

**CHANGING CONTINUITIES:  
EXPERIENCING AND INTERPRETING  
HISTORY, POPULATION MOVEMENT AND  
MATERIAL DIFFERENTIATION IN  
MATATIELE, TRANSKEI**

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## ABSTRACT

Cultural continuities through time and space have long concerned anthropologists. Recent work has increasingly concentrated on understanding these as social structural responses to both broad and local political-economic structures and processes. The aim of this thesis is to build on that approach. I argue that while some persistences of social form are best explained in functionalist and instrumentalist terms, to explain others one needs to look to the momentum of common practices that do not change without good cause. I thus attempt to wed a materialist analysis of political-economic determinants with one focused on social practice. I do this first by the application of a political-economic analysis and then by examining social practices for their apparent continuities of form and analysing why these occur. The approach taken thus reveals the influence of a paradigm shift in contemporary anthropology.

The thesis focuses on the Matatiele District in South Africa's Transkei bantustan. The evidence I present was obtained primarily from ethnographic field-research conducted between 1982 and 1985 and concentrated in two settlements there. This is augmented by material both from further fieldwork undertaken elsewhere in the district, and from various documentary and archival sources.

A primary concern is the nature of material and social differentiation in the district and its relationship to both large- and small-scale population movement there since the mid-nineteenth century. By examining these through the prism of a political-economic approach, I indicate the extent to which they are functions of broad regional processes, including the development of capitalism in southern Africa. I thus show that local-level material differentiation is the product of population movements, themselves traceable to both capital's demand for labour and state interventions in rural land-use practices. In addition I show that local circumstance modifies the impact of these broader processes at the local level: there is great variety in the ways in which regional political-economic processes impact locally.

Another primary concern is the appearance of cultural continuity in observed social behavioural forms, and people's claims that their present practices represent such continuities. A number of examples are identified. I examine these in order to establish the extent to which they are the functions of political-economic structures, the products of instrumental manipulation for local political purposes, or just the outcome of people pragmatically going on in ways with which they are familiar. While I acknowledge the merit of the first two types of explanation, I argue that there are many instances when the primary reason that people behave as they do is that they have no reason not to, and that their actions reflect a practical consciousness (or knowledgeability) that has its roots in experience.

I conclude the thesis by discussing some of the methodological implications of a greater focus on practice and practical consciousness in southern African anthropology. I suggest that there is need for reinvestment in the method of intensive participant-observation, refined to accommodate concerns with the commonplace activities of everyday life in particular. This approach, I argue, is necessary in order to represent the diversity of cultural practice to be found in the region, but without recourse to structuralist analyses that have tended to reinforce notions of a mosaic of cultures in the region and given strength to pluralist perceptions of the region's population.

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## PREFACE

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#### Note on names

I have used the pseudonym Polelo to describe the village of Mabua in all my previously published work on the people and areas discussed below (cf. Spiegel, 1982; 1984; 1986a; 1986b; 1987; Sharp and Spiegel, 1985; forthcoming; Spiegel and Sharp, 1988). In order to protect my village informants' identities, I have also always used variously selected initials to refer to individuals in my Mabua case studies, and I continue with this practice here, using the same initials as previously. The reason I have abandoned the pretence of renaming Mabua is that the village is readily identifiable from the historical data and sources presented below as well as from the maps referring to Tsita's location, of which Mabua is a ward. My experience with work done in Lesotho is that keen readers were able there to identify where I had worked from the map included (Spiegel, 1979). I am also increasingly inclined to desist from using pseudonyms for places because doing so makes difficult future historical research using contemporary ethnographic records. I do not believe that my decision now to divulge the name of the village will compromise anybody living there.

#### Notes on terminology and orthography

*African, black and white* Present South African legislation classifies the country's population into three main categories identified as Black, Coloured (including Indian) and White (cf. West, 1988). The latter two have often been generically described as non-White, but many people thus classified prefer the generic reference black, which is how I have used the term. I use the term African to describe the category designated Black (previously Bantu; Native) in legislation. My use of terms to describe these categories is because classification into one or other can have significant practical implications. I do not use them to imply

support for any system which classifies people in racial or other ways for purposes of political and economic discrimination.

**Bantustan** No term to describe the bantustans/homelands/national states is politically neutral. I have used bantustan because it most clearly reflects rejection of the policy of creating separate politico-geographical entities for different categories of the South African population.

**'Common area/s'** The 87% of South Africa's land area not scheduled for African occupation in terms of the 1913 Natives Land Act and the 1936 Natives Trust and Land Act is commonly described as the 'white areas'. As this both misrepresents the population distribution and implies acceptance of the notion that black people should not have full rights of citizenship and residence in those areas, I prefer to use the term 'common area/s'. Others have described it as the 'heartland' and the 'mainland'.

**Prefixes in African languages** It is anthropological convention to drop prefixes when describing people or languages by African language terms such as Xhosa, Mpondo, Bhaca, Tswana etc. This is problematic in the case of the term Basotho because the root Sotho is commonly used to describe all of the Tswana (western Sotho), the Pedi (northern Sotho) and the Basotho (southern Sotho). I have therefore not dropped the prefixes from the root Sotho when I have found it imperative to use such terms to describe people (*Basotho*: sing. *Mosotho*) or language (*Sesotho*: lit. in the manner of the *Basotho*). I prefer, however, to avoid such descriptive labels wherever possible.

**Sesotho orthography** Sesotho has two orthographies, one used in Lesotho, the other in South Africa since 1959. The latter is regarded by many Sesotho speakers as a product of apartheid who therefore prefer the older Lesotho orthography. Where I use Sesotho terms in this thesis I have used the older orthography. It has several peculiarities, some of which appear in terms used below:

1. an *l* before an *i* or a *u* is pronounced *d*: thus *bohali* (bridewealth) is pronounced *bohadi*.
2. a *th* is an aspirated *t* and not a *th* as in the English 'thin' or 'these': thus *thaba* (mountain) is pronounced *t'aba* with a soft *t*, while *taba* (issue; matter) is pronounced as written with a hard *t*.
3. an *o* before another vowel is pronounced *w*: thus *tloaelo* (custom) is pronounced *tlwaelo*.
4. an *e* before another vowel is pronounced *y*: thus *ke eaka* (it is mine) is pronounced *ke yaka*.

**The Transkei** Since 22 October 1976, when the Transkei was granted nominal constitutional 'independence' by the South African government, it has formally been known as the Republic of Transkei, commonly abbreviated as 'Transkei'. During the years its formal appellation as the Transkeian Territories was abbreviated to 'the Transkei', particularly after the introduction of the Bantu Authorities system in the 1950s when the Transkei Territorial Authority superseded the colonial-style form of direct-rule administration. The phrase 'the Transkei' has been retained since 1976 by those not wishing to give verbal recognition to the bantustan's 'independence' - a status now being challenged by the

military government in power there. I follow this usage throughout this thesis, and, for similar reasons, also use quote marks when referring to the Transkei's 'independence'.

### Abbreviations

AA	Administrative Area = location
BAC	Bantu Affairs Commissioner
BAD	Bantu Affairs Department
CMTT	Chief Magistrate Transkeian Territories
DAF-UTA	Department of Agriculture and Forestry, Umtata
DAF-Maluti	Department of Agriculture and Forestry, Maluti
DBSA	Development Bank of Southern Africa
DNA	Director of Native Affairs
DRB-Matatiele	District Record Book, Matatiele magistrate's office
DS	Deputy Secretary
GPO	General Post Office
M.M.	Matatiele Mail
M/M-DRB	District Record Book, Maluti magistrate's office
NAC	Native Affairs Commission
NCOLA	Natal Coal Owners' Labour Association ( <i>Vezamafa</i> )
R	Republic - prefix to government notices etc. after 1961
RA	Regional Authority
SADT	South African Development Trust
SAIRR	South African Institute of Race Relations
SANT	South African Native Trust
SAP	South African Police
SA	South Africa/n
SNA	Secretary for Native Affairs
SPP	Surplus People Project
TA	Tribal Authority
TDF	Transkei Defence Force
TEBA	The Employment Bureau of Africa, the labour-recruiting arm of the Chamber of Mines of South Africa
TLA	Transkei Legislative Assembly
TNIP	Transkei National Independence Party
TTA	Transkei Territorial Authority ( <i>Gunya</i> )
TTGC	Transkeian Territory General Council
UG	Union Government - prefix to government notices etc. 1910-61
UTAA	Umtata Archives
UTTGC	United Transkeian Territories General Council ( <i>Bunga</i> )
Vezamafa	See NCOLA
VRG	Valid Re-engagement Guarantee (certificate)
WWII	World War Two

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION: APPROACHES AND METHODS

A major concern of much anthropological work in southern Africa, as elsewhere (cf. Moore, 1987), has been to attempt to detail and understand continuities of practice and belief from the past into the present. Practices such as the transfer of bridewealth are shown to have persisted into the industrial era in functionally modified forms (Murray, 1977), while beliefs, such as that in the ancestors, are said to have 'survived' the introduction of Christianity (West, 1975a; 1975b; Comaroff, 1985). Some authors seem to have worked from the premise that institutions - even whole 'cultures' - have the 'tenacity' to survive changed circumstances, and some have felt that the subjects of their researches are historical 'relics' representing ethnographic data that anthropologists have tried to salvage (Hunter, 1979: ix-x; cf. Clifford, 1986; Smith, 1987). Others, having recognised that the functions of such institutions and practices have been significantly restructured by the colonial experience, have still conceived their persistence as continuities of past institutions of similar form and name (cf. Hammond-Tooke, 1975; Murray, 1981). Yet others have added that there may be an instrumentality behind perceptions of present practices and institutions as manifestations of past forms, implying that such images of the past are conceived as tools used by individuals or groups in order to realize their (often political) aims (Spiegel and Boonzaier, 1988; cf. Hobsbawm, 1983; Keesing and Tonkinson, 1982; Philibert, 1986). Whatever the reasons, there has been widespread concern to demonstrate that something has survived, persisted or continued, and that one cannot assume that incorporation into an industrial environment results in a complete overturning and replacement of what existed and occurred before.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The term continuity appears frequently in the ethnographic literature in the sense outlined here. It bears no relation to the Popperian 'continuity thesis' contested by Gellner (1985a: 48-57).

Various analyses have been put forward to explain these continuities. In southern Africa these explanations have been widely divergent. There have been primordialist arguments about the essence of ethnoses. There are some more and some less simplistic syncretistic analyses (eg. Malinowski, 1961; Sundkler, 1961; Comaroff, 1985) as well as sensitive commentaries on the complex contextual reasons that some rituals persist while others have disappeared (eg. Wilson, 1978). And there have been materialist and instrumentalist analyses which have indicated the changing function of such practices through changed historical circumstances (eg. Murray, 1977; Lincoln, 1986).

While I accept the analytical efficacy of the last of these various perspectives for the purposes of this thesis, I also try to develop and add to it because, with Giddens, I do not wish "to take institutional analysis to comprise the field of sociology *in toto* [and to] mistake a methodological procedure for an ontological reality" (1984: 285). I thus try to go beyond mere critique and I explore the possibilities of an analytical method whereby explanations of continuity and change can remain sensitive to those continuities which are not explicitly instrumental, but which nonetheless remains within a generally materialist framework. While I recognise that many practices and institutions can be interpreted in terms of their contemporary functionality in the broader political economic environment, I also want to understand and explain those which persist for reasons not to do with people using them for contemporary purposes.

This has required a sometimes rather eclectic mix of theories and approaches, itself signalling the start of a paradigm shift in my own intellectual development. But I believe that unless we attempt to build the insights of recent interpretative methods and post-modernist approaches into our materialist analyses, the latter are bound to fail because of their structuralist biases. This development of my approach is reflected in some ways in the chapters of this thesis, and I will indicate how this is manifested when I discuss its contents below.

My most general concern in the thesis is the nature of continuity and change and the processes which give rise to such phenomena. To throw light on this question I look at apparent persistences of practices, beliefs and institutions, and the ways in which all of these are simultaneously transformed. The ethnographic data which I use for this purpose are drawn from fieldwork in the Matatiele district of the Transkei.

Two important empirical characteristics which research in that area revealed are the interrelated phenomena of individual mobility, in the sense of movement between places of residence, and of material differentiation in the area. Discussion of the nature of continuity and change is thus illustrated by consideration of the issue of population movement and the nature of differentiation. In the first few ethnographic chapters I focus directly on these two processes; in the later chapters I look more closely at various ways in which both population movement and differentiation impact on how people behave. In the later chapters I am also concerned to examine how these two factors leave their impression on the persistence or not of behavioural, ideational and institutional forms.

Throughout my work on this project, a primary aim has been to produce an interesting and detailed ethnographic account of life during the early 1980s in the Matatiele settlements in which I worked. When I was in these areas, I was frequently asked why I had chosen to do research there, and I commonly responded that, at least in part, my work - as that of colleagues and students working with me - could hopefully provide a reference source for present-day residents' grandchildren and great-grandchildren when they wished to discover how their own antecedents had lived and struggled, and how they responded to broader processes which constrained their lives. For this reason, an accessible ethnography remains an implicit aim despite the rather academic flavour of the presentation here.<sup>2</sup>

Of course, this concern with a record for posterity begs the question: "why [do] people think history is important ...?" (Carrier, 1987: 117). I hope that this dissertation will provide

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<sup>2</sup> Julia Segar's *The Fruits of Apartheid* (1989) provides a more readily accessible product of this broader aim. I intend in time to publish some of my material in a more accessible form.

some answers to why both social actors and social observers regard history as important. As Carrier goes on to point out, history is differently conceived and used by different categories of people, so that social anthropologists' images of the past, and their interest in those images, may well be at odds with those of their subjects of study (cf. Borofsky, 1987; Toren, 1988). I return to this particular issue in chapter 2.

Increasingly I have come to realise that little of the work on the bantustans ever captures the fluidity of the erratic yet continuous movement of village people over time: labour migration and relocation have both received special attention, probably because they most clearly reflect macro processes in the political economy of southern Africa, and because of the political connotations they hold as institutions of the apartheid state. But other apparently less immediately emotive kinds of movement are constantly under way in these remote rural settlements, and one aim of this thesis is to bring the fluidity of bantustan residential arrangements to the fore. This is most closely addressed in chapter 8, while chapter 3 looks at past population movement in the Matatiele district in general.

Another aim is to attempt to provide an understanding of how material differentiation is experienced by people in the research area: how it impacts on their lives and social practices, and how they understand it themselves. This is addressed in chapters 5 through 8.

### The study's background and methodology

I first visited Matatiele in September 1976, on my way to begin fieldwork in the adjoining Lesotho district of Qacha's Nek. As a Research Officer on the Rhodes University-based Migrant Labour Project, I was originally expected to work on the Reef. But, having sensed the uneasiness which preceded the uprisings later that year, project leader Philip Mayer decided to terminate research at the labour-receiving end in Soweto, and I was directed to work in a rural labour-supplying area either in the Transkei or the Ciskei.

I was pointed, by my working knowledge of Sesotho, to one of the three districts of Herschel, Mount Fletcher or Matatiele, all of which were areas with large concentrations of Sesotho speakers. At that point Herschel had only recently been ceded to the Transkei (Proclamation R254-1975), and Mount Fletcher appeared to have a less widespread distribution of Sesotho speakers than Matatiele, which was the district I selected. But I was not able to conduct research there as the then Department of Bantu Administration and Development of South Africa failed to issue me the necessary permit to remain and work in the Transkei bantustan, despite repeated requests and enquiries.<sup>3</sup> Consequently I went to neighbouring Qacha's Nek district in Lesotho with the intention of one day being able to realise my desire to work in Matatiele. This became possible some five years after the South African government declared the Transkei to be constitutionally 'independent' in October 1976, by which point permission - in the form of a temporary resident's permit - came from its own Department of Interior, rather than from officials in a Pretoria-based office.

My work on the Migrant Labour Project was planned to examine the economic integration of rural labour-supplying areas in the powerful capitalist political-economy of industrial South Africa, and to look for the local-level mechanisms which resulted from that integration, and how it impacted on rural village life. At that point it was still widely held that migrant labour was used only as a means of earning an income over and above that drawn from agricultural activities and used for the basic necessities of life. My starting hypothesis, today quite passé, was that the primary resource for obtaining subsistence goods and services was migrant workers' remittances. In order to test this I directed my attention towards the routes for diffusion of remittances amongst people left behind in the villages in which I worked (Spiegel, 1979; 1980a). And I concentrated on those activities which were most clearly economic.

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<sup>3</sup> I was never formally refused a permit. The Migrant Labour Project was funded by the Chamber of Mines through the Human Resources Laboratory of their Research Organisation (Spiegel, 1979: ix), and when our repeated enquiries about my permit application met with no clear response the Chamber's offices were asked to investigate with Pretoria. The message that came back was that I should not expect to be granted a research permit to work or remain in the Transkei.

Nonetheless, throughout the six months during which my wife and I lived in a village in the area, we were both invited to and attended a number of rituals and feasts of various sorts, all of which were said to be examples of Sesotho custom (*tloaelo*). And we noticed and talked about certain everyday behaviour patterns. For example my wife, not an anthropologist, remarked to me about the way in which men, on entering a house, sat next to each other in a line along the wall to the left of the door while women tended to go to the right and sit there, on the floor behind the open door, among the other women and children.

We both intuitively understood practices such as these to be cultural continuities from the (undeconstructed) past which the impact of industrialisation via labour migration had not yet destroyed. But I felt many of them were not important to my study, and I chose to ignore the majority in my written work. Where I did subsequently discuss such things as feasts and their attendant rituals, I went only as far as to suggest that they performed an important function for the distribution of foodstuffs from relatively wealthier migrants to those less well off who were not themselves recipients of remittances (1979; 1980a). But I steered well away from attempts to trace their historical roots in earlier cultural institutions, preferring to focus exclusively on their contemporary function, much as Ferguson (1985) has done subsequently with regard to the value given to cattle in Lesotho. Indeed, my concentration on those aspects of life which I regarded as *really* economic, along with my concern to avoid writing an ethnography of a timeless set of cultural institutions as practised by 'the Basotho' (cf. Kuper, 1987: 4), led to my effectively ignoring these practices.

To a large extent I still subscribed to this attitude when I first started work in Matatiele early in 1982, soon after having completed an extended return trip to the villages in Qacha's Nek where I had worked earlier (cf. Spiegel, 1984). I was by then co-leader of the University of Cape Town-based Conditions of Life in Rural Areas Project which aimed to collect data relating to poverty, material differentiation and differences in living standards in various

bantustan areas.<sup>4</sup> The other major area of focus was Qwaqwa, the official South Sotho homeland which had become a major receiving area for relocatees from farms all over the Free State and elsewhere (Sharp and Martiny, 1984). The very different conditions in Qwaqwa from those in Matatiele made for striking comparisons, and demonstrated the necessity of regionally located studies of bantustan areas as elsewhere (cf. Sharp and Spiegel, 1985; forthcoming; Spiegel and Sharp, 1988).

But the research in this comparative vein concentrated almost exclusively on issues relating to the economics and politics of poverty (cf. Hammond-Tooke, 1990: 11), particularly as the fieldworkers in Qwaqwa felt severely constrained by the circumstances of closer settlement life which made participant observation almost impossible (Niehaus, 1987; Sharp, forthcoming). In Matatiele, on the other hand, that method was quite feasible and, as in Qacha's Nek, I was exposed to a variety of activities which seemed to fall outside the scope of a limited focus on the politics and economics of poverty. During my longest period of fieldwork in the area, through the second half of 1984, I followed up some of these issues, finally having realised the import of Malinowski's (1922: 20) comment, in the introduction to *Argonauts*, where he says:

foolish indeed and short-sighted would be the man of science who would pass by a whole class of phenomena, ready to be garnered, and leave them to waste, even though he did not see at the moment to what theoretical use they might be put!

Using the methods of participant observation and extended unstructured interviewing I began to generate an as yet still incomplete body of data about some of those very activities I had earlier thought I could relegate to the periphery of my research. Yet as my attention has been drawn towards these practices, I have become increasingly uneasy with the idea that they represent the manifestation of some kind of cultural lag, continuities from the past which may have been modified for contemporary functional reasons, yet remain sufficiently intact to warrant their being

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<sup>4</sup> This project was funded by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research's Co-operative Scientific Projects programme for the years 1982-3. In 1984 I received a doctoral study bursary from the Human Sciences Research Council which assisted me to conduct research that year. The views expressed in this thesis are not necessarily those of any funding agency.

treated as persistences. Such an explanation fails to ask why those practices in particular persist, while others may be lost.

Thus began the search for new explanatory approaches. I was sure of the inadequacy of primordialist arguments that people continue with all such practices purely because they are objectively members of a named category for which we have evidence of similar practices in the past. And I felt unhappy with the inadequacy of explanations demonstrating the contemporary political-economic functionality of persistences if applied to all such practices and institutions. It seemed appropriate enough for a macro-understanding of the maintenance of bridewealth as a means of signifying marriage in the context of oscillating labour migration which took men far away from their wives and children for most of each year (cf. Murray, 1977). But the approach seemed to have to be stretched beyond its limits when applied, for example, to intra-household gender relations where it could provide a useful but only partial explanation (cf. Bozzoli, 1983a; Ferguson, 1985; Jaffee, 1987). Similarly, important recent approaches which have explained structured cultural responses - such as being 'Red' (Mayer, 1980a) or participating in independent churches (Comaroff, 1985) - as forms of resistance to incorporation into a capitalist-dominated political economy seemed insufficient to explain micro-level activities which appear to be the same as those described as having occurred in the past.

Indeed, what seemed necessary was a more micro-sensitive analysis which could examine the ways individuals, both alone and in groups, interpret the rules they have presented to them, and which would also recognise the constraints that already accepted practices place on those interpretations. As Giddens (1981) has pointed out, structures both constrain and enable, and the structures established through practice and experience are no exception. In particular, non- and semi-literate people's knowledge of how to behave derives most commonly from their remembered experience of previous behaviour, and the cognitive models upon which they draw both limit and open up the possibilities for future behaviour.

This in turn drew my attention to another necessary requirement for beginning to understand persistences of the forms taken by

social practices. I wanted to find a means of looking at how ideas about social behaviour were related to practice and at the processes of transmission of these ideas from one actor to the next. Again Giddens' insights were useful, particularly his (1979; 1984) distinction between practical and discursive consciousness. Giddens suggested that while all people have

the capacity to understand what they do while they do it ... [their knowledge is] ... only partly on a discursive level. What agents know about what they do, and why they do it - their knowledgeability as agents - is largely carried in practical consciousness. Practical consciousness consists of all the things which actors know tacitly about how to 'go on' in the contexts of social life without being able to give them direct discursive expression (1984: xxii-xxiii).

If, as now seems obvious, people 'go on' with much of their lives and many of their social interactions without ratiocinatively considering their every move, then we must ask how they come to know how to 'go on'. How do they gain that knowledgeability that they carry in practical consciousness? Surely it is not because they each have implanted in them a culture which predetermines their actions? That would take us back to a primordialism that cannot account for change.

In this instance, some answers came from Edward Shils' (1981) book *Tradition* which, despite its inherently conservative outlook, offered some useful arguments. These included the suggestion that, in its most elementary and neutral sense, tradition refers to all those things handed down from the past to the present and which, regardless of the substance and setting for their transmission, persist or recur precisely through their being passed down (Shils, 1981: 12-16; cf. Seymour-Smith, 1986: 279-80). Also very important were his suggestions that tradition's intimate connection with transmission means that it refers primarily to (transmitted) ideas or rules for behaviour, rather than to the behavioural forms which result, and that the process of such transmission was primarily non-ratiocinative.<sup>5</sup> In this last respect, Shils seemed to be referring

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<sup>5</sup> When practices are described as traditional it is either because the ideas that give them form have been handed down from the past or because there is something to be gained in the present from giving them authoritativeness and salience gained by claiming that they are based on unchanging precedence (cf. Boyer, 1987; Spiegel and Boonzaier, 1988).

to the transmission of knowledge carried in practical consciousness, and transferred through tacit rather than explicit socialisation processes.

The challenge I faced as I developed these ideas was to make them 'work' with data collected beforehand in terms of my earlier perspective. Chapters 6 through 8 below represent a start to this type of exercise. But, as I point out in my conclusion, putting this approach into practice will require further development and refinement of various anthropological fieldwork methods.

What I have done in those three chapters is to use these ideas to try to understand the nature of continuities and persistences of social practices over time. Building on them, I came to distinguish two ways to approach an understanding of how what appears to derive from the past comes to be part of the present. Firstly, there are those practices and institutions that are followed quite self-consciously and indeed instrumentally. They are frequently contrived as part of some or other political enterprise: the way in which traditions are conceived by Hobsbawm (1983) reflects this process.

Secondly, the persistence of certain practices reflects the ways in which people are used to 'going on' with their lives. They do not contrive to continue those practices which are sometimes described as habitual, nor do they contrive to change them. Indeed, they accept them tacitly and without actually considering whether or not they are necessary or appropriate, nor why they do them.

I have also found it useful to separate the second of these approaches to persistences into a further two: where explication can be obtained, and where this is not possible. Let me spell this out briefly. When circumstances demand of people that they explain the reasons for their 'going-on' practices, they may or may not be able to provide an explanation. If they can, and when they do, the fact that they have now raised their understanding to the level of the explicit and discursive, may provide the impetus for those practices to become available for instrumental purposes, or for their abandonment (cf. Wilson, 1978). Once questioned, habits may change.

But often, however, they are then replaced by newly habituated practices.

On the other hand, there are times when people's reasons for adhering to certain practices remain so tacit that they can never really explicate them. In the language of pragmatist C S Peirce, they are intuitive or instinctual, although in neither case does this mean that they do not require actors' knowledgeable ability or that they have not themselves at some time in the past been learnt in a ratiocinative way (cf. Rochberg-Halton, 1986: 9-11; 73; 131). In such circumstances the most people are able to provide is post-hoc rationalisations for their actions, yet they continue to practice them, preferring to leave tacit the knowledge they need for those practices.

In all of these situations the persistence of particular practices may well be structurally functional, with the implication that people's inability to explicate why they persist suggests a kind of 'false consciousness' which is itself the product of a dominant ideology imposed by an external structure. But structures cannot impose so absolutely, nor do they provide reasons for forms of behaviour; they only enable certain forms to appear and simultaneously constrain or limit what forms may persist. Moreover, as Giddens has so clearly shown, social structures are constantly being restructured by the conduct of knowledgeable social agents, even when that conduct has unintended consequences (Giddens, 1984: 293-5). Structural functions are therefore not the only sociologically sound reasons for social behaviour. Indeed Giddens suggests that a functionalist interpretation cannot provide an explanation at all because "it does not supply a mechanism linking the positing of a functional need and the consequences that are presumed to ensue for the wider social system in which the activities to be explained are involved" (1984: 295). My hope is to explore how we might develop an approach that would have us look for such reasons in a combination of previous practices, on the one hand, and the manner and contexts in which the rules for those practices are transmitted on the other.

## Methods, techniques and sources

Thus far I have dealt with my methodology in the sense of a concern with the ways in which theory impacts on the research process and how these are reflected in one's writing (cf. Ellen, 1984). But I have not yet commented on the various means I used for data collection. Although I address the question of sources in later chapters, it seems useful here to discuss my field methods and techniques briefly before outlining the thesis contents.

I spent a total of some 11 months in the Matatiele area during the years 1982 to 1985. Most of this time I lived in the homestead of the local sub-headman of the village of Mabua, a ward in the betterment location known as Tsita Moshesh. For a six-week period during winter 1983 I resided on 'Harry Ebden' farm, an area of freehold land which had become relatively densely populated by tenants (see chapter 5).

Both research sites lie west of Matatiele town (see map 3), 'Harry Ebden' alongside, and Mabua some distance off the main road running westwards from Matatiele town across the north-western part of the district. Mabua is situated quite close to the border with Lesotho, and is only about 10 km away from the villages where I had previously worked in Lesotho, albeit a rather strenuous walk across and over the mountain ridge which marked the border. A few of Mabua's residents were close relatives of people I had previously worked with in Lesotho.

The village was built around a core settlement that had been there before betterment was implemented in the mid 1970s (see chapter 5). It retained an attractive rural appearance with open spaces between its uneven lines of residential sites. In this it was different from those villages laid out on a strict grid-like pattern in terms of betterment, one of which had thereby come to be known popularly as Soweto (cf. Segar, 1989: 21-2).<sup>6</sup> Mabua village itself was situated on quite steeply-sloping land on a low ridge overlooking the upper reaches of the Kenigha River with a narrow flood plain set aside for arable fields. Across the river to the north was another

<sup>6</sup> For discussion of what constitutes betterment see chapter 3.

location which bordered on range- and reserve-lands rising steeply up to and including the escarpment whose peaks dominated the landscape, particularly when snow-covered during winter.

'Harry Ebden', by contrast, comprised a more undulating and less sharply mountainous area with its river frontage near the Kenigha's confluence with the Mabele River, far from the scattered areas of settlement which were all within relatively easy walking distance of the main road. The mountain border with Lesotho was far less prominent from 'Harry Ebden' than in Mabua and the landscape there appeared much more barren and inhospitable than that of Mabua with its green and watered appearance.

The predominant architecture in both areas was small rectangular and round houses built from poles, stones and mud, and roofed either with thatch or corrugated iron, the latter material being more common in 'Harry Ebden' than Mabua. Mabua also boasted a number of larger cement-block houses, built to modern urban-type designs and roofed with corrugated iron. These belonged to the wealthier residents of the village such as the storekeeper and café-owner and successful labour migrants.

While in the district I was frequently able to 'retreat' to the homes of friends I made both in Matatiele town and on farms in the neighbouring Mount Currie district. Their homes proved to be invaluable 'havens', both for personal cleaning-up and relaxation purposes, and for providing places for me to meet for discussions with students I had placed to work in other settlements in the area during 1982 and 1983 (cf. Segar, 1982; 1986; 1989; Reitstein, 1983; Thorold, 1983).

My primary fieldwork method was that of participant observation, by which I mean that I was caught up in much of the daily activities of the people around me and was able to listen and talk to a variety of informants getting on with their everyday lives, all the while trying to direct conversations in ways which would provide me with the data I thought I needed. It also meant attendance at village meetings, feasts and rituals, and occasionally at the location headman's court. In addition I conducted many interviews, both

tight and formal as well as unstructured and extended. These included two sets of quite tightly structured interviews for purposes of conducting sample censuses in Mabua in both 1982 and 1984 (see Appendix B). I also conducted a rather less intensive census of all homesteads on 'Harry Ebden' in 1983 (see chapter 5) as well as a number of life-history interviews.

For almost all of the time I spent in these settlements I was accompanied by one of a series of assistants drawn from the local population. In 1982 my assistant was a young man from Mabua who had recently left high school. In Harry Ebden I was helped by an older man from a nearby village, while my longest-serving assistant was a woman from the village of St Paul's who had earlier assisted Julia Segar with her work there (Segar, 1982; 1986; 1989). My various assistants' duties included both acting as a guide and interpreter when my Sesotho failed me or my informants preferred to speak Xhosa, and helping to transcribe and translate more extended and open-ended interviews some of which I tape-recorded. For this purpose I also employed two young educated village women whose domestic responsibilities prevented them leaving their homes to work, but who were all too keen to be able to generate some extra income. During times when I was away from the village for a day or two, I relied on my assistant to keep a record of major local events and occurrences.

I visited various district-level and Umtata-based offices where informal discussion on a variety of issues, with clerks and other officials, generated much material and where I was also able to obtain some limited statistical data on labour migration and remittances sent home by labour migrants. Local offices of labour-recruiting organisations and the Postmaster in Matatiele town also provided an important source of such material, while an invaluable source regarding remittances was the registered letter book kept by the Mabua store (see chapter 4).

I also used a variety of other documentary sources. While in the area I consulted district-level records including the District Record Books held by the magistrates in both Maluti (Transkei) and Matatiele town (Natal). I was also granted access to various records held by the local office of the Department of Agriculture

and Forestry, particularly those pertaining to location administration, the introduction of betterment planning, residential and arable site allocation etc. In the Transkei's capital, Umtata, I was able to consult and indeed copy whole files in the same Department's planning offices, and much of the micro-level historical data I present below derive from this source. I have also used data derived from the Umtata Deeds Office and from the Department of the Interior's files on the Ongeluksnek farms (see chapter 3). The Umtata Archives provided a small amount of similarly valuable, but rather less coherent, local data. In part this was because the various departmental offices have tended to keep their records and not release them to the archive which, in 1984, was not particularly strict in maintaining the thirty-year closed-access rule. In part it was because the Transkei archival material is split up between the Umtata, Cape Town and - for more recent East Griqualand material - the Pietermaritzburg archival depots. As is clear from chapter 3, I have also consulted old local newspapers, particularly the *Matatiele Mail*, and I have used various secondary sources for historical material.

My persistence with the method of participant observation in Mabua had both its positive and negative results. In particular it helped to draw me into a series of local disputes, some of which I discuss in chapter 7 where I present data which I might not have obtained using other approaches. Being thus drawn in had its drawbacks, however, as the following series of incidents indicates.

In 1982, soon after I began work in Mabua, I was accosted by a man who introduced himself as a police informer (NH - see case 7.1). He demanded to see my papers, and took copies to the local security police chief who then had me and two of my students in another village brought in to explain our presence. This was despite our having reported to the magistrate in Maluti before establishing ourselves, and having been sent by him to the district police chief.

Some time thereafter I was called before a small private moot for having allegedly maligned two local women (one of whom subsequently turned out also to be an informer) by asking them whether they had been previously married: one was then married, the other not. My

reasons for doing this were that a child had told me they had both left their husbands in Lesotho and returned to Mabua - information which contradicted what I had collected during census interviews in their households. I now wished to confirm this information, but without revealing my source. The police informer, NH, chaired the meeting where my host, the sub-headman, appeared to be as much on trial as I, giving me my first inkling that the village's leaders were divided into the antagonistic factions I discuss in chapter 7. My sense was that the moot was called primarily to demonstrate the subheadman's incompetence by showing that, despite my having already addressed a general village meeting where my presence in the village had been agreed to, he had been wrong to allow me to remain in the village, let alone to provide me with accommodation.

This sense was reinforced by various subsequent incidents which culminated, in August 1984, with the Transkei security police taking my assistant and me into custody for a day of interrogation at the remote Ongeluksnek border-post. As they shepherded us into their van in the village, they were overheard to ask the woman-informer what she now wanted them to do with us. And once we had been put into separate rooms for interrogation they referred to allegations that I had incited villagers to treason and revolt. As we discovered on our being returned to the village that evening, these allegations had been made by the woman-informer whose close association with the anti-subheadman faction in the village I had by then clearly established (see chapter 7).

This incident significantly affected my rapport with the majority of villagers who appeared not to want to choose permanent sides in the dispute between those with local power. Up until then some people had complained in interviews about the problems of Transkeian independence (cf. Segar. 1989: ch 3), albeit in muted tones because they knew that their words could get them into trouble.<sup>7</sup> After the incident, however, many preferred not to talk to me about anything except the most innocuous daily affairs, and even then they were cagey because they seemed to feel I was now clearly associated with

<sup>7</sup> In terms of the Transkei's Public Security Act of 1977 any questioning of Transkeian 'independence' is liable to the same penalties as those for treason (Streek and Wicksteed. 1981: 37)

one faction within the village hierarchy. In particular, my attempts to establish how people understood and explained the nature of material differentiation in the village were hampered by their suspicion, and my efforts to delve more deeply than before into a variety of cultural practices and beliefs were similarly disrupted.

Despite these hindrances I remained in the village until the end of the year, and I was able to maintain good rapport with a number of informants. In a sense these events also provided an important source of data regarding local conflicts (see chapter 7), and they forced me to rely on what I observed and heard in passing instead of depending too heavily on what people told me in interview situations. I thus gained a limited foretaste of the kind of methods which, I suggest later, are needed to pursue an approach concerned with everyday events in order to 'tap into' people's practical consciousness (see chapter 9).

#### A personalised thesis outline

I now turn to the outlining the contents of the thesis. I do this through reference to my earlier discussion of my own intellectual development because, in some respects, the ways in which the chapters unfold reflect that development.

Chapter 2 reviews some of the literature which I began both to discover and to rediscover as my interest in cultural phenomena was rekindled, and as I searched for the ways in which social anthropologists have addressed the problem of continuities and change, both in southern Africa and beyond. The chapter sets out to examine some of the reasons that anthropology has long been interested in social continuity and change, and it looks in particular at some recent ethnographic analyses of the reasons for apparent continuities in southern Africa. This is done in an attempt to demonstrate how the modernist quest to discover rationality in apparently archaic forms of behaviour can lead either to an instrumentalist analysis or to a return to a form of romanticism which is hidden in the folds of a very schematic cultural structuralist historiography, which is itself based upon a

long intellectual tradition which has dichotomised human social life-styles and history. The chapter ends with a brief discussion of the approach I have tried to apply in the thesis.

Chapters 3 through 5 together provide a set of background contextual material about the district of Matatiele and the two sites of my most intensive research there. One of the imperatives of the then 'new' anthropology of the 1970s and early 1980s was to understand one's micro-data as part of broader historical processes. Some earlier ethnographies had included an historical introduction which effectively focused on the genealogical histories of the rulers of the 'peoples' being described (cf. Krige and Krige, 1943; Kuper, 1947). But these were presented as background information to the static descriptions of the ethnographic present which followed, rather than in order to establish what kinds of social-historical processes were already in motion and whether these could be traced in contemporary social processes (cf. Lincoln, 1986). More recently, however, there has been a growing insistence to address what Hammond-Tooke has recently called "the thorny question of the role of history in adequate anthropological explanation" (1990: 11), and to locate one's contemporary data within broader political-economic processes so as to see how these impact on local behavioural patterns.

Chapter 3 represents the product of such an exercise. In that chapter I present a short historical summary of the various types of population movement which have occurred since the mid nineteenth century in Matatiele and its neighbouring districts which together comprise the ill-defined region of East Griqualand. I thus focus on population movement into and within the region in each of three periods: the first before the Vacant Lands Commission's demarcation of the area's lands in 1884, the second from then until the 1936 Trust and Land Act, and the third following that Act and resulting from the implementation of 'betterment' policies and planning. The processes of differentiation which such population movement set in motion are examined again in chapter 5.

Chapter 4 is similarly motivated by concerns of the then 'new' anthropology to locate local-level material in its broader

political-economic contexts before 'zooming in' to examine what occurs on the ground. The chapter considers the nature of Matatiele's dependence on involvement in the capitalist-industrial complex which dominates the southern African economy, and into which the district's population has been inserted through the phenomenon of oscillating labour migration. I look at the impact of increasing population density on the district and at the contrast between living standards there and in the neighbouring Mount Currie district which has been retained within the boundaries of South Africa's 'common areas', and within which the commercial centre at Matatiele town is today situated. I then use a set of quite erratically recorded statistics to generate estimates of the district's population size, its labour migration rates, and the amounts of money which reach its people through remittances from labour migrants to their dependants.

In chapter 5 I turn to the two settlements where I conducted my most intensive research, Mabua and 'Harry Ebden'. My concern in this chapter is to examine the nature of rural differentiation in these two areas and to compare its characteristics with those in other parts of the rural labour-supplying periphery of southern Africa. I show how processes of population movement and settlement at different times in the past impact on contemporary differentiation, using a set of detailed case studies both to illustrate this theme and to introduce some of the people of my fieldwork sites.

The next three chapters (6 through 8) reflect my concerns to understand continuities and change in social behaviour, ideas and institutions. In this respect they represent my more recent intellectual concerns, although in each case I have presented empirical material which I examine as much from my older perspective as from my newer one. Each chapter deals with a separate body of empirical material drawn primarily from my own fieldwork, and in each case I use it to address some of the more recent southern African literature dealing with that kind of data. But the three chapters must be read together as an attempt to demonstrate my argument about the nature of cultural continuities outlined above and in chapter 2.

In chapter 6 I deal with a wide variety of relationships that people have with respect to the land. The chapter is divided into two sections, the first dealing with different kinds of tenancy on freehold areas in the district, the second with agricultural co-operation and sharecropping arrangements particularly in Mabua. Again the issue of wealth and resource differentials is central. But my main concern is to ask whether the kinds of relationships I describe represent continuities or new forms, for both actors and observers. I use my discussion to address some recent southern African ethnographic literature which retains an epistemological dualism for analysing the nature of contemporary South African social life. That literature argues that there is an implicit instrumentalism in the very tropes people use to describe their activities and relationships. I argue that, on the contrary, there are many instances where people are far more pragmatic than they are instrumental, particularly in their use of metaphorical terms to describe their everyday activities and non-conflictual relationships.

Chapter 7 focuses on local power-relations and the nature of local administration in Mabua. I first outline the historical development of the three most prominent local administrative structures in the Transkei, and comment about the limitations of the various secondary sources in this connection. I then use case-studies to show how, at the village level, these three structures intersect in their impact on ordinary people's lives. Again the issue of wealth differentials is central, people with material resources frequently also being those who are able to exercise power, and those with power able to use it for their own further accumulation. The chapter ends with a discussion of the instrumentality with which people appealed to images of the past to legitimate their behaviour in cases of local dispute, and how this seems most prevalent in instances of conflict which of themselves generate a demand for discursive consciousness of the reasons for behaviour. I also discuss how those with local power are able to manipulate what may be treated as 'traditional' and how those with limited access to such power may be forced to appeal situationally to such images.

The empirical focus of chapter 8 is the nature of the rural household and domestic relationships and practices. In particular I examine the fluidity of household composition in Mabua, thus returning - at a very micro-level - to the issue of population movement and the relationship between that process and material differentiation. I use this material to demonstrate again how persistences of social practices occur not for instrumental reasons but purely because people have no reason to abandon ways of 'going on' with which they are accustomed. And I look at how this persistence reflects a process of tradition as non-ratiocinated transmission of models for social behaviour rather than one where tradition is always instrumentally invented.

My concluding chapter returns to the general issues raised above and in chapter 2. In particular I examine some of the problems of method which are raised if one attempts to adopt the kind of analysis I have tried to advocate. I conclude therefore by looking at the methodological implications of pursuing my exploration into finding a new approach for understanding cultural continuities and practices in southern Africa.

## CHAPTER 2

### CONTINUITIES AND ANTHROPOLOGY

Fundamental to any academic research project is the need to establish what aspects of the intellectual history of a discipline, or grouping of disciplines, impinge on the chosen subject of empirical study. This process of consulting the relevant literature is, after all, what constitutes academic practice. It requires that researchers attempt to discover what has come before them, and then build, albeit critically, on that knowledge and analysis. Ethnographic research carries with it the further requirement that one consult whatever literature is obtainable to throw light on the social practices and cultural perceptions of the people in the area chosen for research (cf. Amselle, 1990b). Such sources include earlier ethnographies of the area, and nearby or other areas perceived to be 'culturally related', as well as missionary and travellers' reports, and the final research report is expected to include references to these.

For anthropology, therefore, this consideration of previous work encompasses more than just the history of the discipline and of the development of theories and ideas of concern to it: what Levi-Strauss has described as the "interpretation of the history of historians [or anthropologists...]" (1972: 251). It also gives attention to the history of the researcher's chosen research subjects - "the history men (sic) make unconsciously" (1972: 250). What came before empirically has become a major pre-occupation of the research process, particularly as - but not only because - social change has gradually replaced social structure as the discipline's focus.

One function of searching through the comparative literature has therefore been to discover pertinent ethnographic records so that newly-observed and recorded data can be re-examined for continuities and changes, particularly the former. Thus we find Kuckertz introducing his recent ethnography of Mpondo social life as follows:

"When I went to live as a participant observer in a village in Mpondoland, I knew that ... I could expect a more traditional way of life, still bound to the habits and customs of the past. I had familiarized myself with the relevant social anthropological literature on the Southern Nguni ..." (1990: 13). Similarly, Hammond-Tooke (1975: x) explains that his efforts to understand continuities in practices "necessitated the combing of the earlier literature for clues, as well as tapping the memories of present-day informants as to what they remembered of the traditional system ... the Cape Nguni generally exhibit such cultural uniformity that it is highly probable that the picture I have drawn for the Mpondomise is valid for the whole group". Interestingly, when researchers who have followed this procedure have difficulty finding ethnographic precedent for contemporary practices, the way they record this fact is almost apologetic, as if they need to excuse themselves for having discovered something which is not already in the cultural corpus and might therefore be construed as not authentic to their subject people's culture. An example can be found in De Wet's introduction to a detailed ethnographic description of practices of an *ukubiyisa* ritual in a Ciskei village. He remarks that, despite various references to it in the literature of the relevant 'culture area', "there is no substantial account of the ritual with which to compare this account at any level of detail, or against which to assess possible changes" (1986: 338).

As the study of social change has replaced studies of ethnographically static and bounded social units, comparisons across space have been augmented, and increasingly superseded, by comparisons across time. Along with this switch in focus has come an increasing concern with persistences of certain practices in changing contextual circumstances. Indeed, this concern with persistence and change over time has made such an impact that it has since been conjoined with a Levi-Straussian structuralism, and simultaneously retranslated into what may appear to be the beginnings of a neo-diffusionist examination of the continuities and transformations of cultural patterns across regional populations. As Kuper has pointed out (1987: 8-9), his earlier comparative study (1982) of bridewealth and marriage across the 'indigenous peoples'

of the southern African region (in fact among the 'Southern Bantu', a more limited analytical category) exemplifies this reformulation (cf. Comaroff, 1980; Guyer and Peters, 1987a: 201). By linking it to recent analyses of semiotics, Kuper has tried to breathe new life, in southern African studies, into the kind of Boasian culture-area approach extolled by Hoernlé when she expressed the wish to be able "to tell exactly the spread of all culture traits [in southern Africa], with their area of distribution, as well as their probable centre of dispersal and origination" (1925: 879).

One might perhaps be able to argue that a concern to contribute to this same enterprise has motivated the recent work of South Africa's most prolific contemporary anthropologist, David Hammond-Tooke (1980; 1989): this might explain his historically indiscriminate, and apparently insensitive, drawing on sources which date from the nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century to explain cultural practices which he has researched in the field between the 1960s and 1980s. Alternative explanations are more difficult to identify. It may be that he has found some practices and institutions which seem empirically more resilient than others, and has decided to concentrate on these (cf. Wilson, 1978). Indeed he has recently attempted to explain his taking apparently "unacceptable liberties with time in presenting this picture of indigenous beliefs" by asserting that there has been an "essential continuity with the past of beliefs in healing" (1989: 8). But the outcome is still that he ends up merely demonstrating the occurrence of their formal continuities while eschewing the question as to why or how those continuities have come about. He gives no cogent explanation for having now left this question aside, although it clearly motivated some of his earlier work (1964; 1975). Possibly the reason is simply that his concern to demonstrate the systemic logic of cultural structures has led him into producing static timeless ethnographies, even though he claims not really to have done this (1989). Sadly, this makes his work appear very similar, at least in this regard, to that of most *volkekundiges* whose primordialist perspective produces the argument that people maintain specific practices by virtue of their (assumedly natural) membership of particular named social entities (cf. Sharp, 1981; Kotzé, 1982).

There is clearly a wide variety of reasons that continuity and persistence hold a special fascination for most contemporary anthropologists. This is despite, or possibly because of, Levi-Strauss' insistence that history and anthropology complement each other: that "one of them unfurls the range of human societies in time, the other in space" (1972: 256). The question which this begs is why such a fascination has arisen? The answer must be sought at a series of levels not all of which are wholly discrete.

### History of Anthropology

One part of the answer requires consideration of the history of social anthropological theory. Firstly, anthropology originated, along with romanticism, in reaction to an overly rationalist understanding of the nature of human history which tended to downplay the contemporary import of the past. Anthropological enquiry remained "respectful of the past, using the present as evidence for the past" and in a sense understanding the present as the slave of the past (Gellner, 1985b: 645).

Malinowski's positivism overturned this perspective of the past for British social anthropology, replacing it with an insistence on the functionality of the present. He suggested that the function of perceptions of the past was to act as charters for the present, arguing in addition that "the past is and ought to be the slave of the present" (Gellner, 1985b: 645). This did not mean that the past as history was completely lost to anthropology, only that historical data had to be treated as myth rather than fact. It also meant that contemporary informants' accounts of the past came to be recorded as if they were just charters for the present. Concern with contemporary functionality led to the collection of oral testimonies and oral traditions<sup>1</sup> in order to provide evidence of norms which could be shown to be part of functioning systematic wholes. Moreover, these were then presented in the ethnographic present. When anthropologists, and indeed some historians (cf. Bundy, 1979:

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the problems of using the terms tradition and traditional are discussed in Spiegel (1989): Spiegel and Boonzaier (1988).

13ff; 1988: viii; Peires, 1981), subsequently began to draw from earlier ethnographies written in this ethnographic present, their ability to use the data presented there was seriously impaired by this earlier convention (see below).

Secondly, one needs to look at the divorce of social anthropology, along with sociology, economics and political science, from more universalistic studies of political economy. Wolf (1982) has pointed to the development of sociology as a discipline concerned to discover interpersonal bonds which were believed to maintain order in society. He has also indicated that, in its functionalist phase, social anthropology did the same, except that the units of inquiry and analysis were so-called primitive peoples conceived as separate entities each with its own static social and cultural system. This produced a clear image of difference - both between those from among whom researchers came and the 'others' they studied, and between the various different peoples studied. As Clifford has pointed out, "difference is an effect of inventive syncretism" (1983: 119).

This concern with particular named entities - cultures, societies or peoples - has been pursued even when the focus has switched to the study of social change (Amselle, 1990b). There have been two results.

One is that research has frequently focused on the ways in which people - understood to be members of such named entities - have accommodated themselves to exogeneous change, and on how similarly named social structures have been adapted as a result. In part this is because social change has been perceived as the product of extraneous imperatives. The societies of earlier anthropological study were seen to be static and unchanging, so that change came about through their contact, in the colonial and imperial periods of European expansion, with the dynamic structures of industrialism and capitalism. Wolf (1982) reflects this in his sarcastic reference to 'the people without history', a phrase which both satirises Trevor-Roper's earlier comment that there is no proper history of black Africa (1966: 9) and jibes at Levi-Strauss' separation of 'peoples without history' living in 'cold societies' where diachronic process is culturally denied, from historically supersensitive people, in

'hot societies' where diachronic process is the "moving power of their development" (1972: 233-4). For purposes of the present discussion, the significance of this concern with social structural adaptation is that it gave rise to a focus on continuities: on what cultural elements survived, and in what form; and on what aspects of the social structure persisted, and why. As I attempt to demonstrate later in this chapter, this concern with continuity and persistence is reflected in both syncretistic and instrumentalist analyses despite the diversity of reasons for such a focus.

The other result of the proclivity of anthropologists to work with named entities has been that many of those who have recognised the processual nature of pre-colonial and pre-capitalist society have persisted in writing histories of isolated entities, often in a highly structuralist form of analysis. Probably the best known example is Meillassoux's work on the Gouro of West Africa (1978 - orig. 1960) which attempts to identify the structural principles underlying the processes of Gouro society as example of what has since become known as the lineage mode of production. In some respects Bonner's history of the Swazi (1982) follows the same structuralist pattern although it is by no means a history of an isolated entity. And it is interesting to note that despite Godelier's earlier appeal (1977) for the need to go beyond a perspective of societies as clearly bounded entities, he persists in (or has reverted to) an analysis of political processes among the Baruya (1986) as a closed entity which he calls a tribe (Skalnik, 1988).

### History as process or as data-base

Another reason for the concern with continuities and persistences is highlighted by John Comaroff's (1982: 143) reiteration of Maitland's comment, made originally in 1936, "that anthropology must become history or be nothing". As anthropologists have become dissatisfied with the static models of structural functionalism they have increasingly recognised that the two disciplines must converge, and they have turned to historical study to inform their analyses (Vincent, 1986; Moore, 1987). This has manifested itself in a

variety of ways, some of them unfortunately confusing the need to acknowledge historical process with a concern to research and present historical data and chronologies. This conflation is most apparent when attempts to introduce historical processual analyses degenerate into presentation of empirical data about the past. One example is the common insertion of a sequential history as a preliminary chapter in many anthropological monographs, particularly when little or no further reference is made later to the data presented or processes outlined there.

In southern African studies, an influential example of such a concern with history, realised primarily as presentation of data about the past, is to be found in Monica Wilson's contribution to the *Oxford History of South Africa* (Wilson and Thompson, 1969 and 1971). In particular, her two chapters on the Nguni and the Sotho (1969a; 1969b) represent a static analysis of a set of data from an (idealised) past. These are presented as a base-line for comparison with synchronic (or multiple synchronic) representations of subsequent periods of the kind which can be found in Hammond Tooke's (1975) discussion of changes in the bases of chiefly administration in the Transkei.<sup>2</sup> Wilson's agreement to the abridgement, in the late 1970s, of her classic *Reaction to Conquest* (Hunter, 1936), by the excision of the sections on towns and farms in the Eastern Cape, is indicative of this sense of a need to salvage, and have an heuristically useful record of a base-line situation: "What is in demand" she said then, "is a picture of a way of life that no longer survives" (Hunter, 1979: x).

Moreover, when, in the *Oxford History*, Wilson (1971) attempts a more processual history, it tends towards a series of sequential descriptions or arguments rather than being a structured analysis based on a single chronology (Bundy, 1979: 8). This is reflected in her chapter on the rise of the peasantry in which an analysis in terms of scale - originally developed with Godfrey Wilson (1945) - provides a means of presenting sequential histories of religious, economic and political change, the combination of which does not

<sup>2</sup> As suggested above, by the 1980s Hammond-Tooke's work seems to have returned to a point where the base-line appears to have become a representation of the present.

reflect concern with any single set of causal determinations. This must surely be why Bundy's almost simultaneous analysis (1972) of the rise and decline of the same South African peasantry had so much more impact than Wilson's: his was an explicitly historical processual analysis in the model of dependency theory (cf. Frank, 1967; Roxborough, 1979).

### Reactionary Anthropologists?

Some might wish to look towards assertions about anthropologists' essentially bourgeois interests to find another reason for their apparent fascination with continuities and persistences (cf. Asad, 1973; Frank, 1971). Does anthropology's conservationist concern to reclaim and save a picture of the past for posterity (Fabian, 1983; Clifford, 1986) reflect a conservatism deriving from class-interest?

It is now commonplace that such a simple reading off from (assumed) class position through class interest to consciousness and proclivity for particular actions is fallacious. Like any other professional or other social category, anthropologists can neither be assumed to share a common class position, nor - more significantly - to be motivated by the same interests or theoretical perspectives. On the one hand, it seems superfluous to have to point out that many have engaged in practices which are clearly not in their own (immediate material) interest nor in those of the (objective) class into which they are assumed so readily to fall. On the other hand, politically conservative tendencies clearly are present in anthropological work. It is useful to establish where these are, and why, in order to be able to ascertain the extent to which they impact on analyses of perceived continuities and on the way in which the past is conceptualised.<sup>3</sup>

For some anthropologists, the conservation of the past, which is actually its reconstitution, reflects an explicitly progressive attitude: the past is there to be reconstituted so that it can be used to alter the status quo. Thus some anthropologists have found

<sup>3</sup> One might equally ask how politically progressive attitudes impact on such analyses (cf. Keesing, 1982b; Spiegel, 1988b) and whether they exaggerate change and conflict.

that a form of salvage work is important, in order to document the history of those who have been said to have lacked any history. This suggests that they are concerned to recapture ground lost in the struggle over what constitutes the norm, at least in so far as norms are determined by appeals to the past for legitimation. Such instrumentality regarding perceptions of the past is not, however, limited to those with progressive leanings; nor is it always so clear, particularly in the work of anthropologists who appear to adopt a neutral stance.

Almost all contemporary anthropological approaches reflect a perception of polarity between two different types of society, or at least between two different types of systems of thought (cf. Fabian, 1983: 23; Argyle, forthcoming). This is closely related to the persistence of anthropological concern with an illusory notion of 'primitive society' and 'the other' which inhabits it (Kuper, 1988; Fabian, 1983). The polarity is described in such terms as *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* (Tönnies, 1955 [1884]), status and contract (Maine, 1873), mechanical and organic solidarity (Durkheim, 1933), folk and urban (Redfield, 1947; 1956) and, more recently, traditional and scientific thought (Horton, 1967a; 1967b) traditional and modern societies (cf. Eisenstadt, 1973), and agrarian versus industrial society (Gellner, 1983: 139-41). Levi-Strauss' 'cold and hot societies' (1967: 46ff.; cf. 1972: 233ff.) in which, at least implicitly, knowledge is created respectively as bricolage or science (1972: 16ff.), pursues the same dichotomous way of ordering human society: thinking processes are thus seen as either primitive or rational (cf. Rochberg-Halton, 1987: 198). This is despite Levi-Strauss' insistence, elsewhere, that "the kind of logic in mythical thought is as rigorous as that of modern science" (1963: 230), a point identified by Kuper (1988:12).<sup>4</sup>

Even where there have been attempts to replace the dichotomy with more elaborate typologies, such as in Weber's threefold analytical distinction between traditional, charismatic and legal-rational

<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the passage quoted continues with a reassertion of the dichotomy in terms of societal types: "... the difference lies not in the quality of the intellectual process, but in the nature of things to which it is applied. ... man has always been thinking well; the improvement lies, not in an alleged progress of man's mind, but in the discovery of new areas to which it may apply its unchanged and unchanging powers" (Levi-Strauss, 1963: 230).

bases of legitimation, this has been built on a persisting perception of the earlier dichotomy (Eisenstadt, 1973: 10), a dichotomy into which are built notions of social era (Fabian, 1983). As Shils, one of Weber's most ardent acolytes has pointed out, Weber "shared the common view that there were at bottom two types of societies: one which was in the toils of traditions and another in which the criterion of the choice of actions was rational calculation for the optimal satisfaction of 'interests'" (1981: 9).

The same criticism can be applied to both recent neo-marxist approaches in anthropology and to some of the very new attempts to break with dualistic approaches in sociological methodologies through a reconsideration of the pragmatic theory of knowledge. Much of the former work was devoted to attempts to disaggregate the era/s before the advent of capitalism into what turned out to be a confusing variety of differently named modes of production. But a perception of a qualitatively significant dichotomy between pre-capitalism and capitalism remains fundamental to marxist analysis (Wright, 1983: 21). It frequently reappeared in the work of neo-marxists, particularly of those who were concerned with the impact of capitalism on social formations where the influence of that mode was previously absent.

Significantly, Wolf (1982) avoided this dualism by setting up a trichotomy of modes of production, each of which could ideally articulate with either or both of the other two. The difficulty, however, was that Wolf was never clear whether these modes all persist in articulation up to the present or whether the two non-capitalist modes were superseded by the capitalist mode of production (cf. Roseberry, 1985). If the latter was the case, and Wolf indeed conceived the kin-ordered and the tributary modes of production having been superseded by the capitalist mode, one is again left with a sense of dichotomy: capitalism versus pre-capitalism.

As both Wright (1983) and Mills (1986: 123) have indicated, Giddens too has not completely divorced himself from a dichotomous perspective of this kind, particularly when he distinguishes (pre-capitalist) class-divided societies from (capitalist) class

societies on the basis of their being organised around principles of authoritative and allocative resources respectively: "in non-capitalist societies coordination of authoritative resources [politico-ideological power over people] forms the determining axis of societal integration and change" (Giddens, 1981: 4) while capitalist social integration is determined through allocative (material/economic) resources and their co-ordination (cf. Callinicos, 1985: 145-6).

The dichotomy also reappears in the work of Rochberg-Halton, one of a growing group of social philosophers concerned to revive philosophical pragmatism and to expand it into a critical social theory.<sup>5</sup> On the one hand, Rochberg-Halton is fiercely critical of the dualism implicit in methods of scientific inquiry which are not sensitive to the primary importance of what he calls cultivated instinct (cf. bricolage), and which place ultimate faith in the ability of rational analysis (1986; 1987: 195). Following C S Peirce, he calls for a move towards scientific inquiry which will overcome dualism by disposing of the need to reject the instinctual as a distinct and scientifically inappropriate mode of thought and allow it to be conjoined, through recognition of the process of abductive logic, in an approach which incorporates it with rational analysis. On the other hand, he maintains precisely that dichotomy when he presents an extremely negative and reified image of 'modern culture' as enslaved by rationality, and 'traditional societies' (or 'cultures') as rather romantic exemplars of the value which can be derived from 'listening to' instinct, in this instance for creating urban environments (Rochberg-Halton, 1986: ch 9).

Clearly then the received wisdom is so well ensconced, and the dichotomy between two types of society at once so apparently real and realistic, that it seems inevitable that we need to develop tools to understand their differences (and similarities) fully. If even those who are explicitly attempting to overcome the inherited dichotomous perspective cannot break fully with it, we cannot assume

<sup>5</sup> Other proponents of this approach include Rorty (cf. 1982). The two main sources for the approach are Peirce, famed for his seminal work on semiotics, and Dewey. Both attempted, around the turn of the twentieth century, to develop a novel approach to the philosophy of science (cf. Hacking, 1983: 58ff). The other two classic pragmatists were William James and George Herbert Mead (Rochberg-Halton, 1987: 194).

that those analyses which do adopt such a perspective are guilty of *prima facie* instrumentalism in their endeavours to record and analyse features of past social forms. Indeed, the interest which many have shown for historical data more probably reflects a concern merely to engage in comparative sociology while adopting, quite uncritically, prevailing attitudes as regards differences between two types of society.

This dichotomous perspective is, however, itself the product of an earlier conservatism which dominated the founding of the social sciences as separate disciplines. I referred above to the concern with the maintenance of order which was consequent on the splitting off of the various social sciences from political economy and which directed attention towards those elements of social organisation which could fulfil the function of maintaining, or alternatively reinstating, such order. As Wolf (1982: 7ff.) has pointed out, this concern with order derived from the perception of the dominant intellectual establishment, at the time of the industrial revolution, that the cause of disorder and social disintegration in that milieu was the lack of an adequately dense network of social relations whereby to unify people and achieve consensus: a lack which was not perceived to have been present in the (idealised) social structures of the pre-industrial world. This then

issue[d] in a polarity between two types of society: one in which social order is maximized because social relations are densely knit and suffused with value consensus; and another in which social disorder predominates over order because social relations are atomized and deranged by dissensus over values (Wolf, 1982: 11).

In other words, the perception of a dichotomy between types of society itself derives from an instrumental and essentially conservative, even reactionary, effort to overcome a perceived threat to the status quo, in an historically particular conjuncture, without altering that status quo or really examining its fundamentals. For these earlier analysts, therefore, continuities of social practices from the past were viewed very positively precisely because they were perceived to represent persistences of those facets of social life which could and would function to ensure social order. Their concern with continuity was clearly

instrumental, but that explicit instrumentality was lost to later generations which came to adopt the earlier paradigm quite uncritically and without realising the tacit conservatism of the dichotomy.

As Kuper (1988) has pointed out with regard to the notion of primitive society in anthropological discourse, once established as authoritative within a discipline, a central idea becomes a paradigmatic tenet which continues to be held while undergoing intellectual transformations. Among other reasons, such a tenet's tenacity is because of the increasing sophistication of those transformations, because of the commitment of the discipline's practitioners to engage in such transformations rather than adopting radically new perspectives, and because the apparently "endless succession of transformations [can] accommodate any special interests" practitioners may have (Kuper, 1988: 241). Nonetheless it may be as well to heed Clifford's prescription that although "ethnographic writing cannot [now] entirely escape reductionist use of dichotomies and essences, it can at least struggle self-consciously to avoid portraying abstract a-historical 'others'" (1983: 119).

### Conservatism among social anthropologists' subjects

A further influence which may have led to anthropologists' concern with continuities and persistences comes from their subjects of investigation. Popular perceptions of the past, used to legitimate either the present or an ideal for the future, are often intertwined in anthropologists' and historians' analyses of that past. Indeed, as van Binsbergen (1981) and Sharp (1985) have shown, researchers' subjects often seem to pursue such an intertwining in order to obtain scholarly legitimation for their own analytical categories and the political endeavours which they support.

A crucial characteristic of the social sciences is that the concepts which practitioners develop frequently enter into the consciousness - both discursive and practical - of their subjects of study. Giddens (1984) refers to this as the 'double hermeneutic':

on the one hand sociology is, or at least ought to be, the analysis of already meaningfully constituted phenomena and their reinterpretation by a 'second-order' set of concepts; on the other hand, "it is in the nature of social science that these can become 'first-order' concepts by being appropriated within social life itself" (Giddens, 1984: 284). Often, moreover, this process works in reverse: the (emic) categories of one's research subjects infiltrate into the very process of sociological analysis and are used as if they were 'second order' analytical (etic) categories. In the case of the dichotomous perspective now shared by social sciences and more popular understandings of society, it is not clear whether the popular preceded, or was the product of, the social scientific.

It is clear, however, that when emic categories refer to the past, they express somebody's, or some group's, political instrumentality: struggles over what constitutes the contemporary norm create perspectives of the past in terms of the categories of the present. Malinowski's insistence on seeing the past as charter for, and slave of, the present (see above) draws attention to precisely this point. For those concerned to maintain a status quo, this means projecting an image of the past in terms which will reinforce the present, while for those looking towards transforming the present - whether they aim at a reactionary or a progressive transformation - images of the past are often used as a means of legitimating their ideal.

Authors of more reactionary analyses are clearly conscious of the power of images of the past, as is evident in the ways in which various *apartheid*-supporting publications use the idea of tradition (Spiegel, 1989; Spiegel and Boonzaier, 1988). Moreover, most avowedly progressive analyses are careful not to ignore the power of the past which, as Marx (1968: 96) pointed out, remains a constant (albeit inappropriate, for him) touchstone, even for revolutionaries, and particularly in times of significant change.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Sitas (1986) appears to be an exception in that he makes the mistake of allowing his apparent disappointment with past practices, for their perceived lack of democratic efficacy, to cloud his ability to recognise how important the past may be in legitimating images of the future: he is so enamoured with his perception of the future that he fails to recognise the power of the past in the present (cf. Spiegel, 1988b). Instead he attempts to have realised Marx's wholly modernist suggestion that contemporary revolutionaries should throw aside the past (1968: 98-9; cf Sitas, 1988).

Strangely, considering Malinowski's legacy, some anthropologists in contemporary research situations appear to fail to ask in what way their own informants' opinions, or indeed those of their anthropological predecessors, are (or were) motivated by particular interests, or to establish the possible levels of interaction from which those interests derive: for example, what old men say about present norms, or past methods, of agriculture may reflect their engagement in a struggle over land rights with intruding commercial capitalist farmers and simultaneously their concern to fend off an attempt by local youth and women to gain control over the utilisation of fields and their product.

This failure, viz. not to recognise the instrumentalism inherent in the ways informants use images of the past for their present purposes, derives at least in part from acceptance of the kind of sociological dualism described above; in part too it follows from a commitment to an apparently neutral precept of knowledge for knowledge's sake. Both of these imperatives manifest in a striving to salvage and portray for posterity what is perceived to be a real (even authentic) past (Clifford, 1986), often of named social entities.

Moreover, the ways in which the past is presented to the anthropologist in the field often reflect conservative tendencies in the present. They thus reveal the use of the past to legitimate those present tendencies. If for no other reason, this may be because those who hold local power limit access to the anthropologist because they see the anthropologist - rightly or wrongly - as a resource which can be manipulated to consolidate their position. If anthropologists are not very sensitive to this possibility, they are likely to convey received conservative portrayals of the past as if they are neutral, particularly where these appeal to a sense of earlier value consensus as distinct from a perceived present social discordance.

Continuities and dichotomies  
in some recent South African anthropology

I have already made a few passing comments about some South African ethnographic literature as regards the ways in which continuities and the past are handled and how these seem to reflect Levi-Strauss' insistence on an anthropological domain concentrating on distributions of social structures across space rather than time. In this section I look at some of the more recent ethnographies of the region in order to examine their handling of the past. I focus on the ways in which these works reflect the problem of perceiving human society in terms of the dichotomy outlined above. I adopt this route as a foundation for the ethnographic chapters which follow.

Gellner (1985b) has argued that anthropology and romanticism were, in a sense, seeded in tandem reactions to the modernist commitment to the supremacy of rationalism, but that Malinowski diverted the attention of British social anthropology towards a positivist analysis of the present. It is probably overstating the case that this redirection of the discipline as practised in the 'British school' was solely the responsibility of Malinowski: Radcliffe-Brown's interpretations of the work of the French sociologist, Durkheim, were as significant as the fact that, in France itself, a sociological approach had developed which began to eschew conjectural historical reconstructions in favour of more structural analyses of society in its different forms (Kuper, 1983; 1988). Nonetheless, the link between romanticist concerns with European folklore, and ethnological studies of exotic people's ways of life, was not wholly expunged. The relationship has continued up to the present in continental western Europe (Levi-Strauss, 1967: 20; Braukämper, 1979) although in West Germany the intellectually and especially politically motivated boundary marking off ethnology (Völkerkunde) from 'national folk-studies' (Volkskunde) has tended sometimes to hide their common roots (Jell-Bahlsen, 1985). In France, the 1980s saw a resurgence of interest in folklore and local histories among anthropologists and ethnologists, many of whom were drawn to these issues by the imperatives of European social

movements striving for a sense of regional identity and autonomy (Janard, 1985: 196-7).

The influence of European romanticism of the inter-war period is clearly discernible in the political and intellectual thought and practices of Afrikaner nationalists (Kotzé, 1987), and its link with ethnology is reflected in the kind of anthropology practised at many of the Afrikaans language universities - at least until the mid 1980s (Sharp, 1980a; 1981; cf. Gordon, 1988). The *apartheid* ideology which built on this duality of romanticism and ethnological perceptions of the primitive, was anathema to many social anthropologists working in South and southern Africa (cf. Kuper, 1987: 4). For the generation which began publishing during the 1970s in particular, this was not only for political and moral reasons. It was also because many of these students were thoroughly committed to the rationalism of modernism: it was inconceivable that the people whom they studied might maintain practices for other than rational reasons, and thus the primordialism of both *volkekunde* and studies of cultural ethnicity were inimical to their perspective (cf. Sharp, 1980b).<sup>7</sup> Just as Malinowski's positivist-functionalist ideas "provided a splendid and original escape from the dilemmas which Hegelian-type philosophies impose on state-less nationalities" such as the Poles of the early twentieth century (Gellner, 1985b: 645), so has the rationalism with which those ideas are associated provided a means of escaping the claustrophobia of Afrikaner nation-building and its reflection in the creation of ethnic national states (Gordon, 1988).

What has emerged in contemporary South African social anthropology is a rationalist approach to the apparent persistences of past practices. The underlying assumption of this perspective is that particular forms persist, albeit with significantly altered content, because they are both functional to a changed political-economic environment and structure, and represent a rational or utilitarian

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<sup>7</sup> Rich (1984) and Dubow (1986b) both argue that there was a clear link between early social anthropology in South Africa and segregationist policies, a point which I believe they somewhat overstate. Notions of cultural boundedness are, nonetheless, central to pluralist conceptions of the structure of South African society (cf. Kottler, 1988).

response to the exigencies of that environment.<sup>8</sup> The most widely cited exponent of the approach has been Colin Murray (1977; 1979b; 1980a; 1981), but others such as Ferguson (1985) and Lincoln (1986) have adopted a similar perspective as has McAllister (1981; 1985); it has also been a characteristic of most of my own previous work (cf. Spiegel, 1980a; 1987b).<sup>9</sup>

For Murray, as for myself, this perspective developed out of an attempt to consider the possible application of what was originally Bettelheim's (1972) idea of conservation-dissolution of structural forms. This became a cornerstone of neo-marxist analyses of articulations of modes of production generally, and, more specifically, of approaches to the articulation of any of the pre-capitalist modes with capitalism (Murray, 1979a; 1980: 143-4; 1981: 107-8; Spiegel, 1980a: 123; cf. Wolpe, 1972; 1980; Foster-Carter, 1978; cf. Ferguson, forthcoming).

