituality.

⁹¹ Report of the Natives Land Committee, Vol. 1, 1916, p.1.

⁹² Ibid. p.369. Mr E.T Stubbs.

⁹³ Report of the Natives Land Committee, Vol. 2, 1916, pp.369-70.

⁹⁴ Report of the Natives Land Committee, Vol. 2, 1916, p.370. Colonel Stanford.

⁹⁵ Ibid, pp371-372. Colonel Stanford.

Traders and farmers from Reubander opposed opening up Luvuvhu as a native area.⁹⁶ To them, the natives should not be given more land, since they had too much land. Opposition was based on the fact that such irrigable land was suitable for white settlers. Such irrigable ground should be given to settlers and replaced by dry lands, since “natives do not make use of irrigation”.⁹⁷ This contradicted the observation made by Stayt that, “where there was enough water for irrigation, crops were grown throughout the year”.⁹⁸ One may argue therefore, that the desire to dispossess natives of their fertile land caused traders to lie before the commission, since telling the truth would weigh heavily against them. Suggesting that natives should be given dry lands was a deliberate attempt by farmers to impoverish them, since they were unable to stand competition from the natives.⁹⁹

The Medical Superintendent of Elim Hospital also furnished the Commission with health reasons. He showed that the highlands in the Levubu settlement areas were free from malaria infestation, but the low lying areas on both sides of Levubu river were infected. However, the area could be utilised for European settlement provided they had good housing and suitable preventative precautions were taken. However, opening up Luvuvhu for white settlement would involve thousands of pounds to make the area habitable.¹⁰⁰

Further evidence was heard from Mr Banks, a settler who purported to be presenting views of another 12 settlers in the area. He indicated that they came to the Zoutpansberg under the Settlement scheme of 1903. They were given 50 years to pay for the holding.¹⁰¹ He argued that the “settlers protest being put into this native area, because it gives them no means of expansion and no means of progressing. According to them, they have spent 11 years in the settlement. In addition, “our experiments have found out that this land is about the finest in South Africa for citrus growing, cotton and tobacco. We are not agreeable to be removed. If we go to another country we would have to learn it over again”.¹⁰² From this evidence, one can deduce that change is a difficult process because one has to adapt to the new environment, but these settlers had only been in the area for 11 years. Their proposal was that the area should not be opened as a native area. This would mean that natives who spent more than 200 years in the area were to be removed. Whilst, settlers complained against removals after having spent 11 years, the Vhavenda and Shangaans after spending 40-200 years in the area, had more complaints.

The commission also held its session at Louis Trichardt. The Commission heard evidence from about 500 chiefs, headmen and natives. Deducing from the testimony given by chiefs, it appeared that the

⁹⁶ Reubander is an area situated about 10km east of Levubu. See map 2 for its exact location.

⁹⁷ Ibid. pp.374-375. Mr Mckechnie.

⁹⁸ Stayt, *The Bavenda*, p.34.

⁹⁹ Report of the Natives Land Committee, Vol.2, 1916,p375. Mr Mckechnie

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.p.375.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.p.384.Mr Banks.

native chiefs were politically informed. They were aware of the effects of having Luvuvhu declared a white area. Their grievances were genuine, more about land and resources garnered from it. Whilst I have identified some of the chiefs of Luvuvhu, whose voices might not be heard in this section, such chiefs were represented by their great chiefs such as Mphephu, Sinthumule and Davhana. However, the majority of such chiefdoms in Luvuvhu owed their allegiance to Mphephu.

In his evidence, Mphephu argued that “it is very unfortunate to hear that we will have to stay in the area reserved for us, where we could buy land or pay rent.... As you know the child inherits what his father leaves him after his death.”¹⁰³ For Vhavenda, it was not only their land that was at stake, but their culture. Giving them an area reserved for them meant that they would not have enough land. Their children therefore, would be unable to inherit land from their fathers. A man desiring more land would not be able to get it from the headmen because land in areas reserved for them would be inadequate to accommodate all the people.¹⁰⁴ Buying land would also usurp the powers and functions of the headmen and chiefs since the native commissioner would be responsible for that.

Chief Sinthumule indicated that “our custom is to have plenty of food and plenty of cattle to buy our wives, but to buy land is very difficult thing to do as we are not used to buying land ”.¹⁰⁵ Traditionally among the Vhavenda land was not acquired through the market system, as is the case in western culture.¹⁰⁶ Letsoalo noted amongst the Pedi that, “membership to the tribe was the price for land.... Nobody was jealous of another tribesman who needed more land, agricultural work was not merely an occupation or a source of income but a way of life.”¹⁰⁷ Membership to the tribe was a qualification to obtain sufficient land to support the family. The new system of buying land was contrary to their culture; that land can not be bought. Therefore, without the ability to purchase land, communities were confined to small or unproductive patches of land. This impacted on their culture, for no longer producing enough food for activities like Murundu (boy’s circumcision school), and Domba (for girls). Such schools would suffer because large quantities of food were required for consumption during the ceremony.¹⁰⁸ They would also have inadequate and unsuitable sites for these schools, since a secluded and a remote area have to be chosen. This therefore, rendered the possibilities of such schools impossible. These would restrict their freedom of performing such activities.

¹⁰²Ibid. p.384.Mr Banks.

¹⁰³ Report of the Natives Land Committee, Vol. 2,1916,p.378.

¹⁰⁴ Stayt, The Bavenda, p.167.

¹⁰⁵ Report of the Natives Land Committee, Vol. 2,1916,p.372.

¹⁰⁶ M Nefale, interview with Ralushai, Thohoyandou, 6 June 2000.

¹⁰⁷ Letsoalo, Land reform in South Africa, 1987,p.20.

¹⁰⁸ C. Wheelwright, “Native circumcision lodges in the Zoutpansberg district”, in Journal of the Anthropological Royal Institute, 1905, p.252.

Mphephu also indicated that the hearts of Vhavenda were 'sore'. This was because they do not want to move from their old homes to new places. They fear that moving would affect their families adversely, since they would be scattered all over. They do not want to move because of their strong cultural and religious attachment to their land, on account of their ancestors who were buried in Luvuvhu.¹⁰⁹ Stayt has made a point that, "throughout the country there were places reputed to be inhabited by the spirits, whose sinister presence was greatly feared and who can influence the lives of the living people. Many of these forests were burying places of chiefs and in these graves they generally left trees to grow around them, and, they would maintain a tradition as a sacred grove".¹¹⁰ Matumba asserted that such places were sacred because the people respected their chiefs and that "Khosi yo vhwewa nga Mudzimu".¹¹¹ The implication was that disrespecting the chief, whom they regarded as an intermediary with God, implied disrespecting God. However, all Vhavenda chiefs including those in Luvuvhu, every year they visited regularly their royal graves for thevhula ritual. Thevhula is a thanksgiving ceremony conducted by the royal family at the ancestors's grave after the first harvest. This helps to unify all the people of the tribe and those found in the royal family because feasting, drinking and dancing to the tshikona tribal dance accompany the ritual. Moving out of Luvuvhu would imply that people would no longer be united, since they would no longer perform thevhula.

However, it was alleged in 1917 that the line of demarcation would be alongside the Lwomondo Location and the farm Lisbon, and along the Nzhelele up to Limpopo. The Vhavenda and Shangaan chiefs protested against this demarcation. They protested because the land allocated was not sufficient for natives. They argued that the area was only for cattle ranching, and it belonged to Mphaphuli, Rammbuda and Sibasa.¹¹² All the Chiefs, natives and those who gave evidence before the commission held on the 16th November, wanted a line of demarcation to start from Bandolierkop to Groot Spelonken, and from Bandolierkop along the main road to Messina. To them the line would be suitable for their large numbers.¹¹³ The Vhavenda, while appearing before the Commission, put aside their differences with the Shangaans and claimed together what they thought was rightfully theirs.

¹⁰⁹ M Nefale, interview with Matumba, Tshakhuma, 26 May 2000.

¹¹⁰ Stayt, *The Bavenda*, p.236.

¹¹¹ M Nefale, interview with Matumba, Tshakhuma, 26 May 2000. Khosi yo vhwewa nga Mudzimu mean that God nominated the chief to rule.

¹¹² Minutes of evidence of the Eastern Transvaal Land Committee, 1918, p.69.

¹¹³ Ibid. pp.69-72.

The report of the Land Commission

In 1918 the report of the Local Committees was presented to parliament. The Natives Land Committee (Eastern Transvaal) recommended that, instead of the recommendations of the Beaumont Commission,

“The natives were more inclined towards agriculture than stock keeping, therefore, more arable land was necessary to meet their needs”. The result was that the Commission reserved the forests of Entabeni for white use.¹¹⁴ Setting aside Entabeni for white use reduced the territories of Mphephu and his indunas. It also denied people of Matumba, Ravele, Matidza and Ratombo access to cut trees for roofing and for the walls of their huts. The only way for them to get such material was to buy from the government, which implied that they had to work in order to get money.

An area of about 90,000 morgen situated to the south of Mphephu's location was considered necessary not only as a means of making up the deficiency of arable ground, but to meet the immediate needs of the natives of the district itself. Conerly has indicated that less land was allowed for grazing in order to restrict the numbers of cattle kept by Africans. For Vhavenda, cattle were not primarily kept for eating, but for brideprice. Having many cattle meant that a Muvenda man could marry as many women as possible as it was part of their culture. Therefore, most marriages of those who lived in Luvuvhu were polygamous. However, the government did not recognise polygamy as “legal”, but rather saw it as an “unchristian” practice.¹¹⁵ Polygamy was not only seen as unchristian, it was also attacked because it denied white farmers labourers. To the farmers, polygamists do not work because their wives worked the fields for them. Stayt also argued that polygamous men (instead of working) spend time drinking.¹¹⁶ Within that 90,000 morgen set-aside for Vhavenda and Shangaan settlement, 10 000 morgen were already taken up by the Swiss Mission, whilst the Berlin Mission occupied about 7000. Such an area according to the report had an estimated population of about 25 000. All of them were rent paying squatters and under tribal rule. Furthermore, the area according to the Commission was allocated to a native area because there were important native institutions there, such as Elim Hospital, the Rossbach College and other mission undertakings, which were seen as important in the native's progress to civilisation.

The commission also had a different view in its scheme of creating native areas. It wanted to remove Sinthumule and Kutama from their location and accommodate them in the proposed native area. By doing this they were disregarding the friction that existed between Mphephu and Sinthumule, this could lead to conflict. Its concern was that Sinthumule and Kutama Locations offer exceptional

¹¹⁴ Majority Report of the Eastern Transvaal Land Committee, 1918, p.15.

¹¹⁵ Conerly, “The Surrendering of Lands in the Northern Transvaal”, p.82.

¹¹⁶ Stayt, *The Bavenda*, p.142.

possibilities for white settlement, because of its close proximity to the railway line and that it was suitable for irrigation. Such Locations were undesirable because they were in the midst of a white area and such natives were to be moved where to other natives resided.¹¹⁷

The Land Committee observed that there was a need for land by Vhavenda and Shangaans but this recommendation was never implemented. Its implementation involved repealing the 1913 Land Act, an Act that was designed to reduce the amount of land occupied by natives and to force them to work for whites. Giving natives more land would result in Vhavenda and Shangaans working for themselves rather than working for whites. However, Omer Cooper has noted that the report raised objections from white farmers and that this led to no action being taken.¹¹⁸ Action was not taken because white farmers possessed the most powerful weapon, the right to vote which had been denied Africans. The government therefore listened to those with votes rather than those with no votes. The result was that the Vhavenda and Shangaans continued to reside in Luvuvhu until the second half of the 1930s as rent tenants and squatters on government land.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to show how chiefs of Luvuvhu and the territories that fell under their jurisdiction changed over time because of the coming of Albasini, the Boers and traders. This contact between Europeans with natives led to the reduction of land belonging to Luvuvhu chiefs. Their cultural practices mostly those which depended on the availability of land was adversely affected. Though they maintained their independence to a certain extent by paying rent to landlords who occupied their territories, they did not carry out their cultural activities freely, but had to solicit for permission from the Native Commissioners. The failure of the government to enforce the recommendation of the Natives Land Committee showed that the government listened only to those who had the right to vote and ignored those denied that right. Therefore, decisions that affected those without the vote were taken in their absence, and in many cases such decisions were at their expense. The power wielded by these whites had led to the establishment of Levubu settlement, the subject of the following chapter.

¹¹⁷ Conerly, "The surrendering of Lands in the Northern Transvaal", p.15.

¹¹⁸ Omer-Cooper, History of Southern Africa, p.163.

Chapter 2

Origin of landlessness in Levubu (1935-1980)

Introduction.

At the turn of the second half of the 1930s, the Levubu settlement accommodated a large percentage of new arrivals who were classified as poor whites. Despite the fact that the majority of them were poor, they co-existed alongside a small proportion of wealthy landowners who rented out land to Vhavenda and Shangaans. While Vhavenda and Shangaans over time lost their ability to live off the land, and were condemned to lives of miserable poverty, the poor whites with the sympathetic support of the government were a given chance to start afresh. This chapter attempts to show that the placement of poor whites in the Levubu settlement scheme involved the displacement of Vhavenda and Shangaan-Tsonga found in the area. This is what Delius et al call "accumulation and dispossession".¹¹⁹ In an attempt to do justice to this topic, this chapter will look at the origins of the settlement scheme, who and what problems faced the poor whites, and the type of assistance that the State offered to alleviate their poverty. In the final section, I look at the displacement of Vhavenda and Shangaans due to mechanisation on the farms. I examine the ethnicity implemented by the National Party government as a form of divide-and-rule politics. The major feature of this settlement was the growth of racism as a code that cemented bonds of ethnic solidarity and racial superiority.

Who were the "poor whites" and what was the "poor white problem"?

The word poor white was first "used in the United States in the slavery days" and then transferred to South Africa.¹²⁰ The term can only be used in a country where blacks and whites live together in a relatively close intercourse. The argument therefore is thus, why slavery and close relations between the two races? Slavery involved relations between masters and servants and in that case, the servants were blacks who were poor, rightless and discriminated against by the "superior white race". But, as these blacks were emancipated, they gradually uplifted themselves from their poverty whilst competing with their "masters" to an extent that the masters became impoverished. However, the term indicated that poverty among whites was felt to be something exceptional, being associated more "naturally" with black labouring masses. Therefore, this term has "a derogatory ring to it".¹²¹ This emanated from the wealthy town dwellers who looked with disdain, dislike and at times with scorn and annoyance at the impoverished and untaught whites from the farms. The wealthy white community viewed them as a disgrace and in a way, they felt that the poor white had let the white race down.

¹¹⁹ Delius et al. Putting a plough to the ground, 1986.

¹²⁰ J.F.W. Grosskopf, Rural impoverishment and rural exodus, (Stellenbosch, 1932), p.17.

Poor whites can be distinguished between urban poor and rural poor. According to this distinction, urban poor were destitute, without visible means of production, and they were involved in petty commodity production like brickmaking previously done by black servants. On the other hand, the rural poor still maintained ties with the land, but their agriculture was unproductive and unprofitable. They were unable to raise capital to adopt to new technology and techniques and were often in debt.¹²² It is difficult to come up with a clear definition of this term because it includes moral, material, and economic factors. According to the Carnegie Commission a poor white “ is a person who has become dependent to such an extent, whether from mental, moral, economic or physical causes, that he is unfit, without help from others, to find proper means of livelihood for himself or to procure it directly or indirectly for his children”.¹²³ The “proper means of livelihood ” might imply being independent economically or might have meant having a couple of black servants at their disposal typical of the white race.

From the early 1900s onwards, the state made efforts to raise agricultural productivity with measures that included the Land Settlement Act of 1912 which aimed to encourage the poor white farmers to produce more and thus pull themselves out of their poverty. Through the Act the state earmarked settlement in the countryside and channelled funds to them as this was considered the best solution to the poor white problem.¹²⁴ To implement such a scheme required that rural areas be freed from African occupation hence creating space for white settlement. The state’s interest in eradicating the poor white problem can be traced to several factors. The poor whites had political power.¹²⁵ They had the right to vote, which had been denied Africans. In order to deal with this potential “political threat” posed by poor whites, the government offered failed farmers new opportunities. This was intended to convert “dangerous” class members into conformist class members.¹²⁶ They also feared that many might join forces with blacks against the government as this was demonstrated by poor whites renting land to blacks. Such relations were despised because they might lead to miscegenation, which would “stain” the superior white blood and worsen the situation.

The Making of Levubu settlement scheme

As early as 1935 settlers north of the Zoutpansberg range wrote to the magistrate in Louis Trichardt complaining about the continued drought which had started in 1933. Mr Harvey Wright, a farmer and

¹²¹ Morrell, “The poor whites of Middleburg, Transvaal, 1900-1930:Resistance, accommodation and class struggle”, in Morrell (ed) White but poor, p.1.

¹²² Morrell, “The poor whites of Middleburg”, p.2.

¹²³ Groskopf, Rural exodus and rural impoverishment, p.18.

¹²⁴ Morrell, “The poor whites of Middleburg”, p.17.

¹²⁵ P. Le Roux, “Poor whites,” in Second Carnegie inquiry into poverty and development in South Africa, (Cape Town, 1986), p.6.

¹²⁶ Morrell, “The poor whites of Middleburg”, p.2.

storekeeper in the area wrote, "owing to the continued drought cattle are dying in large numbers of poverty, the people who live almost entirely from cattle had for long no income and many of them are practically destitute, the store keepers are no longer able to supply their needs on credit and there is no other alternative than for the government to come and rescue those who are unable to help themselves with food and clothing".¹²⁷ The Veterinary officer also indicated that, "one could not gather a bag full of grass on a whole farm and moving stock to other farms proved to be futile as most of them were in the area suffering from foot and mouth disease".¹²⁸ The magistrate on the other hand, informed the Lands Department that the situation had become desperate and that if the farmers were not assisted the whole land settlement scheme would be doomed.

The implication of the statement raised by the magistrate was that Settlers in the north were placed in the area by the government as a way of solving the poor white problem. However, what was not clear was where these poor whites came from and whether they were moved from urban areas. According to the letter, settlers north of the mountain were placed there under the Land Settlement Act and most of them had been assisted by the state to purchase cattle that were now dying.¹²⁹ It was recorded that from December 1934 to 17 June 1935, 400 cattle died, including 200 government cattle. Some 300 sheep belonging to Dorstig and Keith farms had also been lost. Besides drought, Grimbeek of the Transvaal Land Board reported that locusts, masonja (mopani) worms, overstocking and overgrazing also acerbated the conditions. According to him, the area 20 years previously had been one of the richest in stock farming. The area therefore, attracted a significant number of stock farmers and farms there became smaller and smaller as most farmers wanted a plot.