This structuralist analysis was overlaid with a version of formalism born, for a large part, of a concern not to attribute people's behaviour to other than substantively rational considerations. To a lesser extent it derived from an interpretation of transactionalist approaches which saw all human action and decision-making as essentially self-interested (cf. Barth, 1966; Boissevain, 1974). Effectively this produced an analysis with two easily conflated thrusts: on the one hand there was a concern to discover the systemic rationality behind apparently 'irrational' (or 'traditional') practices; on the other hand concern with rationality led to a perspective which saw decision-making by individuals as self-interested. It was also recognised to be constrained, but not determined, by the nature of the political economy of the labour reserves.

The influence of neo-marxist analyses and their reflection in the 'new historiography' of southern Africa created a perception of an

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<sup>8</sup> In some senses this approach is a throwback to that adopted by Gluckman in the ethnographic description included in his 'Analysis of a Social Situation in Modern Zululand' (1942): the recent approach eschews Gluckman's concern with processes for re-establishing social equilibrium.

<sup>9</sup> The list is by no means complete, nor is it readily completable: the themes of papers at the annual Conference of S. A. Anthropologists in 1987 and 1988 would suggest that the approach has - belatedly - now become the dominant one among social anthropologists in South Africa.

ubiquitous capitalism, uniquely structured in terms of race (cf. Ranger, 1980). In some cases it was this structure that was seen to give rise to what Murray (1980: 155; 1981: 148) has called the "persistence of custom" (cf. Wolpe, 1972: 450). In others the argument seemed to be that local level decisions were clearly rational, and indeed instrumental, but that they were significantly constrained by that very structure.

This kind of analysis produced some very interesting and indeed convincing arguments about the persistence of such institutions as bridewealth (high in Lesotho, less so in Botswana) (Murray, 1977; 1980b; cf. Kuper, 1987: ch 10), concern with cattle in a wage-labour economy (Ferguson, 1985) and the first fruits ritual in Swaziland (Lincoln, 1986). Murray's (1980a) exegesis on the ways in which family structure in Lesotho had changed in response to the demands of the migrant labour system was another analysis in this mould although, having been written a little later, it was rather more structuralist than the others and reflected, to a greater extent, the idea of a systemic rather than individualistic rationality (cf. Murray, 1981: 148; Beinart, 1980). In a general sense, the approach also provided a means to explain apparent conservatism among so-called Red Xhosa-speakers as a form of resistance to the encroachments of capitalist industrialism (Mayer, 1980a) while their ritualised beer-drinks, as practised in the Willowvale district of the Transkei, came to be viewed as a symbol of that resistance (McAllister, 1985; 1987b). Segar's (1989) ethnography of life in a Matatiele village also adopts this kind of perspective when she explains a recent revival of interest in initiation practices as an index of resistance, via Sotho ethnic consciousness, to the imposition of the predominantly Xhosa-run Transkei state on a largely Sotho-speaking village.

Let us look more closely at a couple of these examples in order to see how the past has been handled in this kind of analysis: both are drawn from the now quite large ethnographic corpus on Lesotho.<sup>10</sup> Both Murray and Ferguson were concerned to demonstrate the

<sup>10</sup> cf. Hamnett, 1975; Murray, 1976a; 1981; Poulter, 1976; 1979; Turner, 1978; Perry, 1977; Spiegel, 1979; 1980a; Gay, 1980; Moletsane, 1982; Mokitimi, 1982; Quinlan, 1983; Ferguson, 1985; forthcoming; Heap, 1985; 1989; Robertson, 1987; Coplan, 1987; 1989: n.d.(a); n.d.(b).

functionality and rationality of particular institutions in Lesotho of the 1970s and 1980s. In form at least, these appeared to be unchanged or slightly modified reiterations of past institutions, with the practices associated with them often being seen, in terms of a dualist model, as almost blind continuities for the sake of 'tradition', understood as unthinking commitment by 'cultural dupes' (Giddens, 1979: 71) to an idealised past. It was this last perspective that these authors were at pains to disabuse.

Focusing on how marriage continued to be formalised through the transfer of bridewealth (*bohali*), Murray (1977) showed that the significance of the transfers had changed as political and economic circumstances changed over time. In what was effectively a double synchronic analysis, he argued that bridewealth amounts had been high in nineteenth century Lesotho not only because their transfer functioned for cementing political alliances between agnatically based groupings, but more importantly because it allowed for the consolidation of one such grouping's political power. The fact that bridewealth levels were still high in the 1970s reflected no such struggle for national political power. Instead, Murray was able to explain it in terms of the function bridewealth payments served, on the one hand, in establishing rights to filiation of children and thereby to the security of their support once they reached adulthood, and, on the other hand, to ensure support for the older generation of retired migrants and their dependants. People's behaviour regarding payments of bridewealth instalments, and litigation where such payments failed to materialise, were portrayed as wholly rational aspects of their structural dependency on labour migration. Indeed, at this relatively early stage in his work, this rationality was portrayed as being a sensible utilitarian response by individuals adapting to the exigencies of life as migrant workers or their dependants:

... *bohali* transfers ... effect a redistribution of income in favour of the senior generation, which thus has a clear interest in continuing to demand high *bohali*. Migrants also have an interest in substantially fulfilling their *bohali* obligations, for their own long-term security is best assured by establishing access to legitimate dependants within a rural household. Given a high rate of conjugal dissociation ... the migrant has to balance two considerations. On the one hand the rationality of investment in the next generation, of the sort

that *bohali* transfers represent, is qualified by his initially tenuous attachment to the rural household where his dependants reside. On the other hand, so long as *bohali* remains the idiom in which inter-household competition for the earning capacity of the next generation is rationalized and resolved, such investment remains the only way in which he can legitimately assert his own interests against those of his affines. It is sensible for the migrant to dispose his resources accordingly ... (1977: 91)

It is interesting to note the changes in Murray's approach over the next few years, as he began to emphasize the systemic over the individualistic rationality. His first move in this direction came with his concern (1979b: 340) to avoid a utilitarian reductionism and his acknowledgement that the ideas and behaviour of his informants derived an authenticity from their own sense of what they "recognized as 'proper Sesotho', the repository of a long tradition - the everyday observance of taboo, the fulfilment of ritual obligations to the dead, and the invocation of Sesotho customary law" (1979b: 348).<sup>11</sup> This he developed further, reaching the conclusion that

Firstly, the rationality of the system cannot be reduced to the perspective of the individual migrant who needs to find the wherewithal to pay off his in-laws. Such reductionism is based on a false division of the migrant's behaviour into its implicitly rational 'economic' aspects (investing in the home) and its implicitly irrational 'social' aspects (adhering to custom). Secondly, the persistence of custom in this respect must be understood by reference to the structural relationships between migrants and their rural kin on the one hand and between rural households on the other. *Bohali* is a mechanism by which migrants invest in the long-term security of the rural social system, and by which rural kin constitute claims over absent earners (1981: 148).

This greater emphasis on the structures led to the individualistic approach being somewhat submerged.

Ferguson's (1985) explanation of the persistence into the late twentieth century of what he called the 'bovine mystique' in Lesotho also addressed the question of rationality. Moreover, his analysis was synchronic, unlike Murray's, and there was virtually no reference to any earlier functionality of the institution: Ferguson made no explicit mention of a functional relationship between the

<sup>11</sup> This is an example of the conservatism of anthropologists' subjects, discussed above.

structure of nineteenth century domestic arrangements, with its polygyny and house-property complex, and the accumulation of cattle in terms of what had earlier been called the 'cattle complex' (Herskovits, 1926). In true Malinowskian style, he stressed only the present, focusing on the concern of men in Lesotho of the 1980s to build up herds by investing some of their migrant wage-earnings in cattle. This, he argued, was quite rational in terms of the insecurities produced by the system of labour migration - and it drew on a cultural idiom which was familiar and which could be reinforced for its contemporary utility. Firstly, cattle could provide men with a means of support once they had had to retire at a relatively early age and without benefit of a pension. Secondly they served as a symbolic 'placeholder' for men whose migrant jobs kept them outside of their home communities for extended periods. By inserting their cattle into village networks of agricultural cooperation men retained a presence in those networks despite their own physical absence. Thirdly, cattle comprised a form of wealth which men, by virtue of the power derived from their being breadwinners, could still keep out of the clutches of women. Men saw the women's concern to gain access to sufficient means to maintain their households on a daily basis, as undermining their ability to look after their own longer-term interests.

Summarising Murray's and Ferguson's arguments so briefly tends to conflate the one with other. The differences between them thus need to be pointed out. These relate largely to the times at which they were writing: Murray's seminal work in the 1970s broke important new ground by locating the rationality of local-level behaviour within the political-economic structures of migrant wage-labour and the labour reserve. In some senses, he took it for granted that, in Lesotho, bridewealth confirms marriage: the question on which he concentrated was why Basotho should continue this practice in the circumstances of the labour reserve. And he produced an answer which was structuralist and, despite his efforts to the contrary (1979a; 1979b) also utilitarian. The structure of the system of labour migration intersected with the structure of Sotho marriage by bridewealth in such a way that its payment was structurally and

individually rational: high bridewealth was both structurally functional and individually utilitarian.

Ferguson had this to build on when he was writing in the mid 1980s and he attempted to go beyond a utilitarian approach. For Ferguson there were two questions: the one, the parallel of Murray's question, was why Basotho should continue to want to amass cattle in the money economy of the late twentieth century. But this was in a sense subsumed in the other question, which was why there should be what he called a 'bovine mystique' at all. His answers, despite his attempt to break with a utilitarian explanation, seem to me to be precisely that: the structure of the system of labour migration gave power to wage earning men, which, in rational fashion, they conjointly consolidated by maintaining a mystique regarding cattle - itself not new in Lesotho. This created and maintained a special domain of property which was not freely interconvertible with cash and was inaccessible to women. It thus allowed men to secure their own interests, individually and in the aggregate, in a rational and utilitarian way.

Ferguson's insertion of a discussion of the constraints on individual rationality imposed by 'cultural rules' about property thus fails to overcome the utilitarianism to which he objects.<sup>12</sup> Instead he breathes life into a more perceptive analysis of the rationality of Basotho: not only do they look towards their individual self-interest, but they understand that they need sometimes to cooperate in looking after what he calls their category interest (1985: 663): as men they ensure the persistence of the 'bovine mystique' in the interest of a social aggregate of which they are individually parts while attributing its persistence to the power of 'tradition'.

Ferguson's thrust away from utilitarian explanations, albeit unsuccessful, reflects a more widespread hesitancy in adopting a wholly modernist perspective of universal rationality at the level of the individual. This is probably the reason for his brief

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<sup>12</sup> It fails because his answer to the question: why should there be a bovine mystique in Lesotho? is answered only in terms of the present: ie. because men maintain it and thereby 're-create tradition'.

attempt to draw on Sahlins' cultural structuralism in recognition of the idea that there are always socially determined constraints on individuals' rationality in their decision making (1985: 648). But cultural determinisms of most kinds tend to drive one right back into romanticist primordialism. As Ferguson remains committed to the side of the dichotomy discussed earlier, which would have rationality in all structures and actions, he returns to a utilitarian explanation, albeit at a slightly deeper (structural) level than that of a pure transactionalism.<sup>13</sup>

In her recent re-analysis of the beliefs of people of the previously independent Tswana chiefdom, the Barolong boo Ratshidi and particularly the Tshidi Zionist churches (1985), Jean Comaroff's similar concern to avoid utilitarian explanations comes down the other way. In a reduction of historical process to structural history (cf. Giordano, 1987: 84), she accepts the romanticist dichotomy between what she glosses as pre-colonial Tswana and Western cultures - each a systemic entity or cultural scheme. She thus explains Tshidi beliefs and independent churches in terms of an ideological and practical resistance to perceived dissensus and atomisation of modern industrial life. The precolonial Tswana past was structured, says Comaroff in a rather too easy slide between specifically Tshidi and more generally Tswana, in terms of a cultural scheme in which the kingpin was consensus and a sense of unifying order between members of society and indeed between humanity and nature:

This cultural order would seem to contrast sharply with a Western epistemology in which persons appear as self-contained, determining individuals, acting out of rational utility upon a compliant world; one in which, as a Tshidi commentator put it, "the air is empty of forces and powers" (Comaroff, 1985: 128).

It is this *Weltanschauung* which, Comaroff argues, underpins and directs the nature of Tshidi beliefs and the Tshidi churches. A kind of cultural insecurity deriving from the clash of Tswana 'indigenous culture' and modern capitalism has given rise to syncretism in various Tshidi institutions. The following comments

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<sup>13</sup> One could say the same of Murray's argument, discussed above, that the structural or systemic rationality of high bridewealth payments "cannot be reduced to the perspective of the individual migrant" (1981: 148).

indicate how Comaroff develops this line of argument by examining the ways in which she has come first to perceive the Tshidi past, and then to draw on those perceptions to explain the present Zionist church phenomenon and beliefs of the Tshidi generally.

As the passage quoted above demonstrates, at least one Tshidi commentator appears to have a rather idyllic perception of the Tswana past, and Comaroff either accepts this interpretation at face value or agrees with it because it fits with her dualist model of pre-capitalist or pre-colonial society as substantively different from rational modern 'Western' society. In his attack on Setiloane's perception of an essential Sotho-Tswaneness, the 'inwardness' of which is described as inaccessible except by its experience, Murray (1980c: 15-16) questioned the logic of just such a commentary, although he failed to reveal why it might have come into being. Comaroff provides a way of answering that question: it lies in the very 'spirit of resistance' to incorporation into a developing capitalist industrialism, first as a poor peasantry and, as dispossession proceeded, as a proletariat.

Romantic images of a golden-age past are frequently used as a means of mobilising rejection of, and resistance to, an oppressive present (Keesing, 1982a; 1982b). Indeed this very instrumentalism lies at the base of the development of European romanticism; in contemporary South Africa it manifests in attempts by those on all sides of the political arena to constitute 'the traditional' in terms which will provide support for their respective concerns and interests (Spiegel, 1989; Spiegel and Boonzaier, 1988). But Comaroff fails to recognise this process at work among the people described as Barolong boo RaTshidi in the 1960s and 1970s. Rather, she allows their own (emic) and probably instrumental interpretations to cloud her analytical perceptions. Analysis of their 'spirit of resistance' is lost in the whirlpool of a cultural structuralism which insists on inventing primitive Tswana society (cf. Kuper, 1988), which searches for continuities of a consensual and community-oriented past, and which discovers them floating in a syncretic mixture of the kind made famous by Malinowski with his skokiaan analogy of culture contact (1961: 24). Instead of attempting to understand the source of the 'forces and powers in the

[Tshidi] air', as John Comaroff (1982) would have us do, she seems merely to accept that they are there and that their influence needs to be recognised.

All of this is most surprising considering Jean Comaroff's discussion, in her introductory chapter, of some of the most recent theoretical developments in sociological analysis of the mid-1980s, one assumes in order to apply them in her consideration of "the reciprocal determination of material forces and cultural forms" (1985: xii). Her attempts to examine those 'reciprocal determinations' remain at the level of structural articulations. Their reflections in people's 'lived experiences', in which Comaroff sees attempts to revive an almost wholly destroyed social communality, come to be described in jargonesque terms which disguise the essential dualism of her analysis.

She refers (1985: 4) to the two dimensions of ideology - as the basis of 'discourse' and as 'lived experience' - which appear in Marx's earlier and later work and which have since been the inspiration for Gramsci's (1971) concern with 'common sense' and, more recently, Giddens' (1979; 1984) distinction between discursive and practical consciousness. Concern to emphasise 'lived experience' has given rise to various responses. One is Foucault's antagonism, which Comaroff cites (1985), towards exclusively instrumental explanations of motivations for social behaviour. Another is Bourdieu's emphasis on the way in which (discursive) history becomes tacit knowledge. This, he argues, occurs through its being turned into nature, and thus denied its existence as explicit history, while simultaneously entering the 'unconscious' as cultural structure manifesting in lived experience (Bourdieu, 1977: cf. 78-9).

Comaroff too is concerned to focus on the 'lived experience' of her Tshidi subjects and to see in it manifestations, "only partially subject to explicit reflection", of the process of their response to their "growing enstrangement" (1985: 5). But those responses are based, says Comaroff, on a tacit understanding which comes from the pre-colonial Tshidi belief system, the dominant symbols of which "unified man (sic), spirit, and nature in a mutually effective,

continuous order of being" (1985: 2); and the belief system has manifested itself in "the Tshidi [search] to reestablish the coherence of their lived world" (1985: 5). Despite her criticism of the cultural structural determinism to which Bourdieu's position leads, Comaroff is unable to escape it because, as we have seen, she perceives an (indigenous, authentic) Tshidi/Tswana culture as communitarian and consensual, and because she conceives culture in systematic terms: signs are "elements in systems of signification [which] might have a meaningful logic of their own ..." (1985: 4; original emphasis).<sup>14</sup>

If Comaroff had been drawing exclusively from Bourdieu and applying his notion of 'practical mastery' (1977), one might have anticipated that her analysis would have followed the route it has. As Gell (1985: 273) has shown, Bourdieu's practical mastery theory is wholly compatible with an understanding of the nature of human thought processes which divides these into two types - intellectual (of science), and practical (of the 'habitus') - each of which is implicitly associated with a particular type of society.

However, Comaroff also cites, but fails to apply, the work of Giddens who has introduced to sociology the important idea of recursion, taken from computer programming (Giddens, 1984; cf. Mills, 1986). Use of this notion would allow a humanistically sensitive albeit structuralist analysis of processes of 'reciprocal determination' - Giddens' structuration. Its use would avoid the cultural structural determinations of the kind Comaroff (1985: 4-5) criticises in Bourdieu (1977), and yet seems to adopt when she retains a perspective that sees pre-colonial Tshidi society as typologically different from contemporary industrial capitalism.

Moreover, the value of the discursive versus practical consciousness distinction, as developed by Giddens, is that it has no need of a social-typological dichotomy: both explicit and tacit understanding direct people's actions in all social contexts. In

<sup>14</sup> As Thornton (n.d.) has indicated, there is no sense in looking for logic in arbitrarily assembled sets of signs or symbols: "logics are deliberately reduced (simplified, clarified, unambiguous) systems of meanings ... [while] ... meanings in their 'natural state', as observed, are complex, opaque and ambiguous. [so it] it can not be valid to ask whether they are equivalent to logical systems which negate these qualities."

addition, it provides a useful device for understanding how and why apparent continuities occur in social life, and for prising apart instrumental, functional and habitual reasons for such continuities. For this purpose it is useful to refine Giddens' analytical distinction between discursive and practical consciousness.

Giddens is quite clear that his distinction does not imply an abrupt separation of two kinds of consciousness, and that there is often a blurring of the one into the other. Thus practices reflecting practical consciousness may well - in their performance - result in agents becoming more explicitly aware of what lies behind their actions, and what ends they serve. The result is that these ideas enter the level of discursive consciousness. Nonetheless, it is likely that people perform some practices without ever being discursively conscious of the reasons for those practices, and never needing to be so conscious. These are practices which are adopted and conducted habitually, and which are sometimes explained to interrogating outsiders merely as 'our custom'. Both are quite different from those instrumental actions which are the product of calculated or discursive decision-making processes.

I am not suggesting that habitual practices necessarily require no skill for their performance nor that they are necessarily non-intellectual. Indeed some highly technical operations are conducted through practical rather than discursive knowledge (cf. Gell, 1985; Cohen, 1987: 123-4).<sup>15</sup> All I am saying is that people have neither need nor inclination to discuss certain of their practices or the reasons for performing them. Their determinants remain at the level of practical consciousness and are never raised to the level of discourse. In this respect they are different from those practices which, while emanating from the practical, do reach the level of the discursive once they are performed or queried.

While it is true that all social actions reflect instrumentalism, functionalism and habit in differing degrees, it is heuristically

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<sup>15</sup> Pragmatists such as Peirce argued that much of what was learnt discursively was subsequently internalised so that the activity which followed did not require ratiocinated thought to be given effect, but rather that it proceeded on an intuitive basis. Peirce argued that intuition was actually the product of those learnt and thoroughly internalised ideas rather than a kind of natural insight or merely the product of ideas learnt unconsciously (Rochberg-Halton, 1986: 26ff).

useful to distinguish these three so that one can examine the extent to which each impinges on any particular practice. It is for this reason that I have suggested, in chapter 1, that one needs to make a clear distinction between those social practices, and facets of such practices, which people engage in for instrumental reasons, and those which they do for reasons of habit - practices with which people 'go on' in terms of their practical consciousness, and which they do not have to decide to do in any ratiocinative way. It is for the same reason that I have suggested that one needs to distinguish those practices for which an explication can be obtained on enquiry from those for which a practitioner's explication, if available, turns out to be a post-hoc rationalisation.

I return to these ideas in later chapters, particularly chapter 6 through 8, where I attempt to apply them to my own ethnographic material. My intention is to use these ideas to look at a variety of social practices to do with relations around the land (chapter 6), with local use of power (chapter 7), and with domestic relations (chapter 8). I do this in order to see whether I am able to throw further light on the reasons for cultural continuities. Modern rationalist analyses based on a structuralist-materialist paradigm have been particularly insightful in recent years. But they do not provide a sufficient explanation because they tend to have homogenised regional culture, particularly in southern Africa. As I indicate in my concluding chapter, my aim is to find a way to explain differences without resorting to a dualist or pluralist approach via cultural-structuralism, or to what Amselle (1990a: ch2) calls culturalism. I thus look at some of the methodological problems which stand along the path of realising this goal.

Before proceeding to consider these issues, however, it is necessary to locate the area from which I have drawn my ethnographic examples. I do this in the following three chapters, starting in chapter 3 with a discussion of the history of population movement in Matatiele since the mid-nineteenth century.

## CHAPTER 3

### A LAST FRONTIER: POPULATION MOVEMENT AND RESETTLEMENT IN MATATIELE, EAST GRIQUALAND

Event histories, written to set the scene for the presentation of ethnographic data about a recent period, are to be found in most anthropological monographs. Two approaches are common. In the case of older monographs, the focus was on the named entity (eg. Bhaca, Mpondo) which was the concern of the monograph; more recent studies concentrate on the district or region from which ethnographic data have been drawn (cf. Amselle, 1990b). Sometimes the two are conflated, as when authors present regional historical summaries and yet continue to search for recorded precedents of particular cultural practices which they wish to analyse in the contemporary period (cf. De Wet (1986: 338) and Kuckertz (1990: 130), both quoted above: p.22-3).

Interestingly, they only infrequently focus on the episodes of recorded conflict which are often the concern of recent local level histories. Most commonly this is because, as here, the contemporary data that follow do not reflect major conflict, but focus rather on the politically less traumatic practices and norms of social life which are accessible on a day-to-day basis through anthropological research. In general the concerns of this chapter are not about the uprisings, rebellions and rural scares in the area of my research, some of which have been so well documented by recent historians (van Onselen, 1973; Beinart, 1986; 1987a; Bundy, 1987b; cf. Bardsley, 1982; Ross, 1976). But I do refer to the social products of those incidents, particularly in so far as they are reflected in the contemporary situation.

In this chapter I adopt the second approach referred to above, attempting to locate Matatiele in the broader East Griqualand region. I recognise, however, that a simple chronology of events would be meaningless if it were not carefully constructed to engage

the subject matter of the dissertation. The result is that I have used some historical data about the district to create a sense of some of the processes set in motion in an earlier period than the one on which the dissertation concentrates. I focus particularly on those processes of which the results are still evident today, constraining and enabling the more recent practices which are my main focus. My primary aim here is to provide a picture of the continuing movement and resettlement which people have experienced in Matatiele since the mid-nineteenth century. I do not therefore intend an 'objective' or 'complete' chronological summary of Matatiele's history (even if that were indeed ever possible).

There are two reasons that this historical summary does not focus on any one named social entity. The first, as must be clear from chapters 1 and 2, is that I find difficulty with an approach which sees as primary any sense of necessary continuities between people who, over time and to distinguish them somehow from others, are described by a single name. Recent work on the Transkei has shown quite how fluid various social categories have been in the past, and how readily individuals and indeed named groups have switched allegiances in changing circumstances (Beinart and Bundy, 1987b; Bardsley, 1982; Spiegel, 1988a). The same applies today, making the nature of group membership and association an issue worthy of analysis in its own right. One certainly cannot take named groups for granted, and then proceed to use them as a natural starting point for discussion and analysis.

Secondly, the empirical history of Matatiele is littered with a large number of different named entities and with changing allegiances and alliances of individuals who have moved across the boundaries of these entities. As Beinart has pointed out, "East Griqualand [which includes Matatiele] was a last frontier for settlement for Africans as well as Europeans" (1987a: 51). The result was that for many different reasons from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, the region was settled by Africans from a variety of different areas and with a variety of different political allegiances. The groups into which they formed were named in various ways, such as for their leaders, for the clans of their leaders, or by virtue of their association with other broader

political entities. As the Blue Book for 1884 points out, the period starting about 1861 saw "streams of population from different sides ... pouring into [East Griqualand], and its inhabitants are now greatly mixed as regards tribal connections" (G3/1884: xii).

Matatiele, as indeed most of East Griqualand, can thus not accurately be described by reference to a named group as are other areas in the Transkei, such as Pondoland, Thembuland, Gcalekaland etc.<sup>1</sup> East Griqualand provided a home for a large number of disparate and often antagonistic immigrant communities (cf Bardsley, 1982), only one of whom was Adam Kok's Griquas for whom the region is still named (cf. Ross, 1974; 1976). There was never a period between the Griqua's arrival in 1863 and formal annexation of East Griqualand in 1877 that the whole area was effectively under Griqua rule (G37/1876), although nominally this was the case between 1868 and 1877 (A12/1873: 28). Matatiele is similarly not the home of one dominant social entity, and has not been since its settlement in the nineteenth century. One present indicator of this situation is the fact that the Regional Authority for the area of Matatiele and Mount Fletcher does not have a paramount chief as is the practice elsewhere in the Transkei (see chapter 7; cf. Bundy, 1987b: 203).<sup>2</sup> Nor indeed does the Regional Authority have a 'tribal' name: Maluti is geographically descriptive.

#### Movements and settlement before 1884

Although "[t]ribal traditions among the Thembu, Xhosa and Mpondomise point to their having been in East Griqualand long before [the mid-sixteenth century]" (Wright, 1971: 6-7), most evidence suggests that before the mid-nineteenth century, the area which then

<sup>1</sup> This situation is reflected in some of the new 'authentic' district and town names which have been introduced to replace colonial ones in parts of the 'independent' Transkei: eg. Mount Ayliff has become MaXesibeni and Mount Frere has been renamed KwaBhaca.

<sup>2</sup> Van Warmelo (1935: 17) suggests that Jeremiah, descended from a junior son of Moshoeshe, George Tlali, was recognised by some as local paramount in the 1930s. Occasional unsuccessful attempts to formalise this claim have ignored the competing claim made for Motheo Sibi by local Bahlakoana (van Warmelo, 1935: 17; cf. Bardsley, 1982). More recently locals have called for the cession of Matatiele to Lesotho - particularly when the Transkei was about to be granted 'independence' by Pretoria in 1976 (Southall, 1982: 141; Streek and Wicksteed, 1981: 50ff.).

came to be known in colonial discourse as Nomansland, was inhabited by roaming bands of 'Bushman raiders' (Wright, 1971: 11), some of whom became cattle rustlers in association with Khoi and 'Hottentots of mixed descent' operating from strongholds in the mountain fastnesses of the Drakensberg (Vinnicombe, 1976: 57ff).<sup>3</sup>

The sources are by no means clear, but it is possible that other small 'petty chiefdoms' which had fled the ravages of wars, dispossession and possibly slavery (Cobbing, 1988), both to the north and the south, were also to be found in the area around that time (cf. Bardsley, 1982: 55-6; 74). One immigrant group comprised "a band of marauders who established themselves ... beneath the mountains during the 1850s" (Ross, 1976: 97). They were led by Smith Pommer previously a leader in the Kat River uprising in 1851 (ibid.).

Most, however, were small groupings of refugees from the *lifagane*,<sup>4</sup> such as two Hlangwini groupings under Nombewu and Baleni who first fled into the area in the 1820s and then moved back to the Tugela area in the 1830s (Bryant, 1965: 380; 387-8). Under Shepstone's administration, both groupings, now under Fodo and Sidoi respectively, were subsequently punished for separate attacks on neighbouring Natal groups (Welsh, 1971: 19; 120). They consequently fled again into Nomansland, Fodo in 1846/7 and Sidoi ten years later (Bryant, 1965: 389).

Other such refugees included portions of Mthimkulu's destroyed Hlubi chiefdom (Wright and Manson, 1983: 17-19) temporarily seeking sanctuary before proceeding to settle further south and west. One source suggests that Ludidi, one of Mthimkulu's sons, settled in the area in 1858 after first having sought sanctuary in Thembuland and thereafter in Pondoland (Manchongo, n.d.: 23; cf. A12/1873: 28; Dorning, n.d.: ch 6). Although 1884 saw Ludidi removed from

<sup>3</sup> Saunders (1978: 19n) remarks that "To some at least, the name [Nomansland] suggested the lack of a supreme political authority rather than an absence of people."

<sup>4</sup> I am aware that there is recent historiographical criticism of the notion of *lifagane* (Cobbing, 1988: 1989), but feel constrained to continue using it pending further clarification from historians. Whether or not the massive disruptions of the early 19th century resulted from European slave-raiding or from autochthonous processes, the evidence suggests that there was notable movement into Nomansland of refugees from the north and the south-west.

Matatiele and relocated into Qumbu district (G2/1884: 8; 17), various of his own and his brothers' descendants, many of whom came from Herschel in 1868/69 (A12/1873: 24-28; Brownlee, 1923: 46), still today control the locations in the southern part of Matatiele district (cf. Jackson, 1975: 33-4; 63).<sup>5</sup>

In terms of an 1844 treaty between the Cape and Faku, the Mpondo chief, the Nomansland region was recognised as falling under the latter's sovereignty (Saunders, 1978: 18), although he soon found it impossible to settle it with his own subjects (Campbell, 1959: 63ff.). His inability to control the cattle raiding bands occupying the area, and the consequent reparations demanded of him by Natal, led Faku to begin negotiations to cede the region to Natal in 1850, although no cession was ever formalised (Brownlee, 1923: 43; le Cordeur, 1974: 165-6; Saunders, 1978: 19; Bardsley, 1982: 50). Faku's uncertain sovereignty over the region and its unsettled petty chiefdoms helped lead him to enter another agreement, also in 1850, with Moshoeshoe, king of Lesotho. This allowed the latter to settle one of his dependants in what is today Matatiele (Theal, III 1964 (1883): 159) and to regard at least part of the area as potentially his own.

Sir George Grey, British High Commissioner and Governor of the Cape during the 1850s, was also interested in seeing the area settled, primarily in order to ensure stability, and to develop alliances beyond the Colony's eastern frontier. In addition he wished to provide places in which to locate "groups whose occupation of land elsewhere was being challenged" (Saunders, 1978: 19). Having met Nehemiah Sekhonyana, Moshoeshoe's son and chief negotiator after the 1858 Free State - Basuto war, Grey is reported to have encouraged Nehemiah to reach agreement with Faku so that he could establish himself and his followers in Nomansland and thus replace the land which they had lost to the Free State (Saunders, 1978: 19; Bardsley, 1982: 54-5; G37/1876). Without confirming Grey's opinion in writing, Nehemiah removed to Nomansland early in 1859, settling near the site of the present town of Matatiele

<sup>5</sup> Bardsley (1982: 74) is wrong to suggest that Hlubi - she calls it Mfengu - occupation of these locations has been continuous since 1844.

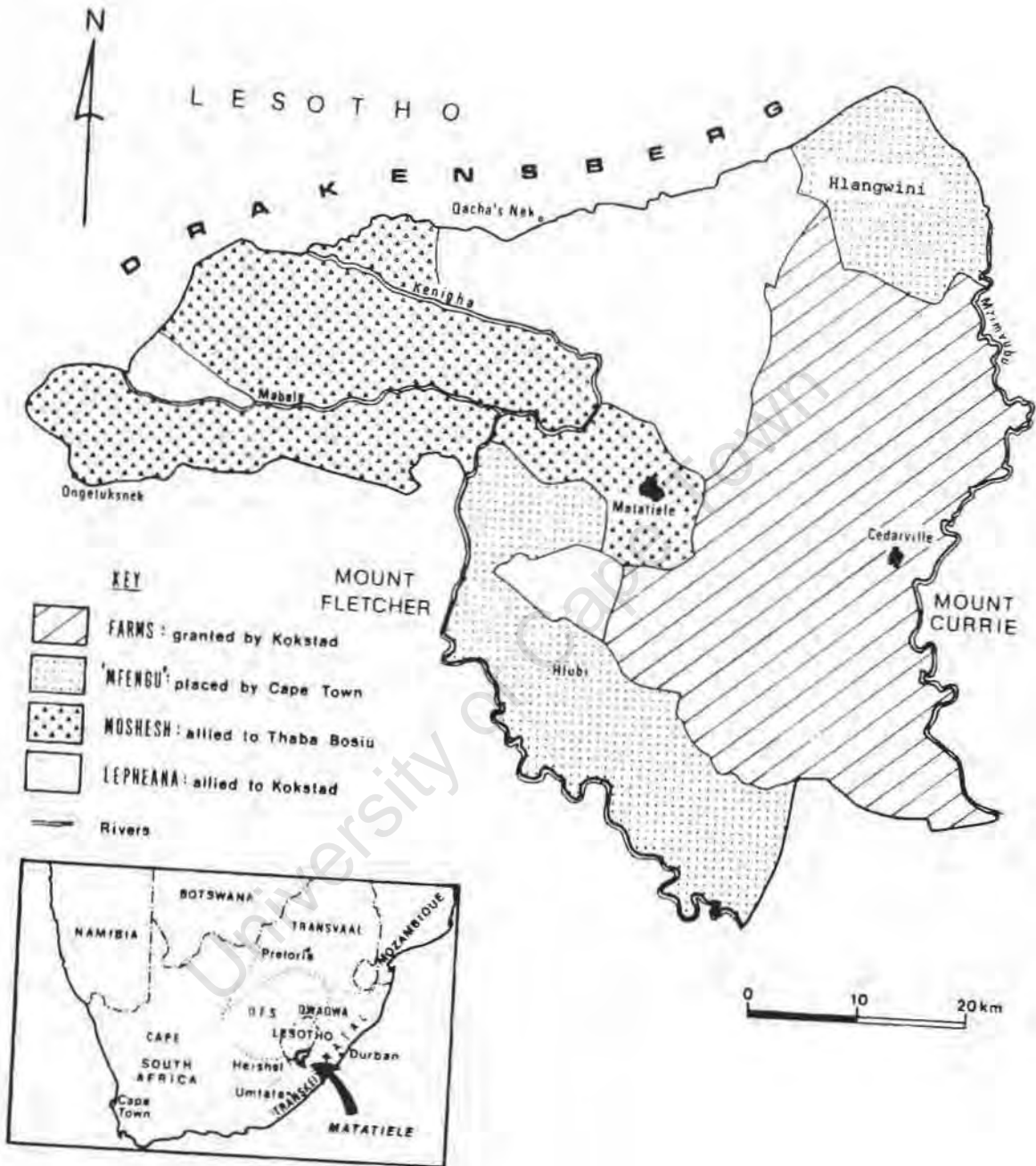
(Bardsley, 1982: 54). Meanwhile he began negotiations which culminated in his father entering an agreement with Faku in 1861 "by which this territory [viz. the portion of Matatiele where Nehemiah had settled] became part of the Sotho kingdom" (Saunders, 1978: 20).

Also during the late 1850s, Grey encouraged Adam Kok's Griquas, then resident around Philippolis in the Orange Free State but very unsettled after the Bloemfontein convention (Davenport and Hunt, 1974: 20), to consider crossing the Berg and settling in Nomansland. There, promised Grey, they would be able to reconstitute their polity and their landholdings which were steadily being appropriated by Free State farmers (Saunders, 1978: 20; Ross, 1976: 97). Consequently, Kok and three thousand of his followers settled near the present town of Kokstad during 1863. Their location to the east of the Mzimvubu River followed the Cape's recognition of Nehemiah's claim to the area to the west in the present Matatiele district (Saunders, 1978: 21; G37/1876: 59-60).

As Bardsley (1982) has shown, however, the boundary between Griqua and Basotho territory was complicated by the fact that a number of Kok's followers were people who had previously been members of Moshoeshe's Basotho, but had since parted company with that polity. The largest grouping among these were the followers of the Hlakoana chief Lepheana Phamotse, at least two of whose sons expressed their loyalty to Kok during 1876: at one Cape Government enquiry Ramahlakoana emphasised his allegiance when he asserted that: "I am a Griqua" (quoted in Bardsley, 1982: 48); at another public meeting addressed by the newly appointed Chief Magistrate for East Griqualand his brother Sibi did the same by explaining that: "I considered myself a subject of the Griquas in this country" (G52/1876: 2).

According to one source (W D Hammond-Tooke: interview with Jeremiah Moshesh n.d.) a Cape decision that only Kok's original Griqua followers should settle to the east of the Mzimvubu left Lepheana's group with no choice but to remain within the area to the west of the river, already regarded as Nehemiah's territory (see map 1; cf. G37/1876; Saunders, 1978: 21). Bardsley has suggested that

Map 1 Sketch map of Occupation of Matatiele area 1860-1880



After Bardsley (1982: 56: map 2)

Kok placed them there strategically in order to locate his allies as close as possible to Nehemiah's settlements (1982: 70). Whatever the reason, the older animosities between them were not forgotten and they resurfaced repeatedly, at least until the annexation of the Griqua state was completed by 1879. This is clear from the evidence presented to the 1876 Commission on Griqualand East (G37/1876) which was formed to investigate both the allocation of land in the area soon to be annexed, and the related claims of Nehemiah which he presented in the form of a petition to the Cape Assembly in 1875.

Although Nehemiah had retreated into Lesotho after a skirmish with Kok's followers in 1865, just in time to join hostilities against the Free State, he continued to wield influence in the area (Bardsley, 1982: 58ff.). He was soon replaced as representative of Moshoeshoe in the area by his agnate Makoae who came to occupy Nehemiah's old territory after his own stronghold at Maboloka was captured by Free State forces during the war of Seqiti (Manchongo, n.d.: 8; Brownlee, 1923: 46). Also fleeing from the war, Lebenya, an ally of Moshoeshoe, came to settle nearby in 1867/8 having first sought "refuge in the crowded [Wittebergen] Native Reserve ... [whereupon] the superintendent ... obtained leave from Sir Philip Wodehouse for him to go to occupy a part of [Nomansland] territory" (A12/1873: 24; cf. Brownlee, 1923: 45; Manchongo, n.d.: 8). In 1867 Nehemiah also re-entered the area. Despite regaining effective leadership, he came this time as a nominal subordinate of Lebenya who was based in the neighbouring Mount Fletcher section of the Gatberg district (G37/1876). With Nehemiah's presence still very much in evidence, the antagonisms between his followers and those of Lepheana continued unabated (Bardsley, 1982).

Grey was not the only Cape Governor to introduce settlers into the area. In 1869 Wodehouse relocated a number of groups who had fled the Free State - Basotho wars and settled in the now very overcrowded Wittebergen Native Reserve (Herschel) (A12/1873: 24ff; Brownlee, 1923: 46; Manchongo, n.d.: 8).<sup>6</sup> Among these were various descendants of the Hlubi chief Mthimkulu such as Zibi, Matandela,

<sup>6</sup> Keen to see Nomansland fully annexed, Joseph Orpen - 'arch-expansionist' and magistrate in Gatberg and the Cape's newly appointed agent and British Resident in Nomansland (Martin, 1978: 153) - complained bitterly about overcrowding in the Wittebergen Reserve (A12/1873: 27).

Lupindo and Magadla as well as Lehana, son of the Tlokoa chief Sekonyela (A12/1873: 24ff; Manchongo, n.d.: 8; Dorning, n.d.: ch 6).<sup>7</sup>

This procedure was to be repeated again after uprisings among the Griquas in 1878, and the Gun War (Transkei Rebellion) of 1880/1, when the Report on the Griqualand East Commission (Vacant Lands) of 1884 followed the recent practice in Fingoland (Bundy, 1979: 34-5; Beinart and Bundy, 1987a: 9) and rewarded many 'loyal' chiefs and their followers with locations in various East Griqualand districts including Matatiele. One of these chiefs was Mzongwana, son of the Hlangwini chief Sidoi, who had been 'loyal' during the Griqua uprisings. Recognising that earlier Griqua land grants had reduced the size of his location to accommodate no "more than half of the tribe" (G2/1884: 5), the 1884 Commission allocated him land in the north east of Matatiele already partly in Hlangwini control by 1883 (Beinart, 1987a: 50). Another such land grant was an area on the east bank of the upper Mzimvubu, allocated to Makoba, also a Hlangwini chief (interview with Justice Hornby, 22 Aug 1982, Matatiele).

A striking feature of the Commission report is the ease with which various groups of people were moved around the region in this way. This was not only to reward 'loyals' and deprive 'rebels' of their land and their chiefs of the basis of their authority. It was also a means to ensure that there was a significant belt of land left for white settlement and/or conservation along the slopes of the watershed, or, as in the Maclear section of Gatberg, to consolidate areas of land for either African locations or white-owned farms.

In Matatiele district, virtually the whole north-western section of the district was granted to Sotho and Hlubi chiefs from Lesotho who had collaborated with the colonial forces. These included George Tlali Moshesh and Tsita Moshesh, both junior sons of Moshoeshe, as well as Nkau, Madlangala, Isaac Diaho and Klein Jonas (G2/1884: 6-7). Another was Nkosana, a 'loyal' Thembu headman

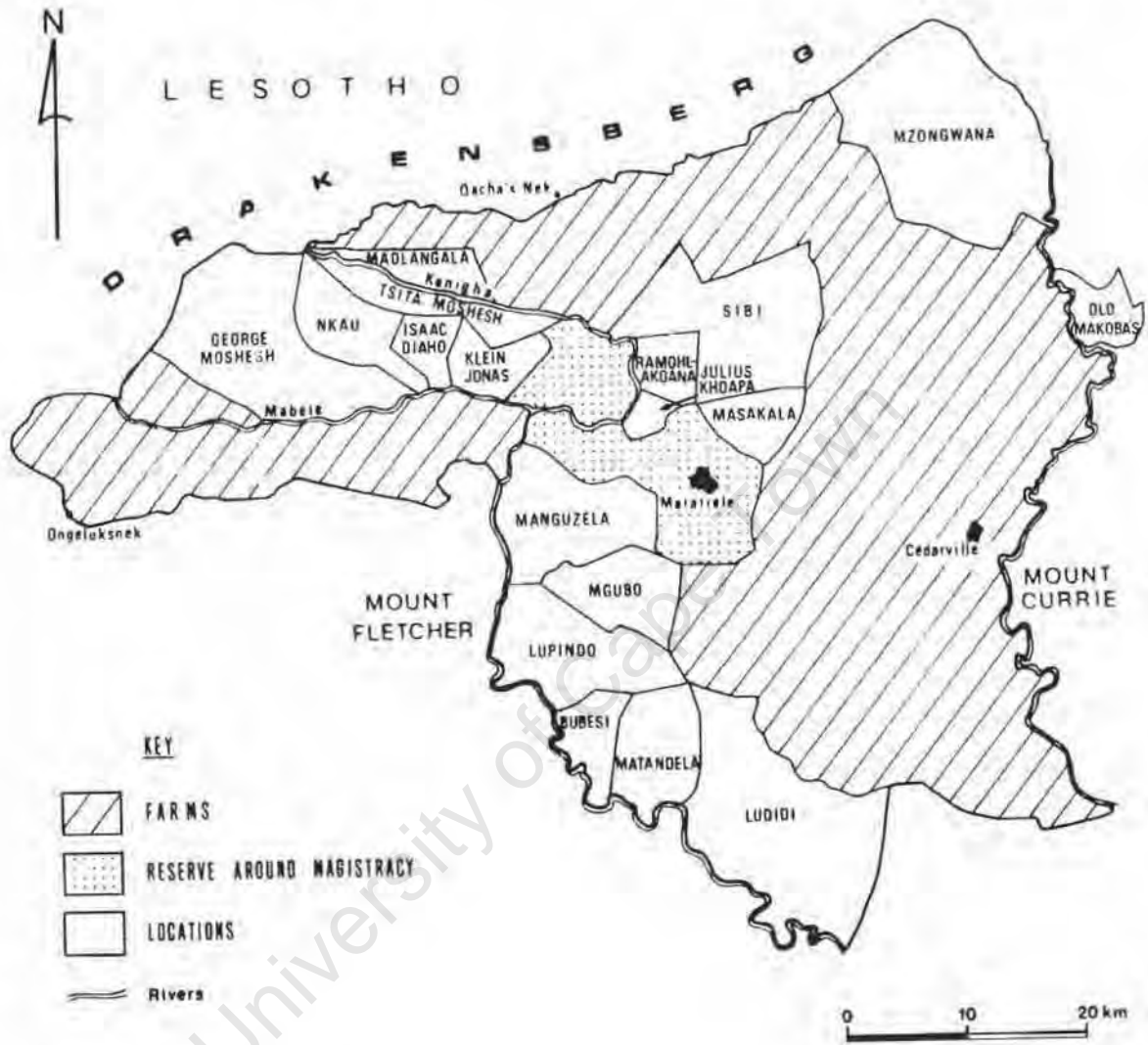
<sup>7</sup> Bardsley's (1982: 57) suggestion that Lehana was part of Kok's following is not supported by the evidence she cites although one of my informants did say the same (Mocheko Simon Khaue. 5 Jul 83 'Harry Ebdon' farm).

(Jackson, 1975: 14). Much of the land on which they were settled had previously been occupied by Makoe and his son Sekake and their followers who had joined the uprising against the Cape Government's 1878 Disarmament Act. When the tide turned against them they had fled over the Berg into Lesotho where they settled along the banks of the Orange River and its tributaries in what is today the Qacha's Nek district.

Significantly, the Gun War brought a major portion of Lepheana's Hlakoana grouping into alliance with their erstwhile local antagonists. Lepheana's first son Ramohlakoana saw his own "sons with nearly the whole of his people [go] with the rebels and even carr[y] away old Lepheana himself as far as the Orange River, whence he was subsequently conveyed back to Matatiele by Ramhlagwana (sic) and died" (G2/1884: 6). Lepheana's second son, Sibi, at first also joined the uprising but later reneged and "joined the Government forces as soon as they crossed the Umzimvubu with about one half of his tribe, the other remaining with the rebels" (ibid.). The result was that both Sibi's and Ramohlakoana's Matatiele territories were significantly reduced in size and the latter was reduced from the administration's rank of chief to that of headman. Moreover, Lepheana's son Marthinus (Mothata) lost his whole territory in the north-west Berg area, this being set aside for farmland. Another of Lepheana's sons, Mosi, was similarly dispossessed, his area being settled by a disparate group of Hlubi 'loyals' under Mgubo, a former policeman now appointed as headman (G2/1884: 7). Marthinus, Mosi and their followers, who had remained with the 'rebels', also subsequently settled across the mountain ridge in Lesotho (Segar, 1986: 49). Masakala, the local Phuthi chief was another who saw his already small location reduced in size for his temporary support of the 'rebels'. The expropriated portion was handed to "some ten families of loyal Basutos under Julius Khuhapu [Khoapa]" (G2/1884: 6) (also see maps 1 and 2).

The present distribution of locations in the Matatiele district (see map 3) accords almost wholly with the recommendations of the 1884 Commission, the major exception being areas released after the 1936 Land and Trust Act (see below). The method of removing and

Map 2 Sketch map of occupation of Matatiele district after 1884 (Vacant Lands Commission)



After Bardsley (1982: 64: map 3)

Map 3 Sketch map showing present distribution of locations and selected farms in Matatiele district



KEY TO FARM NAMES

- 1 Newlands
- 2 Freemantle
- 3 Glen Alfred
- 4 Tramore
- 5 La Grange
- 6 Mount Plaisier
- 7 Rankakala (incl. Welgemoed)
- 8 Robertdale
- 9 Manning
- 10 George Herbert
- 11 Harry Ebden
- 12 Charles Brownlee
- 13 Etheldale
- 14 Wallace/St Pauls (incl. portion of Etheldale)
- 15 Polygon
- 16 Simpson
- 17 Prospect
- 18 Black Diamond
- 19 Vermiljoenskuil
- 20 Nuhah
- 21 Allingthun

resettling whole populations as punishment for their participation in anti-imperial and anti-colonial uprisings, or in reward for their collaboration, was abandoned in government attempts to deal with similar events in the region after the 1880s. Instead, both individual and family mobility and resettlement, and removals of whole communities, became part of the regular affairs of the area - the latter reflecting attempts to consolidate blocks of African and white-owned land as segregationist policies were set in motion. This, however, was only to take significant effect in the 1930s. Before that, movements into Matatiele were more closely linked to the purchase and settlement of farms, by both whites and Africans. The 1884 Commission demarcated various areas of farmland in the district all of which are still evident on present-day cadastral maps, although many farms are no longer in private hands. The next section deals with some of the movements onto and settlement on those farms.

#### Moving onto farms: 1884-1936

By 1875, the Commission on Griqualand East (G37/1876) began to investigate land allocations in the region with a view to formal annexation. It found that, after 1867, Kok's administration had extended the area of demarcated farmlands well to the west of the Mzimvubu to establish a belt of farms between the river and Lepheana's, Makaoe's and the various Hlubi territories in Matatiele (see map 1; Bardsley, 1982: 65ff.). Moreover, the list of grants disallowed by the Commission suggest that, at least on paper, the Griqua administration also attempted to lay claim to land within the bounds of various African 'locations'. This included areas in the very fertile strip along the Mabele and Kenigha Rivers (Bardsley, 1982: 71), then in Makaoe's area, which subsequently came to be the Ongeluksnek enclave (see below).

Although annexation was promulgated in 1877, a Griqua uprising in 1878 (G72/1880; Ross, 1976; Beinart, 1987a) meant that it was only effected by 1879. Moreover, the 1878 uprising, along with the population movements associated with disarmament and the Gun War, had the effect of nullifying the 1876 Commission's report on

location land allocations in Matatiele (Bardsley, 1982: 74). The 1884 Commission report (G2/1884) was thus able to extend the areas of farmland right into the heart of the Matatiele district and to include two large blocks of land which had previously been in Makoa's, Sibi's and Marthinus Lepheana's territories. In addition, a large town 'reserve' was created around the magistracy at Matatiele, also taking over land previously under Makoa's control (see maps 2 and 3).

Bardsley (1982: 67) has pointed out that before annexation there was no great scramble to obtain farms for occupation in Matatiele. However, a sudden surge in grants (many subsequently disallowed) was recorded in 1873/4 when inhabitants of the area became aware of impending annexation and the likelihood of a land commission. It is not clear to what extent this was to legalise long-standing occupation of land and to what extent land speculation was the motivating factor. One indication that the latter was the case is that even after annexation and the completion of the 1884 Commission, many of these farms, whose grants were now confirmed, remained unoccupied until the early 1910s brought an infusion of new white settlers, who came to occupy farms which many of them believed to be 'virgin' land.

On the farm 'Nuhah', purchased and first occupied by Walter Leslie in 1910, the new owner found his land being used as general commonage by Africans from nearby locations and neighbouring farms: "it was Crown land and they used it for grazing believing it still belonged to them." (interview with Leon Leslie, 29 Nov 1984, 'Allingthun'; cf. Matatiele Mail (hereafter M.M.) 27 Oct 1938).<sup>8</sup> This was despite an 'approved [Griqua] applicant', Cornelius Vesazie, having been granted the farm in 1880, following the recommendations of the 1876 Commission (Bardsley, 1982: 78). Similarly, many of the 'mortgage bond' farms created in areas which had previously been locations "were not sold for ten or even twenty years after the [1884] Report had been published" (Bardsley, 1982:

<sup>8</sup> When, during the interview, I asked Mr Leslie whether, when his father had arrived to settle at 'Nuhah', there had been any people living there previously, his answer was "No, it was still only natives." (interview with Leon Leslie, 29 Nov 1984, 'Allingthun').

75; 79-80).<sup>9</sup> For all but one or two of the new farms along the Berg to the north of what had been Makoae's territory, the period was about 25 years.

What is interesting about these mortgage bond farms, as also some whose Griqua grants and land certificates were confirmed in 1876, is that many in the Matatiele district came to be in the hands of Africans. In some cases, such as 'Polygon' and 'Simpson' (see below), these were purchased by chiefs and headmen as annexes to their locations - the money being collected by subscriptions among their followers as happened around the same time in Umzimkulu district (cf. Bundy, 1979: 235; Beinart, 1987a: 51; Beinart and Delius, 1986: 44). The result was that people moved onto these areas both from the increasingly crowded nearby locations, from nearby farms as they were occupied by their new owners, and from other parts of the colony.

The availability of freehold farmland also brought a number of wealthier Africans into the area where they obtained farms for their own private use, in much the same way as, already during the Griqua period, some of the local chiefs and others, such as Ramohlakoana and Kurt Jan Rubisi, had done before them (Bardsley, 1982: 73). Among these were men who became quite large landowners "such as Charles Pamla, a 'Mfengu' Methodist minister who came from the eastern Cape and held three or more farms [in East Griqualand] in his own name" (Beinart, 1986: 283). Pamla demonstrated his 'loyalty' by repeatedly providing information to the colonial authorities during the 'rural scare' in East Griqualand in the 1890s (Beinart, 1987a: 63-4). He was among the first to purchase one of the newly demarcated mortgage bond farms in Matatiele: in 1888 he bought the farm 'La Grange' registering a bond of 360 pounds (Bardsley, 1982: 80). By 1904 he had purchased at least one other farm in the district. This was 'Vermiljoenkuil' (Deeds Register, Umtata), one

<sup>9</sup> 'Mortgage bond farms' refers to the parcels of freehold land delimited by the 1884 Vacant Lands Commission for sale by government to individuals, many of whom were obliged to obtain mortgages for their purchase. There were 84 such farms within the Matatiele District (Bardsley, 1982: 74). The term was used to distinguish these farms from farms granted by the earlier Griqua government and subsequently confirmed by the colonial administration, and from farms granted by the colonial administration to holders of Griqua government 'Land Certificates' (certifying their right to Griqua quitrent farms not yet demarcated) or to various other categories of special and 'approved' applicants (see Bardsley, 1982: esp. Appx 1 pp. 76-80).

of the grants recommended by the 1876 Commission to those whose earlier applications to the Griqua administration the Commission approved (Bardsley, 1982: 77-8).<sup>10</sup>

Other wealthy African immigrants who became landholders in the western part of the district near to or on the banks of the Kenigha and Mabele Rivers included William Mzozoyana who had come from Peddie in the eastern Cape, and purchased 'Tramore' in 1889, registering a 400 pound bond. Another was Ned Sekhosana and his sister's son Sihayi (or Siyayi Sebete) from Nqutu in Natal, who bought 'Etheldale' in 1895 registering a bond of 808 pounds. Also from Nqutu were Sabasaba Andries Dodo, Joel Lipara (Sekhosana) and Liquila, the purchasers in 1895 of 'George Herbert' (bond: 380 pounds).<sup>11</sup> Other new landowners came from Herschel. These included 'Moso Faro who purchased 'Manning' in 1892 paying a total of 750 pounds (bond: 305 pounds) (Faro, 1922: 6), and Philip Khaue and his son Peter who in 1904 bought 'Harry Ebden' from one Christian Petrus Naude for 1 950 pounds (Deeds Register, Umtata).<sup>12</sup> In addition there were various African immigrants who purchased land elsewhere in the district. Their numbers were sufficient by 1914 for the local newspaper to carry a letter, signed by 'A Native', which called for the establishment of a 'Farmers' Native association' for the "many wealthy natives owning farms of their own ..." (M.M. 5 Mar 1914) A detailed history of these African landowners and their interrelationships remains to be researched and recorded.

A number of immigrants to the district had first accumulated wealth through transport riding (cf. Beinart and Bundy, 1987a: 11). This was the case for both Africans and whites. Among the latter were such men as Walter Leslie, who purchased 'Nuhah' in 1910 and farmed there and at two Berg farms 'Rankakala' and 'Welgemoed' until they were all expropriated by the South African Native Trust in 1938. Leslie was a leading figure in local affairs through the

<sup>10</sup> An area of relatively dense settlement around a shop, school and mission station in Mzongwana's location is still called Pamlaville.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*: interviews with Sobantu Mzozoyana, 3 Jul 1982. Tsita's location: Morekisi Sekhosana 10 Aug 1982. 'Etheldale': Ramote Sekhosana 7 Aug 1982. 'Glen Alfred'.

<sup>12</sup> Naude had just a year before paid the original grantees of this farm 1 400 pounds for both this farm and the adjacent 'Charles Brownlee'.

1930s (M.M. 27 Oct 1938; interview with Leon Leslie, 29 Nov 1984, 'Allingthun'). Others purchasers included the Kirks and the Forresters, descendants of 1820 settlers, who first traded and rode transport in Lesotho and the Free State before coming over the Berg to settle as farmers along the Kenigha River (interview with Sam Kirk, Jul 1983, Matatiele; Kirk, n.d.), and the Maartens family who had run transport from East London while farming stock near Barkly East. When the latter first came to Matatiele in the 1870s, they initially settled as tenants, breeding livestock for sale. They subsequently purchased two farms just east of Matatiele town, and in 1915 extended their holdings to the farm 'Newlands' in the western Berg section of the district (interview with Rent Maartens, Jul, 1983, Matatiele).

Among the Africans who came to purchase land in Matatiele were transport riders who included William Mzozoyana of 'Tramore', Philip and Peter Khaue of 'Harry Ebden', and Ned (Lenetha) Sekhosana of 'Etheldale'.<sup>13</sup> For both the latter two as well as for some others, collaboration with colonial forces provided the initial funds for the purchase of wagons and draft animals. This is clearly demonstrated in the case of Ned Sekhosana's career which I outline here as an example.

According to his grandson, Morekisi Sekhosana, Ned had been a small child among Sekonyela's Tlokoa people when they were routed by Moshoeshe.<sup>14</sup> Ned's family fled into Natal where he later assisted the British forces at Isandlwana, fighting under a chief Hlubi who was granted land at Ngutu. With the reward he received personally Ned purchased a wagon and proceeded to transport goods, first within Natal and then from Durban to the new settlement at the Reef, running two wagons and trading also in cattle and horses. His search for horses brought him to Matatiele where he discovered that there was land for sale. Returning to Natal, he spread word that farms were obtainable and then proceeded, in company with others such as Sabasaba Andries Dodo ('George Herbert' farm), to purchase the farm 'Etheldale' and remove his dependants to live there. His brother Leteba followed some years after, buying 'Charles Brownlee' in 1906 from a white owner.

<sup>13</sup> Interviews with Sobantu Mzozoyana, 3 Jul 1982. Tsita's location: Mocheko Simon Khaue, 11 Jun 1983 and 5 Jul 1983. 'Harry Ebden': Morekisi Sekhosana, 10 Aug 1982 'Etheldale'.

<sup>14</sup> The later chronology suggests that this may in fact have been Ned's father, Tloutle.

A close reading of the Deeds Register in conjunction with my interviews with Morekisi Sekhosana (10 Aug 1982, 'Etheldale'), his sister Makgokolotso (5 Aug 1982, Tsita's location) and the son of his father's half brother, Ramote Sekhosana, (7 Aug 1982, 'Glen Alfred') suggests that members of the Sekhosana family purchased at least five farms in the district over the following years. They still own a number, including most of 'Etheldale' and a greater portion of 'Glen Alfred'. A portion of the former that was originally in Siyayi Sebete's name was transferred to the South African Native Trust (hereafter SANT) in 1960 and has since been used as a section of the St Paul's ward in Ramohlakoana's location (Deeds Register, Umtata; Register of Trust Farms, Maluti; Segar, 1982: 28).

The availability of freehold land in the district continued to attract wealthy African immigrants. At least in part this was because it lay in the Cape Province where there was as yet no prohibition on Africans purchasing land outside the areas scheduled by the 1913 Land Act (cf. Davenport and Hunt, 1974: 42-3). A number of the farms in the belt along the Berg slopes were thus sold by whites to Africans, both from within and without the district. One was a half portion of the farm 'Freemantle' sold in 1930 to Springkaan Makamole, a large stockowner from another district who required pasturage for his herds (Deeds Register, Umtata), and who thereafter allowed tenants to run their stock with his. Another was the farm 'Robertdale' which was purchased by Jakko Tsuebeane in 1930 (ibid.).

Tenancy for both pasturage and cropping as well as residence was common on many of these farms, and is still practised today (see chapter 6). Indeed, as Beinart (1986: 300) has remarked for the same period in Umzimkulu, some "African landowners such as Charles Pamla were attempting to transform themselves into government recognised headmen" and they were willing therefore to encourage tenancy on their farms. This was more marked in that district than in Matatiele, but it still meant that there was a fairly steady flow of immigrants into the latter district, both from other parts of the colony and from Lesotho. Of particular note in this regard were a block of farms including 'Black Diamond' and 'Prospect' lying between Sibi Lepheana's location and the Little Mzimvubu River, and purchased by members of the Faro, Kortjass and Pakkies families. Some of these farms, in particular portions of the two just named and owned by Faro, subsequently became areas of dense 'squatter'

settlement in much the same way as has 'Harry Ebdon' farm in the west of the district (see chapter 5) (Michael Morris, pers. comm. 27 Feb 1989).<sup>15</sup>

This flow of population into the district was not only onto the farms. Indeed some of the locations were also relatively sparsely populated and they experienced a steady trickle of new residents. Many were people from the much more densely populated valleys of Qacha's Nek in Lesotho. They had spent time working on white-owned farms in Matatiele, in nearby districts, and also in the more distant districts of the north-eastern Cape. While the Gun War had led to a flood of refugees into the southern areas of Lesotho, many ordinary folk who had gone over with their leaders were able now to return to locations in Matatiele where they often had close relatives who had remained.

This trickle of immigration should not be understood to mean that land was plentiful for Africans in Matatiele during this period. Indeed, the Beaumont Commission heard evidence of what was seen as critical pressure on African land in the area, as elsewhere (UG 22/1916: 204). This inclined the commissioners towards recommending that large portions of the district be allocated for African occupation (UG 25/1916), despite strident counter-claims, in evidence to them, that the district's land was "eminently suitable for European settlement" (UG 22/1916: 203-4).

Movement of people from Lesotho into Matatiele during this period was often of an oscillating nature with some people moving back and forth quite rapidly while others who settled stayed for a generation or even more and then returned. One reason for generational oscillations was clear still in the 1980s: women from one side of the border, married to men on the other, often left some of their children at the mother's natal home. Once the children were themselves adults they were expected to move back across the border.

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<sup>15</sup> Michael Morris, an attorney in Matatiele, noted: "some owners have allowed people from elsewhere, including illegal immigrants from Lesotho, to settle on their farms and to build themselves houses - all for a consideration, of course. Many of the farms ... were inherited by the present owners subject to the condition that they must allow the deceased's children and their children to reside on the farm. As the decades go by, this right of occupation is claimed by more and more descendants ..." (pers. comm. 27 Feb 1989).

Regular patterns of repeated cousin marriage also had this effect, particularly where it involved marriage across the border.

Another reason for cross-border movement was the search for employment. This operated in both directions. From very early on, Lesotho (Basutoland) was a source of labour migrants both to the diamond and later the coalfields, and before that to farms in the eastern Cape (Parsons and Palmer, 1977; Kimble, 1976; 1978; 1982a; 1982b; Murray, 1981; Spiegel, 1979; 1980a). On the other hand, sons of those whom an official called the wealthy landed "aristocracy among the other Natives" in Matatiele, (quoted in Bundy, 1979: 128; Beinart, 1986: 283), and who had gained an education but for whom there was no farm to inherit, often crossed over to find employment in the Basutoland administration. Many maintained links in Matatiele and ensured that their children returned once they had themselves come of age.

In many senses, then, the ridge of the Drakensberg which marked the boundary between Matatiele and Qacha's Nek in Lesotho (Basutoland) was more a symbolic than a real obstacle to movement. This contributed, no doubt, to the reasons for antagonism shown towards the erection of a fence along the border at the time of rinderpest in 1896/7 (van Onselen, 1973: 474-6). And it helps to explain some of the outcry when the Transkei's 'independence' in 1976 led to extreme difficulties for cross border traffic (Southall, 1982: 141; Spiegel, 1979: 37).

#### Consequences of the Native Trust and Land Act, 1936

The publication of what was referred to locally as the Released Areas Bill in the mid 1930s caused a great stir among the by now growing and increasingly cohesive white settler community in Matatiele. A local newspaper headline, 'A Serious Threat to Matatiele', well summed up local opinion about the Bill and its likely effect on the district (M.M. 16 Jan 1936).

The 1916 Beaumont Commission recommended that 41 758 hectares of 'white' Matatiele should be included in the proposed extended areas for African occupation (UG 22/1916). This was reduced to 10 248

hectares by the 1918 Select Committee (UG 8/1918), while local interests had, in 1928, managed to have the district's ward of Ongeluksnek excised from the list of areas likely to be handed over (M.M. 24 Sep 1936; 4 Feb 1937; cf. De Wet, 1986: 60). It thus came as something of a surprise to white farmers in the district, many of whom had only just managed to establish themselves, when they found their security of tenure threatened by a Bill which their local representative said was being rushed through the legislature (M.M. 16 Jan 1936) and which had scheduled for release 46 520 hectares or 62 farms in the district (Matatiele/Maluti District Record Book (hereafter M/M-DRB): 1a).

They attended various meetings called separately and jointly by local representative bodies including farmers' and traders' associations and their divisional and municipal councils. They drew up petitions and memoranda and published their plight in all the major South African newspapers. They sent a deputation to see the responsible Minister protesting the possible loss of their land. Drawing on a conservationist ideology then in the ascendancy (Beinart, 1984; Moll, 1983: 85-6) they pointed out that much of "the proposed Released Area in the Matatiele District on the Drakensberg consisted of the watershed and that native occupation of this land would be harmful" (M.M. 20 Feb 1936).<sup>16</sup>

Once their attempts to reverse the decision to include 62 local farms in the Schedule of Released Areas had failed, and the Act had been passed, local whites established the East Griqualand Vigilance Committee to look after local interests as farms were bought out by the SANT (M.M. 30 Jul 1936). Among other complaints raised repeatedly from this point onwards was that revenue to the divisional council would be severely cut because the SANT had been "relieved of its liability to pay divisional council and road board rates on land acquired by the Trust" (M.M. 3 Jun and 9 Dec 1937).

The local newspaper carried many articles and letters expressing local opinion, including that of one African who objected to the

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<sup>16</sup> "... the huge area proposed to be set aside for the Natives comprises portions of the Berg watershed. It is a regrettable fact that the Natives invariably denude their special areas of its bush and tree growth." (M.M. 6 Feb 1936).

rash of antagonism towards the Bill from people who had long supported the principles of segregation (M.M. 17 Sep and 1 Oct 1936). Another correspondent argued that the loss of land by whites constituted a "second dismemberment of East Griqualand", the first having occurred "in 1882, when enormous location reserves were ruthlessly cut out of the district to accommodate tribes that had been loyal during the native war of 1880" (M.M. 3 Sep 1936).<sup>17</sup>

Despite the protest, once the land valuation process began, many of the farmers in the district were reported to have offered up their land even before they were approached (M.M. 24 Dec 1936; 29 Jul 1937). Indeed, some of the farmers in the unscheduled Ongeluksnek ward did likewise (M.M. 4 Feb 1937).<sup>18</sup> By spring of 1938, many Matatiele farmers had been paid out and were leaving their farms, in this the first Cape district to have been subjected to purchases by the SANT (M.M. 5 Aug 1937). They had been allowed to remain until the end of October that year, to harvest their crops and to have had access to new spring grazing for fattening stock prior to selling them (M.M. 3 Feb and 10 Mar 1938).

For a number of these farmers the expropriation meant nothing much more than a move to another farm in the district. For others, some of whom had been tenants on the land that they had worked, the sale of the farms meant the end of their presence in the district and even the end of a farming career. At a time of high unemployment and concern with the 'poor white problem' their dispossession provided scope for renewed calls to create a belt of smallholdings for white occupation below the Berg, as had been proposed already in the 1870s and 80s when the need was felt for a buffer between Lesotho and the Colony (M.M. 13 Jan and 3 Mar 38).

<sup>17</sup> The 1884 Commission was charged with two mutually contradictory tasks: to create a continuous belt of farmland for white settlement as a 'buffer' all along the Berg boundary with Lesotho, while avoiding relocating 'loyal' Africans "from their present locations without their consent" (G2/1884: 5). The compromise reached included granting George Moshesh and other 'loyals' locations in Matatiele district.

<sup>18</sup> The same occurred in Maclear which has since been excised from the Transkei and is today a wholly white farming district (M.M. 3 Mar 1938; cf. Bundy, 1979: 89).

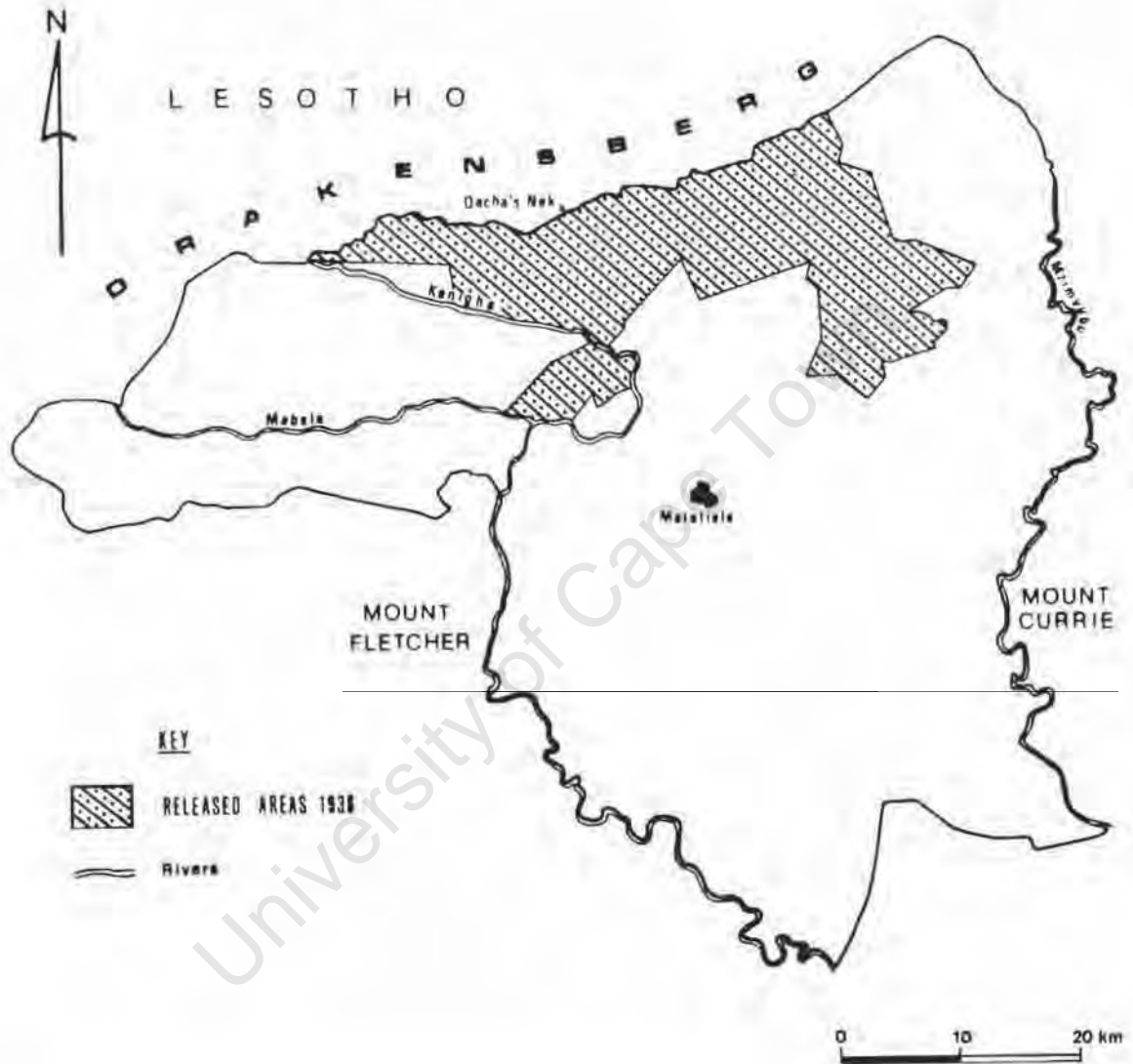
Among those who purchased nearby and thus planned to remain in the district was Walter Leslie (see above).<sup>19</sup> His farewell party at 'Nuhah' was attended by a number of his old African landowning neighbours, including members of the Pamla and Kortjass families. Noting the goodwill apparent between Leslie, a prominent local personage, and his African neighbours, a local official in attendance remarked that he was pleased by it at a time "when one might expect tension between the farmers and Natives in the Released areas" (M.M. 27 Sep 1938).