Grimbeek investigated the conditions of farmers in the north and recommended that the government should supply farmers with maize rations and cattle fodder. It should create jobs on public works such as, roads for married men who were not prepared to move out of the district, and that farmers should be allowed to graze stock on government land. Furthermore, most farmers in the area, according to him, indicated that they would be willing to move to other districts on condition that irrigable ground was available.¹³⁰ Calling the government for help indicated that the farmers in the north were unable to depend on themselves, as they were poor. This therefore, gave rise to a dependency syndrome which led to underdevelopment, because each time they experienced a problem, they expected help from outside sources rather than solving their own problems.

¹²⁷South African Archives, Pretoria, (henceforth SAA), Lands Department (henceforth LD), 31418,1733,Vol.1, Letter from Harvey Wright to Louis Trichardt resident magistrate, 18 January 1935. For more on the experiences of settlers in their respective schemes see Murray, Black Mountain, pp.63-70.

¹²⁸ LD, 31418,1733,Vol.1, Letter from Veterinary officer to resident magistrate, 18 January 1935.

¹²⁹LD, 31418,1733,Vol.1, Letter from resident magistrate to Secretary of Agriculture and forestry, 18/01/1935.On the issue of giving settlers stock see especially Morrell, "Competition and co-operation in Middleburg", in Delius et al, Putting a plough to the ground, p.378.

¹³⁰ LD, 31418,1733,Vol.1, Grimbeek report to the minister, 14 October 1935.

It was reported on the 14th of October 1935 that an investigation to determine the general opinion on the purchase of several farms on the Levubu, Lutanandwa and other rivers in the area has been conducted with a view to create a settlement scheme. The scheme that was being proposed was going to include farms such as, Laatsgevonden 74 belonging to Gaymans, Barrota 65 belonging to Coetzee, Klein Australia belonging to Venter, Welgevonden 120 belonging to Adendorff, Madrid belonging to Menne and Morgenzon belonging to Louw. The first three farms, it was argued, fell in an area demarcated as government plantation forests, and no-one therefore, could claim to own the streams, provided that the whole of Barrota and Klein Australia had been bought by the state.¹³¹ The quality of the soil and the fact that the land could be brought under irrigation cheaply without the construction of huge dams, compelled the Land Board to recommend the government to proclaim the area as an irrigation scheme as required by Irrigation Act No.8 of 1912 as amended.¹³² The Act gave the Governor General extra-ordinary powers since it stipulated that, "if at any time he requires or deems it to be expedient in the public interest to take or use any land or stream for the purpose of irrigating any land or constructing thereon any reservoir or other irrigation work, he is not entitled by law to take or use the land so required without the consent of the owner".

The argument is that the proposed scheme at its initial stages would affect the people of Ravele, Matumba, Rasikhuthuma at Barrota and Klein Australia and their neighbours who settled at Laatsgevonden under headmen Dombo of Tshakhuma. The Act stated that no irrigation work could take place unless the consent of the owner was obtained. In reality, it meant the white owners who were having title deeds to such areas, which the Africans were denied. Furthermore, the interest of the public it was referring to were those of whites and not Africans', since the scheme was for the benefit of whites and not blacks. The result was that on 22 December 1935 it was reported that the government had acquired irrigable, fertile land in the North, between Louis Trichardt and Sibasa. According to The Star, Mr E A Rooth, a Member of Parliament, supported by local farmers was "largely responsible for this new settlement scheme, which would provide for many of the farmers who for years have fought a losing battle at the back of the Zoutpansberg Mountain against arid conditions". In addition, reference was made to the financial success of the settlement known as Welgevonden. Welgevonden was situated on the adjoining farms of the proposed settlement. This was meant to show that the area was indeed fertile and productive.¹³³

Before the commencement of the 1936 Native Trust and Land Act, the Secretary for Native Affairs was informed by the Secretary for Lands that the Department of Lands had purchased the farms in

¹³¹ Ibid. Report from the Grimbeeck to the Central Land Board, 14 November 1935, pp.1-8. See map 2 and 3 for the proposed farms for the settlement scheme.

¹³² Ibid. p.3.

¹³³ DLA, Nkatingi papers, The Star, 22 December 1935.

question for the proposed irrigation scheme. He was also informed to take steps to remove the natives who occupied the farms.¹³⁴ The farms purchased were not scheduled as native areas in terms of the 1913 Native Land Act, but were included in released area No. 26, Districts of Zoutpansberg, Letaba and Petersburg. Such Land could be purchased by the Trust for native settlement. Nevertheless, this did not include any land, which had been reserved for public purposes, or had been declared forest under Forest Act No.16 of 1913 before the commencement of the Act on 31 August 1936. Land purchased for any Government irrigation settlement prior to the commencement of the 1936 Native Trust Land Act would not be used for native settlement because the Minister of Lands certified that it was required for allotment to white farmers.

The effect of purchasing land in Levubu before the passing of the Natives Trust and Land Act by the government was intended to manipulate farmers in the area. This implied that land in Levubu would be sold at high prices by farmers, because farmers were made to believe that the soil was more fertile than it actually was. On the other hand, it also made it impossible for individuals to reject claims for excision for the purposes of the settlement scheme.

Towards the end of 1936, before the irrigation construction was completed, it was reported that the "present rain might have benefited farmers behind the mountain to an extent that they would be reluctant to move".¹³⁵ However, according to the survey carried out by Grimbeeck in 1937 involving 215 holdings, it was revealed that the overwhelming majority of settlers were no longer willing to move. Only five people assured that they were ready to take up holdings in Levubu, whilst 181 indicated that they were not willing to go to Levubu. The remaining 29 were not available at the time of the survey, but it was assumed that they were against going to Levubu. This contradicted what was reported while the settlement was still in its infancy. The government on the other hand, adopted a neutral position as far as relocation was concerned, arguing that settlers were not be pressured to move but had to do so voluntarily. Settlers such as Le Roux, Cloete, Mulder, Badenhorst and the Vogels were the first to take advantage of the scheme.¹³⁶

Most of the settlers refused to move to Levubu because they were not prepared to change from stock farming to arable farming. They were too old to start from scratch with arable farming. Arable farming required more time in terms of investigating whether the soil was suitable for the type of crops they wanted to plant, the use of insecticides and payment of water for irrigation which they feared given their poverty. Others did not want to move because they were employed in Messina

¹³⁴ LD, 3148,1733,letter from Secretary for Lands to Secretary for Native Affairs, 29 May 1936.

¹³⁵ LD, 3148,1733,Letter to Mr Burgers, 20 November 1936.

¹³⁶ LD, 3148,1733,Vol.2, Report from Grimbeeck to the Central Land Board 13 July 1937; HT, Interview between S Dowling and Mr Schoeman, Superintendent of 1960 Settlers,Levubu , July ,1987

mine, some travelling daily or even weekly to their farms. This group did not want to move because they were near to their work place compared to Levubu. Some were businessmen owning outlets such as butcheries and shops in Messina.¹³⁷ They preferred to move their stock to other districts until conditions improved. Moving to a place far away from their business would affect them adversely because they would have to pay daily travelling expenses that would eat into their profits.

Benefits attached to Levubu Settlement Scheme

The rain that started towards the end of 1936 brought some relief to the drought stricken area North of the Zoutpansberg. This led some of the farmers to refuse to move to Levubu, although it was already indicated that a number of them had already been transferred to Levubu. Such a number was not enough to serve the purpose of enlarging plots in the north, to make plots to be economically viable.¹³⁸ In order to encourage the movement to the new scheme, it was indicated that those who “refused to take advantage of the holdings offered, should be made to realise that they will have to depend upon themselves in the future”.¹³⁹ This indicates that, since the settlement in the north was started, the government had channelled more funds there because farmers were unable to sustain themselves. But, because farmers in the north refused to move to Levubu, thus making it difficult for the government to carry out its plan of enlarging plots in the north, it threatened to cut assistance to farmers in the north. The aim was to make them move to Levubu, where they would continue to receive assistance from the State. Consequently, taking up a settlement in Levubu was made as attractive as possible so that people can move without being forced. The result was that when these holdings were advertised they were described as varying from 65 to 100 morgen in extent, with water available for irrigating about 15 morgen on each holding. The balance of the land was could be used for dry farming and grazing.¹⁴⁰

The department of lands constructed a fenced and mosquito proof dwelling house consisting of three bedrooms, dining room, Kitchen, pantry, bathroom and veranda. The cost of the house was included in the purchase price of the holding. The terms and conditions of taking up a holding in Levubu was done through the Land Settlement Act of 1912 as amended in 1925. The Act provided that rentals on such dwellings were payable as follows: no rental was paid for the first and second years of the lease, only 2% on the purchase price was paid for the third year of lease and only 3,5 % was payable during the fourth and fifth years. In addition, an option of purchase was also included which was payable through 65 annual instalments, including capital and interest at 3,5%.¹⁴¹ Low interest rates indicate

¹³⁷ LD, 3148,1733,Vol.2, Report from Grimbeeck to the Central Land Board, 13 July 1937.

¹³⁸ LD, 31418,1733,Letter to the Irrigation Commission, 10 October 1939.

¹³⁹ LD, 3148,1733,Vol.2, Telegram from Lands Department to Cape Town.

¹⁴⁰ LD, 31593/129, 1735,Government Notice No.1403, 15 September 1939.pp.2-3.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.p.3. For more on interests and rentals in OFS see especially Murray, Black Mountain, pp.60-61.

that the people were poor and therefore, could not afford high interests rates. At the same time it may also indicate the effort that the government was making of giving failed farmers another opportunity of starting afresh by giving them seeds, implements and credit.¹⁴² Hence keeping them on their side.

According to the Secretary for lands, the position concerning the leases of settlers who were opting to be transferred to Levubu were as follows:

- If the Land Board determined that the holding could not, owing to soil conditions or other cause, afford a reasonable subsistence, the settlers would be transferred and their present lease terminated in terms of the provisions of section 17 of Act 26 of 1925.
- Subject to a recommendation of the board, arrear rent and interest would be written off in terms of sub-section 4 of section 17 Act 26 of 1925.
- Compensation would be paid for any improvements effected on the holdings, but should improvements have been effected by means of advances granted by the department, compensation would be paid for any value, at the time of transfer, over and above the amount advanced.¹⁴³
- From such compensation, the deduction on the capital amount of any outstanding advances would be made in terms of Section 44 of the Land Settlement Act.
- Should no stock or equipment be in existence any longer, easy terms would be given for repayment of any balance owing after deductions of the compensation for improvements from the capital amount of advances outstanding.
- Should they still be in possession of stock or equipment by means of section 44 advances, they would be allowed to take with them what was necessary for the development of the new holding and to dispose of the balance and pay the proceeds of such sale in reduction of the advance capital.¹⁴⁴ All these terms indicated the willingness of the government to move settlers without force to Levubu.

Despite the fact that the Levubu settlement was initially intended to absorb farmers in the north, the focus of the project changed towards the end of the first half of the 1940s. The settlement was also opened to discharged soldiers of the Union, those who served in the Second World War, irrespective of where they came from. Lt O'Fleaherty was the first soldier to get a holding there. Holdings that were advertised as from 1945 attracted and marked the beginning of the occupation of Levubu by demobilised soldiers.¹⁴⁵ This marked the involvement of the office of the Director General of Demobilisation in issues of Land allocation. This office indicated that returned soldiers should be

¹⁴² HT, interview between S. Dowling and Mr Schoeman, Levubu, July 1987.

¹⁴³ LD, 3148, Vol.2, Letter from the secretary for lands, 05 July 1938, p.2.

¹⁴⁴ LD, 3148, Vol.2, Letter from the Secretary for Lands, 05 July 1938, p.3.

¹⁴⁵ LD, 31593/129, 1735, Government Notice No.1718, 14/8/1945.

given priority in the allocation of government farms and that, “in the case of farms already earmarked by a person other than a returned soldier, the office of the Director General needed assurance from the Lands department that priority would be given to returned soldiers”.¹⁴⁶ Morrell points out that “evidence on poor whites is to be found in the history of war” which dates back to the 1870s where in those who participated in the war be it with Africans or Whites were given land after the war.¹⁴⁷ This had evolved into a tradition that was carried into the 1940s when the services of the poor whites were “purchased” in the form of giving them land and other advances to help them establish themselves. Those who applied for holdings in Levubu fell into this category because they were entitled to a 250-pound demobilisation grant. Moreover, this group received strong recommendation from the Demobilisation Committee so that they would be given plots, but they generally lacked experience in farming. One therefore, may argue that experience in military activities, being a prisoner of war for a long time, and also living on a farm with parents whose farming needs were catered for by the labour of the Africans does not make one a better farmer. This was part of the reason why farmers in the area continually relied on the support of the government, because they were not productive since they had little knowledge of farming.

When comparing this group of returned soldiers with those farmers who were accommodated in Levubu from the north, a significant distinction was noted in respect to their economic status. A report on the position of farmers in the north indicated that farmers were unable to make a livelihood out of farming only. In most cases, they depended on work outside farming such as working on the mines, and depending on their relatives who were working elsewhere, whilst others rented out their land to shop owners and police stations. They were also reported to be “unable to feed and clothe their children” and to eat “pap”.¹⁴⁸ Pap has largely been regarded as food for the lower classes and mostly associated with being consumed by natives. By comparison, the group that came in 1944 arrived with their own capital which included cash of between 105 to 300 pounds, oxen, cows, implements, motor cars plus 250 pound they got from the directorate of demobilisation.¹⁴⁹ Although this group came with their own capital, but were treated in the same way as those who had nothing. They were also entitled to advances under the 1912 Land Settlement Act.

Keeping Settlers healthy

Before Levubu was earmarked for white settlement in 1936, it was reported in 1917 that the area was not suitable for white settlement because it was malarious. In order to make this area suitable, it was

¹⁴⁶ South Africa Archives (henceforth SAA), Director General of Demobilisation (henceforth DGD), 413/10/22,1243,Letter from the chairman, Director General of Demobilisation, 15 February 1946.

¹⁴⁷ Morrell, “The poor whites of Middleburg”, p.3.

¹⁴⁸ LD3148, Vol.1, Report from the magistrate to the Secretary for Justice, 29 June 1935,pp.1-6.

¹⁴⁹ LD 31593/129, various letters from the director of demobilisation to secretary for lands, undated.

argued, would involve channelling thousands of pounds into the health sector for the prevention of malaria.¹⁵⁰ This was part of the reason why the area was set aside for native settlement in 1917. Irrespective of the recommendation of the Natives land committee that it would be expensive to open the area for white settlement the government opened the area for whites. It was not recorded whether settlers from the north were reluctant to move to Levubu because of fear of being infected by malaria because, according to the map on which the malarial areas in the union were indicated, Levubu borders an area where the disease occurs continually. As such, it was recommended that Dr Annecke of Tzaneen should be sent to make recommendations about housing and prevention of malaria in Levubu.¹⁵¹ Dr Annecke found that the incidence of malaria appeared to be very low when compared with the intense malaria found at Pongola settlement, "but just because malaria is of low prevalence here the individual is apt to become careless and any epidemic would produce the same decimating effect".¹⁵² The implication was that every precaution had to be taken so that people should stay as healthy as possible, to prevent the outbreak of an epidemic which could have been prevented. According to this recommendation all houses should be adequately gazed, and reliable insecticides such as pyagra should be used daily. Bed nets, repellent smears such as citronella oil should also be used. Houses should also be mosquito proof. Annecke also recommended that the housing that were constructed for the irrigation Engineer should be demolished as it was not up to standard and that he should be involved at each and every step of development of the settlement.¹⁵³

The involvement of the health department in the settlement means that the construction of houses had to meet the requirements of the department of health. It was the recommendation of this department that forced the department of lands to construct houses for the settlers, since they were lacking funds to build houses that would meet the requirement of the health department. Nevertheless, these measures were not going to prevent malaria. Consequently, it was reported that many settlers had died because of malaria despite the construction of houses that were up to the standard of the department of health.¹⁵⁴ Therefore, one may argue that this was a government scheme of giving houses at cheap prices of about 6000 pound to settlers in the guise of preventing malaria.¹⁵⁵ Furthermore, the inabilities of such well-armed houses against malaria indicate the failure of man to control nature. Although it was indicated that the settlers would have to buy insecticides for themselves, it was also noted that there were those who were poor who could not afford to buy though the prices were reduced considerably. One gallon of insecticide costed 6 shillings. Those who could not afford to purchase insecticides could obtain free issue from the nearest magistrate or police post. It was not

¹⁵⁰ Report of the Native Land Committee, Vol.2, 1916,p.375.

¹⁵¹ LD 31593/21,1634,Letter from Rooth to the Secretary for lands 7 September 1936.

¹⁵² LD31593/21,1634,Report from Medical Inspector Annecke the Secretary for public health, 24 October 1936.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ HT, interview between S. Dowling and Mrs Mulder, Levubu, 07 July 1987.

¹⁵⁵ HT, interview between S. Dowling and Mr Schoemann, Levubu, July 1987.

indicated whether these settlers in Levubu bought insecticides or not but, what was evident was that the government ordered large quantities of insecticides in the 1940s of which it was not indicated whether the settlers were given free or not.¹⁵⁶ One can only assume that they were given free, since they were unable to depend on themselves. These settlers were also unable to paint their houses to make them as light as possible, since it was argued that darkness attracted mosquitoes. This was a plea from the health superintendent to urge the government to paint the houses.¹⁵⁷

The Department of Health also embarked on a large-scale training, educating and distributing pamphlets to farmers in the area. This was done to raise the level of awareness against the disease, and to teach them how to use dangerous insecticides. In addition, it was felt that Elim hospital was far to provide the settlement with health services, and therefore it was recommended that a resident nurse should be stationed at the settlement.¹⁵⁸ While the government was channelling funds to make settlers as healthy as possible, it was reported on the other hand that, natives in the Transvaal were dying like flies due to malaria.¹⁵⁹ This was because the Department of health did not extend its programme of malaria prevention to natives. This indicates that the local population was severely discriminated against, even in matters of life and death.