For Africans, however, the effects of the 1936 Act were not yet massively apparent, and there was no reason for them to be subject to any expressions of tension. Some farm labourers, left behind by white farmers as they departed their farms, had to search for new places of residence, but many stayed on until the SANT evicted or relocated them. It was only once the land purchased by the SANT came to be used to resettle people and to relocate whole communities, starting some seven years later, that it came to affect the lives of African villagers on any significant scale and to lead to antagonism towards provisions of the Act and the SANT's administration.

Although the 62 farms scheduled for release in Matatiele comprised a continuous belt, they included only two blocks which were not already in Africans' hands. The first was the tongue of land between Mzongwana's location and the block of farms including 'Vermiljoenskuil' and 'Prospect' already in African ownership and bordering on Sibi's location. The second was the belt of farms stretching down from the ridge of the Drakensberg through the foothills and including the large chunk of land north west of Matatiele town and between Moiterie's Kop and the bend in the Kenigha River (see map 4). All of this was land which had been excised from the territories of Makoae, Sibi and Ramohlakoana in 1884. Neither the small section of land in the south near Mvenyane, taken in 1884 from Ludidi's territory, nor the fertile alluvial Ongeluksnek strip running up to the Berg, excised from Makoae's territory, were included (cf. maps 3 and 4).

<sup>19</sup> Leslie died in 1939, aged 58 years (M.M. 17 Aug 1939).

Map 4 Sketch map showing distribution of released areas (1936) in Matatiele district



The first of these blocks was soon to be used as a relocation site for Makoba's people (see below); the second was broken into smaller sections and used for a variety of purposes. Significantly, in 1939 (Moll, 1983: 85n), the first line of 24 farms along the upper reaches of the Berg was demarcated as 'forest reserve' where grazing and fires were to be prohibited so as to "prevent excessive run-off of storm water and thus strengthening springs and rivers" (M/M-DRB: 57; Register of Trust Farms, Maluti). The second line of 15 farms was reserved exclusively for grazing, the areas to be allocated as 'cattle-post' pasturage to residents of nearby locations who initially had to pay for the right to pasture their cattle there (ibid.). Both lines were to be cared for by government-appointed rangers. This arrangement was reached as a result of pressure for protection of the watershed referred to above. It increased in intensity as the white farming population came to accept that the scheduling of these farms for 'release' was not reversible (cf. M.M. 13 Oct 1938 and 23 Feb 1939). This policy remains in force to the present, although some wealthier individuals do manage to get past the rangers and pasture their stock high up in the Berg during the summer months.

This almost symbolic 'success' for local white interest did not, however, satisfy their determination to seek retribution for their dispossession, and they soon turned to the task of identifying 'black spots' and calling for their clearance. These included Makoba's location in neighbouring Mount Currie district plus a number of African-owned farms lying between white-owned land, particularly in the Ongeluksnek strip. Another was Moiketse's location in Mount Fletcher district but which abutted on that same strip of white-owned land (M.M. 29 Jul 1937, 13 Oct 1938). And a particularly irritating area for whites in Matatiele and especially for the Ongeluksnek farmers was the two adjacent farms which cut off the latter from town - 'Polygon' and 'Simpson' (see below).

The first significant impact of the Act for Africans in the district was the removal, in 1945/6, of chief Makoba and his people from the 'black spot' which was their home. Their removal and relocation onto a block of SANT (Trust) farms within Matatiele's boundaries had a ripple effect of further relocations in other parts

of the district. Makoba and his people had been living in a location on the east bank of the Mzimvubu which marked the boundary between the Matatiele and Mount Currie districts. The 5 139 hectare location (UG 22/1916: 199) had been created by the 1884 Commission in return for the 'loyalty' shown by Makoba's Hlangwini in the face of the Griqua uprising. It was a "reserve presented to Makoba after the war of 1880" (interviews with Simon Sondangane, 31 Jul 1982, New Makoba's; Justice Hornsby, 22 Aug 1982, Matatiele). It had also been scheduled as a 'Native area' in 1913 (M.M. 13 Oct 1938) but had been singled out as particularly congested by the Select Committee in 1918 (UG 8/1918; cf. Segar, 1982: 16). As it was situated in Mount Currie and shared no common border with any African occupied land, however, the legal hurdle of its 1913 scheduling did not deter local white interests from identifying it as a 'black spot' which would have to be cleared - the legalities they left in the hands of their local M.P. (M.M. 13 Oct 1938).

With farms coming into the SANT's hands from 1938 onwards, one of the first tasks that fell to them was to plan them for settlement in terms of the 'betterment' principles then developed by the SANT to fulfil its mandate in terms of the 1936 Act. Moll (1983; cf. Hendricks, 1989) has usefully identified three distinct phases of betterment policies and practices, and their applicability to the Transkei.<sup>20</sup> The first, which he calls 'betterment' extended from 1935 to 1944. Building on earlier conservationist concerns with overstocking and soil erosion, it was applied to Trust farms all of which "were to become automatic 'betterment' areas" (Moll, 1983: 91; De Wet, 1986: 59), at least by 1944 (Yawitch 1981: 14). Implementation of similar planning principles throughout the Transkei was proposed in 1941 (Moll, 1983: 96), but did not occur until after World War II.

1945 saw the start of the second 'rehabilitation' phase, extending planning to all African 'reserve' areas (but still excluding freehold farms and mission land) so as to ensure their optimal agricultural utilization. This entailed a very expensive and time-

<sup>20</sup> Surprisingly, De Wet (1986) uses a less refined division into a pre-World War II phase of conservationism, and a post-WWII phase of agricultural developmentalism.

consuming process of demarcating grazing, agricultural and residential areas in locations as well as proposals for rural villages of closer settlement by non-agriculturally productive residents dependent on wage-labour (Moll, 1983: 100ff.; De Wet, 1986: 60ff.). This phase lasted until the mid-1950s, although it overlapped with the third phase of 'stabilisation' - a phase Hendricks (1989) associates explicitly with 'resettlement'. After the accession of the National Party in 1948, "less attention was ... paid to the *economic* development of the reserves and more to the preservation of archaic classes within them" (Moll, 1983: 122, his emphasis); or as Hendricks would have it, conservationism in the Transkei was a casualty of a policy "to reinvigorate tribalism in the reserves as a cooptive device bringing African chiefs and headmen into the local machinery of government (1989: 307).

During this phase of 'stabilisation', planning thus lost its ecological bias and concern with ensuring viable agriculture on, and optimal productivity of, reserve land. It became more concerned with accommodating large numbers of people and with the development of Bantu authority structures in the reserves/bantustans (Moll, 1983 122ff; Hendricks, 1989). Environmentally, the most 'stabilisation' offered was to "hold the status quo and prevent deterioration of the soil until reclamation can be undertaken" and 'rehabilitation' set in motion ('Memorandum' on Stabilization Planning in the Transkei, 1957, quoted in Moll, 1983: 125-6; cf. De Wet, 1986: 64ff; Hendricks, 1989: 318). Rehabilitation in this context meant, as earlier, "the establishment of a true peasant-farmer class" (SNA to CMTT 7 Jan 55, quoted in Moll, 1983: 126). Despite the Tomlinson Commission's similar recommendations (UG 61-1955: 75-7), this form of 'rehabilitation after stabilisation' has never been realised. Among the reasons were that such an intervention would have provoked resistance as well as being contradictory to the *apartheid* policy of promoting Bantu authorities (Hendricks, 1989).

Although Moll implies that this third phase ended in 1960, one could argue, with Hendricks (1989), that it has persisted to the present, at least in the Transkei. Efforts to complete planning in all locations are still in evidence there (De Wet and McAllister, 1983; De Wet, 1986: 70; see below) although the planners seem to be

undertaking the exercise merely in order to complete a task set out for them years earlier. They do not seem to be motivated by convictions of either the agricultural or political usefulness of their efforts. Indeed the only explanation I was able to solicit from planners in Umtata's Department of Agriculture and Forestry in 1984 was that they drew up plans because there were areas for which planning still had to be completed: tidy maps make for happy developers.

The second half of the 1930s in Matatiele saw extensive purchase of land by the SANT and its planning in terms of early betterment principles. A number of these farms were prepared for the eventual relocation of Makoba's people. This step was finally completed by October 1946, but not without incident. Trucks used to transport people and goods were involved in an accident causing loss of life; many people refused to move until, in 1946, Makoba was arrested and "forced to cross over to this new land" (Mnukwa Makhoba to Mr Buchanan, 24 Dec 1946 in file Matatiele 64/10/2/23, Umtata Archives [hereafter UTAA]); and others who were prosecuted with Makoba for refusing to obey "the Governor-General's removal order" of 1945 eventually agreed to be 'translocated' to the 'New' Makoba's 25 km west of their previous homes (M/M-DRB: 57). A further display of symbolic resistance was enacted with fatal consequences in November 1947 when a group of senior men, after first reporting their intentions to the local police station, set out to return to their old land and began to rebuild their headman's old homestead. In the ensuing fracas with the police, two were shot dead - including the father of one of the policemen called out (ibid.; Station Commander, Afsondering to District Commandant, Kokstad SAP, 6 Nov 1947 in file Matatiele 64/10/2/23, UTAA; interviews with Max Mzozoyana and Simon Sondangane, 31 Jul 1982, New Makoba's; interview with B.S.H. Lehmkuhl, 11 Dec 1983, Kokstad).<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> It is noteworthy that the Makoba removal of 1946 was treated as a precedent to be followed in litigation over the highly publicised removal, twelve years later, of Mamathola's people from their 'black spot' location in a very fertile part of the Letaba district of the Eastern Transvaal Lowveld. As Starfield (1988: 1990) has shown, the Mamathola removal both came to the courts and was raised in parliament: Verwoerd, then Minister of Native Affairs, complained that the United Party opposition had 'whipped up [the case] ... into a world affair' (quoted in Starfield, 1990: 3), even though - he argued - the state was following precedents set by the previous administration, such as with Makoba's.

A total of 595 households were relocated from Old to New Makoba's which was situated on an 8 600 hectare block of eleven Trust farms (or portions of farms) all of which land had been planned for its 'optimal utility' (M/M-DRB: 57b). This planning notwithstanding, by 1948 142 new sites had to be surveyed urgently to replace those surveyed previously which had proved uninhabitable as they were "low lying and damp sites" (ibid.: 57d). Indeed, there was sufficient concern with the rapid deterioration of the land in the two years after the relocation that the betterment plan for area was subjected to major revision with concomitant further relocations of the population: "184 of the existing kraal [residential] sites to fall out of use and registered owners to be allocated new sites in proposed residential areas - discretion to be used in inducing people to move ... compulsion not recommended at this stage" (Report on Carrying Capacity: New Makoba's Location 7 Jul 1948: p 7, in file A5/1-012(23) Department of Agriculture and Forestry, Umtata [hereafter DAF-UTA]).

The deterioration of the land after just two years of settlement in the area was attributed primarily to overgrazing in certain parts of the location. This, the planners reported, had been caused by an apparent reluctance of stockowners in Makoba's to send their stock into the new location's highland areas for spring and summer grazing (ibid.; Director of Native Affairs (DNA) to Controller of Native Settlements 12 Dec 1947 in file A5/1-012(23) DAF-UTA). The original plan had concentrated small residential areas in close proximity to small blocks of arable land, all of which were in the south of the location. This was now found to "create serious difficulties in regard to the grazing or to the introduction of any system of grazing control" (ibid.: 1), particularly as residents feared stock theft if their animals were pastured so far from home and across the sometimes unfordable Little Mzimvubu.

A further recommendation of the 1948 planning report was that stock culling, suspended till then, should begin (Report on Carrying Capacity: New Makoba's Location 7 Jul 1948: p 7, in file A5/1-012(23) DAF-UTA). As a start, however, the administration recommended just a 'token cull' in 1948/9, to avoid rekindling the resistance demonstrated during 1947 (CMTT to SNA 4 Sep 48 in file

A5/1-012(23) DAF-UTA). The proposals put forward to the stockowners was that all donkeys and goats, and all cattle and sheep over "the age when it is profitable to retain them" should be placed on an as yet unoccupied SANT farm where they might be fattened, and then sold during spring (Magistrate, Matatiele to CMTT 12 Apr 1949 in file A5/1-012(23) DAF-UTA). At least one stockowner responded that any cull would mean suicide, and "the second story of Nongause to our people" (Titus Nguza to CMTT 18 Apr 1949 in file A5/1-012(23) DAF-UTA). Others disdained the administration's call, and indeed the law, and introduced new stock into the location at a time when they were being instructed to reduce their numbers (Magistrate, Matatiele to CMTT 16 Oct 1949 in file A5/1-012(23) DAF-UTA). Initially culling did occur on a small scale, but the resistance which it provoked resulted in a one-third upwards re-assessment of the carrying capacity of the location's pastures in 1950 and a virtual halt to further culling (CMTT to SNA 9 Dec 1950, in file A5/1-012(23) DAF-UTA; cf. Moll, 1983;).<sup>22</sup>

With all these continuous interventions in their lives, Makoba and his councillors had good reason to continue to express dissatisfaction with the form of administration imposed as a result of relocation. They objected to having been subjected to Bunga rule, and they resented the SANT's interference in what they regarded as their own affairs: "This country where we are is the Trust Land ... We do not accept the Trust law and we do not agree with it" (Mnukwa Makoba et al to CMTT 22 Jul 1947, in file Matatiele 64/10/2/23, UTAA). In particular they objected to the fact that site allocation was now in the gift of an external agent, the agricultural officer, and that the headman no longer had the right to admit new subjects into his domain: "The Headman has sought to approve the entry into the new settlement of a number of Natives from other locations and from farms. It has been necessary for the Administration to refuse the admission of these people ..." (SNA to

<sup>22</sup> Hendricks (1989: 319) implies that the suspension of culling was primarily a result of a new state reserves/bantustans policy than simply a response by the administration to previous acts of resistance: "the abandonment of of the contentious issue of stock reduction in the mid-1950s was part of a concerted effort to get the scheme accepted by the people so that resettlement to the new residential areas could proceed unimpeded by resistance. ... Quite clearly, the state's priority was ... the disorganisation of African protest, the reduction of their wage-levels and prohibition on urbanisation (emphasis added).

Douglas Buchanan 14 Feb 1947, in file Matatiele 64/10/2/23, UTAA). Moreover, the people were dissatisfied with the overall land allocation plan. While the administration proceeded with its plan to separate residential, arable and pasture areas, the people treated their allotted residential sites as arable and "continue to plough up the whole of their half-morgen residential sites and then apply for authority to erect their kraals and stables on commonage" (ibid.).

It was only after having obtained little satisfaction in response to these complaints and after a year in their new location that the gesture of re-occupation of their old lands was undertaken. One consequence of this action was that the Native Affairs Commission recommended "that the old location should not be allotted to Europeans for at least five years ... [because] it will give an unfortunate impression to the Natives that their removal was effected in order to make room for Europeans" (Secretary NAC to SNA 20 Nov 1947 in file Matatiele 64/10/2/23, UTAA). In any case, said the Commission, the area required at least those five years rest in order to recover adequately from its eroded state (ibid.; Note of Inspection of Makoba's Location (old and new) 4 Nov 1947 in file Matatiele 64/10/2/23, UTAA).

Makoba's relocation set in motion further relocations in the district. When the farms subsequently settled by Makoba's people had been taken over by the SANT, many farm-labourers had remained on the land, some expecting that they might be entitled to settle there once betterment planning had been instituted (CMTT to Magistrate, Matatiele 3 Aug 1948 in file A5/1-012(23) DAF-UTA). This was not to be, however, for - as we have seen - the administration insisted on maintaining what they saw as the social integrity of Makoba's 'tribe'. To accommodate these ex farm-labourers and "squatters from Makoba's new location farms" (ibid.; M/M-DRB: 57c), 50 arable and 50 residential sites were surveyed and allocated to them on another Trust farm, 'La Grange', bordering on Nkosana's location further to the west. The process is illustrated in case 3.1 below. The farm 'La Grange' was later to become part of a block of Trust settlements in which the overflow from the tiny and very overcrowded Thembu-dominated Nkosana location was resettled along with a small

heterogeneous assemblage of people from various parts of the district and elsewhere (Magistrate Matatiele to CMTT 24 Sept 45 in file Matatiele 57/10/1 part I UTAA).

### Case 3.1 The billiard ball effect: removal makes way for removal

SG's father was born in the eastern Cape in the 1880s and became a wagon-driver for a white farmer, Jim Bader, who migrated to near Bloemfontein about 1910. SG was born in the Free State soon after that. By the early 1920s Bader and his family and labourers were on the move again - this time to Matatiele where he bought the farm 'Rochdale'. SG, now a small child, accompanied his parents, travelling first by train to Pietermaritzburg and then by wagon to their new home. His sister, MG was born soon after their arrival, and they both grew up there, SG working as a shepherd while his father continued as Bader's foreman until his death. By about 1940, MG was married and had gone to live with her husband on the farm where he worked, and was accumulating a herd, near the Mafube tributary of the Kenigha.

Like 'Rochdale', however, that farm was bought up by the SANT in 1938. 'Rochdale' was one of the ten farms used to relocate Makoba's people, and the farm where MG and her husband were living was surveyed as a location for 'squatters' from Makoba's new area. Initially, once Bader had left, SG had stayed on at 'Rochdale' expecting to be able to settle there permanently. By 1948, however, he found himself and his family removed and relocated near his sister and her husband. But this was not to be for long. MG's husband was unable to maintain his whole herd on the now much more densely settled farm where he had been living, and he was forced to take up residence as a tenant on a nearby African-owned freehold farm 'Harry Ebden'. It was there that MG, now widowed, was living out her old-age in 1983 when I interviewed her - with her livestock holding almost completely depleted, with no arable allotment and no security of tenure on the farm which was itself becoming increasingly densely populated with tenants (see chapter 6).

Another nearby SANT area, centering on the farm 'Mount Plaisier' was surveyed and set aside, in 1949, as a demobilisation village for African veterans of World War II (M/M-DRB: 57c). It is not clear whether these ex-soldiers were all from Matatiele district, or whether some came from neighbouring and more remote areas of the Transkei and elsewhere. Moreover, despite its appearance as a re-enactment of earlier efforts to reward 'loyals' with land in the district, the 'Mount Plaisier' settlement was less reward for services rendered than disposal of superfluous population: there being inadequate land to allocate both sites and arable allotments

to all veterans who came to settle there, a portion of the area was demarcated as a 'closer settlement' for the placement of those who did not obtain arable rights (*ibid.*). In this respect, the area is unique in the district.<sup>23</sup> For this reason, some local veterans who initially planned to settle there, returned to the locations where they had grown up and obtained sites and sometimes fields there.

The other SANT-purchased farms in the district which had arable potential were allotted over the years to become betterment-planned annexes of various nearby or adjoining locations. In some cases these were whole farms; in other cases portions of farms. Some of the latter comprised land purchased from African owners by the SANT which had a policy of attempting to obtain as much contiguous land as possible and thereby to create consolidated blocks. Although there was no compulsion on African owners to release their land for purchase by the SANT, they did experience some pressure to sell - and "in cases where farms [were] bonded, and the bond holders intend[ed] calling in their bonds, sufficient ground [was] purchased by the Trust to enable the owners to clear themselves" (M/M-DRB: 57a). It was thus, as well as through owners of inherited shares in a farm selling out, that the extent of African-owned freehold land was reduced in favour of the SANT.

Betterment planning was well under way on most released land in the district by the late 1940s and early 1950s - at least on those areas to which the SANT had by then managed to gain title. This allowed the local administration to turn its attention towards betterment or rehabilitation for location land and for the area of freehold land held 'communally' by chief Manguzela's people of Magadla's location - the two adjacent farms 'Polygon' and 'Simpson'

<sup>23</sup> The phrase 'closer settlement', as used in the contemporary sources, referred to relatively densely settled residential areas for people with neither arable land nor livestock, nor rights to acquire or pasture these resources. These settlements, also known as 'rural villages', were proposed in 1945 by the SNA as a means of linking "the Government's plan for rehabilitation in the Reserves and the large-scale industrial development expected after the war" (SNA, quoted in Beinart and Bundy, 1980: 299). They were thus to be established for "the families of Natives regularly employed in industry and other services" (*ibid.*).

By the 1980s, 'closer settlements' were more prominent in bantustan areas of large-scale relocation where their function as industrial-labour dormitories had been superseded by a need to accommodate masses of 'surplus people' in South Africa's archipelago of remote dumping grounds (SPP, 1983). More recently closer settlements in the Qwaqwa bantustan have been described as "areas in which people are allocated a small residential site only and [where] the authorities provide minimal infrastructure (Sharp, 1987: 135).

which had long been regarded by the white population as a 'black spot' as they lay across the only route between the belt of Ongeluksnek farms and the town of Matatiele (M.M. 29 Jul 1937, 13 Oct 1938).<sup>24</sup> A planning report was drawn up in April 1955 for the two farms which were among the only three non-Trust areas in the district to be subjected to betterment planning during the 1950s: the other two were Madlangala's and Mzongwana's locations for which planning reports were completed in December 1954 and May 1955 respectively (Department of Agriculture, Maluti).

The 1950s saw a concerted drive to encourage location residents in the district to agree to the implementation of betterment (or rehabilitation) planning for their respective areas. But in most locations officials were confronted by clear rejection of the principles of betterment in whatever guise and of the consequent daily intervention of Agriculture Department officials in such locally crucial activities as land allocations and animal husbandry (see above).<sup>25</sup> This rejection took the form of verbal and written objections rather than active resistance. In part this was because those who most objected were the wealthiest whose interests would not have been served by mobilisation of their poorer neighbours (cf. Moll, 1983: 102). Nonetheless, had more concerted attempts been made by the administration to implement betterment in Matatiele in the 1950s, active resistance would have been most likely as it was in a number of locations elsewhere in the Transkei (Moll, 1983: 104).

As Bundy (1987b) has pointed out, the implementation of compulsory dipping in the first two decades of the century introduced an unwelcome new external intervention into the affairs of location residents, and brought home the intrusiveness of the council system. Betterment, with its complete re-organisation of the spatial layout of the land and its stock culling features meant a similar sort of intervention from the 1940s onwards, but to a degree thus far

<sup>24</sup> Attempts to clear the farms by relocating their inhabitants and reversing their 1913 scheduling as 'Native areas' continued until the mid 1960s (A5/1-012(23) DAF-UTA).

<sup>25</sup> Cf. minutes of meetings at Tsita's and Nkau's locations on 7 Mar and 10 Mar 1952 respectively (A5/1-012(17) and A5/1-012(14) DAF-UTA).

unknown.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, the extent of popular resistance to culling and fencing had helped to lead to a watering down of betterment and rehabilitation, and the introduction of 'stabilisation' only. The latter, driven more by state concerns with control (Hendricks, 1989), included no provision for culling (Moll, 1983: 122ff; De Wet, 1986: 70).

With the experience of Makoba's behind them, and with their knowledge of the response betterment had elicited in Witsieshoek in 1950 (Moroney, 1976; Lodge, 1983: 269ff.), officials in Matatiele in the 1950s proceeded extremely carefully in their efforts, showing a degree of sensitivity to local opinion not demonstrated in later years. The one exception was the somewhat anomalous area of communal freehold, 'Polygon' and 'Simpson'. The manner in which betterment was implemented there in 1955 exemplifies the ways in which such interventions forced people to relocate. The case is valuable also because it shows that such forced relocations were not only within the confines of the planned area but also sometimes meant that people had to remove to neighbouring locations and, in this case, onto a nearby area of freehold land, the farm 'Harry Ebden' which I discuss again in later chapters.

### Case 3.2: Betterment on 'Polygon' and 'Simpson'

The farms 'Polygon' and 'Simpson' had been purchased from the Crown in 1895 by the Hlubi chief Manguzela and his people who had contributed by public subscription to cover the down payment on the bond and who continued to help servicing that bond (see case 22 SCR 562 of 1905). The farms were soon settled by people from the adjacent Magadla's location where the land was rocky and inhospitable and where road access was impossible.<sup>27</sup> As in all other locations, there was also a slow stream of new settlers into Magadla's, and some of these people joined the flow onto the two farms.

In 1914, Government Notice 273-1914 decreed that the two farms be governed as part of Manguzela's location (Magistrate Matatiele to CMTT 24 Dec 1956 in file A5/1-012(5B) DAF-UTA),

<sup>26</sup> For further details as to the constitution of betterment and the manner of its implementation see Yawitch (1981), De Wet and McAllister (1983) and De Wet (1986); also cf. Beinart (1984) and James (1983: 1987). In chapter 5 I deal with some of the consequences of its implementation in one Matatiele location - Tsita's.

<sup>27</sup> It was still not possible in the late 1970s after a betterment plan had been implemented in the location (Secretary, Manguzela TA to Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, 1979 in file A5/1-012(5) DAF-UTA).

thus changing their administrative status. This encouraged local officials to regard the farms as location land, and to feel they had a right to treat them as such, particularly as regards betterment and rehabilitation planning. This perception was reinforced in 1935 when the chief and his followers fell so behind in repayment of the bond on the farms that foreclosure was threatened and the United Transkeian Territorial General Council (UTTGC) had to redeem the bond.

By the late 1940s local administrative officials were of the opinion that the farms were overcrowded and "notwithstanding opposition from the residents these two farms were declared a betterment area ... [in 1949] ... in view of the serious deteriorated condition of the farms." A betterment planning report was drawn up in 1955, despite continuing opposition to its introduction throughout 1954 (Planning Report - Polygon and Simpson: p 1; Magistrate Matatiele to CMTT 14 Feb 1955 and 24 Dec 1956; in file A5/1-012(5B) DAF-UTA).

In some respects, the implementation of the plan pre-empted subsequent attempts to declare the farms a 'black spot' and to remove their inhabitants in the 1960s. Not only had money been spent on soil reclamation and the costs of residential removals, but the residents had been assured that the plan was not a precursor to their subsequent removal from the farms to make way for white settlement (CMTT to Deputy Secretary (DS) Bantu Administration and Development (BAD) 2 Dec 1961 in file A5/1-012(23) DAF-UTA). Verwoerd, then Minister of BAD, had earlier ruled that "the two farms must be cut out of the segregated area and must become white in order to create a corridor between the Ongeluksnek area and Matatiele town" (Notas van 'n samespreking 23 Jun 1958 in file A5/1-012(23); my translation). But by the mid 1960s it had been decided to leave the status quo intact. Among other reasons this was because officials had expressed fears "that the Department [of BAD] would lose prestige and confidence if the people were forced to move. They would regard the promises of the BAC [Bantu Affairs Commissioner] and his staff as a means of tricking them into accepting benefits - not for themselves - but for the European farmer" (CMTT to Deputy Sec'y BAD 2 Dec 1961 in A5/1-12(23) DAF-UTA). By the late 1970s the Ongeluksnek area had been set aside for incorporation into the Transkei (by then granted 'independence') and the SANT began buying up farms in the area in November 1978 (Matatiele District Record Book: p 19). The need for a 'corridor' thus no longer existed.

'Polygon' and 'Simpson's' betterment plan in 1955 did mean quite extensive removals and relocations nonetheless. Its implementation required reduction in the number of residential sites on the farms from 302 to 231, meaning that 71 households had to be relocated in Magadla's location proper (Magistrate Matatiele to CMTT 24 Dec 1956 in file A5/1-012(23) DAF-UTA). In addition, the creation of distinct residential, arable and pasture areas meant that a further 58 and possibly 67 households had to be relocated on the farmland itself in order to ensure that no sites were situated outside a demarcated

residential area (Planning Report - Polygon and Simpson: p 6; Magistrate Matatiele to CMTT 24 Dec 1956; both in file A5/1-012(5B) DAF-UTA). A possible total of 138 households were thus to be moved: 46% of all the resident households.

The selection of households which had to relocate away from the farms, and which could remain, was left to the Hlubi headman's discretion. His decision was nominally to provide sites and land only for original farm residents and subscribers to bond payments, and their descendants (*ibid.*; also see file 19/3/3-5 Land and Water- Private Lands, Department of Justice, Maluti). In practice what happened was that the first to be evicted were non-Hlubi residents, even though they might have been otherwise eligible to remain. The result was that a number of Thembu residents, whose antecedents had been part of the original subscribing group and had first occupied the farms with chief Manguzela, were obliged to remove. Among these were 31 families whose homes were within the designated residential areas and who therefore received no compensation (letter N2/10/3-12: Magistrate Matatiele to CMTT 24 Dec 1956 in file A5/1-012(5B) DAF-UTA).

Disgusted by this partisan approach to a common problem, they elected to leave the Manguzela tribal authority area completely, and settled instead on a neighbouring freehold farm, 'Harry Ebden' where the owners were facing foreclosure on their bond and were willing to take in rent-paying tenants (see chapters 5 and 6 below).<sup>28</sup>

Widespread opposition to betterment in the district became more muted in the 1960s and 1970s, particularly as location residents came to discover that stock-culling had been suspended (cf. Moll, 1983: 122ff.; De Wet, 1986: 70ff.; Hendricks, 1989). There was also a greater determination on the part of officials to ensure that the planning programme was expanded, albeit in its more limited and less locally drastic form of 'stabilisation'. The 1960s thus saw nine locations in the district planned, and the 1970s a further six. By the mid 1980s only four of the district's 23 locations had not yet been planned although I was assured by officials of the Department of Agriculture and Forestry in Umtata that the process had begun.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Spiegel (1988a) for a more detailed discussion of this event and its outcome, including threats to the subsequent tenure of the Thembu relocatees on 'Harry Ebden', and their response.

<sup>29</sup> Muller (1986: 13) suggests a different figure from that given me by local Agriculture and Forestry officials in 1984. Including various Trust farms in his count of 28 rather than 23 locations in the district. Muller claims that in 1984 20 had been planned. 5 had accepted planning and 3 were still 'incomplete' (i.e. there were no plans at all).

In a number of cases acceptance of a betterment plan had the significant benefit of extension of the location's land area by the annexation of neighbouring areas of Trust farmland. This was the case, for example, when Ramohlakoana's location was planned in 1968 (Segar, 1982; 1986; 1989). By that stage the location had become extremely overcrowded and people were finding it necessary to build homes on virtually uninhabitable, damp sites. Moreover, the pastures were severely overcrowded and there were many who either had no field or whose field was so poor as to be pointless working. For those who were relocated in the new ward of St Paul's in 1969/70 - on what had been a 867 hectare Church-owned farm, 'Wallace' - the move was regarded as having been most beneficial: now they were assured good harvests from the extremely fertile arable lands lying in the alluvial flood plain of the Kenigha River; they were able to build more substantial homes in accessible places and they had access to better pastures less heavily overstocked (Segar, 1982: 29-30; 1986: 37; Deeds Register, Umtata).<sup>30</sup>

Of course implementation of the betterment plan did involve extensive relocation of residential sites throughout the location, and not only into the newly created St Paul's ward. And it also meant that larger land- and site-holders saw their holdings diminished and their residential areas reshaped so that the sites were all in straight lines (Segar, 1982; 1989). This re-organisation of the spatial layout of location land was (and still is) as prime characteristic of betterment (cf. De Wet, 1986); and was its most immediately intrusive feature for location residents.

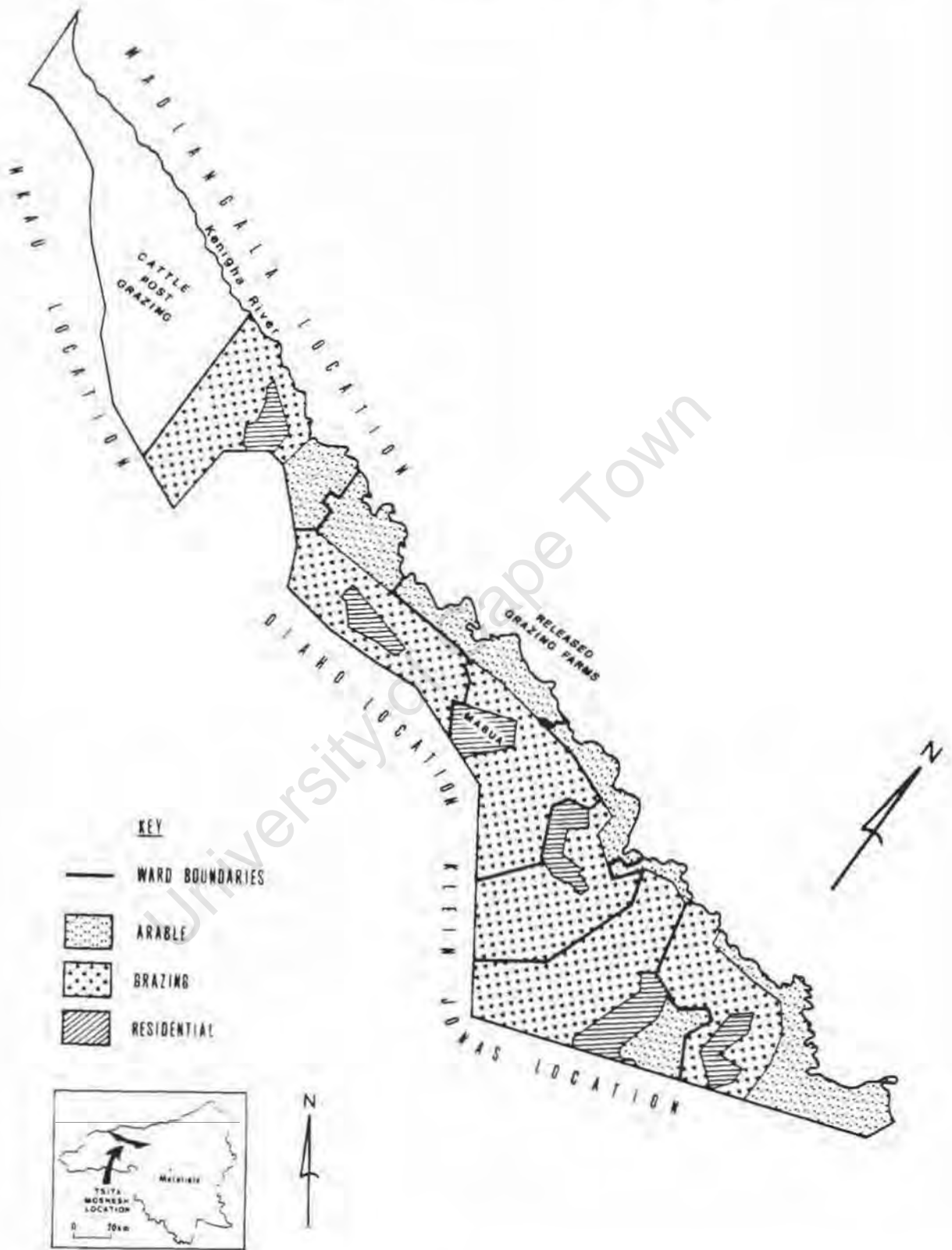
For people in Tsita's location, where most of my fieldwork was concentrated, and where a betterment plan passed in 1974 was implemented in 1977, residential re-organisation was extremely disruptive. In a population comprising 567 households ('families' in the planning report - see ch 5), 158 (28%) were listed as

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In one of the outstanding locations resistance had continued into the 1980s. The people of Nkai's location continued to reject betterment for fear that it would prejudice their rights in a boundary dispute with George Moshesh location. The dispute itself dated back to the implementation of the latter's 1971 plan (correspondence in file A5/1-012(14) DAF-UTA; cf O'Connell, 1981: 45-6).

<sup>30</sup> The pastures included the 469 hectare portion of 'Etheldale' taken over by the SANT (Deeds Register, Umtata) - see above.

Map 5 Sketch map of Tsita Moshesh location showing land-use distribution in terms of 1974 betterment plan



qualifying for 'hut compensation' because they were obliged to relocate their homesteads to lie within the boundaries of one of the location's six newly-demarcated residential areas (wards) (Soil Conservation Scheme 17 Jun 1974, in file A5/1-012(17) DAF-Maluti).

As can be seen from map 5, the location comprises a long narrow strip of land stretching from the source of the Kenigha River on the Berg escarpment and bounded in the north by that river and, in the south, by a ridge of hills. Until the implementation of betterment, people's homesteads could be found all along the northern slopes of the ridge. Betterment required the consolidation of this extended settlement pattern into the six wards indicated. People to whom I spoke about this relocation expressed resignation rather than resentment. They complained about the upheaval of removal without any transport being provided and with minimal 'hut compensation' being paid out.<sup>31</sup> And they were dissatisfied with the straight line layout of their new residential areas and the disruption which the removal had caused in neighbourhood relationships (cf. De Wet and McAllister, 1983; De Wet, 1986). But they expressed the feeling of total powerlessness to prevent implementation of the plan. Moreover, some admitted that they were pleased with the possibility their new sites had offered for having a kitchen garden alongside their homes, so long as they could afford to fence their sites. Of course there were other effects of having had the plan implemented, including implications regarding access to arable allotments, and - as elsewhere - the now ubiquitous interest of Agriculture Department officials in all local land matters. I return to some of these in later chapters where they are reflected in the case studies I present.

### Conclusion: after 'independence'

My discussion of the period since the 1930s has focused primarily on population movements and resettlement which have resulted from

<sup>31</sup> Compensation totalling R3 852 was calculated: "Very good square huts @ R16 [each]; Very good round huts @ R12; Good round huts @ R12; Fair huts @ R8; Poor huts @ R6; Very poor huts @ R4." (Soil Cons. Scheme in file A5/1-012(17)).

the implementation of legislated or administrative policies and decisions. The 1970s and early 1980s saw a series of further significant administrative changes for the district of Matatiele - all related to the declaration in 1976 of Transkeian 'independence'. These included redelimitation of the district's boundaries, expropriation of the Ongeluksnek farms for inclusion in the Transkei, the introduction of limited border control, and important modifications in local government with concomitant changes in resource availability and particularly health service delivery (cf. Segar, 1982; 1986; 1989). But they had virtually no direct effect on population distribution and introduced no further major relocations.

Smaller scale population movement and resettlement has nonetheless continued, often in response to a combination of circumstances which include both the administrative and the personal. It is often impossible to disaggregate these influences from one another in specific cases. But it is important to recognise that the particularities of local circumstances have also at times effected removals both within the district, and between it and other areas. As we saw in case 3.1 above, people move about because of demands in the labour market, and in response to domestic decisions and investment opportunities. Although I do not, in later chapters, explicitly address the central concern of this chapter - viz. movement and resettlement - the case studies I present there provide further evidence of the importance of micro-level factors of this kind in processes of removals and relocations.

## CHAPTER 4

### A DEPENDENT DISTRICT: MATATIELE IN THE 1970s AND 1980s

The early years of the 20th century saw Matatiele a net exporter of agricultural produce. Many of the district's new landowners had come from Herschel and Lesotho, both regarded as 'granaries' of note into the early years of the 20th century (Bundy, 1979; Parsons and Palmer, 1977: 24; Murray, 1981: ch 1; Robertson, 1987: 136ff.), and had proceeded to engage in commercial arable agriculture in Matatiele. In this respect they were on a par with many of their white neighbours, particularly those in the Ongeluksnek area which came to be known as "the granary for Matatiele" (M.M. 13 Oct 1938; cf. M.M. 4 Feb 1937). Locations with arable lands on the fertile alluvial plains of the Kenigha and Mabele Rivers were similarly able to produce surpluses for marketing, an activity which was given a boost in 1923 when the railhead reached Matatiele town.

But, as elsewhere, Africans in the district were not all able to gain or maintain a foothold in the market for agricultural produce. Recruitment of labour migrants from the district into Natal and later to the Reef dates back to at least the last years of the 19th century. By the 1930s, the African portions of the district had, like Lesotho (Murray, 1981: 18; Robertson, 1987: 137) become consistent net importers of foodstuffs, and suppliers of labour to the industrial centres of the country. A few African freeholders did manage to keep up market production, although they were unable to compete with their white neighbours who were increasingly able to draw on various state subsidies, particularly as dairying and cheese production took off in East Griqualand. For the most part the district had become yet another labour reserve.

It is not my intention here to detail yet another case of a granary turned to labour reserve or to show the process of underdevelopment which led to Matatiele's ever-growing dependency on labour migration as a means of supporting its resident population.

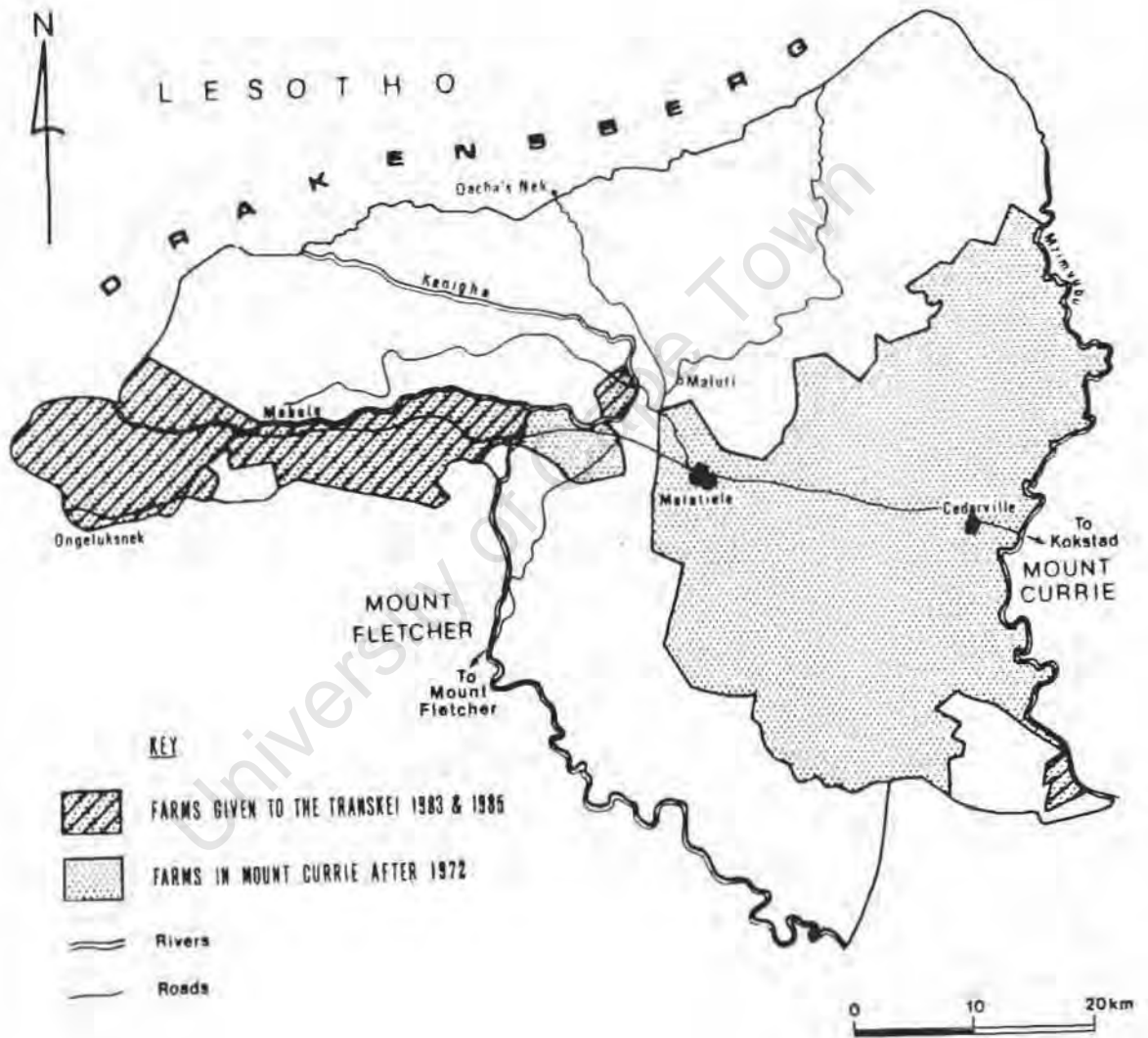
While the specifics of that process may differ from those for other areas, the general picture of a steady decline in access to and production for the produce market, and a simultaneous increase in labour migrancy, applies to Matatiele as to other parts of the southern African rural periphery. My intention is to use this chapter to outline the more recent extent of the district's aggregate dependence on labour migration by working through the few available figures which illustrate this dependence. I thus look to establish some estimates of migrancy rates and amounts of remittances reaching the district during the late 1970s and early 1980s.

I start by presenting the local regional backdrop against which these estimates must be considered, giving some indication of the proximate causes of the district's dependence on labour migration. This includes examination of the population growth of Matatiele itself, and of the relative population density of the district as compared with the neighbouring 'white' district of Mount Currie. The extent to which the local region's economy is incorporated into the national cash economy is reflected in the importance to the small commercial town of Matatiele of its vast remittance-dependent hinterland. I thus briefly describe the town and its function as a small but thriving commercial centre.

#### Population and differentiation

The year 1972 saw the land area of Matatiele district severely reduced in size in preparation for its inclusion in an 'independent' Transkei which was to be declared four years later. Some 1 210 square kilometres of the best agricultural land in the old Matatiele magisterial district - the part of the "district of Matatiele which is not a Bantu area" (Proclamation G1162-72) - was ceded to neighbouring Mount Currie, and the towns of Matatiele and Cedarville and a belt of farmland to the west of the Mzimvubu were set aside for white occupation (Proclamation G1149-72; see map 6). Also excised, although only until 1983 (Proclamation R141-1983), was all 290 square kilometres of the Ongeluksnek area, and four farms in the

Map 6 Sketch map showing Matatiele district boundaries pre- and post-1972 redelimitation



Mvenyane valley straddling Kaka's location which were consolidated into the Transkei in 1985 (Proclamation R43-1985).<sup>1</sup>

According to the 1980 census, the 2 140 square kilometre of the district which comprised the Transkei's Matatiele district was home to 112 947 *de facto* residents (Muller, 1984: 13).<sup>2</sup>

Changes in the district's boundaries make comparisons of its population over time a little difficult, although it is possible to get a clearer picture of one reason for the increased dependence on wage-earnings by examining changes in population densities for the district as a whole (see tables 4.1 and 4.2). Moreover, with the exception of Matatiele town with its population of 2 600 in 1980 (Census report 02-80-01: 60) including many non-Africans, the greatest population concentrations have been in the 'location' areas of the district. This factor was already clear in 1937 when Fox and Back indicated the significant differences in population density figures for the white and the African areas of Matatiele. While they recorded an overall population density for the district of 16 persons per square kilometre, the figure was 33 in its African-occupied areas (Fox and Back, 1937: 344: table C; Map II).<sup>3</sup> The population figures presented in table 4.1 are indicative of the general order of the district's overall population size and growth since the last quarter of the 19th century; the population density figures link this growth to the *total* area of land available for that population, without distinguishing African- from white-occupied areas.

Wilson and Ramphele (1989: 36-41) have recently remarked on population densities in, and the relative overcrowdedness of, the various bantustans as compared with the 'white' (or common) areas in

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<sup>1</sup> Seven farms in the east of the Ongeluksnek strip had still not been transferred to the Transkei by September 1988. Earlier rumours were that these had been designated as relocation sites for the people at a Mount Currie 'black spot', Pakkies near Kokstad (interviews with P Hechter and M Morris, Dec 1983, Matatiele: B S R Lehmkühl Dec 1983, Kokstad: cf. SPP, 1983 IV: 305).

<sup>2</sup> Here *de facto* refers to the people counted as present in the district at the time of census. I discuss the categories *de jure* and *de facto* in chapter 8.

<sup>3</sup> The original, non-metric figures were 42.7 and 84 persons per square mile.

South Africa in 1980.<sup>4</sup> Matatiele's figure of 53 persons per square kilometre (almost all non-urban), is only slightly lower than Wilson and Ramphela's figure of 55 persons per square kilometre in rural Transkeian areas.

Table 4.1: Population of Matatiele district for selected years

Year	Total	African	Pop density (per sq km)	Source
1875		8 257		Ross, 1974: 137
1911	38 875	36 455	11,4	UG 15-1923 [c]
1921	44 652	42 046	13,1	UG 15-1923 [c]
1936	55 538	52 201	16,5	UG 21-1938 [c]
1936[a]	57 963	55 499	16,7	Fox & Back (1937: 344)
1946	61 161	58 403	18,1	UG 51-1949 [c]
1951	68 281	65 322	20,2	UG 42-1955 [c]
1960	71 238	68 388	21,1	RP 62-1963 [c]
1970	94 014	91 335	27,8	O2-05-01 [c]
1980[b]	112 947		52,8	Muller (1984: 13)
1980	100 625	100 499		Dept of Stats, 1981 [c]

#### Notes

- a. Fox and Back's population figures include a total of 8 029 absent migrants (1937: 344 - Table C)
- b. Although Muller's (1984) figure is the final one for the census, and thus probably more accurate, he does not give a breakdown of total district population by the census category of 'population group' which is available in the Preliminary Transkei Census report (Dept of Statistics, Pretoria, 1981).
- c. Census-sourced figures represent the *de facto* population at the time of census; they exclude absent residents of the area such as migrant labourers. The male/female ratio figures in the sources would suggest that the *de jure* (ie. permanently domiciled) population for the area is likely to be 15% to 20% higher than the *de facto* figures (cf. Wakelin, 1983a and 1983b).

There are, moreover, two reasons that population densities in the locations themselves are somewhat higher than the district average. Firstly, large areas of the district comprise uninhabitable mountain slopes, and secondly, some 5% of the district's land (excluding the Ongeluksnek belt) is freehold, and some of these areas are quite sparsely settled, although one or two have become heavily populated 'squatter' areas. Thus, for example, Tsita's and Ramohlakoana's locations (the latter including the small administrative centre at

<sup>4</sup> Dewar et al (1984: 121-2) have commented on the relatively advantaged situation of the Transkei in this regard.

Maluti; population of 437 in 1980) had population densities in 1980 of 64 and 109 persons per square kilometre respectively (figures from the Magistrate, Maluti, pers. comm. July, 1982; Department of Statistics, 1981). And on the 'squatter' farm, 'Harry Ebdon', where I completed a survey in 1983, the population density was some 165 persons per square kilometre (cf. Spiegel, 1984; see chapter 5).

These figures are significantly lower than those for some of the most densely populated bantustan areas such as Qwaqwa, which had a conservatively estimated 'rural' population density of 298 persons per square kilometre in 1980 (Sharp and Martiny, 1984; Wilson and Ramphela, 1989).<sup>5</sup> This difference notwithstanding, there is a much starker contrast between Matatiele's population density and that of its neighbour, the Mount Currie district of Natal,<sup>6</sup> which has much larger areas of agricultural land and far less mountainous terrain. Of course, the starkness of such a contrast is hardly peculiar in South Africa, as Wilson and Ramphela's (1989) summary of poverty research demonstrates. I highlight it here because any consideration of wealth differences within the migrant labour-dependent district of Matatiele needs to be duly contextualised, and the circumstances of neighbouring 'white' Mount Currie represent the proper backdrop of the history of white South African affluence against which to set them.

Already in the 1930s Fox and Back (1937) recorded population densities of 3,5 persons per square kilometre for Mount Currie as compared with Matatiele's figure of 16,7. And by the 1950s the Tomlinson Commission found the difference sufficiently significant to remark pointedly on Mount Currie's estimated population density of 7 persons per square kilometre as compared with the mean of 32 (*de facto*) for the rest of the Transkei (UG 61/1955 :51). As can be seen from table 4.2, Mount Currie's overall population density has long been much lower than that of Matatiele, even though in 1936 its

<sup>5</sup> Some of the implications of this and related differences are taken up in Sharp and Spiegel (1985; forthcoming) and Spiegel and Sharp (1988).

<sup>6</sup> Until April 1978, the district was part of the Cape Province. The Transkei's 'independence' physically separated it from the Cape and, after the findings of the Steyn Committee (1976) it was ceded to Natal. This led the Transkei government to break diplomatic ties with South Africa (Streek and Wicksteed, 1981: 171ff.; Southall, 1982: 268ff.)

African population was squeezed onto so small a portion of the district's land area that the population density figure for Africans on African-occupied land in that district was 44,5 persons per square kilometre (Fox and Back, 1937: Map II).<sup>7</sup> By the 1980 census, when Matatiele's overall population density had risen to 52,8 persons per square kilometre, Mount Currie's was just 11,3 (calculated from Census report 02-80-01: 60), and this in an area including the towns of Kokstad, Matatiele, Franklin and Cedarville which accommodated 38,5% of the district's population. The population density of just the non-urban population of Mount Currie in 1980 was 6,4 persons per square kilometre (ibid.).

Table 4.2: Areas and population densities - Mount Currie and Matatiele districts for selected years

(areas in sq. kms.; pop densities in persons per sq. km.)

Year	Matatiele		Mount Currie		Source
	area	pop den	area	pop den	
1911	3 411	11,4	2 808	5,4	UG 15-1923
1921	3 411	13,1	2 808	6,7	UG 15-1923
1936	3 364	16,5	2 854	8,7	UG 21-1938
1936	3 325	16,7	2 821	3,5	Fox & Back (1937: 344)
1946	3 364	18,1	2 854	9,1	UG 51-1949
1951	3 380	20,2	2 800	9,3	UG 42-1955
1960	3 380	21,1	3 035	9,3	RP 62-1963
1970	3 380	27,8	3 035	10,6	02-05-01
1980	2 140	52,8	3 823	11,3	{Muller (1984: 13) {& 02-80-01

The redefinition of their common district boundary in 1972 was one of the factors exacerbating the extremely marked difference between the population densities of these two neighbouring districts. It also worsened Matatiele's overcrowding and deepened its reliance on infusions of remitted cash income to support its population. Along with natural population growth and some limited relocation off farms and from towns, the redelimitation helped increase Matatiele's population density by a factor of 90% between 1970 and 1980.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> A significant portion of this land was Makoba's location, subsequently treated as a 'black spot' and removed (see chapter 3).

<sup>8</sup> Had the 'consolidation' of Matatiele, including all the Ongeluksnek farms, been complete by 1980 the district's population density would have been 46.5 persons per square kilometre - an increase since 1970 of 67%.

This contrast in population densities reflects an even starker contrast in differences in wealth levels and living standards between white farmers in Mount Currie and African location residents in Matatiele. The former owned and/or ran large commercially-oriented farms, worked capital-intensively with small complements of poorly paid labour; the latter were dependent on irregular migrant wage-remittances both for their quite meagre subsistence and to underwrite their small-scale agricultural efforts, the products of which were almost all for own consumption. The former lived in modern homes linked to the national electricity grid, owned motor cars and sent their children to good schools, including some of the country's most expensive elite private schools, and to universities. Their access to modern health-delivery services was limited only by the distances they had to travel to reach the almost empty wards reserved for whites in the Matatiele or Kokstad hospitals, or the time it took for a private doctor from one of those towns to reach their homes.

By contrast, most Africans' homes comprised small wattle and daub or turf-block structures, with pit-sanitation, no running water, and no access to reticulated energy sources. Transport for all but a few was limited to buses and taxis whose reliability and frequency left much to be desired, while educational opportunities were restricted - for most - to poor village schools with little opportunity of going beyond the primary level. Weekly mobile clinics provided access to private medical services in the locations, but those who could not afford the fees asked had to travel to a day-clinic at Maluti administrative centre.

There was, as elsewhere in the bantustans, a diversity in wealth levels, employment opportunities and life-styles within the district, and indeed within locations. But these were nowhere near as striking - both to outside observers and to many local Africans, particularly those less severely impoverished - as the chasm of difference separating the circumstances of African farm-labourers and location residents from those of the average white Mount Currie farming family or of the small white population (960 in 1980) resident in the vibrant commercial town of Matatiele. Most of the 1 060 Africans in the town were similarly disadvantaged as were the

majority of the town's 580 residents classified 'coloured' (statistics from Census report 02-80-01: 60; cf. Davies, 1984).

#### Matatiele as commercial region

The contrast in living standards in the two districts disguises the high level of integration between the two - and particularly the fact that Matatiele town's whole vitality is dependent upon the large consumer population in its immediate hinterland (cf. Segar, 1986: 114; 1989: 60). Sited as it is at the railhead of the Natal line from Pietermaritzburg and Durban, the town is a thriving commercial centre, with both wholesale and retail outlets supplying the districts of Matatiele and Qacha's Nek in Lesotho as well as much of Mount Fletcher through which scheduled Railways buses travel to the Cape railhead at Maclear. The town also provides banking and workshop facilities as well as being the base of a private medical practice which sends a mobile clinic into the district's locations and attends large numbers of patients at its town-surgery every day. The Natal Provincial Administration-run hospital in the town admits in-patients referred by this practice, but offers no African out-patients' service as this is deemed to be the responsibility of the Transkeian health authorities. The latter have built a small clinic in the Maluti administrative centre, but this is consistently understaffed and poorly supplied. Patients referred from there for hospitalisation are forced to travel across 64 kilometres of poor dirt roads to Mount Fletcher (cf. Segar, 1982: 19-22; 1986: 112-8; 1989: 59-62).

The Maluti administrative centre, first laid out and built in 1976 at the time of the Transkei's 'independence', is almost exclusively that - an administrative centre with neither supermarkets nor wholesale outlets. Buses running there from the western portions of the district do so only as a branch-off from their regular routes into Matatiele town. Maluti's centrepiece is a magistrate's court building which became the seat of the Matatiele magistracy on 22 October 1976, four days before declaration of the Transkei 'independence' (G1934-76). The building also houses district offices of various Transkei government departments. Other buildings

accommodate a police station, a post office, a teacher's training college, offices of the Department of Agriculture and Forestry, and the clinic referred to above. There are a few small shops, including a liquor store, to service both office workers and people attending the offices, as well as the ever-larger numbers of men waiting outside the local TEBA recruiting depot. By 1985 a filling station had opened up, and a small hotel was being built for commercial travellers to the district, particularly Africans who then still had difficulty finding accommodation in Matatiele town. Despite lying outside the district's boundaries, however, the town remained the commercial hub of the district and local region, and it continued to thrive on the business generated in the heavily populated nearby districts.

The importance to Matatiele of its commercial hinterland has been recognised since at least 1923 when the line first reached the town after years of lobbying for a rail-link through East Griqualand between Natal and the Cape.<sup>9</sup> By the 1930s, the town's enterprises had become so dependent on this source of clientele that strenuous objections were raised to the introduction of a Railways bus service to Maclear. Not only would passage of these large vehicles add to the road-building and maintenance costs of the divisional council which had still received no compensation for loss of roads-tax revenues from Trust farms (M.M. 26 Jan 1939), but their introduction was seen as a threat to local vehicle owners and repairmen as well as retailers in the town: they feared their vehicles would be less used, and their customers inclined to make their purchases at remote trading stations which would now obtain supplies more readily. As the local newspaper commented: "Matatiele's business depends on our being a railhead with a ninety mile gap between it and the next railhead at Maclear" (M.M. 2 Jun 1938). SANT purchases of land after the 1936 Natives Trust and Land Act were also seen as a threat to the town's commercial interests. This was because the local divisional council felt it would lose "control over the issue of trading licences in the rural districts of the division ... and it is feared that trading licences may be issued to the detriment of

<sup>9</sup> A line from Riverside through Kokstad and Umtata to Butterworth was also mooted (M.M. 5 Apr 1906). Neither the Kokstad-Umtata nor the Matatiele-Maclear 'Berg' link has ever been built.

the town of Matatiele ..." (Petition of Matatiele Municipal and Divisional Councils to the Executive Committee of the Cape Provincial Council quoted in M.M. 11 Mar 1937).

The importance to the town of its role as Qacha's Nek's entrepot from the 1930s onwards was reflected in a number of ways. These included expressions of concern that it was inappropriate to continue to demand an annual contribution of 300 pounds by the Qacha's Nek district administration to road maintenance funds in Matatiele (M.M. 15 Sept 1938), and the Matatiele Mail's regular column in the 1930s dealing with the social affairs of Qacha's Nek's small but growing expatriate trading and administrative community. Moreover, the Basutoland trade was seen to be so important that threats to deproclaim the roads to Ramatseliso's Gate and Rankakala's Nek were strongly fought by the town's traders (M.M. 5 Aug 1937). Describing their town as one of the 'Gateways to Basutoland' (ibid.), the Matatiele Chamber of Commerce had, in 1935, encouraged the protectorate's administration to extend the road network to link Matatiele through Quthing with Mohale's Hoek, and with Zastron in the Free State, so that they might expand their business into the lowland heart of the protectorate (M.M. 25 Nov 1937). Moreover, trade was not only in one direction: border Berg farmers were purchasing stock in Lesotho, more probably for speculative rather than breeding purposes (M.M. 31 Mar 1938), and traders near the border were equally keen to buy both grain and wool from producers in Lesotho (M.M. 14 Oct 1937). Rather than see trade restricted, Matatiele's traders and farmers were thus determined to see it expanded.

This was still the case in the 1980s, although the trade was by then almost exclusively a one-way traffic of goods into the overpopulated countryside with cash flowing in the opposite direction. One estimate I was given suggested that the town's annual commercial turnover in 1983 was about R125m, of which R90m derived from sales to residents and storekeepers in the Transkei, and R30m from Qacha's Nek sales. This was reflected in the daily pilgrimage into town of thousands of shoppers from Transkei and Lesotho villages, and in the vast amounts of supplies leaving the town to stock the many small trading stores scattered about the

district. From 8 a.m. until about noon, the town is a throbbing hive of commercial activity. As the buses leave over the lunch hour, however, it settles down to become a sedate small country town.

#### Migrant labour: district figures

This level of consumer spending directs our attention to the crucial importance of cash income for the district's residents, and thus also to the issue of migrant labour rates and the size of the district's remittance receipts to which I now turn, along with a consideration of the amount of pension receipts in the district. The aggregate extent of dependence on migrant labour earnings can be illustrated by two sets of figures: the numbers of labour migrants sent out from the district and the amounts of money received as remittances in the district. Both sets are notoriously difficult to compute accurately: almost inevitably the figures available under-represent the degree of dependence on migrant labour. As for the census-generated figures in table 4.1 above, I present the figures which were available to me as an indication of this dependence rather than as a precise statement of the absolute level of the district's involvement in migrant labour.

- Before proceeding, however, two further points need to be made. Firstly, it is essential to recognise that the aggregate figures presented below tend to hide the diversity of material circumstances to be found in the district, as well as the particularities of different parts of it. Even location areas, with their relatively dense populations, were not all the same, although the majority of labour migrants did come from such areas. As Segar (1986; 1989) has pointed out, the village of St Paul's, within easy reach of Matatiele town, was home to a number of daily commuters to town, as was the even more proximate location at Khoapa's which provided a weekly home-from-home for town workers with established residences in more outlying areas. Residents of the more remote locations had, by and large, to be content with longer term labour migration to more distant employment centres. Some of them remained rooted in

those areas because they retained access to arable land and/or pastures on commonage for their stock.

The areas of freehold land in the district provided yet other forms of residential accommodation. On some, such as 'Harry Ebden' (see below), there were many densely settled residents ('squatters'), almost all of whom were wholly and directly dependent on remitted wages. Other farms provided place only for their owners and a few labour-tenants who were able to send dependants away as labour migrants, but had an obligation to provide labour-service in return for their rights on the farms (see chapter 6). Yet another set of circumstances existed on the Ongeluksnek block of farms which, by the early 1980s, was still primarily agricultural land with very few residents, and no labour migrants among them.

Secondly, a methodological comment is necessary. The scarcity of detailed statistics for the district's labour migration rates and of remittances received by its relict residents has meant that I have had to work with a variety of kinds of data, some of which are available in the published literature, while others are obtainable only from local sources and are not generally accessible. From these I have attempted to estimate aggregate district rates of labour migration and remittance receipts by projecting both upwards from small local sample data and downwards from aggregated Transkei data. The implication, as stated above, is that the figures arrived at are not to be regarded as precise, but merely treated as indicators of the order of migrancy and remittance receipts.

#### Labour migrancy rates

For areas such as Lesotho, it is possible to estimate rates of labour migrancy by studying available records of the numbers of citizens formally employed as labour migrants in the industries and commercial centres of South Africa, and adding estimates of 'illegal' labour migrants. For Matatiele, however, there are no figures of this kind available. It is, of course, a district of the Transkei, and one can use the aggregate figures available for that territory to gain an indication of the levels of labour migrancy

from the district. Indeed, when authors write about selected areas of Lesotho this is what is commonly done: the aggregate national figures are used as a backdrop to the specifics of the research area (cf. Murray, 1976; 1981; Spiegel, 1979; 1980a; 1980b; Gay, 1980). However, this approach has its problems, particularly in the Transkei context.

Firstly, various sources (eg. the SAIRR annual *Survey of Race Relations* and the TEBA annual reports) did not record figures of Transkeian workers in the common area, nor of recruitment of Transkeians or their numbers 'on strength', until after the territory was granted 'independence' in 1976.<sup>10</sup> Secondly, areas of the Transkei have long supplied the labour market and there are many registered workers whose place of origin is the Transkei, but who are not formally oscillating migrants.<sup>11</sup> Their inclusion in figures of Transkeians registered as workers in the common area reflects both the state's obsession with 'ethnic' identification, and some people's maintenance of Transkeian homes despite their holding permanent rights to remain in the common area (see table A.1 note a, in Appendix A).

Thirdly, the extent of regional variation in the Transkei makes application of aggregate figures to the district level rather more difficult there than in Lesotho. People in Matatiele, with its history as a labour-supplying area going back into the 19th century, are involved in the labour market rather differently from people in Pondoland (Beinart, 1980; 1982) or in the southern coastal regions around Willowvale and Elliotdale (McAllister, 1978). With these caveats in mind, I have tabulated some of the aggregate migrancy figures for the Transkei in Appendix A; I use some of those figures here to help assess the available figures for Matatiele district in order to estimate the extent of labour migration among the district's population of the district.

<sup>10</sup> The SAIRR *Surveys* draw their data from parliamentary questions: until the Transkei's 'independence' its migrant labour strength was included in that of the whole South African population: its sudden appearance in response to a question about 'foreign Africans' working in South Africa drew attention to it as a separate category (SAIRR, 1979: 177; 236 n52).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Muller (n.d.: 13-15; 25-6 n14) who is concerned to establish rates of 'permanent' outmigration from the Transkei.

Table A.1 (Appendix A) shows that in the ten years since being granted 'independence', the Transkei has continued to have a large number of its people at work in the common areas. The Chamber of Mines' drive to increase its complement of Transkei workers during the 1970s was quite notably successful, and Transkeians have consistently comprised 25% or more of the workers 'on strength' at TEBA-supplied mines since 1978 (TEBA annual reports). As noted in table A.1, the 29% reduction in the number of registered Transkeian workers from 1982 to 1983 reflects an administrative change in data-recording procedures rather than a sudden decrease in the numbers of people involved.

The 1983 figure of 372 492 Transkeian migrant workers in the common areas (table A.1) compares favourably with Wakelin's (1983a: 5) estimate of 399 502 Transkeian migrants in the common area late in 1982 - a number which is about 13% of the total projected Transkeian population of 3 094 000 in 1982 (ibid.). Wakelin estimates that some 50 476 (13%) of these ('external') migrants were women, the majority of them 'illegally' in the 'common' area. He also identifies and quantifies the extent of a phenomenon which is rarely mentioned in literature on labour migration in southern Africa: people's migration away from their homes to places of employment elsewhere within the labour-sending area itself.<sup>12</sup> Wakelin describes this as 'internal' migration,<sup>13</sup> which he estimates to have involved some 68 738 Transkeians (2,2% of the total population) in late 1982 (ibid.).

Assuming that, in 1982, Matatiele supplied a similar proportion of its population to work as labour migrants in the common area as did the whole Transkei, then we can expect that the district's *de jure* population that year included about 15 000 'external' labour migrants of whom some 13 100 would have been men and 1 900 women. This last figure is unlikely to appear on any records because, by

<sup>12</sup> The phenomenon was addressed most vigorously by the Botswana National Migration Study (Botswana, 1982).

<sup>13</sup> I have elsewhere used this phrase to describe migration by whole domestic units away from remote locations to places alongside major roads where they take up residence (Spiegel, 1984). This movement is only indirectly related to the imperatives of labour migration.

and large, women's employment is not attested.<sup>14</sup> However, two factors lead to the conclusion that there are probably more migrants from Matatiele than this calculation suggests.

Firstly, the long history of involvement by the district's population in distant labour markets means that many of its residents are well-established urban dwellers who also maintain a rural home. While these people are not obliged to oscillate between their urban residences and places of employment, and their rural Matatiele homes, many of them continue to do so. As they have no need to go through any recruiting procedures, they do not appear in any statistics.

Secondly, the people described above offer support networks to others in the district who may go independently to towns in search of work. The district's position right on the border of Natal, and within easy reach of the railhead and access to the labour markets both in the Durban-Pinetown-Pietermaritzburg areas and on the Reef, makes such an endeavour quite feasible. There is thus probably a greater proportion of the district's population than the Transkei mean which comprises 'external' migrants, a sizable proportion of whom would have been 'illegal' in terms of influx control legislation.<sup>15</sup> Among these 'illegal' migrants one must include all those people who are employed by Africans and other blacks in urban areas, either as domestic workers or as assistants in small businesses in the townships. Many of those in such jobs had been able to find them precisely because of the networks of contacts which Matatiele villagers had in various parts of the 'common' urban areas.

Moreover, quite easy access to the Natal labour market for domestic workers means that this relatively high rate of labour migration is not restricted to men. Indeed this is reflected in the

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<sup>14</sup> 13% of 112 947 (1980 population) = 14 683 'external' migrants: 13% of this figure = 1 909 women. If Wakelin's calculations use proportions of de jure population, then 'external' migrancy from the district would be about 16 500 of whom 2 100 were women. This is calculated as follows: 113% of 112 947, of which 13% (16 592) comprises 'external' migrants, and of which 13% in turn (2 157) comprises women migrants.

<sup>15</sup> This legislation was repealed in 1986, although there are still restrictions on people taking up residence in urban areas.

proportion of women among the Matatiele-based 'external' migrants generated by Wakelin's 1982 household sample: of 2 200 migrants across the country 72 were Matatiele-based. This figure was broken down as follows: 63 'external' migrants, of whom 51 (81%) were men and 12 (19%) women; 9 'internal' migrants of whom 7 were men and 2 women.<sup>16</sup>

Let us now turn to see whether we can 'find' evidence of 13 100 or more men from Matatiele engaged in migrant labour during 1982 or 1983 - as shown above, this figure of 13 100 derives from projecting general Transkei migrancy rates onto the Matatiele population figures. Here again, some projections from aggregated data are necessary.