Displacement of communities from Levubu

In July 1937, according to a letter to a Member of Parliament, Mr E.A. Rooth, the Levubu scheme would be ready for occupation by the new settlers.¹⁶⁰ The implication was that the removal of natives from Levubu was fixed to take place at the end of August 1937. It was estimated that approximately 13,000 natives would be removed from the settlement. They possessed 1348 head of small stock and 1840 head of large stock.¹⁶¹ W.A. Biddell, assistant Native Commissioner at Sibasa indicated that some of these natives would be used as labourers when irrigable plots were ready and some would be accommodated in his district, the Zoutpansberg. Most of them could be absorbed as labourers, more especially at Driefontein, which was developing citrus plantations.¹⁶² On 22 August 1938 it was reported that the removal of Vhavenda was already in progress with the Forestry Department absorbing some of them, while others were being moved to Beaconsfield, Cliffside and Boabab (new Mauluma) in Nzhelele.¹⁶³ On 28 December 1938 about 3000 followers of chief Ravele were reported

¹⁵⁶ SAA, LD 31593/2,1634,list of insecticides ordered, 30 September 1937.

¹⁵⁷ LD 31593/2,1634,letter from the superintendent to the secretary for lands, 02 October 1940.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. Letter from the secretary for lands to the secretary for public health, 14 August 1940.

¹⁵⁹ SAIRR, JD Rheinallt Jones, AD843/RJ/S63.65 (file 1) Senatorial Correspondence.

¹⁶⁰ LD, 3148,1733,Letter to Rooth, 11 March 1937.

¹⁶¹ DLA, Nkatingi papers, 199/97,Letter from the secretary for lands to the Secretary for Native Affairs, 16 June 1937.

¹⁶² Ibid.Memorandum dated 27 July 1937.

¹⁶³ Ibid, Minute to the secretary for lands, 22 August 1938.(For new Mauluma see map 4)

to have been resettled, with the exception of some members of the royal family who were allowed to remain at Barrota. At the time the officials understood that members of the ruling family would only stay until the body of chief Ravele, buried at Barrota had decomposed, so that they could take his skeletal remains and move with them to Beaconsfield. They were granted permission to stay with effect from 23 November 1938 for five years, which they can extend on a year to year basis after until the custodians of the grave were able to live.¹⁶⁴

However Mr Phillips, an executive of the Farmer's Union, claimed that the Native Affairs Department had provided good houses for the dispossessed natives from Madrid and Barrota.¹⁶⁵ Available evidence indicates that they were only given poles for the construction of houses and nothing else.¹⁶⁶ As a member of the Farmers Union Phillips might have exaggerated the claims to convince politicians like Jones that the displaced natives had been taken good care of. In addition, Phillips indicated that "the government has taken good care of Tsonga speakers and Masakona who were resettled on trust farms in the Pietersburg district, sent there on lorries". Chief Khamanyani confirmed that chief Shigalo was carried from Levubu to New Barrota (Hartebeesfontein and Olifanthoek farm) in Lebowa.¹⁶⁷ However, Phillips did not mention in his letter important issues such as the conditions of the soil and water. He might have been afraid that Jones would fight for those basic necessities and, if acquired by the natives, it might restrict the flow of labour on to the market.

In 1939 Entabeni and Barotta No 65 were declared government plantation areas in compliance with section 5 of the Forest Act of 1913 as amended.¹⁶⁸ This meant that people of Matidza, Makatu, Ravele and Ratombo would be removed. This was aggravated by the application of chapter 4 of the Native Trust and Land Act of 1936, which was firmly implemented after April 1939.¹⁶⁹ "If chapter 4 was implemented over 26 000 natives would have to move" reported Jones. According to a census on 92 farms, about 32 000 natives resided in the area bounded in the South by Pietersburg, West by Bandolierkop to Louis Trichardt railway line, and in the north by Mphephu location, and in the East by the released area. Allowing 12 families or 60 people on each of the 92 farms would mean that 5,500 would remain, while the others would have to move. The point that I am trying to argue is that, while it has been noted that the application of chapter 4 led to an exodus of natives from farms in the Lydenburg district (where 180 days of labour was required of tenants), in Levubu farmers decided that tenants should perform only 90 days labour as rent. This, it was argued, would prevent an

¹⁶⁴ NTS17/12/2,1/1/49, letter from Van Warmelo to CNC, 28 May 1946.

¹⁶⁵ SAIRR, JD Rheinallt Jones papers, AD843, RJ/SB3.138 letter to Jones from Phillips, 26 January 1939.

¹⁶⁶ DLA, Nkatingi papers, 199/97, letter from Senior Agricultural officer to Deputy director of native agriculture. 16 September 1938.

¹⁶⁷ HT, Interview between P. Harries, B. Feldmann and Chief Khamanyani, Gazankulu, 08 July 1983.

¹⁶⁸ DLA, Nkatingi papers, Government Notice No. 461, 6 May 1939. See map 2 and 3 for plantation areas.

¹⁶⁹ JD Rheinallt Jones, AD843/RJ/SB3.138, Memorandum of evidence given before the district committee on chapter 4, 12 May 1939.

uncontrollable exodus of labour from the area.¹⁷⁰ Still, natives were going to move out of the area because of the tightened squatting laws, which demands that squatters and labour tenants had to be registered with the department of native affairs. The Natives Affairs Department, could then after 1940, inspect each farm to make sure whether activities on such farms necessitated the presence of large numbers of natives.¹⁷¹ The effect was that “surplus natives” that is, those not working were to be moved. This limited the number of families residing on the farms while ensuring an equitable supply of labour to the farmers. The remainder of the population would have to go to the congested reserves where it was difficult to eke a living from the land.

It was agreed that if the period of service were increased from 90 to either 120 or 180 days, there would be a general exodus of farm labour. It does seem that chapter 4 was applied by some farmers in Levubu. At Borchers farm (Driefontein) people used to work for 3 months but later Borchers “came and said another month”. But this was untenable and eventually was dropped. However, after the death of Borchers, his two sons ran the farm. Borchers’ sons appointed a manager known to labour tenants as Shivenda to run the farm on their behalf. Shivenda introduced a system of giving people four tickets at the beginning of the year. Despite the fact that the ticket system had first been introduced before the Second World War, it was firmly established as a form of payment, tied to productivity by Shivenda. These tickets were signed every day when people reported for work. The ticket system was intended to ensure that labour tenants served the four-month period. The unsigned tickets easily detected those who were not working and “Borchers took away his land”. The result was that many people left the farm since they were not in favour of the new system.¹⁷²

On the farm Schoonuitzicht, chief Tshipfula mmbwa Matumba and Ratombo were compelled to work for three month without pay for the farmer known amongst the local people as “Mulibana”. His personal name was Naude. Matumba and Ratombo argued that they were given trek passes during the first half of the 1940s. This was due to the Murundu/circumcision school that lasted for six months instead of the usual 2-3 months.¹⁷³ The circumcision school denied Naude a full supply of labour during the ploughing season. This system of forcing the people to work, while neglecting to work their own fields, and physical abuse by Naude, forced these communities to move out of the area with only the royal family remaining. The royal family was forced to work and the youth particularly resisted working. This system of making the royal family work on the farm was contrary to Venda culture. The commoners were supposed to serve the chief and it was regarded as the duty of the

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ LD, 31593/129,1735, letter from Secretary for land to Inspectors of Lands, 11 September 1940.

¹⁷² HT, interview between P. Harries and M. Shivuri, Kwa Nkuzane, July 1987.

¹⁷³ Interview with E. Matumba, Tshakhuma, 26/5/2000. A trek pass was a document written by a farmer or Native Commissioner indicating that the presence of particular individuals or communities on the farms was not required. It allowed such communities to leave the farm without getting into trouble with the police.

commoner to work the farm. The result was a conflict between Naude and members of the royal family, especially the young generation. This led the Native Commissioner to order their removal from Naude's farm. The effect of this system of forced labour was that all the subjects of Matumba and Ratombo moved from farms to the reserves while others moved to towns.¹⁷⁴

The declaration of Barrota and Entabeni as forest reserves in 1939, together with Lisbon (acquired by the government in 1934), and Klein Australia (which was set aside for plantation purposes) sparked further removals of people.¹⁷⁵ It was reported that in the 1920s "foresters came and planted trees around the homesteads and issued orders that the cattle must not eat the trees. But when these trees were ready to be cut, the foresters cut them in front of the homesteads, and made it difficult for people to have access to their homes."¹⁷⁶ In addition, people were required to work on the plantation especially debushing the area, and in the process they were unable to work their plots, which were then taken by the foresters. Under these conditions the people moved away from the area to Mphephu Location in Nzhelele, to Sibasa, Dzimauli and some going to towns.

On the other hand, the Communist party paper, Inkululeko, reported in 1944 that "Khorro ya Ramabasha" (the forestry committee), expelled chief Matumba, Makatu, Matidza, Netshifhefhe and Marandela.¹⁷⁷ Since those reported to have been expelled were chiefs who lived in the area taken over by the forestry department, it might imply that removal due to afforestation also took place in 1944 when more ground was needed to increase the operation. These chiefs, according to Inkululeko were refusing to move from their area. It claimed the problem lay with the government that wanted to turn people into farm labourers. It therefore urged the people to join the Zoutpansberg Cultural Association (ZCA) which aimed at uniting people in the fight for their country. Consequently, the ZCA was given a platform to articulate the grievances of the oppressed rural masses through Inkululeko. This was in accordance with the Communist Party's principle of emphasising the struggle of the masses in the countryside since it was neglected by the African National Congress. It was reported that those who were left on the farms were told by the native commissioner in September to limit the number of their stock on the farm or not to raise them at all as this was limiting the space of the white farmer.¹⁷⁸ The result was that people moved to the reserves with the hope of raising their livestock freely. Despite being free in the reserves, conditions were sufficiently bad for stock to die of lack of pasture. On the other hand, in 1946 a portion of farm Barrota 65 was to be afforested and the Ravele royal family was

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ DLA, Nkatingi papers, Government Notice No.1996, 15 December 1939.

¹⁷⁶ M Nefale, interview with R. Maimela, former forestry worker, Nzhelele, 29 May 2000.

¹⁷⁷ Inkululeko, 14 August 1944; P. Delius, A lion amongst the cattle, Reconstruction and Resistance in the Northern Transvaal, (Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1996), pp.96-96.

¹⁷⁸ Inkululeko, 07 October 1944. For campaigns against land alienation in Matshavhawe, see especially T. Nemutanzhela, Ploughing amongst the stones: The story of betterment in the Zoutpansberg, 1939-1944, (Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1999).

residing there on agreement signed in 1938. The officials learned that it was not in keeping with Ravele's custom to remove the remains of a deceased and that the Royal family was in fact guarding the graveyard. The Department of Forestry then gave assurances that the graves would be left undisturbed and they arranged for members of the family to move to Klein Australia 13LT and continue as custodians of graves.¹⁷⁹ However, members of the royal family were no longer in Klein Australia but were moved to Nzhelele (new Mauluma).

The movement of the people into the reserves deprived farmers in Levubu of their labour. Most of those who were in the reserves were forced to pay tax and therefore, moved to towns as migrant labourers in the mines, and to the industries that emerged in the 1940s.¹⁸⁰ Farmers therefore wanted the Native Affairs Department to refuse passes to natives seeking work in towns, particularly natives below tax paying age, as long as farm work was available in the district.¹⁸¹ They argued that the majority of native parents were in favour of this as many youngsters ran off to towns and were never heard of again. Their argument to a certain extent is true, as these youngsters left old parents to fend for themselves. Meanwhile, many farmers were demanding an intensification of state intervention to halt the migration of labourers to town, and substitute full-time wage labour for partial wage labour or labour tenancy. They also wanted to trace those who went to town with slips that they would get after paying tax. However, before Vhavenda and Shangaans went to town, they had to work for three months for the farmers; they were also allowed to employ someone to work on their behalf whom they would personally pay 3 pounds 10 or that they were expected to be back after 9 months to work for the farmer. If they fulfilled such conditions, the farmer gave them an exemption certificate or a special pass to go to town.¹⁸² This happened in the second half of the 1940s - early 1950s.

Despite these measures, many people moved to towns and it was reported that there was a significant increase in the African urban population, which grew from 12,5% in 1921 to 22,9% in 1946.¹⁸³ This movement to towns was not appreciated by the labour-starved Afrikaner farmers both in the Orange Free State and Transvaal. Consequently, the National Party (which believed in helping fellow Afrikaners, and the total subjugation of Africans) capitalised on the concerns of Afrikaner farmers. It aimed at developing migrant labour as a system capable of reducing numbers of Africans moving to the cities.¹⁸⁴ This implied that Africans had to be allowed in cities as temporary workers who would

¹⁷⁹ NTS, 17/12/2, 1/1/49, letter from CNC to Headman Godane Ravele, 4 September 1946

¹⁸⁰ M Nefale, interview with E. Matumba, Tshakhuma, 26 May 2000.

¹⁸¹ SAIRR, JD Rheinallt Jones, AD843/RJ/SB3.138 Memorandum of evidence given before the district committee on chapter 4, 12 May 1939.

¹⁸² HT, interview between P. Harries and W. Resenga, Kwa Nkuzana, July 1987.

¹⁸³ M. Horrell, "The economic development of the reserves: the extent to which the Tomlinson Commission's recommendation are being implemented", (SAIRR 1959), p.1.

¹⁸⁴ C. Saunders, Reader's digest, Illustrated history of South Africa: The Real Story, (Readers digest Association, Cape Town, 1992), p373.

return home after the contract had expired. Returning home would therefore, help farmers because they would be able to get permanent labourers. This situation emerged after the National Party won the election in 1948.

In order to combat the influx of Africans to cities, which was causing political problems for the government in terms of Africans demanding political participation in a common legislature, and to placate farmers who were demanding labour, the government incorporated African chiefs into a new system of political control.¹⁸⁵ This was done through the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951, which turned the positions of the chiefs into salaried officials of the government. Receiving a salary from the government meant that chiefs had to control the movement of people to towns, and they had to supply farms with labourers as requested by government. Chief Mashau, headmen Matshabela and Chavani demonstrated this, because, after receiving word from the farmers, they responded by supplying them with people to pick oranges.¹⁸⁶ The implication was that they made it difficult for people to move, because they were paid according to the number of taxpayers in the area. This implied therefore, that letting their people go, would mean low government salaries. Further, if they were uncooperative the Native Commissioner was given the power to depose them and replace them with more co-operative chiefs.¹⁸⁷ As such the chiefs were hated by the educated few who wanted to escape from the rural areas to towns where opportunities were to be found.

However, the strategy of using chiefs proved to be ineffective politically because the 1950s were characterised by a new spirit of defiance. The result was that ethnicity was recommended as a way of dividing the people. This was done through the promotion of Bantu self government Act of 1959 which maintained that: "Bantu speaking people of South Africa do not constitute a homogeneous people, but form separate national units on the basis of language and culture".¹⁸⁸ This decreed that Venda and Tsonga/Shangaan were different according to culture and language and therefore, each had to develop along its own lines. The same was applied to other ethnic groups such as Xhosa, Sotho, Zulu. This Act laid the foundation of further removals from Levubu, and it paved the way for the formation of tribal "homelands" or bantustans.

According to Harries, this Act led to the formation of separate Matshangana, Venda and North Sotho territorial authorities in 1962.¹⁸⁹ One territorial authority controlled both Venda and Tsonga ethnic groups before 1962 and ethnic differences were played down. Shangaan speakers under Shigalo who

¹⁸⁵ Harries, "Exclusion, classification, and internal colonialism", p.103; E. Unterhalter, Forced removals: The division, segregation and control of the people of South Africa, (IDAF, London, 1982), p.11.

¹⁸⁶ HT, interview between Harries and M. Shivuri, Kwa Nkuzana, July 1987.

¹⁸⁷ C.Hill, Bantustans, the fragmentation of South Africa, (Oxford University Press, London 1964), p.11.

¹⁸⁸ Harries, "Exclusion, classification and internal colonialism", p.105.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.* p.105.

were removed from Levubu in 1938 to new Barotta in the Pietersburg area immediately felt this policy of ethnicity. Shigalo was resettled in the Lebowa district, with North Sotho speakers under chief Mamaila as his neighbours.¹⁹⁰ When Lebowa was declared the North Sotho bantustan, identity became important in the lives of the people. To these people identity involved speaking their own Shangaan language, such language had to be taught to their children at schools and used in the administration. They therefore rejected being placed under the Sothos and opted to rule themselves. Despite the fact that they resisted being moved, it was explained to their chiefs like Shigalo, Khamanyani and their headmen that should they stay, they would lose their positions and government salaries. The result was that they left the area in 1968 for territories demarcated for Shangaans in the Gazankulu bantustan. Those who stayed behind lost their identity, they still spoke Shangaan but their children were taught Sotho, and they were not given teaching posts in Lebowa.¹⁹¹ The fact that these people spoke Shangaan in Lebowa as an effort to maintain their identity is not convincing. Since these people were discriminated against one can argue that they did not use the language in public or in any place where Sothos were in fear that it might be used to block their opportunity to employment or better services.

The policy of separate development also targeted for removal the communities at Driefontein/Borchers, since it was composed of both Venda and Shangaan Speakers. The Vhavenda were under chief Mashau whilst the Shangaans were under Chief Tsuvuka, and headmen Matsilele and Chavani.¹⁹² The Shangaans were only told that they were going to be removed but to where and when they were not told. As a result, a group under headman Matsilele resisted removals. This caused him to be expelled in 1967 and he left the farm for Nkuzana (in the Gazankulu homeland).¹⁹³ In 1972 Borchers was reported to have called the Shangaans to his house and said "you must understand that I failed in this country, the government ordered me to free you people to go and join your people in Gazankulu."¹⁹⁴ The implication was that the Shangaans were staying in a "foreign country" (Vendaland) and therefore had to be taken "home" (to Gazankulu). Home in a sense that it was defined by the "law" as indicated by Mr Jileni, the then minister of community affairs in Giyani. Mr Jileni promised them that at Giyani they would have their school, their chief Tsuvuka, they would plough the fields as at Borchers, and raise their livestock.¹⁹⁵ After all these promises, the mood of the people about the removal was captured in a Shangaan song.

¹⁹⁰ HT, interview between P. Harries, B. Feldmann and Chief Khamanyani, Gazankulu, 8 July 1983.

¹⁹¹ Ibid; D. Cosmas, *The discarded people, An account of African resettlement*, (Christian Institute of South Africa, Johannesburg, 1969), pp.152-154.

¹⁹² HT, interview with J. Tshitsenga, Mphambo, 12 July 1989.

¹⁹³ HT, interview between Harries and W. Matshileze, Kwa Nkuzana, July 1987.

¹⁹⁴ HT, interview with J. Tshitsenga, Mphambo, 12 July 1989.