I found that the best single source of data on the largest numbers of labour migrants from the district was the Matatiele office of TEBA (The Employment Bureau of Africa), the labour-recruiting arm of the Chamber of Mines. Between the years 1978 and 1984 that office processed between 8 and 10 thousand recruits annually (see table 4.3) the vast majority of whom were from Matatiele district although some came from other areas.<sup>17</sup>

Table 4.3 Numbers of miners recruited by TEBA Matatiele 1978-83

Year	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
Number	10 292	8 987	8 131	9 590	9 797	8 376

Note For the period Jan-Aug 1984, the figure was 6 589

Source C Kriel, Manager TEBA Matatiele, 14 Sept 1984

These figures can be augmented by figures from the labour bureau situated at Maluti and from the other mine recruiting agency in

<sup>16</sup> Wakelin's aggregate figures were extrapolated from a sample survey of 4 500 households in the Transkei, from which data on 2 200 migrants were selected (1983a: 3). 72 of these migrants were from Matatiele (pers. comm. 1984). He does not explain how this selection procedure was conducted.

<sup>17</sup> Some Qacha's Nek, Lesotho citizens attempted - sometimes successfully - to obtain Transkei documentation and be recruited in Maluti/Matatiele where jobs were easier to find than in Lesotho. But TEBA had a fairly busy office in Qacha's Nek, while another, in Mount Fletcher, served most of that district. A few recruits through the Maluti/Matatiele office came from nearby white-owned farms, but in insignificant numbers.

Matatiele, Vezamafa, recruiters for the Natal Coal Owners Labour Association (NCOLA). Unfortunately, neither set of figures is as comprehensive as those from TEBA: the labour bureau provided me with data showing that 1 481 workers were forwarded during the second half of 1982, 2 912 were forwarded through all of 1983, and 1 992 were forwarded from Jan through August 1984. These figures were the totals, for each period, of workers with call-in cards and others registered in terms of influx control regulations. Vezamafa's figures are presented in table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Numbers of recruits forwarded by Vezamafa, Matatiele, 1981-3

Year	1981	1982	1983
Number	995	804	626

Note For the period Jan-Aug 1984, the figure was 432

Source Vezamafa, Matatiele, 14 Sept 1984

All of the above are recruitment figures which do not reflect numbers of migrant workers absent at any one time, nor the total number of people involved in labour migration over any fixed period. As comparisons of recruitment and 'on strength' figures for TEBA demonstrate (see table A.2, appendix A), there have been times when far more workers were recruited in a year than were 'on strength' at one point during that year, and times when this situation was reversed. One reason for this is that not all workers attest for contracts of the same period; another is that some extend their contracts whilst at their places of employment. Nor did individual workers always spend the same periods at work for every contract. The result was that in times of easy availability of jobs, men tended to spend longer at home than when jobs were harder to find. This comes to be reflected in greater or smaller labour turnover rates respectively, and in a tendency towards shorter or longer attested contracts, as tables A.2 and A.3 (Appendix A) indicate.

During the late 1970s when mine-labour jobs were still quite readily available for Transkeian workers, some men attested early in

the year and remained on contract for the shortest possible period (6 months) and then returned home, only to re-attest again later in the year. By the 1980s, however, men tended to attest for longer contracts and to stay on for longer in order to ensure that they would obtain re-employment guarantee certificates (cf. Spiegel, 1980b which shows how this process began during the 1970s in Lesotho; cf. Murray, 1980d). The result was that recruitment figures fell. This tendency is clear also from the relative numbers of 6, 9 and 12 month contracts attested over time - see table A.3.<sup>18</sup>

Table A.2 (Appendix A) indicates both the annual total TEBA recruitment figures for the Transkei as a whole and the numbers of Transkeians 'on strength' as at 31 December each year for the period 1977-87. Again assuming congruency between the aggregate Transkei figures and the situation in Matatiele, we can estimate the annual total numbers of men from Matatiele 'on strength' with TEBA-supplied mines by multiplying the ratio b:a (table A.2) by TEBA-Matatiele's annual recruitment figures. In order to generate a similar set of 'on strength' figures for Vezamafa recruits and workers forwarded through the labour bureau we need to make the added assumption that Vezamafa's and the labour bureau's 'on strength':recruitment ratios are approximately the same as those for TEBA on a year by year basis. If we make this assumption, we can calculate estimates for 'on strength' figures as summarised in table 4.5.

PTO for table 4.5

<sup>18</sup>

By 1984 TEBA-supplied mines were specifying longer contracts for attestation by recruits - for VRG holders as well as for men whose return guarantee certificates had expired, for experienced miners without such certificates, and for 'novices' (interview Chris Kriel, TEBA Manager, Matatiele, 14 Sep 84).

**Table 4.5** Estimated numbers of Matatiele workers 'on strength' through TEBA Matatiele 1978-83, Vezamafa 1981-3, and Maluti labour bureau 1982-3

Year	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
TEBA	9 094	9 612	9 376	10 325	10 561	10 028
Vezamafa				1 071	866	749
Labour bureau					3 193[a]	3 486
Estimated, totals for 1982 and 1983					14 620	14 263

Note The 1982 labour bureau figure has been reached by taking twice the bureau's number forwarded for the second half of 1982 and multiplying it by the TEBA-Transkei 'on strength'/recruitment ratio for that year.

Source Calculated from figures in tables 4.3 and 4.4

From Wakelin's aggregate figures for the Transkei, I estimated above that in 1982 there should have been at least 15 000 'external' labour migrants from Matatiele, of whom some 13 100 would have been men. I also pointed out that these were probably very conservative estimates, which is borne out by the calculated figures presented in table 4.5. In addition to this estimated fourteen and a half thousand migrants, we need to add figures for 'illegals', particularly women and those employed by other blacks, for migrant workers who had managed to secure legitimate jobs without having to go through the labour bureau, and for those who had rights in town and can thus not strictly be regarded as labour migrants, although they continued to be *oscillating* migrants. Clearly, therefore, the estimate of 15 000 'external' migrants is too small - although attempts to put a figure on the extent to which it ought to be increased are all in the realm of guesswork: my guess would put the total at around 20 000 people. In a population of 133 000 (113 000 *de facto* plus the estimated 20 000 absent migrants) this puts the 'external' migrancy rate at around 15%.<sup>19</sup>

An examination of the age and gender breakdown of Matatiele's *de facto* population as recorded by the 1980 census (Muller, 1984: 13) provides some support for the above estimate. Assuming that most labour migrants are over the age of 16 and under 60 years old, that the majority are men, and that there will be a similar number of men

<sup>19</sup> This, of course, ignores any estimates for 'internal' migrancy.

and women in any one age-cohort, we can compare the numbers of men and women in the appropriate cohort to gain indication of the rate of male absenteeism.<sup>20</sup> In this instance there were 19 026 fewer men than women in the cohort 15 to 64 years of age (ibid.). If these figures are anything to go by, adult absenteeism runs to around 20 000, but then one must also make allowance for 'internal' migrancy at a rate of 2,2% (Wakelin, 1983a: 5), which would add about 3 000 to the total migrancy rate for the district.

Despite this apparently high rate of labour migrancy, the effects of the national recession were clearly being felt in Matatiele from about 1983 onwards. In that year, and the one following, the local TEBA depot in Maluti was surrounded daily by unemployed men looking for work as mine-migrants. Moreover, there was a steady returning trickle of retrenched workers from industries on the Reef and in the Durban-Pinetown complex who could be found wandering forlornly around the district's locations. My data on labour migration from the district do not extend beyond 1984, and I am thus unable to quantify this process.<sup>21</sup>

### Remittances

Another important indicator of dependence on labour migrants' wages is the amounts of money both remitted by migrants to their dependants and brought with them when they come home. As for the migrancy rates dealt with above, there are no detailed figures available for remittances either to Matatiele district or to the Transkei as a whole. However, some estimates for the latter do exist, and can be used to project down onto Matatiele. Annual

<sup>20</sup> Some of these assumptions are problematic. Muller (n.d.: 12) has argued that "there is substantial outmigration in the age-cohort 0 - 4 years of the order of 19.13% ... [and] massive outmigration of women in the fertile age groups 20 - 44 years of age." While he is right to point to these phenomena, his data are for the Transkei as a whole, and make no allowance for regional variation. Certainly some young Matatiele children are taken to 'town' with their parents, but 20% seems too high a figure; and 'massive' exaggerates the extent of outmigration from the district by women in the 20-44 year age-cohort.

<sup>21</sup> Unemployment figures held by the Maluti labour bureau reflected only those who had gone to the trouble of registering themselves there as workseekers. As most people knew how small the chances were of finding employment that way, they did not register, and the figures are thus useless as an indicator of levels of unemployment. Many of those eligible for unemployment benefits appeared to claim these before returning to the district, as there was confusion regarding their availability in the 'independent' Transkei.

estimates of remittances by Transkeian labour migrants are presented in table 4.6 below:

**Table 4.6** Estimates of annual remittances of Transkeian migrant workers (millions of rands)

Year	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1982
Amount	41,5	70,1	90,0	113,9	119,7	160,7	500+[a]

Note: a. The large jump in 1982 is explained below.

Sources: 1975-80: *Transkei Development Review* 1(2): 88; 1982: Wakelin, 1983a: 11.

All of the pre-1982 figures are estimates based on calculations from yet other estimates of remittance and wage-rates, because precise remittance figures are not regularly available (*Transkei Development Review* 1 (2): 88 n5 & n6). The 1982 figure is based on an extrapolation from a survey of income and expenditure in a sample of 4 500 Transkei households (Wakelin, 1983a). This may explain why the 1982 remittance figure is so much higher than that for previous years: not only have wages and remittances increased as a result of inflation, but surveys generate better data than office-bound estimates can, and surveys of income and expenditure can reveal otherwise hidden incomes. The 1982 survey indicated that an amount "in excess of R500 million per annum" reached relict Transkeians from their migratory breadwinners, either through financial institutions, recruiting organisations and in kind, or in direct remittances of money. Alone these "direct remittances (exclud[ing] ... goods) amount[ed] to R350 million per annum" (Wakelin, 1983a: 11).<sup>22</sup>

If Wakelin's estimate of R500m total remittances received in the Transkei in 1982 is realistic, and if the aggregate figure can be projected down onto the Matatiele district - with about 4,3% of the Transkei's population at the time of the 1980 census - then one

<sup>22</sup> All of these figures make a mockery of a Benso estimate of remittances to the Transkei in 1976 of R4.62m (cited in SAIRR, 1982: 328).

would anticipate that cash and goods to the value of about R21,5m would have reached Matatiele in both *direct* and *indirect* remittances in 1982. A similar calculation would give a figure of nearly R15.1m in *direct* remittances only. This compares well with a different extrapolation from Wakelin's data, this time from his sample of 72 Matatiele migrants whose mean annual *direct* remittance was R655 (Wakelin, pers. comm. 1984). Assuming a total migrant population for Matatiele of 23 000, the total *direct* remittance to the district would have been nearly R15,1m.

Remittance figures I collected from three of the major remittance processing agencies in the district suggest that *total* annual remittances to the district were likely to have been somewhere between the figures for *direct* and *total* remittances suggested above (R15,1m and R21,5m respectively). Although the total amount that went through those agencies in 1982 amounted to only R11,3m (see table 4.7 below), it is clear that there was a vast amount of money (and goods) which reached the district through other channels not amenable to detailed record-keeping. While computations from available figures cannot provide a comprehensive picture of all remittances, they do help to provide some indication of the level of remittance-dependence in the district.

PTO for table 4.7

**Table 4.7** Amounts remitted to Matatiele through various agencies in selected years

Year	Amount (000s of rands)			Totals
	TEBA	GPO	Vezamafa	
1979	2 014			
1980	2 557			
1981	2 849			
1982	3 661	7 418	209[a]	11 288
1983	3 613	4 692[b]	211	8 516
1984[c]	2 134	4 314[b]	66	6 514

Notes:

- a. The Vezamafa records were incomplete for 1982, figures for the months of January and February were unavailable.
- b. Introduction of a computerised recording system had resulted in a break in the Matatiele GPO records for the period 1 June to 20 October 1983. Records of savings bank withdrawal payments were not available between June 1983 and February 1984 for the same reason.
- c. The figures for 1984 are for the months of January through August only.

Sources: See next paragraph.

I have derived the figures in table 4.7 from records held by the two labour recruiting offices and the post office in Matatiele. Both TEBA and Vezamafa kept records of monthly totals of remittances and of deferred pay payments, including a tally of the number of payments made per month in each category. The GPO figures came from records of totals of monthly payments under the following headings: payouts against telegraphic money orders, payouts against postal orders, and Post Office savings bank withdrawals. The validity of these figures as indicators of remittances was made clear by the local postmaster's comment to me, during 1984, that virtually all of the postal and telegraphic orders cashed by his tellers were for Africans, and that "about 98% of the savings bank withdrawals are made by Blacks". Although many migrants use savings accounts with other financial institutions as a means of returning some of their

earnings,<sup>23</sup> I was unable to obtain figures from the branches and agencies of any of these in Matatiele: in some instances it would in any case have been impossible to disaggregate figures related to extremely bouyant local business and those reflecting remittances.

The figures provided by these sources reveal one other useful annualised set of data: the mean amounts received as remittances and the mean amounts of deferred pay transferred to workers when they returned home after completing a contract. These are summarised in table 4.8, along with the figure for 1984 of the mean amount per telegraphic money order processed by the Matatiele GPO, and with figures obtained from the records of amounts received in registered letters processed in the Mabua village store which provided an informal service as a postal agency (see below).

Table 4.8 Mean amounts paid out per remittance, deferred wage payment, and telegraphic money orders, and in registered letters, Matatiele

Source:	Mean amounts (rands)					GPO Teleg m.o.	Mabua regist'd letters
	TEBA		Vezamafa				
Year	Defer pay	Remit- tance	Defer pay	Remit- tance			
1979	622	169					
1980	468	204				48[a]	
1981	585	270				61	
1982	799	337	354	152		69	
1983	930	371	475	174		80	
1984[b]	919	399	450	184	140	86	

#### Notes

- a. Mabua registered letter figures for 1980 cover only August to December.
- b. 1984 figures are calculated from data for the months of January through August only, except for the Mabua registered letters figure which pertain to the period January through November. The apparent drop between 1983 and 1984 in deferred pay amounts can be explained by the fact that many mine-migrants, particularly those with longer service and higher wages, try to arrange their contracts so that they can return home near year's end. The 1984 figure is thus skewed downwards because it does not cover the whole year.

<sup>23</sup>

During 1984 I was told that one of the mining houses had decided to encourage its workers to use the services of one of the building societies and to by-pass the recruiting agencies' deferred pay system. I was unable to verify this.

Table 4.8 indicates a steady increase, over the years, of amounts remitted and deferred, in line with wage-increases and to allow for inflation. It also reveals the extent to which workers attempt to hoard their earnings until they return personally to the district and can disburse them at their own discretion: not only were average amounts of deferred pay payments markedly larger than those for remittances, but workers returning home often brought large amounts of cash with them on their persons.<sup>24</sup> Of course, this has important ramifications for the flows of cash in location villages, and for the dependants of a remitting earner who may struggle through the period of his absence, and then see a relatively large amount of money pass through the domestic unit during his brief sojourn with them between contracts.<sup>25</sup> I return to issues of how intra-household and inter-household relations mesh in chapter 8.

What is not clear, either from these figures, or indeed from any which are available, is the range in the size of remitted amounts, and the frequency with which individual workers remitted, and with which particular recipients received remittance payments. The available institutional data (TEBA, Vezamafa, GPO) were aggregated per month and are not susceptible to this level of analysis, although there is scope for such a project through examination and correlation of individual remittance and deferred pay vouchers held by the first two of these offices. The Mabua village store's registered letter record-book does provide data which gives some indication of both range and frequency of remittances, although the mean amounts remitted in this manner were significantly smaller than through the other agencies (see table 4.8). This is for two reasons. Firstly, many better-paid workers were on the mines and used the TEBA remittance system, while others who could afford to send large amounts preferred to use telegraphic money orders, as these had to be collected personally in Matatiele town and did not pass through village stores (see below). Secondly, many remittances to village residents were sent through other channels and, for some,

<sup>24</sup> Often too they carried sums from friends at work to their dependants at home.

<sup>25</sup> I use the masculine personal pronoun because most labour migrant women earn too little to be able to hoard much. Moreover, for many, migrancy has been forced on them as a means of supporting children in the absence of a husband, and they tend to be more sensitive to the needs of their dependants.

the registered letter route was only a stop-gap measure, or a means of sending small amounts to people other than a migrant's immediate dependants.

The general dealer's store in Mabua, the village in which I spent the longest period of my field research, provided an informal postal agency service. They sold local stamps (South African, not Transkeian) and transported all outgoing mail to the post-office in Matatiele town. In addition village residents used the store's post office box in Matatiele town as their own address, and all mail arriving there was collected by the store-owner when he travelled to town for stocks. A written record was kept of all registered mail reaching the village in this way: it included details of office of posting, date of delivery to the village, name of addressee and identity number of person collecting the letter, and amount of money contained in the letter.<sup>26</sup> The last of this information was obtained by the store-assistant who opened each letter in front of the addressee and counted the amount of its contents together with her.<sup>27</sup> The store-owner told me that the reason for this procedure - which he assured me was not unique to his store, or the 1980s - was to provide wives with evidence of the amounts they had received in case of disputes over household budgeting with their husbands when they returned home,<sup>28</sup> and to provide remitters with a means of checking on co-workers whom they had asked to send money home on their behalf. Another reason may well have been that the information thus obtained allowed trading store management to claim payments on outstanding debts and evaluate the further credit-worthiness of their customers. The data aggregated in the last column of table 4.8 derives from these records.

The records still available during the times when I was in the field extended for the period August 1980 to November 1984. During the whole period of 52 months there were 3 385 remittances made

<sup>26</sup> Most of this was in the form of postal orders. This means that - if all village stores kept registered letter books, which they do not - one could not add village-store figures to the GPO figure - see table 4.8.

<sup>27</sup> The legal restriction on opening others' registered mail was by-passed by doing this in the company of the addressee or her nominee.

<sup>28</sup> I did not hear of any cases of people having used the record for this purpose.

through this channel. They ranged in size from R2 to R700, bringing the following annual total amounts into the village:

**Table 4.9 Annual amounts and number of remittances through Mabua Store registered letter system**

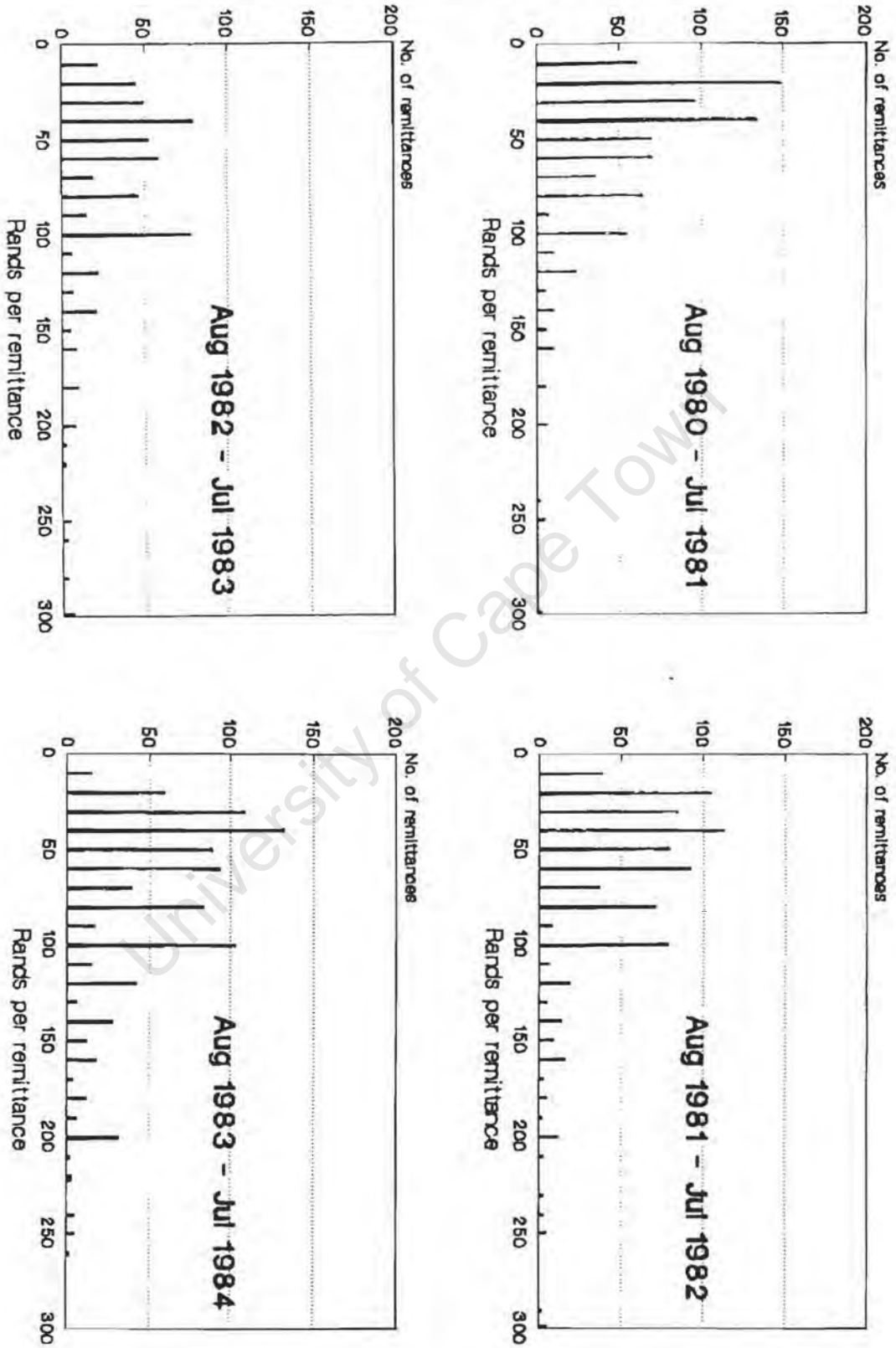
Year	Amount (rands)	No. of remittances	Mean per remittance (rands)
1980 (Aug-Dec)	15 934	331	48
1981	47 940	789	61
1982	53 059	774	69
1983	51 255	642	80
1984 (Jan-Nov)	72 921	849	86

The range in remittance size from this source is presented graphically in figure 4.1 which indicates the annual distribution of remittances for each of the four calendar years August to July 1980 through 1984. For reasons of clearer graphic representation, and because there were very few remittances of greater than R300, I have excluded these from the figures.<sup>29</sup> Not all remittances were exactly divisible by ten; the remittance cohorts thus include  $x \leq 10$ ,  $10 < x \leq 20$  .... etc. These remittance figures have not been corrected for inflation.

PTO for figure 4.1

<sup>29</sup> Remittances over R300 were as follows:  
 1980-1: Nil  
 1981-2: One remittance each of R600 and R700  
 1982-3: One remittance each of R500, R530, R540 and R600  
 1983-4: One remittance each of R340, R350, R400 and R510

Figure 4.1 Histograms representing distribution of remittances through Mabua registered letter system, by size of remittance - annually Aug-Jul 1980 to 1984



Of crucial importance to people who must depend on labour migrants' remittances is both their size and the frequency with which they receive them. I found assessing such frequency to be extremely difficult, particularly while I relied on limited records and interviews with people who either do not clearly remember these details - particularly over a period of more than a few months - or who are unwilling to divulge the minutiae of their financial affairs. The Mabua registered letter records provided me with one means of gauging frequency, although there was indication that many remittances through that agency were one-off payments, sent either to top-up other payments or as gifts to more distant dependants. The local store- and cafe-owners' names both featured fairly frequently, and both received amounts from a wide variety of places. None of these was for a large amount. This suggests that advances made before a migrant left for work were repaid by sending money in a registered letter; debts incurred by a migrant's dependants could be settled similarly.

For some, however, remitting by registered letter seemed the only way of sending money home, although such workers did tend to bring relatively larger sums home with them when they returned for visits between contracts. Thus there were some names which appeared in the record showing that they received regular monthly or bi-monthly amounts always from the same area.

#### Case 4.1 An agricultural worker's remittances

An example was the wife of a fruit-packing labourer in the western Cape for whom 38 registered letters arrived - quite regularly near the beginning of each month - through the 52 month period for which the records were available. During this time her husband visited the village four times, during the winter off-season at work, for two to three months each visit: each time he came he brought a lump sum of about R200 or more for domestic needs, plus food and clothing, and building materials at the time they were building. His purchase of a beast during one of these visits suggests that he had returned with a further amount which he had kept out of the subsistence sphere which was his wife's concern and did not divulge during interviews when his wife was present (cf. Ferguson, 1985; Sharp and Spiegel, forthcoming). After returning to work he would immediately send whatever small amount he could in an

unregistered letter.<sup>30</sup> The Mabua registered letter book records the following amounts received by the wife [with figures of other amounts obtained from interviews in square brackets]:

1980: Oct: R16; Oct: R40; Nov: R80  
 1981: Jan: R30; Mar: R40; Apr: R40; Jun: R25; Sep: R50;  
 Oct: R40; Nov: R40; Dec: R40 (Total: R305)  
 1982: Jan: R120; Feb: R40; Mar: R56; Apr: R40; Sep: R40;  
 Oct: R40; Nov: R50; Dec: R50 (Total: R436)  
 1983: Jan: R60; Jan: R50; Feb: R40; Mar: R65; Apr: R40;  
 [visited home, May: brought R200 for wife; left early  
 Aug: R50 left with wife] Aug: R50; Sept: R60; Oct:  
 R50; Nov: R50; Dec: R65 (Total: R530 + R250)  
 1984: Jan: R140; Mar: R50; Apr: R80; May: R50; [visited  
 home, May, brought R200+ for wife; sent R4 in unreg.  
 letter Aug] Aug: R40; Sep: R50; Oct: R80; Oct: R130;  
 Nov: R80 (Total: R704 + R200 - excludes Dec for which  
 no figure available)

The somewhat larger amounts sent home in January reflect receipts of December/Christmas bonuses: as they were paid relatively late in the month they tended to reach the village only after the festive season, but in time to be used for school fees and other related start of year expenses.

Methodologically, it is instructive to compare these figures with those given in response to questions during interviews, particularly as regards the problem of informants' capacity of recall (cf. Bernard et al, 1984). In 1982 the husband was in attendance when I visited his home. He then informed me of the following amounts he remembered remitting or leaving at home:

1981: Aug: left R50 with wife; Sep: R60; Oct: R40; Nov:  
 R40; Dec: R120  
 1982: Jan: R20; Feb: R20; Mar: R60; Apr: R40; Came home  
 May: R200.

In 1984, his wife gave me the following figures only:  
 R60 per month every month; June, 1984: R40; Came home  
 1 July with R200+; Aug: R4 unreg. letter.

Other names which appeared frequently included those of a variety of wives and other dependants of labour migrants such as an old woman with a daughter in domestic employment in Natal. Another old widow who had taken in the children of a couple who were absent for extended periods (see chapter 8) received small but quite regular

<sup>30</sup>

I discovered this practice when, visiting his home a week after he had left for work, I witnessed his wife's receipt of one such letter containing two R2 notes.

sums for their support in registered letters while they remained with her. The letters came to a stop once the children had moved on to be 'fostered' in another village household which included a relatively regular remitting migrant of its own. In one case the letters were for an ex-domestic worker on the Natal south coast whose ex-employers on the Natal south coast knew of the difficulties she had had attempting to obtain a civil old-age pension (see below), and sent her a small gratuity every month.

### Pensions

Much of the recent literature on labour-reserve and other rural (*platteland*) areas of South Africa has emphasised the importance of pensions as a means of support, not only for their recipients but also for a host of children and unemployed adults who have no other source of income and attach themselves to the households of pensioners for this reason (Wilson and Ramphele, 1989: 63-4; Human Awareness Programme, 1984). Indeed, pensions, for reason of their regularity, have been shown to be more reliable, albeit often smaller, than remittances from distant labour migrants whose continuing commitment to their relict families may sometimes falter (Ardington, 1984). Regular receipts of predictable amounts of money facilitates both domestic budgeting under stringent conditions, and borrowing from, and lending to, neighbours (Sharp and Spiegel, 1985).

The Transkei is no exception to this situation, where it has been estimated that almost a tenth of rural household income derived from pensions in 1982 (*Transkei Profile*, 1985: 19), while households in the R1 501 - R2 000 annual income cohort received more than a fifth of their income from this source (*ibid.*). Moreover, fewer than half of those eligible were registered pensioners, a factor which exacerbated the pressure on, and destitution of, the 92 843 old-age, and 30 568 other civil pensioners registered in the Transkei in 1983 (*Transkei Profile*, 1985: 27-8).<sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Men over 65 and women 60 years old were deemed eligible for pensions, as long as they were otherwise virtually destitute, thus allowing them to 'pass' a means test.

Many old people in Matatiele experienced great difficulty in registering for and obtaining pensions. These problems frequently arose as a result of bureaucratic inefficiency and corruption and because people often did not know how to insist on their rights or were afraid to do so (cf. Segar, 1986: 84; 95; 1989: 46-7; 50). The system appeared to function through a network of contacts, and people most in need often lacked the social resources to make it work.<sup>32</sup>

Registration as a pensioner also required great perseverance. In Matatiele, the Transkei administration needed proof of age - furnished either by one's headman or by reference to one's identity document, which carries a recorded age which may bear no relationship to one's actual age.<sup>33</sup> A fairly stringent means test was also applied, information relating to one's wealth being obtained from the headman and local stock inspector. In any event, married women whose husbands were registered pensioners were judged to be ineligible for pension registration because their husbands' pension receipts put them over the means test income maximum. Moreover, from 1980 until late in 1982 the Transkei administration was loathe to accept further registrations of pensioners apparently because of a lack of funds. In October 1984, the Mabua sub-headman collected the names of 22 villagers who had already registered as pensioners but whose applications were still being processed: 5 had applied in 1981, 15 in 1982 and 2 in 1984. The oldest applicant on the list was already 80 years old.

For ex-World War II servicemen in Matatiele, registration for war veteran's pensions required negotiation of yet another bureaucratic structure and submission of one's application to the magistrate in Matatiele town rather than to the offices in Maluti. Technically

<sup>32</sup> The sensitivity of the issue became most clear to me when someone suggested that one certain way to attract the attention of the local security police was to encourage eligible but unregistered pensioners to go to Maluti to demand their registration and pension payment. Indeed, this was one of allegations against me which helped land my assistant and me in Transkei security police custody in August 1984 (see chapter 1).

<sup>33</sup> Soon after 'independence', officials went from village to village registering information for 'books of life' (identity documents). In many cases, said my informants, an applicant's age was judged and recorded by the official without any consultation with the applicant: many were recorded as younger than their actual (chronological) age, and, when they reached pensionable age, they remained ineligible for pensions unless they could demonstrate the error in their identity books.

the Matatiele magistrate ought not to have been concerned with pensions for residents of the Transkei, but in 1984 mechanisms in the Transkeian bureaucracy to administer these pensions seemed wholly inadequate - in Maluti at least (but cf. *Transkei Profile*, 1985: 26-7).<sup>34</sup>

Other pensions paid to people in the district included civil blind, disability and leprosy pensions, and employment-related pensions. Significant in regard to the latter were SA Transport Services (SA Railways) pensions which until 1974 had operated on a non-contributory basis and were payable only to those 'casual' labourers who had completed 15 years of continuous service with the Railways and had reached 60 years of age, or were forced to retire for reasons of ill health. From 1975 onwards it was re-organised on a contributory basis. In 1983, these pensions injected about R430 000 into the Matatiele district, while war veteran's pensions amounted to about R36 000 (interview with postmaster, Matatiele, July 1983).

Transkeian civil old-age pensions were extremely poor, although - in line with those available to Africans in the common area - they rose significantly during the late 1970s and early 1980s. At the time of the Transkei being granted 'independence' late in 1976 they rose from R26,25 bi-monthly to R31,50. Further rises were:

November 1977:	R37,76 bi-monthly
April 1980:	R41,00 bi-monthly
June 1980:	R43,00 bi-monthly
August 1982:	R98,00 bi-monthly

In addition, pensioners were sometimes treated to an extra bonus, such as the one paid in August 1982 when they received a total of R160. The total amount paid per pensioner in 1983 was R651 (*Transkei Profile*, 1985: 27).

I have no figures for the total number, nor the total annual amounts, of pensions paid out in Matatiele district. Projecting downwards from the aggregate figures for the Transkei - as done

<sup>34</sup> I was called upon to act as intermediary for pension registration of World War II veterans on a number of occasions. Men who had enlisted in Lesotho had more difficulty than others as records of their service were more difficult to trace.

above for remittances - suggests that about R2,6m would have reached the district via all civil pensions in 1983.<sup>35</sup> This figure is probably an overestimate because of the district's remoteness from the centres of power in the Transkei, both geographically and socially. The fact that, with adjacent Mount Fletcher, it is home to most of the Transkei's South Sotho population of 101 264 in 1980 (Muller, 1984: 1), militates more than elsewhere against ease of pension registration (Segar, 1986: 155-7; cf. Spiegel, 1982: 35). This factor notwithstanding, pensions were, as elsewhere, an important source of income, and their availability was of crucial significance in distinguishing Matatiele from the neighbouring district of Qacha's Nek in Lesotho, where there was no provision whatsoever for the payment of civil pensions (cf. Spiegel, 1980a).

### Conclusion

Matatiele in the 1970s and 1980s represented an almost classic case of a migrant-labour reserve, sending out a large proportion of its adult population and relying on regular infusions of cash to support its population, some of whom still attempted to generate small amounts of produce for own consumption by investing some of their cash income in arable agriculture and livestock. In this respect it was by no means exceptional in the Transkei. Unlike many of the other bantustans, the Transkei has still not been transformed into a continuum of closer settlements providing just residential rights for vast numbers of commuters and their dependants. It has not been used as a dumping ground for mass-relocation, and it can thus continue to offer access to areas of arable and pasture land in which at least some people feel it is worthwhile to invest their hard-earned wage-income.

The most important reason that people from Matatiele engage in labour migration is that there are extremely few employment opportunities available within commuting distance of the district. Matatiele town offers a very limited number of such jobs, but for

<sup>35</sup> This estimate has been calculated as follows: Matatiele population is 4.3% of total Transkei population (1980 census). Total civil pension payout was R60.2m in 1983, of which 4.3% = R2.6m. If calculated by taking the Matatiele population over age 64 as a proportion of the total Transkei population in that age-cohort (ie. 4.6% - see Muller, 1984: 13; 16) we obtain a figure of R2.8m.

various reasons including its own remoteness relative to the major centres of the country and a lack of reliable water supply, the town has never developed into a centre for industrial decentralisation. Other nearby employment is limited to farm-labour requiring residence on the farm, and it offers much poorer wages than are obtainable in industrial and commercial employment in the more distant parts of the country. The people of Matatiele are thus obliged to rely on the migrant wage-labour market, and to a lesser extent on pensions, for a source of income to ensure their livelihood. In chapter 5 I begin to examine the extent to which receipt of such income is reflected in the nature of differentiation in the district in general, and in the two localities in which I worked in particular.

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## CHAPTER 5

### INTRODUCING DIVERSITY AND DIFFERENTIATION IN MATATIELE: MABUA VILLAGE AND HARRY EBDEN FARM

Most recent attempts to come to grips with contemporary material diversity in selected portions of rural southern Africa start off with questions about the relationship between that diversity and the nature of class differentiation in the southern African region as a whole (cf. Innes and O'Meara, 1976; Murray, 1981; Spiegel, 1980a; Levin and Neocosmos, 1987; May, 1987; Webster, 1988). In this chapter I look for a means of understanding wealth and living-standard differences in two particular localities in Matatiele, but without wishing to imply that this will throw much light on class differentiation in the broader region as a whole. Indeed, I work from a conclusion reached from earlier work in Lesotho, that virtually the whole population of these areas is part of the regional working class (Spiegel, 1980a: 112ff.)<sup>1</sup> As we shall see below, there are various determinants of localised wealth differences. But for the most part - possibly until the permanent landlessness brought about by betterment has worked its way thoroughly through the population - these differences cannot be taken as clearcut indicators of classes being formed at the micro-level of village society. Indeed, even in those areas where residents/tenants have no formal rights to arable land, such as on freehold farms, many still manage to participate in some form of agricultural activity, and attempt to stretch their wage-earnings by doing so. Their persistent interest in agriculture makes difficult any clearcut divisions of the population into localised classes.

Why then do I proceed to illustrate and explain the nature and causes of micro-level wealth differences? Firstly, one of my

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Webster (1988: 6-7) who points out that in a population of 406 people in the Kosi Bay area, there were "only four ... who did not broadly fall within the working class", and only one who "perhaps ... should be treated as analytically separate".

concerns is population movement and resettlement in Matatiele, and there is clear evidence that these processes have had an important effect on the ways in which local differences are manifest. This is a primary focus of the present chapter. Secondly, I deal in later chapters with a variety of social practices. All of these reflect the extant wealth (and power) differences in local settings which result in diverse ways of performing many such practices. This makes it necessary to have a prior understanding of those very differences and their determinants. Thirdly, one of the gaps in most studies of contemporary rural wealth diversity is their failure to address the question of how people understand the diversity which surrounds them and how they construct hierarchies based on it (cf. Webster, 1988: 1). Although I do not address this problem directly, chapters 6 through 8 give indication of various emic perspectives, including some ways in which popular understanding of wealth differentials is reflected in various cultural practices. I reflect again briefly on this in chapter 9.

Despite my comments about the relative class homogeneity of rural villages, the district of Matatiele as a whole shows some clearcut class differentiation. I thus begin the empirical presentation of this chapter with a brief discussion of the factors that distinguish the small but powerful landholding and bureaucratic strata in the district.

### Rural differentiation

Contemporary analyses of micro-level differentiation in the southern African periphery begin by recognising that migrants' wages (and increasingly pensions) are the major determining factor distinguishing rural households from one another in terms of their wealth levels. This has been amply demonstrated for areas such as Lesotho (Murray, 1981; Spiegel, 1980a; 1980b), Kwazulu (May, 1987; Webster, 1988), Gazankulu (Kotzé, 1986), Lebowa (James, 1987) and various parts of the Transkei, including areas in Matatiele (Leeuwenberg, 1977; McAllister, 1978; Muller and Tapscott, 1984; Moll, 1984; May, 1985; Sharp and Spiegel, 1985; Segar, 1984; 1986; 1989; Muller, 1986; Spiegel, 1987; cf. Wilson and Ramphela, 1989:

62ff.).<sup>2</sup> Further important indices of the extent of local wealth differences have been sizes of livestock holdings and access to arable land rights. The challenge at the micro level has been to understand and explain the nature of the relationship between these two sets of resources - wages and agriculture.

One especially powerful and apparently elegant approach, particularly for rural Lesotho of the mid-1970s, demonstrated that the relationship was mediated by a cyclical process of domestic development of rural wage-dependent households (Murray, 1978; 1981; 1987; Spiegel, 1980a; 1980b; 1982). Analyses following this approach showed, moreover, that access to wages and remittances determined the likelihood or not of any particular household managing to realise what was then seen as a typical cycle of domestic development. It was demonstrated that access to wages enabled a young couple marrying, and then - over time - setting up their own residential unit and building a homestead with appurtenances such as arable land and the implements to work it, as well as herds and flocks of livestock, at least some of which were used for draught purposes.

An important function of these investments was to enable young men - as heads of new households - to develop social relationships with others in their rural communities. Murray's (1977; 1981) discussion of the function of bridewealth in migrant labour-dependent Lesotho of the 1970s illustrates this point well, as does Ferguson's (1985) analysis of the importance of cattle there a few years later. As Ferguson points out, investing in livestock had important social as well as material benefits, because possession of even a small herd:

1) establishes the legitimacy of a husband's claims to be legal 'head' of a household (and its children) by providing tangible and visible support to dependants, even in the husband's absence; 2) serves as a 'placeholder' for the absent man, in the household and the community, symbolically asserting his structural presence even in the face of his physical absence; and 3) involves the absent man in relations of patronage and reciprocity with other villagers and establishes for him a prestigious social position and a large social

<sup>2</sup> Since the stimulus of the Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in southern Africa, in 1984, studies of contemporary rural areas have proliferated, virtually all of them stressing the extreme dependence on migrants' remittances and some demonstrating the link between that dependence and the nature of rural differentiation (cf. Wilson and Ramphela, 1989).

network in the village to which he will, one day, return unemployed (1985: 661).

Livestock and bridewealth are the most obvious forms that investment of wage-earned resources can take for social purposes. But, as I have indicated previously (Spiegel, 1980a: 123), even buying rounds of drinks in local beerhouses in Lesotho is a means whereby those with material resources attempt to invest socially. And much of McAllister's work on the significance of formalised beerdrinks in Willowvale in the Transkei (1980; 1981; 1985; 1987a) demonstrates how this institution enables migrant workers to invest some of their earnings for purposes of establishing and maintaining social relations in their neighbourhood communities.

Moreover, it is not only migrant workers who invest in this way, and not only wage-earned resources which are invested. As is apparent below and in chapters 6 and 8 (cf. Sharp and Spiegel, forthcoming), relict wives of migrants - particularly those with fields - often utilise their remittances not only for immediate subsistence purposes but also to generate further income and, significantly, to maintain their local bonds of reciprocity and patronage. The other side of the coin is that those with no resources other than their labour-power try to invest that resource in order to build up social credit: they become the clients of others with material resources. For the very poorest, this is done so that they might draw material benefits in times of extreme hardship. For others, investments of labour-power might be the first step into becoming equal partners in associations such as reciprocal ploughing teams (cf. Spiegel, 1980a: 138).

Let us now return to the developmental-cyclical analyses. Having shown that migrant wages enabled young couples to establish their own independent households, they went on to demonstrate that, as a household reached the later phases of its developmental cycle and its direct access to remitted wages fell away, its members became increasingly dependent on those very resources built up over its years as a remittance receiver. These were drawn on both for their daily needs and, more importantly, in order to gain indirect access to others' remittances. Older households earned cash income, for

example, by contracting to work for younger remittance-receiving households in such activities as ploughing the latter's fields with their draught oxen and implements, and by building their houses. In addition, livestock was sold to those building up their herds, and landholders' children were promised their parents' fields in exchange for support in the latter's old age.

This cyclically differentiated access to wage-remittances was reflected in wealth differences between households. Young newly established households were dependent exclusively on wages, and had neither land rights nor livestock, both of which local resources had to be built up by investing remittances. A 'zenith' phase was reached in the typical cycle where a household had access to all of these resources. And then subsequent phases saw ever-greater reliance on local resources and increasing difficulty in obtaining access to remitted monies.

This model worked well to breathe process into the synchronic micro data collected by researchers working in various Lesotho villages in the early and mid-1970s. At that time there was a very high rate of oscillating labour migration which followed an earlier period of large-scale permanent out-migration from that country to the urban-industrial centres of the Reef (cf. Spiegel, 1979: 21-2). However, those who applied the model did not explicitly ask how or whether the earlier outflows of population might have facilitated the particular kind of localised differentiation they found and described. Nor did they ask whether the areas studied had experienced any inflows of people which might have affected the characteristics of differentiation, in terms of both wealth levels and the nature of insertion into the wage-labour market. Indeed, these studies worked from an implicit assumption that there had been little change in the local specificities of particular labour-supplying populations during most of the 20th century, at least until the impact of massive forced relocations into bantustans from the 1970s onwards. They also implicitly assumed that changes that had occurred at the micro level had had little effect on the nature of rural material diversity. Rural labour-supplying populations were seen to have been fairly homogeneous, a view that was actually reinforced by the developmental cycle analysis which provided a

means of understanding apparent micro-level differences as reflecting merely temporary phases in the lives of specific households.

A further limitation of these analyses was that they tended to be too micro-oriented, and to ignore indicators of substantive class differences which were clearly visible at a district, regional or national level (cf. Rugege, 1981; Cooper, 1982). At best, reference was made to an incipient petty bourgeoisie just beginning to extract itself from the general mass of working people (cf. Spiegel, 1980a: 153-4). But there was no attempt made to locate the analysis of differentiation in the intermediate level of the labour-supplying region. The zoom lens moved too fast, locating the micro data of the village directly in the macro context of capitalist relations. For areas such as Matatiele, where some people have been large-scale landowners for generations, and where opportunities for accumulation on a relatively large scale have provided scope for the existence of a clear stratum of wealthy non-proletarians, such an oversight is quite distorting.<sup>3</sup>

Many of the misconceptions identified above have since been corrected by people working in relocation areas of different types. James' work in Lebowa (1985; 1987) has shown clearly how time of settlement in a particular locality affects access to local resources and insertion into the labour market, a point already implicit in the findings of the Keiskammahoek Rural Survey conducted in the late 1940s (Hobart Houghton and Walton, 1952; Wilson et al, 1952; Mills and Wilson, 1952; cf. Manona, 1981). My data from Matatiele show that the same applies there (cf. Spiegel, 1982), and I use this chapter to demonstrate this factor at the local village level of field-researched data, and thereby to introduce the two particular localities in which I concentrated my research. I do this by considering the two areas sequentially. In each case I present a brief historical background focussing particularly on settlement in the area and its relationship to the kinds of wealth differences I found there. Thereafter I present a set of case studies to illustrate the extent to which specific households'

<sup>3</sup> For further critique of the developmental cycle model see Spiegel, 1982; Murray, 1987.

particular settlement histories, and their experience of interventions such as betterment, are determining factors in their relative local wealth statuses. Before doing this, however, it is important to consider the nature of wealth and living standard differences across the district as a whole and thus to avoid repeating the previous error of focusing too soon at the micro-level.

#### Indices of wealth differences at the district level

One important indicator of wealth differences within the Matatiele district of the 1970s and '80s was ownership of freehold land. As we have seen in chapter 3, Africans with the wealth to do so had managed to purchase farms in the district from the late 19th century onwards. Some 5% of the district's 2 140 square kilometres was held under freehold tenure in the early 1980s, virtually all of it still in the hands of their descendants, although a few small portions of farms had been transferred to new owners, at least some of whom had come out of the Transkei's new petty bourgeoisie.<sup>4</sup> This figure is markedly higher than the average for the Transkei as a whole (2,1%) (Southey, n.d.: i) although nowhere near as large as that for the Umzimkulu district where "Africans owned over a quarter of the private land" during the first decade of the 20th century (Beinart, 1986: 283; cf. Bundy, 1979: 89), a position which was virtually unchanged by 1936 (Fox and Back, 1937: 349). At that stage, as still today, Umzimkulu contained the Transkei's major concentration of African-owned freehold farmland (ibid.; Deeds Register, Umtata).<sup>5</sup>

While ownership of land most certainly corresponded with high status in the district, such status was not the exclusive prerogative of farm-owners. Nor were they the most apparently

<sup>4</sup> I have here excluded the 290 sq. km. of freehold comprising the Ongeluksnek farms. By 1984, the portion of that area already ceded to the Transkei was all government land leased out to various short- and medium-term leaseholders.

<sup>5</sup> This excludes areas of land comprising 'consolidated' farms which were appropriated by powerholders in the 'independence' government (cf. Streek and Wicksteed, 1981: 117ff.; Southall, 1982: 196). Some owners of cleared 'black spots' in Mount Currie purchased land in Umzimkulu after they were forced to sell and relocate in 1946/7 (interview James Rennie 10 Aug 1984, 'Palmiet', Mount Currie). At least one family sold to their neighbours, the Rennies, and remained on as workers (ibid.).

affluent of the district's residents, although they had certainly stood out in the past (cf. Bundy, 1979: 128; Beinart, 1986; 1987a; see chapter 3 above). Indeed, until the 1940s and '50s landowners had maintained a conspicuous presence not only by their lifestyles and dress (cf. Faro, 1922) but with their drive to ensure their children's education. Just as Moshoeshe and other leading nineteenth century chiefs had done, they sent their sons to Zonnebloem College in Cape Town. They also travelled to England (ibid.) where a few placed their heirs in school (interview with Michael Morris, 1 Jul 1982, Matatiele).

By the 1980s their marked distinction from the rest of the population was no longer so clear. In particular they did not have access to the kind of ready money which the appearances of some traders and bureaucrats suggested. While the older people among them had tended to ensure that their children were given a good education, this concern was no longer so marked, and many of them continued to live in the relatively unsophisticated houses inherited with their properties rather than in the flash modern dwellings being built by the new stratum of well-off in the district. Although some ran small trading stores from their farms to generate additional income, these were not as obviously successful as those of other traders in the district.

Some junior descendants of farm-owners, who were not in line to inherit land, as well as some members of chiefs' families, were nonetheless both prominent among those who had attained high levels of education and among the small but conspicuous population of successful local traders. Among this local elite were various bureaucrats in both the Transkeian and Lesotho administrations, some of whom could be found in offices in both Umtata and Maseru.<sup>6</sup> Other people of high status included senior local bureaucrats - primarily from outside the district - and a number of successful traders from non-elite families, as well as a few professionals and people in commercial employment who - by the 1980s - had risen to relatively high positions as travelling representatives and agents. These were

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<sup>6</sup> Many emigrated from the district and settled elsewhere: the wealthiest woman in the Qacha's Nek village where I worked in the mid 1970s was the widow of a university-educated teacher in Lesotho who was of a farm-owning Matatiele family.

the people who had started building modern brick and mortar houses in settlements such as St Paul's and Maluti (both in Ramohlakoana's location), and in Khoapa's location right alongside the Transkei's border with Natal and the road into Matatiele town.<sup>7</sup> Some of them had invested in small petrol generators both to electrify their homes and to drive pumps on privately sunk boreholes on their sites. They were also the owners of private motor vehicles.

Another important indicator of wealth in this period was the ability to lease and work one of the farms in the Ongeluksnek area. After these had been expropriated in 1978, they were left in the care of the South African Development Trust (SADT, previously described as SANT) pending their transfer to the Transkei government from 1983 onwards. During this time they were made available for lease on a year-by-year basis and conditional on their being worked in a productive manner which did not threaten their fertility or cause erosion on the land (interviews Philip Hechter, Jun/Jul 1982, Matatiele). Many of those who managed to obtain such leases were traders in Matatiele and Mount Fletcher, and for some they provided extended pastures for large herds and flocks for which they had previously had to lease pasturage from owners of freehold farms.<sup>8</sup>

The fact that it was only people such as traders and bureaucrats, with significant non-farming sources of income, who managed to maintain leases on the Ongeluksnek farms reflects the importance of non-agriculturally generated sources of cash for almost all agricultural enterprises in South Africa. For larger-scale white commercial farmers this is provided through institutional subsidies, allowances and tax rebates, and reduced interest rates. For African small-scale agriculturalists resident on location-type land, however, these subsidies have to be self-generated. In the case of people in Matatiele - as for those of many other areas in the southern African periphery - these came primarily from labour

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<sup>7</sup> Khoapa's also provided weekly accommodation for workers in Matatiele town who commuted the 7km stretch between the two - often on foot. This was necessary because the town's African township was minuscule.

<sup>8</sup> Many of these leases were terminated in 1983, after the bulk of these farms were transferred to Transkei government control (Proclamation R141-1983). Indications in 1984 were that 10-year leases were to be issued to Umtata-based bureaucrats and other public figures.

migrants' remittances and pensions. This is the reason that I argue that the vast majority of such people are part and parcel of the broader regional working class, and why I see micro-level differences in wealth as poor indicators of processes of class formation which can be extrapolated to the wider region.

The vast majority of the district's population, as implied above, were by no means affluent. As in all the bantustans (Simkins, 1984; Wilson and Ramphele, 1989), most people in Matatiele's rural locations lived in circumstances of greater or lesser poverty, their primary means of income being either from direct or indirect access to wages earned by absent labour migrants employed in the industrial heartlands of the country, or from pensions. I now turn to the examine the two localities where I concentrated my field-research in order to begin to understand the determinants of micro-level wealth differences.

As indicated in chapter 1, my most intensive research was conducted in the village of Mabua. My primary research method while living there was participant observation. This was complemented by various detailed in-depth interviews and a survey of residents of a randomly selected sample of residential sites in the village, as well as by further structured interviews with householders from a further 'strategic' sample, otherwise described as a combined 'opportunistic' and 'judgemental' sample (cf. Honigman: 1970; also see chapter 8).

I also lived on the farm 'Harry Ebden' for a period of six weeks in 1983. Given the limited time-period spent there I was more reliant on interviews than on observation as a means of generating data, and I concentrated primarily on attempting to gain some idea of the backgrounds and immediate past histories of families living on the farm which was a steadily growing area of dense ('squatter') settlement.

### Mabua

Mabua was one of six wards created in Tsita's location when a betterment plan was implemented there in the 1970s. The location

was named for Tsita Moshesh, one of Moshoeshoe's junior sons who supported the colonial forces during the Gun War of 1880-1. With his brother George Tlali Moshesh and others, he was rewarded by a grant of land in Matatiele district (see chapter 3). The location which he and his followers settled lies along the upper reaches of the Kenigha River, stretching in a narrow band of land from its source on the escarpment along its southern bank for about 25km. (see map 5 and cf. chapter 1).

The total land area of Tsita's location is 4 398 hectares, of which 728 hectares (16,6%) comprise the Mabua ward. Since the implementation of betterment in 1977, the total land area of the location, and of the ward, has been divided as follows:

**Table 5.1 Land-use distribution: Tsita Moshesh location and Mabua ward**

	Tsita Moshesh location		Mabua ward	
	hectares	%	hectares	%
Residential	364	8,3	68	9,3
Grazing camps	2 213	50,3	364	50,0
Communal grazing	949	21,6	154	21,2
Arable	648	14,7	104	14,3
'Waste'	220	5,0	38	5,2
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>4 398</b>	<b>99,9</b>	<b>728</b>	<b>100,0</b>

Source: Plan AF 2925/68, DAF-UTA

### Betterment

When a betterment plan was first mooted for the location in 1952 it was unanimously rejected by the headman, his councillors and the people of the location (minutes of meeting at Tsita's, 7 Mar 1952 in file A5/1-012(17), DAF-UTA). Twenty years later, the magistrate, still explicitly concerned with 'rehabilitation', was able to report that "the residents of [Tsita's] area request that their area be planned". He thus asked that "the necessary steps [be taken] for the introduction of a soil conservation scheme" (Magistrate Matatiele to Agricultural Officer, Matatiele 17 Oct 1972, in file A5/1-012(17) DAF-Maluti). A plan was duly drawn up in 1974 and fully implemented by 1977 (Soil Conservation Scheme: Tsita Moshesh

Administrative Area in file A5/1-012(17) DAF-Maluti).<sup>9</sup> As spelled out in chapter 3, this involved the removal of 28% of the location's 567 homesteads from their old sites in what now became grazing camps, and their relocation in one of the six newly demarcated residential areas. It also meant the demarcation of a fixed number of two hectare arable allotments which were allocated to the 324 householders who had already held some arable land before implementation of the plan. The remaining 243 households in the location (43%) were thus left landless. When I conducted a sample survey among 30 of Mabua's 174 households in 1982, I found that 11 (37%) had no fields because they had not been allocated any.

The implication of fixing the total number of arable allotments in this way was that it significantly reduced the chances of being allocated a field for households which had not yet acquired an arable allotment before the plan was implemented. Previously it had been in the headman's power to demarcate new fields, or to authorise the subdivision of an extant landholding for such people. This was why many residents' arable landholdings were scattered in small parcels of land in various parts of the location. With the implementation of betterment, however, this prerogative was lost to the headman, and aspirant landholders now had to wait to inherit a field or be allocated one which had been abandoned by a land-holder.

The plan thus introduced a new situation where many householders could expect to remain landless permanently. There was no longer the opportunity for them to gain land rights through the patronage of the headman, as had clearly been possible previously, or through their 'investing' cash or cattle in such a way that they would be allocated fields (cf. chapter 7). By the time of the 1974 survey report on the plan for Tsita Moshesh location, there were 243 landless households in the location as a whole. Of these, all but 11 held no livestock at all (Soil Conservation Scheme: Tsita Moshesh Administrative Area in file A5/1-012(17), DAF-Maluti).<sup>10</sup> This

<sup>9</sup> In recent years the term location has been superseded in officialese by the phrase administrative area (AA). Following popular usage in the district, I continue to use the term 'location' throughout this thesis.

<sup>10</sup> I am, however, somewhat dubious of the accuracy of this facet of the planning report which may have been accounting only for herds of large stock and ignoring flocks of sheep and goats.

correspondence between lack of stock and landlessness suggests that those households which up till then had had fluid resources had managed to invest them in order to obtain arable allocations, while those lacking such resources had failed to become landholders. Now, even if they accumulated such resources, there was little chance they would obtain fields.

This was indicated in 1982, when I conducted my first sample survey in Mabua. More than a third of the landless households did have some livestock. But - as a result of the new restrictions on land allocation procedures brought about by betterment - they were now not readily able to obtain fields. The nature of intra-village differentiation was thus significantly altered from what it had been before betterment: that intervention helped noticeably to rigidify the extent and nature of material differentiation within the village.

Implementation of betterment did bring with it some positive features nonetheless. In common with other betterment plans implemented during this period (see chapter 3), Tsita's plan made no provision for stock-culling even though the planning report did include an overall stock-carrying capacity of 1,7 hectares per cattle unit and a set of figures reflecting the ideal stock-rate for each ward in the location (Plan AF 2925/68, DAF-UTA). Acceptance of the plan also meant a guarantee of continued access to mountain grazing on Trust farms along the Berg for the location's residents. In addition it ensured their right to harvest firewood from a forest on one such farm across the Kenigha - a right which people in Mabua were readily able to exercise because of their closer proximity to the forest than that of residents of any of Tsita's other wards.

Mabua ward's residential area was formed around the nucleus of a number of existing homesteads, a general dealer's store and a café-bakery alongside a minor road. This road provided access from the main east-west artery in the district's western portion for residents of Madlangala's location situated north of the Kenigha (see map 4). A bus service along the road operated out of Mabua in 1982, although it had broken down by 1984.

Once a week a mobile clinic, run by a private practice of doctors in Matatiele town, worked out of a homestead at the roadside. It was attended by people from Mabua and from other nearby villages, including those in Madlangala's and some in Diaho's locations. Only once during my various stays in the village did a mobile clinic of the Transkei's Department of Health visit the village, with a nurse in attendance. Once every second month, officials from Matatiele attended at the general dealer's store to pay pensions, in the company of the location headman. And once a year general tax payments were similarly received there. The nearest police posts were at Maluti administrative centre and close to the border post at Ongeluk's Nek. There was another border post at Qacha's Nek.

The nearest primary school, attended by most of Mabua's school-going children, was in neighbouring Thotaneng ward to the west of Mabua, about a 20 to 30 minute walk away. Some went a little further to an old Catholic mission school at St. Andrew's in the next village eastwards, while a few were at school in Madlangala's location. Children who went on to secondary schooling were obliged to board away from home at schools elsewhere in the district (cf. Reitstein, 1983).

In 1982, when I first started fieldwork in Mabua, the settlement comprised 174 residential sites, the number rising to 179 by the time I left the area late in 1984. From the profile of my random sample in tables 5.2 and 5.3 below one can extrapolate the total village population and get some indication of the extent of absenteeism in that population.

Table 5.2 Random sample population profile: Mabua 1982; 1984

	1982	1984
No. of sites in random sample	30	30
<i>de jure</i> population of sample	221	249
<i>de jure</i> population per sampled site	7,37	8,30
<i>de facto</i> population in sample	170	182
<i>de facto</i> population per sampled site	5,67	6,07
absentee population in sample	51	67
absentee population per sample site	1,70	2,23
No. of wage earners in sample	41	52
Wage earners per sampled site	1,37	1,73
Wage earners per capita of sampled pop.	0,18	0,21
No. of pensioners in sample	7	7

Extrapolating from these figures I estimate the village population in 1982 to have been in the region of 1 280 people, of whom about 23% (q294) were absent either at work or for other reasons. By 1984, the absentee rate had risen to nearly 27% (q401 individuals) and the estimated village population to 1 486 persons.

By far the majority of absentees in both sample censuses were people of working age: 48 (47%) out of 102 in 1982, and fully half (62) of the total *de jure* sample population of 124 aged 16 to 65 in 1984. In both years most of these absentees were wage-earning men, but, as table 5.3 shows, the number of female labour-migrants in the sample more than doubled between 1982 and 1984, while the number of male labour-migrants remained constant - despite an increase in the number of working-age men recorded as absentees. Only a very small number of children in the sample population were recorded as absentees: 3 out of 110 and 5 out of 112 in 1982 and 1984 respectively.

Table 5.3 Random sample absentees and migration rates, by gender and age: Mabua 1982; 1984

	1982			1984		
	m	f	tot	m	f	tot
<i>de jure</i> sample population	100	121	221	111	138	249
<i>de facto</i> sample population	65	105	170	69	113	182
No. of absentees, sample pop.	35	16	51	42	25	67
Absentee (mig) rate (%)	35,0	13,2	23,1	37,8	18,1	26,9
No. absent migrant labourers	34	7	41	34	15	49
Labour migration rate (%)	34,0	5,8	18,6	30,6	10,9	19,7

#### Material differentiation in Mabua

Just as the district as a whole had a few noticeably wealthy members of its population, so did the store-keeper and the café-bakery owner in Mabua stand out from the rest of the village population. The store-owner was the son of an ex-farmworker who had managed to accumulate a very large flock of sheep and a number of cattle and horses before coming into the area to look for grazing. This he found on a neighbouring freehold farm, 'Freemantle', whose owner was willing to lease out rights to pasture animals. The store-owner himself settled at Tsita's, and by the late 1950s had

begun converting his inherited wealth into trading-store stock. He still maintained a close interest in agriculture, however, and represented himself as a farmer rather than a trader - the store, he said, was his wife's enterprise. According to their oldest son, its annual turnover in 1981 was R35 000. In addition to their truck, he owned a tractor which was used to work land he had leased from a nearby freeholder on the farm 'Glen Alfred West' (see chapter 6). the tractor was also hired out for ploughing in the location. When the Ongeluksnek farms became available in the early 1980s he signed a lease for one of them and was able to extend the land he had under cultivation. He was also a senior lay-preacher in a local independent church, and had constructed a church-building on the site immediately adjoining his house and store.

The café-bakery was owned by a junior descendant of one of the early freehold landowners in the district. He had established it in the 1960s in order to provide his wife - initially a teacher - with a means of generating income from home, while he continued his career as an officer in the Transkei Department of Agriculture and Forestry. He ran two tractors as well as two motor vehicles, and provided milling services to villagers wishing to grind their own grain mechanically. After he had retired in 1982, he also invested in a share in a bottle store elsewhere in the district.

The majority of the village population was not in this league, however. The better-off among them were those with a reliable source of remitted wage-income which they could use both for subsistence purposes and to invest in livestock and arable agriculture. The poorest were those with neither regular cash income nor any local resources (cf. Spiegel, 1982; 1986b; Sharp and Spiegel, 1985; forthcoming). Frequently, as has been shown to be the case elsewhere, the poorest households were those headed by widowed or deserted women who had no regular source of remittances from a male migrant.

The extent of villagers' dependence on migrants' remittances is reflected in the fact that my sample survey of 30 residential sites in 1982 showed that there was a mean of 1,37 wage-earners per site (see table 5.2). By 1984, when I conducted a follow-up survey with

the same sample, not one of the sampled site-populations lacked a cash income source from either a wage or a pension, and the average number of wage-earners per homestead had risen to 1,73.<sup>11</sup> This change was attributable to the fact that a number of women - most of them young - had proceeded to the 'common' (white) areas and found wage-employment (see tables 5.2 and 5.3). By and large these were poorly paid jobs in domestic service or with township retailers, and the women were not able to remit much at all. By 1984, the total labour migrancy rate for the sample was close to 20%. If extrapolated to the whole population this means that about 290 people in the estimated village population of 1 485 for 1984 were labour migrants.<sup>12</sup>

Despite the sample survey findings, however, a number of village households had neither a wage-earner nor a pensioner among their members. As elsewhere in the periphery, these households constituted the poorest stratum of the village household population, commonly headed by women (cf. Murray, 1979b; 1981: 160ff.; Spiegel, 1984; Sharp and Spiegel, forthcoming). They were dependent on various kinds of social relationships with other more fortunate households to maintain themselves. I look at some of these relationships in later chapters. Here I am concerned with the determinants of the social differentiation in the village which in turn gave rise to the need for such relationships. The extent of is differentiation is reflected in the distribution of wage-earners and pensioners in stock- and land-holding households, which is presented in tables 5.4 and 5.5 below. These sample tabulations corroborate findings from other research sites in the periphery that households possessing access to land and holding livestock are more likely to be those with a regular source of income - either from wages or pensions, or from both.

<sup>11</sup> In 1982, three of the sampled sites included neither a wage-earning member nor a pensioner. By 1984 at least one member of each of these households had managed to find wage-employment. There were no newly registered pensioners in the 1984 sample.

<sup>12</sup> This 1984 population figure is extrapolated from the sample survey data, as is the figure of 1 280 given above for 1982. The apparent population growth rate of about 7.7% p.a. is probably a distortion resulting from the small sample size, and the fact that sampling was of residential sites rather than households: in some cases small caretaker households in 1982 were replaced in 1984 by larger households whose numbers inflated the aggregates.

**Table 5.4** Distribution of wage-earners and pensioners by size of households' livestock holdings: random sample Mabua 1982; 1984

Year	No. of wage-earners/pensioners per site						Totals	
	0		1		2+		1982	1984
	1982	1984	1982	1984	1982	1984		
No. of units								
0-2	2	-	8	9	4	7	14	16
3-10	1	-	4	4	6	5	11	9
11+	-	-	4	4	1	1	5	5
Totals	3	-	16	17	11	13	30	30

Note unit = livestock unit = 1 bovine, equine or 5 small stock.

**Table 5.5** Distribution of wage-earners and pensioners by number of households' fields: random sample Mabua 1982; 1984

Year	No. of wage-earners/pensioners per site						Totals	
	0		1		2+		1982	1984
	1982	1984	1982	1984	1982	1984		
No. of fields								
0	1	-	6	6	4	5	11	11
1	2	-	9	9	7	8	18	17
2	-	-	1	2	-	-	1	2
Totals	3	-	16	17	11	13	30	30

#### Determinants of differentiation in Mabua

While betterment tended to ossify village differentiation as regards access to arable land, it was not the only determining factor for village-level wealth diversities. Far more important in the period up to and including the 1970s was the timing of settlement in the location. Those who had long been settled in the area had advantages vis à vis both local resources and access to the wage-labour market. This was primarily because they had had the time to develop complex local social networks through which they were able both to find employment and to ensure their rights to village resources. By contrast, more recent immigrants, particularly those who had spent long periods on farms, were significantly disadvantaged by their lack of such a social resource-base. As households with rather limited resources when betterment was implemented, their experience of the intervention was rather

more negative than it was for the better-established households. Households headed by women were similarly severely affected by betterment, particularly those forced to relocate their homesteads within the location, many of whom lacked the resources to build adequate new homes.

As we have seen, the location was granted for occupation by Tsita Moshesh and his followers who settled there in the 1880s. They were soon joined by various other immigrants, many of whom came from across the Berg in south-eastern Lesotho. The area had previously been part of Nehemiah's and then Makoae's territory (see chapter 3, map 2) and many of the latter's subjects had fled with him into Qacha's Nek at the time of the Gun War. Although the more prominent among them were unable to return, it seems that many ordinary folk did so, filtering into the area over many years. Moreover, they were only part of the steady influx of immigrants into the location which, like many others in Matatiele, was nowhere near as densely populated as neighbouring areas in Herschel and Qacha's Nek. For immigrants from the latter area, there was the extra advantage of being within the boundaries of first the Union, and then the Republic of South Africa from whence labour migration was easier - particularly from the 1950s onwards - than it was from the Basutoland Protectorate (Spiegel, 1979: 21-2).

Many of these immigrants first spent some time on white-owned farms, and the timing of their decision to settle in Mabua, as well as the extent of their stock-holdings when they did so, was crucial in their ability to secure their resource bases in the area. The other even more important criterion for their ability to insert themselves successfully into village society was the extent of their involvement in the migrant-labour market. For most longer-settled residents, migrant labour was an established part of the ordinary routine, and the prime means of generating an income to support a household's members. Immigrant households with one or more members already well-established as labour migrants were much more readily able to become part of this rhythm than were those who came to the location as a first step towards entering the migrant-labour market. Not only did the latter struggle to find relatively secure and well-paying jobs, but their initial lack of regular cash income meant

that they were less rapidly able to create a secure resource base and social network in the village.

There were also those who settled in the location when their menfolk were either past their wage-labouring days, or had already died, and the younger generation was not yet ready to enter wage-labour. For these people, most of them women without husbands, insertion into village life depended upon their being able - at least at first - to rely on kin or affines in the area for support. And even when they did manage to establish their own separate households they were significantly disadvantaged relative to others in similar circumstances. Similarly disadvantaged were the households of older widows obliged to relocate when betterment was implemented, and for whom the meagre amounts paid out in hut-compensation were totally inadequate for building new homes on the sites to which they had had to remove.

#### Selected case studies from Mabua

I now present a series of case studies as a means of 'zooming in' from the more general discussion thus far to examine how broader processes impact at the micro-level. My intention is to illustrate the relationship between various types of population movement and the diversity in present wealth levels in Mabua. I have thus selected cases which most clearly exemplify an implicit set of typical personal and household trajectories which illustrate that relationship. While in the field I recorded other cases, the data from which indicate that the examples I have chosen to present are representative rather than merely 'apt illustrations'. They are, nonetheless, the most clearly illustrative I could find in my field notes. All are drawn from my extended sample of both randomly and strategically selected households in Mabua.

The sequence in which the cases are presented is intended to indicate the importance of long-term residence in the location and village for ensuring access to local resources. I start by demonstrating how long-standing residents are relatively secure and well-placed materially, and end by showing how more recent arrivals are less well-off, but not so severely disadvantaged as woman-headed

households. I thus begin with a case of long-standing Tsita's residents who have established themselves well both in the labour market and in the local village arena. I then use various cases to show that the more recent immigration has been, the greater the level of both local and labour-market insecurity. I conclude by turning to a set of three cases about women-headed households. These show how relatively disadvantaged such households are in general, and how much more detrimentally population relocation impacts on woman-headed households than it does on those headed by men.

I have ordered the cases to reflect a decrease in household wealth, security and extent of influence in local affairs. For this reason, all the cases of woman-headed households come after those dealing with households headed by men. While some immigrant households headed by men were significantly disadvantaged relative to others of longer standing, they were notably better-off, at least in the short run, than those headed by women, even those with long-standing links in the village community.

#### Case 5.1 An old settled family

MM was born in 1934 into one of Tsita's oldest and wealthiest families whose members had long played a prominent role in location affairs. His father had had three wives who bore him eleven children. MM was of the third house, his mother the daughter of one of the councillors of the District Chief in Qacha's Nek, Lesotho.

After completing eight years of schooling, MM migrated to find work on the Reef during the 1950s. He subsequently enlisted with the SA Police, serving in the Free State for fifteen years. For a while his wife, also born in Tsita's, lived with him there, giving birth to one of their four children in Parys. During this time they did not build a homestead of their own and returned, instead, to stay in MM's wealthy natal home on their occasional visits to the location. Indeed, for a time it seemed that they might become permanent townspeople, and dispose of their livestock in Tsita's in favour of urban investments.

But betterment planning in the 1970s threatened MM's natal homestead which was situated in an area due to be demarcated as a grazing camp. Realising the extent to which he relied on his rural resource base, and seeing it now threatened, he determined to build a large and relatively modern home on a site he was allocated in Mabua. Some time after having done

this he resigned from the police and returned to settle in the village where he was soon appointed as the local dipping inspector responsible for Tsita's and two neighbouring locations. Fields which his father had obtained for MM's mother's house were regarded as MM's, and with betterment he had this right confirmed and was allocated an allotment in the arable area of the ward. By the 1980s when I was in the field, MM was a respected man in the local environment. He held a powerful and relatively well-paying job, and he had a herd comprising more than 40 livestock units.<sup>13</sup> Two of his sons were in reliable wage jobs on the mines and one had recently married the daughter of another prominent and wealthy member of the location's community who also had a long family history of residence in the area.

Among the other well-established residents in Mabua were a number of immigrants who had settled there sufficiently long to have established secure networks in the village and location community. Indeed, during the period before about the late 1960s it was quite feasible to insert into local networks and establish a secure home-base with both material and social assets, particularly for those who had come into the location with reasonably large resources. In many cases, moreover, immigrants were able to use existing kinship links with already established residents for this purpose. One example was the village sub-headman who had come into the area during World War II and by 1984 had been in office through the rule of 7 consecutive location headmen, over a period of nearly 30 years.

One notable difference between longer-standing immigrants and residents who were descended from original inhabitants was that, with exceptions such as the store- and café-owners, the former tended to be less well educated and not as securely situated in terms of the wage-labour market, either for themselves or for their own children. But many of them had managed to establish themselves securely in terms of local resources, and in this respect they were indistinguishable from descendants of residents of much longer standing.

<sup>13</sup> I have used the formula used in Lesotho: 1 livestock unit = 1 bovine or equine, or 5 sheep or goats. This differs from that used by the Transkei's agricultural planners who take 6 small stock as equivalent to 1 large stock unit.

### Case 5.2 Immigrants of long-standing

JT was born about 1918 in a village 20km north of Mabua across the Berg in Qacha's Nek, Lesotho. He received no formal education, spending his childhood herding his father's large herds. He also spent some of his youth in Tsita's where he had been sent to live with MM's paternal grandfather (case 5.1) one of whose daughters he subsequently married.<sup>14</sup>

On reaching late adolescence JT began a series of jobs as a labour migrant, first on a mine and then with a construction company on the Reef, and thereafter in construction in Durban and Pietermaritzburg. Every time he returned home to Lesotho, he purchased livestock with his earnings. But he soon found that the animals were not properly cared for in his absence, despite his new wife's presence. He thus abandoned his migrant career in favour of a job herding stock on a farm in the mountain reaches of the Ongeluksnek belt, where he was able to run his own animals with the farmer's. Both he and his wife and child went to live there: he was paid in kind - 6 goats per year - while his wife worked as a domestic for payment in cash and rations. They remained there for five years, attempting to return to Lesotho when his flock had grown to 50 small stock and the farmer would no longer allow them all to remain on the farm's pastures. But "when I arrived at the gate they said I had too many animals to be allowed to bring them into Lesotho". This predicament decided JT to begin to negotiate a site in Tsita's near to where he was now forced to leave his animals with his in-laws.

For the next few years he continued his work as a herder on the Ongeluksnek farm, during which time he managed to begin building his homestead on a site allocated to him in Mabua. By returning to the location regularly he managed also to develop his local social relationships: in particular, by leaving animals in the care of local men he established close cooperative links which were to stand him in good stead in later years. Moreover, he was soon allocated arable land.

When, after some years, he found his absence was again working to the detriment of his stock, he left his farm-labour job and settled permanently at his Mabua home. After a few more years, he became village sub-headman.

Meanwhile, his only son had begun a career as a labour migrant to the Durban-Pinetown complex, and had settled in Hammarsdale from whence he commuted to work. Once he married, he too was granted arable land, although his wife and children remained in JT's now extended household. When betterment was implemented they managed to acquire two adjacent sites which they used as if they were one. The additional land provided JT with an extra area to work and from which to harvest food for the son's growing family, and, in 1982, he retained a herd of

<sup>14</sup> Sending children from one household to another was common practice, and in this case it continued across the border into the 1980s - see ch 8.

cattle and small stock (15 stock units) both of which were able to generate small amounts of local income to supplement the remittances sent home by his son.

1983, however, saw their security threatened by the deepening economic recession and JT's son first being placed on short time in his job with a textile factory, and then losing it when the workers were locked out during a strike. Having had minimal education and limited contacts in town, the son had never managed to find a really secure job which he felt was worth remaining in. For a time, their ability to continue paying off various items of household furniture was undermined, and JT, his aging wife and his daughter-in-law seemed to be facing a difficult period. But the son managed to find occasional work for a while, and by 1984, he was again in regular employment, this time as a labourer in a timber company. Moreover, his own oldest son was nearing the age when he too would enter the labour market, although like his father and grandfather before him he had had minimal education and was not likely to find work easily.

JT and his family had been able to secure themselves in Mabua for a number of reasons. They had arrived at a time when the location could still take in immigrants without suffering extreme overcrowding, and they had come with sufficient resources to be able invest some immediately in developing social relationships: JT's livestock were an important means through which this was done (cf. Ferguson, 1985). Moreover, JT's affinal links into a powerful location family opened up social opportunities not available to all immigrants - even those of that early period. And, in addition, despite the time they had spent working on the Ongeluksnek farm, they had always seen that as a temporary sojourn before returning to settle in an area of communal type tenure, such as existed in Lesotho and in the locations of Matatiele.

Others of JT's generation, such as NH's and PK's parents (cases 5.3 and 5.4) had gone to live and work on farms anticipating that they would spend their whole lives there, and would have no need to relocate in a location or similar type of area, and had thus made little provision for eventual settlement in such an area. Many found, however, that their sons were unwilling to remain as farmworkers. On gaining adulthood they entered the migrant labour market and were soon earning far better on the mines than they could do on the farms. When the parents became too old to continue

working, they were forced to leave the farms, and many found their options to be limited.

Those who had stock often elected to become tenants on African freehold farms, where they were able to run their animals for an annual rental, rather than settle in a relatively overcrowded location where the commonage was overgrazed. But they did not bargain for the rapidity with which their stocks would be depleted as a result of such tenancy: not being wage-workers meant that they were no longer generating any income and they were soon drawing on their hard-earned livestock assets to sustain themselves. A number therefore eventually turned to the locations as a place of refuge, although arriving with depleted stockholdings reduced their ability to negotiate sites and fields there.

The two cases which follow (cases 5.3 and 5.4) both reflect the above general scenario of farm labour followed by a time of tenancy on an African farm and then settlement in a location. Yet there are significant differences between them as regards the success with which they finally established themselves in Mabua, and their relative wealth levels in the early 1980s. These can be attributed to the quite different ways in which the younger generation engaged in the wage-labour market. In the first (case 5.3), the son, then in his late teens, had left the white-owned farm to become a regular mine-labour migrant; in the second (case 5.4), participation in the migrant-labour market began only after the family had settled in Tsita's location and when the son was already well into his adulthood. The result, as reflected in the 1980s, was that members of the first of these two households were significantly better-established than those in the second, in terms of both local resources and access to and involvement in the migrant wage-labour market.

### **Case 5.3 Farmboy turned migrant makes good**

NH was born in 1936 in his mother's natal village in southern Lesotho. His father, born in Herschel, had settled there near his affines soon after having married. When NH was 3 years old, they all moved to work and live on an Ongeluksnek farm where they remained for twenty years. NH himself assisted with

herding and, by the time he was 12, he was working as a herdboy on a neighbouring farm. As a result, he never went to school.

By age 18 NH had been recruited for work on a coal mine. When his first contract ended and he returned to the district, he found his father had left the farm and was hoping to settle in a location where a classificatory father's brother resided. But their lack of material resources led to the failure of their application for a site, and the parents returned to the farm while NH was recruited again - this time for the gold mines, where he continued to return for a period of about 20 years. During this time he enrolled in night-school, ensuring that he was literate before he retired from labour migrancy. By the time that he was married in 1961 - to a woman from a farm in the east of the district, near Cedarville - his parents had left the farm where he had grown up, and had settled as labour tenants on an African-owned farm. But NH disapproved of their lack of security there while he continued to command what he saw as a respectable wage with which to support them, and he applied for and, in 1964, was granted a site in Mabua where he built a home for himself and his parents.

By the mid-1970s NH and his younger brother were both regular mine-migrants, remitting to their wives and family in Mabua. Moreover, NH had managed to acquire rights to a relatively large arable allotment which he then divided, giving his brother a portion. As a result, each of them was granted a field at the time of betterment. In addition, they were slowly building a livestock holding, which by 1982 amounted to 28 units. By the early 1980s, NH's eldest son was also employed on the mines and had started remitting.

NH had long been aware of the importance of developing a network with local powerholders and he elected, on his retirement, to ally himself with the most powerful local institution, the Transkei police for whom he became a village informer.<sup>15</sup> He also became chairman of the local branch of the ruling Transkei National Independence Party (TNIP) and made a play for the sub-headmanship, mustering enough support to be elected as the sub-headman's deputy - despite his extreme unpopularity among some groups in the village. For a time occupation of these offices helped him to ensure his material security, but his overzealous informing activities resulted in his being lynched early in 1984 (see case 7.1 below).

#### Case 5.4 Tenancy eats up the cattle

PK was born in Quthing, Lesotho, in 1931 but went with his parents to live on a farm near Maclear in 1943. Like JT (case 5.2) PK's father was paid primarily in livestock which he was entitled to run on the farm's pastures. The rations they received, and the small cash amounts paid to PK's mother for her work in the farmer's home, covered their day-to-day

<sup>15</sup> I deal with the different power structures in the district in chapter 7.

expenses. As PK and his older brothers grew up they too joined the farm labour force, providing their father with further livestock to add to the family holdings. By the mid-1950s when the parents and young PK left the farm to become tenants on an African-owned farm in Matatiele, they had accumulated 28 cattle, 150 sheep and 6 equines (64 units).

The conditions of tenancy were, however, extremely demanding. Not only did they have to pay R160 pa to run their stock, but they were expected to provide labour service on the farmer's land, using their own draught power and implements. In six years there they saw their holdings whittled down to 5 cattle and 20 sheep. At this point PK decided to move to a location, and managed to gain rights in Mabua because that was his wife's natal home. But the livestock were soon taken over by his brothers with whom his mother and ailing father went to live: they had by then settled in Maclear's African township and they sold the cattle and "used the money to live [maintain themselves] there".

PK, already in his mid 30s, found he now had to enter the migrant-labour market for the first time. With no experience and few contacts he ended up a labourer on a western Cape fruit farm (see example of remittances, ch 4) and his household never acquired arable land. Not having had the resources to effect an allocation soon after they first arrived - "the chief did not give me one ... I was away at work" - meant that when betterment was implemented they were recorded as landless and thus not entitled to an arable allotment. They had, nonetheless managed slowly to invest some of PK's remittances in a small but growing herd, including some animals received as part of their older daughters' bridewealth. But as PK's sons were still quite young he was obliged to continue as the sole wage-earner for quite a time to come.

The above four cases together reflect the relative advantage which having been long-settled in the location brought with it, and the problems resulting from a sojourn as tenants on an African freehold farm before settling in the village. But, as pointed out above, immigrant households with active wage-earning men among their members were not as disadvantaged as woman-headed households without any remitting men resident in them. This having been said, we must also recognise that such woman-headed households were not all equally poorly-off: again, length of residence, depth of social networks, and experience of betterment were important factors of differentiation, as the next three case studies show.

They also indicate that we should not discard the developmental cycle idea as a prism through which to view individual household histories, despite our having questioned its usefulness as a means

of finding homogeneity in a highly differentiated situation. Circumstances in all three of the following cases would have been very different had the households been at a different phase of their respective developmental cycles at the time of my research. This was particularly significant for cases 5.6 and 5.7 where their experience, respectively, of immigration into the village and betterment relocation would have been quite different had it occurred before the death of their respective husbands, and at an earlier phase in their own household's developmental cycle when they could still expect to engage in wage-labour.

The cases that follow are also ordered in terms of decreasing household wealth, security and local influence as reflected in their circumstances during 1982-4. As regards cases 5.5 and 5.6, the order also reflects the relative disadvantages of immigration into the village, particularly at a point when the immigrant family had no wage-earner on whom they could reliably depend. Comparison of case 5.5 with 5.1, and of case 5.6 with 5.3 and 5.4 demonstrates how much more disadvantaged women-headed households were than those headed by men in otherwise similar circumstances.

#### **Case 5.5 An old established family in decline**

Having been born in 1927, MKM was not yet eligible for a pension. She had been widowed in 1982 after her husband, a close kinsman of the location headman, had been ill for five years. She herself was of a long-settled local family. During her husband's illness, they had disposed of all their livestock to provide for their maintenance and his medical treatment. This had been necessary because their only son had absconded to the Reef and provided them with no support.

When they were first married, MKM and her husband had immediately been allocated a large arable field which entitled them to a standard allotment at the time of betterment. In the early 1980s MKM was still able to obtain some crops from the field through having it worked for her by her brother with whom she established a sharecropping agreement.

In addition, she managed, for a time, to foster three children whose guardians were away at work on the Reef and whose small remittances for their upkeep (see case 8.6) provided her with a cash income which she could invest in beer ingredients so as to generate a little income for herself before spending the money on necessities for the children. While she had little need to depend heavily on her local kin

and other social networks, they remained available in times of crisis.

MKM's length of residence in the area had provided her with arable rights and a fairly dense network of relationships, both of which provided her with a means of some security, despite the decline in her household's fortunes with the illness and then death of her husband. Had she been forced to relocate at this point, however, she would have experienced the kinds of deprivation that we see in the next two cases.

#### Case 5.6 Farm to location in the declining phase

MGM was born on a farm in Umzimkulu in 1919, and married a man from Sibi's location in Matatiele. They met after he had become a farmworker near Swartberg in Mount Currie. Their seven children were all born on the farm, and three died there as young children. They remained on the farm for nearly thirty years, MGM's husband working with the dairy herd, while she did seasonal weeding in the fields and was also occasionally called to work in the farmer's garden. To all intents and purposes, they saw themselves as permanent farm labourers and residents.

Their security was overturned in the late 1960s, however, when MGM's husband fell ill and was no longer able to work. Although MGM insisted that they were not forced to leave the farm, she and her husband felt insecure under these circumstances, and they moved to live temporarily with her father's brother who worked on another farm nearby. Her husband died there.

By this point two of their daughters were married to men from Tsita's, and MGM decided to move in with one of them. Not having sons who were of an age to start going out into the labour market themselves, she was obliged to rely upon her son-in-law's income-generating ability, with concomitant pressure on the marriage. By the time the marriage had begun to falter, however, her first son had begun work on the mines. And when her daughter left her husband, some years after betterment had been implemented, MGM managed to obtain a residential site near her other daughter's in-laws in Mabua and built a small mud hut there. But she had neither livestock nor arable land - "since we arrived here we were not given any fields because they say we are people who have just come here; we are not people of this place".

Despite applying for a pension in 1982, she was still not receiving one late in 1984. She was thus dependent on her children. The daughter with whom she had lived and whose marriage had ended had first taken a job in the Cedarville hotel and then - by 1984 - had moved on to become a domestic worker on a farm near where she had grown up. She sent small

amounts of her earnings home to support her young son whom she had left with MGM. And MGM's two sons, both now mine-migrants, helped when they could spare odd amounts although both were trying to establish their own households in the village.

Cases 5.6 and 5.7 both exemplify the vulnerability of households in the declining phase of their domestic development, particularly once the male earner has died and if there is no son to take over that role. I have previously pointed to the vulnerability of widowhood for women who have long depended on a regular source of income from a wage-remitting migrant husband (Spiegel, 1984: 13ff). Not only does their source of income dry up, but they find themselves having increasingly to eat into whatever material resources they have at their disposal. Moreover, a time comes when those resources are completely depleted, and they are forced to throw themselves on the mercy of others. Where this coincides with forced relocation - as in the case of MTK (case 5.7) - the process of resource depletion is significantly accelerated.

#### Case 5.7 Betterment strikes an old, poor household

MTK was born in 1928 in a location neighbouring Tsita's where she subsequently settled after being married to a local man. He died in 1974, just as agreement had been reached that the location would be planned, and just before the actual implementation of betterment.

Together they had built their homestead in Ha Thupa, an area of previously residential settlement which was cleared at the time of betterment. They had also had a field, and MTK's husband managed to invest some of his earnings as a rather erratic mine-migrant in a small number of animals. MTK bore 14 children, of whom only two were still alive in the early 1980s, the rest having died as infants.

The coincidence of her husband's death with the start of the betterment planning had particularly serious repercussions for MTK. After his death she had rapidly disposed of their few animals in order to support herself and her two young children, and had had to allow others to work her field for her. Although this was on a sharecropping basis, her share-partners increasingly took advantage of her lack of resources, her state of mourning and her own growing ill-health. Soon it seemed as if they were treating the field virtually as their own.

With the implementation of betterment, she had both to relocate and to fight to retain her long-standing arable rights. Indeed, when I first interviewed her in 1982, she complained that she had no field. By the time of my second

visit in 1984, however, she had managed to regain her rights to a portion of what had been her land and had turned it with the ploughing-team cared for by her son - a herder in another village household where he earned R6 a month paid directly to his mother. This was the first time in years that she hoped to harvest any crop of her own, as her lack of resources had meant that her residential site had remained unfenced and could not be used as a vegetable garden. The meagre R42 compensation paid for the loss of her original homestead of three houses was insufficient even to build one new rondavel.

During 1984 she also negotiated to exchange the one large ox she had received as part of her daughter's bridewealth for a young cow. But although the ox had been taken and slaughtered for a political rally in the district, she had not yet received her cow nor any cash payment. Her daughter's marriage was on the rocks, and she could not expect any further income from that source. Indeed, for a time that year her daughter had come to live with her, bringing her two young children, both of whom showed clear signs of malnutrition.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, MTK's own efforts to generate some cash by working in other village homes were hampered by her ill-health. Indeed, she had become almost wholly dependent on handouts from her own two brothers, migrants with homes in her natal village some distance away, to whom she was increasingly frequently turning for help. They were virtually the last resource she had left, at least until her son could enter the migrant-labour market, itself an increasingly difficult and costly process.

Read with the brief descriptions earlier of the store- and cafe-owners, the seven case studies above give some indication of the diversity of wealth levels in the Mabua population. They do not, however, provide any evidence about the very poorest in the village who were not themselves householders, but rather attached themselves temporarily to village households which were prepared to accommodate them for a time. Among them were people such as one old woman, originally from a neighbouring location, most of whose life was now spent cadging both food and accommodation from others in the village. She had neither home nor close relatives in the area, and depended on odd handouts in exchange for occasional labour service fetching water or firewood, washing clothes or helping to plaster walls or smear a floor. Having come into the village destitute, she remained in that state with little promise that her circumstances would ever improve.

<sup>16</sup> I was able to direct the daughter to a social worker in Mafuti who had access to emergency food supplies to assist people in such circumstances.

The case studies above have stressed the importance of relocation and population movement as a determining factor in extant wealth differences in Mabua. The more recent immigration had been to the village, and the fewer the resources brought into the location at the time of settlement, the less well-off households were by the 1980s. Moreover, those households with few resources at the time betterment was implemented, and which were forced to relocate within the location, were most severely disrupted by that intervention, while those with accumulated resources (see case 5.1) were able, in some cases, to take some advantage from the forced move.<sup>17</sup>

Despite betterment's creation of a permanently landless category of the local population, there was little evidence yet of the extent to which this was likely to create the groundwork for local class differentiation. This was because of the very short period which had elapsed between implementation of the betterment plan and the time of my fieldwork. During that time, Mabua's population still resembled that described for various other labour-supplying villages where local resources such as land and livestock were still accessible. Most younger householders had, or still hoped to gain, access to local resources in which they could invest some of their migrant labour earnings. Few of these younger people expressed any concern that they would somehow not be able to combine their wage-earnings with the use of common pastures and some arable land, if not their own then in sharecropping arrangements, in order to generate their subsistence requirements. The cases they saw of struggling households headed by old women were viewed either as those of people past their prime and thus past the zenith phase in their domestic development, or as exceptions where unexpected pressures, such as a husband's early death or poor planning, had forced this condition. For the most part they subscribed to

the paradigm of the successful migrant career [which is] for a man ... to establish his own household and to build up a capital base through the acquisition of land, livestock and equipment, to enable him to retire from migrant labour and to maintain an independent livelihood at home (Murray, 1981: 41).

<sup>17</sup> None benefited to the extent that they gained larger and better fields than before, as Segar (1982: 27ff.) reports having occurred in nearby St Paul's village.

Younger tenants on 'Harry Ebden' farm had similar expectations. Moreover, the evidence I collected there suggests that they were indeed realisable, at least for those who had the resources to be able to enter into sharecropping arrangements with landowners on the farm. Despite the lack of arable rights for the majority of residents on the farm, differentiation on 'Harry Ebden' farm was very similar to that in Mabua, although there was a much smaller proportion of residents close to destitution. This was because immigration and settlement on the farm required expenditure to obtain a site on the farm, closing off this option to the down-and-out. There were, of course, some tenants who had settled earlier whose circumstances had deteriorated in the intervening period, and who were thus very poor. But they were less apparent and common than in Tsita's. An important point of contrast, however, was that immigration onto the farm had been rather different from that into Tsita's and Mabua. Along with a very different form of land tenure, this had resulted in a rather different kind of land distribution on the farm from what prevailed in the location. Nonetheless, many otherwise landless households kept their hand in at arable production there through engaging in sharecropping, while a number ran livestock on the farm's range land: according to the old man responsible for taking spleen smears from cattle which were slaughtered or died on the farm, there were 97 registered cattle-owning households on the farm in 1983.

#### 'Harry Ebden'

'Harry Ebden' was one of the freehold farms purchased by wealthy African immigrants to Matatiele during the first decade of the 20th century (see chapter 3). It was soon settled by both the new owners and a number of labour tenants, descendants of both of whom were still resident on the farm in the 1980s. Following the 1955 implementation of betterment on the adjacent communally-held farms, 'Polygon' and 'Simpson', a number of new tenants came to join those already on 'Harry Ebden' (cf. chapter 3; Spiegel, 1988a). By the early 1980s, the number was growing rapidly following the settlement of many new 'squatter' tenants from a wide variety of different places. Indeed, by mid-1983, when I spent six weeks living and

working on the farm, there were 252 homestead sites situated on the farm's 744 hectares of land, and further sites were being demarcated for new tenants on an almost daily basis (see table 5.1). At that point nearly half the homesteads on the farm had been built by new tenants who had first arrived to build on the farm within the past 13 years.

The farm was one of three situated between the main east-west road artery in the western portion of the district and the lower reaches of the Kenigha River in the district near its confluence with the Mabele (see map 4).<sup>18</sup> It was thus within relatively easy reach of Matatiele town some 13 km away, both by bus and taxi along the road, and by foot across other farm and location land.

Title to the farm was held in two equal shares by descendants and heirs of the first registered African purchasers, Philip and his son Peter Mpiti Khaue, who bought the farm in 1904.<sup>19</sup> Although there was no formal subdivision of the land, by the 1980s both title-holders controlled a specific area of the farm, and new tenants had to be accepted by either one or the other who would then allocate them a site in exchange for a consideration. At that stage this was of the order of a single one-off payment of R130 for an unfenced residential site and rights to allow one's livestock access to the farm's rather depleted pastures and minimal water resources.

I conducted a survey on 'Harry Ebden' in 1983 through which I was able to gather data from 211 of the 252 sites there - the rest of them not having anybody present at the time I visited them who was able to respond. In some cases this was because all their residents were away in the common areas; in others the homes were still unfinished and the new tenants not yet in occupation. Of these 211 homesteads, a total of 137 (65%) had been built in the period 1971 to 1983, and 63 (30%) in the two-and-a-half years January 1981 to June 1983. A breakdown of the places from which the households

<sup>18</sup> The Kenigha flows much further south, marking the Mount Fletcher - Matatiele boundary, and running into Mount Frere district with its confluence with the Mzimvubu just north of Mount Frere town.

<sup>19</sup> Discussion of the details as to how Philip's third son, Peter Mpiti, came to be co-owner and the disputes over rights to the title must await a more comprehensive exegesis on the farms in the area.

surveyed were said to have originated is presented in table 5.6 below.<sup>20</sup>

Table 5.6 Distribution of Harry Ebden households by place of origin

Households of/from:	When homestead built:											
	<1950		1951-60		1961-70		1971-80		1981-83		Totals	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
Tenants' children	18	67%	6	21%	11	61%	22	30%	12	19%	69	33%
Rural locations	7	26%	22	76%	5	28%	36	49%	41	65%	111	53%
White farms/towns	-	-	1	3%	1	6%	9	12%	5	8%	16	8%
Africans' farms	-	-	-	-	1	6%	7	9%	2	3%	10	5%
Not known	2	7%	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	5%	5	2%
TOTAL	27	100%	29	100%	18	101%	74	100%	63	100%	211	100%

Note It is likely that the figure for white farms/towns was actually higher than that recorded above, and that for rural locations lower by the same amount. Our question 'where did you come from before settling here?' was often answered by reference to a location which respondents claimed as 'home' because their parents or grandparents had been born there, although they had themselves lived all their lives on white-owned farms, and had come to settle on 'Harry Ebden' directly from those farms. In cases where I was able to pursue this issue, I was able to correct this datum. But because of the brevity of my stay on the farm, and the absence of some site-occupants when I conducted my survey, I had sometimes to rely on responses from neighbours who would identify these nominal location 'homes' as the places of 'origin' of settlers, rather than the specific details of where they had been resident last.

Table 5.6 reflects two noteworthy influxes of new tenants onto 'Harry Ebden' farm. The first, in the 1950s, was directly related to the implementation of betterment on the neighbouring communal farms of 'Polygon' and 'Simpson' (see chapter 3) and to an episode of vigilante action in neighbouring Mount Fletcher, known locally as *chesa chesa*, when alleged stock-thieves' homes were set alight. The other, in the 1970s and '80s, was primarily a result of overcrowding in more remote rural locations, particularly those where betterment had been implemented and the number of potential arable allotments

<sup>20</sup> I use the terms 'origin' and 'originate' here to refer to the places where tenants had resided immediately prior to building their present homes at 'Harry Ebden'. In some instances this information was obtained from neighbours who often gave the name of a location as place of origin whereas subsequent research showed that the people were from white-owned farms - see note to table 5.6.

fixed. It also reflected a certain amount of relocation off white-owned farms, as a result of both mechanisation and workers' decisions to enter the migrant-labour market rather than remain farm labourers.

Many of the new residents on 'Harry Ebden' were households comprising young couples and their children who had removed from locations which offered them no more than a rural village homestead site and access to pastures on overgrazed location commonages. Frequently this was the result of betterment having restricted the number of arable allotments available, leaving these individuals with little hope of ever obtaining a field. Indeed, in some cases, they had even been unable to obtain residential sites because the residential areas of their locations were fully allocated and they had now to wait for officials of the Department of Agriculture and Forestry to demarcate new areas. The same applied in the few remaining non-betterment areas where the local headman would allocate sites only to those who had paid him for the privilege. Virtually wholly dependent as they were on labour migrants' wages and remittances, these people had seen little purpose in remaining in remote rural areas when they could remove to places such as 'Harry Ebden' which was much closer to the road, and to the town with its various facilities, particularly medical services and transport to the urban-employment centres of the 'common' area. Moreover, 'Harry Ebden' still offered a chance of being able to contract as a sharecropper on someone else's land and thereby obtain some of one's own arable produce.

The farm's two title-holders each had control over quite extensive arable areas, some of which they worked for themselves, the rest being put out in various kinds of arrangements to others. A large portion of the land was leased out for cash to better-off residents of neighbouring locations - such as store-owners, teachers and other senior petty officials who could afford to work them in order to obtain harvests for own consumption and local sale - and to those few farm tenants who had the wherewithal to pay for the right to work some land on the farm. The owners also let out quite large portions of their land to sharecroppers, as did some of the leaseholders (see chapter 6). In addition, junior descendants of

the original African owners and some very long-standing tenants still had allocated fields which they worked for themselves or put out for sharecropping. Residential tenants on the farm were thus able to lease or sharecrop small parcels of such land.<sup>21</sup>

Farm residents were also entitled to run livestock on the farm's pastures, although the recent population increases were resulting in their very rapid deterioration. Just as there were many households without stock in the locations, many tenant households on 'Harry Ebden' had no animals, but others had herds of 30 and more livestock units grazing freely on the farm's range land. The two farm-owners had their own large herds and flocks running with the rest, in an arrangement reminiscent of the commonages in location areas not yet subjected to betterment.

#### Differentiation and its determinants on 'Harry Ebden'

As indicated above, wealth differences on 'Harry Ebden' were very similar to those among the majority of the Mabua population, despite the much more widespread lack of arable rights among households on the farm. While details in the case studies presented above are necessarily different from those to be found in examples from 'Harry Ebden', the general dependence on remittances and pensions was common to both areas, and it would be repetitive to present here a further set of case studies drawn from the 'Harry Ebden' population. I therefore present this section discursively without detailed case-study illustration.

As in Mabua, time of settlement on 'Harry Ebden' determined relative access to arable land, although non-members of the owning family had no substantive rights in this regard, and all that most tenants could expect was the option to lease or sharecrop an area of land (cf. chapter 6). Unlike the situation in Mabua, however, there was not quite so clear a correspondence between length of residence on the farm and ease of access into the labour market. One or two of the most senior of the farm-owners' children had received good education, one having spent some time at university before returning

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<sup>21</sup> I return to the issue of tenancy and sharecropping in chapter 6.

to live on and administer one half of the farm. But many of the more recent tenants were already well-established labour migrants when they came; indeed they would not have been able to relocate had they not been relatively secure in their ability to earn sufficiently regular cash incomes to allow them to abandon their kin networks in their natal villages. Immigration did not necessarily imply lack of ready access to the migrant-labour market, and even in the case of more recent arrivals from white-owned farms these comprised households where one or more members was already a labour migrant.

With the partial exception of the two title-holders and their immediate dependants, all residents on the farm were dependent on remittances and pensions for their major sources of income, much as most people in Mabua subsisted. There was no store or café on the farm, and no very wealthy tenants. Moreover, even the title-holders did not live conspicuously differently from the rest of the population: neither's homestead was significantly different from those of their longer-resident tenants and the unmarried son of one title-holder was himself a mine-labour migrant who remitted to his father to help support the household.

In terms of a classical class analysis, the farm's title holders were 'objectively' in a class apart from their tenants, primarily because they were rentiers (of a kind) of privately-owned land. Moreover they had the nominal right to sell the land and thus the potential to realise their land asset in a form of wealth which could be invested more directly for capitalist accumulation. But 'subjectively' they did not stand apart from many of their tenants. Their lifestyles were very similar, with a high level of close social interaction between landowners and tenants, particularly as some of the latter were close relatives of the former. Moreover, the title-holders were not in a position to accumulate to any extent. Indeed, their willingness to accommodate ever-increasing numbers of 'squatter' tenants was their means of ensuring an adequate source of income to cover their outstanding mortgage bond and rates payments rather than their using their land resource as a means of accumulating wealth for investment either on the farm or elsewhere. In part this was because of the nature of the tenancies

on the farm. Most of these, as we shall see in more detail in chapter 6, were based on a one-off payment for the right to occupy a site, rather than a regular rent-payment, although leased areas of arable land did generate an annual source of cash income for the title-holders, and areas put out on a sharecropping basis provided them with a source of grain. With regard to their residential tenants, however, the title-holders were more quasi-headmen than rentiers, in the usual sense, and they were unable to rely on rent income as an adequate means of maintaining themselves and their dependants.

The farm's tenant population can be divided into three broad categories based on the timing of their settlement on the farm. But there is no necessary correspondence between this categorisation and the wealth levels of particular households. Particularly among the longer-settled households, other factors such as domestic developmental phase had come into play, so that some older residents' households which, at the time of my fieldwork, lacked a remitting migrant member were very much worse off than some of those which had only recently settled on the farm. The same applied to a few of the more recent arrivals, although to a lesser extent.

The first category comprised the households of people whose antecedents had settled as labour and sharecropping tenants on the farm around the time of its purchase by the Khaoue family or soon thereafter, plus members of that family who had not inherited title. Many of these households - particularly members of the Khaoue family and those descendants of tenants who were still occupying their original sites on the farm - still had rights to allotments of arable land on the farm in the 1980s. Those with remittance incomes and sufficient livestock to be able to work their lands did so, while those without turned to others who had these resources and contracted sharecropping and other arrangements for the working of their fields. For some, these rights to arable land which they could let out to others, provided an important source of subsistence income.

The second category included households of tenants who had first settled on the farm in the 1950s, and their descendants. The older

settlers among these spoke of having been allocated both residential sites and arable allotments at the time of their arrival. Indeed, they said that at that time the farm's title-holders had talked of transferring the farm to the SANT and the land then being annexed to a location with the present residents gaining rights to allotments as was the case elsewhere on Trust farms.<sup>22</sup> Not only had this not occurred, but they had since had their fields taken from them to make room for further residential sites. Those who could afford to, now hired or sharecropped areas of arable land made available by the farm's title-holders, by others who still had allotments or by leaseholding residents of nearby locations. Others were left landless: these included households which had neither a remittance income nor livestock which they could use to insert themselves into local arable productive activities. Households in this category, as with the first, were thus not all homogeneously very poor or relatively well-off. But those without a regular and reliable source of cash income were rather worse off than those of the first category who were in the same predicament, primarily because they had no land which they could use as a bargaining counter for access to others' cash incomes.

The third category of most recently arrived tenants were uniformly landless and were thus wholly dependent on remittances or pensions. For the most part they were able to rely on these sources of income. The majority included at least one absent wage-earner on whose remittances the relict members depended. Among them were a number of people who had relocated from white-owned farms. This third category also included some older people who had abandoned their previous location homes because of their remoteness and the difficulty they experienced in reaching medical services. Among these were people who had invested all their meagre resources just to obtain a site and build a new house on the farm, and were now having difficulty obtaining pensions or extracting help from migrant sons.

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<sup>22</sup> The idea of making the farm a Trust area remained an issue of some contention right into the 1980s (cf. Spiegel, 1988a).

Viewed 'objectively' all of the people in this third category seemed to constitute part of a fully 'freed' proletarianised class which might have been located in urban areas had it not been for the influx control regulations which were then still in force. This was indeed the case for some of the farm's recently established tenants, particularly those for whom the major motivating factor for relocating there was the farm's proximity to a main road and transport, and thus to the nearby town of Matatiele. But for others it was quite clearly not so, as is reflected in the persistent attempts many of them made to engage in agricultural pursuits. Indeed, a number of the younger remittance-receiving households in this category of recent arrivals had managed to find ways of entering sharecropping arrangements, or had hired land so that they could engage in arable agriculture. Quite a few also had growing herds of livestock which they ran on the farm's range. In fact the possibility of being able to participate in agriculture in this manner had been an important motivating factor for many of these recent arrivals on the farm. They felt that their living conditions and the potential for small-scale domestic accumulation were far better at 'Harry Ebden' than had been the case in the places from which they had come. Indeed their numbers included a few who had become disillusioned with life in the urban townships and squatter areas on the peripheries of cities in the common area and had decided to try to re-establish themselves as oscillating migrant workers with rural home-bases. There being little chance that they might ever obtain arable allotments in locations which had been subjected to betterment, they saw the farm, with its opportunities for sharecropping and the leasing of small areas of arable land, as an appropriate and convenient place at which to settle.

### Conclusion

I began this chapter by stressing that my discussion of synchronic village-level diversities in wealth would not readily help to impose a set of class-based divisions on the small populations with which I worked. On the basis of 'objective' criteria such as land- and stock-holding, one can see clear differences between households in both the Mabua and 'Harry Ebden' populations. But, as we have seen,

the determinants of these differences are many and varied. In examining the importance of time of settlement as a factor determining contemporary material well-being, however, we have seen how this too is tempered by other factors such as the point reached by a household in its domestic development at the time of settlement, the level of education of its members and the extent of their insertion into the labour market before being relocated. Moreover, the almost universal dependence on migrant remittances and pensions is one indication that these differences are not only often temporary, but that they may also be relatively superficial. Compared with the small but growing class of traders and bureaucrats in the district, local level differentiation is quite shallow.

Nonetheless these wealth differences are important at the local level, both in terms of local power and in terms of the ways in which people strategise in order to maintain themselves and their dependants in what is a situation of generalised poverty. In the chapters which follow I look at some of these various strategies, examining them both for their strategic functions and for the way in which they are understood by those who adopt them. I begin in the next chapter by considering the variety of tenancy, sharecropping and other agricultural co-operative practices which are to be found in the district's villages and farms.

## CHAPTER 6

### TENANCY, SHARECROPPING AND AGRICULTURAL CO- OPERATION: OLD OR NEW ARRANGEMENTS WITH OLD OR NEW LABELS?

The three previous chapters have focused on the historical and contemporary circumstances of Matatiele, in particular the processes of population movement into and within the district, and how these are related to the nature of wealth diversities. In the three chapters which follow I examine the extent to which wealth differences are reflected in the variety of ways diverse social practices are experienced and understood by people in the areas where I worked. This is in order to return to the question of continuities, the subject of chapter 2. I do this by considering a number of different kinds of social relationships, practices and institutions found in Matatiele. Among the questions I ask are how people understand their participation in such practices, and to what extent they draw on various images, particularly those of the past, when they explain these activities either to themselves or to an interrogating outsider such as an anthropologist. My aim in doing this is to attempt to discover how people give meaning for themselves to their social practices and whether the images they draw on to do this are consciously or tacitly adopted. This should in turn allow us firstly to discover what circumstances prevail when people engage in such practices *without* making any explicit attempts to give them discursive meaning, and secondly to examine why this may be. I return to these last questions only in chapter 9.

The present chapter focuses on practices related to the variety of ways in which people in Matatiele district gain access to, use and work land, and the relationships which are formed around that interrelated set of processes. It has two aims. The first is to present a body of empirical material showing the variety to be found in these kinds of relationships and to compare these with those of a similar nature as described in the South African literature. I thus examine both tenancy and sharecropping on freehold farms in the

district as well as sharecropping and other forms of agricultural co-operation in Mabua. In both cases, consideration of these relationships further illuminates the nature of differentiation which we began to examine in chapter 5. In particular, it highlights how the poorest in rural communities such as Mabua are able to participate in the agricultural activities of others by providing labour for weeding, harvesting and threshing, and thereby manage to insert themselves into other supportive networks of assistance.

My second aim in this chapter is to address the question of continuities as regards perceptions of different forms of land use and agricultural labour relations. I do this by showing how people explain some of the more prevalent types of land-based relationships in the district. In doing so, they draw upon their perceptions of practices believed to have occurred in the past and/or in other, nearby areas of rural settlement. I also examine the language used to describe such perceived practices.

#### I: TENANCY ON FREEHOLD FARMS: SETHABATHABA AND MALOSO

The freehold farms in the district can usefully be divided into two broad categories: farms which are still treated primarily as agricultural resources and farms (such as 'Harry Ebdon' - see chapter 5), which, despite some agricultural activity, have come to be regarded primarily as informal locations with dense settlement of tenants. Broadly speaking, where farms of the first type have resident tenants, their relationship with the landowners is one of labour-tenancy (described locally as *sethabathaba*), while tenants resident on the second type of farm have no such obligation to the landholders: they are called *maloso*. I deal below with both of these terms and their derivation. In addition, various forms of productive tenancy are practised on the freehold farms of the district, including sharecropping as well as the leasing of arable and pasture land. On most farms, however, one can find a variety of different types of arrangements simultaneously. Although it was an extreme case, this was exemplified by the variety of land-use relationships that pertained on 'Glen Alfred', a farm bordering on

Tsita's location near Mabua where the Mabua store-owner had an annual leasehold contract to use an area of land (see chapter 5).

**Case 6.1 A variety of land-use relationships**

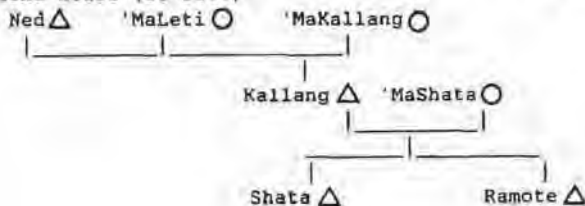
'Glen Alfred' was one of the farms in which Ned Sekhosana and other members of his family invested their transport-riding income around the turn of the century (see chapter 3). They bought the 944 hectare farm in 1902, but sold half of it 5 years later to Freemantle and Company, traders based on the neighbouring farms 'The Retreat' and 'Makomereng', who in turn sold 3 years later (see below). A further half of the half-share remaining in the hands of the Sekhosana family - the 236 hectare share owned by Ned's first son of his first house - was transferred to the SANT in 1944, so that only 236 hectares were left in the Sekhosana name.

In the 1980s, this 236 hectare portion was home to three of Ned Sekhosana's now aging grandsons, descended from his second house, and their families. One was regarded as the landowner even though the Umtata Deeds Register had no record of a transfer to his name after his father, Kallang, had died.<sup>1</sup> The others, both much more junior genealogically, had residential rights on the farm, but were regarded as tenants rather than part-owners. They had rights to a field each and were entitled to run stock on the farm. And, unlike the other four tenants on the farm, they were not expected to provide labour for landowner Ramote in exchange for their residential sites, their one small stony field each, and the right to graze their livestock on the farm's pastures.

By the 1980s, the SANT portion, which had earlier become part of the belt of cattle-post pasturage for residents of nearby locations (see chapter 3), was used as summer pasturage by various people from Tsita's location. Indeed, its availability had meant that Ramote had lost the little income he had previously received from location-based stockholders hiring pasturage: "There's nobody hiring here now because of those large government pasture areas".

In 1910, Freemantle and Co. had had the farm formally partitioned, their 472 hectare portion being registered as 'Glen Alfred West'. Having done this, they sold it to Mbulelo (Mvulelo) Mbedu, a headman in Mount Frere who used it as a

<sup>1</sup> This was Ramote, the first surviving son in the first house of Kallang, the first son in Ned's second house (of five)



cattle-post and allowed various labour-tenants to settle on the land. By the early 1960s, 'Glen Alfred West' had been inherited by Mbulelo's grandson, Peter Bonagele Mbedu. He settled there permanently and soon replaced his labour-tenants with rent-paying non-resident leaseholders. In 1972 he sold a 242 hectare portion for R2 000 to a retired policeman who wanted the land to run his herd of over 300 cattle. These had earlier been pastured on another freehold farm, 'Manning' where he had been able to hire pasturage, but at a rental which was eating into his herd (cf. case 5.4). When the ex-policeman died in 1978 the farm was left to his widow who was still resident there in the 1980s (Deeds Register, Umtata).<sup>2</sup>

In 1982, the 230 hectare Mbedu portion of 'Glen Alfred West' was being worked through a variety of different types of relationships established between the owner and others. The Mabua store-owner had an annually renewable leasehold contract allowing him to pasture his livestock on the farm and to work a 20 hectare area of arable land for his own benefit. In 1982, his rental of R800 allowed him to generate 200 bags of maize (worth about R4 000) and to run 77 livestock units on the farm. During this time he employed three herdsmen on the farm; they also assisted on the fields when his tractor was brought to plough, plant and cultivate his hired fields.

Three sharecroppers, among them the neighbouring ex-policeman's widow, also worked sections of Mbedu's arable lands, one of them also running a small number of animals on the farm (see table 6.2). The sharecropped fields yielded 286 bags of maize and 4 bags of beans before being shared, while Bonagele Mbedu, the landowner, using his own tractor and labour to work some fields for his own account, obtained a yield of 50 bags of maize and 8 bags of beans, plus some turnips which were sold loose and not bagged. Table 6.1 summarizes his total estimated annual arable returns for 1982 - I have calculated the values by using prices slightly lower than that obtaining for commercially available 80kg. bags at the time.

Table 6.1 Estimated annual arable income to landowner, Mbedu portion of 'Glen Alfred West', 1982

Fields (and pastures) leased out to store-owner	R 800
Fields sharecropped by non-residents:	
143 bags maize, 2 bags beans:	+R3 000
Fields worked by landowner:	
50 bags maize, 8 bags beans:	+R1 300
TOTAL:	+R5 100

<sup>2</sup> These data derive from interviews I conducted with various residents on the farm. In deference to the anthropological procedure of not divulging one's sources' names, I have not identified them here. Up till this point, however, I have attempted to provide source data to the same extent that historians do.

The farm's pastures were treated as commonage by the landowner, Mbedu, his leaseholder and one of his sharecropping partners. Their livestock holdings on the farm in 1982 were:

Table 6.2 Livestock on Mbedu portion of 'Glen Alfred West', 1982

	Landowner	Leaseholder	Sharecropper	Total
Cattle	40	48	6	94
Sheep	-	60	-	60
Goats	50	70	5	125
Horses	7	3	-	10
Donkeys	-	-	2	2
Total (livestock units)	57	77	9	143

During the same year, the ex-policeman's widow was running 65 stock units on her portion of the farm, all of them her own. Its lack of much arable soil meant, however, that there was virtually no crop harvested. To overcome this deficiency, she had entered a sharecropping contract on the Mbedu portion of the farm and, in 1982, this provided her with a crop of 75 bags of maize from those of Mbedu's fields which had been worked by her four hired labourers who were normally employed on her own portion of the farm.

The variety of forms of relationship between landowner and worker on 'Glen Alfred' was particularly marked, probably because of the extent to which the farm, which had quite extensive arable areas, had been subdivided among a number of unrelated landowners. Other farms had been subdivided to an even greater extent, albeit amongst large numbers of heirs: one was 'Freemantle', one half of which was taken over from its white owner by the SANT in 1938, while the other half, owned by an African, was inherited in 14 equal shares two years later. Being situated high in the Berg it was useful only for summer pasturage and thus provided little scope for complex sharecropping arrangements. It had, nonetheless, provided opportunities for large stockholders to lease grazing rights there (cf. chapter 5).

#### Labour-tenancy: sethabathaba

I referred above to the existence of labour-tenancy on the Sekhosana portion of 'Glen Alfred'. This kind of tenancy was known throughout the district by the Sotho term *sethabathaba*. Tenancy

relationships described by this term were common on many of the freehold farms in the district, although, as elsewhere, description by a single term does not mean uniformity in the details of the relationships thus described. Let us first look at the term's derivation and then at the various forms such tenancy was reported to have taken.

The term *sethabathaba* is most commonly used to describe a "special tax levied by a chief on all his people" (Paroz, 1974: 508). Earlier commentators and translators suggest that it was a "tax in cattle for a public purpose" (Mabille, 1893: 178) such as to finance a lawsuit involving the tribe or to pay the chief's debts to save him the disgrace of prosecution" (Ashton, 1952: 208)<sup>3</sup> According to Ellenberger and MacGregor (1969: 265) chiefs imposed such a tax in cattle only in extraordinary circumstances. Informants in Lesotho confirmed this meaning of the term, referring to collections taken during the two World Wars in support of the allied war-effort as examples of *sethabathaba*.

In a discussion in 1982, one particularly knowledgeable old man in Qacha's Nek was telling me about his childhood years during the first World War when he made unelicited reference to *sethabathaba*:

Kaizer was a German who fought with King George in 1914. I was still a boy then, yet I know it [viz. remember that time]. It was when those cattle which were taken as 'thabathaba were eaten.<sup>4</sup> ... It was [the case] that every person took out a beast which went to feed the soldiers, in 1914... In Sesotho this is [called] *sethabathaba*.

Prompted further he added that during the second World War, collections amounting to 5 shillings per person were taken, and that these too were known as *sethabathaba*, although he was unhappy with

<sup>3</sup> Ashton also refers to such a levy as *morokhaoana*, a term which does not appear in that form in the standard Sotho-English dictionaries, although Paroz (1974: 294) translates the word *mmorogoane* as 'special tax' and gives its derivation as possibly from Afrikaans without identifying its source (cf. Dieterlen, 1937: 292; 1911: 290). Hunter (1961: 385) cites an Mpondo chief as pointing out "that in times of special necessity the chief could levy tribute (*isithabathaba*) from each man according to his capacity to pay". This was reportedly done "when chief Poto had a motor accident and was permitted by Government to levy a tax of 1s[hilling] per head on his people to meet the damages claimed against him" (ibid.). Cf. Kropf and Godfrey (1915: 401) who define the Xhosa *isit'abat'aba* as "that which, as a breach of the law, is imputed to all in the vicinity, or to a whole clan, the actual transgressor being unknown; fine; tribute".

<sup>4</sup> In oral use of Sesotho, the nominal prefix is often left off. This is because the concordant verbal prefix indicates the class, and thus the prefix, of the noun to which it refers.

this usage because this levy had been in relatively small amounts of cash rather than in cattle. He was quite certain, moreover, that *sethabathaba* was not a term which could readily be used to describe labour service. Indeed, confirming what various authors have said about chiefs' rights to labour-service, he said that earlier forms of corvée labour exacted by chiefs were best described as *matsema* (sing. *letsema* = work party) (cf. Ellenberger and MacGregor, 1969: 268; Ashton, 1952: 208; Wallman, 1969: 34).<sup>5</sup>

None of the variously updated editions of the *Southern Sotho English Dictionary*<sup>6</sup> makes any reference to use of the term *sethabathaba* to describe labour-tenancy. Yet various landowners and tenants in Matatiele insisted not only that local labour-tenancies were *sethabathaba*, but also that the term described labour-service performed for a chief in Lesotho: "It is just as in Lesotho. In Lesotho, it is said, the chief would be worked for on a particular day. Similarly, this [*sethabathaba* here on the farm] is something like that".

There is one area, however, where *sethabathaba* describes a site-rent, and that is the high density settlement relocation areas of Qwaqwa. According to Leslie Bank (pers. comm. 1989) people in the closer settlements on the immediate perimeter of that bantustan's only town, Phuthadithjaba, were obliged to pay R2 per annum in 1984/5 to the local headman or chief, the money going ostensibly into 'tribal authority' coffers. People described this payment as *sethabathaba* which Bank's interpreters translated for him as 'tax'. Yet he believes that his informants thought of it as a rent because they commonly compared this *sethabathaba* with the rents of R16.16 per month paid for a township house - it was one reason many elected to live in nearby closer settlements rather than in the town.

In Matatiele, the precise expectations and obligations of *sethabathaba* varied quite extensively from one farm to another and

<sup>5</sup> Ashton refers to chiefs calling for such labour on *masimo a lira* (lit: fields of the enemies) - "the produce of which should be used to feed messengers and other officials" (1952: 208), while Wallman points out that the chiefs' legal right to make demands for such labour was abolished in 1948 when an additional shilling was added to the annual "head tax to enable Chiefs to pay for any 'public' works" (Wallman, 1969: 34).]

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Paroz (1974: 508), Dieterlen (1937: 420; 1911: 418) and Mabile (1893: 178).

indeed from one tenant to another on any particular farm. On 'Glen Alfred', situated far from the main roads and in hilly infertile country, only one day's work per week was expected of the four tenants who were not of the Sekhosana family, while those who could demonstrate direct descent from Ned Sekhosana were not obliged to provide any such formal labour-service. They were, however, asked to assist the landowner to raise funds to pay annual rates on the farm. On 'Etheldale', by comparison, the owner expected all those who had a homestead on the farm to contribute three days of work per week for his benefit. Alternatively, tenants could arrange to be available on a full-time basis for six months in the year, while a select few had arranged to make a regular cash payment in lieu of such service (cf. Walker, 1981: 11; SPP IV, 1983: 28; see below). Interestingly, the owner of the farm in the early 1980s insisted that every single resident tenant was obliged to him in this way: indeed, he said that even his own children who had elected to build their homes on the farm had to contribute: "My children are now working for me on this farm. All of them except those who have gone to Makhoeng [lit: the place of the whites; i.e. are away as labour migrants]. It's that word [ruling] which I told you about, that they should work three days..." And regarding those of his children who were labour migrants with homesteads on the farm he said: "Yes, they too must pay. After all, where do they pass [stools]? It's here on the farm ... he [my son] must help me, see, so that I will be able to pay rates..." While this reveals a clear shift in practice from pure labour tenancy to a form of regular cash-rent tenancy, the latter was seen as a concession allowed to family members whose proper obligation was to provide three days labour-rent per week. Indeed all the landlord-tenant relations on the farm in the early 1980s, including those between landowner and his sons, were described by the term *sethabathaba*. Moreover, even the six months system was seen as a concession: "because that person who works three days wastes his time [for the three days he's free]."

Part of the reason for the difference between the two farms was that the 587 hectare portion of 'Etheldale' still in private ownership was a much more attractive farm on which to be resident than was 'Glen Alfred'. 'Etheldale' bordered on the Kenigha River

and had quite extensive fertile arable lands in its flood plain. As Segar (1986: 64; 1989: 35) has pointed out, the fertility of these alluvial fields meant that landholders in neighbouring St. Paul's village had no need to apply additional fertilisers to generate good crops, an advantage they shared with farmers along the Mabele tributary of the Kenigha in the Ongeluksnek strip (see chapter 3). All tenants on 'Etheldale' were allocated a field in this area, as well as being allowed free range for their livestock. Moreover, 'Etheldale' is situated right alongside the main road into Matatiele, and indeed within relatively easy walking distance of the town. The landowner's problem there was to restrict the number of his tenants, which by 1982 included 22 households, and not to allow his farm to become a 'squatter' area like 'Harry Ebden' directly across the road, an area which was commonly described not by the farm's name, but as *malosong* (lit: the place of the *maloso* or non-paying tenants.)

#### 'Squatter'-tenants: *maloso* at Harry Ebden

'Harry Ebden', as we have seen in chapter 5, was a 744 hectare farm where 252 homesteads had been built by 1983, and where new tenants were settling all the time. Virtually all of these tenants were described by the term *maloso* (sing. *leloso*), a word which derives from the Afrikaans *los* meaning loose or unattached.<sup>7</sup> *Maloso* commonly refers to Africans living on white-owned farms who are not employed there (cf. Paroz, 1974: 282; Dieterlen, 1911: 191). My informants referred to ex-farmworkers who were too old to continue working but remained insecurely on their ex-employer's land, as *maloso*.

Common to all *maloso* I came across in Matatiele was their access to residential sites on a freehold farm without any obligation to pay a regular rent, rate, tribute etc. Almost all had made just a

<sup>7</sup> Paroz (1974: 282) translates the Sotho root word *loso* as "loose, unattached: in bulk". Some colloquial Xhosa describes unexpected helpers in the fields, and young boys who go along with the regular herders, as *amalose* (sing. *ilose*). Here again the term reflects uncertain and insecure tenure. Use of the nominal prefix *le-* (pl. *ma-*) for human nouns in Sesotho often signifies that the person or category described is in some way unusual. Cf. baby (*lesea*): old person (*leqheku*): white person (*lekhoaa*).

single payment when they had first settled on the farm, and this had ensured their right to remain, although their landlords did occasionally impose a levy for a particular purpose.<sup>8</sup> The exceptions to this rule were tenants who, without payment, had retained the right of residence because they were descendants either of the first African title-holders of the farm where they now 'squatted', or of those title-holders' earliest sharecropping tenants. As for *sethabatha*, there was some variety in the nature of tenancies popularly subsumed under the term *maloso*.

We have seen in chapter 5 that by the 1980s 'Harry Ebden's' population comprised at least three different categories of tenants: (i) very long-settled families a number of whom were directly descended from the farm's first African landowners or from early sharecropping tenants; (ii) tenants who had settled on the farm twenty or more years before and had expectations that the farm would become a Trust area where their tenure would be ensured; and (iii) those who had arrived very recently and saw the farm as a rural dormitory for relict dependants of labour migrants, albeit one with the potential for some agrarian production.

Many of those in the first category still had free access to arable allotments, which they worked either for themselves or put out to sharecroppers. The fact that they continued to command access to these resources confirmed for them their perception that they were significantly different from people in either of the latter two categories. They were therefore especially angered by the steady encroachment into their fields as the farm's arable land areas were subdivided into residential plots for newcomers. And they complained bitterly about the way in which they were being reduced to relying ever more heavily on participation in the migrant wage-labour market in order to subsist. Indeed, some descendants of the first African owners of the farm felt aggrieved that they were not treated as full partners on the farm, particularly - said one of first owner Philip Khaue's junior sons - because they had been

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<sup>8</sup> In 1982, tenants on 'Harry Ebden' were subjected to a R2 per head levy for provision of a water supply which did not subsequently materialise.

called upon to help raise funds to pay annual rates and mortgage bond repayments on the farm in the past.

In the absence of any testamentary condition to this effect, however, only the heirs by primogeniture had any legal right to be regarded as a part-owner of the farm. Nonetheless, past practice had been that many of the Khauoe family's descendants, for example, had remained on the farm and had been allowed to work fairly extensive portions of arable land, without - as in the case of 'Etheldale' - being treated as formal tenants who had somehow to recompense the title-holder for these rights. By the 1980s, however, this had begun to change rapidly and those with arable allotments were handing them on to just one heir, leaving their other children to become landless 'squatters' like the rest of the *maloso* on the farm.

Older tenants who were not descended from the landowning family described a similar experience of dispossession and deprivation. They talked about the past when their antecedents had arrived to settle as sharecropping tenants on the farm, having been recruited by the farm-owners for this purpose. And they bemoaned the fact that their arable rights on the farm had been undermined over the years, making them have to turn, like so many others, to a dependence on the wage-labour market for their subsistence requirements.

#### Case 6.2 From sharecropper to *leloso*

FM, born in 1914, remembered a time when his father was a sharecropper working extensive areas of arable land on 'Harry Ebdon' farm. His father, he said, had been born in a place called Moteng in Natal but had come to settle in Matatiele after having been invited by the owners of 'Harry Ebdon' to become a tenant on their farm. This was before FM was born. Both his father and his father's brother had come to the area, although his father's brother had settled on a neighbouring farm, 'George Herbert'. At the time they came, they had brought numbers of cattle and sheep with them, and had soon settled into a productive routine producing sufficient grain every year to be able to sell much of it to local traders. In this way they were able to increase their herd size, and thereby improve their draft power for working the land. FM claims to remember a time - probably in the 1920s - when their own half-share of the crop amounted to 150 bags. At that point, said FM, they were certainly not *maloso*, although he was

not so certain in 1983 that the term could not be used to describe his existing situation.

He had retained the site and house which his father had built, and still had a field on the farm. For a while in the early 1980s this latter right had been in doubt when one of the farm's title-holders attempted to appropriate the field. But FM's close association with and support for the other title-holder was rewarded by this decision being reversed. In addition, in 1983, FM was sharecropping a portion of quite extensive arable land which had been leased by one of the title-holders to a well-off resident of a nearby location. The lease-holder had in turn contracted a number of sharecroppers to work sections of it, while he worked the rest himself.

In 1983, FM's byre housed 12 cattle and some 30 sheep and goats. His two sons were both labour migrants, one on the mines, the other with the Johannesburg municipality. Neither had yet built his own homestead.

Maloso in the second category - those who had settled on the farm during the 1950s - were of the opinion that by the 1980s their tenure as tenants was much less secure than they had expected it might be when they arrived, and much less secure too than that of people who had been there since the first decades of the century, some of whom still retained arable rights. In the mid-1960s they had faced a brief period when the farm's title-holders had attempted to evict 49 'squatter families'. But the former's lack of funds prevented them from proceeding with litigation, although they did briefly try to effect the eviction by having the farm declared a betterment area (cf. Spiegel, 1988a: 151). More recently, they had begun to feel increasingly threatened by the rapid influx of new tenants during the late 1970s and early 1980s. This had resulted in the loss of previously-granted fields and diminishing access to sharecropping as more and more of the farm was demarcated into residential sites. This was despite their compulsory contributions towards rates amounting to of R10 per annum for three years at the end of the 1960s, after the attempts to have them evicted had failed.

As described in chapter 3, many of these people had found refuge on the farm after having been dispossessed of their homesteads when a betterment plan was implemented on the neighbouring communally-owned farms 'Polygon' and 'Simpson'. Some explained that among the

factors that had enticed them to 'Harry Ebden' was the promise of its 'red' soil in the area where they were granted fields, and the fact that there were areas of 'black' alluvial land along the farm's river frontage where they expected they would be able to sharecrop. More importantly, they had understood that the farm was due to become a Trust farm offering full residential, pasture and arable rights. This was the case on other areas of communal land such as locations, and on other Trust farms which by definition would have been planned in terms of betterment principles (see chapter 3). As one man put it:

When I came here in 1955 I had to pay 15 pounds. I was given 3 [Sotho] acres<sup>9</sup> of land to plough, and my site also. Then they said that I'll get another field when the Trust comes here. This was said when we first came here. There was a chief<sup>10</sup> here called Mokokoana Khaue, who is now dead. He said it. Now they have taken my field and those of others too, and new people have been given sites on our fields. Now I have no field, and I'm having to live by sharecropping. First I ploughed with different people every year, but now I am working with a man from Pontseng who has hired a land here ... He ploughs half himself, and has people who sharecrop on the other half.<sup>11</sup>

Tenants in this second category felt that their length of residence on the farm, and the promises which had been made them about the likelihood of the farm becoming a Trust farm where they would gain full residential status, were good reasons that they ought to have more security and greater rights on the farm than more recent arrivals. Yet they found that increasingly they were being treated as if they were no different from the rest. They no longer had fields, and they were not given special preference when it came to sharecropping contracts with the farm's title-holders. Indeed, new arrivals to the farm, who of necessity were just beginning negotiations for a site, were often given preference by the title-holders. This was because their concern to insert themselves into

<sup>9</sup> See Wallman (1965) on the difficulty of defining acres as units of land area.

<sup>10</sup> He used the word *morena* (lit. chief, headman, person in authority etc.; cf. Hamnett, 1975: 86) to describe one of the farm's title-holders. See below.

<sup>11</sup> Pontseng is a nearby village in an neighbouring location. My informant was one of seven sharecroppers working portions of the Pontseng man's hired land.

agricultural relations made them ready to accept much less favourable sharecropping conditions than older tenants would.

The tenure of these new arrivals was substantively as insecure as that of the longer-settled 'squatters', yet they did not express similar feelings of insecurity. This was probably because they had arrived expecting that their one-off payments would gain them little other than their sites and the right to run livestock on the farm's depleted pastures. They recognised that they could expect no access to arable resources without paying for them either in cash or significant contributions of labour through sharecropping on very disadvantageous terms. For most of them, the decision to settle on the farm had been taken because its position alongside a main road and near to Matatiele town offered them advantages over the places from which they had come, and where they had had no greater access to agricultural resources than they now had as 'squatters' on the farm. Moreover, for those who had come from white-owned farms, the sums they had had to pay for their sites were of the same order as what they would have been asked for by a headman had they wanted to settle in a location. Even for those who came from locations where they had not yet built their own homes, their payments to the 'Harry Ebden' title-holders were not significantly greater than what they might have been asked for in order to obtain sites in the locations from which they came. And, in any event, many villages in locations were experiencing a shortage of available residential sites as a result of the residential areas demarcated in terms of betterment already having been filled.

#### Freehold tenancies: continuities in time and space

What would no doubt have unsettled all of the tenants on 'Harry Ebden', both old and new, would have been the imposition of a regular annual or, worse still, monthly rental for their sites. Whereas it was commonly accepted that portions of the farm's arable lands were leased out for cash, there was an understanding between landlords and tenants that the right to reside on the farm was obtained through a one-off payment when the tenants first arrived. Indeed, this was a distinguishing characteristic of *maloso*: having

made their one-off payment, they had no further obligation to their landlords, unless exceptional circumstances arose.

None of the literature on contemporary tenancy on African-owned freehold farms elsewhere in the country refers to tenancies where there is no regular rental payment, whether this be in cash, kind (through sharecropping) or labour. Indeed in Natal - the closest area for which similar kinds of present-day tenancies are documented - resident tenants on African-owned farms are reported to have had to pay a regular rental to the landowner (cf. Mngadi, 1981; Cross and Preston-Whyte, 1988). A 1983 survey of shack settlements on both freehold and 'traditional tenure' (location) areas in Natal/Kwazulu indicated that the most common form of tenancy there was what was described as "site-rental tenancy (technically "tenancy at will")" (Fourie, 1986 cited in Preston-Whyte et al, 1988: 201), whereby tenants paid a regular (monthly or annual) rent to their landlords for the right to retain and occupy a residential site. Interestingly, this was found to occur only on freehold land, and not in areas of what was described as 'traditional' or 'tribal' land. Where these were experiencing "modernizing forms of indigenous tenure" (Preston-Whyte et al, 1988: 201-202), changes in land allocation procedures were said to be leading to greater informal purchase of land from local landholders (Cross et al, 1982: 8), and to increasing 'squatting' without any payment at all (Fourie, n.d.: 9). In these areas, it seems, the principle was still applied that once one was settled as a resident in a headman's area of authority (a location) then the only regular payments required of one were head and stock taxes, and contributions to levies for projects of public concern.

This is not to say that new arrivals to such areas were conventionally accepted without charge. Although neither Fourie (n.d.) nor Cross et al (1982) mention any such payments in areas of 'traditional tenure' in Natal/Kwazulu, Preston-Whyte (1988: 184) has described the payment of amounts of between R10 and R50 to the chief

and his headmen for sites on the Mission Reserve at Indaleni in the Natal midlands (cf. Preston-Whyte and Sibisi, 1975: 301).<sup>12</sup>

This practice appears to have had much earlier precedent when American missionaries in control of Mission Reserves in Natal during the nineteenth century had "charg[ed] rent, at least for new settlers, even though they lacked the authority to make people pay" (Kiernan, 1989: 3).<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Hunter (1961 [1979]: 114) points out that in the 1930s headmen in Pondoland were demanding payments for fields allocated to residents of their locations and that in earlier times "newcomers entering the country of a chief paid him a beast" (Hunter, 1961: 385).

My own informants referred often to the necessity of a newcomer to an area 'taking out a beast for the headman' in order to obtain a site in a Matatiele location, in much the same kind of transaction as has been described as having occurred elsewhere in the Transkei in recent years (cf. Haines et al, 1984: 14).<sup>14</sup> This was neither a new practice in the region nor one which had been looked on with official disfavour earlier, despite its supposed illegality by the 1980s (ibid.): in the 1960s the local magistrate pointed out that people wishing to settle in a headman's domain on location land "would have to agree to pay the customary fee" (Magistrate Matatiele to Attorneys van Niekerk and Gray, 3 Sept 1965 in file 19/3/3-5 DAF-Maluti). It is this practice which gives us a clue as to the way in which *maloso*-tenancy was understood by both residents and others in Matatiele.

<sup>12</sup> Cross et al (1982) and Fourie (n.d.) do, however, refer to informal purchase of land by an immigrant from a local landholder who has sufficient available to be able to sell a portion. These transfers are reportedly 'witnessed' by neighbours and the local headman, although neither source reports the latter receiving any payment for this service (cf. Cross, 1990).

<sup>13</sup> By 1893 the American missionaries were claiming that "for years now, no revenue has accrued from any of our eleven reserves" (quoted by Kiernan, 1989: 3). Possibly this was because they had not themselves taken in any new settlers during those years, this prerogative having been captured by chiefs who were "exercising their normal right to allocate land to newcomers" even in the Mission Reserves. Indeed, the terms of the missions' deeds were altered in 1895 to give them, rather than the chiefs, the right to introduce new settlers. But they traded their right to claim rent for one to select tenants on the basis of religious acceptability. And they became rent-collectors for the colonial government which imposed an annual cash rent of 30 shillings per household on Mission Reserves (ibid.).

<sup>14</sup> By the 1980s in the peri-urban areas around Umtata, the cash value of such a beast was "upwards of R300" (Haines and Tapscott, 1987: 24).

Beinart has pointed out how during the last decade of the 19th century freehold owners in Umzimkulu were accommodating immigrants on their land in exchange for a settlement fee, and as rent-tenants (1986: 283-4; 1987: 51), and the SPP reports the same for Natal where "by the early twentieth century African landowners were taking on rent-paying tenants in lieu of producing agricultural goods for an elusive market" (SPP IV, 1983: 27). In some respects this practice was also used to support the efforts of some landholders to have themselves recognised as headmen, at least in the making, precisely through their assembling large numbers of followers around them. More recent reports from areas of African freehold near Durban show that a similar process has been occurring there during the 1970s and 1980s, although tenants are expected to pay a regular cash-rental (Jenkins et al, 1986 cited in Preston-Whyte et al, 1988: 201).

In many respects, the nature of *maloso*-tenancy on 'Harry Ebden', and on a few other farms in Matatiele, can be seen similarly.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, there was a strong local perception of continuity between the relationship of the title-holders to their tenants, and those of headmen to villagers in locations or on communally-owned freehold areas such as 'Polygon' and 'Simpson' (see chapter 3). Just as new location residents paid a tribute to the headman for the right to take up residence in a location village, new *maloso* paid a one-off sum to the title-holder for a site on freehold land. Moreover, the fact that one of the title-holders on 'Harry Ebden' attempted, during 1983, to hold regular weekly meetings of the farm's tenants suggests that he was trying to emulate the headman model and to draw on a well-established tradition of local authority and power which resonated with people's experience and practices throughout the neighbouring areas.<sup>16</sup>

During the time I was on the farm in 1983, the weekly meetings were markedly unsuccessful as the village moots they were intended

<sup>15</sup> I was told that *maloso*-tenants were also to be found on one or two farms in the east of Matatiele district, in the area of the farm 'Black Diamond'. I did not manage to visit the area and confirm this (cf. chapt 3 n13).

<sup>16</sup> I am, of course, not suggesting that the headmanship was not itself an invention of the colonial period (cf. Hammond-Tooke, 1975: 77-8; Spiegel and Boonzaier, 1988: 49-51; chapter 7).

to be. But there were various other pointers to suggest that the title-holders did, in some ways, aspire to becoming headmen. One of these was their promises during the 1950s that the farm would become a betterment area, and their subsequent attempts in the '60s to effect that transformation, but without giving up their freehold rights. Another was the fact that many tenants did come to the more approachable of the two title-holders to seek help in sorting out domestic disputes and the like. In this respect, that title-holder was expected by his tenants to perform at least one of the roles of a location headman or village sub-headman. This indicates that, to some extent, the perception of title-holder as headman was shared by at least some tenants on the farm. It was for this reason that they sometimes referred to the title-holders as *libota* (sing. *sebota*, headman) and tended to use the term *morena* when addressing them.<sup>17</sup> That the latter aspired to this status is also reflected in the fact that the most senior son of one title holder had Morena as his given name despite the fact that none of his genealogical antecedents had had the name.

Similar circumstances have been described for areas of African freehold around Durban, most of which have been occupied in recent years by rent-tenants. As Jenkins et al point out: "The landlord has replaced the induna and is consulted by his tenants for help in solving various problems" (1986: 57 quoted in Preston-Whyte et al, 1988: 201).

By contrast with the virtual uniqueness of the *maloso* status as non rent-paying tenants, labour-tenancy relationships have a long history throughout the Natal midlands, the Free State and Transvaal and the north-eastern Cape (Slater, 1975; Walker, 1981; Morris, 1981; SPP IV, 1983; Keegan, 1983; 1986a: 121ff; Beinart and Delius,

<sup>17</sup> The appellation *morena* is often used as a means of showing 'respect' towards people with power or in authority. I was often called *morena*, and when I questioned the usage, I was told that it was because people wished to be polite: *ke a u hlompha* (I am honouring/respecting you). Cf. Paroz (1974: 157) who translates *hlompha* as 'to honour, to respect, to fear, to be polite'.