Ha hlamba milenge, ha famba la tikweni ra wena, (we are washing our feet, we are leaving your territory)
Hi ya Giyani, (we are going to Giyani)
*Khombo ita sala na wena (you will experience troubles alone)*¹⁹⁶

People from the farm were looking forward to going to their new home. On 20 November 1972, out of frustration because it was the day of the removal, some of the people ran to Nkuzana, Bungeni and Mavambe. They were no longer willing to go. However, trucks carried those who remained to Mphambo. All these areas are situated within Gazankulu homeland. Such names can be seen on map 4. When they were at Mphambo they sang another song, which revealed their shattered expectations and their sufferings.

Mi nga ni khoma njhani ni ri so (how can you arrest me when I'm like this)
Ndzi nonile ka mafutha, (I'm fat, I have fat in me)
*A hi dja malamula, mibanana eka Borchers, (At Borchers we used to eat oranges and Bananas)*¹⁹⁷

The song indicated the nostalgia that people had, and that they were better off Borchers than at Mphambo. At Mphambo, they had no fields, no school, and they were forced to recognise Mphambo as their chief since they were in his terrain.¹⁹⁸ The Vhavenda were reported to have crossed the road, and occupying the other part of Driefontein that was later given to the Venda homeland.¹⁹⁹ It was estimated that about 16 000 people were relocated from Driefontein, Borchers, Kurulen, Schiel and Mtiti.²⁰⁰ These estimates (although they also included removals from two more areas that were not covered by the study), indicate that many people were also been removed from the area investigated.

Agricultural restructuring and displacement.

After the Second World War, South African agriculture developed along commercial lines in order to meet the demands placed on it by urban dwellers. This affected adversely the numbers of farm workers employed, their living and working conditions. This restructuring according to the Surplus People Project, was shaped by the capitalisation of agriculture; and the concentration of land in few hands which has led to a situation in which the majority of farmers supported the state in its drive to eliminate labour and cash tenancy in the countryside.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁵ HT, interview with J. Tshitsenga, Mphambo, 12 July 1989.

¹⁹⁶ HT, songs recorded by M Kondlo and B Sibuyi, Nkuzana 12 July 1989.

¹⁹⁷ HT, songs recorded by G. P. Magagula, Ntlaveni Block 1.13 July 1987.

¹⁹⁸ HT, interview with J. Tshitsenga, Mphambo, 12 July 1989.

¹⁹⁹ HT, interview between Harries and W Matshileze, Kwa Nkuzana, July 1987.

²⁰⁰ Surplus People's Project Report (henceforth SPP), *Forced Removals in South Africa*, Vol.5, (Cape Town, 1983), p.134.

An exposition of the economic status of settlers from the north and those who came after the war indicates that not one of them possessed machinery (such as tractors) which was necessary for large-scale production.²⁰² At first they used oxen and mules for ploughing their fields, with maize as their main produce. The result was that large numbers of Vhavenda and Shangaans who were hired as labour tenants did more work. But as from 1959 onwards farming in Levubu was gradually becoming profitable.²⁰³ Consequently, Standard Bank and Baclays Bank started to offer loans to farmers with a view to increasing productivity. Farmers such as Messrs. Mulder, Badenhorst and Hartman were among the first to secure loans from these financial institutions for purchasing tractors.

Farming was simplified by the arrival of tractors and the availability of chemical fertilisers, supplied by the Levubu Co-operative.²⁰⁴ This meant that, mechanisation of farming was taking place, and according to de Klerk, "the traditional technique of using hands was replaced by machines".²⁰⁵ The introduction of tractors meant that large tracts of land could be cultivated, planted and harvested profitably instead of using too much labour. Chemicals such as weedcides also eliminated intensive labour utilisation. On the other hand, the shift from vegetable and maize farming to fruit farming in the second half of the 1950s and early 1960s signalled the deathblow to the tenants. Services of labour tenants were no longer required in large numbers after the fruit trees have been planted. Such tress did not require much labour and care in comparison to vegetable farming. Consequently, labour tenants were replaced by seasonal labourers (required during harvesting only) from nearby villages. The implication was that labour tenants and their stock occupied space that could be used productively for planting trees. They were therefore eliminated and most farms were only left with 6 to seven families.²⁰⁶ At Morgenzone when Ambi Company took over the farm from Mr Thomas in 1980, Vhavenda and Shangaans were removed. Mr Hlongwane 's comments captured the reason given for the removal that: "Ambi Company said we do not want your cattle and goats, we want to plough".²⁰⁷ Consequently, an undisclosed number of people were removed. Such a number can only be explained by comments such as "I don't know how many families lived at Morgenzone, a lot of people worked for Mr Thomas". Most of those removed went to Nkuzana, Mashau and Valdezia.²⁰⁸

²⁰¹ The SPP Report, Vol.1, (SPP, Cape Town 1983), p.42.

²⁰² LD 3148, Report from the magistrate to the secretary for justice, 29 June 1935, pp.1-6. See also LD31593/129, letters from the director of demobilisation to secretary for lands, undated.

²⁰³ HT, interview between S. Dowling and Mrs Mulder, Levubu, 07 July 1987.

²⁰⁴ The Land Department established Levubu co-operative in 1956. It took responsibilities for packaging, transportation and distribution of fruits produced by farmers.

²⁰⁵ M.de Klerk, "Mechanising farming: Implications for employment, incomes and population distribution", in Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa (Cape Town, 1984), p.1.

²⁰⁶ HT, interview between Dowling and Badenhorst, Levubu, 09 July 1987.

²⁰⁷ HT, interview with W. Hlongwane, Valdezia, 16 July 1984.

²⁰⁸ HT, interview with W. Hlongwane and Timbane, Valdezia, 16 July 1984.

Moreover, ownership of lorries by farmers allowed the labour force to be located within the bantustan and brought in on a daily basis. It seems these lorries arrived in the 1960s and 1970s when labour tenancy was abolished due to the capitalisation of farming. It might be possible that these lorries first came during homeland formations in the late 1960s, with the aim of introducing commuter labour that would work in white areas but sleep "home". This was done to avoid the blackening of the platteland.²⁰⁹ In a different context, Harries has made a point, which equally applies to Levubu "that lorries gave rise to female labour migration".²¹⁰ Women from Venda and Gazankulu bantustans were ferried on a daily and weekly basis to Levubu. However, farmers argued against hiring men because they were unreliable, because they suffer from "babalaas" (hangover); besides, men were scarce. Most of the men were working in the mines as migrant labourers where opportunities were better than on farms. Despite this argument, some farmers perceived most of the work on the farm, such as picking fruits as a woman's job.²¹¹ This could be the reason why the majority of farm workers in Levubu are women. Therefore, the transition from labour tenancy to wage labour was rapid, with the decade from 1960 - 1970 a turning point.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to show how Levubu as a white settlement area came about and in the process exposed the type of assistance that the government made towards the settlements. On the other hand, white settlement in the area meant that the Africans who were living there had to be removed and resettled in arid and mountainous areas without assistance at all. In these areas Vhavenda and Shangaans suffered impoverishment. In the next chapter attention will be given to those removed, and how they eke out a living under conditions of extreme hardship. Despite the fact that the 1936 Land Act recognised that blacks needed more land (which would be purchased and held by the South African Development Trust), this was never implemented because the Tomlinson Commission reported in 1956 that there was enough land in the reserves to meet the needs of 51% of the population. Moreover, with the purchase of 7,25 million morgen still to be incorporated in terms of the 1936 Land Act, the reserves would be able to support 22 million Africans.²¹² This purchase of land was never done because it was argued that it would be expensive, and therefore whites voted against the idea.²¹³ The implication was that they did not want to utilise public money, whereas this money came from the taxes and fines produced by blacks. This shows how powerless blacks were, and how those with the franchise determined their fate.

²⁰⁹ W. Davies, *We cry for our land, Farm workers in South Africa*, (Oxfam, Oxford, 1990), p.6.

²¹⁰ Harries, "The forgotten corner of the Transvaal", p.125.

²¹¹ HT, interview between Dowling and Fogwell, Levubu, 7 July 1987.

²¹² Horrell, "The economic development of the reserves", p.7.

²¹³ Saunders, *Illustrated history of South Africa*, p.380.

It was only during the Bantustan period that the Trust acquired some portions of Driefontein (Sapikoe) in 1982, portions of Welgevonden in 1980, and portions of Wolferoode in 1985.²¹⁴ These farms were then transferred to the Venda homeland. However, such farms were not opened for settlement but were utilised by the Venda Development Corporation and later taken over by Agriven, which was responsible for agricultural development in Venda. The result was that the farms were utilised by the government rather than being transferred to the people trapped in the homeland. One therefore, may agree with assertions made by Letsoalo that, blacks occupied less than 13% of land in South Africa.²¹⁵

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²¹⁴ DLA, Nkatingi papers, 199/7, deeds history, pp.18-33.

Chapter 3

The impact of the establishment of Levubu settlement

Introduction

The establishment of Levubu settlement had a profound impetus on both the (white) beneficiaries of resettlement and the (black) communities that bore the brunt of this experiment. This chapter looks at the victims of the relocation process and their struggle to keep heart and soul together in their relocated area. Poverty is central to this chapter because it is a by-product of relocation. Platzky suggests this when she writes that “relocation impoverishes the communities and people who are removed”, but such poverty “has many dimensions”.²¹⁶ It is not limited only to economic poverty but permeates all spheres of life including a person’s self respect, the harshness of living, a feeling of powerlessness and hopelessness. I also examine how these questions on impoverishment fit into the system of maintaining political and economic power in the hands of a white minority group, and how successful Levubu is.

However, this chapter will use specific cases to illustrate the impact of relocation. My object is, particularly, to examine the experiences of communities, that due to their remoteness from the centres of development, have not formed part of the public sphere of history. Through these illustrations, according to Marks, “something of a differentiated meaning of the complex South African social order can be seen, a tapestry in which race, gender and class are densely interwoven”.²¹⁷ I therefore examine the short term and long term effects of the removals from Levubu.

Conditions in closer settlements.

The relocation policy of the government affected blacks from rural areas adversely. As suggested by Platzky almost twenty years ago “both the way in which people are moved and the condition they find in the new place vary according to who they are”.²¹⁸ In this instance, Indians and coloureds got better facilities than Africans, urban more than rural, the employed more than the unemployed, industrial more than agricultural workers did. Vhavenda and Shangaans fell within the category of being African, who happened to find themselves doing agricultural work in a rural area declared white. In Levubu, these people were self-employed, involved in agricultural work for subsistence purposes, with surpluses exchanged with other members of the community. To show that they were self-sufficient they commented that:

²¹⁵ Letsoalo, Land reform in South Africa, p.41.

²¹⁶ L Platzky, “Relocation and poverty”, in Second Carnegie Inquiry into poverty and Development in Southern Africa, (Cape Town, 1984), p.6; G Ellis, “The dimension of poverty”, in Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa, (Cape Town, 1984), p.1.

²¹⁷ S. Marks, (ed) Not either an experimental doll, (The Women’s press, London, 1987), p.2.

“Everyone ploughed the field depending on the manpower he has, it was not demarcated how much land one can plough, his abilities and manpower to cultivate prevented him. We had good cattle”.²¹⁹

“We worked for three months for the farmer, we ploughed our fields as much as we liked, we never bought “mugayo”(Millie meal, the staple food of Vhavenda and Shagaans), beans, ground nuts, a variety of vegetables and water”.²²⁰

The above illustrations are just a myriad of other reasons given by informants in relocated areas, which in a way symbolise the contrasts between where they are now and the area they occupied before. They indicated that people produced enough to eat, and poverty was unknown to them though some were working for nothing, as noted by Lacy they were working for “boroko” (a place to sleep).²²¹ The government in pursuit of its policy of supplying farmers in the Transvaal and Zoutpansberg with labour, moved these people and dumped them in closer settlements at Beaconsfield, Boabab, Cliffside, Mphambo, Nkuzana and other areas that were divided along ethnic lines.

Closer settlements according to Platzky were usually designed to accommodate tenants from black spots and those removed or evicted from farms.²²² The churches’s report on forced removals indicated that closer settlement was meant for African people. They were located in the reserves or Trust land and were established for residential purposes only as no agricultural land was allotted. Facilities according to them were poorer than those in townships with a communal or non-existent water supply.²²³ People accustomed to ploughing were to suffer, as there were neither ploughing nor grazing fields. It would be difficult for people to survive in such places. The purpose of the government in dumping those removed in closer settlements was to eliminate them as producers who, in capitalist terms, may be seen as competitors with whites. The object was also to deliberately impoverish them so that they can help to build the wealth of Afrikaners in Levubu not because of their own free will, but because they had no choice. This was what the South African Council of Churches called the “ideology of unrestricted capitalism” which views all form of wealth accumulation as good, no matter what effect they have on other people.²²⁴ The conditions of closer settlement in different areas occupied by Vhavenda and Shangaans were reported as follows:

²¹⁸ Platzky, “Relocation and poverty”, p.4.

²¹⁹ M. Nefale, interview with E. Matumba and Ratombo, Tshakhuma, 26 May 2000.

²²⁰ HT, Interview with J. Tsitsenga, Mphambo, 12 July 1989.

²²¹ M Lacy, Working for Boroko, The origins of coercive labour system in South Africa, (Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1981), p.1.

²²² Platzky, “Relocation and poverty”, p.4.

²²³ South African Council of Churches (henceforth SACC), Relocation: The churches’ report on forced removals, (The South African Catholic Bishop Conference, 1984), p.11.

²²⁴ Ibid, p.16.

“When we arrived at Mphambo, we found all stands numbered with a hut. We have no fields from 1972 up to today (1989), we plough nothing and all our cattle died because of drought, We are just seated, We have nothing but when we came from Driefontein; a truck carried my belongings six times”.²²⁵

“We stay and farm in a 30 square meters stand. Our cattle graze along the roads. You see at Tshakhuma you can say that people like ploughing on top of mountains, we do not like it”.²²⁶

The Ravele community indicated that “we have been removed from our fertile soil and resettled at this barren and rocky place where we cannot live off the land”.²²⁷

The above quotes indicate the extreme shortage of land in the areas where people were relocated, or in areas they voluntarily chose for themselves since they were afraid of the “wilderness”. The effect of the removal on agriculture was to reduce people’s stock holdings, while others lost all their livestock. It also reduced their access to land, thereby reducing the extent and scale of agricultural activity and paving the way for a precarious subsistence.

How people managed to survive conditions of extreme land shortage and poverty is an interesting story. Matumba indicated that “they resorted to ploughing on top of the mountains”, as there was no other fertile place. Consequently, these people have even developed some skills on the usage of their hoes in cultivating on the mountains since, it is impossible for tractors or draught animals to do this daunting task. One can only imagine how difficult it was for one to adapt from being accustomed to cultivating flat areas to mountainous areas. These people are said to be producing mealies that can only be utilised for a month or two. Hirson who commented that “he did not know whether the government intended to turn all African people into monkeys” also observed ploughing on mountainous areas. This would make it impossible for the ordinary person to work the land.²²⁸ Moreover, a land surveyor asserted that “when comparing a native land map with a contour map, native land was either mountainous, too rocky and too high for farming and settlement”.²²⁹

Those who still have livestock face an uncertain future since they expect anytime to be told that their cattle are dead. Most of these cattle do not die of natural causes but mainly because of road accidents and in the process kill innocent travellers. If one drives along the Nzhelele main road, where most of

²²⁵ HT, interview with J. Tshitsenga, Mphambo, 12 July 1989.

²²⁶ M.Nefale, interview with E. Matumba, Tshakhuma, 24 May 2000

²²⁷ *The Mirror*, 28 November 1997.

²²⁸ B. Hirson, *Yours for the Union, Class and Community Struggles in South Africa, 1930-1947*, (Wits University press, Johannesburg, 1990), p.127.

²²⁹ SAIRR, JD Jones papers, AD843/RJ/C3.9, Report to Mr Molteno, 8 July 1940, p.2.

the relocated communities reside, to Thohoyandou, Giyani, Mphambo, and from Mashau to Elim, the only visible road signs are those warning motorists that livestock may cross the roads at anytime, and as such they must be alert. This proved to be difficult, as the area is too dark, since electricity supplies are still far from reaching such areas. Therefore, it proved difficult for drivers to see clearly at night, resulting in accidents. Because of this, in 1991 farmers in Levubu issued a strong warning to the chiefs and headmen in their vicinity to warn their subjects to keep livestock away from the roads as too many accidents were taking place.²³⁰ In my opinion, I believe farmers were not justified to say that people were not taking care of their livestock. This is because there was no other place where they could find pasture. The only pasture that was available was along the roads, thus causing cattle to stray into the path of traffic. This forced people to sell their livestock since they were punished for not looking after them.

In addition, such cattle proved to be a liability rather than an asset to the owners, since they had to pay a 20-cent tax per head for dipping in order to prevent cattle from dying of diseases.²³¹ That was reasonable because medicine needed to be purchased, but what was unfair was paying for pasture since this had never been part of their culture. This system of taxation also impoverished the people because it was levied on people who did not work, who because of relocation became poor. This gave them no option but to sell their stock which others referred to as their “bank”, because they do not keep their money in banks.²³² These when coupled with bad living conditions and a R2 tax known as chibalo paid by every married man per year, forced people to sell all their stock.²³³ When all these animals were sold, the people were left with no other source of income but had to seek employment in white areas as migrant labourers in order to avoid being arrested.

The effect of migrant workers on relocated families.

“Migrant workers are the ones who can help us, they send us money because they have families here”.²³⁴

From the above comment it was clear that those who went to towns were the only hope in which those left in closer settlement depended on for survival. They were reported to be as far as Johannesburg and Pretoria. They were working on railways, mines, industries, shops, building construction and road works.²³⁵ The labour bureaux established in 1952 were responsible for their recruitment. These labour bureaux were regulated by Bantu Labour Act no 67 of 1964, which made provision for district,

²³⁰ Thohoyandou, 28 June 1991.

²³¹ HT, interview between S. Dowling and Tambane, Valdezia, 16 July 1984.

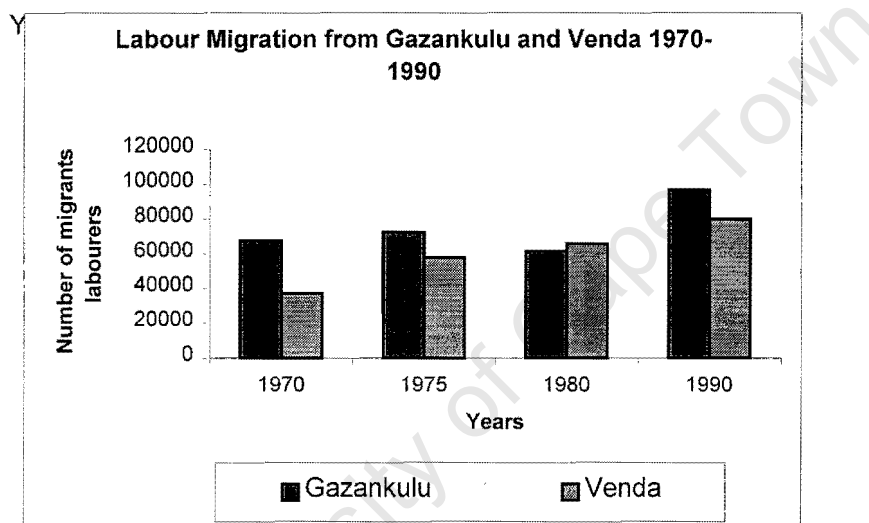
²³² M. Nefale, interview with M. Sambo, Magoro, 24 May 2000.