1986).<sup>18</sup> Indeed, when I queried its precise mechanisms in Matatiele, some informants explicitly referred me to the practice which has continued in some cases virtually right up to the present on white-owned farms in parts of Natal (Walker, 1981: 14), and which was widespread in that province from the early decades of this century when labour-tenancy began to replace cash-tenancy (SPP IV, 1983: 28): "It's just like there in Natal where people stay on farms ... They work for six months on the farms and then they work for six months in Johannesburg or Durban. Now, see, they do just like that". Walker has succinctly described the expectations of labour tenancy in Natal until the late 1960s:<sup>19</sup>

Until the late 1960s, the most common form of farm labour in Natal was that of labour-tenancy, a system that had evolved over several generations into what was commonly known as "the six-month system". Under this system a family supplied the white landowner with their labour, generally for six months of the year, at a nominal or non-existent wage, in return for the right to graze some stock and cultivate some land on the farm: labour serving as a form of land-rent (Walker 1981: 11-12).<sup>20</sup>

Considering the ready availability and use of this model from white-owned farms to explain labour-tenancy in Matatiele, it is interesting that people in the area should have attempted to 'indigenise' it by giving it a putative continuity with a Sotho past and a Sesotho name which, as we have seen, is not wholly appropriate as a term for its description. Similarly, it is noteworthy that *maloso*, a term which derives from Afrikaans and which refers to a relationship which is more commonly found on white-owned farms, has

<sup>18</sup> Significantly, Beinart and Delius (1986: 35) point out that "progressive settler farmers in East Griqualand ... had a stated preference for waged migrants [already] by the turn of the century, not least because they sought to graze their own flocks on the whole area of their land." African landowners in the region clearly took their model from further afield and from their less 'progressive' neighbours, many of whom were still using forms of labour-tenancy along with wage-payment in livestock in the western reaches of East Griqualand (around Barkly East, Elliot, Ugie, Maclear and Rhodes as well as in the Ongeluksnek mountain pasture areas) during the 1930s and 1940s, and possibly into the 1950s and '60s.

<sup>19</sup> She also details how attempts by the state to abolish it subsequently led to mass removals in that province.

<sup>20</sup> According to the SPP report, the period of labour service was initially 3 months per year (SPP IV, 1983: 28). Walker (1981: 14) reports that in the Louwsburg area, some farmers responded to a 1979 proclamation finally to abolish labour-tenancy by increasing the labour obligation to 12 months "but without improving or even instituting wages, and without converting the tenant's obligation to work from a family one to an individual one". Beinart and Delius (1986: 12) cite Morris (1981) as saying that when, in the 1920s, labour-tenancy began to replace rent-tenancy and sharecropping in the Free State it involved two days labour per week continuously through the year.

been used to describe residents on land whose title-holders were keen to be seen as quasi-headmen in the traditions of authority in nearby locations rather than landlords whose relationship to their tenants could be seen as purely material and exploitative. At first sight, both examples suggest a kind of paradox: where an exogenous model is available and readily used to understand the landlord-tenant relationship, it is described by an endogenous term, and vice versa.

Is this really paradoxical, or is its appearance as such a reflection of a particular perspective which attempts to pursue analytically an idea that the endogenous and the exogenous represent two readily distinguishable worlds of experience and cognition? A number of recent contributors to the anthropological literature on rural southern Africa have presented an argument that there are indeed two cognitive worlds which are brought together, albeit in opposition to each other, through the experience of labour migration and the effects of industrialisation and incorporation into a world-capitalist system (cf. Comaroff, 1985; Comaroff and Comaroff, 1987; Alverson, 1978; see chapter 2). These authors have then sought to show how people have attempted to make sense of their life experiences by reference to the perceived chasm between these two worlds: particular activities and sets of behaviours are categorically placed in one or the other such world.<sup>21</sup>

Thus Alverson (1978) and, following him, Comaroff and Comaroff (1987) have argued that the Tswana, and Tshidi, make a clear categorical distinction between subsistence work, such as in agriculture, or where one works 'for oneself', and wage labour. They do this by tagging each of these with a different lexeme: *tiro* (from the Tswana *go diha, go dira*, to work, make, create - implicitly in a non-alienating productive environment) for production of one's own use-values, and in an egalitarian communal context; and *bereka* (from the Afrikaans, *werk*, work) for wage-work

<sup>21</sup> There are, of course, significant differences between Alverson's and the Comaroff's approaches. The former adopts a highly individualistic perspective derived from Schutz's phenomenology, and argues that Tswana "reinterpreted their mine experiences in terms of their own wider [personal] rural life-plans and goals" (Moodie, forthcoming: p.4 of ms.). The latter attempt a more structuralist approach which sets up an opposition between two cultural structures (see chapter 2), and which fails "to recognise the extent to which migrant cultures bridge the contrast between *tiro* and *bereka*" (Moodie, forthcoming: p.16 n20 of ms.).

(implicitly alienating). Moreover, those items which Tswana place in what they see as their own 'authentic' environment (*tiro*) are more valuable than those relegated to the world of whites and their callous industrial society and production processes (*bereka*).<sup>22</sup>

Extrapolating this kind of argument to the data presented above would necessarily lead to a view that it is somehow paradoxical for those who have a ready model in endogenous 'tradition' - as do the *maloso*'s landlords - to allow their relationship to be tagged by a term derived from the exogenous world. Similarly, one may ask why labour-tenancy, a practice with a long history on white-owned farms, should be tagged with a 'genuine' Sesotho word.<sup>23</sup> Surely, one would expect that both labour- and *maloso*-tenancy would each be placed neatly into either the endogenous or the exogenous category: either the practice is exploitative and of the 'white' world of *bereka*, or it is communitarian and of the African world of *tiro*.

Of course, the argument would still hold if one could explain the apparent paradox by reference to different interests within the local population. To do this one would have to show that landlords emphasised the 'traditional' features of the respective tenancy practice while tenants stressed those of its characteristics which derived from the 'white' world. If that were the case, then we would have clear evidence for the cultural playing out of localised class struggle, landlords appealing to a tradition of reciprocity and communitarianism to legitimate their enterprise, tenants denying

<sup>22</sup> During my own work in Lesotho and the Transkei. I have never been exposed to a similar metaphorical distinction. Indeed I have heard the word *bereka* used interchangeably with *mosebetsi* (from *hosebetsa* to work; cf. *go dira* in Tswana) to describe all of the following: wage-work as a labour migrant; local productive labour in the fields or pastures; and significantly, the activities of sacrificing an animal to the ancestors (slaughtering and cooking as well as the ritual and feast involved) which Murray (1989a; 1989b) has described as 'the work of the ancestors'. Kuckertz comments that in Pondoland "The dictionary meaning of *umsebenzi* is any kind of 'service' or 'work'. [However, if the vernacular noun is used in the locative case (*emsebenzini*) it means 'at the work place' and refers specifically to employment in the cash economy of one of the cities or industrial centres. The latter meaning is quite common today, but is a relatively recent semantic development of the original word *umsebenzi*, meaning 'service'. Common speech in Caguba use the term particularly in the domestic sphere, including rituals performed in honour of the ancestors (1985: 118; emphases added). Clearly the Mpondo have no exotic term to describe wage-work: they have merely extended the meaning of an existing vernacular word.

<sup>23</sup> At a seminar where I presented an earlier version of this argument, David Hammond-Tooke suggested that *sethabathaba* was 'originally' a Xhosa word subsequently taken into Sesotho, a claim for which I can find no documentary evidence. The implication, of course, is that both forms of tenancy were recognised linguistically as 'imported'.

them the legitimacy which such appeals might support by stressing the exogenous nature of the landlord-tenant relationship. As Moodie has recently pointed out, we need to disaggregate the Tswana and be able to conceive "of the alienation experienced in their 'working' [viz. *tiro*] by subordinate classes" (forthcoming: p.7 of ms.), and particularly among subordinates within the local structures of rural society. It is now a well-established procedure to look out for manifestations of different class and gender interests in studies of pre-colonial society. And in the contemporary period one cannot stress sufficiently the importance of incorporating an understanding of the differentiated nature of rural labour-supplying populations into analyses of cultural practices and discourse: both Alverson (1978) and, surprisingly, the Comaroffs (1987) have tended to overlook this.

Unfortunately for the argument outlined above, there was no clearcut division between landlords and tenants - and indeed others in the district - as regards the terms of reference used for the two types of tenancy, or as regards the derivation of these practices. I am not suggesting that there was complete unanimity on these issues, but the differences which did appear did not correspond neatly with any wealth or class differentials. In fact the titleholder on the farm 'Etheldale', when explaining the origins in Natal of the kind of labour-tenancy he enforced on his land, went so far as to say that, in Natal, such labour tenants were in fact *maloso*, although he would never have used that term to describe his own tenants. Indeed, he was at pains to distinguish tenancy on his farm from *maloso*-tenancy which was generally regarded with some contempt, primarily because most *maloso* had no rights whatever to arable land and because their security of tenure was very limited. The reasons for this contempt were thus much more material than ideological.

How then can we explain the fact that both kinds of tenancy in the district were explained and described by reference to a combination of both exogenous and endogenous practices and terms? The answer seems almost too simple: the two cases show very clearly how practices, traditions and descriptive labels can be drawn from whatever source is available, often without any clear motivations for drawing from one or other source. There may well be a sense in

which people attempt to use images and experiences from each of the two worlds of 'home' and 'work', of *tiro* and *bereka*, and thus try to understand their changing practices in terms which derive from the variety of their experience as labour migrants and their relict dependants. But, I would argue, this is less to signify an opposition between the idyllic and the prosaic or unpleasant than to accommodate their variety of experience in their social and cultural practices. As Coplan (1987; 1989; n.d.(a)) has shown with regard to the songs sung by migrants from Lesotho and by their 'discarded' women who populate the shebeens of Lesotho's towns, people draw into their practice as wide a variety of images as are available to them from their own personal and especially their vicarious experience. They are acutely aware that the past has as many immoralities to it as does the present, and they express them in the songs which they sing: thus the horrors to be found in the belly of the earth where miners must today work find their equivalent in "the cannibals of war" of old (Coplan, 1989: 6). By implication, therefore, Sesotho (the Sotho way of doing things) is as blemished as is the white way (*sekhoa*), although many of those who see themselves as the custodians of Sesotho would deny this, particularly when presented in such stark terms.<sup>24</sup>

There are two reasons for this almost eclectic use of symbols and images. Firstly, such a procedure enables people to integrate ideologically the variety which is their life-experience, and thus to bridge the contrasts to which those experiences expose them. Their sense of personal integrity, itself dependent on authorisation from those around them, depends on such an integration: as Moodie has pointed out, the Comaroffs' (1987) madman is highly representative of this integrative process, much more so "than their insistence on dualism and opposition allows them to see" (Moodie, forthcoming: p.16 n20 of ms.). Secondly, albeit more prosaically, people usually use those symbols and images most readily available and convenient in order to express themselves. Only in those cases where there is explicit pressure to be able to legitimate their

<sup>24</sup> Indeed, Coplan (1989; pers. comm.) has found that many such self-appointed custodians - all of whom are of the elite in Lesotho - prefer to regard the songs of migrants (*lifela tsa litsamaea-naha*, lit: songs of the inveterate travellers) as a phenomenon outside of 'the authentic' Sesotho. Shebeen women's songs in the same genre receive similarly disparaging treatment.

practices, or to deny that ability to others, will their choice of images to explain those practices be constrained by perceptions of moral and immoral sources for those images. Put into Giddens' (1984) language, unless there are particular factors which lead people explicitly to consider which terms they will use to describe phenomena, thereby raising them to the level of discursive consciousness, they will merely 'get on' with relating to those phenomena in the most practical ways possible, and the terms they use to describe them will come from whatever words happen to be at hand. Their consciousness of those phenomena will thus remain at the level of the practical. This does not, however, mean, as Jean Comaroff's (1985) analysis would have had it, that their use of terms reflects a kind of cultural persistence via the habitus. It reflects a much less structured process of pragmatic convenience, or what Fernandez (1989: 470) calls a "pragmatics of metaphor".

Read together, these two cases of tenancy in Matatiele show that people draw from diverse yet convenient language and practical traditions to explain their practices. In situations where there is no political need for them to prove their bona fides, there is no pressure on them to look to images which will give their practices special legitimacy, and their choice of images thus becomes a matter of convenience.

## II: SHARECROPPING AND AGRICULTURAL COOPERATION: MABUA

### Dichotomies and continuities

The topic of sharecropping and agricultural co-operation has been the focus of much of the anthropological work on Lesotho, and virtually all rural researchers deal with it to a greater or lesser extent.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, there is an important body of historical literature dealing with sharecropping on white-owned land, particularly in the Free State and Transvaal Highveld, which is

<sup>25</sup> Inter alia cf. Sheddick (1954), Morojele (1962), Wallman (1969), Hamnett (1975), Murray (1976: 1981), Turner (1978), Spiegel (1979: 1980a), Gay (1980), Quinlan (1983) and Robertson (1987). Kuckertz (1985) has recently analysed work-parties in Pondoland in some detail.

beginning to throw light on the contemporary practice of sharecropping in Lesotho.<sup>26</sup> In what is probably the most sophisticated analysis of contemporary sharecropping to date for Lesotho, Robertson (1987) has managed to draw together these two corpuses, demonstrating how the historical experiences of both sharecropping on the Highveld and labour migration have impacted on, and been influenced by, the agricultural co-operative practices of Basotho living within the domain of the Lesotho state, and on nearby areas of communal tenure.<sup>27</sup>

Adopting the same kind of approach employed by Alverson (1978) and the Comaroffs (1987), Robertson argues that there are two faces to sharecropping in Lesotho: a redistributive communitarian one represented by the term *seahlolo* (from *hoahlola* to judge, condemn, decide), "regarded as thoroughly Sesotho, with connotations of equitable apportionment; and the more businesslike *lihalefote*, which derives from the Afrikaans *halfte*, 'half'" (1987: 128), and thus represents a clearly exogenous influence.<sup>28</sup> For Robertson, this distinction is not only an emic one which allows people to legitimate or deny legitimacy to particular practices to do with sharecropping. It is also useful for his own analysis whereby he wishes to understand the extensive variation which he found in the content of sharecropping contracts in Lesotho during the late 1970s and early 1980s in terms of two opposing world-views and life-styles to which Basotho are exposed and which they experience:

In my explanation of this variation I shall represent the *seahlolo/lihalefote* ambiguity as part of a complex dialectic, involving the struggle for subsistence within the fabric of Sotho communities on the one hand, and entrepreneurial relationships in the wider regional economy on the other ... the historical record reveals extraneous influences and

<sup>26</sup> cf. Slater (1975), Trapido (1978: 1986), Keegan (1979: 1982: 1983: 1986a: 1986b) and Beinart and Delius (1986).

<sup>27</sup> For a detailed discussion of land tenure in colonial Basutoland, see Sheddick (1954) and Williams (1972). Post-independence changes to land-tenure provisions have not significantly affected rural land use patterns, although there is rapidly-growing landlessness as a result of population increases which cannot be taken up in, or dampened by, permanent migration to the industrial core-areas of South Africa where most economically active men from Lesotho are employed.

<sup>28</sup> Sometimes the literature describes sharecropping on white-controlled land as farming or ploughing 'on the halves' or as 'half-share arrangements' (cf. F Wilson, 1971: Keegan, 1986a: 30; Beinart and Delius, 1986: 33; Robertson, 1987: 137), although a one-third - two-thirds division was also common, the larger share going to the white landowner or leaseholder (Keegan, 1983: 209ff.).

important changes [regarding sharecropping] which go far to explain the modern semantic duality (Robertson, 1987: 128-130).<sup>29</sup>

Robertson is thus concerned to question the implication of continuity which Hamnett (1975: 73) suggested between co-operative and entrepreneurial sharecropping in Lesotho.

The Tswana opposition between *tiro* and *bereka* thus reappears here in a different guise. Although far more sensitively handled, for Robertson is at pains to emphasise that it does not readily generate durable social categories, we are again faced with a dualist analysis. A conceptualisation of two clashing historical 'cultures', discoverable in the language and images used by people to understand their present circumstances and relationships, is placed within the framework of a single political-economic history of the region.

In my own efforts to understand the nature of sharecropping and agricultural co-operation - both in Matatiele and previously in Qacha's Nek - I have never been conscious of hearing people using the term *lihalefote* to describe sharecropping. This is despite my having been closely involved with Quinlan's (1983) work in the northern Lesotho foothills in 1981-2, from which Robertson (1987) takes the term<sup>30</sup> and which had alerted me to its possible presence in the language of the people with whom I was working. Of course, I might have missed its use; or by being familiar with the word *seahlolo*, I might have inadvertently led my respondents in their use of language to the exclusion of the term *lihalefote*. But I do not think that I did.

There are various possible reasons for this apparently consistent use of the term *seahlolo* to describe all sharecropping arrangements in the areas where I worked.<sup>31</sup> One is that all the sharecropping

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<sup>29</sup> It is interesting that Keegan (1986a: 51-2) indicates that sharecropping on the Highveld found its models in the mid-19th century lands held by Griquas, in the "pre-trek Cape midlands" and in Basutland itself. Cf. Beinart and Delius (1986: 33).

<sup>30</sup> It was also referred to by Murray (1976a: 103).

<sup>31</sup> I do not include various forms of agricultural co-operation where crop sharing is not part of the contract as forms of sharecropping (cf. Spiegel, 1979: 118ff.).

arrangements to be found in these areas were predominantly reciprocal in nature so that none was regarded as deserving of the opprobrium of the description *lihalefote*. This unlikely scenario is empirically refutable, although I did find, in Qacha's Nek in the mid 1970s, that there was far less sharecropping on the fields of the two villages where I worked than Murray (1976a) had reported for his area of research in the northern foothills of Lesotho. This was possibly because there were no local people with tractors who could use them to accumulate in the entrepreneurial manner of *lihalefote*-style sharecropping (cf. Spiegel, 1979: 123ff; 193 n29). Moreover, the four tractor-owners in and nearby Mabua who were willing to contract to work others' fields all did so exclusively on a straight hire-basis, except where they were able to sharecrop quite large tracts of *farm* land (see case 6.1 and discussion of 'Harry Ebden' farm above). Sharecropping on the two hectare allotments of location residents was unreliable and small-scale, and had proved a risky investment: an immediate cash-payment for turning the soil was a much better means of accumulation. The most successful local entrepreneurs thus stayed clear of small-scale sharecropping, and there were thus few examples of its practice in its entrepreneurial mode.

A further possible reason is that the apparent opposition between *lihalefote* and *seahlolo* is in fact not so easily appropriated for analytical purposes, precisely because many people are ready to use sharecropping exploitatively whether it is called *lihalefote* or *seahlolo* - and similarly when it is used philanthropically. Indeed, Robertson's own comment that his "informants were at a loss to explain why there should be two words in very general usage for what they nevertheless insisted was 'the same' phenomenon" (1987: 128) indicates that the semantic distinction was less important to people 'on the ground' than it was to him as analyst. What they called 'the same' phenomenon had the capacity to encompass wide variety in its manifestation. This was the case despite the use of a single

word, or that word and a straightforward simile, to describe the phenomenon.<sup>32</sup>

These issues aside, however, some people in Mabua did sharecrop, and virtually all those who had arable lands engaged in some or other form of co-operation in the fields. I use the rest of this chapter to discuss these practices briefly, and to use them to illustrate some implications of local wealth differences. In particular I show the importance to those domestic groups without fields or regular remittance income of participation as junior partners in others' agricultural work.

### Sharecropping

The incidence of sharecropping was quite varied from one year to the next, particularly in response to the many vicissitudes of agricultural production. Among the 30 Mabua households I selected randomly in 1982, six put out their own fields for sharecropping in 1981/2 while seven took in other households' fields. Three of these seven did not have fields of their own to work. By 1983/4, after a poor previous season, only two landholding households put out their fields to sharecrop contractors, and just four took in fields. Two of the four were themselves landless.<sup>33</sup>

Only one of the sharecropping contractors attempted to work more than one field other than his own. He was a successful mines clerk

<sup>32</sup> My experience is that people use the many Sesotho words which derive from Afrikaans (and English) while remaining quite oblivious to their etymology, and without even tacitly categorising their world into an endogenous world of Sesotho and an exogenous one of Sekhooa (the ways of whites). Indeed they are often surprised when I point out these derivations to them, saying that they had never doubted that such words were 'pure' Sesotho. For example, I heard an old man refer, during a village case, to a suitcase as potlamente (from portmanteau; Paroz, 1974: 361). The young woman he was cross-questioning asked "Potlamente, what is that?" to which he replied "It is a sutukheisi (suitcase; Paroz, 1974: 472). [But] I don't know English". In his mind potlamente was Sesotho, sutukheisi was English. Already in the 1930s, Hunter had made a similar finding when she pointed to the irony - for an outsider but not an insider - that "a characteristic expression of the Pondo attitude towards a chief" was imbedded in a word, ukubasela (colloquially to give a gift, to tip), which derives "from the Afrikaans baas and means literally to act like a baas or master" (1961: 388).

<sup>33</sup> As shown in chapter 5, 18 of the 30 had fields of their own, the remaining 12 being landless as regards rights to arable allotments. Segar reports that in nearby St. Paul's village in 1982/3, 33 households in a sample of 162 (i.e. 20%) put their fields out to sharecroppers, and 29 (18%) contracted to sharecrop others' fields. Of the latter 29, only 6 also had fields of their own (1986: 65; 1989: 35).

who, in 1981/2, had negotiated sharecropping contracts with 2 other landholders, and who hoped to accumulate locally by investing some of his wage-earnings in agriculture which would be overseen by his relict wife. His returns were so small, however, that by the following year he had abandoned the attempt, and had even fallowed his own field.

This case, and the fact that relatively wealthy local tractor-owners did not engage as sharecropping contractors, suggests that the idea that small-scale sharecropping offered the potential for accumulation is misplaced, although this might have been different in Lesotho previously.<sup>34</sup> Segar (1989), who worked in the village of St. Paul's, downstream along the Kenigha from Mabua, does not report anybody sharecropping to accumulate there, despite the high fertility of the alluvial soil in that village's arable areas. That sharecropping was not seen as an easy means of accumulating is also borne out further by the aspirations of one relict wife, whose husband's small remittances were partly being invested to build up a ploughing team of oxen and implements, even though they had no field of their own (see cases 4.1; 5.4). In 1984 she explained that

I am planning to do seahlolo on two fields next season ... I will use my own cattle, plough, planter and seed, and I'll buy fertiliser. Then I'll get old PM [a struggling unemployed neighbour] to inspan the oxen and drive them. ... But it would be still better if my husband bought a tractor there at work. Then we could be hired to work others' fields, and maybe we could also get our own field.

Let us now look briefly behind the figures of those who sharecropped, either as clients whose fields were worked by others, or as contractors working others' fields in exchange for a share of the product. Sharecrop-clients by and large adopted this kind of arrangement because they lacked some of the resources necessary for working their land: examples included old widows or young nursing mothers without the strength and time to oversee the work, a migrant and his family who were in Durban virtually permanently, and an old man who called upon a relative to work his land for him. The reasons for the drop in sharecropping rates among them were two-

<sup>34</sup> For Lesotho cf. Sheddick (1954: 85), Wallman (1969: 52), Hamnett (1975: 73-4) and Murray (1976a: 103-9); but also compare with Turner (1978: 240) and Spiegel (1979: 123ff.).

fold: that their circumstances changed to allow them to engage in their own work two years later, or that their contracting partners opted out because of their lack of success in the intervening year. Thus, for example one widow died and her field, put out for sharecropping in 1981/2, was taken over by her son who hired labour to work it by 1983/4; a young nursing mother in 1981/2 was able to oversee the work in her own field by the next and following years; and the old man's sharecropping relative withdrew because his investment in 1982/3 had paid no return.

While the evidence I have obtained does not support the argument that sharecropping allowed for accumulation, it was clear that some of Mabua's sharecrop-contractors, such as the mine-clerk referred to above, had thought they might use such arrangements for that purpose, only to be disillusioned. Nonetheless, some sharecrop-contractors in the village had entered such arrangements in order to employ their draught animals and implements more fully than they would have been had they been used only to work their own fields, and they thereby supplemented their arable returns. The village sub-headman was one of these: he worked both his own and his son's fields as well as that of a man from a neighbouring village whose own income and resources were insufficient to allow him to work the land himself. The return for the sub-headman was a half-share of the crop from a field which he had ploughed and planted. In some years his contribution to the tasks of ploughing and planting included using his own oxen, implements, seed, fertiliser and labour. In other years, they were completed through his hiring a tractor to turn the soil after which he and his grandson used his oxen and planter to plant seed and spread fertiliser, both of which items he provided. The more labour-intensive tasks of weeding, harvesting and threshing were shared between the women in his household and members of the household whose field was worked. They were assisted by other landless women who received small payments of crop for their services.

Other sharecrop-contractors were themselves landless people who used sharecropping as a means of obtaining some arable product directly for themselves. Some were older retired migrants who, through wise investments of migrant labour earnings, had accumulated

stock and implements, and had established various local social networks. They were now able to contract themselves to sharecrop others' land. One man in this situation explained that "I live by seahlolo": soon after retiring from wage-employment he had established himself as a sharecrop-contractor working the field of a resident in a neighbouring location, either using his own oxen and implements or engaging in co-operative arrangements with others to do the work. The sharecropping relationship he established was sufficiently long-standing and secure that his widow was able to maintain it, at least for the next two years, after his death late in 1982. Also to be found among the landless contractors were relict wives of migrants who invested some of their remittance receipts to hire local tractors and purchase seed and fertiliser so as to work others' fields on a sharecropping basis. In most instances, however, such arrangements were quite short-lived, except where the absent husband was expected soon to retire from wage-labour and engage actively in local productive activities.

#### Agricultural Co-operation

Sharecropping, as the examples above suggest, often involves a complex set of arrangements, not only between the contractor and the client but also between the contractor and a variety of others who may participate in various ways in the agricultural activities around which the sharecropping relationship is built (cf. Murray, 1976a: 121-128; Robertson, 1987: 142-159). Sometimes these are on a purely material basis, as for example when the contractor hires a tractor to turn the soil. In other instances, however, these arrangements involve various forms of mutual assistance, as for example when the contractor must turn to a ploughing company of which he/she is a member in order to ensure that the field to be sharecropped is ploughed. Moreover, various people can be brought in to assist with the labour-intensive tasks of weeding, harvesting and threshing, either through one of the sharecropping partners calling a work-party, or by individuals being called upon to assist in return for payment which is usually in kind (cf. Kuckertz, 1985: 117-8).

This variety of arrangements within the sharecropping relationship reflects the extent of ways in which agricultural activities are generally undertaken through co-operative labour and mutual assistance, as well as through the hiring - for cash - of tractors and, in some instances in recent years, of labour too. Following the example of Murray (1976a) and Turner (1978) who also worked in Lesotho, I have previously detailed the nature of these kinds of relationships as they occurred in Qacha's Nek during the mid-1970s (Spiegel, 1979: 118ff.). As regards the arrangements made for ploughing and planting fields, the nature of these relationships in Mabua was - with some minor exceptions - very much the same as in Lesotho. I will therefore only provide only a brief summary here of their characteristics in Mabua so that I can concentrate, rather, upon (i) the extent to which people with fields drew upon the labour of others who lacked them in order to weed, harvest and thresh their crops; and (ii) the latter's dependence on offering such labour to obtain some arable product. Provision of this labour was particularly important for households which lacked a regular remittance income as they were thereby able to obtain small amounts of food.

#### Ploughing and planting arrangements

The most common means whereby Mabua's landholders had their fields ploughed during the early 1980s was by hiring one of the four locally available tractors. In some cases the field was then planted by the application of a tractor-drawn mechanical planter - also hired. In most instances, however, planting, as well as cultivating (mechanical weeding) was completed by ox-drawn implements although a few people with very limited resources broadcast-planted.

Those who owned all the necessary stock and implements, and had the necessary labour available in the household, undertook this task themselves. A few hired these resources from those who had them

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<sup>35</sup> Because broadcast planting does not result in rows of crop, cultivating (mechanical weeding) is not possible. Broadcast planting also effectively excludes any fertiliser being used unless it too is broadcast before ploughing. People who can afford to purchase fertiliser will also spend money on mechanical planting so that the fertiliser is placed close to the seed.

available, while others exchanged labour for the use of implements or draught animals, thereby effectively entering ploughing companies. These arrangements were often based on longer-term relationships of kinship, of friendship and, significantly, of co-operation in the care of livestock. Those whose cattle were herded and penned together formed ploughing companies which used their aggregated herds, implements and labour to plant and cultivate their own and sometimes others' fields. An absent labour migrant who left his animals in the care of an older man with a herd of his own could be sure that that man's draught team and implements would plant and cultivate his household's field. Interestingly, although there were hierarchies in such ploughing companies, they were not as marked as I found them to be in Qacha's Nek. Indeed, I never heard the descriptive label *hokena lehafing* (lit. to enter the armpit), used in Mabua to describe junior partnership in a ploughing company (cf. Spiegel, 1979: 120). This was possibly because Mabua's householders had less complex agriculture-based assistance relationships than I had found among householders in Qacha's Nek. The likely reason for this difference is that landholders in Mabua had single fields in arable areas demarcated by 'betterment' planning; in Lesotho, by contrast, a household's landholdings could be spread over five or more small scattered fields, each with its own set of productive relationships. A further result of these circumstances was that ploughing companies were not as persistent over the years as they had appeared to be in Qacha's Nek.

#### Weeding, harvesting and threshing arrangements

During the period for which I have data (1981/2 to 1983/4 seasons), 25 of the 30 Mabua households I sampled were involved in some form of cooperation with other households to perform the tasks of weeding, harvesting and threshing. Of these, 13 households called upon others' labour for these tasks, 11 provided such labour, and one did both. Four of the remaining five were totally uninvolved in agriculture and were wholly dependent on migrant wages. Indeed in three of these last cases all the household's members were away from the village almost permanently. The fifth was a household with enough members to complete its weeding,

harvesting and threshing unassisted. It also normally managed to plough and plant for itself on its own land, although its members did use outside labour on a sharecropped field in a neighbouring location.

This was the household of the village sub-headman, JT (see case 5.2), which had two fields: one in the name of the sub-headman, the other in that of his migrant son. JT owned a plough, a planter and a cultivator, and had sufficient cattle in his byre to span a ploughing team on his own. Some of these cattle belonged to an absent labour migrant who had no field and did not call upon the team, although he expected to begin to do so once he had arranged a field to sharecrop. With JT's labour, and that of his grandson and their herder, they were able to work their two fields for themselves. His daughter-in-law and grandchildren normally helped to complete the weeding and harvesting without any outside assistance, and the whole family participated in threshing their crop which the menfolk then transported to the homestead on ox-drawn sledges.

All but one of the 13 households which called upon others to assist with weeding, harvesting and/or threshing their crops had fields of their own; the exception used this labour to work a sharecropped field. By comparison, eight of the 11 households which provided such labour to those who needed it were themselves landless. Two of these were so poor that their involvement in the provision of agricultural labour occurred because they each had a household member regularly employed locally by better-off households where their duties included agricultural work: one was a domestic worker, the other was a herder.<sup>36</sup> Those who had fields and also provided labour to others did so because they did not have the resources to ensure their own fields were worked properly.

MKM was widowed in 1982 after her husband had been ill for five years (see case 5.5). Her brother sharecropped her field, and in 1982, when she was still in mourning, she had not helped to weed, harvest or thresh and had had to call upon others to help in exchange for a small portion of the crop. In the following two years she helped her brother's wife with these tasks, and added to her food-income by weeding and harvesting a neighbour's field. She said that she felt obliged to do this in order to make up her losses suffered because she could not work her own field for and by herself.

This kind of labour was commonly provided on the understanding that those who did the work would receive a portion of the harvest

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<sup>36</sup> This was not the herder in the sub-headman, JT's, household.

in return. Such payments were normally made in stipulated amounts of grain and not as proportions of the total yield, although the amounts paid did tend to vary with the overall yield expected from a field in any one year. In poor years, therefore, workers also suffered a reduction in grain income; and in years where there was too little crop in the fields to warrant extensive weeding, they could be deprived wholly of this income. The payments normally included the right to take small amounts of green crop during the time of weeding, and odd gleanings during harvesting and threshing.

In some instances, a cash payment was made, but this was the exception and was not the form of payment favoured by those who did the work. Indeed, it was described by the word *sekoropo* (pl. *likoropo*; piece-job; from Afrikaans *skrop*: scrub) which more commonly described hard-labour short-term domestic work offering little if any security.<sup>37</sup> People preferred payment in kind because it left much greater leeway for slipping extra little amounts into the bargain. This was often crucial, considering that the stipulated amounts to be paid varied from a bag of maize and a basin of beans to just one 5 litre tin filled with sorghum. In one case an informant reported having employed some boys to do her threshing for her and had paid them just by feeding them cooked crushed maize (*setampo*) and *motoho*, a thick drink of almost liquid maize-porridge. In years such as 1982/3 yields were particularly low as a result of drought: one informant complained that her yield on a sharecropped field had been so small that year that "when I'd paid them [viz. my weeding/harvesting helpers] their tin each I got nothing [an exaggeration] for myself from that *seahlolo* I did." In cases that season where workers helped with only one of the three tasks, particularly the less time-demanding harvesting or threshing,<sup>38</sup> the amount formally paid could be as little as a basinful of maize-grain: but to this a worker would be able to add gleanings.

Who were the people who engaged in working on others' fields in this way? For the most part they were women, and - as we have seen

<sup>37</sup> Again this implies an opposition between an authentic and humanitarian Sesotho and an exogenous exploitative 'way of whites'. I return to discuss this again at the end of the chapter.

<sup>38</sup> There is a special term, *moelela*, which is used to describe the small amount of "corn given to women who have helped to winnow" (Paroz, 1974: 60).

- they were frequently from households lacking either a field or a regularly dependable remittance income, although some more enterprising wives of absent migrant workers did supplement their cash incomes in this way. One example was the woman who expressed a wish that her husband would purchase a tractor so that she would not have to sharecrop the following year. In each of the three years for which I obtained data, she had managed to weed and harvest in at least one other household's fields, and had obtained amounts ranging from a bag of maize, a basin of beans and green maize and pumpkins in 1982, to just two tins of sorghum in the poor harvest year of 1983.

Another such worker was an old woman who, in 1984, had an arrangement with a relatively well-off migrant's wife to weed and harvest her field and to help thresh her crop in exchange for a bag and a half of grain. This was a long-standing arrangement which had been temporarily suspended two years previously when the old woman had taken to supporting her family by working as a domestic locally for R10 per month plus food. She soon realised, however, the extent to which the job restricted her ability to earn by engaging in occasional piece-jobs and prevented her from earning her regular income in kind through providing her labour in her old patron's fields. She thus elected to leave the job after discovering the extent to which it restricted her freedom to use opportunities - both material and social - which had previously provided her with a more varied but greater means of support. Prior to having been employed, she had regularly brewed beer for sale, sometimes joining forces with another old woman to do so. She had also frequently been able to find odd floor-smearing and clothes-washing jobs in the village, occasionally being employed as a new mother's attendant. Now she was free to engage again in such activities, and to revive her local social networks.

For members of landless households, the ability to insert themselves into local productive activities was crucial for their very livelihoods, particularly if their access to cash income was unreliable and/or irregular. This was not merely because they were able to obtain some agricultural product by making their labour available; it was also because, having established relationships of

co-operation with those whose crops they worked on, they could turn to those people at other times of the year for help in times of material shortages. The idiom of mutual concern and altruism which people said motivated their willingness to assist others was thus underpinned by material relations of co-operation which extended from the fields into a variety of other areas of small scale productive activities and localised exchange relations.

The long-term nature of relationships formed around the activities of weeding and harvesting has been the subject of detailed exegesis by Murray (1976a: 99ff.). He has argued that, in Lesotho of the 1970s, the labour-intensive nature of these activities meant that they were frequently completed through the exploitation, by household managers, of relationships with kin and neighbours which had been invested with long-term moral commitment (Murray, 1976a: 127). In virtually all cases these were relationships between women.

The evidence from Mabua would suggest that this argument can, in addition, be turned on its head. Those who were relatively well-off and had fields requiring weeding and harvesting did indeed exploit their long-term relationships with poorer members of the village, glossing them as reciprocity (see below). But the latter had at least as great a need to create, reinforce and maintain such relationships for other times of the year. As has been pointed out elsewhere - both in comparative studies of different bantustan areas (cf. Sharp and Spiegel, 1985; forthcoming) and for Matatiele alone (Spiegel, 1987) - the ability of the poorest in villages such as Mabua to insert themselves into productive processes allows them to maintain social relationships which provide a crucial safety-net not available to people in areas of high-density populations of relocated people. I examine further the ways in which these kinds of relationships are established, maintained and used in chapter 8.

#### Agricultural co-operation and descriptive tropes

Most of the people to whom I spoke about these various forms of agricultural assistance did not have any special terms to describe

the provision of labour in exchange for payment in kind. Indeed, as in Qacha's Nek in the mid 1970s, it was regarded as proper Sesotho: "The Sesotho way of working is that ... a woman who has no field ought to join in and help those who do plough. She will help with weeding and with harvesting so that at the time of reaping she will receive a part of the yield" (quoted in Spiegel, 1979: 165). When one weeded for another the activity was described simply as *hohlaolela* (to weed for [another]), the verb *hohlaola* (to weed) being extended by the applied suffix *-ela*). Similarly, harvesting and threshing were described as *hokotulela* and *hopolela*, both verbs with the applied suffix added to describe harvesting and threshing for. Moreover, people suggested that such assistance was based on the principle of reciprocity: that someone called out to work could expect the assistance of those whom she assisted. As one woman who had others working her field said: "I would go to work on their fields if they needed me, but they haven't anything to weed" (cf. Murray, 1976a: 127 discussed above).

As I pointed out above, however, being paid in cash to help weed, harvest or thresh a crop was singled out for special linguistic treatment: such cases were referred to by the Afrikaans-derived term *sekoropo*. This term was more commonly used to describe piece-work jobs such as plastering the walls of a newly built house, smearing its floor or providing short-term labour service for a cash wage in the village or its vicinity. In most such instances, the worker found the piece-job at short notice. Interestingly, village-based employers of this kind of agricultural and domestic labour were not commonly inclined to describe it by that term, preferring to imply reciprocity in the relationship.

The term was, however, used to describe one-off daily employment in town or with the local department of works or other government agencies. Significantly, I never heard it used to describe regular wage-work, whether locally or in migrant labour. It is thus not the equivalent of *bereka*.

What does this use of the word *sekoropo* imply as regards the constructed cosmologies of the people of Mabua? At the end of the first major section of this chapter I argued that people normally

draw pragmatically from diverse language and practical traditions unless their situation demands that a trope or practice be used to express a particular political stance. It is quite possible that people in Mabua as elsewhere in Matatiele, felt aggrieved at the exploitative nature of the cash-payment relationship for local work and thus elected to describe it as *sekoropo* and associate it with an intruding system in much the same way as the Comaroffs (1987) argue the Tswana did when they described migrant wage-work as *bereka*. In a situation where most short-term labour assistance relationships are believed to be based on the principle of reciprocity, cash payment, with its implication of immediate ('balanced') reciprocity, is indeed regarded as distasteful. This is because it makes clear the exploitative nature of all such relationships: as we have seen, those who performed the tasks of weeding, harvesting and threshing for others did so in order to obtain some income for themselves rather than with the expectation that their efforts would be reciprocated in like kind.<sup>39</sup> The reciprocal gloss 'disguised' the exploitative nature of the relationship (cf. Spiegel, 1980a: 123),<sup>40</sup> a disguise which was lifted by cash payments. The politics of such a relationship make the use of tropes which will signify its distastefulness highly probable. But - as I point out in my conclusion - it is very difficult to assume, on the basis of language-use alone, that people hold such sentiments. As Keesing (1987; 1989) has pointed out, we need also to examine other cultural signals before leaping to conclusions derived from looking at language use.

<sup>39</sup> Some were, nonetheless, able to utilise the idiom of reciprocity in which their assistance was cast to call upon those for whom they worked to help them out materially at other times of the year.

<sup>40</sup> Kuckertz (1985: 119ff.) agrees that 'work-parties' and other mutual help is not really reciprocal. And he argues that people in the Pondoland area where he worked do not even perceive work-parties as co-operative in any sense of generalised reciprocity: "Cagubans would prefer to achieve their economic goal of a good harvest independently of any co-operation from outside the homestead" (p. 120).

## CHAPTER 7

### VILLAGE POLITICS AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES IN MABUA: USING TRADITION AS RESOURCE

The residents of villages such as Mabua are faced with the demands of three separate structures of local administration, all of which intervene and intrude in their lives, often together and yet in conflicting ways. The first of these is the local chiefs' and headmen's administration which operates in terms of the Bantu Authorities system, legislated in 1951 by the Bantu Authorities Act and set in motion in the Transkei in 1956 (Carter et al, 1967: 46-51; 89-91). The second is the Transkei civil service which finds its local manifestation in the district administration at least in part still effectively under magisterial control. Thirdly, there is the ubiquitous presence of the Transkei police and their informer network. I distinguish them from the rest of the civil service primarily because their interventions were perceived as being of a different order by people who suffered them, and because they tended to operate outside the ambit of the local and district administration.<sup>1</sup>

The ethnographic focus of this chapter is an examination of how these three administrative structures impinged on the lives of Mabua's residents, both separately and in conjunction with one another. Despite the fact that they intersected on the ground, it is useful first to consider separately the history and structure of each and thereafter to use case material to examine their local-

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<sup>1</sup> De Wet (1986: ch 8) has argued that in the Keiskammahoek village of Catha people are similarly exposed to a three-pronged intervention by the Ciskeian state in the form of "the office of the Magistrate and the various government departments which have offices in Keiskammahoek ... the Tribal Authority system of local government ... [and] the Ciskei National Independence Party" (De Wet, 1986: 286). It is not clear, however, whether the Ciskei police intervene in local village affairs to the extent that the Transkei police did so in Mabua. The Transkei National Independence Party was nowhere near as ubiquitous a presence in Matatiele as was the Ciskei National Independence Party in Keiskammahoek. Recently reported tensions between the Transkei military and the police, since the 1988 military coup, were not very evident at the village level during the time of research (Weekly Mail, 01.12.89; Flanagan, 1989: 47).

level effects and the processes which they set in motion. In addition, the chapter looks at the ways in which some of the local political and administrative structures and practices found in the district are given legitimacy by appeals to 'tradition'. This discussion allows further brief consideration of the reasons for apparent continuities in social practices. Before addressing these issues, however, a note on secondary sources is apposite.

#### Note on sources

In chapter 2 I commented on the way in which ethnographic practice requires consultation of literature which can throw light on the social practices and cultural perceptions of the people in one's chosen area of study, and on how this may direct the researcher to a body of material regarded as being about people in a particular 'culture area'. I have followed this pattern to a large extent in looking for material to illustrate the preceding chapters. Thus far, when I have looked for data which can be used comparatively, I have tended to look primarily to the ethnographic corpus on Lesotho. And I shall do so again in chapter 8. The reason for doing this is that the majority of people in Mabua village, in Tsita Moshesh location, and in the Moshesh Tribal Authority area, as well as neighbouring tribal authority areas, were Sesotho first-language speakers.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, they saw themselves as part of the greater population of Basotho, people (indeed, for them, a people) who, in their understanding, have their contemporary cultural epicentre in Lesotho.<sup>3</sup> And they looked to the Sotho past as a source of precedent to create their own sense of cultural base-line. The same could be said for many of the residents on 'Harry Ebden' and 'Etheldale' farms. It was for this reason that an image of a past

<sup>2</sup> This does not mean that there was anywhere near the kind of 'ethnic' homogeneity which Jackson's (1975) attempt at classification suggests. Indeed, the 1980 census figures for Tsita's location were 1 746 Xhosa and 2 812 'other groups' (Magistrate, Maluti, 1982). I have previously commented on the likelihood that the figures for 'Xhosa' in the district are inflated (Spiegel, 1982: 36). At least one way to have done this would have been to enumerate all Hlubi descendants as Xhosa, even if they spoke Sesotho as a first language as was commonly the case.

<sup>3</sup> My use here of the phrase 'cultural epicentre' does not mean that I subscribe to a notion of multiple cultures each with its own core. I am merely representing the perceptions of informants who, as my parenthetical comment suggests, have a clear perception of 'the Basotho' as a culturally and linguistically defined social entity the boundaries of which are readily apparent.

practice of *sethabathaba* by chiefs in Lesotho was called upon to give their present labour-tenancy practice some sense of legitimacy (see chapter 6).

For the present chapter this exclusive drawing off the Lesotho corpus is neither appropriate nor possible. Since its annexation as part of East Griqualand in the 1870s, Matatiele has been subject to the same kind of administration as prevailed elsewhere in the Transkei, even though it was formally incorporated into the Transkeian Territories only in 1895 (Southall, 1982: 147). Despite various claims that it is, or ought to be, part of Lesotho,<sup>4</sup> the district's local administration has always been along much the same lines as that elsewhere in the Transkei. For this reason, the present chapter draws heavily on the literature on local administrative and political structures and processes in the Transkei (cf. Carter et al, 1967; D A Kotzé, 1972; Hammond-Tooke, 1975; Charton, 1976; Beinart and Bundy, 1980; 1987a; Southall, 1982; Haines et al, 1984; Segar, 1986; 1989), and takes little cognisance of the material on chieftaincy and local-level politics in Lesotho (eg. Hamnett, 1975; Perry, 1977).

An interesting feature of much of this body of literature is the extent to which almost everything published since the 1950s excludes detailed consideration of the public service bureaucracy, and concentrates on the system of administration established by the Bantu Authorities system, with its reincorporation of hereditary chiefs into what some have described as a system of 'indirect rule' (Hammond-Tooke, 1975: 2) based on a "model of 'tribal'/ethnic

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<sup>4</sup> In 1976, just before the Transkei was granted 'independence', there were calls for the secession of the Maluti region (viz. the districts of Matatiele and Mount Fletcher) from the Transkei, and its incorporation into the South Sotho bantustan of Qwaqwa, or into Lesotho (Streek and Wicksteed, 1981: 51; Southall, 1982: 141-2). These calls fly directly in the face of the often repeated Transkei rulers' claims that all of East Griqualand, including the present Mount Currie District, rightfully belongs to the Transkei (Streek and Wicksteed, 1981: 171ff.)

trusteeship" (Haines et al.: 1984: 6).<sup>5</sup> This is particularly notable for those repeatedly cited texts which deal primarily with administrative structures and their formal genesis and elaboration (Carter et al, 1967; Hammond-Tooke, 1975; Southall, 1982; Haines et al, 1984: 2-13). It is rather less the case for works concerned with political processes which occurred within the constraints imposed by those structures, and which at times seemed to have been set in motion in order to overthrow them (cf. Beinart and Bundy, 1980; 1987b, albeit for an earlier period; and Copelyn, 1974). Except for Roos (1975) and more briefly D A Kotzé (1972) and Wronsley (1972), none attempts a detailed analysis of the history and evolving structure of bureaucratic administration through the development of the Transkeian public service, particularly as this manifests at the district level.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, I have been unable to find any secondary source on the history and structure of the Transkei police.<sup>7</sup> Although the intersection between the old district magistrates' administration and that of the chiefs and headmen is discussed at some length for the period soon after the imposition of the Bantu Authorities system, there is virtually no attempt to follow it through into the period when the public service began to grow rapidly.

It is difficult to do more than speculate about why there should have been this tremendous interest in a system of administration

<sup>5</sup> Before that period, there were attempts made to describe and understand the workings of the already extant bureaucratic system of administration in the Transkei (McLoughlin, 1936; Canca, 1948). The latter deals with the administrative structure under the chief magistrate in a thesis devoted to the history of the District Council System (see below). More recently there have been a few theses devoted to particular facets of the Transkei's civil service in Umtata, although little attention has been paid to its workings in the districts and villages (Roos, 1979; Bhana, 1986; Sotobe, 1989). Bhana's thesis does deal with local government, in the form of a Transkeian municipality. But municipal government and administration is catered for by different legislation from that for general district administration. The reason for this is that earlier the towns were reserved for whites, and in 1970 - some years after the Transkei attained 'self-government' - a Transkeian Township Board was established to administer towns separately from location areas (Bhana, 1986: 54). This was replaced in 1979 by a Municipalities Act passed by the Transkei government (Bhana, 1986: 92).

<sup>6</sup> Also cf. Canca (1948) and McLoughlin (1936) for the period up to the 1940s, and Charton (1976) and Southall (1982: 176ff) who deal with the growth of the public service in the years preceding and immediately after 'independence'. Bhana (1986) includes a brief summary of that administration's history, and links it to the Transkei's bantustan-type constitutional development.

<sup>7</sup> In his book devoted to "an investigation of local government in the Transkei, its development and problems" Hammond-Tooke (1975: 2) does not have even one index reference to the police or security forces in that territory, and makes only passing reference to the effects of the state of emergency imposed in 1960 and in place in the Transkei until 1989 (p. 204).

spawned by the *apartheid* state's bantustan strategy. Yet one can comment on the impressions left by the rather skewed nature of this body of material on the Transkei, and the possible effects it can have, indeed has had, for subsequent scholarship.

At least one reason for the interest in the workings of the Bantu Authorities system must surely have been the fact that it represented, in more than mere rhetoric, Pretoria's first attempts to create the instruments for implementation of 'separate development'. And some wondered what kinds of political opportunities it might create for Africans otherwise wholly disfranchised and severely oppressed (cf. Carter et al., 1967: xi), particularly in a period when the conventional bureaucracy was both small and dominated by whites (Canca, 1948; Mafeje, 1963), and was regarded as of little local sociological significance. For an anthropologist such as Hammond-Tooke it also provided the opportunity to examine apparent continuities of forms of government (1975: x; cf. 1964; 1968). Having been centrally involved, as government ethnologist, in 'finding' hereditary chiefs where there were none immediately apparent (Hammond-Tooke, 1975: ix; Carter et al. 1967: 50), he was ideally placed to look closely at how and whether past 'traditional' forms of government could be reinvented for new circumstances.

By paying so much attention to this system, however, both Carter et al. and Hammond-Tooke have implicitly given it a semblance of legitimacy, particularly as neither locates it adequately in the changing nature of the other bureaucratic structures then developing in the Transkei.<sup>8</sup> The result is that readers of these standard texts on the Transkei's administration are left with an impression of a system of chiefly administration which seems far more preponderant than it is on the ground: already in 1972 D A Kotzé suggested that the tribal authority system of "rural local

<sup>8</sup> Hammond-Tooke does include a chapter on the workings of the District Council System (1975: ch. 10; cf. 1968), and in 1964 already he had published a critique of the Bantu Authorities system which "with its kin-based conservatism is totally inadequate to cope with the problems of an emerging state" (1964: 528), a sentiment repeated some years later by D A Kotzé who argued that the efficacy of autonomous local government was in decline in the Transkei as elsewhere in Africa (1972: 61). Yet Hammond-Tooke's book, published just one year before 'independence' when the public service was growing rapidly (see below), makes little reference to that new burgeoning bureaucracy and its on-the-ground structures.

government acts as an appendage to local [bureaucratic] administration .. that is kept alive by the latter as a matter of policy" (1972: 61), because "[t]he Bantu authorities did not perform well at all" (D A Kotzé, 1972: 60). And in the early 1980s, Segar (1986: 61; 1989: 33) had a local official explain that headmen "have no power at all, the real power is there at Maluti [administrative centre]".

In a sense, both Southall (1982) and Haines et al. (1984) are even more culpable in this regard than either Carter et al. or Hammond-Tooke, for they had the advantage of writing in the post-'independence' period.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, by drawing upon Charton (1976) and other sources, Southall was able to document the growth of the Transkei's public service and its members' class interests as a factor in Transkeian politics (1982: 172-86). Yet both works are dominated by discussion of the system of chiefly rule and its evolution, and both lean heavily, and quite uncritically, on either one or both of Carter et al.'s and Hammond-Tooke's already very similar earlier sources (cf. Segar, 1986: 55).<sup>10</sup> Moreover, both fail to analyse with equal detail the development, structure and workings of the new and growing bureaucracy, or even to refer to Roos's (1975) dissertation on precisely this issue: this despite Southall's explicit recognition that "[t]he expansion of the bureaucracy in Umtata has been perhaps the most visible and substantial aspect of the entire homeland scheme" (1982: 176). While Haines et al. offer a brief discussion of recent changes in district-level administrative arrangements (1984: 21-3) and the ways in which the rapid growth and development of the public-service bureaucracy clashed with the system of chiefly rule, at least at the local level, Southall made no attempt to do so.

<sup>9</sup> For Haines et al. the most significant "networks and mechanisms of [rural] control [were those] operated by chiefs and headmen" (1984: 13). Indeed, they consider the import of the state of emergency declared in 1960, and still in place in the Transkei, virtually only in terms of the ways in which it extended chiefs' powers: "These temporary powers accorded to the chiefs and headmen were never revoked and were thus incorporated into the structure of the Bantu Authorities" (1984: 8).

<sup>10</sup> Hammond-Tooke has explained the similarity in these texts by saying that Carter et al. drew heavily on his notes and that he had written portions of their text. He also explained that he had felt politically constrained at the time and was thus unwilling to acknowledge the extent of his contribution (pers. comm., 1989).

And as regards the structure and development of the Transkei police force, none of the standard sources is at all informative.

## I THE THREE ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURES

### Chiefs and Headmen

Until the 1950s, local administration in South Africa's Transkeian Territories (viz. the Transkei) was in the hands of government-appointed headmen each of whom administered a location that comprised the lowest recognised unit of administration. The boundaries of these locations were established by administrative fiat after annexation, a prime concern having been to undermine and break the power and disaggregate the domains of chiefs, many of whom had been central to primary resistance to colonisation (Hammond-Tooke, 1975: 77-8; Beinart and Bundy, 1980).<sup>11</sup> In time, the centrality of headmen to local administrative practices, and the importance of locations as administrative units, resulted in locations becoming "capable of arousing a high degree of loyalty on the part of their members" (Carter et al., 1967: 85; cf. Hammond-Tooke, 1975: 16; Segar, 1989: 30), and headmen coming to be seen as 'traditional' leaders (Spiegel and Boonzaier, 1988: 51).

<sup>11</sup> In 1928, provision was made "for chiefs either to be 'appointed' or 'recognized' by the Governor-General. Appointed chiefs were granted authority to 'exercise tribal government and control and to perform administrative functions' ... while 'recognized' chiefs had no administrative functions ... [nor] any 'administrative or official authority on behalf of the Government...'" (Hammond-Tooke, 1975: 93). In effect all this meant was that 'appointed' chiefs were headmen with territories larger than locations. But they had no jurisdiction over headmen within their areas (ibid; cf. Haines et al., 1984: 3).

Under this earlier system of 'direct rule' (Hammond-Tooke, 1975: 81)<sup>12</sup> headmen were directly responsible to district magistrates whose districts comprised between 30 and 40 locations. Each magistrate was in turn responsible to a chief magistrate in Umtata<sup>13</sup> who, after Union in 1910, reported to the Department of Native Affairs in Pretoria (Carter et al., 1967: 77; 84ff.; Hammond-Tooke, 1975: 77ff.; 109ff.; Southall, 1982: 88ff.).<sup>14</sup>

With the introduction of the Bantu Authorities system in the 1950s, however, the headman's functions and the administrative centrality of locations were structurally altered, although the latter remained important social and administrative entities. Locations were grouped into 'tribes' (cf. Hammond-Tooke, 1956a; 1956b; 1957; Jackson, 1975; Skalnik, 1988) each under a chief. Chiefs each presided over a tribal authority, the council of which included the headmen of locations within that tribal authority's domain. Headmen thus now became responsible to those councils and their presiding chiefs, and the magistrates became somewhat more remote as regards local administrative processes (Haines et al., 1984: 7).

They did, nonetheless, retain an important role through the district authorities. In the 1950s, when the Bantu Authorities system was implemented, the chiefs were grouped into district

<sup>12</sup> After Brookes (1967 [1934]: 249) who saw the Transkeian administrative system under magistrates as "an original form of 'indirect rule'" (Dubow, 1986a: 180). Beinart and Bundy consider the system of rule through headmen to have been one of 'indirect rule', instituted as a result of "the Cape's inability and unwillingness to admit the Transkei into the full colonial system of administration and representation" (1987a: 7). From the top-down perspective of the colonial government, the system of appointing on-the-ground administrative lackeys from among the local 'loyal' elite may well have appeared as a form of indirect rule, effected through people selected from the conquered's own 'leaders'. But from the perspective of those now subject to this administration, the imposition of appointed local rulers who were often not of chiefly descent constituted a new and extremely direct intervention and form of rule. What Beinart and Bundy appear to suggest is a continuity between the pre-1950s system of local administration and the Bantu Authorities system: "...the period 1900 to 1960 saw ... an extension of the apparatus of political and social control, particularly the elaboration of a system of 'indirect rule' ... the crucial political development was the mounting involvement ... of chiefs, headmen and Christian educated 'progressive farmers' in the administrative system (Beinart and Bundy, 1980: 275).

<sup>13</sup> Until 1903, when they were incorporated into one, there were three Chief Magistracies: the Transkei, with its seat at Butterworth; Tembuland, at Umtata; and East Griqualand, at Kokstad (Carter et al., 1967: 77; Hammond-Tooke, 1975: 23).

<sup>14</sup> The Chief Magistracy was abolished in 1963 when the Transkei moved towards apartheid-styled 'self-government' and a Legislative Assembly came into being: "The Chief Magistrate gave place to a Chief Minister and his cabinet ..." (Hammond-Tooke, 1975: 1; Carter et al. 1967: 85).

authorities. This major modification to the Bantu Authorities blueprint was unique to the Transkei (Carter et al., 1967: 89). Part of the reason was that, "[d]istricts were so much part of the Transkeian scene, both organisationally and psychologically, that their disestablishment would have caused serious dislocations" (Hammond-Tooke, 1975: 206; cf. Southall, 1982: 105). Another reason was that the system of district councils which had been in existence in the Transkei for many years (cf. Canca, 1948) was one of the remaining institutions by which the educated elite in the territory retained at least symbolic access to political decision-making processes.

Although districts under magistrates are still important, the district authorities were indeed disestablished in 1965 in terms of the Transkei Authorities Act (SAIRR, 1966: 122; Breytenbach, 1976: 39; Segar, 1989: 31). The result was that the Transkei Bantu Authorities hierarchy fell in line with that elsewhere and regional authorities became the next level upwards above tribal authorities, just as in other bantustans. In some parts of the Transkei, where regional authorities' areas approximated those of earlier chiefdom clusters, they were headed by a paramount chief. But the heterogeneity of Matatiele's and Mount Fletcher's population has meant that the Maluti Regional Authority, into which both districts' tribal authorities fall, has no paramount (see chapter 3, esp. n2).<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> The change wrought by the Bantu Authorities system with regard to chiefs had some interesting side-effects. One of these was that the chieftaincy became sufficiently important that government ethnologists (in the Transkei this was Hammond-Tooke) were required to 'find' chiefs by reconstructing genealogies for those groupings which had no such officials - ostensibly because their members had historically lost any real sense of cohesion when they had been forced to disperse and flee from other predatory 'tribes', particularly in the Natal area (Carter et al., 1967: 50; Hammond-Tooke, 1975: 207; but cf. Cobbing, 1989). A second effect was that "[b]etween 1955 and 1958, 30 chiefs and headmen were deposed ... [because] ... [i]n addition to qualifying for royalty through birth, a different qualification appeared, state approval and consent" (Moll, 1983: 39). Moreover, chiefs were sufficiently powerful for the chief magistrate to be inundated with applications from people who wished to claim chiefly status, and which it fell to the government ethnologist to consider (Hammond-Tooke, 1975: 207). Indeed, in 1982 I was approached by a friend of the magistrate at Maluti to help him claim his supposed right to a chieftainship in Umzimkulu.

By the 1980s, the essentials of the Bantu Authority system were still very much intact.<sup>16</sup> For Mabua villagers this meant an administration which had its lowest-level representative in the form of a village subheadman who was an unpaid appointee of the location headman, nominated by Mabua residents. He had occupied this office for many years, during which time he had seen seven different individuals in the office of location headman.<sup>17</sup> In 1982 and 1983 he was assisted by another villager who aspired to the office of subheadman and who had unsuccessfully attempted to effect a takeover (see case 7.1 below).

The most visible facet of this administration was a weekly village meeting and moot (*pitso*), held on Saturday mornings. This provided opportunity for the subheadman to report what had transpired at the location headman's regular Wednesday *pitso* and - when he had reason to attend - at the Moshesh Tribal Authority an 8 kilometre walk or horse-back ride away in another location. In addition the village meeting was the opportunity to transmit information and directives from government departmental offices about such issues as the opening of grazing camps and the need for pit-latrines on every site, and to hear minor cases of disputes in the village, although often their appearance there was preceded by their having had an initial private moot hearing attended by the sub-headman but 'within the family'. The village *pitso* was also the place where demands were made for contributions to a variety of different special funds:

<sup>16</sup> Indeed, legislation passed in 1982 had the effect of extending the judicial functions of chiefs and thereby reinforcing their power. This was effected through the passage of the Regional Authorities Court Act which gave regional authorities the same degree of criminal and civil jurisdiction as that held by magistrates' courts in respect of Transkeian citizens (Segar, 1989: 31).

<sup>17</sup> I have retained the official terminology for the various levels of the Bantu Authorities hierarchy. I do this despite the fact that in Sesotho people persisted in using the term *sebotā* (headman) to describe the subheadman and *morena* (chief) to describe the headman (cf. Segar, 1989: 30). Thus I use headman to describe the most senior administrative figure in a location, and subheadman to describe his subordinate at the village (ward) level. Chiefs are responsible for administering 'tribes' which comprise a number of locations whose headmen all report to a tribal authority.

Although Paroz (1974) does not specify, the Sesotho term *sebotā* probably derives from the Xhosa *isibonda*, literally a supporting ridge-pole (Hammond-Tooke, 1975: 80), a term used derogatively to suggest that headmen were "'poles' supporting the colonial administration" (Southall, 1982: 89; cf. Bundy, 1987b: 217). Cf. Kropf and Godfrey who define *isibonda* as "(a) A pole or stake in a fence or hut; fig. a headman of a locality or district, who upholds the Government's authority. (b) A severe, constant pain" (1915: 42). The Sesotho term *sebotā* can also be translated as 'heap' (Paroz, 1974: 39).

for materials to build covers to protect springs against animal encroachment; for the purchase of a beast to celebrate a TNIP rally where a government minister would attend, etc. Such demands were often met by complaints that previous collections had not been used for their intended purposes, or that only part of the money collected had been spent while the rest had disappeared.<sup>18</sup>

In addition, the subheadman was frequently consulted by villagers with a variety of problems ranging from bureaucratic difficulties over pensions and papers such as travel documents, to various family disputes such as absent migrants failing to remit and cases of intrafamilial violence. To deal with these he would first call together members of the family, and if that procedure was unsuccessful the case was brought to the village *pitso*. The next step was to go to the location headman's court.

During the time I was in Mabua the most serious case resolved by the subheadman involved an attempted rape of a young girl visiting the most active village liquor outlet. Despite the proprietors' usually very close connections with the police (see case 7.3), they elected not to use that resource in this instance because "this girl is not my child. I just want you [subheadman] to ask him [accused] what he has done." And once having obtained a confession he was fined as well as publicly shamed: "One woman took a potty and smacked him on his head with it; and then she made him put it on his head like a cap. And they said to him: "'smoke" (rape)<sup>19</sup> that - seize it in the way you wanted to seize this child."

A further task of the subheadman was to know of all strangers in the village: all overnight visitors to the village were thus expected to report to him, and villagers accommodating such people were expected to ensure that he knew of their presence. Moreover, at least in principle, all officials from either the civil service or the police were expected to report to the subheadman when they entered the village and before they conducted whatever business had

<sup>18</sup> I was able to explain my presence as researcher in the village at one such meeting early on in the fieldwork period.

<sup>19</sup> The word *hotsuba* (to smoke tobacco) is a common euphemism describing sexual intercourse (cf. Murray, 1975).

brought them there. Particularly as regards the police, however, this requirement was honoured primarily in the breach (see case 7.3 and its outcome below).

The next level above that of the village subheadman was that of the Tsita Moshesh location headman. In this instance there had been a relatively rapid turnover of occupants of the office: records held by the Maluti magistrate in 1982 (M/M DRB) indicated that while Seeiso Moshesh had been appointed in 1955, he was replaced by a series of three 'acting' headmen in the period 1960 until 1969 when he re-occupied the office until his death in 1983. At least for the immediate period thereafter, and throughout 1984 when I was in the field, the office was occupied by his widow.<sup>20</sup>

While the headman's *pitso* was open to all Mabua villagers, the majority did not attend unless they had special reason to do so. Most preferred not to do so. Except in exceptional circumstances, local disputes were handled in the village court and there was only infrequent recourse to the headman's moot. Visits by the headman to Mabua were quite uncommon, with the exception of her regular attendance at bi-monthly pension payouts conducted on the front porch of the village store, and when annual taxes were collected by officials from the administrative offices in Maluti (but see case 7.2). When the headman's stamp was needed for such things as applications for a travel document or registration as a pensioner, this could be arranged through the subheadman, although some individuals preferred to visit her village personally.

The tribal authority was, by contrast, virtually as remote an institution as was the district magistrate's court and administrative centre for most Mabua villagers. Indeed, people found more reason to attend at the latter - to obtain travel documents, to be attested for migrant contracts etc. - than at the former. Segar (1989: 31-2) has discussed how little most residents of St. Paul's village understood of the workings and composition of their tribal authority. This was despite the fact that it had its seat near to the Maluti Administrative Centre in the same location

<sup>20</sup> I will continue to refer to her as 'headman', that being the official designation which was never used in a feminine or gender non-specific form.

as that in which St. Paul's village was situated, and comprised representatives from just three locations. The same lack of understanding was evident among most of Mabua's population who were further disadvantaged by their tribal authority being based in a location with which they did not share even a common border. As regards the regional authority, this was so remote - both socio-politically and geographically - that people in Mabua were virtually unaware of its existence. Through the sporadic activities of the Transkei National Independence Party, there was greater awareness of the existence and operation of the Transkei parliament in Umtata than of the regional authority in Mount Fletcher.

### Magistrates and the civil service

The system of administration established in the areas which became the Transkeian Territories included the creation of 26 magisterial districts under a chief magistrate in Umtata.<sup>21</sup> Until

21

The districts of Maclear and Mount Currie (Kokstad) were initially administered as part of the chief magistracy of East Griqualand and, after 1903, constituted districts in the Transkeian Territories under the chief magistrate in Umtata. Maclear, the 27th original Transkeian district, was excised from the territories in 1913 (Beinart, 1987a: 47).

I have been unable to ascertain precisely when Mount Currie was formally excised. Although it remained one of the Transkei's 26 districts, it never had a district council, primarily because it comprised almost exclusively white-owned farmland taken over from the earlier Griqua title-holders (cf. Ross, 1976; Bardsley, 1982). In 1931, Divisional Councils were constituted for the district and the white-occupied portion of Matatiela (Ordinance 30-1931; cf. Steyn Committee, 1976: 66). These came into effect on 30 Jan 1932 (Proclamation R14-1932). According to the Mount Currie District Record Book, administration of the district was transferred from the Department of Native Affairs to the Department of Justice on 1 Aug 1953 (cf. Kokstad Advertiser, 18 Jun 1953). However, Mount Currie was still formally regarded as part of the Transkeian Territories when the Bantu Authorities system was first implemented there in 1956 and the TTA (Gunya) replaced the UTTGC (Bunga) - see Proclamation R180-1956 which explicitly excludes the District of Mount Currie from its provisions.

In 1963, the Transkei Constitution Act (48 of 1963) replaced the TTA (Gunya) with the TLA. Two items indicate that by then Mount Currie was no longer formally regarded as part of the Transkei Territories: (i) the 1962 TTA Select Committee on Land and Legal Matters, concerned about pressure on the land, "requested [the Government] to make more land available by causing the districts of Elliot, Maclear, Mount Currie, Indwe and Ugie to be annexed to the Transkeian Territories" (TTA, 1962: 18; emphasis added); and (ii) no mention is made of Mount Currie in the Transkei Constitution Act (48 of 1963). A careful search has not, however, revealed any formal cession, even though the TTA Recess Committee - appointed in 1961 to consider whether the Transkei should accept self-governing status - reported that "The Transkei will embrace those areas throughout the Transkeian Territories, exclusive of the District of Mount Currie, referred to in ... the Native Administration Act, 1927 ... the Native Trust and Land Act, 1936 ... [etc]" (TTA, 1962: 1v; emphasis added). This may explain why the Steyn Committee (1976: 66ff.) is vague on this issue.

My grateful thanks go to Doreen Rix of the University of Cape Town's African Studies Library who has searched tirelessly in my quest to find what seems to be a non-existent proclamation. Any omissions are, of course, my own responsibility.

implementation of the Bantu Authorities system in the 1950s, magistrates' rule in their districts was direct and - from the people's perspective - apparently absolute, or as Hammond-Tooke (1975: 81) puts it in something of an overstatement, "[t]he white magistrate ... was in complete control".<sup>22</sup> This control was exercised through close personal contact between the magistrates and their subjects, particularly in the early years of the administration. It was through such liaisons that the former obtained what Beinart and Bundy (1987a: 1) have described as detailed 'local knowledge' (cf. Dubow, 1986a: 183ff.). This is not to suggest that the magistrates were able to prevent all uprising and insurrection in all areas. Indeed, Beinart and Bundy's recent volume (1987b; cf. 1980; Lodge, 1983; Copelyn, 1974; Mbeki, 1963) provides ample testimony to the extent of resistance in the Transkei and the wide variety of forms it took. It also demonstrates how, particularly after the 1920s, magistrates faced increasing difficulties in gathering information about the people over whom they ruled. Nonetheless, the model of resident magistrates with a keen finger on the pulse of affairs in their districts persisted well into the period of the Bantu Authorities system.<sup>23</sup>

The reason for this was that the Umtata-based chief magistrate's rule was much the same as a colonial governor's might have been, with the Native Affairs secretariat his colonial office (cf. McLoughlin, 1936: 79ff.; D A Kotzé, 1984). Virtually the whole of the Transkei administration was in the hands of this one central government department (later called Bantu Affairs and Development), rather than in the hands of a series of different government

<sup>22</sup> McLoughlin argued that in the late 1920s the Transkeian magistrate's "paramount duty [was] that of an administrator ... [who] 'governs' his district ... [where] he is the pivot and brain centre of of all the activities of the Government in all its branches as well as the head and executive officer of the local government." (1936: 90).

<sup>23</sup> Indeed, some contemporary magistrates still consider it to be the ideal. The model derives from the nineteenth century 'Victorian civilising mission' said to have motivated many of the early magistrates in the Transkei who saw themselves as 'benevolent paternalists' implementing a system of 'patriarchal government' (Dubow, 1986a: 181-8; 199; cf. Martin, 1978).

departments as was the case in the 'common areas'.<sup>24</sup> The conduit for this administration was the chief magistrate in Umtata and, through him, the district magistrates. Indeed, in 1927 they were also designated Native (later Bantu Affairs) Commissioners (Hammond-Tooke, 1975: 83; 97; Southall, 1982: 147; Carter et al., 1967: 85). As a result, magistrates were as much concerned with administration of agriculture and roads-engineering, health, welfare and education, land-allocation and tenure, and with the collection of taxes, as they were with the local administration of justice (McLoughlin, 1936: 71; 82; 89ff.; Canca, 1948: Appendix 1; D A Kotzé, 1972: 61). Indeed, their administrative duties were often so overwhelming that some magistrates, knowing that their decisions could be appealed, delegated much of their judicial function to their assistants (McLoughlin, 1936: 92; cf. p.98). As Carter et al. point out, the magistrate's "responsibilities for administering the comprehensive body of laws and regulations that govern the life of African inhabitants of his district go far beyond those of his Department of Justice colleagues in the so-called White areas ..." (1967: 86).