²³³ HT, interview between S. Dowling and Tambane, Valdezia, 16 July 1984.

²³⁴ HT, interview with J. Tshitsenga, Mphambo, 12 July 1989.

²³⁵ M. Nefale, interview between S Shirinda and N Manganye, Olifantshoek, 13 July 2000.

regional and local labour bureaux. With the establishment of the homelands, this system of labour bureaux saw its extension and four district labour bureaux were established in Gazankulu.²³⁶ Vendlalnd was reported to have three labour bureaux, with 26 tribal bureaux.²³⁷ The point that I am trying to put to the fore is that, though these labour bureaux were situated within the reserves they were largely responsible for employing even people who were relocated from Levubu as there was nothing to eat in the relocated areas. These bureaux were designed to further the interests of capitalists, to provide them with labour, which could be manipulated in the form of giving them starvation wages. Despite the fact that most of those who went to town provided relief to their starving families in the closer settlements, more harm was done to the families that were left behind.



These figures indicate the number of people who worked outside Gazankulu and Venda between 1970 and 1990.²³⁸ What is important to note is that approximately 50% male absenteeism in both areas was recorded. Therefore, the heads of families were always absent from home and this contributed to the destruction of marriages since most men married again in towns. They neither went back home nor send money to those left home.²³⁹

The expectations which members of the family had developed such as looking at each other for support, healing and growth disappeared. Those left at home lacked the energy to cope with forming new identities as the situation demands. This contributed to the destruction of their self-esteem and

²³⁶ Bureau for Economic Research and Bantu Development (henceforth Benbo), Gazankulu Economic Review, 1976, p.50.

²³⁷ Benbo, Venda Economic Review, 1976,p.49.

²³⁸ Benbo, Gazankulu Economic Review, 1976,p.51; Benbo, Venda Economic Review, 1976,p.49. South African Labour Development Research Unit (henceforth SALDRU), Regional Poverty Profile: Eastern and Northern Transvaal, (Cape Town, 1993), p.41.

sense of hopelessness. In my views, I believe poverty is likely to hit hard families without males, as females were left to assume duties once performed by males at the home. They had to fend for themselves on their own. On the other hand, children grew up in unhealthy conditions. This contributed to their emotional and mental instability due to lack of family care and adequate food needed for growth and development. These effects can be portrayed through the life of Phaniel Manganye aged 13, who since birth has never known the interior of a classroom.²⁴⁰ It was not because families were not aware of the possibilities of a bright future if one was educated, but it was because they were unable to provide for education of their kids. For them education is no longer an asset or investment but a liability since it would drain the little they had which was meant for survival. However, complaints by other communities that schools promised were not built, or that their children were forced to travel long distances, also had an adverse effect since most of the kids stayed away from them. This was because they were not accustomed to travelling long distances.²⁴¹ The result is that closer settlements have a high rate of illiteracy. Consequently, such poverty stimulated criminal activities such as thieving which Levubu farmers complained about. This on the other hand, ensured that a pool of cheap labour was always available and prepared to work under brutal conditions for white farmers at Levubu.

Old age pension: a simple alternative for survival.

Relocated communities survived on the payment of both migrant's remittances and the payment of old age pensions. It seems most of the people depended on them, since societies in relocated areas were composed of old men and women. Those who were away were mostly from about 16 years to 64 years of age. Mare put it clearly when he wrote that "as soon as they become, for some reason or the other, no longer fit for work in the labour market, they were expected to return to their country of origin or territory of their national unit".²⁴² Age also caused these people to be classified as unfit. Nevertheless, these people were old, unproductive and therefore could not fend for their families. They needed to spend their last years resting. This was another side of unrestricted capitalism under the apartheid government, wherein if one was unproductive or disabled because of the work he did, one was thrown out of the system with little provisions. These old men got old age pension every two months but the amount was not enough, since out of those meagre wages they were forced to pay taxes to the chiefs, school fees, water and dip tax.²⁴³ On the other hand, Vhavenda were also reported

²³⁹ M. Nefale, interview with G. Manganye, Tiyani, 24 May 2000.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ HT, interview with J. Tshitsenga, Mphambo, 12 July 1989.

²⁴² G. Mare, *African population relocation in South Africa*, (SAIRR, Johannesburg, 1980), p.75.

²⁴³ HT, interview with J.Tshitenga, Mphambo, 12 July 1989.

to be earning a living from old age money.²⁴⁴ Though they got money, it was reduced to an extent that it was difficult to survive from it alone, whilst those families with no aged faced extreme hardships. This was because they were not having a source of income.

Cultural poverty

George Ellis in his paper on the dimension of poverty argued that communities suffered severe deprivation of the means that enabled them to carry out their usual cultural activities. This is what he calls “cultural poverty”.²⁴⁵ This cultural poverty can not be divorced from the fact that people experienced severe land shortage due to removal. The survival of any culture depends on the resources garnered from the land. The form of chieftainship, known to the Vhavenda and Shangaans suffered as a result of land deprivation. It was argued that “we are continuing to install chiefs in our area, despite the fact that we have no land”.²⁴⁶ This means that the chiefs were there only in name, because he had no land, in which he could settle and exercise control over his people. He was also deprived of the tribute, which his subjects were supposed to pay him. On the other hand, the people of Ravele were lucky enough to be given a place in Beaconsfield, Boabab and Cliffside where they were able to have their own chiefs as before, though the tributes to the chiefs were very limited. Those from Driefontein who moved to Mphambo were forced to owe allegiance to Mphambo. The minister of community affairs in Gazankulu was reported to have said “you people from Borchers you have no more chief, your chief is Mphambo the owner of the area”.²⁴⁷ This was a recipe for conflict since such chiefs would not be popular and whatever they did would be seen as unfair to the other groups. The result was a split between groups that wanted to maintain their independence. Therefore, chiefs Tiyani and Bungeni did not want to have any connection with chiefs Shigalo and Khamanyani.²⁴⁸

The Vhavenda have a strong cultural attachment to their ancestors, through the graves in which they were buried in various areas in Levubu and elsewhere. They relied on these graves for their spiritual fulfilment. The establishment of farms meant that the Vhavenda were denied access to these graves by the farmers, though some like Ravele and Masakona were allowed to visit them, but were later denied access to them and were labelled trespassers.²⁴⁹ To the Vhavenda, this meant that they experienced what Ellis calls “psychological poverty” or “spiritual poverty” because they were denied access to go

²⁴⁴ Republic of Venda, Office of the State President, Statistical Report no 3 of 1987, current population survey 1985.

²⁴⁵ G.Ellis, “The dimension of poverty”, in Second Carnegie Inquiry into poverty and Development in Southern Africa, (Cape Town, 1984), p.1.

²⁴⁶ M. Nefale, interview with E. Matumba and W. Ratombo, Tshakhuma, 26 May 2000.

²⁴⁷ HT, interview with J. Tshitsenga, Mphambo, 12 July 1989.

²⁴⁸ HT, interview between Harries, Feldman and chief Khamanyani, Gazankulu, 8 July 1983.

²⁴⁹ NTS, 17/12/2, Vol.1/1/49, letter from the chief native commissioner, September 1946; M. Nefale, interview with Shirinda, Farmworker activist, Nkuzi Development Association, Elim, 24 May 2000

and worship their ancestors.²⁵⁰ The royal families were also denied the benefits associated with the thevhula rituals, which were performed in royal graves.

In order to compensate their spiritual needs, since it was impossible to perform traditional ancestral rituals, people turned to Christianity but not all of them.²⁵¹ Christianity suppressed and forbade traditional ways of worshipping.²⁵² Many people turned to it because it offered them advantages like schooling and an opportunity to be accepted in the Whiteman's world. An opportunity to get educated served purposes of making Vhavenda look down upon their culture, it controlled them for the benefit of capitalism and at the same time it also prepared them for a better future. The implication was that they were made to believe and to measure their standard of living through Whiteman's eyes, which was not necessarily the right criterion. What is good to whites may be bad to blacks.

The royal families were also denied the right to perform the "murundu" or boys' circumcision in Levubu, because suitable sites for such activities were located on farms. On the other hand, the relocated areas made it impossible for them to perform circumcision due to lack of forests and water. Murundu is a ritual which almost all Venda and Shangaan boys have to go through. Children born on the farms and in closer settlements grew up not knowing Murundu. This is an "experience and right of passage which has been missed".²⁵³ From 1943 permission was required from the Native Affairs Commission to conduct such schools in Levubu in terms of Proclamation No: 53 of that same year.²⁵⁴ The application for permission laid down certain conditions that made it difficult for applications to succeed. It marked the involvement of whites in traditional matters, as they became the ones who recommended the person to perform the operation. Therefore, the powers of the chiefs to run these schools according to Venda culture were usurped by the Native Affairs Commissioner. The diminishing status of these schools could be attributed to the involvement of whites in cultural practices they knew nothing about. The high death rate in these schools could be attributed to people who had been appointed to perform operations without adequate knowledge and experience.

Since the Vhavenda and Shangaans were relocated to settlements that resembled deserts in conditions, it implied that all traditional skills of making household articles disappeared. People were unable to make sleeping mats such as "thovho" made from reeds found in rivers. Since it was difficult to find rivers in such areas, clay, a valuable material for the making of cooking pots was unavailable for the community. The result was that they were forced to buy these articles from shops, which also proved difficult for communities with no source of income.

²⁵⁰ Ellis, "Dimension of poverty", p.3.

²⁵¹ M. Nefale, interview with E. Matumba, Tshakhuma, 26 May 2000.

²⁵² C Kwenda, <http://www.images.uct.ac.za/Internal/Module/Religion/God.htm>.

²⁵³ Nefale, "Conditions of farm workers in Levubu", p.37.

²⁵⁴ TA, HKN, 17N1/12/10, Vol. 1/1/50, various applications to the Native Commissioner 1943-1953.

The dispossessed as Levubu farm workers.

Farm work was another alternative for families affected by poverty, especially whose husbands were not sending money from the towns and those headed by widows. It needs to be stressed that economic pressures forced families to work on farms. Farmers and farm workers are tied together by a dialectical relationship, which means the survival of the two. It is always difficult to deal with one or ignore the other.

Levubu is edged on in most parts by Venda and Gazankulu. The implication was that farmers could afford daily transportation of workers by ferrying them to and from home daily or on Fridays and Sundays, hence maximising production and reducing costs, a fundamental feature inherent in a capitalist economy.²⁵⁵ Though costs were reduced, labourers reaped the bitter harvest of travelling in open trucks in winter and summer. In a different context, it was noted that “in 1979, two teenagers froze to death on the back of the lorry which was driving through a blizzard in the Orange Free State”.²⁵⁶ This exposes the farm workers to a number of diseases.

However, others have taken residence with their entire families at their masters's farms.²⁵⁷ Mr Badenhorst had seven families on his farm, and 60% of the 800 labourers at the Sapekoe Tea Estate were staying in the compounds.²⁵⁸ These compounds were mostly built on a piece of unwanted land, especially near rivulets of dams, and were a breeding ground for mosquitoes. Keeping labourers on the farm gave the farmers the upper hand. This meant, for instance, that workers would start work early and knock off late hence maximising productivity. Though schooling facilities were provided at Sapekoe and Tshitungulu for instance, they seldom went beyond primary level. Such schools were meant for the children of farm workers. In my views, I believe these schools were meant to give some form of elementary education with the hope that their education would improve productivity on farms, unlike “raw natives” who damaged farm implements. The little education the youth received made them realise that there was life beyond the farm, and this often led to conflict between heads of families and land owners when children deserted the farm. For many families born and bred on the farm, it became automatic for some farm owners to claim labour of children. In a different context, which equally applies to Levubu, Keegan has made a point that contracts under the Masters and Servants Act were broad to enable landowners to call the service of minors whenever required.²⁵⁹ This left farm workers with no right to order their children to school. However, in most cases, farm

²⁵⁵ Thohoyandou, 23/10/1992. SACC, Relocation: The churches report on forced removals, p.16.

²⁵⁶ Davies, We cry for our land, p.24.

²⁵⁷ HT, interview between S. Dowling and Hartman, July 1987.

²⁵⁸ HT, interview between S. Dowling, Badenhorst, and Mr Elliot, Levubu, July 1987.

**A common sight of violence against women by farmers in Levubu.
(Thohoyandou, 28 October 1992)**



Women who were revaged by dogs. They are from left, Nyatshiongo Mufamađi, Tshinakaho Mufamađi and Emely Mudau.



Second from right is Mrs. Munzhedzi Mufamađi with her hand in plaster. Mrs. Mufumađi was beaten up by her employer.

workers' families were not in a position to send the children to school because of poverty. Such children were often recruited to work on the farms and by so doing helped to make ends meet.

Labourers toil from dusk to dawn, nearly 12 hours a day and 72 hours per week, with salaries ranging from R80 to R180 per month for 1992. It was also reported that a "breadwinner was earning R120 a month after 10 years of service", though at times such wages were supplemented by a bag of mielie meal and some fruit.²⁶⁰ Mrs Mulder, one of those who settled in Levubu around 1937, reported that "Bantu labour in those days was worth R2", and R100-R140 in 1987. However, wages varied from farm to farm and according to gender and age. Child labour was common on these farms.²⁶¹ The result was that a lot of female labourers and school going youth were employed on these farms. Farmers often exploited them as they were regarded as "cheap" and could be treated according to the wishes of the farmers. Such women and children were unable to resist the bad treatment handed out by the farmers. To make matters worse, some of them usually got their dues 5 days after the salary calendar month had ended and there was no provision for one to question the employer as one might face expulsion, which might lead to loss of accommodation, and the little that families were depending on. "Some employers were reported as having a tendency of beating up their workers during month end so that they could forsake their employment without having received their dues (see opposite picture). Thus he would keep on hiring new faces."²⁶² Bradford's observation of a similar situation elsewhere in the country is equally valid for Levubu. She writes that "in an economy in which black labour power came cheap, black bodies were the site on which farmers exercised their blood stained power."²⁶³ The result therefore, was that workers' rights were violated, and that they were forced into marginal existence, with poverty affecting every facet of their lives.

Levubu: The "Mecca" of subtropical fruits

Farming constitutes an essential component in the production of food for the nation and its people. Levubu farms specialise in particular fruits such as mangoes, macadamia, litchis, oranges and, predominantly, avocados and bananas.²⁶⁴ On the other hand, vegetables such as cabbages, tomatoes and maize, though still produced, are less dominant than fruits. Such produce has done well both

²⁵⁹ T Keegan, "The sharecropping economy, African class formation and the 1913 Native Land Act in the highveld maize belt", in Bozzoli, *Town and Countryside in the Transvaal*, p.121; M. Nefale, interview with Prof. Ralushai, Thohoyandou, 6 June 2000; HT, interview with W. Hlongwane, Valdezia, 16 July 1984.

²⁶⁰ Thohoyandou, 23 October 1992.

²⁶¹ HT, interview between S. Dowling, Mrs Mulder and Mr Fogwell, Levubu, 7 July 1987; HT, interview with W. Hlogwane, Valdezia, 16 July 1984; HT, interview between Harries and W. Matshileze, Kwa Nkuzue, July 1987.

²⁶² Thohoyandou, 23 October 1992.

²⁶³ H Bradford, "Lynch Law and Labourers: The ICU in Umvoti, 1927-1928", in Delius et al. *Putting a plough to the ground*, p.433.

²⁶⁴ HT, interview between S. Dowling and Mrs Mulder, Levubu, 7 July 1987.

locally and internationally, hence earning valuable foreign exchange. For instance, in 1978, a 4kg box of avocados was R1, 94 locally but for export in that same year it sold for R2, 09. In 1982 the same box locally was R2, 95 and R3, 84 for export.²⁶⁵ Though I have not obtained more recent figures, such figures can help one to at least set the present price in line with the increased standard of living, coupled with high demand for such produce.

From the inception of the Levubu settlement, efforts were made to link this farming area with important markets in South Africa. This was done to ensure an efficient marketing of produce.²⁶⁶ Fruits produced were transported from Levubu by "railway" buses, which moved daily to and from Sibasa to Louis Trichardt. Such goods were then transported to Johannesburg by train.²⁶⁷ However, to date Landman Vervoer, a transportation company situated at Beaufort is responsible for the transportation of fruits and vegetable to Johannesburg.²⁶⁸ The farmer therefore had a choice of either using railway or Landman; or he could transport produce to market in his own lorries.

Locally, the produce provided an opportunity for communities to escape from poverty. Street vendors from all over Venda would flock to Levubu for goods to sell to the local communities, and to tourists on their way to and from Kruger National Park.²⁶⁹ This also provided an opportunity for communities to avoid exploitation on the farms. But that did not guaranteed their safety, since they were constantly harassed, searched by the police and required to carry slips as proof of purchase since, it was alleged that theft on the farms was widespread. However, such farmers never gave such people slips.²⁷⁰ This meant that farmers' actions would be justified before the law for crimes committed against blacks in the area. These may account for the brutal reputation that the area got through assaults and murders on black people. Dogs reigned supreme in this conservative farming area and several cases were reported to have been opened in Levubu Police station, and in all instances no farmer was prosecuted for violating the rights of blacks or for murder.²⁷¹ After all, we can not expect a fair judgement from a police station, established in 1963, in order to prevent theft and to discipline labourers in the area. Those alleged to be thieves were always guilty before taken to court, since both the police force and the court system in the area was dominated by Afrikaners, who strongly supported apartheid.²⁷² Up to today real transformation within the Levubu police force has not fully taken place.

²⁶⁵ Die Noord Transvaler, 20 August 1983.

²⁶⁶ LD, 31593/21,1634,Transport arrangement, Letter to Mr Grossert, irrigation engineer, 7 July 1938.

²⁶⁷ HT, interview between S.Dowling and Mr Fogwell, Levubu, 7 July 1987.

²⁶⁸ Landman Vervoer is a private company found in Levubu.It transports produce on daily basis to the Johannesburg market.

²⁶⁹ Nefale, "Conditions of farm workers in Levubu", p.3.

²⁷⁰ Thohoyandou, 28 July 1991.

²⁷¹ M. Nefale, interview with Deputy Station Commissioner S.P. Baloyi, Levubu, 2 June 2000.

²⁷² M. Nefale, interview with Deputy Station Commissioner, S.P. Baloyi, Levubu, 2 June 2000.

Conclusion

The chapter has attempted to show how a shortage of land impoverished communities relocated from Levubu and how they managed to survive under conditions of extreme hardship. The alternatives that communities relied on, like migrant labour and farm work, had far-reaching effects on their families and culture because they were designed to serve capitalists' interests. They could be manipulated and disposed if they were no longer fit to serve the system. The success of the settlement was captured in the comments by Mrs Mulder who stated in 1987 that "when we came here we were not rich, we were poor," and presently, electric fences dominate the landscape of the settlement.²⁷³ On the other hand, Prof. Ralushai commented that "in the beginning they could have been poor whites but because of subsidy from the government they were successful, not only to offer jobs but to export food as well".²⁷⁴ The implication is that through the Levubu settlement scheme the local poor white problem has been eradicated; but at the cost of creating a poor black problem. It is, of course, unacceptable in any society to solve a problem by creating another problem. Violence against blacks, both those near the settlement and those working on neighbouring farms, has taken the form of evictions, low wages, sjamboking, and general harassment. The countryside therefore, remains a terrain wherein racism still manifests itself. Its survival is a threat to the new South African democratic government. Therefore, attention in the following chapter will be focused on the new democratic order and the social aims of its land reform programme.

²⁷³ HT, interview between S. Dowling and Mrs Mulder, Levubu, 7 July 1987.

²⁷⁴ M. Nefale, interview with Prof. Ralushai, Thohoyandou, 6 July 2000.

Chapter 4

Land Reform (1990-1998)

Introduction

It has been argued by various scholars of land reform such as Levin, Dorner and de Klerk that for “any government purporting to be democratic, legitimate, stable and non-racial”, the need for land reform, as part of a much broader rural restructuring package, requires little explanation.²⁷⁵ Apartheid, and the colonial and segregationist policies that preceded it, acted to displace blacks from the land, to deny them access to institutions and facilities that enhance the quality of life. It impoverished them on the one hand, whilst on the other hand empowering whites in rural Levubu. For a society purporting to be stable and non-racial, democracy would remain out of reach as long as those historical inequalities were not addressed.

The newly elected ANC government “promised a better life for all”, for all those who live in deep poverty, those who have no security in relations to their homes, and have often been thrown off the land at the whim of the farmer.²⁷⁶ This chapter focuses on the new government’s role in land redistribution, restitution, and tenure reform for farm workers as a way of delivering a better life for all. This is what Levin calls “the pursuit of a developmentalist vision for South Africa”.²⁷⁷ Continuities and discontinuities with the past will be looked at to determine what has been done and what has changed in the lives of those who live in deep poverty, since the democratic government came into power in 1994. Though South Africa in general was affected by land reform policies, Levubu remains the focus of this study.

Land redistribution and the free market enterprise.

The South African government through the free market approach, which de Klerk writes about, is attempting to implement land reform.²⁷⁸ The approach argues that previously disadvantaged blacks can now participate with whites to buy or lease land on a free market basis, since measures of control such as the 1913 and 1936 Land Act and Group areas act have been repealed. Removal of these restrictions was expected to lead to the purchase of commercial farms by blacks. However, Claassens argues against this approach because of a lack of funds to purchase such land at current market prices.²⁷⁹ Very few black people in the rural areas have the money to buy land; most of them as the

²⁷⁵ de Klerk, “Issues and options for land reform”, in *Harvest of discontent*, p.259.

²⁷⁶ Levin et al, “From Apartheid to development”, in *No more tears*, p.5.

²⁷⁷ Levin, “Land restitution, the chieftaincy and territoriality: The case of Mmaboi Land claim in South Africa’s Northern Province”, paper presented at the African Studies Centre’s spring symposium, (University of Illinois, 1996), p. 1.

²⁷⁸ de Klerk, “Issues and options for land reform”, p.260.

²⁷⁹ A. Claassens, “Who owns South Africa?”, p.5.

study has shown live below the poverty line. This means that those targeted by this programme of reform would remain poor and destitute while perpetuating further inequalities. Consequently, the Afrikaner farmers in Levubu would remain in advantageous positions because they have resources accumulated during the apartheid dispensation. Therefore, rural Levubu has maintained its Afrikaner population composition. This means that once laws that excluded blacks from owning land were repealed, the market was effectively used to exclude blacks from owning land alongside whites. The market is perpetuating the legacy of the past in this way. Furthermore, removing restrictions and giving blacks the right to buy land does not address the claims of communities that were forcibly removed.²⁸⁰ The question remains therefore, as to how communities are going to respond when their ancestral homes are put on the market. I believe that this is likely to lead to violence in the form of invasions.

Claassens has remarked that, in order “for land to be given to someone who doesn’t have, it has to be taken away from someone who does ”.²⁸¹ Dorner on the other hand, has noted that the only major way to acquire land for reform purposes has been through confiscation and expropriation, which proved to be successful in Chile, Japan and Mexico.²⁸² Despite the successes of confiscation and expropriation in other countries, the ANC government has opted for the market approach, which has been characterised by pitfalls, with neighbouring Zimbabwe providing a living example of such failures.²⁸³ Such a choice seems to be a product of a negotiated settlement, which Alexander has noted as the root of Zimbabwe’s problems.²⁸⁴ Such negotiated settlement forced the ANC to shift from its economic policy of nationalisation, and to dance to the tune of leading international agencies like the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and World Trade Organisation.²⁸⁵ These agencies are able to influence economic policies of every country in the world since they have made the world a global village. It seems therefore that the market approach was a product of pressures from these groups and not from the ANC since its freedom charter stressed the need to banish famine as “land shall be shared among those who work it”.²⁸⁶ However, Cliffe has noted this and made a point that “a collection of papers of international experience or of South African realities and designed to yield a model for the right policy choice, authored by interconnected experts from the World Bank.... They included those from Southern Africa Development Bank waving apartheid era reformist, verligte credentials and some agricultural economists based in one institution. Their influence was fed into the

²⁸⁰ Claassens, “Who owns South Africa?”, p.5.

²⁸¹ Ibid.p.6.

²⁸² P. Dorner, Land reform and economic development, (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1972), p.48.

²⁸³ BBC News, 15 September 1998, Africa, “Zimbabwe backtracks on Land reform”.

²⁸⁴ J. Alexander, “State, peasantry and resettlement in Zimbabwe,” in a Review of African Political Economy, 1994, pp.325-326.

²⁸⁵ L. Cliffe, “Land reform in South Africa”, in Review of the African Political Economy, No.84, 2000, p.276.

²⁸⁶ African National Congress (henceforth ANC) Selected writings on the freedom charter, (ANC, London, 1985), p.2.

policy – making process through a series of conferences and other dialogues with the ANC (African National Congress), government and activists from the early 1990s”.²⁸⁷ What is clear is that the approach was a result of the thinking of the World Bank. A priority in such economic institutions is the creation of economic conditions in which the already rich could get richer.

Nevertheless, existing land distribution has nothing to do with free market enterprise, for it is the result of politically inspired, forced removals carried out by the segregationist government. Can we call a market free while whites in Levubu were given land, seeds and implements by the government to establish themselves, whilst the Vhavenda and Shangaans were removed to barren areas so that they could help whites to accumulate wealth.²⁸⁸ One can argue therefore, that the very same political mindset used by the government to appropriate land from blacks should be used on the other hand, to appropriate land from whites, with the difference being that this time it is being done in an attempt to redress the past injustices. However, the government finds itself in a dilemma. It is unable to expropriate land from farmers because they are contributing millions of rands in the form of taxes. These farmers are also producing enough food for consumption in South Africa whilst surplus produce is exported to other countries. Therefore, expropriating land from these farmers would mean loss of revenue for the government both locally and internationally, since there is a belief that blacks particularly those within the bantustans “could not and did not want to farm,” as observed and noted by Levin.²⁸⁹ Moreover, the post-Apartheid State is highly fragmented politically and it is still in the process of consolidation. Therefore, within the government we still find architects of apartheid working in the new democratic offices. They remain influential in the design and conceptualisation of post-apartheid social transformation. This resulted in policies developed from these offices ignoring land issues as a rural development concern.

To rely on the market would only consolidate the unequal nature of existing land distribution. After all, there is no such thing as a free market. It is an ideal which does not exist anywhere because a market is never entirely free. It operates within the exploitative capitalist system in which wealth has been concentrated in few hands irrespective of whether such wealth has been accumulated by foul means (as in the case of land acquisition under apartheid). It does not take into account the sufferings of the majority of the people. Therefore, giving different individuals equal access to the market, and to information would only consolidate inequalities because, they would never compete on an equal footing since some individual are more equal than the others.

²⁸⁷ Cliffe, “Land reform in South Africa”, in Review of the African Political Economy, 2000,p.276.

²⁸⁸ HT, interview between S. Dowling and Mrs Mulder, Levubu, 7 July 1987.

²⁸⁹ Levin et al, “From apartheid to development”, in No more tears, p.7.

The essence of the market approach is that land had to change hands based on a “willing buyer and willing seller” principle.²⁹⁰ This meant that in order for the government to acquire land for reform purposes, landowners had to volunteer sell their land. Therefore, if they were not willing such land could not be taken away from them, because they were operating in a free market economy. One may argue that the approach depended largely on the mercy of white landowners who must be willing to sell. On the other hand, it is assumed that the dispossessed masses are “willing buyers” who can be assisted by the government to buy that land for agricultural purposes.²⁹¹ This approach does not take into account that the dispossessed communities did not volunteer to be destitute, but were forced by apartheid policies. The result of this voluntary transaction is that farmers are not willing to sell their land, because the South African Constitution allows them to do so. It is also difficult for them to give up the wealth they have accumulated during the apartheid dispensation, and therefore venturing to other vocation would be difficult for them. It is difficult because they need to make “major adjustments” when they resettle somewhere even when adequately compensated.²⁹² De Wet has observed this and made a point that “farmers moving off the land had to find an alternative source of income, and many farmers have few professional qualification”.²⁹³ This means that if farmers sell their farms, they will starve, since they would be unable to compete with others in the job market. Consequently, if farmers were not selling their land, redistribution programmes would not work hence, the poor would remain poor.

According to Mr Shirinda, a field and farm worker activist for Nkuzi Development Association,²⁹⁴ “from 1994 to the present moment not even a single farmer in Levubu has demonstrated willingness to sell their farms. However, there was one farmer who was insolvent and as such was forced to sell his farm within six months in order to pay the bank”.²⁹⁵ Such a farmer can hardly be classified as a willing seller because he needed money urgently, he was not just willing, but was forced, and as such he was not prepared to wait for the bureaucracies involved in the process of redistribution which can last up to 18 months. Mr Shirinda commented that:

“We were assisting farm workers and farm residents to buy the farm they were occupying. The farmer was calling us three times a day saying how far is the project. We were charged with the responsibility of drafting a proposal to the Department of Land Affairs (DLA), DLA had to come back to us and we

²⁹⁰ White paper on South African Land Policy, 1997,p.39; Claasens, “Who owns South Africa?”, p.5.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² C. de Wet, “Resettlement and land reform in South Africa”, in a Review of African Political Economy, Vol.21, No.61, 1994,p.371.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Nkuzi Development Association is a Non-Governmental Organisation based in the Northern Province, working on areas of Land reform and land rights. It is an affiliate of the National Land Committee.

²⁹⁵ M. Nefale, interview with S. Shirinda, Field and Farm worker activist, Nkuzi development Association, Elim, 24 May 2000.

were supposed to hold meetings with the farmer, farm workers and farm residents. But within three months the farmer called us and said he had already sold the farm to another white person”²⁹⁶

The long process involved in redistributing land proved to be detrimental to land reform because willing sellers, who in the case of Levubu were those in debt, were not ready to wait but wanted to sell their land as quickly as possible. This means that the landless and the poor were not benefiting because of the protracted correspondences with the DLA. Only those not targeted by the programme were benefiting. The poor therefore are losing interest in the land reform programmes. They no longer believe that the government wants to assist them in getting access to the land.

Despite the long process experienced by willing sellers the beneficiaries of the redistribution programme were required to furnish the DLA with a “business proposed plan.”²⁹⁷ This proved to be an obstacle to redistribution for the poor of Levubu. Such business plans should explain how people would use portions of the farms, how they will plough, how many cattle they will have and how they will use water and labour.²⁹⁸ The result was that business plans made by such people were heavily criticised by the DLA arguing that people would not use the land effectively because income generation from such plans was not positive. After all, the DLA knew very well that the people would be unable to come up with such plans because they are poor, have no funds to enlist the services of professionals in drafting a plan, and are illiterate. This is another measure, which is being utilised to deny beneficiaries of the programme access to land, hence the programme is perpetuating inequalities of the past. Business plans are not necessary for people who want to utilise land to sustain themselves. It seems as if the purpose of redistribution, of providing the poor with land for residential and productive purposes in order to improve their livelihoods has been forgotten.²⁹⁹ I thought that business plans were meant for those venturing into commercial farming with the aim of applying for grants and subsidies. Nevertheless, impoverished communities are entitled to apply for a R15 000 grant allocated by the government.³⁰⁰ The purpose of the grant is to help impoverished communities to finance the land, to improve their homes, infrastructure and to buy farm assets. Therefore, these plans might have been required in order to choose among others individuals who qualify for such an amount because the government would be unable to subsidise all land for the needy people of this country. The result is that not even a single family in Levubu and the Northern Province in general, has benefited from this programme or even accessed the R15 000 grant.³⁰¹ One may argue therefore, that there seem to be confusion among government officials who seem not to know the purpose of land

²⁹⁶ M. Nefale, interview with S. Shirinda, Elim, 24 May 2000.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ White paper on South African Land policy, p.ix.

³⁰⁰ Ibid. p.43.

³⁰¹ M. Nefale, interview with S. Shirinda, Elim, 24 May 2000.

redistribution. The confusion stems from their pre-occupation with the notion that redistribution of land to small emergent farmers could lead to the collapse of agricultural output.

On the other hand, farmers who wanted to sell their farms because they were willing were only available in 1996 and 1997 at Waterpoort, an area north of the Zoutpansberg Mountains. Such farmers were selling their farms at high prices.³⁰² This problem of farmers charging high prices is not only unique to South Africa, as Namibia and Zimbabwe are also experiencing it as well.³⁰³ The high prices they are charging demonstrate their unwillingness to sell and their intention not to part with their land. Despite the fact that prices charged were high, farms in Waterpoort were very far from the people.³⁰⁴ This proved to be a problem because the question of distance was now coming in, as to how they were going to work on such farms if redistributed. The main object of these people was to use the land and not to stay on the land. They want to use land that is next to them, where they can walk, work and sleep at home. The result therefore, was that the poorest of the poor were not benefiting because they do not have funds or transport facilities to such areas. Therefore, they lost interest on this redistribution programme because it is not working for them. They no longer believe that the government wants to buy land for them and extend basic services to them.

Land restitution.

The ANC and the PAC popularised a vision of Land restoration through slogans such as "Mayibuye i Africa and Izwe lethu i Africa".³⁰⁵ This led to the general assumption that the new period would be characterised by redress and restoration. While such assumptions were true, it also appears that their implementation will fall short of the people's expectations.

Following the democratic elections in 1994, the South African parliament promulgated the Restitution of Land Rights Act 22 of 1994.³⁰⁶ The aim was to provide for restitution of rights in land in respect of persons or communities dispossessed for the purpose of any racially based law. This would be achieved through the establishment of a Commission on Land Rights and a Land Claims Court. The implication was that when communities lodged a claim with the Commission on Land Rights they would be acting within the Constitution of South Africa. However, the very same Constitution also protected and entrenched private and individual property rights.³⁰⁷ The former minister of Land

³⁰² M. Nefale, interview with S. Shirinda, Elim, 24 May 2000.

³⁰³ *New Africa*, No.386, June 2000,p.22; Alexander, "State, peasantry and resettlement in Zimbabwe", p.325.

³⁰⁴ M. Nefale, interview with J. Manenzhe, Field worker, Nkuzi Development, Elim, 31 May 2000.

³⁰⁵ Mayibuye i Africa mean the return of the African land to its indigenous inhabitants. Izwe lethu i Africa mean our land Africa.

³⁰⁶ Restitution of Land Rights Act 22 of 1994.

³⁰⁷ J. Thome, "Constitutionalism, property rights and agrarian reform" in Land redistribution options conference proceedings, (Land and Agriculture Policy Centre, 1993), p.106.

Affairs, Derek Hanekom noted this when he referred to the “Constitution as a compromise document”. Rural people at the Community Land Conference in 1994 criticised the Constitution as it would hinder land restoration.³⁰⁸

I believe that arguments raised by Alexander on the “constraints of a negotiated independence” in Zimbabwe can shed light on these constitutional debates and serve as lessons for South Africa.³⁰⁹ She argued that countries that gained independence through negotiation with the oppressors led to the entrenchment of property clauses, and how proprietors should be compensated during expropriation. This affected Zimbabwe’s land redistribution programme adversely because it made it difficult to alienate property protected by such clauses, hence leaving the economy dominated by few people. Since the transfer of power in South Africa was achieved through negotiations, Claassens reported FW de Klerk, the former South African president, saying during negotiations that “white title to land will remain secure and protected”.³¹⁰ This guaranteed that South Africa would remain economically in white hands and delay the provision of a better life for all.

Such properties are actually a power structure, which empowers the owners by granting them exclusive access to owned resources while disempowering the landless by denying them access to owned resources. Therefore ownership of property empowers some sectors of the society at the expense of others. The argument therefore is that the entrenchment of these clauses within the Constitution serves to perpetuate inequalities within our society, because they were protecting properties acquired under apartheid through forced removals. Since Levubu is privately owned it would, therefore, remain under white control, denying the dispossessed an opportunity for restoration.

Beside entrenching rights accumulated under apartheid, the Constitution in conjunction with the property clause can also be seen from another perspective. It can be seen as a document that laid down rules which would regulate the smooth running process on how people can claim land that was dispossessed. Such claims could only be done through Land Claims Courts and Land Commissions. Otherwise for the Constitution to allow people to go to any land would be a recipe for lawlessness in the form of invasions and squatting on private property. Those who invade on other people’s land would be trespassing, hence contravening the Constitution, a punishable offence.