The one institution established to give Africans access to a semblance of democratic decision-making was the District Council system, first introduced in embryonic form in Fingoland in the 1870s, and implemented more formally in terms of the Glen Grey Act of 1894 (Hammond-Tooke, 1975: 84ff). It was extended into the Transkei from 1895 (Charton, 1976: 62).<sup>25</sup> By 1932 all 26 of the territories' African-occupied districts had councils which sent members to a single United Transkeian Territories General Council (UTTGC) often described as the *Bunga* (Canca, 1948; Hammond-Tooke, 1975: 90; Lawrence, 1976: 22). But, as Canca (1948) emphasises, the purely advisory function of these councils, and the fact that they were chaired by the resident magistrate of the district, meant that

<sup>24</sup> For a time some local technical personnel were employed by and responsible to the United Transkeian Territories General Council (UTTGC) often described as the *Bunga*, but in the 1940s they were transferred to the Native Affairs Department leaving only junior African employees to the *Bunga* (Canca, 1948: 116). D A Kotzé (1972: 61) says that before 1963 already police and postal officials were not controlled by the magistrate. It is not clear when the magistrates lost their small contingents of police constables (McLoughlin, 1936: 82; 90).

<sup>25</sup> The government's insistence on appointing Council members rather than having them elected democratically was cause, around the turn of the century, for significant opposition to the system, as was the continued chairmanship of councils by magistrates (Hammond-Tooke, 1975: 89-91; Charton, 1976: 62; Bundy, 1987a).

they were little more than talking shops and "extensions of the district administrative system" (D A Kotzé, 1972: 59; cf. Hammond-Tooke, 1975: 192). Indeed, by the late 1940s the educated elite for whom the system had ostensibly been established were avoiding participation in any of its structures (Hammond-Tooke, 1975: 187). Moreover, African council members had no control over administrative staff of the districts and territories. They were all responsible to the magistrates and chief magistrate alone. And these offices were legally reserved for whites (Canca, 1948: 114; Mafeje, 1963: 10).

With the passage of the Transkei Constitution Act in 1963, the chief magistrate was replaced by a chief minister and a cabinet of five ministers responsible for the portfolios of Finance, Justice, the Interior, Education, Agriculture and Forestry, and Roads and Works (SAIRR, 1964: 84; Wronsley, 1972: 8; Bhana, 1986: 48ff. cf. Laurence, 1976: 65 and Southall, 1982: 46 who attribute the transfer to the passage of the Transkei Self Government Act). Control over defence, police (as regards internal security and public peace), external affairs, postal services, health and transport were retained by the central government (SAIRR, 1964: 85; Wronsley, 1972: 9). The transition to a self-governing bantustan thus brought with it a degree of administrative devolution at the centre of the Transkei's administration, with control of various administrative functions being handed to a series of Umtata-based government departments.

At the district level, too, a degree of what D A Kotzé (1972) calls deconcentration of administrative functions was planned. On paper, separate district offices were established for the Transkei departments of Education, Agriculture and Forestry, Justice, and Roads and Works, and for the central government departments of Police, Health and Information (D A Kotzé, 1972: 61). On paper, there was no provision made for any formal co-ordination of these different district offices and officials (*ibid.*). Effectively, however magistrates continued to co-ordinate district administration and to wield tremendous influence and power in their districts. Although it was no longer a part of their formal function, D A Kotzé

(1972: 61) suggests that the "all-purpose character" of the magistrate and his office was maintained.

The main reasons for this were that the incumbents were reluctant to relinquish control and that there was no formal mechanism to undermine their power. Indeed, a salient characteristic of the Transkei's administration, particularly after 'independence', has been various centralising influences at work in the region's administration and government generally (Bhana, 1986: 125ff.; Sotobe, 1989: 120). Another reason that the magistrates managed to retain local control was that local officials and the general population expected that administrative power in the district ought to be centralised in one person. For people in the villages it appeared that all administrative directives still emanated from the magistrate's office. The only exception was the police force which had long functioned autonomously.

In time, district-level departmental representatives gained a degree of local autonomy. But certain of their functions continued to be given out to local members of the Department of Justice on an agency basis right into the 1980s (cf. Southall, 1982: 179), and the magistrate thus retained direct control over many of them. As Bhana (1986: 53-4) has pointed out, each district magistrate "supervised the affairs of every local government [departmental] bureau".

Details are not readily available as to the formal functions of the district administration, the chain of command between magistrate and local officials, and the manner in which these have changed with the introduction of first Bantu Authorities and then 'independence'. The secondary sources are quite opaque in this regard,<sup>26</sup> although McLoughlin's (1936) study is useful for the period until the early 1930s. Even Canca's (1948: ch 10) outline of the administrative organisation of the UTTGC (*Bunga*) gives little indication of the

<sup>26</sup>

I have conducted searches through the available bibliographies on the Transkei as well as via computer-linked data-bases and have found only Roos' (1975 and 1979) dissertations. The first was completed before 'independence' and is in any case very general: the second is very specific and not at all concerned with the district level. There are also two theses from the University of Transkei (Bhana, 1986; Sotobe, 1989) but these too address issues not directly to do with local district administration. There is clearly a need for much more detailed historical and particularly contemporary research into the workings of the Transkei bureaucracy, particularly at the district level. Sotobe's strident critique of corruption and government through centralised directives indicates that the present Transkeian government may encourage such research.

situation at the district level as it existed in the 1940s, the decade before implementation of the Bantu Authorities system when the District Councils were still operative,<sup>27</sup> while Roos's (1975: 53) diagrammatic representation of the Transkei public administration suggests that district magistrates were responsible for only judicial functions. Moreover, the published sources remain obscure for the period after 1956 when the Transkei Territorial Authority (TTA, commonly *Gunya*; SAIRR, 1958: 57) replaced the UTTGC (*Bunga*). As I have pointed out, this was primarily because of their authors' overzealous interest in that system and the way it was structured, to the exclusion of any concern with the more conventionally bureaucratic public service which has grown steadily since that time, and especially since 'independence' in 1976 (see table 7.1).

The Transkei Constitution Act of 1963 which replaced the TTA with the Transkei Legislative Assembly (TLA) also provided for the creation and control of a separate Transkeian public service (Wronsley, 1972: 9-10; Roos, 1975: 58ff; Charton, 1976: 67; Southall, 1982: 176; Bhana: 1986: 48ff). The Transkei Civil Service Commission was thus appointed in January 1964. Initially its establishment built upon the foundations of the administrative staff controlled by the chief magistrate. Table 7.1 indicates the rapid growth in the number of permanent public service posts since 1963.

PTO for table 7.1

<sup>27</sup> All Canca does is to point out that the one African clerk in each district was responsible for more duties than were reflected by his status, but that this could not rise because of racist practices regarding pay-scales and the hierarchy of authority in the administrative system (1948: 119ff.)

**Table 7.1 Establishment of Transkei public service  
(permanent posts)**

(figures in brackets represent white seconded officials)

1963	2 446	(455)	1974	5 679	(270)
1964	2 475	(427)	1975	10 291	(258) [a]
1965	2 821	(382)	1976	17 320	(358)
1966	2 920	(359)	1977	17 300	(314)
1967	3 393	(365)	1978	17 310	(232)
1968	3 460	(377)	1979	19 800	(140)
1969	3 576	(349)	1982	33 550	(123)
1970	3 673	(339)	1983	35 567	( 83)
1971	3 862	(314)	1984	37 495	( 82)
1972	4 094	(306)	1985	40 262	( 75)
1973	5 594	(349)			

Note: a. Figures exclude staff in departments of police and prisons. The 1975 figure including police and prisons personnel totals 11 554 (292).

Sources: Roos (1975: 66); Charton (1976: 67); Southall (1982: 177); DBSA (1987: 1-14). I have not found any figures for 1980 and 1981. SAIRR Annual Surveys provide slightly different figures.

In addition to officials in these established posts, there were a further about 4 000 temporary officials in the Transkei's public service during the 1980s (DBSA, 1987: 1-14) plus a figure growing from 10 000 labourers in 1964 (SAIRR, 1965: 148) to 17 000 in 1985 (DBSA, 1987: 1-14). In the period July 1984 to June 1985 the total government service complement was 63 367, including police and prisons service, and permanent and temporary officials as well as labourers (*ibid.*) By comparison, in February 1986, there were just 1 053 chiefs and headmen who "administratively ... all resort under the Department of the Prime Minister" (DBSA, 1987: 1-16).<sup>28</sup>

The extension of the bantustan policy, and particularly 'independence' in 1976, resulted in a more rigid division of administrative functions between the various separate departments and a reduced importance - at the local level - of chiefs and

<sup>28</sup> This figure does not include the many unpaid sub-headmen whom headmen and chiefs appoint to administer affairs at the village level.

headmen.<sup>29</sup> As the different departments vied for power, so the headmen were pushed out of the race. Another result was that magistrates' control at the district level was formally reduced as different departments attempted to administer more directly those local affairs of concern to them. This was most clearly evident with regard to the Transkei police.

In Maluti in the early 1980s, the fact that local officials of the departments of Agriculture and Forestry and of Health were housed separately gave them a slightly greater sense of autonomy than that experienced by others such as the local labour or pensions officers who were based in the same building as the magistrate. This was reinforced by their reporting directly to Umtata, rather than to the magistrate. Nonetheless, the magistrate's overbearing presence could be felt throughout the district's administrative offices. This was despite the appointment, as elsewhere in the Transkei, of a district commissioner responsible to the Department of the Interior. That official's job was to co-ordinate "the activities of the different departments" (Haines et al., 1984: 21) and to oversee the details of local administrative activities at the district level. The intention of this appointment was to leave the local Department of Justice officials, the magistrate and his assistant, free to attend primarily to their judicial functions. In the early 1980s, however, Matatiele's district commissioner, as other officials based in the district administrative centre, still deferred to the resident magistrate whose decisions and rulings were virtually unquestioned by all in the offices. Whenever I visited the Maluti Administrative Centre during the period 1982 to 1985 I was left with a clear impression that the incumbent magistrate would have liked to have seen himself as succeeding in the earlier tradition of tight district administration through the office of the resident magistrate, and that most of the clerks and others in the offices believed that this was his legitimate role. This *de facto* situation probably existed in other districts also because in 1983 "the

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<sup>29</sup> I am not suggesting that chiefs suffered a total demise of their power, only that it has shifted from the local level to the centre of Transkeian politics. Chiefs retained the right to half the seats in the legislature, and they have also taken a number of the elective seats. Moreover, they "have been drawn [increasingly] into the orbit of the Transkei state bureaucracy" (Haines et al., 1984: 13). Without similar access to the legislature, headmen have experienced a significant decline in their power - see below.

district commissioners' co-ordinative role" was handed back to the magistrates (Haines et al. 1984: 22).

### Police and informers

Although technically the police are part of the Transkei's civil service, local interventions by members of the police are perceived differently from those by other bureaucrats, at least in part because the police operate outside the control of the local magistrate and independently of the rest of the bureaucratic apparatus.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, they maintained an extensive network of village-based informants, many of whom regarded and treated the power their positions offered as a resource to be called upon for use in local-level political struggles.

It is even more difficult to provide a synoptic history of the development and structure of the police force in the Transkei than that of the rest of the public service, again because the sources lack any detailed information. It is clear that in the early years headmen were expected to perform as much a police function as an administrative one and that there was thus little need for an extensive specialised police force (Pim, 1934 cited by Beinart and Bundy, 1987a: 43; Bundy, 1987b: 209). Attached to each magistrate was a contingent of eight or ten 'Native Constables' whose primary function was to run messages, and who had little or no time to act in any policing capacity other than to assist headmen in gathering intelligence (Bundy, 1987b: 208). When bigger displays of force were deemed necessary, quasi-military units were called in. In particular, the Cape Mounted Riflemen "regularly patrolled the region prior to the First World War" (Beinart and Bundy, 1987a: 7) and that unit's troops provided "[t]he permanent police force in the Cape, until 1912" when the South African Police was established

30

The same applies to the Transkei Defence Force (TDF) and the Transkei's National Intelligence Service which reported directly to the Prime Minister. Some members of the former were located at three bases in the district during the early 1980s (cf. Segar, 1989: 52ff.): but they had little impact on the lives of residents of villages such as Mabua which were not in close proximity to those bases. While members of the TDF were relatively immobile - at least on an individual basis - the police were not. Since the advent of military rule in the Transkei, late in 1987, tensions have appeared between the military and the police, the continuing to operate as an autonomous power (Weekly Mail 01.12.89; Flanagan, 1989).

(Bundy, 1987b: 208). By the late 1920s the 'Native Constables' previously on each magistrate's own staff had become "members of the South African Police [albeit remaining] attached to his [the magistrate's] office under his direct command for duty" (McLoughlin, 1936: 82; 90).

Throughout the early years of colonial rule, magistrates were wholly responsible for local affairs including criminal administration. It was only in the mid 1930s that the latter was transferred to the police (Dubow, 1986a: 188). By 1972, administration of the police and prisons had been transferred to the Transkeian government, a separate Transkei Department of Police having been established in 1965 (SAIRR, 1966: 122) and police stations having been increasingly staffed entirely by Africans from soon thereafter (SAIRR, 1968: 146; 1969: 144). It was only with 'independence' in 1976, however, that the Transkei police began wearing their own distinctive insignia.

Despite the 1930s transfer of criminal administration from the magistrates to the police, the headman's role as policeman persisted right through to at least the early 1960s when Mafeje remarked on the "striking ... similarity between his duties and those of a policeman" and on the "frequent accusations that 'headmen are nothing else but police-spies...'" (1963: 73). By this point, however, the South African Police presence in the Transkei was well-established, and there was little doubt that it was they, rather than the magistrates, who expected to receive intelligence inputs from the headmen and local informers.

My own impressions of this structure in Matatiele in the early 1980s was that the headmen and chiefs were rather less willing to co-operate with the police than has been suggested occurred elsewhere and in earlier times. Possibly this was linked to the fact that, in the areas where I worked, they were primarily Basotho, whereas almost all policemen in the area were first-language Xhosa-speakers. It is also possible that this recalcitrance to act as intelligence sources reflected a significant difference of interests

between chiefs and headman, on one hand, and the police.<sup>31</sup> This lack of willingness by Sotho-speaking headmen to participate in police intelligence gathering may well have resulted in a denser informer network in Matatiele than existed elsewhere, although detailed comparison is not possible because of the lack of adequate data.<sup>32</sup> Suffice it to say that Mabua had a very noticeable contingent of informers - at least three were commonly acknowledged in a population of about 1 280 in 1982 - with other individuals linked in informally through kinship and other ties. This fact notwithstanding, it was still regarded as exceptional and indeed quite threatening to see uniformed police in the village, particularly if they left the arterial road running through the village to the next one, and visited a homestead within the settlement itself.<sup>33</sup>

## II IMPACT AND INTERSECTION OF THE THREE STRUCTURES ON THE GROUND

Earlier I said that the three administrative structures whose history I have outlined intersected in their effects on people in villages such as Mabua. They were often also in conflict with one another, as people used one or other as a resource. Their interaction is best demonstrated through case-studies showing how some individuals used one or more of these structures for their own advancement, while others less powerful suffered their impact. Before considering case material, however, it is useful to examine how ordinary village life was affected by agents of the three administrative structures dealt with above, and to look briefly at the kinds of corrupt practices which marked much of the administration in Matatiele as elsewhere in the Transkei.

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<sup>31</sup> This difference has recently been manifested in support for the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (CONTRALESAs) and the start of an association between the Transkei's military government and the African National Congress.

<sup>32</sup> Haines and Tapscott (1987: 22-3) have pointed out that there are significant variations in the power and legitimacy of chiefs from region to region.

<sup>33</sup> They did often stop at one of the roadside homesteads, but that was because (i) they could purchase drink there; and (ii) another of their informers spent a lot of time there (cf. note 45 and case 7.2).

Fear and corruption

I was repeatedly struck, during the time I spent in Mabua, by a pervasive fear of officials of all kinds. This is partially explicable in terms of migrants' and others' experiences of life in the common areas where African people have generally been hounded by all manner of petty officials, workplace and hostel supervisors, and the police. But, as Segar (1989: ch 2) has shown, local officials had also given them reason for apprehension by displaying an attitude of impatient disrespect for ordinary people. This was brought home to me most forcefully when I saw police indiscriminately, and without warning, whip spectators at a TNIP rally in the district in 1984, purely because they had failed to leave open a space for a local dance troupe to use as they made their way to their change-area after performing before the visiting Umtata dignitaries, including a cabinet minister, who were sitting on a raised platform. Given that the rally was meant to woo voters to the TNIP cause, the dignitaries' failure even to comment on the incident - let alone try to prevent it - indicates their own ill-concealed contempt: two years earlier I watched as the then Prime Minister, George Matanzima, read a newspaper and peered through binoculars at the distant mountains while supposedly listening to local TNIP members at another such rally.<sup>34</sup>

How did this attitude manifest itself within the village? Although Mabua's subheadman tried to be as accessible and non-intrusive as possible, his self-made assistant (see case 7.1) was positively hated by many village residents, particularly since he was also a police informer. The latter regarded as a prerogative of his office the right to intervene in private domestic squabbles, even if the parties concerned preferred to settle their differences without outside 'help'. And he pursued his informer role with great vigour, particularly when he suspected cases of dagga-trading or stocktheft. While other informers were somewhat less obviously active, at least some of them were known as such in the village, and

<sup>34</sup> Cf. a 1980 newspaper report that Kaiser Matanzima, then Transkei's Prime Minister, "advised the newly installed paramount chief of the Mpondo 'to employ the only way understood by Black people and that was "the stick": they 'did not understand the philosophy of consultation'" (quoted in Mayer, 1980a: 56).

they were feared for their ability to call upon their police contacts to make life unpleasant for those who crossed their paths.

In my field-notes I have described this as 'informer terrorism', a term which followed from my own experiences detailed in chapter 1, and which I used to headline anecdotes such as the following:

One day late in 1984 I was approached for help by a woman originally from Lesotho who had recently crossed one of the village informers. Now she had heard that her antagonist had called the police to arrest her because she did not have papers to reside in the Transkei, even though she had lived in Matatiele for over 20 years: she feared she might be arrested and repatriated to Lesotho (also see case 7.3 below).

By contrast, regular and direct intervention by public service officials was relatively limited, at least by comparison with St. Paul's village (cf. Segar, 1989: 50). Possibly this was because Mabua was situated quite far from the administrative centre at Maluti, and off the main road. Nonetheless, local people were not completely protected from officials' attentions: agriculture and health officials paid occasional visits, and the men who maintained the village dip-tank and the local roads were also wont to disturb local people's lives. For instance, a common means of transport was to use ox-drawn sleds, and the most popular way of bringing fuel-wood from the nearby forest was to tie up a number of newly-cut trees and have a draught-team drag the pile of timber home: but beware the less powerful villager who used the road as the route for such a load. For the relatively wealthy and those with local power, however, no such threat existed.

Haines et al. (1984) have linked pervasive local fear with a high degree of control exercised by local powerholders, and argued that this commonly goes hand-in-hand with corruption. Indeed, Sotobe has clearly documented and analysed the extent to which the Department of Works and Energy was effectively run from the office of the Prime Minister whose directives gave clear indication of corruption at the highest level (1989: 106ff.) One of the Transkei administration's major problems has long been extensive corruption at all levels of society, particularly as a result of those with power using it for purposes of what Southall correctly calls 'primitive accumulation' (cf. Southall, 1982: 179; Streek and Wicksteed, 1981; cf. Sotobe,

1989). It came as no surprise, therefore that the stated motive for the two military coups in the Transkei during 1987 and 1988 was the endemic high-level corruption in the territory. What was surprising was the extent to which the corruption had undermined the central figures' power-base, so that one ex-premier, George Matanzima, has since been convicted and sentenced for corrupt practices while in office.

In areas such as Matatiele, corruption at the micro-level has been so widespread that it inclined Segar (1989: 45) to observe that "corruption was a way of life, so much so that it was not even commented upon": people complained about having to pay for various services but did not seem to realise the extent to which those payments were not officially required or sanctioned (Segar, 1989: 47). For reasons probably related to the much more extensive sources on the tribal authority system (see above), consideration of this low-level graft has concentrated on the chiefs and headmen (Haines et al, 1984; Haines and Tapscott, 1987). But, as Segar's data show, it also involved various levels of petty bureaucrats.<sup>35</sup> These ranged from local pastureland-rangers and dip-tank officials through to pension- and labour-officers and others based at the administrative centre. Also involved were priests (Segar, 1989: 123ff.) and police who used their official powers for personal advantage as well as informers who took advantage of their connections to further their own interests.

A commonly held view, reiterated by Haines et al (1984: 13), is that much of this local-level corruption has revolved around the land, with chiefs and headmen using their land-allocation function to extort both cash and kind from their subjects. Indeed, those authors argue that in order for people to be able to gain and maintain access to arable allotments they had to acquiesce in the knowledge that they would be drawn into corrupt practices in which the chiefs and headmen played a central role. I was not able to ascertain the full extent to which this was occurring in Mabua, and in Tsita's location generally - particularly since implementation of

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. Southall (1982: 179): "there is evidence that some bureaucrats, like the chiefs, engage in the primitive accumulation of capital" (emphasis added).

betterment. But from what people told me, officers of the Department of Agriculture and Forestry had been as involved, if not more so.

With the introduction of betterment, the demarcation and allocation of arable plots and residential sites fell to these officials (cf. Davenport and Hunt, 1974: 33), and at least some had allegedly accepted gifts for favourable allocations. Moreover, I was told, the only individual who had obtained two arable allotments in Mabua when betterment was implemented was a then fairly senior agricultural officer who had since retired. In addition, he and the storekeeper were the only village residents who both managed to hold onto double-size residential sites: his to be able to run a café-bakery, the storekeeper's - kept under regular cultivation - to accommodate the church of which he was the local leader. The subheadman, by comparison, was forced to place his son on a portion of his large site before the plan was drawn up: that way they retained access to two adjacent newly-demarcated sites of the regular 46x46 metres. Others who had had large sites that now fell within the newly-demarcated residential area had them cut down to the regular size, while those who had to remove from areas now demarcated as pastures were given sites of that size in an area planned on a grid pattern.

As regards arable allotments, people's reports of the process of both site- and field-allocation when betterment was implemented suggest that the headman and subheadmen were only marginally involved, the task having been taken over almost wholly by agricultural officers. Although I heard very few explicit reports of bribery for fields or sites, it is clear that there had been some jockeying to be allocated even small fields in the period before planning began, and this had given the then incumbent headman his last chance to use arable land allocation for personal gain. This had occurred because people understood that only those with fields at the time the plan was drawn up would be eligible for fields under the new dispensation. One couple did complain that their unwillingness to 'plead' with the agricultural officers had meant they had not been allocated a field when the plan was implemented, despite having had a field to work before betterment. In this

instance, however, the field had not been their own, but one which had been allocated to the husband's mother who had died not long before the plan was drawn up, and which had thus been available for re-allocation just at the time of the rush for fields mentioned above.

Corruption did not revolve around land allocation only. I also heard that rangers in charge of grazing camps took their own stock, and those of favoured friends, into closed camps. Claiming it was 'traditional', the subheadman took a portion of whatever thatching grass villagers harvested from the area's pasturelands, while there were reports that in the recent past the location headman had expected payments, either in cash or kind, for firewood taken from the forests to which his subjects had access. This was in addition to the expected 'traditional' payment of 'an ox' to the headman by newcomers wishing to settle in the location (see chapter 6). And there were regular complaints that collections of money taken by the headman for various 'development' purposes were not being used for their intended purpose (see case 7.1).

Another area where corruption and bribery are reported to be widespread is in the local juridical processes - particularly in chiefs' and headmen's courts (Haines et al., 1984: 15; Segar, 1989: 43-46; 120-123).<sup>36</sup> Segar details two cases where litigants who came before a nearby village subheadman were alleged to have managed to sway the decision of the court in their favour through the payment of bribes. Although Mabua itself appeared not to suffer this form of corruption to the extent described for other areas, people I spoke to often alleged that there were instances - for higher stakes than locally - in chiefs' and magistrates' courts. But they did not proffer details very readily, probably because it was as dangerous to say much about such transactions as it has been difficult for those in authority to detect them. As Southall points out, the Transkei Public Service Commission's annual reports regularly carry

<sup>36</sup> Hamnett (1975) has argued that the results of litigation in Lesotho were not the product of 'objective' judicial proceedings, but that the courts there took a variety of detailed circumstantial evidence into account. He does not say to what extent 'gifts' influenced the relevance of such circumstance, but certainly local standing and status did. Just as gifts of 'an ox' to a headman for a site in a location have legitimacy derived from 'tradition', so is there perceived precedent in 'tradition' for giving gifts to chiefs and headmen in return for favours (cf. Hammond-Tooke, 1975: 211).

reports on bribery, misconduct and corruption among lower-ranked civil servants, "probably because corruption at their level is easier to detect ... and possibly because they are less controversial victims for prosecution" (1982: 179).<sup>37</sup>

A third area in which corruption was widespread was where the local bureaucratic administration had direct dealings with the public, such as welfare payments, particularly pensions, the issuing of official papers such as identity and travel documents, and the recruitment process for labour migrants, particularly for jobs on relatively well-paying mines. Haines et al. (1984: 15-16), concerned with corruption among the chiefs and headmen, focus attention on the way in which pension applicants had to turn to chiefs' and headmen's offices to obtain proof of their age. They argue that this provided chiefs and headmen with yet another means of control and a further opening for small-scale primitive accumulation.<sup>38</sup> Segar, by contrast, gives indication of the extent to which local level administrative clerks were similarly engaged in trying to make money through their interventions in applications of this kind. She points to the prevalence of clerks taking gifts and small payments merely for assisting applicants to complete their forms, and the misapprehension of pension applicants that such payments would expedite their applications: while identity documents are issued locally, pension "applications are all sent to Umtata, and local officials have little influence over their success" (Segar, 1989: 46). Similarly, clerks in the major mine-labour recruiting agencies had little say over who might obtain employment, yet bribes were still common. This was despite the fact that the (white) manager of the major recruiting agency, TEBA, was expected to keep personal control over the allocation of jobs to new recruits and miners whose guarantees of re-employment had expired.

<sup>37</sup> Recent events in the Transkei have indicated that even those in high office can be prosecuted for engaging in such practices and have highlighted the extent of corruption at the highest levels of the bantustan's government. As suggested above, it seems that the corruption had reached a point at which it undermined the power-base of those at the centre.

<sup>38</sup> I was told that the original issuing of identity books to people in Mabua was done by a contingent of Transkei military personnel who seemed to allocate people an arbitrary date of birth rather than attempt to establish from them when they were born. In many cases these dates underestimated people's chronological age. The result was that they had to postpone application for a pension until their official age made them eligible, or they had to obtain the headman's verification that the recorded birth-date was incorrect.

Mabua case studies

Let us now turn to some case studies which indicate the extent to which people use facets of the three administrative structures as resources for their own local political endeavours, and how the structures intersect in that process. The cases show that those who are best able to use the structures for their own benefit are those who already have some local power and are at least relatively well-off. For the poorest and most powerless in the village, on the other hand, the various aspects of the administrative structures are merely an intrusive presence mobilised, often to their detriment, in a manner quite beyond their control.

I begin by presenting an extended case which reveals in general the intersection between the police and headmanship structures. This is apparent in the ways in which the principal actor drew on his powers as a police informer to engage in a struggle for the subheadmanship which required that he expose the maladministration of the incumbent headman. I then turn to two cases which illustrate the extent to which those with local power are able to mobilise sources of power outside the village to pursue their own local interests, and how these are linked to a division of the village- and location-leaders into two clear factions. The final case also reflects the way in which outside sources of power intrude on village-level politics, and it provides an example for a discussion of the ways in which perceptions about what constitutes 'traditional' authority are able to influence local events, interactions and power-relationships.

**Case 7.1 Playing for power ... and a lynching**

By the early 1980s NH (cf. chapter 1 and case 5.3) was retired from labour migrancy and had enlisted with the Transkei police as an informer in Mabua. His decision to follow this 'career' followed from his hopes of becoming a man of power and authority in the village. As we shall see, he gained temporary power but little authority.

Soon after I first arrived in Mabua in 1982 I discovered that NH was feared by many villagers. I heard that he had a firearm and had used it early one morning on two girls he intercepted on their way to school. Having been instructed to stop, they

ran away; and he shot and injured one. He subsequently claimed that they were carrying dagga, and that he therefore had reason to detain them. According to those who told me the story, no dagga was found. But during my time in the village, NH did apprehend an old woman living in Mabua who was subsequently convicted for trading the drug. And he persisted in trying to stop runners carrying it from across the Lesotho border into Natal and the Eastern Cape.

Not content with the power he had through his police connection, NH had attempted early in the 1980s to oust the subheadman from his office. Playing, among other things, on the fact that he was a Xhosa-speaker and the subheadman a Sotho-speaker, NH mustered enough support in the village to force an election for the subheadmanship. He had also by then attempted to expose the location headman as corrupt, to show that he had embezzled communal funds, and to have him brought before the district magistrate.<sup>39</sup> NH demonstrated he had sufficient support for Mabua's subheadman to be forced to recognise him as his deputy. In addition, NH became very active in the local branch of the ruling Transkei National Independence Party (TNIP), and was made chairman. This gave him access to various district-based government officials most of whom were also supporters of the party.

From this position of strength NH proceeded to terrorise his co-villagers.<sup>40</sup> People complained that he often arrived at their homes to 'look for dagga'. He wandered around the pastures examining people's stock to look for stolen animals. In one instance he impounded a number of allegedly stolen donkeys on their way to Lesotho, and took them to the location headman's place: but the headman released them, and NH complained to the police who instituted action against the headman.

NH also interfered with the smooth running of village affairs in other ways. When villagers had differences of opinion with their neighbours he would arrive uninvited to offer his services as deputy subheadman. But often neither party liked the solutions he proposed and insisted upon. This was particularly threatening in cases where conflict had resulted in assaults which the protagonists wished to put behind them but which NH chose to report to the police who would sometimes then arrive in the village to investigate.<sup>41</sup> In one instance he called on me to go to a neighbouring village to photograph a

<sup>39</sup> According to one of his early supporters, subsequently disaffected, he had started out with the aim of exposing local corruption, but had subsequently begun to abuse his new-found power.

<sup>40</sup> By some reports, NH was also a sadist who allegedly detained people of his own accord and hung them from the roof beams of a hut with handcuffs he had and then mutilated their genitals (cf. Segar, 1989: 131).

<sup>41</sup> I gained the impression that the police selected only those cases which might have had some political significance: showing the headman up as incompetent appeared more to their liking than attending to cases of simple assault.

suicide, seemingly in order to have evidence in case it turned out to be a murder.<sup>42</sup>

NH also took it upon himself to ensure that directives from the bureaucracy were followed to the letter. For example, during 1983/4 he inspected all sites to see who was liable to a fine for failing to dig a pit-latrine, insisted upon by representatives of the Department of Health. Such activity contrasted negatively, in villagers' eyes, with the way the subheadman handled such directives. All he had ever done was to communicate them at the village *pitso* and then leave villagers to decide for themselves whether to act on them. And if he got wind of a pending inspection he would again warn them. For the subheadman, officials represented intervention which was best ignored; for NH they were a source of power for his own aggrandisement.

Early on in his career as informer, NH had aroused the anger of Basotho in the area when he had attempted to expose the secrets of their male initiation lodges. This followed upon his claim that some initiates had died during their seclusion. His activities wrangled with many people in the area, and soon after NH had effected the arrest, early in 1984, of a group of alleged dagga runners from a neighbouring village, he was called out to that village to examine some cattle which people there said they suspected of having been stolen. On his way to the village he was stoned to death, and - in one informant's words - "his throat was slit and he was thrown in the donga to die like a dog".<sup>43</sup>

#### Two factions in the village

NH was not alone in his efforts to embarrass Mabua's subheadman. Indeed, the village's leaders and elders were divided into two clear factions: one comprised relatively conservative older men - most of them Basotho - who saw their interests as best served by maintenance of the status quo and who disliked any form of outside bureaucratic intervention. Its most active members were also generally supportive of the location headman and the village subheadman. The other faction included NH and his co-informers as well as various people with direct links with the administrative bureaucracy, particularly the police. Significantly, its members were not all non-Basotho: in fact its most active members apart from NH were

<sup>42</sup> This may have been motivated by a genuine concern: my impression was that the police were less ready to come to the village to investigate a clearcut case than they were to arrive on some trumped up issue and to put on a show of power.

<sup>43</sup> An apocryphal version of NH's story appears in Segar (1989: 131) who heard it in St Paul's village.

affines of the subheadman and agnates of various members of the subheadman's faction (including MM of case 7.2 below). Their close liaisons with the police had alienated them from many of their relatives and neighbours including some of their own agnates. (They were the principal actors in case 7.3 below.) This faction also included the local café/bakery owner, a retired agricultural officer, who also owned two tractors for local hire, and a share in a bottle store elsewhere in the district. By some reports his wife was an informer, although if she was she kept a low profile.

The village's elders also included a few people whose allegiances vacillated with circumstance: an example was an old man with a physical disability which had restricted his participation in the labour market. He had, however, developed skills as an orator in the village court, and he used these eloquently in support of whichever side seemed for the moment to be in the ascendant.

In addition there was the majority of village residents who tended not to ally themselves to either side. Interestingly, the local store-keeper was one of these. He tried to keep his distance from the divisions, partly in order not to let them intrude on his commercial enterprise and partly - he said - because he was an active leader in an Apostolic Church which preached avoidance of such affairs.

For most, however, non-participation in such disputes did not mean that their lives were unaffected by the division in the local leadership. Indeed, as case 7.1 has shown, they could find themselves 'caught in the crossfire' as one side attempted to show the other up. This also occurred when local powerholders called in outside power sources to assist them in settling their affairs, as cases 7.2 and 7.3 both show.

#### **Case 7.2 The headman intervenes for a local official**

During 1984, MM (case 5.1) and his wife of many years came into severe conflict and his wife left his house, fleeing from the location to go to the Reef. She also removed her personal belongings as well as various items of domestic equipment which MM was to claim were not hers to take.

Such occurrences, although infrequent, were not uncommon. In most cases the disputing spouses were left to sort out their differences by themselves or encouraged to call in family members to help them to do so. When this did not work, the village subheadman was asked to intervene.

MM, however, immediately by-passed a low-key approach of this sort. He appealed directly to the location headman who only rarely intervened in such matters, especially in outlying villages. Within days she had come to Mabua and instituted a search party of various homesteads in the village where the allegedly 'stolen' goods might be found. And when they were, in the home of one of the wife's relatives, the headman's authority was immediately brought to bear on the person now found guilty of being an accessory to MM's wife's crime. Indeed, threats were made that the police would be informed and that she and her various accessories would end up in gaol for theft; and they were severely verbally chastised at the public moot which was held with the headman in attendance.

Why could MM mobilise the headman so readily? As we have seen earlier (case 5.1) MM was relatively wealthy and, as dipping inspector, a prominent figure in that part of the district. He was also known to spend much of his time at the headman's place and was closely connected to her. Moreover, around the time NH (case 7.1) had accused the headman of embezzling public funds, he had also accused MM of holding stolen cattle, a charge MM had successfully turned into a libel suit against NH. He thereby demonstrated NH's general incompetence, for which action he found favour at the headman's court. This reinforced his partisanship in the location.

The faction opposed to the subheadman was not opposed to headmanship itself. Indeed they often called on the offices of both the subheadman and the headman to help them settle their affairs, thus creating the opportunity to attack the operation of the subheadman's and the headman's courts and to show them up for not providing the service that they ought - and would if only there were other occupants of the offices. John Comaroff (1975) has shown how Tshidi in court begin their oratory by listing the normative ideals on which the case they are addressing calls before going on to discuss the details in which the particular case deviates from those now-stated norms. The way in which the Mabua subheadman's antagonists used his and the headman's offices followed a similar pattern in their litigious practices. By engaging in disputes in those courts they provided themselves with a platform from which

both to spell out what they saw as the norms whereby those courts should operate and to berate those in office for not achieving those ideals.

The factional division in Mabua was both used and exacerbated by village-based police informers. As case 7.3 shows, when members of the anti-subheadman faction felt wronged, they were quick to call the police to act against their perceived antagonists, thereby trying also to embarrass the subheadman and demonstrate his incompetence.

### Case 7.3 Tumult when a young wife deserts: calling the police

In August 1984 AL, a young woman only recently married to a young labour migrant, disappeared from her marital home. From reports, she could not stand her domineering mother-in-law nor her father-in-law's parents and sisters, all of whom were active members of the anti-subheadman faction, and some of whom were closely associated with the police: indeed one sister was a well-known informer,<sup>44</sup> two others were married to or in close liaison with policemen, and a fourth was married to a son of the local café-owner who had deep-running links into the Transkeian bureaucracy.

Until her recent marriage AL had been left with various relatives in the village while her father's sister (at that point her guardian) was away at work (see case 8.7). One of these was Mrs MKM, who was now accused of having encouraged AL to desert by having handed her a letter from her father's sister which contained the sum of R6. Indeed, so irate were the deserted family that the informer among them, by her own later admission, called the police to harass and threaten Mrs MKM, a widow whose husband had been an agnate of the location headman, and a close neighbour of Mabua's subheadman (cf. case 5.5). Their excuse for having done so was that the young woman had disappeared - might even be dead. The only person they could ask about her was Mrs MKM, and she refused to be questioned in front of the village court - ostensibly, Mrs MKM later explained to the headman's court, because she had been called on directly to appear rather than through a man, and she had no man to represent her there. Moreover, she complained, the group assembled to question her comprised just the subheadman plus members of the family AL had deserted, and it was thus biased against her.

<sup>44</sup> It was she who called the police to apprehend me and my assistant (see ch 1) and threatened to have a woman with whom she'd had a disagreement repatriated to Lesotho (see above).

<sup>45</sup> AL's father-in-law's parents' roadside home was a regular stopping place for all passing government officials, especially policemen (see note 33). It was also the site used by a group of Matatiele town-based medical practitioners for their weekly clinic. In addition, it was a successful local liquor outlet.

Early on the aggrieved family brought the case to the attention of the location headman. Although she said she thought it was something which should be handled by the Mabua court, she agreed to hear it at her home. But she refused to come out to Mabua to attend to the matter as she had done for MM (case 7.2). Initially she directed the disputants to telephone AL's earlier guardians on the Reef and to establish if they knew her whereabouts. This procedure established that she had in fact fled to the Reef. But still not satisfied, the complainants returned to the headman's court to demand reparations from Mrs MKM for having alienated their new daughter-in-law from them. In this respect they were unsuccessful. All that happened was that a short while later they received a letter from the girl's guardian which directed them to his relatives in a neighbouring village where they were refunded the bridewealth already paid.

They were nonetheless able to turn the events to their favour as regards their efforts to show up the subheadman as incompetent because he had been unable to make Mrs MKM attend his hearing. And they were able to turn their abuse of their police connections to their benefit by suggesting that the subheadman had allowed them to call the police, which - under strenuous cross-questioning - he was himself forced to admit at the headman's court. As a result he received a severe dressing down from both the headman and her immediate councillors, one of whom wondered "why you bother to bring this case here when you have already made yourself into a chief by calling the police to the location" (without prior consultation with your superiors).

This case illustrates the persistent tensions between the headman's administration and the police, tensions which from the perspective of the headman's court were related to the abrogation of their 'traditional' rights and duties and the ever greater intervention of 'the government' in local affairs. I return to this issue below.

#### Young women and employees as 'possessed' subordinates

The case also reflects a perception that young people - especially young newly-married women - are virtually the property of their immediate seniors and have neither the ability nor the right to make personal decisions for themselves. AL's desertion - she was said to have been 'lost' (*olahleiloe* from *holahla*: to throw away, forsake, give up, bury; Paroz: 1974: 259) - was presented as an abduction, even a theft, engineered by Mrs MKM rather than as the product of AL's own personal decision to desert her marriage. As

was repeatedly said during the court case following her disappearance: Mrs MKM had given AL "money and a letter right here beside us" viz. without going through us, who ought to know and control all her material circumstances. Indeed, Mrs MKM reported to the court that both AL's mother-in-law and her father-in-law's mother had each approached her and expressed anger and shock that "you took AL's letter and gave it to AL; you didn't give it to me." And, said Mrs MKM, in both cases she had responded by pointing out that AL's father's sister "did not instruct that I give it to you; she told me that I should give it to her child".

This reported interchange reveals a tension between 'tradition' and practice. Much of the standard southern African anthropological literature indicates that women, especially young newly-married wives, normatively occupy subordinate positions, particularly as regards their fathers-in-law, but also with respect to their mothers-in-law and their affines in general. This is as apparent in the literature about the Basotho as it is in that on the Mpondo and various other Xhosa-speaking entities (cf. Ashton, 1952: 19; 76ff.; Poulter, 1976: 167-8; Gay, 1980: 98-102; Hunter, 1936: 35-47; Hammond-Tooke, 1962: 115-120). In the instance discussed above, AL's in-laws appealed to what they knew was generally accepted as the 'traditional' way in which daughters-in-law should expect to be treated. And they gained the support of the court that AL's father's sister (who had been her guardian before she was married) had been out of line in sending AL money and in having used Mrs MKM as a conduit. Once married, said the court, AL became the responsibility of her affines and Mrs MKM was not entitled to interfere at all in her affairs - even though she had spent years bringing up AL in her parents' absence. Once married, AL became her affines' person, accessible only through their mediation.

A similar notion prevailed that 'traditionally' employees of a wealthy and powerful man were 'his men' (*banna bahae*), indeed even 'his children' (*bana bahae*), and that they were his responsibility. If others wished to engage in any dealings with them, particularly if these involved litigation, then they had to be approached through their employer. This image of 'tradition' derived from the earlier practice whereby poor men subordinated themselves and their families

to wealthy powerful ones, adopting the status of junior in the wealthy man's household and seeing him as their master or lord. By the 1980s, however, this notion had been overlaid onto the employer/employee relationship in such a way that it provided some with a shield against prosecution for criminal activities, and - as we see in the following case - hindered the subheadman in the proper execution of his duties.

#### Case 7.4 'Tradition' blocks apprehension of alleged rapist

During the winter of 1984 a young man employed at the village café-bakery allegedly attempted to rape the daughter of one of Mabua's poorer families. Her mother complained to the subheadman, but no formal charge was laid. The young man's attentions continued, and one weekend, after another approach to the girl, he was involved in a fight with the girl's brothers. As he ran off he allegedly threatened revenge, and that night their house-roof was torched. Everyone was sure that the same young man was responsible, and the subheadman was approached to apprehend him and bring him to trial.

But the subheadman prevaricated, explaining to me that he could not detain the young man because there was no eyewitness to support the allegations of arson,<sup>46</sup> and - more importantly - because the powerful café-owner, MZ, was not in the village at the time. The young man, said the subheadman, was MZ's 'man': "he is his person; he is his child, because it was he (MZ) who hired him." For this reason, and because the alleged rapist and arsonist had holed up on the café site, the subheadman was unwilling to intervene: "it is difficult to enter that yard, the one of MZ, because it is required that he be present; he is the owner (*monghali*) there. I cannot enter his site without him there to see or to allow me". And even though the subheadman was sure "the police would know [be unafraid] to be able to enter there" he still asked "how can I summons them and send them in while the site-owner is absent?"

Why was the subheadman fearful of bringing the police in for this case when later in the year he agreed to allow them to be summonsed by an informer (case 7.3)? And why was he fearful of apprehending MZ's worker, indeed of entering MZ's site for this purpose, when in other instances involving less serious allegations he had done just that on other sites and with other people? For the most part, the reason was that MZ, a recently retired senior agricultural officer, was himself an extremely powerful person, feared by all Mabua's

<sup>46</sup> As elsewhere, the allegations of attempted rape were not taken very seriously on the assumption that the girl may well have provoked her alleged assailant's attentions.

villagers for the influence he had in high places, drawing on contacts in the Transkei bureaucracy and police as well as being extremely wealthy.<sup>47</sup> The subheadman was clearly afraid to intervene - at least without MZ's formal approval.

### The instrumental use of 'tradition' in the political domain

What is interesting, however, is the way in which the subheadman used images of 'tradition' to give legitimacy to his reluctance to intervene in affairs which involved MZ and his workers - a reluctance he did not demonstrate consistently throughout the village. In terms of Sesotho (the Sotho way), he argued, everyone called to appear before the court had a right to expect protection from his or her 'master' (*monghali*; cf. household head = *mong'alelapa* lit: master or lord of the family home - see chapter 8). As village subheadman he was therefore obliged to observe this rule and to consult an offender's 'master' before apprehending that person or calling upon him or her to appear before the court. But, as we have seen in case 7.3, he had failed to do this when calling upon Mrs MKM to appear before him, despite her own appeal then to this same 'tradition' as a means of procrastination.

Clearly the 'tradition' was a resource to be drawn on selectively: The subheadman used it when he needed to legitimate his prevarication which in reality derived from a fear of the powerful café-owner and of intruding into his domain. But he ignored the same 'tradition' under pressure from his erstwhile antagonists when they insisted on calling Mrs MKM to book for having undermined their own claims to the 'tradition's' significance with regard to their daughter-in-law who had absconded. In that instance the subheadman felt threatened by the use his antagonists could make of the police as a resource - I witnessed a couple of other incidents where they had called in the police to intimidate the subheadman after being dissatisfied with the outcome of events locally.

<sup>47</sup> In another case reported to me, an agricultural officer had employed an old cripple to herd his stock, paying him both in cash and by depositing amounts into a savings account which the employer controlled. When the employment was terminated he repeatedly failed to hand over the savings account book, and - said the old herder - "If I try to lay a charge against him, I will lose the case because I lack *matla* (power; cf. *amandla*).

For similar reasons the subheadman was unwilling to call in the police in the café-owner's case - despite the seriousness of the charge - even though he was easily swayed into allowing an informer to invite them to antagonise an old widow without such clout. Again this demonstrates that those with access to outside power resources were able to use them locally both to protect themselves and to further their own interests in village and location level disputes.

As we have seen the subheadman's agreement to allow the police to be called to threaten Mrs MKM was subsequently held against him as a demonstration of his incompetence. Allowing the police to intervene without first consulting the location headman threatened another 'tradition' - that headmen retain an autonomous authority over their locations and that any presence of an outside authority such as that of the police should occur with the headman's full knowledge and agreement.

As I suggested earlier, although the institution of headmanship was a product of colonial intervention, it has been in existence so long that by the 1980s it was itself regarded as 'traditional'.<sup>48</sup> Not only have locations become focuses of parochial loyalties, as Carter et al (1967: 85) suggested, but headmen and their councillors strenuously resent any direct interventions by agents of the state, whether in the form of officials and clerks, or the police. In part this derives from the historical role headmen were expected to play as local administrators responsible to the magistrate for all affairs in their locations. In part it derives from a growing sentiment of resistance to various interventions by the state and its agents. Over the years these have steadily whittled away headmen's authority: as we saw in chapters 3 and 5, they were consulted about the appropriateness or not of betterment schemes during the 1950s, but by the 1970s these were imposed willy nilly, the role of the headman being limited to that of administrative conduit only. The same now applies to a wide variety of interventions where the headman and subheadman's function is merely

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<sup>48</sup> The 'traditionality' of headmanship has meant that the institution has reappeared in the urban township context (Ramphela and Boonzaier, 1988).

to transmit central- and district-government's directives to the people.

As a result headmen and their councillors now guard jealously what is left of their assumed 'traditional' right to administer all affairs in their locations. In particular they try to protect their right to act as arbitrators in cases of local dispute which find their way to litigation. As Mayer (1978: 121) has said of residents of a Willowvale location in the 1970s: "everyone wants to settle things without invoking the police". Moreover, people in Mabua still believe that the police have no right to intervene unless they are summoned by the headman. That, they say, is the right way - viz. the 'tradition'. Expressing her anger that Mabua's subheadman had allowed the police to be called (case 7.3), the headman asked him, in her court:

When you have problems in your place, do you no longer call the men there together? Don't you bring together those people who are quarreling, as these children of Moshoeshoe<sup>49</sup> are fighting today? Did you sit down together as we are sitting here today?

And one of her councillors, pursuing the matter, asked:

Now sir, let me hear. Since you'd made yourself into a chief that day and called the police right here into the middle of this land of our chief, why do you now bring this case here to us? Why have you not left it with the police? ... Sir, have those people of the government not served you? And having worked thus for you what have they given you (as a solution)?

These sentiments run directly counter to the attitude of the police who were ever keen to display their presence and 'maintain law and order'. Thus at a district quarterly meeting in September 1984, the Maluti police chief complained about the poor attendance of chiefs and headmen and stressed that he expected them to report serious cases to the police promptly rather than try to settle them locally. They had no reason to feel aggrieved, he said, when - as had recently happened - assault victims laid a charge directly with the police and did not go through their headmen.

<sup>49</sup> Her use of this phrase 'children of Moshoeshoe' (*bana ba Moshoeshoe*) constitutes a direct appeal to a Sesotho heritage and tradition: problems such as chiefly succession disputes in Lesotho all require the calling together of the children or sons of Moshoeshoe (Ashton, 1952: 196). Corporately this body is often perceived as the repository of Sesotho law and tradition.

Why did people call upon tradition in circumstances of conflict such as those described above? In the previous chapter I argued that there are times when the political environment is such that it may be useful for people to construct images of earlier times in order to appeal to them instrumentally as traditions whereby they legitimate their present practices. They use them as resources to engage in political processes where tradition has salience. It is in this kind of situation that what Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) call the 'invention of tradition' occurs.

All the situations described above were situated in the political domain and involved people using whatever resources they could find to participate in processes in which power was transacted. Whether it was the headman and her councillors trying to maintain an ever-diminishing autonomy from outside intervention, the subheadman legitimating his weakness vis à vis the café-owner, a young woman's affines claiming authority over her, or an old widow looking for an excuse for refusing to participate in a hearing which was bound to be biased against her, all appealed to tradition in a clearly instrumental way. They created images of the way it 'ought to be', claimed that those images had clear precedent, and then referred to them as the guidelines for their present practices.

By comparison with the rather undirected pragmatic use of images to give meaning to forms of tenancy discussed in chapter 6, what we have seen here are much more clearly instrumental processes in which images of what is right and good - and which were said to derive from the past - were used as a resource in situations of conflict over power. If we can return to Giddens' (1984) language, there is a clear discursive consciousness at work here: people were not just 'going on', they were explicitly reflecting on their situations and creating images of the past and tradition.

This results in the appearance of continuities in practices from the past and a persistence of what appears to be unchanging 'tradition'. For the actors themselves, this appearance of continuity gives salience to their practices and strength to their claims that their actions are legitimate. For the observer,

however, those apparent continuities are subjects for study and analysis.

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## Chapter 8

### DISPERSING DEPENDANTS: VILLAGE HOUSEHOLDS AND THE FLUIDITY OF THEIR COMPOSITION

Thus far we have looked at three different ways in which the contemporary use of images of the past gives the appearance of some kind of continuity - or its rejection - whether in social practices or in the tropes used to describe social practices. In chapter 6 we have seen that where there is no immediate political need for people to legitimate their actions in terms of the past, the tropes and images they use constitute a 'mix' of the old and the new, and of the endogenous and the exogenous. That mix can appear to be paradoxical in the way its constituents may sometimes be drawn from the old to describe the new, and vice versa. This, I have argued, is because such circumstances allow people to draw pragmatically from whatever source is convenient. Secondly, we have seen that in instances of antagonistic relations there is sometimes an apparently explicit attempt to distance that relation from tradition and the past by giving it an exogenous referent such as the term *sekoropo*, used to describe local one-off wage labour, or 'piece-jobs'. Thirdly, we have seen in chapter 7 how tradition can and has been used as a resource in situations of local conflict so that opposing parties selectively call upon facets of what they hope is popularly accepted as tradition in order to support their positions.

This chapter pursues the discussion by looking at practices relating to a social institution often regarded as 'traditional' - the household. It looks at how people engage in household-related practices without any explicit or discursive consciousness that by doing so they are maintaining, or trying to maintain, adherence to tradition. In other words, I am interested to examine situations in which people persist in maintaining facets of household organisational structure purely because they know how to 'go on' best by doing so, rather than because they see them as right by virtue of those practices representing commonly accepted images of the past. And I look also at how my insistent enquiries as to the

reason for certain practices brought people's consciousness of it out of the practical but not quite into the discursive: where my questions made an informant, searching for an answer, turn to that response all too commonly heard by prying anthropologists, 'it is our custom' when what I had hoped to hear was a utilitarian rationalisation. I use this discussion to comment upon a powerful structuralist argument that the traditionality of households is a construction which implicitly disguises the functionality of such units for world-capitalism (cf. Smith et al, 1984b).

Before addressing these questions, however, I first look at some of the methodological problems which arise when one uses the household as a unit of analysis in studies of labour-sending areas in rural southern Africa. Many contemporary studies of such areas have relied on one-off survey data and have tended to treat households as static units. They thus give little or no recognition to the high turnover of membership such units experience, both over the short- and the longer-term.

The empirical material I present is based on a longitudinal study which formed part of my research in Mabua and which highlighted the very fluid nature of household composition, even over relatively short periods of time. We thus return here to the issue of population movement at a very micro level, this time looking at movement of individuals between households and homesteads within the village, rather than of whole households or larger groupings being relocated by betterment or other larger-scale processes. The fluidity of household composition which results is related to the exigencies of labour migration, although that is not the sole determining factor - there have been long-standing fostering arrangements within some local families, and a practice of young wives going back to their natal homes for at least their first their confinements. These inter-household transfers of people are nonetheless a common reflection of material differentiation in the village, in that they are as much a response to economic circumstances as are transfers of foodstuffs and other commodities.

Defining the household: a fluid and permeable unit

The very fluidity of household composition with which this chapter is concerned raises two broadly methodological problems: the first is directly to do with the actual definition of household and of household boundaries; the second and more important is that research which fails to account for the substantive phenomenon of fluctuating household composition also fails to recognise what is a crucial key to our understanding of the effects on rural people's lives of the migrant labour system in general and the present economic recession in particular. If the movement of individuals between households in the periphery is a strategy used to manage the very limited resources available to such people, then we can hardly afford to allow our research methods to result in our ignoring this very process. And we need also to know how people understand those movements themselves. Let us take these two questions in turn, and begin by surveying briefly how the notion of household has been used in southern African anthropological literature and how studies of household composition have been approached.

Household defined and understood

With the exception of Schapera's (1935) work on Botswana (then Bechuanaland), and the few studies he stimulated (eg. Ashton, 1946; Sheddick, 1948), early southern African ethnographies did not really attempt to collect or present detailed statistical data on residential group composition. Until the 1970s, it was only the multi-disciplinary Keiskammahoek Rural Survey (Hobart Houghton and Walton, 1952: 51-64; Wilson et al, 1952: 46-61), which was at all concerned with rural household composition, and that only in the context of its direct relationship with labour migration. Moreover, as Murray (1981: 102) has pointed out, the Survey accepted Schapera's idea that the 'nuclear family' was the primary form of domestic unit. The problem which arises when the nuclear family is given priority as an analytical unit is that all other domestic groupings are seen as variants on the nuclear family type.

As James (1985; 1987: ch 3) has shown from her work in a contemporary labour-supplying area that has experienced betterment and waves of population influx resulting from relocation, such an approach is inappropriate for various reasons. Firstly, the separation between man and wife caused by labour migration prevents nuclear families from co-residence or commensality and constrains people to form other types of co-residential and commensal units (cf. Murray, 1981; Webster, 1987). Secondly, the diversity of circumstances which marked people's relocation impacts on the forms of household structure they create once relocated. The various household structures to be found in peripheral areas have, as James (1987: 98) has put it, "evolved via a series of complex historical processes" which are both time- and place-specific (cf. Murray, 1980a; Guyer and Peters, 1987a). One important factor in James' area of research was the time of relocation into the area which tended to correspond with a division of the population along 'ethnic' lines. Pedi people had been in the area longer, had access to more local resources and were inserted more securely in the wage-labour market: they tended to form smaller households often based on the nuclear family. More recently arrived and less secure Ndebele, by contrast, were more likely to be found in larger extended family-based households.

James' work<sup>1</sup> built upon the ways in which the problem of household composition and structure was addressed by anthropologists in the 1970s who were concerned with the effects of labour migration, particularly in Lesotho and also in Botswana.<sup>2</sup> With that concern came a new interest in how the household could be defined, and an attempt to understand its position and function in the context of extreme dependence on migrant wage-earnings. In other terms, an effort was made to locate the household of southern Africa's

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<sup>1</sup> James's work (1985; 1987) reflects a more general tension between "those scholars and practitioners who are working towards the development of more adequate typologies [of household forms] and those whose analytical concern has shifted to process" (Guyer and Peters, 1987a: 204). James (1985) reflects the former interest; her more extended work (1987) indicates sensitivity to the need both to examine households typologically and to understand the processes which are both cause and effect of householding practices.

<sup>2</sup> eg. Murray (1976a; 1981); Spiegel (1979; 1980a); Gay (1980); Cooper (1982); Kerven (1982); also McAllister (1978); Mayer (1980a).

periphery in the world capitalist system as it manifested in the South African mining and industrial complex (Murray, 1987; cf. Smith et al, 1984b; Martin and Beitel, 1987). The nuclear family was no longer given such prominence. Instead, as I have mentioned in chapter 5, attention was focused on the developmental cycle of the remittance-dependent household, a model which was particularly useful in the context of Lesotho in the 1970s where there was no form of state-run social security system nor even a simple old-age pension (cf. Spiegel, 1982; Murray, 1987; James, 1985; 1987: 97-8). The most appropriate definition of household for the labour-reserve situation came out of Murray's Lesotho work. Focusing on a combination of the income-pooling and reproductive characteristics of the household, he described that entity as "an aggregation of individuals within which are concentrated the flows of income and expenditure generated by the activities of its members" (1976a: 54-5).

The 1980s saw various social scientists paying increasing attention to the ways in which peripheral labour-supplying areas were inserted into the South African political economy. What had been almost exclusively an anthropological interest in the micro-effects of labour migration and in issues such as poverty and rural development was taken up by growing numbers of economists, sociologists and others conducting local-level research in rural areas and producing detailed statistical data.<sup>3</sup> But the almost total dependence of this work on one-off survey-type methods has resulted in very static statistical descriptions. Where the researchers have actually considered household compositions, their attempts have been quite cursory, with, at best, recognition that account must be taken of the movement of household members between their places of employment in town and their country homes or, occasionally, an acknowledgement of the internal dynamics of households which have a bearing on, and reflect, gender relations (cf. Moll, 1984: 31-35).

<sup>3</sup> This interest was represented by the many papers on rural poverty presented to the Conference of the second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa, Cape Town, April 1984 - see Wilson and Ramphela (1989: 358-367) for a full list of papers. Also cf. Martin and Beitel (1987) and May (1985 and 1987). The latter's work, while remaining static, shows insights missing in much of the economists' literature. Non-anthropological interest in household also occurred internationally (cf. Guyer and Peters, 1987b; Netting, Wilk and Arnould, 1984).

*De jure and de facto: useful categories?*

Much of the contemporary literature has used the terms *de jure* and *de facto* as a means of indicating the rate of labour migration and its impact on the composition of household units: all the people who are emically regarded as members of a particular domestic or residential grouping even if they are temporarily absent, but as long as they contribute to, or draw off, the income used by the household's members, have come to be identified as the *de jure* household; the term *de facto* has been used to identify those members of the *de jure* household who are in residence at the time that the unit is subjected to a census survey of some kind (cf Murray, 1976a: 56; 1981: 49). In effect this has meant that the difference between *de jure* and *de facto* figures specifies the number of members of the unit who are absent at the time of census, most likely because they are labour migrants (see chapters 4 and 5, especially the tables). Indeed, it was for this purpose that the convention was adopted.

The same convention can, of course, be applied to other types of units: the residential site population; the village as a whole; and indeed, the whole of a country's population, as was the original usage in the official Lesotho Census of 1966 (Lesotho 1969: 85) and which was adopted by Murray (1976a; 1981; cf. Spiegel, 1979: 86; n2). It has also come to be abused by *apartheid* apologists when attempting to distinguish between the whole population of any one 'ethnic national unit' (its *de jure* population) and the total (*de facto*) population present at any one time in that unit's designated Bantustan, including 'non-ethnics' (cf. BENSO, 1975; 1982-I: table 7 n 2).<sup>4</sup>

The data on changes in household composition over time presented below bring this convention into question and suggest that it may be misleading. Murray has emphasised that his use of the term *de jure* "implies no normative statement about who ought to belong to a household" (1981: 49). Yet the term may at the same time suggest, if not a strong normative sense of belonging, then at least an

<sup>4</sup> "The *de facto* population is that part of the population actually present within the given borders of the homeland. ... The *de jure* population is the *de facto* ethnic (sic) population as well as the temporary and continuous absentees in the White areas and other homelands" (Benso, 1975: 26; table 5.1.1 notes).

expectation - which is itself normative - that the *de jure* boundaries and membership of a particular household will persist over time.<sup>5</sup> The data presented below indicate that this expected stability may in fact not be the case, and indeed is so only infrequently.

Could usage of the terms *de jure* and *de facto* as they refer to the household be modified in an attempt to overcome this problem? I do not think so. In some of the cases to be discussed, individuals who at the time of a first survey were *de jure* members of one household had, by the time of a second survey, become income-generating members and consumers in another such unit. But they continued to maintain a claim - in terms of our functional definition of the household - to *de jure* membership of the household in which they were previously recorded as members. And they persisted in their allegiance to those 'original' households<sup>6</sup> thus revealing an ideological component to perceptions of the household.<sup>7</sup> Recording them as *de jure* members of one or other of these units is thus problematic, particularly when respondents in both households identify them as members of their respective domestic groups. My experience was that respondents in households which had put out children elsewhere (see below) sometimes excluded them from their listings of household members (*de jure*), and sometimes included them, but that they were consistently happy to include absent labour migrants. This occurred even where the 'put out' children were herders generating income for use by relict members of the household.

Of course one might treat such individuals as absent *de jure* members of their natal or 'original' households and *de facto* but not

<sup>5</sup> Webster (1987) suggested that a way out of the normative implication of the term *de jure* is to replace it with the word potential, and to replace *de facto* with actual. I do not think that this is helpful because it implies that absence reduces one's functional importance to one's *de jure* household - which reinforces the paradox, first identified by Murray (1981: 103) and which Webster cites when he says that "a man's absence as a migrant is a condition of his family's survival" (1987: 5).

<sup>6</sup> 'Original' only in the sense that they were recorded as members there at the first survey.

<sup>7</sup> I am grateful to Pat McAllister for reminding me of the important distinction between household as an ideological unit and as a functional unit. In the last analysis, however, I would see the ideological aspect deriving its moment from the functional. Kuckertz's recent book (1990) explicitly addresses the ideological and practical construction of household in Pondoland.

*de jure* members of their 'new' households. But this would mean that it would be possible for a domestic group with wage-employed/fostered residents to have a *de facto* population larger than its *de jure* population. And this would distort the original intention of using these terms: i.e. to be able to identify the rate of oscillating labour migration away from labour-supplying areas and into the industrial cores of the country. On the other hand it would indicate the internalisation of that very process of dependency, particularly where the individual was in a wage-labour relationship with the household head in the 'new' household.

Why was it that informants readily included long-absent migrants in faraway places as part of the perceived local household while they excluded fostered children such as sons employed as herders nearby, even when their labours provided material support for the households from which they had come? The answer would appear to lie, paradoxically, in the fact that fostered-out children were physically present in the village or vicinity. At least for local juridical procedures, they took their jural status from their residence in their foster households. In contrast, the very absence of migrants meant that they were unlikely to be involved in local disputes; and even if somehow they were, they had no other local resource base with which they might be associated for definition of their jural status.

That such changes of jural status did and do occur became clear on a number of occasions. It is exemplified in two instances discussed below: the first involved one of the workers at the Mabua café-bakery for whom such jural status provided a protection from a charge of arson (see case 7.4); the other related to the way in which an old widow, Mrs MKM (see cases 7.3, 8.7), was consistently called as respondent when the girl she had earlier fostered abandoned her marriage.

If fostering and employment involving residence with an employer can bring about jural status changes, we need to query the usefulness of the category *de jure* household membership. On the one hand, if *de jure* household membership changes when fostering occurs, then what is the use of the concept, in conjunction with that of *de*

*facto* household membership, as a means of indicating rates of wage employment and absenteeism?

On the other hand, it is surely important to recognise that there may be a variety of criteria which can be used to ascertain jural status. Among these are place of residence and participation in a particular household's productive activities (Spiegel and Sharp, 1988) as well as right to inherit and to be in line for similar transfers of property (Goody, 1976): this is despite the fact that there is no necessary link between residence and the agnatic principle whereby lines of inheritance are normally determined, particularly where disputes over bridewealth payments and rights of filiation are widespread (cf. Murray, 1977). A further criterion might become evident in matters concerning relations with the state bureaucracy.

A number of different levels of jural status would thus seem to exist, their levels reflecting the hierarchy of different political structures which rule people's lives in the Transkei. But there is also a time dimension to these statuses: jural status through residence applies only in the short term; jural status through rights of inheritance in the longer term, and jural status through registration with the national bureaucracy for all of one's adult life.

The fact that one can have at least two jural statuses derived from associations with, although not residence in, two domestic groups would suggest that, in certain respects, it is possible for individuals to be *de jure* members of two (or more) households simultaneously (cf. Wilk and Netting, 1984: 2).

#### Households as appropriate units of analysis in future research?

More fundamental, however, than whether the *de jure/de facto* concepts are useful in discussing residential turnover is whether a focus on households is not itself misleading. Guyer (1981: 104-5) has commented on the tendency towards high mobility of individuals between domestic groups which bedevils many efforts at collecting household composition data in rural Africa (cf. Guyer and Peters,

1987a). And she has made the point that household may be useful as a descriptive category but is inadequate as an analytical unit (cf. Harris, 1981). This is because the very differences between such empirical units, and the fluidity of their composition, are themselves precisely what require analysis. The links and networks between households may well thus be more important than the household units themselves. As Wong has argued, one cannot isolate the household analytically because of "the important role that transfers from other households play in the survival of individual household units" (1984: 59).

How far do these links and networks extend? They could include people and institutions of the southern African political-economy at large (Martin and Beitel, 1987). They could include whole village communities which, in the southern African periphery, are in some senses also units within which flows of remitted income and expenditure are concentrated (cf. Spiegel, 1979: 50). And there are also smaller local units which cross-cut household boundaries which should be understood thus (cf. Quinlan, 1983). The problem is to identify the principles whereby households are interlinked. Classically identified agnatic groups or even agnatic clusterings are certainly not central here.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the most common underlying principle appears to be functional utility - although possibly presented in some kind of idiom of kinship or fostering. A further central kind of relationship is that of wage-labour although this too is often hidden behind a facade of kinship or fosterage, as we have seen in chapter 6.

It may be as well therefore to follow Löfgren's advice when he suggests that it "would be a good idea to start [with] a contextual study of household organisation by ignoring the household units and focusing on other types of social and economic units" (1984: 448).<sup>9</sup> Future research will need to go further by looking for the

<sup>8</sup> As Guyer and Peters point out, the prime motivation for studies of descent and kinship principles was to "account for and justify the constitution and dissolution of politico-administrative units like villages ... and such property- and title-holding units as lineages" (1987a: 198). It was not for understanding exchanges of goods and services between domestic units.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Gastellu (1987) whose method is to start not with households but with examining production, consumption and investment groupings in order to see whether these overlap and thereby to trace flows of resources (cf. Guyer and Peters, 1987a: 266).

organising principles which order the relations and transfers between households and the fluidity of their composition. In the context of areas where oscillating labour migration is so widespread, and where dependence on unreliable remittances is so great, it is precisely the fluidity of household composition which must be explored and understood. Its occurrence is an intrinsic part of the process of labour migration and its analysis must have a central role in the explanation of the effects of that process on domestic relations, particularly of age and gender, and of the efficacy of the rural household as a locus for the reproduction of labour for the migratory wage-labour market. The ethnography which follows the section below represents the beginning of work which is thus focused. Before proceeding to the ethnography, however, some further methodological issues need to be dealt with.

#### Residential turnover: some methodological implications in the field

The phenomenon of high rates of residential turnover resulting from oscillating labour migration has been well described both by Hobart Houghton and Walton (1952: 52-64)<sup>10</sup> and by Murray (1981: 56-64), while the Botswana National Migration Study has been concerned as well with the movement of individuals between village homes, cattle posts and temporary homes near agricultural lands in addition to places of domicile while in wage-employment (Kerven, 1982; see Botswana, 1976: 178-80). The first two studies cited both present case studies of changes over time in the *de facto* composition of a number of households. The object of these exercises was to demonstrate the problems inherent in attempting to define the household in terms of its co-resident members in the homestead at any one time. Indeed, this problem is of sufficient significance for Murray to have introduced two chapters of his doctoral thesis (1976a) with sections entitled 'Defining the Household' (cf Murray, 1981: chs 2 & 5) and for various subsequent authors to have

<sup>10</sup> It is interesting that this part of the work on household composition in the Keiskammahoek Rural Survey was in the volume on 'economics' rather than in that on 'social structure'.

continued to grapple with the problem of understanding the nature of labour-reserve households.<sup>11</sup>

In much the same way as Hobart Houghton and Walton (1952: 52ff) did before him, Murray used longitudinal data to demonstrate that any one household can be expected to have a varying *de facto* composition across time as a result of the movement of its members between employment areas in the metropolitan areas of South Africa and their rural homes in Lesotho. But he goes further, reflecting that over a five year period,

... small households either disappeared, amalgamated with other households or remained relatively stable ... [while] larger households ... exhibited such regular and unpredictable residential turnover as to make it very difficult, in some cases, to identify *de jure* household membership with any confidence (1981: 56-7).

Thus he raises questions about the *de jure* boundaries of the household unit over time, and the incorporation of members from, or their loss to, other such units. It is this phenomenon which is our primary concern here, particularly but not exclusively as it reflects the strategies of people locked differentially into the insecurity of rural residence and migratory industrial employment and unemployment.

Recognition of the extent of empirical variability and fluidity in the *de jure* composition of domestic groups in the labour-supplying areas of the Bantustans brings with it certain technical field-work problems regarding decisions about one's unit of investigation. This is particularly the case in areas of dense population relocation such as the closer settlements of Qwaqwa where households could be wholly dissolved over even a six-month period (cf. Sharp, 1987). For purposes of a longitudinal study there, it was thus unsatisfactory to choose the household as one's unit of investigation, as had been common in the past and in one-off survey projects: one could not readily assume a continuity of even a core-group of household members, nor could one always find that core-

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Spiegel (1980a; 1982; 1986; 1987); Quinlan (1983); James (1985; 1987); Sharp and Spiegel (1985; 1990); Murray (1980; 1987); Sharp (1987); Webster (1987); Spiegel and Sharp (1988); Jaffee (1987); also see Guyer (1981).

group if they had moved house in the intervening period. As my work in Mabua was at one point part of a comparative project concerned also with Qwaqwa (see Sharp and Spiegel, 1985; forthcoming; Spiegel and Sharp 1988) the primary unit of investigation we chose was the residential site (cf. Sharp and Spiegel, 1985; Spiegel, 1986a).

This course of action brought with it its own problems, among them that complete changes are possible in the occupancy of certain sites across time, as for example when a site and the houses on it are transferred from one 'owner' to another (Spiegel, 1986a: 20; Webster, 1987: 9). The result in both areas was that we found ourselves having to deal with new groups of people on sites we had been to previously. In Mabua, however, this was readily overcome because I was able, in all cases, to track the household - or at least its core - whose members I had interviewed previously. The village was small enough and sufficiently cohesive for nobody to be 'lost' from our sight in the way this could and did occur in Qwaqwa (cf. Sharp, 1987).