³⁰⁸ *Afra News*, No 26, January/February 1994, p.10. The Community Land Conference was held in February 1994 in Bloemfontein. It was organised by the National Land Committee to give rural people an opportunity to voice what they want on land and development.

³⁰⁹ Alexander, “State peasantry and resettlement in Zimbabwe”, p.325.

³¹⁰ Claassens, “Who owns South Africa?”, p.6.

Title deeds in Western societies provide owners of property with tangible proof of their place and a sense of belonging to a society.³¹¹ White farmers in Levubu own that land by virtue of title deeds. This according to Claassens shows that whites have “vested interests” in such land, on the basis that they have bought the land, and as such, they can sell and transfer it if they so wish. However, those displaced from Levubu argue that they do not recognise such documents because “they took away our land without buying.” They argue that they were “given title deeds because they fought in the war while blacks were merely given bicycles”.³¹² Communities displaced from Levubu “vested their interest” to that land by virtue of their traditional birth right common in African societies.³¹³ What is evident from these comments is the perception by the displaced communities that they would only recognise title deeds as valid if the land was bought from them.

In all these situations both blacks and whites have personal stakes in the land of Levubu, both legally and customary respectively. What is likely to emerge in this situation is conflicting interest between blacks and whites over land. Such conflicts have to be solved through the Land Claims Court, which is charged with the duty of resolving claims without causing conflict.³¹⁴ Based on the notion of willing buyer - willing seller one can argue that the courts intend to make whites willing sellers who will charge enormous amounts of money for the sale of their land at current market rates. Claassens noted this when she writes “white landowners are worried that their land will be appropriated without fair compensation since they have made improvement on the land.”³¹⁵ While communities such as Ravele, Matumba and Ratombo on the one hand, agree that whites should be compensated for the improvement they have made, those of Sigalo on the other hand argue that they should not be compensated because the land was never bought from them but taken from them. One therefore, may argue that compensation should not be paid while expropriating land from white farmers, because it is not fair to compensate them while the Vhavenda and Shangaans were removed from such areas without compensation. If such whites are compensated, the Vhavenda and Shangaans would be buying back their land, land which they never sold. In a different context, Levin has noted that “if someone comes at night and steals your pair of shoes, and if there are slight changes made on them, do you expect him to pay for such changes made on them? Compensation is not possible because it

³¹¹ T. Buckle, “Land relations and Social dynamics” in A. Lemon, The geography of change in South Africa, (John Wiley and Sons, Oxford, 1995), p.66.

³¹² M. Nefale, interview with E. Matumba, Tshakhuma, 26 May 2000.

³¹³ Displaced communities claim that their ancestors were born in such areas. They purported that even if they do not have papers to show that the land belonged to them, maps drawn before they were removed used their headmen’s name to show that they occupied the area. A 1935 map mentioned names such as Matumba, Ravele, Makatu, Ratombo, Matidza, Sigalo and others as inhabiting Levubu. See map 2.

³¹⁴ Restitution of land rights Act 22 of 1994.

³¹⁵ A. Claassens, “Land restoration and a land claims court”, in Land Redistribution Options Conference Proceedings, (Land and Agriculture Policy Centre, 1993), p.103.

was acquired through illegal means.”³¹⁶ However, arguments such as these are against the spirit of reconciliation, which the land reform programme seeks to ensure.

Although Land restitution seeks to prevent conflict between the present owners and the claimants, it proved to be fuelling violence in the area. This violence according to Shirinda was directed to farm workers and dwellers who were frequently evicted from farms by farm owners because of old age or disability.³¹⁷ In one instance an elderly woman was evicted because she was brutally savaged by dogs belonging to a next door farmer while on duty in 1998, to the extent that she was crippled on the arm.³¹⁸ This meant that she was no longer useful to the farmer. Despite the fact that farm workers and dwellers were protected by the Extension of Security of Tenure Act (ESTA) 62 of 1997, farmers in the Northern Province continuously evicted workers without following proper procedures. They got away with it, mainly because such farm dwellers are not aware of their rights. They do not know where to go for help.³¹⁹ However, conflict also arose after the death of workers on the farms, those with no other place to stay than farms where they had worked for a long time. Farmers actually denied the burial of such workers on their farms because of fear that such graves would be used for restitution purposes. As a result farmers in Levubu and Northern Province have agreed that they would only allow such workers to be buried on condition that, they formally agree that the presence of their family graves will not be used as grounds for restitution.³²⁰

The beneficiaries of Land restitution in Levubu.

Levin has noted that “the process of land reform based on historical claims demands that beneficiaries be clearly identified ”.³²¹ In this instance the communities claiming Levubu are those of Ravele, Matumba, Ratombo, Mashau, Shigalo, Matidza, Makatu and Masakona; and they are claiming it because it is their ancestral home.³²² Most of these claimants are chiefs who are the direct descendants of the dispossessed who had organised themselves into groups with members of the community, and lodged their claims with Nkuzi Development Association. Nkuzi Development on the other hand, had the responsibility of making sure that claims lodged comply with the terms laid down by the Restitution clause that removal must have been carried out after 19 June 1913, for the purpose of furthering apartheid or discrimination. Nkuzi Development did not cater for those removed before

³¹⁶ Levin et al, “Forced removals and land claims”, in R. Levin and D. Weiner (eds), No more tears, Struggles for land in Mpumalanga, South Africa, (Africa World Press, New Jersey, 1997), p.111.

³¹⁷ M. Nefale, interview with S. Shirinda, Elim, 24 May 2000.

³¹⁸ M. Nefale, interview with M. Sambo, ex-Levubu farm worker and a victim, Magoro, 24 May 2000.

³¹⁹ Government Gazette No.18467, 28 November 1997,p.10. The ESTA guaranteed security of tenure to farmworkers and dwellers. It protected them against evictions due to age, ill health and disability sustained at the work place.

³²⁰ M. Nefale, interview with S. Shirinda, Elim, 24 May 2000.

³²¹ Levin et al, “Forced removals and Land claims”, p.113.

1913. Mr Shirinda that, “it would be useless to entertain their claim because they would be acting unconstitutionally and that there was no chance to get the land back”.³²³ This is a narrow interpretation of restitution because people were dispossessed of their land rights under segregation and apartheid. Then what do we call such dispossession? I believe it is still land dispossession, because it resulted in the dislocation of social communities.

An important aspect that dominated the perception of the communities claiming Levubu, was the linkage between people’s perceptions and racially discriminatory practice or law. These communities associate their dispossession more closely to the physical occupation of farms by Afrikaners in 1937 and to forestry plantations (which spearheaded the first removal of Ravele community between 1921 and 1923), than to the Land Acts.³²⁴ One may argue therefore that, although the legislations that was instrumental in their dispossession was enacted in 1913 and 1936, for most people ramifications of such legislation became apparent following the occupation of farms by Afrikaners.

Those who were removed in 1958 from New Barrotta in the Groot Spelonken, and those from Driefontein in 1970-1971, perceived their removal as a result of the apartheid legislation implemented by homeland governments.³²⁵ What was evident in their testimony was the notion of going home to Giyani where other Shangaans were, whilst on the other hand, labour tenants perceived their removal due to forced labour on the farm, and that their livestock were not wanted on the farms.³²⁶ The extent to which the community displaced was aware of such discriminatory legislation was demonstrated by their initiatives in the lodgement of the claims even before they knew about the existence of Nkuzi Development Association. They were the ones who approached Nkuzi for assistance after they had come to know about it.

Murray has observed and noted that beneficiaries need to be asked questions as to what form of land reform they need.³²⁷ This meant that the beneficiaries would be directly involved in solving their plight rather than telling them what to do. Experience from Zimbabwe has proved that decisions taken by experts at national level without involving popular participation were detrimental to land reform. This was because people were not encouraged to think for themselves, and they were made to believe that experts know best. The result was that the problems facing the communities were not tackled

³²² *Mirror*, 24 May 1998.

³²³ M. Nefale, interview with S. Shirinda, Elim, 24 May 2000.

³²⁴ M. Nefale, interview between S. Shirinda and Manganye, Olifantshoek, 13 July 2000; M. Nefale, interview with E. Matumba, Tshakhuma, 26 May 2000; *Mirror*, 24 May 1998.

³²⁵ HT, interview between P. Harries and Chief Khamanyani, Kwa Nkuzana, July 1987; HT, interview with J. Tshitsenga, Mphambo, 12 July 1989.

³²⁶ HT, interview with Tambane, Valdezia, 16 July 1984.

³²⁷ C. Murray and G. Williams, “Land and freedom in South Africa”, in *Review of African Political Economy*, 1994, Vol.21, No.61, p.315.

directly.³²⁸ However, this served as a lesson for South Africa because, as noted by Levin, the era of transition to democracy (1990-1994) emphasised popular participation in the formulation of policy documents. Nevertheless, such practices of popular participation have been marginalised in the transition from apartheid to development.³²⁹ The implication was that policy formulation has remained centralised and top-down in character dictated by forces of economic growth and development, which were in contradiction with the improvement of the quality of people's lives. The point that I am arguing is that people of Levubu want restoration of their land rights, which would necessarily improve their quality of life. However, such need is complicated by the fact that such farms are playing a significant role in the economic sector of South Africa. Because of this, claimants will be made to accept terms formulated from the top-down without their participation. This includes the return of original land, alternative land, and monetary compensation or prioritisation in access to government housing and land development programmes.³³⁰ However, Mr Shirinda has argued that when people lodged their claims they had to be sure that such possibilities would apply to them and that they could not dictate what possibilities they wanted from the commission. Since the first option – restitution - of land is impossible, people would be forced to alternatives which they do not want. This has effectively suppressed the idea of popular participation in land reform. In the Land charter compiled during the Community Land Conference in Bloemfontein rural people made it clear that they wanted land that was “stolen from them to be returned.... with compensation for damages and losses suffered due to their forced removal.”³³¹ It seems as if the Conference held in Bloemfontein was intended to give rural people an opportunity to voice their problems so that they could have faith in, and vote for, the ANC in the elections of 1994. The communities displaced from Levubu wanted restitution of their land rights; and according to them, basic services such as access to clean water, electricity, health care facilities and jobs would come later. This shows continuity with the past wherein the poor were having no say in matters affecting them and for them, there would be no new SA until “there is land, services and growth”.³³²

The dynamics of women's participation.

Land reform as part of the ANC Reconstruction and Development Programme noted that “women are the majority of the poor in SA. Mechanisms to address the disempowerment of women and to boost their role within the development process and economy must be implemented.... Land redistribution programme must target women. Institutions, practices and laws that discriminate against women's

³²⁸ Alexander, “State peasantry and resettlement in Zimbabwe”, p.322.

³²⁹ Levin et al, “From apartheid to development,” in R. Levin and D. Weiner (eds), No more tears, Struggles for land in Mpumalanga, South Africa, (Africa World Press, New Jersey, 1997), p.3.

³³⁰ White paper on South African Land policy, p.xi.

³³¹ AFRA News, January /February 1994,p.12.

³³² AFRA News, January /February 1994,p.8.

access to land must be reviewed and brought in line with national policy ”.³³³ The implication of this was that policy documents formulated by the ANC showed sensitivity to gender issues and singled out women as specific targets of state intervention to redress poverty. Walker has observed this when she wrote, “nowadays no politically correct speech maker will miss the opportunity to stress his/her commitment not only to a non-racial but also to a non-sexist democracy.”³³⁴

According to the White paper on SA Land Policy, women are discriminated against by the rule of inheritance under customary tenure, wherein they were not allowed to own land, livestock, implements and fields. Moreover, under the apartheid regime women were further discriminated in terms of family law and inheritance provisions.³³⁵ Ownership of the means of production served as a source of power and authority in rural households. This meant that males were able to exercise control over decision making and on the lives of the females, despite the fact that they were major food producers. Levin notes that “food production has become a predominantly female task” which he defined as the “feminization of subsistence”.³³⁶

As major food producers women, though affected by poverty and past discriminatory practises, had to be empowered through their active participation in land reform structures. Empowering these food producers would lead to the alleviation of poverty because there would be more production since those who did not have access to land would be able to produce. Their position would also change when land is given back because they would also own the land, they would have their own title deeds, they would be protected by the law, and they would have a say and power in the control of their own destiny.

In order to ensure that women were represented in structures formed for restitution and redistribution, Nkuzi Development Association workshoped these beneficiaries to include women in essential positions, and not only as additional members of such structures.³³⁷ Priority in this programmes, it was envisaged, would be given to women because they confront potential destitution in case of divorce and widowhood. Despite the fact that claims for restitution lodged with Nkuzi were made by chiefs, we find within claimants several “Makhadzi”.³³⁸ In this instance, we have Vho-Makhadzi Phophi Mufamadi Mashau under the Ravele claim, under Matumba claim we have Vho – Mukona and Vho-

³³³ ANC, Reconstruction and development Programme, (Umanyano, Johannesburg, 1994), pp.17-21.

³³⁴ C. Walker, “Women, Tradition and Reconstruction” in Review of African Political Economy, Vol.21, No.21, 1994,p.351.

³³⁵ White paper on South Africa Land policy, p.34.

³³⁶ Levin et al, “Class, gender, and the politics of rural land reform” in R. Levin and D. Weiner (eds) No more tears, 19,p.130.

³³⁷ M. Nefale, interview with Manenzhe, Elim, 31 May 2000.

Eunice Selamolela for those at Mphambo.³³⁹ Despite the fact that women were represented within the structures formed one discovers that they form a small minority in comparison with men. Therefore women are, in my view, insufficiently represented in land reform structures.

Levin has noted that men in Mpumalanga responded negatively on the participation of women for their land rights whilst Walker on the other hand, noted conflict with chiefs who, according to her, “are males who forms part of the official rural patriarchy”.³⁴⁰ This marginalizes women and excludes them from decision-making positions. However this is not the case in Venda, where women occupied significant positions because they play a significant role during the installation of chiefs and in the settlement of disputes.³⁴¹ The only problems facing these women according to Mr Shirinda and Manenzhe were that they could not read or write. This created an inferiority complex in meetings, and it restricted the extent of their participation, thereby giving educated men the opportunity of dominating. Further, it was also noted that most women were not attending meetings and this had an adverse effect on their representation.³⁴² Failure to attend such meetings contribute to their under representation, and as such their specific knowledge, needs and interests are not articulated. Such absence from meetings gave men the go ahead to make decisions on their behalf as it was done in the past. What was evident here was that these women were taken from a situation wherein they did not have access to meetings with men (as Venda and Shangaan culture prohibited this). Consequently there is a conflict within women, particularly between their cultural roles on the one hand, and the role they have to play within the new democratic order. In my view, I believe that participating in meetings with men is difficult because the society expects them to behave according to its principles, and as such, they participate within the dictates of this status quo. This made it difficult for women to assume their new roles.

Chieftainship: the past, present and the future

Chiefs played an integral part in the implementation of government legislation during the apartheid era .The State in its endeavour to create indirect rule through the formation of territorial authorities emphasised the role of tribal chiefs to achieve political stability. Central to this system of political control was the revamping of chiefs’ traditional powers of allocating land and rights to it. Land allocation as observed by Levin “constitutes the fundamental material bases of the power of chiefs

³³⁸ Makhadzi is the chief’s sister who, according to Venda culture, plays a significant role in the installation of the chief. However, ordinary makhadzi within the Venda society also play an important role in marriages and in settlement of disputes.

³³⁹ Interview with Shirinda, Elim, 24 /4/2000.

³⁴⁰ Levin et al. Class, “gender, and the politics of rural land reform”, p.131; Walker, “Women, tradition and reconstruction”, p.350.

³⁴¹ Stayt, *The Bavenda*, p.168. and p.84.

³⁴² M. Nefale, interview with S. Shirinda, Elim, 24 May 2000.

and is also the most crucial mechanism for the interplay of corruption and control.”³⁴³ The relationship between chiefs and the apartheid regime led to their decline in popularity amongst the people. Consequently, they were attacked during the resistance period (1980s), but after the unbanning of the liberation movements such chiefs were again used for organising people in the struggle for democracy despite their unpopularity.³⁴⁴ This was because chiefs in rural areas have authority over their followers, and as result can mobilise people easily. This saw progressive chiefs within the homelands forming alliances with the liberation movements in an attempt to consolidate their hold over prospective land allocation. On the other hand, Walker has made the observation that the “Constitution as a whole recognises the institutions of chieftainship and customary law, and makes some attempt to incorporate traditional leaders into government at an advisory and ex officio level.... The Constitution also provides for the establishment of a National Council of Traditional Leaders and a provincial house of chiefs, with the authority to advise and make proposals to their respective levels of government, but not to initiate or veto any Act.”³⁴⁵ The question therefore is whether chiefs still have a role to play in land allocation when land is given back in Levubu and whether they are still popular with the people.

Land claims lodged with Nkuzi Development on Levubu farms were lodged by the chiefs “who purported that they were doing that on behalf of their subjects.”³⁴⁶ This shows that the chiefs within the displaced communities were being looked at by their followers as people who could do things on behalf of the community. One may also argue that such chiefs lodged claims on behalf of such communities so that they could be seen to play a role in the event of getting their land back; but such role could be motivated by the desire to control the forces of production and to get tributes from their people. The extent of the popularity of chiefs can only be ascribed to the fact that the majority of people were illiterate and culture still plays a dominant part in their lives, hence they accept the authority of the chiefs as final. This was evident in meetings as commented by Mr Shirinda where “subjects could not talk or make decisions when chiefs were absent. Even if they were not happy with the decision taken by the chiefs, they do not have the platform to challenge him as it is taboo according to our culture”.³⁴⁷ The only platform used to challenge the authority of chiefs was through refusal by certain members of the society to pay levies. This was a way of showing that the communities were not happy with the decisions made because they were not consulted. Those who refused to pay levies were denied access to letters of confirmation written by the chief so that they

³⁴³ Levin et al, “The chieftaincy, land allocation and democracy”, in No more tears, p.157.

³⁴⁴ Ibid. p.154.

³⁴⁵ Walker, “Women, tradition and reconstruction”, p.355.

³⁴⁶ M. Nefale, interview with E. Matumba, Tshakhuma, 26 May 2000.

³⁴⁷ M. Nefale, interview with S. Shirinda, Elim, 24 May 2000.

could qualify for opportunities such as credits loans and employment.³⁴⁸ This could be used in future to deny them access to plots to plough.

Matumba indicated that chiefs still have a role to play within their communities in future. Such a role consists of “their power to allocate land to their subjects, to give them food and to get tribute from them”.³⁴⁹ Despite the fact that chiefs in Levubu proved to be popular, though with little opposition, de Wet has observed this, and made a point that such opposition could lead to “settlement problems”.³⁵⁰ In this instance, problems would arise between those who challenge the authority of the chiefs. In my view, I believe that such groups would be discriminated against in land allocations and as such, they would not want the chiefs to have powers to allocate land to the people. On the other hand, the Land policy recognises the role chiefs had to play in land reform programmes. It maintained that chiefs should continue to allocate land rights on land jointly utilised by a group (communal land) as most land has been so held in the past. It recognised that the underlying principle under communal tenure was that the principle of freedom of choice is upheld and that changes to the communal systems can take place only on agreement by members. However, it also recognised the potential conflict that might result from this system. Consequently, it recommended that tribal authorities should operate democratically and in ways that would not undermine the constitutionally entrenched basic human rights.³⁵¹ Despite such assurances, the DLA did not put in place structures that would monitor people’s access to land rights in communal systems. As noted by Shirinda, “most chiefs think the land belongs to them, they do not understand the rights allocated to them by the DLA”.³⁵² This misunderstanding could result in chiefs violating the democratic rights of their followers, and therefore the object of alleviating poverty would be an ideal. As a solution to this problem, Walker suggested the “democratisation of chieftainship”. This would be achieved through popular education, monitoring and the enforcement of the rule of law.³⁵³ The other option would be to vest the control of such land rights in democratically elected committees, which would hold office for five years. Levin noted this in Mpumalanga.³⁵⁴ This might be problematic, as chieftainship without the rights to allocate land is worthless.

³⁴⁸ M. Nefale, interview with S. Shirinda, 24 May 2000.

³⁴⁹ M. Nefale, interview with E. Matumba, Tshakhuma, 26 May 2000; M. Nefale, interview between Shirinda and Manganye, Olifantshoek, 13/7/2000.

³⁵⁰ C. de Wet, “Resettlement and land reform in SA,” in *Review of the African Political Economy*, 1994,p.368.

³⁵¹ White paper on South African Land Policy, pp.31-32.

³⁵² M. Nefale, interview with S. Shirinda, Elim, 24 May 2000.

³⁵³ Walker, “Women, tradition and reconstruction”, p.356.

³⁵⁴ Levin et al, “Chieftaincy, land allocation and democracy”, p.163.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to show how land reform through the market approach in Levubu can serve to maintain the status quo created by the apartheid dispensation and the development of capitalism. This proved to be an obstacle towards the realisation of a better life for all because the majority of the poor were not benefiting from such a programme. The only way in which a better life for all can be achieved is through a more aggressive approach rather than relying on the market which is failing to bring about meaningful change. If needs be, land should be taken away from those who have it, and given to those who do not have. Cultural stereotypes preventing participation of women in alleviating their plight and also those of chiefs who proved to be dictators have to be changed through workshops so that the community in general can benefit.

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Conclusion

The study has attempted to show how the land of "Luvuvhu" belonging to Vhavenda and Shangaans was alienated and set aside for white use. Such alienation started before the reign of Makhado in 1865, who strongly resisted land encroachment, and took the form of control of hunting grounds, taxation and forced labour. The formal alienation became evident during the reign of Mphephu that started in 1895. It resulted in his defeat in 1899 by South African Republic. Despite his defeat and his confinement to Nzhelele (known as Mphephu location), his indunas in "Luvuvhu" maintained their authority over their subjects. The evidence given before the National Land Committee in 1917 showed that such people were paying rent to absentee landlords and were able to make a living without working for whites. White farmers in the area who gave evidence before that Commission recommended that such fertile land should be taken away from "natives" because a white man was not supposed to compete with a "native" and that Vhavenda do not use irrigation for farming.³⁵⁵

The commission recommended in 1918 that "Luvuvhu" should be set aside for natives, but this recommendation was never enforced. It was not enforced because responsible white people with their vote objected to it since it would lead to a shortage of labour. Therefore, the power of the whites shaped state policy. Consequently, in 1936 the land was declared a white area for purposes of resettling poor farmers from the North affected by drought. The natives were removed from the land they had lived on for many decades, and resettled in the reserves which desert-like in conditions. Some of the displaced were forced to labour on the farms without pay for the benefit of farmers who used and disposed of them when they were no longer productive. The Nationalist government which came into power in 1948 with its policy of ethnicity, removed labour tenants from farms and channelled them to overcrowded homelands (divided on ethnic lines) together with victims of anti-squatting laws and technological changes. Such homelands were designed to serve as relocation points for surplus population generated by changes in capitalist relations, and to serve white controlled economic interests.

In many cases, the government explained to people why they were being removed, but it did not explain how they were going to make a living in barren and arid areas. This could be explained in terms of capitalistic interests, where those with power exploited the powerless for their own benefit irrespective of the harm it did. Nevertheless, the apartheid government, to disorganise the masses politically, abused this capitalist mode of production. The churches' report on removals has observed this, and made a point that democracy has always been a threat to the white minority in South Africa.

³⁵⁵ Report of the Natives Land Committee, Vol.2, 1916,p.370.

This was because “power sharing on a political level would lead to economic sharing”. To prevent this, the state has always legislated to exclude blacks from political participation.³⁵⁶

Levubu settlement is a success, both in terms of the role it plays in the economy of the Northern Province and South Africa in general. It has succeeded in eradicating the poor white problem, which was the main concern of the government for its establishment. However, its effects amount to much more than the economic role it is playing. It impoverished viable communities due their removal from their homes. It forced them to work under brutal conditions on Levubu farms, and forced them to abandon their culture and to travel long distances as migrant labourers. All the alternatives for survival they have did more harm than good to them. The uses to which Levubu land was put such as forestry reserves and farms clearly shows the priorities of the apartheid state, “of controlling and dominating the means of production”.³⁵⁷ The deprivations that people live with need neither a sociologist nor a psychologist to see.

It was under these conditions of extreme hardship that “in nearly all regions of the country, rural people, above all, voted for the ANC and look to it to bring changes to their lives.”³⁵⁸ This was because it promised to banish famine by giving land and assisting the tillers with seeds and impliments. Consequently, it promulgated a land reform policy in an attempt to deal with this legacy created by injustices of the past. It targeted these poor communities. However, the free market approach to land reform and the entrenchment of private property clause in the Constitution made it difficult for the government to deliver a better life for all. However, The Bulletin, criticised the market led approach indicating that it was not the product of the ANC but of external capitalist interest.³⁵⁹ Therefore, the failure of the approach to bring meaningful change can be attributed to that. Cliffe, on the other hand, has argued that readings of these capitalists giants were based on lessons from experience elsewhere, which dealt with “different inherited structures” and thus were of limited relevance to South Africa.³⁶⁰

This approach is already proving a failure in Levubu, since farmers are not willing to sell their land and, therefore, made it difficult for the government to redistribute land to the poor. Perhaps more should be done than just saying that a person is a willing seller. Circumstances may force some to be willing sellers, hence unable to wait for the long process involved in land redistribution which results in land going to people not targeted by the programme. The same could be said about restitution; the

³⁵⁶ SACC, Relocation, The churches report on forced removals, p.16.

³⁵⁷ Levin et al, “Forced removals and land claims”, p.102.

³⁵⁸ Murray, “Land and freedom in South Africa”, p.324.

³⁵⁹ New Unity Movement, “What is a vote worth in South Africa?”, in The Bulletin, Vol.10, No.1, May /June 1999,p.2.

³⁶⁰ Cliffe, “Land reform in South Africa”,p.276.

process is too slow and it would probably take 20 years for the claims to be successfully resolved. On the other hand, the beneficiaries of this programme, are required to come up with business plans in order to benefit from the reforms. Such proposals tend to prolong the process of redistribution and so far, according to Nkuzi Development, there is no single plan that they know of that has been accepted by the DLA. Instead, plans made by communities are being criticised by the DLA for being financially unsound. It seems as if the government has lost sight to the purpose of land redistribution. It is not intended for commercial farming but for providing land to the poor so that they can enhance their livelihood.³⁶¹ So far, nothing has changed in their lives, and they are losing interest in this programme.

The Extension of Security of Tenure Act (ESTA) highlights tenure security for farm workers against evictions by their employers. However, farm workers are illiterate and are generally not aware of their Constitutional rights. Consequently, farmers continue to evict farm workers, including those who no longer fit within the capitalist system because of injuries sustained in the work place. The government needs programmes to educate farm workers about their rights to avoid illegal evictions. Furthermore, the government has the responsibility that ESTA should include a clause, which at least would protect farm workers in case of their death, and ensure a decent burial. Farm workers need burial places and mostly such workers have lived on such farms for as long as they can remember and that makes such farms a perfect place for their burial.

It is a fact that Levubu is playing a vital role in the capitalist economy of South Africa. Given the fact that productivity plays a vital role in market based land reform, white farmers are in an advantageous position. This is against the will of the people who want their land to be returned. However, the democratic government needs to decide whether South Africa needs “pure white race zones” like Levubu, where history and memory are dominated by blood, guns, sjamboks and dogs. The countryside therefore, remains a place where Afrikanerdom strives to maintain the status quo. The survival of social and economic structures established by white supremacist governments continues to threaten the spirit of reconciliation. However, Claassens has made the point that, “land is not finite and cannot be made bigger”.³⁶² The right to land cannot be extended to the whole population in the same way as the right to vote. It is this giving by taking that lies at the heart of land reform. The implication is that the state should adopt a more aggressive policy of land acquisition, including expropriation rather than relying on the market as the only available option. Only expropriation would bring about meaningful change in the ownership of the means of production in Levubu. However, the government is powerless to bring about radical transformation because it has taken an economic choice in which profit accumulation is the top priority. It is unable to expropriate land because it

³⁶¹ B. Cousins, Who will really benefit from land reform”, Mail and Guardian, September 15 to 21,2000.

might lead to economic decline in the form of small-scale black farming which is regarded “in South Africa as being merely for subsistence or food security”.³⁶³ White farmers might also move out of the country with their capital. However, this economic choice might provoke instability as the homeless and the landless will have to continue to break the law in order to survive.

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³⁶² Claassens, “Who owns South Africa?”, 1991,p.6.

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³⁶³ Cousins, "Who will really benefit from land reform", Mail and Guardian, 15 to 21 September 2000.

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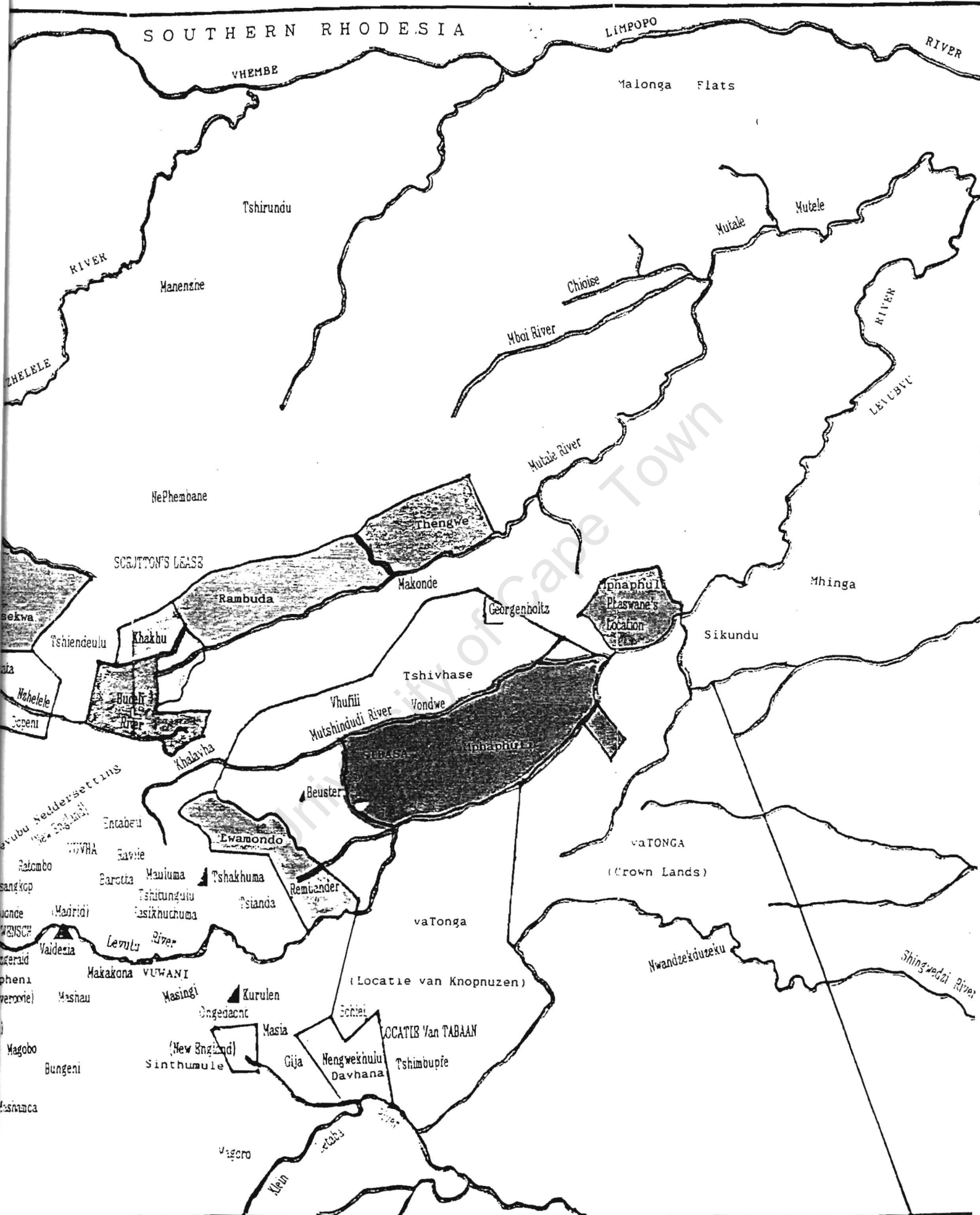
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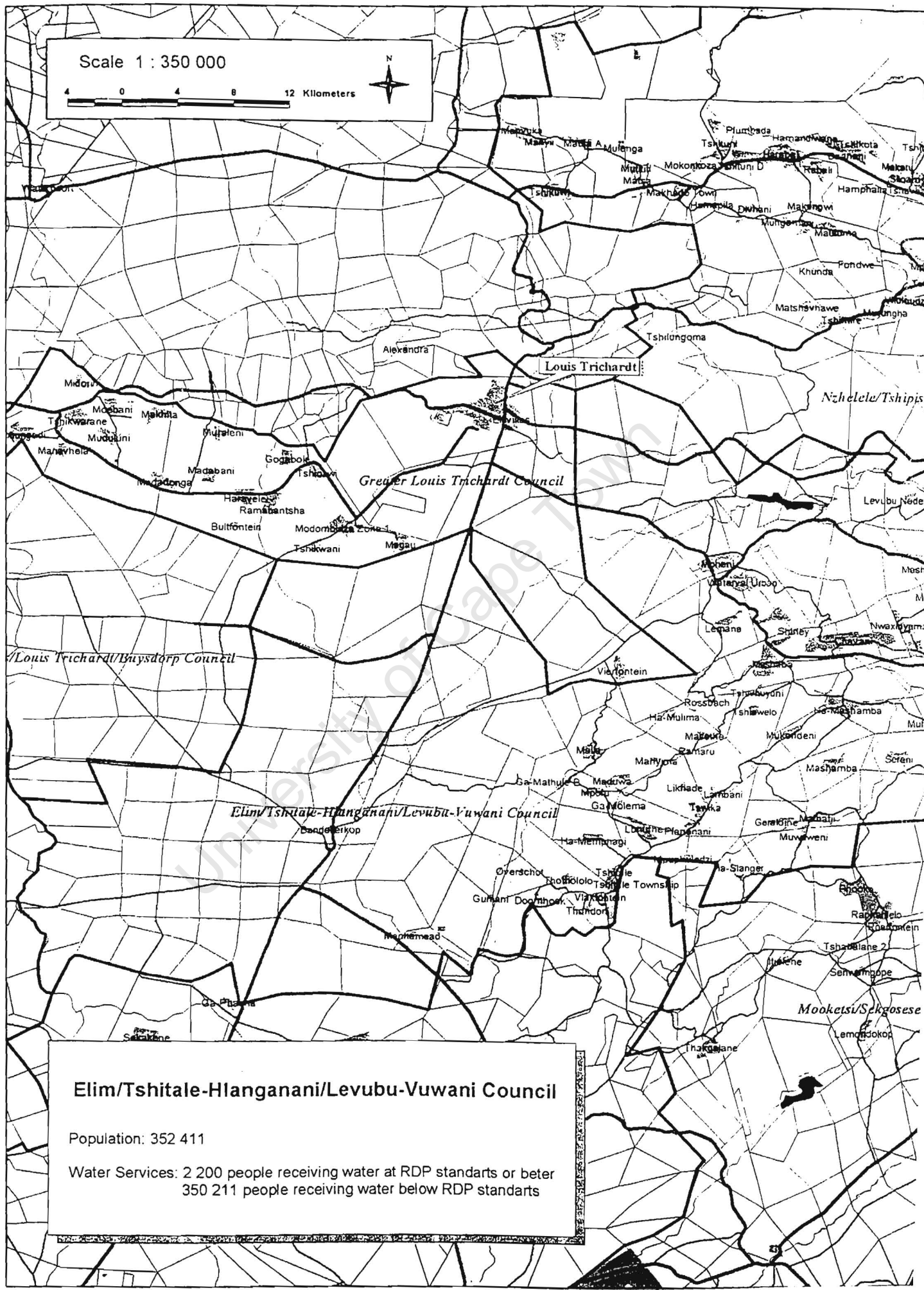
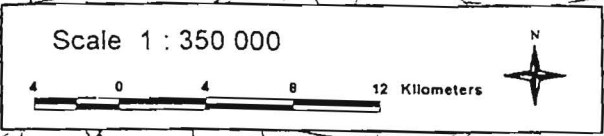
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Map 2: Map showing native locations in Zoutpansberg and communities found in Levubu 1935. (Conerly C. "The surrendering of lands in the Northern Transvaal of Mahosi Davhana, Makhado, Mphephu and Sinthumule").



Elim/Tshitale-Hlanganani/Levubu-Vuwani Council

Population: 352 411

Water Services: 2 200 people receiving water at RDP standarts or beter
350 211 people receiving water below RDP standarts

Map 4: Map showing Levubu after the removal of relocation. (Nkuzi Development Association, Elim).

FARMS IN LEVUBU AREA

Map 3: Map showing some of the farms in Levubu. (Department of Land Affairs, Pietersburg).