Our concern with residential sites was thus solely to identify a readily available unit of *investigation* which, by virtue of its arbitrary nature, was less likely to be altered over time. At no time did we intend to imply that sites are sociologically significant units of analysis. But the focus on the site as the primary unit of investigation produced data on the fluidity of sociologically important units such as domestic groups and residential units. These data were more reflective of on-the-ground experiences and practices than the products of work done using the household as the primary and even 'natural' unit of investigation - even when the household was defined functionally as an aggregation of people within which are concentrated flows of income and expenditure (cf Murray, 1981: 48; Spiegel: 1980b: 7). The latter had produced important information on the relationship between households as units for the reproduction of labour and the macro-context of labour migrancy in which they did this. But these addressed structural issues, while our new method produced more practice-oriented data which could be used to clarify better the relationship between micro- and macro-level structures.

Household fluidity: residential turnover in Mabua 1982-84

As discussed in chapters 1 and 5, when I began my research in Mabua in 1982, I selected a random sample of 30 residential sites for interview, all of which were revisited in 1984. Ten of these had also been the subject of interviews in 1983 conducted by Alan Thorold, a junior post-graduate student. The information thus generated included longitudinal data on changes in site occupancy and household composition. I expanded upon this by adding similar data from a 'strategic sample' of another eighteen sites first visited in 1982 and also revisited later. These eighteen comprised what Honigman (1970) has called an opportunistic and judgmental sample: I selected them by virtue of their having some special interest for me, not always linked to the problem of household composition. I refer to the aggregate of these two samples as my extended sample.

The results of these surveys and further in-depth investigation revealed a surprising fluidity in both site occupancy and household compositions. Of the 48 sites included in my extended sample, only five had experienced no change whatever in the compositions of either the *de jure* or the *de facto* households on them over the two-year period under consideration. In the random sample of 30 sites only three had not experienced any such change, and all of these were occupied by single households comprising effectively simple nuclear families with the father/husband away from home in migratory wage employment and remitting regularly for his wife and children's upkeep.<sup>12</sup>

Various cases of quite major changes in site occupancy had taken place: single households in 1982 had split into two by 1984, some remaining resident on the same site, others splitting spatially as well as socially; whole households had removed from one site to another; households which had been separate and on different sites in 1982 had, by 1984, amalgamated into one on the same site; and

<sup>12</sup> Nominally one of these also included a non-remitting childless widow who was virtually permanently absent. She was the household head's father's brother's wife. Her name was included by them as a household member, but she did not visit the village at all over the duration of my research. Cf. Murray (1981: 49) who used a visit to the village as a criterion for including a long-term non-remitting absentee as a *de jure* household member.

some sites had had an influx of new occupants, some being incorporated into the existing household on the site, some establishing separate independent households on the site.

Five of the sampled sites had experienced major changes of this kind over the two year period between surveys: in one case a *de facto* unoccupied site in 1982 had been let out to tenants by 1984, while the *de jure* residents absent in 1982 were still all away at work. In a second case the site-holder, who had been absent in 1982 when the site was occupied by tenants, had returned in 1984 to re-occupy the site.

The tenants, a young nuclear family, were in the process of building their own homestead when the husband, who was the sole wage-earner, lost his job on the mines. He had allegedly been involved in a fight in the hostel. They had moved back to his parents' site, planning to remain there only until their own house had been completed. In the intervening period, however, the young wife had gone with her children 'for a visit' (of indeterminate length) to her own natal home. Her husband's lack of employment seemed to militate against the speedy completion of the new house.

A third case involved the removal of a young man and his wife and child to their own new house and site after his father had died in 1983.

In the two remaining cases the (male) site-holders' (classificatory) brothers had moved with their own wives and families onto the sites while the site holders and their wives were away at work. In one of these two cases some of the site holder's children remained on the site and were cared for by their father's brother's wife. A closer look at the other case highlights some of the difficulties of caring for children when involved in the migrant labour system, particularly when misfortune strikes. It also introduces the issue of fostering which is taken up again below.

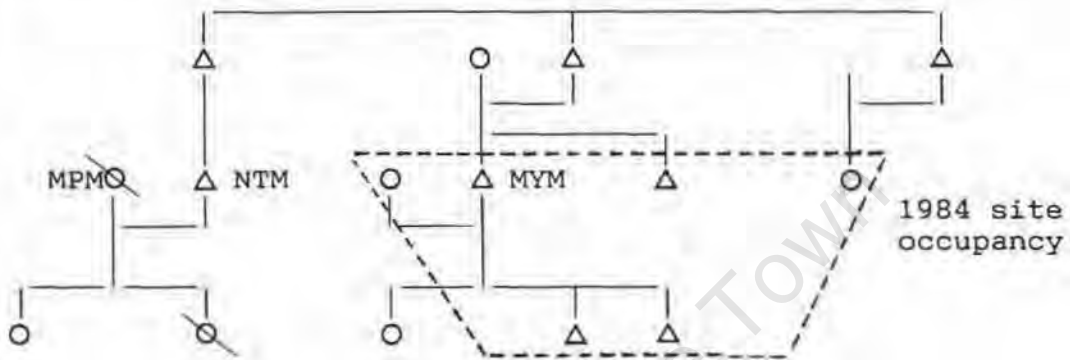
#### Case 8.1: Changing site occupancy: a wife dies

NTM was a labourer on the South African Railways in Durban. In 1982 his wife, MPM, was also in Durban, hospitalised with TB. Her year-old daughter was with her in hospital and their house in Mabua was unoccupied. In 1983, MPM bore another child, but was herself so weak that she died during childbirth.

The newborn baby survived a mere four months. Thereafter the first daughter was placed with her paternal grandparents.

By 1984, NTM's site had been temporarily occupied by his father's brother's son, MYM, and his family. They were more commonly resident in Pietermaritzburg than in Mabua but MYM's wife and children had decided to spend a period at 'home' so that she could be on hand when the time came to apply for a residential site: they planned to build in Mabua "so that we can be near to my parents and breed animals here".

Figure 8.1 Relationships of actors in case 8.1



Note: Dotted line depicts de facto household boundaries.

MYM's wife resided on the site with two of her three children, her husband's younger teenage brother and the thirteen year old daughter of her husband's father's brother, who had been placed with her just for the duration of her stay in Mabua: "to fetch water and look after the child when I'm busy". Her own oldest daughter, a seven year old, remained with her (the mother's) parents where she had been fostered "when we went to Pietermaritzburg so that she could go to school here".

By far the greatest number of changes in residential site occupancy were attributable to youths and children having been left with foster parents, taken back home by their parents, or moved to new foster homes. In the population generated by the extended sample, 35 children and youths changed residence because of fostering as compared with 29 births and 12 deaths recorded among members of the same population across the two-year period; of the deaths, two were of children born during the same period. Marriages of daughters and new wives involved a further thirteen women, while the practice whereby women return to their natal homes for confinement - particularly for the first labour - resulted in six

young women changing their place of residence across the two-year period, one having brought her older children with her.<sup>13</sup>

### Fostering

As we have seen earlier, people in Mabua, as elsewhere in Matatiele and the Transkei, are dependent for their primary source of income on the earnings of labour migrants. Often this very fact meant that a worker's children had no adult at home to care for them, and they were then placed with others in the village in a form of fostered relationship. Moreover, for many dependants of migratory workers, the remittances which were their life blood were unreliable, for one of two reasons: either absent workers lost their jobs, or their sense of 'duty' to their relict families faltered. Often the latter occurred when workers sensed a threat to their domestic security which, as Murray (1981) Spiegel (1980a) and Ferguson (1985) have shown for Lesotho migrants, is what motivates them to remit.<sup>14</sup> Such a process of 'faltering duty' has been shown to have had a high incidence elsewhere in the periphery, particularly in areas of dense closer settlement such as Qwaqwa where local resources are wholly inadequate (cf. Sharp, 1987; Sharp and Spiegel, 1985; forthcoming).

Faced with similar circumstances, people in Mabua found various ways of dealing with their loss of remittance income, many adapting already common practices devised to deal with erratic receipts of remittances. One of these was extensive inter-household lending and borrowing - particularly of small amounts of foodstuffs - almost all done by women linked together into loose networks of mutual assistance and reciprocal help. This in turn shaded into the placing of children in domestic groups other than those of their parents or into other transfers of people between households.

<sup>13</sup> In the population generated by the random sample, there were 28 cases of change resulting from fostering, seventeen the result of births, eight the result of deaths and eight the result of new wives moving to their marital homes.

<sup>14</sup> Wilk and Netting's (1984: 19) assertion that migrant workers remit to their homes out of a sense of moral duty to their families is more a statement of hope than a reflection of practice: such morality derives from workers' own understanding of the security implicit in generalised reciprocity.

Philip Mayer (1978: ch 12) has given some indication of the extent of women's loan networks in a village in the Willowvale district of the Transkei during the 1970s. He has shown how they both 'borrowed' and 'exchanged' maize, beans, pumpkins, tea and sugar and other commodities, and how these transactions linked women together in "a complicated network of obligations" (Mayer, 1978: 144) which could involve various forms of mutual assistance such as "helping with work or sending a child to help" (Mayer, 1978: 145). He also points out that people distinguished between 'exchanging' and 'borrowing', the former implying a reciprocal relationship between equals so that "you must return the same amount of mealies in due course [while] 'borrowing' is a euphemism for begging for help" (Mayer, 1978: 143-4).

Gathering quantitative data on such exchanges and networks is extremely difficult because most transfers are conducted quietly and quickly, often by sending a child with a message asking for a small quantity of foodstuff. Most Mabua women I asked were willing to list the names of those from whom they had recently borrowed commodities, or to whom they had lent them. But they did not keep detailed mental ledgers of all such transfers and transactions, and no-one attempted to ensure precisely balanced reciprocation: they thereby made space for obligations between transactors to retain a diffuse social (and moral) character rather than become purely material and instrumental (or tactical) (cf. Bloch, 1973; Murray, 1976: 121ff.).

Nonetheless, women made a clear lexical distinction between borrowing (*hokadima* to lend; borrow; cf. *hokadimana* to borrow from one another) on the one hand, and asking for handouts (*hoqela* to ask; to beg) on the other (cf. Mayer, 1978). People I interviewed were much more willing to acknowledge that they often borrowed from and lent to their friends and neighbours than that they had had to beg.<sup>15</sup> And they left me with a clear impression that they disdained the situation of those who had to 'beg'.

<sup>15</sup> Significantly, when women begged, they asked for foodstuffs to take home for preparation. When a man came to beg (*qela*) it was understood that he wanted prepared food which he could eat immediately - or preferably beer.

In practice these categories of exchange blurred into one another, reflecting a continuum between balanced and generalised reciprocity in Mabua as in Willowvale (Mayer, 1978). Often the length of time taken for the return of items borrowed had to be extended because remittances to allow a refund failed to materialise. Women whose husbands had just left for work or were away at work were quite readily able to obtain loans in the expectation that they would soon be able to repay and reciprocate; and if a woman's husband had just lost his job, she too would be assisted, at least initially, because it was expected that she would soon be able to reciprocate once her husband was re-employed. When this did not happen, however, the earlier loans would be written off - in the sense that there would be no attempt to force their repayment. Over the very long term, if her circumstances improved, such a woman would hope to be able to help others again. In the short term, however, her further requests for help would increasingly be understood as begging rather than borrowing.

In many instances this signalled a decline in the latter's status. It would mark the start of an increasing reluctance on the supplier's part to provide the recipient with 'loans' which might never be returned. For some it marked the beginning of negotiations for the placement of children, and sometimes also adults, in the households of those with resources where they would be expected somehow to serve their hosts. In yet other instances, such placements went the other way, with a child from a relatively well-off household being 'given' to a poor one which was then supported materially to ensure the child's well-being. This would in turn provide the 'foster parent' with access to some resources. Such cases were less a response to crisis situations, however, than a way of dealing with someone such as an old widow chronically unable to care for herself on her own (see case 8.5 below).

Many of my informants explained the contemporary practice of fostering children as a custom (*moetlo* or *tloaelo*) which has persisted to the present day. People said that one could find its precedents in earlier practices. This is supported by the literature, as for example when Poulter (1976: 238) cites Laydevant (1931) who had earlier suggested that the frequency with which he

found children to be brought up by their uncles, grandparents or other relatives was not new even then. A reason I commonly received in response to my insistent queries about why fostering was practised was that 'it is our custom' (*ke moetlo oa rona*) for especially first children to be placed with their maternal grandparents to be brought up by them. Some went so far as to suggest that this was because when first children were born only a small portion of the bridewealth had been paid and the maternal relatives took a child as surety. My data do not indicate a higher incidence of fostering of first children or of fostering with maternal grandparents than with other foster-parents. This may, however, be a product of small sample size.

There were, in addition, various other explanations given for the placing of children with their paternal and/or maternal grandparents. Case 8.2 below presents an example in which there had been transfers of young children from one part of an agnatic group to another over a number of generations. Case 8.3 which follows reveals the importance attached to having a male heir who can become at least nominal head of a household, and the way in which this influences choice of household where a young boy will be brought up. At the same time it indicates the impact on children if both their parents migrate and reside at a labour centre.

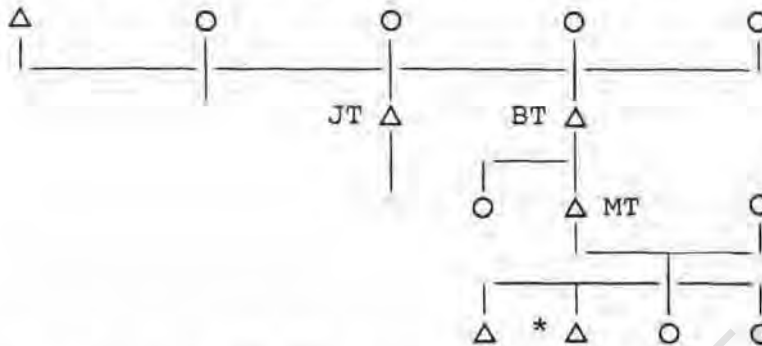
#### Case 8.2 Passing children around across the generations

JT (case 5.2) was born about 1918 in a village in Lesotho. He was the second son in his father's second house of four, and spent his childhood years herding his father's cattle. As a youth, however, he decided to leave home and found employment as a herder for a wealthy stockowner in Tsita's location; he subsequently married one of his employer's daughters and then settled in Mabua, establishing himself as subheadman. His wife bore him just one son.

Some years later his half-brother, BT, the first son in their father's third house married and built a home in Lesotho. BT's wife bore him eight children, and when JT pointed out that he had had only one, BT sent a son (MT) and a daughter to live with JT: as the latter explained "They were brought up here because their father forsook them (*oabalahleha*). He had so many children to have to bring up and support there. So he said that because I had only one child I should take these two of his and bring them up here."

In due course the children grew up and were married. MT built a household in Mabua near to his father's brother's home, and established himself as a successful labour migrant working on the railways. His wife had had four children by the time I left Mabua, including twins born in 1979. By 1982, when I was first in Mabua, the boy twin had already been sent to his paternal grandfather, BT's, home in Lesotho, because - said JT - he had been sent MT, and now the newly-weaned little boy had to be sent back to where his father had come from.

Figure 8.2 Relationships between actors in case 8.2



Note: \* denotes the child sent to his father's father's home in Lesotho

### Case 8.3 Taking a boy to inherit the homestead

SM, an old widower, had all four of his migrant son's minor children staying with him in 1984 while their mother joined her husband for a period at his place of work. When the mother returned home, three of these children were expected to return to their parental home in the village and to reside there with their mother. But, said old grandfather SM, the first-born boy would stay behind. "He is my son's son; but he is really my son" ("Ke mora mora 'ka; empa ke mora oaka hantle"). When I die he should be left here to look after the children in the house [ie. those born to his father's unmarried sister]. If I should die while he is still young then his father's sister will bring him up. And when he comes of age, he will look after his father's sister (*rakhali*) and the family."

Judy Gay, who worked in south-eastern Lesotho, has described a number of contemporary functional reasons for fosterage, a term she uses to refer to a "broad range of circumstances under which the care for a child is delegated for any period of time to someone other than its natural parents" (1980: 78). She found a fairly high incidence of this phenomenon: 34,4% of the 296 households in the village where she conducted a census in November 1977 included one or more resident children whose respective fathers and mothers were

not also members of that domestic unit (*ibid.*). Significantly, 43% of the 54 fostered boys were in their foster homes "to herd", while 25% of the 56 fostered girls were there "to give help, company or because [the] foster-parent had no child" (1980: 80; Table 2:3).

Similar calculations from my extended sample in Mabua show that in 1984 42% of the 48 sites surveyed had a total of 38 children who had neither parent also resident there. The figure for 1982 was 31% involving 34 children. As we have seen, 35 children in my random sample *changed* residence between 1982 and 1984 because of changes in fostering/parenting arrangements. Of these 35 changes in residence, 26 involved boys and only nine girls. It is not clear, however, whether this gender imbalance is representative of the general situation or is merely a product of the small sample size: it is not significantly different from the figures generated by the random sample.<sup>16</sup>

Nine (35%) of these 26 boys had been sent out of their natal homes at least partly so that they could work as herdboys; alternatively they had been brought back home after a spell of being herders elsewhere or had been moved as herders from one household (and site) to another. In some cases the parents of the herder were paid a small sum monthly for their son's services, while the boy himself was clothed, fed and given board and lodging at his place of employment. In other cases, there was no cash payment, but the boy was maintained solely by the foster parent/s.

Case 8.4 below indicates some of the reasons for the hiring or else 'putting out' of sons as herders in other domestic groups and gives some indication of the nature of the relationship between herdboy and his employer as well as that between employer and herdboy's parents.

#### Case 8.4 An injury to the breadwinner injures the family

KHM, a mine worker, was injured underground in mid 1981. He was then 51 years old. Until then he had remitted money to his

<sup>16</sup> Figures from the random sample of 30 site-populations were: 1984: 40% of the sites surveyed had 23 children resident without their parents; 1982: 27% of the sites surveyed had 19 children resident without their parents. The random sample include 21 boys and seven girls among the 28 children who changed residence between 1982 and 1984. Eight of the 21 were sent out to herd.

wife, Mrs KEM, relatively regularly - she claimed to have received about R100 every month or two. His first son, who had started work during the mid 1970s, had also sent money home for a time. But in 1979 he was shot dead by police near his place of work in Durban.

Since returning home after his mine accident, KHM had had occasional local 'piece jobs' (*likoropo*: see chapter 6) but these had not generated sufficient income to maintain his family of eight surviving children. His first daughter was briefly married in 1982, but then returned home. Around that time his second son - then aged 14 years - was first employed as a herdboys by the Mabua café-owner, a retired agricultural officer. He earned R10 per month paid directly to his mother, and was fed, clothed and accommodated at the café-owner's house.

Meanwhile Mrs KEM established an extramarital relationship with a local official which provided some further income in kind, and through it she attempted to find a more regular job for her husband. They also sold off half of their small flock of goats.

By 1984, with precious little income for the family's upkeep, the *de jure* household had decreased in size from nine to seven members, and the first daughter had managed to find employment on the Reef after having first worked for a time in Durban. But she was not remitting to her parents, and they had consequently put out others of their children:

- the second son who had been herding for the café-owner in 1982 was now with a classificatory father's brother who paid Mrs KEM R20 per month for his services;

- another son had been sent to live in another village with his mother's older sister, a pensioned widow who had been living alone. The boy herded her few livestock and in return she provided his basic subsistence needs. Her own sons were all absconders (*machepha*) - migrant workers who had 'been lost in Johannesburg'.

- Yet another of KHM and KEM's sons had also been placed elsewhere by 1984: he was now living in yet another village with his mother's brother's wife whose husband was a migrant worker and whose own children were all deceased.

These arrangements had had to be made because - said Mrs KEM in an aside not intended for my hearing - "I have very many children". To me she explained that her sons just enjoyed visiting their relatives, and often chose to stay on with them if they got the chance. Pressed further, however, she said that it is 'Sotho custom' to place children with their mother's parents, and that - she said - was effectively what she had done.

Despite Mrs KEM's protestations, it was clear that she and her husband had found the burden of maintaining their children too great. In 1982, she had denied that she had had reason to beg (*qela*) food from her relatives and neighbours, although she agreed that she had often to borrow (*kadima*) from them when she

was short. By 1984, however, she explained sadly that she was indeed having to beg food to feed her remaining children, while she continued to borrow the ingredients to make beer which she then tried to sell in order to generate little cash sums. Moreover, by then I frequently saw both her and her husband hanging about at beerhouses in and around the village where they were able to cadge enough to stave off their hunger.

Fostering was not only a response by household's lacking cash income whereby they divested themselves of their dependent children. Fostered children were often placed with elderly relatives in order to help them with heavy domestic tasks and sometimes to assist them financially. Indeed, some instances indicated that one response to lack of income was to take in children in the knowledge that sums remitted to support them would help their hosts. In such instances girls were preferred as foster children as they could be expected to draw water and perform other domestic chores (cf. Gay, 1980).<sup>17</sup> Older women living on their own were also keen to have some company, particularly at night: even within households it was common practice that pubescent girls would be sent to sleep in the same room or hut as an old widow, separated from their brothers and mothers. Of the nine girls in the extended sample who changed residence because of fostering, however, only the two discussed in case 8.5 below did so explicitly to go and perform domestic tasks.

#### Case 8.5 Helping out an old granny

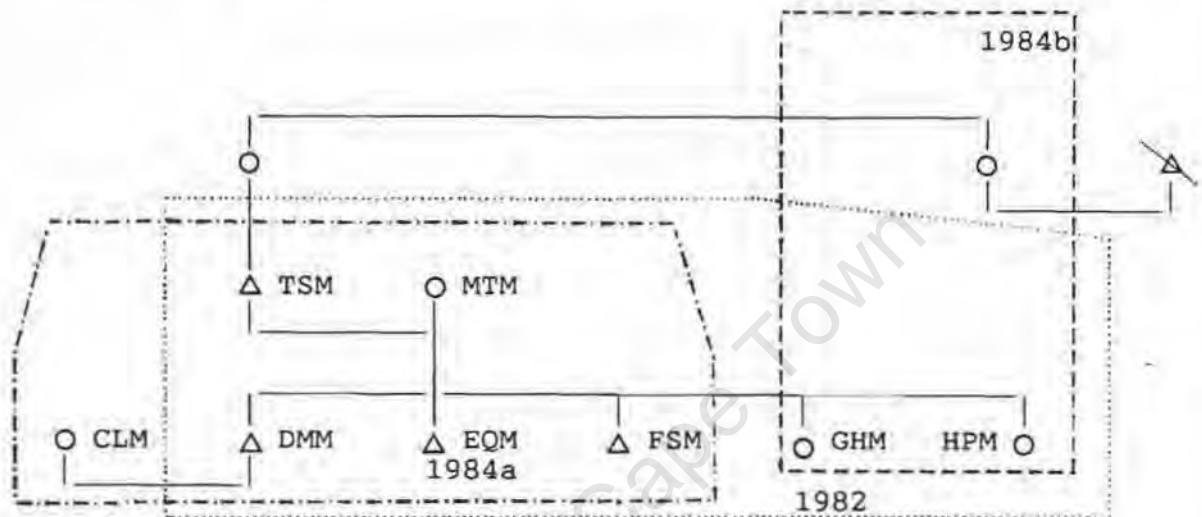
In 1982 TSM, his wife MTM and their five youngest, unmarried children were all *de jure* residents of one household in Mabua. TSM was employed as a labourer with the GPO in Durban from whence he remitted an average of about R100 a month. At home, MTM looked after her children, all scholars at the village school. She also managed their agricultural pursuits: overseeing the herder, a boy from another household who was paid to come and tend the stock on a daily basis, and ensuring that their field and garden were worked properly.

By 1984, the *de facto* composition of the domestic unit had changed quite considerably. The two older sons had begun work away from home. One had been on the mines since October 1983 and was remitting regularly to his new wife who was now also resident on the site; the other had recently arrived to stay with his father in Durban and was doing 'piece-jobs' (*likoropo* - see chapter 6) while he looked for a more secure position. Moreover, the two youngest children, both daughters, had been

<sup>17</sup> Some people gave this latter reason for the fostering of some of the boys too.

fostered out with their father's mother's sister, a widow living on her own in a village some ten kilometres away. Thus they seemed no longer to be *de jure* members of their parents' domestic unit. This is indicated in the diagram following which shows changes, over that period, in the *de jure* composition of the site/household population. The list attached also shows actual presence in and absence from the site at each of my censuses.

Figure 8.3 Relationships of actors in case 8.5



Reference	Date of Birth	June/July 1982	August 1984
TSM	1931	-	-
MTM	1936	+	+
CLM	1965		+
DMM	1965	+	-
EQM	1967	+	-
FSM	1971	+	+
GHM	1973	+	
HPM	1977	+	

Note + denotes presence  
 - denotes absence but *de jure* household membership  
 blank space denotes non-membership of the unit

The two girls, GHM AND HPM, had been placed in their new foster home early in 1984 so that they might be able to enrol at the nearby school at the start of the school year. They had also been placed there in order that "they can go to draw water for her [their old father's mother's sister]". She had requested that they live with her for this reason and for company, and their mother now ensured that they were properly

fed and supported by personally taking R30 or R40 a month to the foster mother. This allowed her to check on her daughters' well-being, while the monthly contribution provided the old foster mother with a small source of income.

With a regular income reaching the household from both her husband, TSM, and her son on the mines, Mrs MTM was able effectively to extend the functional boundaries of the household to incorporate residents on a separate site in another village, although this did not mean that they 'ate from one pot'. In the sense of commensality, then, the two girls were excluded from *de jure* membership of their parents' household; in another sense, that of income-pooling (coparceny), their foster mother became part of that unit.

Fostering of children, particularly by parents obliged to remain absent from their rural homes for long periods, can be extremely complicated, and often fairly frequent changes in fostering arrangements were found to be necessary. In order to understand the nature of these complexities one needs to go beyond a focus on one site or household and to trace the experiences of a child or group of children as they are shunted from one foster parent's home to another. Cases 8.6 and 8.7 below attempt to do this. Case 8.6 focuses at the same time on one widow in whose household a number of children were fostered for a part of the two-year period under consideration. The case also demonstrates the manner in which wives of unreliable wage remitters must, on occasion, be able to turn to their parents or close agnates for support and even shelter.

#### Case 8.6 A household in flux

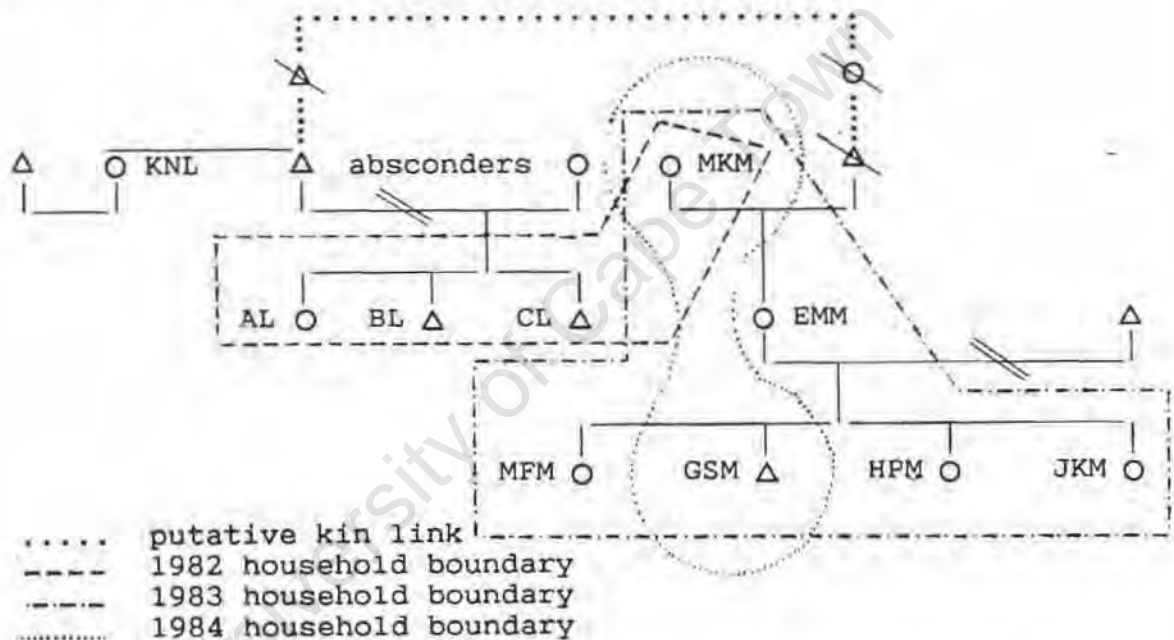
In June 1982 when I first visited Mrs MKM, a 56 year old widow (see cases 5.5 and 7.3), I found three fostered children living in her home. She could trace only a putative genealogical link with them through her husband: she explained that her late husband and the children's 'adoptive mother', KNL, were classificatory cross cousins (*motsoala* = mother's brother's child) (see figure 8.4). All three children were still quite young, the oldest, AL, being a 13 year old girl. During this time Mrs MKM received a relatively regular remittance of R30 per month sent to her to provide for the three children by KNL.

Eighteen months later, when I paid a brief visit to Mabua in December 1983, Mrs MKM no longer had the three children in her

household. Instead she was accommodating her own daughter, EMM, plus her four children. Her daughter's husband, previously employed for eleven years in Pinetown, had contracted TB and had been forced to return home. He had spent time in the local TB hospital and although now at his marital home, was quite demoralised and was unable to earn sufficient income to support his wife and children. The solution for Mrs MKM's daughter was to return to her mother's household and to help her with brewing beer for sale.

By August 1984, nine months later, Mrs MKM's daughter had returned to her marital home just before her husband was re-admitted to the local TB hospital. But Mrs MKM still had a child in the house: her daughter's nine year old son, GJM, had remained on with her rather than return home with his mother.

Figure 8.4 Relationships of actors in case 8.6



Reference	Date of Birth	Jun/Jul 1983	Dec 1983	Aug 1984
MKM	1927	+	+	+
AL	1969	+		
BL	1971	+		
CL	1973	+		
EMM	1955		+	
MFM	1973		+	
GSM	1975		+	+
HPM	1979		+	
JKM	1983		+	

Let us now trace the movements, as they were explained to me by various informants, of the three children, AL, BL and CL. By doing so we will be able to see the kinds of domestic/residential insecurity with which children are faced, and the ways in which they are shunted around to accommodate the exigencies of labour migration.

#### Case 8.7 Problems of placing relict children

Mrs KNL, a childless woman, had first taken over caring for her brother's three children, AL, BL and CL in the early 1970s when their mother 'disappeared in town' after weaning the youngest. She had gone to look for work because her husband had already 'absconded' to town and she said that she needed to support her family. On occasions when KNL travelled to visit her husband living and working on the Reef, she took the three children with her. Or she sometimes left them behind in the care of her close neighbour and friend, Mrs MKM (see case 8.6). Thus, when she decided to go and live more permanently with her husband early in 1982, she again left them in Mrs MKM's care, and - as we have seen - sent a small sum every month for their upkeep.

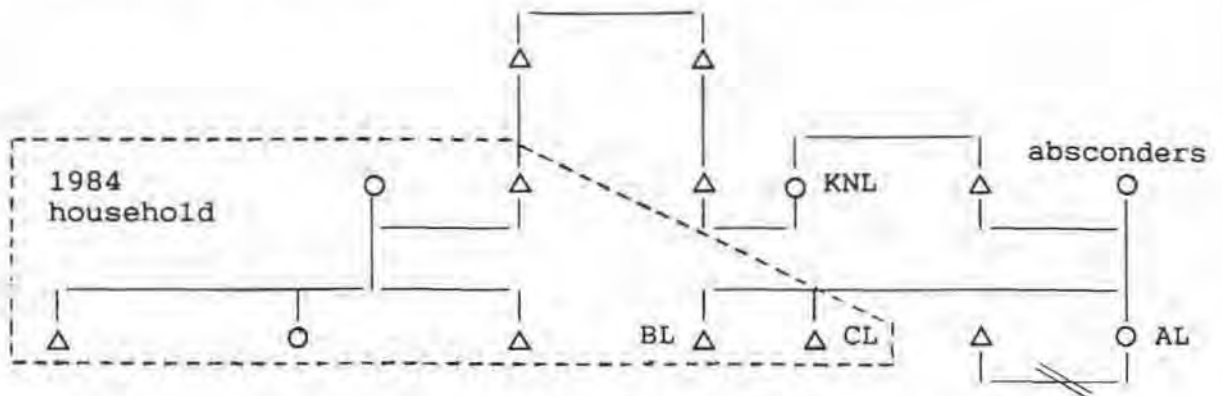
During this time, and until late 1983, Mrs KNL's house, on its own site in the village, was left unoccupied. When she and her husband visited Mabua during 1983, however, they decided that they no longer wanted the house left vacant. In Mabua at that time they found a poverty-stricken woman from a neighbouring district who had been ejected from her own natal home and was now in need of a place to live. She was given their house to live in, promised a regular remittance and left to care for the three children in addition to her own daughter's child whom she had with her. But this arrangement did not last long as the caretaker proved to be incapable.

Soon the oldest child, now a girl of 15 years, was married to a young mine worker in the village. The two younger children were then passed along to take up residence in the household of KNL's husband's patrilineal cousin.<sup>18</sup>

PTO for figure 8.5

<sup>18</sup> I have not attempted to probe the effects of these changing relationships on children themselves. I believe that this is an important area for further research, particularly now that South Africa's iniquitous influx control legislation has been repealed and many more wives are accompanying their husbands to their places of employment, leaving older children behind. One could speculate that AL's early disastrous marriage (cf. cases 7.3 and 8.6) might have been the product of her first being abandoned by her parents and then fostered out by her father's sister who had taken over the parenting rôle. Sean Jones (1990) has begun to examine some of these effects on children and youth in an urban (hostel) setting in the Western Cape whose life-histories reveal a high rate of 'fostering' by migrant-labouring parents.

Figure 8.5 Relationships of actors in case 8.7



But late in 1984 their older sister AL abandoned her marriage and fled to the Reef to be with KNL whom she regarded still as her 'mother' (see case 7.3). As we have seen, in the court case about her disappearance it was Mrs MKM who was obliged to answer charges that she had aided the young woman to abscond. She was singled out because of her previous role as foster mother, and because she was said to have received money from KNL to pay for the train ticket to the Reef. Indeed, the proceedings of the case suggested that there was a perception of greater affinity between Mrs MKM and the girl than was reflected in any genealogical link between them.

The bridewealth was subsequently returned when a letter was received from KNL's husband in which he said "Take your R500 which you said would be two cattle. ... I don't want it. Also I don't want any cattle as a[n elopement/abduction] fine. I have not become so hungry that I will eat your cattle." By the end of the year the young husband had come home on a visit and had married a new wife.

In addition to the instability of residence for relict children these two cases demonstrate, they raise some other points of interest. Although she never explicitly said so, it would seem that Mrs MKM gave priority to the needs and demands of her daughter when she was in difficulty, putting them ahead of the needs of the distantly related three children. But it was her pregnancy that provided the daughter with a legitimate reason to return to her mother's home.

The literature reflects an established procedure, known in Sesotho as *ho ngala*, whereby a woman, dissatisfied with her husband's treatment of her returns to her natal home. Such a move invites negotiations between her husband and her parents for her return (Poulter, 1976: 197ff.). But in the event - as here - that the

husband's support fails because he has fallen ill, it may not be prudent to take this option. Her pregnancy provided Mrs MKM's daughter with another apparently customary reason to return to her mother: many women prefer to spend their confinements in their natal homes, and - as we have seen - it is accepted practice that at least their first confinement should be there (Gay, 1980: 105ff.). Thus Mrs MKM's daughter was able to legitimate her return to her mother's home in terms of tradition, although the reasons that it occurred were clearly pragmatic.

Secondly, in terms of our concern with fluid household composition and the high rate of inter-site mobility, it is relevant to note that the inept caretaker (case 8.7) moved on to a number of different similar sorts of situations in Mabua, most of them without the responsibility of child-care. But by the end of 1984 she was completely homeless - she slept wherever she could find a place to rest; her daughter's child was severely malnourished and ill-treated; and both of them were wholly dependent for their sustenance on hand-outs from well-meaning villagers. Her case represents one of the most extreme as regards insecurity of residential tenure. It also reflects the kind of insecurity which hangs over people in labour-supplying areas in the Bantustans, although tempered in this instance by the accessibility of some agricultural land and indeed of other resources (cf Sharp and Spiegel, 1985).

In villages such as Mabua there are almost always indigents lacking a secure home base. They can be found moving from one house to another, working as domestics and temporary caretakers, and subordinating themselves as 'children' and dependants in other people's homes (cf. chapter 7). Many are women who have left their marital homes and whose agnates have spurned them. As Mayer (1978) has pointed out, the shift to paying bridewealth in cash rather than in cattle has meant that a woman's agnates are less willing to refund it because it has often been spent and they do not have the resources to regenerate such large amounts of cash. Indeed, it has previously been pointed out that bridewealth has become an important resource providing older people a source of cash for their maintenance, particularly if they do not receive pensions (cf. Murray, 1976b; 1977; Spiegel, 1980a: 122). As a result many women

who try to terminate their marriage are offered little sympathy, support and protection by their brothers. Only those who *ngala* to bargain for another bridewealth instalment are received favourably, although such action becomes increasingly less efficacious as time passes in a marriage.

### The household and its fluidity: continuities and 'tradition'

How did people in Mabua themselves understand their householding practices, and can we in any sense argue that these represent a continuity with the past which persists because they are 'traditional'? The answer to the second part of the question is both yes and no - for reasons I will present after dealing with the first part.

People were by no means always clear when asked about precisely what constituted a household, and their constructions of the boundaries around the unit were often contingent. We have seen how the boundaries could be extended or contracted for political reasons. Similarly, when it came to taking subscriptions for public affairs, there was debate about how to decide about the boundaries of the contributing unit. Thus a Mabua village *pitso* in 1982 discussed at length whether each adult, each man, each earner or each household ought to subscribe towards a spring protection scheme which the Department of Health had said had to be implemented. In that instance the household prevailed, a commensal idiom being used to define its boundaries as those who together 'drank from one bucket'. This was very similar to another commensal idiom which was often used in interviews I conducted where the household was described as 'those who eat out of one pot' (cf. Murray, 1981: 48).

This lack of immediate clarity did not imply confusion in people's minds. It merely reflected the way in which households were defined contingently. In those instances where the location of household boundaries was likely to have either social or material

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<sup>19</sup> This was part of the same scheme as insistence on pit-latrines (see chapter 7; Segar, 1989). It was ostensibly set up to try and restrict the spread of cholera of which there had been various coastal outbreaks.

significance, people consciously and discursively decided where they wished to put those boundaries. For the most part, however, they proceeded with their day-to-day living without engaging in such deliberations. They knew, in a very practical way, what constituted the household and who belonged in it: who could be expected to provide support for its members and who could expect to derive some benefit from those contributions. They thus had no need regularly to decide - as if *de novo* - who was part of the household, or what obligations each member had.

An idiom of pooling and redistribution prevailed in most households even though it was often realised only in dispute. People knew who was responsible for which tasks within the household, particularly as these were defined by criteria of gender and age. And most got on with at least attempting to meet their responsibilities to the group. Of course there were cases of dispute over fulfilment of respective roles. In particular, wives complained bitterly that their husbands did not remit enough or sufficiently frequently, or that they set aside amounts needed for daily living in order to purchase investment items such as cattle (cf. Ferguson, 1985). And many husbands visiting the village between spells at work often expressed discontent at the speed with which their remittances were swallowed up by their wives' spending. This was particularly noticeable in households without an arableland allocation (cf. Sharp and Spiegel, forthcoming). But by and large there were well-established practices relating to the maintenance of the household, and there was little in the way of conflict over who should do what - only whether what one should have done was done adequately or whether one was demanding or taking more than one's 'fair' share.

Does the fact that these practices and expectations were well-established mean that they represented a direct continuity with practices which had occurred in the long-distant past, that a relict wife and mother's role as household administrator represented the conservation of the earlier functions of a wife? And does it mean that the household itself, as an entity dependent on its neighbours for various forms of mutual assistance but nonetheless autonomous, represented a persistence in form and content that has come down

from the past? Can we then also argue, because people explained to me that their fostering practices were 'our custom', that those too were an unmodified continuity from the old days?

There is clear evidence that the answer to these questions is a categorical no. As I pointed out in chapter 2, much of the recent southern African literature has demonstrated that the penetration of capitalism, particularly via migrant labour, resulted in the transformation of a wide variety of institutions and practices in the periphery. These include the structure and composition of families and residential and local production units, as both Murray (1980a) and Beinart (1980) have shown for Lesotho and Pondoland respectively, although both are careful not to exaggerate the absolute determinance of capitalism and migrant labour.<sup>20</sup> Nonetheless, as Murray points out, these transformations do not constitute a wholesale replacement of the old by the new. While the practical content of many institutions has been significantly changed, the cultural forms they have taken have commonly persisted (cf. Guyer and Peters, 1987a: 200; 206).

It is not my intention here to rehearse the now well-worn neo-marxist formulation that the structural demands of capitalist expansion paradoxically brought about a simultaneous conservation and dissolution of earlier forms and practices in peripheral labour and commodity-supplying areas (see Bettelheim, 1972; Wolpe, 1972, 1980; cf. Murray, 1980a: 143-4; 155-5; also chapter 2 above). Its overt determinism prevents this approach from recognising that people themselves participate in reorganising their lives and that the practices they establish draw upon their own experiences and histories. While it denies the primordialist argument that people persist with social practices because they are 'culturally committed' to them, this approach falls into the trap of a near conspiracy theory: that capital simultaneously restructured and invented the traditions of the labour-supplying population, including that of the household, in order the better to ensure a labour supply for its industry, and to control that population (cf.

<sup>20</sup> By comparison, the analysis of Martin (1984) and of Martin and Beitel (1987) does imply that kind of determinism (see below: cf. Guyer and Peters, 1987a).

Wolpe, 1972). It fails to recognise the extent to which people's ideas about how to run their lives have been forged in the furnace of the vicissitudes and insecurities of their increasing proletarianisation where they have had to use extant cultural resources to give meaning to their lives, and often to create means for their survival.

This economism also underpins the work in a recent symposium on *Households and the World Economy* which sees the household "not as some kind of primordial unit that exists as a universal or transhistorical feature of 'society in general'" (Friedman, 1984: 47) - as Hammel and Laslett's (1974) typology would imply - but as "part and parcel of [the capitalist] world."<sup>21</sup> Households are seen ... as basic units of an emerging world-system" (Smith et al, 1984b: 7-8).<sup>22</sup> They function, according to this formulation, as "the capitalist institution securing and guaranteeing reproduction of (commodified) labour ... by maintaining subsistence production" (Stauth, 1984: 92).<sup>23</sup> As Martin and Beitel would have it: the household's "theoretical status is on the same plane as other institutions that the world-economy has brought into being, such as 'states' and 'capitalist enterprises'" (1987: 217).

Of course these authors do not suppose that various features of households did not exist prior to capitalism. Indeed, Stauth argues that the household "'inherits' certain primordial functions" such as the reproductive functions of "giving birth, preparing food, providing affection" and socialisation (1984: 91). But by this approach, these are functions that can be located in aggregations other than households, indeed they are in pre-capitalist contexts.

In addition, these writers recognise that there will be regional differences in how the household is manifested because of "variations between and within the zones of the world economy in

<sup>21</sup> Hammel's (1984) essay also reflects this concern to find the characteristics which are the basis of a universal household.

<sup>22</sup> Unlike Meillassoux (1981) they do not see a direct structural continuity of the 'domestic community' becoming the household (cf. Edholm, Harris and Young, 1977).

<sup>23</sup> Subsistence production here describes various forms of production for immediate consumption. These, goes the argument, are destroyed, integrated and recreated by and for the historically dominant productive system (world-capitalism) (Stauth, 1984: 96-7).

which they are located" (Friedman, 1984: 47). But their top-down structuralist analysis prevents them recognising the agency of people on the ground who invest their own experience in their present householding practices, often in only a practically conscious manner. And it implicitly produces a sense that if the household is in any way traditional, its traditionality has been instrumentally invented by and for capital.

A contrasting perspective is necessary, however, if we are to make some sense of my argument above that people in Mabua proceeded with most of their householding practices without consciously and discursively deciding to do them, whether or not those decisions were instrumental or for reasons of their commitment to 'tradition'.<sup>24</sup> This was the case even in situations where members of households were sent to live with others in relationships of fostering: circumstances made such dispersals necessary, and people thus looked to find the most advantageous ways of arranging them, often building on established relationships of borrowing and lending. Only in rare instances did they send children away because this followed an earlier pattern, and in those cases the pattern was idiosyncratic rather than one of general 'custom' (see case 8.2). Yet, when I, as nosey anthropologist, persisted in asking for a reason for their actions, they gave me the often heard answer 'it is our custom' (see case 8.4). And they referred me to a norm - unsupported statistically - that many children were left with their maternal grandparents to be raised by them.

What is this contrasting perspective? I would suggest that we need to recognise that many householding practices persist for wholly pragmatic reasons felt most immediately by ordinary people. While it may be true that households in the periphery can and sometimes have served the function of providing a locus for the reproduction of labour power, one cannot assume that their form has been created by capital in its quest for that labour power. As I have said above, people use their own cultural resources to structure their various social practices, including their responses

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<sup>24</sup> The unhelpful alternative is to ascribe to them a false consciousness created by the hegemony of capitalist ideology of which their traditionality is a product.

to the changing nature of their incorporation into a capitalist-dominated world. They thus continue to practise their old householding ways, and they modify them as they go along and as the need arises. If no such pressure occurs, they just continue as before.

The implications of this as regards notions about the traditionality of the household became quite clear during a comparative study of householding and fostering in Mabua with that in one of Qwaqwa's closer settlements. Dependence on migrants' remittances long ago turned households such as those in Mabua into effective units for redistribution (cf. Spiegel, 1980a). But the availability of local resources in the form of pastures and some arable land allowed them to function as if they were still primarily production units. Moreover, their productive activities, into which fostered individuals were directed, reinforced their image as old-style production units. As was pointed out in the comparative study, this in turn "resonate[d] with older people's experiences of households as production units and [gave] meaning to the notion of 'household' as an institution of 'tradition' or 'custom'" (Spiegel and Sharp, 1988 :141).

This was also the case as regards gender relations within households - particularly those between husbands and wives. In households with arable land, men's remittances sent in order to pay for working that resource were available to their wives for short-term investment in their own productive activities such as brewing or making garments for sale. After this first circuit, such money was subsequently spent on working the land. These women were thus able to find a means of generating small discretionary funds while continuing to perform the task of household manager and homestead overseer in their husbands' absence. Women in landless households did not have such opportunities, and sometimes they expressed resentment of the way in which their lives were dominated by their men. Yet, for the most part, they indicated a wish to find themselves in a similar situation to women in landholding households. We have also pointed out in the comparative study that "The latter women provided a powerful model to others, and set standards of domestic conduct, combining deference to their husbands

and self-reliance, which were still widely regarded as normative" (Sharp and Spiegel, forthcoming: 15). The 'tradition' of a wife's role as relict household manager with some limited personal discretion was thus reinforced by its practice rather than by overt and instrumental demands that it be adopted and maintained.

In these senses then, we can indeed argue that householding practices in Mabua do persist because they are traditional. The very fact that when the existence of some households was threatened others were "able to bear the burden of taking people in and to utilise their presence ... provide[d] opportunities for the importance of the idea of household to be realised" (Spiegel and Sharp, 1988: 141). Secondly, the argument is supported by a structuralist perspective which would have it that state and capital have gone out of their way to ensure the maintenance of traditions they have invented as a means of reducing subsistence expectations and controlling the population (cf. Wolpe, 1972; Meillassoux, 1981; Smith et al, 1984a; Martin and Beitel, 1987).

Thirdly, we can rephrase our question and ask whether the persistence of these practices reflects a process of tradition. I have argued in chapter 1 and elsewhere (1989) that tradition is simply the process of transmitting ideas about how to 'go on' with life. If this is so, and if people are by and large just 'going on' without changing their practices to any great extent, then we can assume that the ideas whereby they organise their 'going on' have indeed been transmitted, albeit non-discursively. This then is tradition in practical process rather than tradition used instrumentally.

Many would prefer, however, to understand traditionality only as a resource to be drawn upon for instrumental reasons (cf. Hobsbawm, 1983; Philibert, 1986). Using that as our criterion, the answer to our question must be no. The apparent continuities in practices occurred not because people had any reason to appeal to their traditional ways to legitimate or explain their actions but because they just knew how to 'go on' in those ways, and had experienced no pressures which might have led them to change. Only when I as an anthropologist asked them to raise their consciousness from a

practical to a discursive level did they then appeal to tradition. But that was more a rationalisation which they assumed I would buy than a premeditated reason for their behaviour. Their appeal to tradition was the result of my question rather than the cause of their actions.

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## CHAPTER 9

### CONCLUSION: SOME REFLECTIONS ON THEORY AND METHOD

This thesis represents the product of a series of interrelated explorations. Empirically it explores the history of population movement and its impact on rural differentiation in the Transkei's Matatiele district, as well as the ways in which this was manifested there during the first half of the 1980s. More abstractly, it includes an exploration of the manner in which the past is thought or said to resurface in the present - sometimes intentionally and purposively, sometimes not - and the reasons this may occur. It is also an exploratory attempt to suggest a possible new approach to ethnographic research in southern Africa.

At the outset I suggested that I wished to examine the possibility of an approach that builds upon a materialist analysis in order to come to terms with processes not immediately explicable by that set of analytical tools. I also indicated that the thesis is, in a sense, two-pronged: that I have both used the insights previously generated by political-economic analysis of rural labour-supplying areas, and tried to go beyond those to attempt to explain how some continuities occur for reasons not susceptible to rationalist explanations. I use this concluding chapter both to summarise the products of my endeavours and, for the greater part, to review some of the theoretical and methodological issues in the thesis. I start by looking at the ways in which the (earlier) approach from political-economy has been useful, and then go on to look again at the trajectory of my own intellectual development in the context of South African anthropology. I conclude by examining some of the methodological implications of the new approach I have proposed.

#### The approach from political-economy

An important facet of materialist analyses in southern African anthropology has been their emphasis on careful historical

contextualisation of micro-level data. It is for this reason that my first empirical chapter (chapter 3) examines the processes of settlement in the Matatiele district since the mid-nineteenth century, and the extent to which population movement has occurred there since, while chapter 4 locates the district as a labour-supplying area with a relict population heavily dependent on remittances from labour migrants. This sets the scene for the subsequent discussion of various other forms of population movement. These were the result of state-sponsored interventions as well as of the impact of labour migration, both of which are explicable only in terms of political-economic processes in the region at large. For example, the specifically political process of bantustan creation is most clearly reflected in the material presented in chapter 7 where the offices and structures created by that regional system are seen to provide a resource for village-level power relations.<sup>1</sup>

It is, moreover, in terms of an approach that looks for such regional contextualisations that I have been able to make sense of the material differentiation in the areas where I worked. As I show in chapter 5, people's relative wealth status can readily be traced to both their individual histories of resettlement and relocation as well as to the nature of their involvement in the migrant wage-labour market at the time of their relocation and subsequently. Whereas previously there was a tendency in the literature to focus almost exclusively on people's relationship to the migrant wage-labour market in order to explain such differentiation, I show in this chapter that local circumstances, such as time of settlement and the impact of betterment-induced relocation, must also be taken into account. One needs to recognise the variety of ways in which regional political-economic processes impact locally.

The approach also throws light on the nature of both farm ownership and tenancy on some areas of freehold in the district, particularly tenancy known locally as *boloso* on 'Harry Ebden' farm. As I show in chapter 6, most *maloso* tenants were virtually wholly

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<sup>1</sup> When I say that bantustan creation is a specifically political process I do not mean to suggest that it does not have roots also in the political-economy (cf. Molteno, 1978). All I am saying is that it manifests as a political process.

dependent on migrant remittances and had settled as tenants on that farm because they knew that because of state-initiated betterment and population pressure they had no prospects of ever establishing an agricultural resource base in the areas from which they had come. Their prime concern was thus to have a secure and accessible place to leave relict family members while wage-earners were away at work. Yet there again, the importance of individual and family history was significant in so far as tenants of very long standing had access to more local resources than did recent arrivals.

Another important contribution of the approach is that it helped me to find a way of understanding the fluid nature of domestic group composition that I came across in Mabua. Much of the more recent literature on the impact of migrant labour has focused on the social problems caused by labour migrants oscillating between their places of employment and their rural homes. But virtually none has been concerned with the impact of the migrant labour system on relict populations' residential insecurity. As I have shown in chapter 8, there was fairly widespread fluidity of household composition in Mabua, and there is little to suggest that this is exceptional for labour-supplying areas. By looking beyond the village borders into the nature of migrant-remittance dependency, I have been able to explain this fluidity as a response to the exigencies of that form of dependence, particularly when migrant labourers' remittances are erratic and unreliable.

#### On a trajectory towards culture

My interest in the ways in which household members were dispersed has not, however, been limited to such an interpretation. I have also been concerned to understand how such dispersals reflected continuities as regards the nature and form of the household. While I was satisfied that there was a functional reason for dispersing dependents, I was not sure that the form this took could also be thus explained. To explain that I needed to turn to another approach - the one I have tried to develop in this thesis which - as I pointed out in chapter 1 - implicitly reflects the trajectory of my own intellectual development in recent years.

That intellectual trajectory is by no means idiosyncratic. As I indicated in chapter 2, from the late 1970s onwards much southern African anthropology - including my own work - was significantly influenced by historiographical revisions which brought a new awareness of the importance of broader political-economic structures. Various anthropologists of the region came to recognise the need to locate their micro-studies in the political-economic environment of the broader southern African region as it changed over time. And while anthropologists shifted in this way, a number of historians turned increasingly to oral sources and produced particularly insightful analyses of the relationship between micro- and macro-levels supported by detailed micro-level evidence (*inter alia* cf. Beinart and Bundy, 1987b; Keegan, 1988; Delius, 1990). Their focus at the local level also exposed them to the cultural texture of social life and led them to ask questions about cultural processes (cf. Beinart, forthcoming; Hofmeyr, 1990), and to develop a new interest in culture and cultural practices.<sup>2</sup>

This interest in culture did not develop for empirical reasons alone, however. Political-economic analysts more generally had begun to look at both human agency and experience (Bozzoli, 1983b) and at the instrumental use and 'invention' of symbols and tradition (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983) as well as the colonial and post-colonial creation of ethnicities (cf. Vail, 1988). And there was a new shift towards cultural studies that came with the growing importance of discourse analysis and deconstruction of both language and other performative practices. All of this has had its impact on southern African anthropology in recent years, as has a similar shift in anthropology worldwide (eg. Ortner, 1985).

This shift in interest is also reflected in the deconstructionism of the substantive contributions to the most recently published compendium of South African social anthropological work, *South African Keywords* (Boonzaier and Sharp, 1988; see Sharp, 1988), which indicates the demise in influence of structuralist analyses of the political economy among South African anthropologists. As some of

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<sup>2</sup> Papers presented at recent conferences of the History Workshop of the University of the Witwatersrand also reflect this concern (cf. Bozzoli, 1983b; 1983c; 1987; Bonner et al 1990: a sixth conference was held in February 1990).

its contributors have suggested in discussion, that book represents the swan-song of an erstwhile predominant (although by no means exclusive) concentration on political and economic structures. It also heralds a renewed concern with culture, albeit still dealt with in rationalist and instrumental terms and hesitating to leap forward to give cultural practice a momentum autonomous of political-economic processes. The political-economic is still seen as ultimately determining the social and cultural.

This renewed interest in culture does not, therefore, represent a concern with cultural structures over the *longue durée*, for which Kuper appeals (1987: 9), so much as a concern both with culture as a socio-political resource (Thornton, 1988) and with culture as ideas about social practice that are transmitted over the short rather than the long term. Such ideas, it is now argued, may develop in response to social environmental demands - particularly in the political domain. Moreover, as I hope this thesis has shown, we need to recognise and realise that culture, both in practice and as ideas, may also persist precisely because of a lack of such socio-political pressure. In situations where practical consciousness suffices, change is quite unlikely, and so old practices and ideas persist. This is less because they 'die hard' than that people have no reason to 'kill' or otherwise modify or transform them.

Underlying the intellectual shift outlined above, however, is an intellectual continuity. This has been manifested in a consistent concern to draw attention to the danger of reifying cultures (in the plural - cf. Thornton, 1988; 1989) and to question the usefulness of regarding such perceived cultures as systematic wholes and of pursuing a dualist or pluralist analysis in southern African anthropological work. For many South African social anthropologists, the emphasis on political-economic structures that became prominent during the 1980s was linked to a politically inspired imperative to break away from an analysis that implied the existence of bounded systematic cultures, and that was being used to justify political separateness in a racial capitalist system (*apartheid*). The aim was to find ways to understand the various parts of South African society as parts of a single whole, perceived as the regional political economy and structured in terms of the

systematic interests of mining and industrial capital. In my own work this manifested as an insistence that people in the labour-supplying areas of southern Africa's periphery were part of the regional proletariat, and that analyses that regarded their social relations as remnants of pre-capitalist modes of production were misplaced (Spiegel, 1980a: 112ff.).

My present shift is the product of a move away from the unmediated structuralism in that approach and away from all exclusively structuralist analyses, particularly at the micro-level. This is for two reasons: firstly because such analyses overemphasise what Giddens calls 'systemness' and thus fail to be able to recognise that there are always "degrees of 'systemness' in societal totalities" (Giddens, 1984: 283); and secondly because one has to look to dialectical combinations of social structural pressures and human agency (what Giddens calls structuration) to find the determinants of social processes. As Giddens phrases it, "it is not the case that actors create social systems: they reproduce or transform them, remaking what is already made in the continuity of *praxis* (1984: 171).

In this respect my concerns overlap with those of Kuckertz (1990) in his recent ethnography of Mpondo social life. Both approaches try to avoid reading society and social process off models of social structure without wholly discarding the notion of structure. Both are concerned to understand the processes whereby social structures are created and/or transformed by social practice which is itself constrained and enabled by extant structures. But that is where the theoretical overlap ends, for Kuckertz focuses almost exclusively on micro-level social interactions with little concern to relate these to broader regional political-economic processes. Indeed he writes about 'Mthwa society' and the social interactions which create social structural order within that perceived unity. And he pays virtually no attention to processes of structuration within broader social contexts. He does not ask how social interactions are themselves both structured by and in turn structure relations and relationships in and with the regional political-economy.

However, there is a more significant theoretical difference between Kuckertz's approach and mine. In his attempt to escape a structuralist analysis Kuckertz elects to understand all social interactions as the product of deliberate choices and decisions by social actors: "decisions depend on clear economic planning and not on the result of some latent function or a subconsciously operating social structure" (1990: 23). Thus, having set up an apparently unbridgeable chasm between social structure and human agency, he leaves no space for practical consciousness because he sees all social interactions - and one assumes all cultural practices - as the product of people's discursive (ratiocinative) consideration.

A more pragmatic approach to social and cultural forms allows one to understand the fluidity of both human social interaction and people's use of culture (cf. Keesing, 1989) without returning to a dualist or pluralist analysis. The cultural resource-base on which people thus draw is itself then understood to be virtually open-ended, and limited only by their experience. Culture in these terms is thus understood to derive from the *whole* of people's own personal and vicarious experience rather than being conceptualised as part of preconceived whole cultural systems or drawn from limited facets of their experience. The approach I propose thus allows one to reinsert human agency and experience into one's analysis and, with Giddens, to understand both how that determines the structure of social systems at various levels and degrees of systemness, and, particularly, how it is constrained by such structure. Social and cultural continuities are a product of the interaction of human social action and the social structures that limit the range of possibilities such action can take in any particular context. That is why they are important - particularly when they are not the product of instrumentality on the part of social actors.

The question this begs is whether such human agency is motivated or is itself merely the product of structure and structural imperatives. After all, if people often act out of habit or what pragmatists have called instinct, then can we even look for

motivations?<sup>3</sup> If people's knowledgeability regarding certain actions is primarily tacit, can one say, as Kuckertz (1990) would, that they 'decide' to act? Can one look for their motivations for their non-instrumentally chosen actions? If not, as would seem to be the case, then are we limited to structuralist explanations, or can we try to understand the impulses for cultural practices by attempting to gain ethnographic insight into what lies in people's practical consciousness?<sup>4</sup>

### Conclusion: method and theory

Putting such a programme into action is, however, highly problematic precisely because practical consciousness is tacit and is never revealed discursively, and because we cannot assume that it is structured in a way that one can read from one facet of it to the next. It is thus not readily accessible to the researcher, particularly one who relies on interviews, however in-depth and extended these may be. Sometimes the text of an interview can be interrogated for hints of tacitly held ideas. But there is always a strong element of uncertainty in such procedures, particularly for researchers lacking an extremely detailed and nuanced knowledge of their fieldwork language. And one cannot overstress the sensitivity needed in order to avoid overinterpreting language-use at the expense of other cultural practices. While research along the lines suggested will require much greater language proficiency than has heretofore been the practical norm for many southern African anthropologists, one must not assume that that will be sufficient (see below).

<sup>3</sup> Indeed I have elsewhere argued that one has to recognise the rationalist assumption behind enquiries about motivations and decision-making. This was at a workshop organised by the Development Bank of South Africa where their technical experts were interested in looking for methods of examining the household decision-making process in rural agricultural households. I suggested that one had to recognise that when circumstances did not warrant people making changes to their agricultural practices they did not make real decisions about how to go on with those practices so much as that they merely continued as before as if habitually (Spiegel, 1987b).

<sup>4</sup> It seems possible that the whole body of work on cognitive developmental psychology may be able to throw some light on these types of questions, even though Rochberg-Halton refutes such a view because of Piaget's rationalism "that has no room for qualitative immediacy" (1986: 39-40). For the moment, however, my own ignorance of that corpus prevents my discussing or applying ideas from it.

Seeing aspects of practice repeated without any explicit decisions having been taken to do so gives us another window through which we can gain further hints about the tacit knowledge people hold, and which directs their actions without determining them. But it does not assuredly tell us what the impulse is that leads to behaviour. It merely tells us that the people involved act in terms of their practical consciousness or tacit knowledge. And asking them about their actions after the event produces only rationalisations that are themselves the result of external pressure for informants to be reflexive rather than the product of a reflexive monitoring which their activity has itself set in motion. An example of how this occurs during research can be found in chapter 8 where my enquiries about the reasons a woman had placed various of her children in households other than her own elicited both an answer that it was because of 'tradition' and an aside that it had been materially necessary.

Such rationalisation was also apparent in people's responses to two different sets of enquiries I pursued in the field, the first to do with perceptions of differentiation, the second with mortuary rites. The first comes from my enquiries about people's own perceptions of wealth differences and processes of material differentiation in their environment, a gap in contemporary studies to which Webster (1988) has also referred (see chapter 5). As indicated in chapter 1, my experiences with the Transkei's security police hindered my efforts to pursue this question in detail because of its local political implications. I was thus reduced to asking people a few bland questions about their perceptions in this regard and constrained from investigating closely how wealth differences and the processes whereby these had come about were represented and reflected in people's social and cultural activities. In other words, I obtained only discursive responses from a few willing informants, and have only limited purchase on the ways in which differentiation was imbedded in practical consciousness - as reflected in local political practice (see chapter 7) and in productive relations (see chapter 6, especially the latter section). What I was after, however, was the finer fabric of such imbeddedness. How did a practical consciousness of differentiation

manifest itself in everyday affairs, and were some people able to bring this up to a discursive level?

One repeated response to my questions about the reasons for local differentiation used the human hand and its fingers as an analogy. It was explained that God had made the hand with fingers of various different lengths so that it would function for what it was intended. Similarly, I was told, God had created circumstances in which some would stand out more than others, that some would be wealthier and others poorer, that some would be luckier and others less fortunate in life. In addition, my informants said, nobody who was now wealthy could be sure to remain so throughout his/her life. Indeed, most people went through periods of relative wealth and relative poverty, all as a result of God's will.

Clearly to deal with a discursively enunciated model such as this would require a careful study of the history and transmission of ideological constructions by churches and missionaries, and an examination of the ways in which these built upon pre-colonial ideological constructions (cf. Jean Comaroff, 1985; John Comaroff, 1989). But engaging in such an exercise means adopting an historical-structuralist analysis which rapidly moves away from the people who hold such a model. And it suffers the same limitations that any focus on explications do - one has to look for the instrumentality behind them.

Let us now turn to the second example. I was intrigued by the way in which Basotho in Matatiele persisted in shaving (sometimes trimming) their hair as part of their mortuary rituals, and I asked why this was the practice. Not only did they explain it as their custom (*tloaelo; moetlo*), but they demonstrated the depth of its customary significance by revealing that the order in which people's hair was shaved reflected their own or their husbands' genealogical position in the agnatic group of the deceased.<sup>5</sup> The fact that some individuals had the task of ensuring that the correct order was

<sup>5</sup> Murray (1976a: 261ff; 1981: 115) has discussed the significance for agnatic seniority among Basotho of the order in which people place earth in the grave of an agnate; and he has commented on the links between wearing the *thapo* (mourning cloth) and agnation. I found a similar set of principles operative with regard to the order of hair-shaving both at a funeral and at the end of the one-month mourning period among Basotho in Matatiele.

maintained indicates that for them at least the practice was the product of discursive consciousness. But for others it was merely the way of 'going on' - they took it on faith that they it was part of the 'natural' order of things as regards death.

When people's discursive consciousness is the product of their own self-initiated reflexive monitoring, there is a lesser likelihood of rationalisation. Whatever the case, however, discursive consciousness will by definition be expressed in ways that its meanings and intentions will be readily apparent to those who understand the language in which it is expressed. An example of such a process can be found when people explicitly appeal to precedent and 'tradition' in order to serve their own political interests. The examples presented in chapter 7 show that this commonly occurs in situations of conflict, because conflict has a tendency to create forums for the expression of such claims. Because it is disruptive, conflict leads people to engage in discussion and in explicit decision-making. Cases of conflict are thus important sources of data that give insight into the discursive level, and it is for this reason that they are so commonly the focus of ethnographic research and of case studies.

But by definition people do not express their practical consciousness except in their activities. While conflict situations provide a source of discursively-held knowledge, one must turn to repetitive activities to see tacit knowledgeability at work. And in particular one must examine daily social activities and everyday practices for the extent to which they reflect continuities over time. How does one do this as a field-anthropologist, particularly one concerned with tacitly held ideas about wealth and power differences? Is it ever really possible? And, if continuities provide us with a window onto practical consciousness, then how does one recognise, in the field, a social practice or institution as that kind of cultural continuity?

Clearly the key to cultural continuity lies in the repetition which routinisation brings with it. One place to look therefore is at cases of repetitive social practices and routines that are most frequently to be found in people's everyday activities: people have

their regular rounds of cooking, washing, eating, sleeping etc., and in all these they tend to follow the same patterns of behaviour from one day to the next. Their repetition in such instances can hardly be attributed to an insistent adherence on their own part to 'culture' or 'tradition'. People do not cook in particular ways, for example, because they explicitly choose or decide to use those methods. They persist with such methods because that is the way they know how to prepare their food. Nor do people ordinarily use their everyday practices as social markers. This only occurs in contexts of contestation. Given political reason to look for symbols of their own specificity, people may turn these into markers of identity with the appropriate level of salience. Outside of such conditions, however, they merely 'go on' with such practices repetitively. As Giddens points out, "Most daily practices are not directly motivated. [But as] routinized practices [they] are the prime expression of the duality of structure in respect of the *continuity of social life*" (1984: 282; emphasis added).

It seems clear that people continue to perform these tasks and activities as they do because they have no reason to change them and because they know how to 'go on' with them in the ways they do. If we are ever to tap into the practical consciousness which allows them to 'go on' thus, we will clearly need far more intensive participant observation in South African anthropology than has been the case in the most recent years, Kuckertz (1990) excepted. And fieldworkers will have to develop much greater proficiency in their fieldwork languages than has been the case for many in recent years. Moreover, the kind of fieldwork to which I am referring will have to focus on the least exotic of activities and allow for careful recording of everyday routines rather than be concerned with the

unusual and 'spectacular' (cf. Keesing, 1989).<sup>6</sup> The challenge for future research is to find ways of gaining access to people's tacit cultural knowledge by watching and listening to their *everyday* activities and utterances rather than by looking at the unusual, the conflictual and the exotic. Possibly this can be done through observing and recording processes of socialisation, especially but not exclusively of children, but that too introduces myriad problems of method and technique.<sup>7</sup>

Another area in which repetition is common is in everyday language usage. In cases of conflict, as we have seen, talk reveals discursive consciousness which nonetheless needs great language proficiency, including a nuanced understanding of local idiom, for adequate interpretation (cf. Giddens, 1984: 290). And to tap into people's talk - whether it is conflictual or everyday talk - one must also recognise the regional variations that occur in both lexical and grammatical forms in any one language, as the examples used in chapter 6 indicate. As pointed out there, the Sesotho term *sethabathaba* was used variously to mean special tax (in Qacha's Nek, Lesotho; cf. Paroz's (1974) dictionary definition), rent/site rates

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<sup>6</sup> This call for a return to highly intensive participant observation, underpinned by thorough fieldwork-language proficiency, is neither an attempt to recreate an objective scientific fieldwork method nor a case of the wheel merely coming full circle. Recent reflexivist emphases in the social sciences must surely have exposed the lie in any claim for the former. With Thornton (1989), however, I believe that we must sometimes suspend our self-consciousness temporarily in order to develop models and theory, as if in the manner of the natural sciences. Without that, and without the unimpeded relativism and anti-theoreticism of post-modernism being checked, we will achieve no analytical progress (cf. Roth, 1989; J-L Amselle, pers. comm. 1990). What we need now is not just super-sensitivity about our own rôles in the empirical and representational processes of creating ethnographic data, but a chance to invest new theoretical perspectives in more finely tuned fieldwork methods. Participant observation cannot now be simply a replica of old methods. Like all social continuities it has to change to accommodate new perspectives, ideas and experiences.

<sup>7</sup> Pam Reynolds' work (1989) represents one of very few anthropological attempts to do this in South Africa. Cf. Jones (1989); Burman and Reynolds (1986).

(in Qwaqwa) and labour-tenancy (in Matatiele). The same applies to a vast array of other words.<sup>8</sup>

By comparison with the language used in conflict situations, however, everyday language - with its regular repetitions - depends on people's tacit knowledge of both grammar and lexicon rather than on their considered choice of words and idiom. Certainly every conversation provides opportunity for reinterpretations of words and phrases, and therefore contestation of their meaning - as any academic or lawyer can testify. But the vast majority of conversations do not do this. People merely 'go on' with using their tacitly held lexical and grammatical knowledge, including various idioms and metaphors, the referents of which they do not consider. Everyday language-use therefore provides an important means of gaining access to practical consciousness.

One should, however, beware of the various pitfalls a focus on language introduces, particularly when attempting to use metaphorical language-use as a means of interrogating people's cultural resource-pools, and especially if one is not highly proficient in the language being interrogated. As I showed in chapter 6, various tropes relating to land-use patterns were used by people in Matatiele. But, as I pointed out there, their use is not necessarily an indication that people parcel up their worlds into neat packages from which they draw such tropes. My argument was that people are far more pragmatic than they are systematic when they draw upon various facets of their experience and history to source their metaphors. I believe the same applies with regard to people's non-linguistic practical metaphors referring to issues such as differentiation, and this opens up whole new avenues of research.

<sup>8</sup> For example, an informant from the Ladybrand area of the Free State gave me another Sesotho term, motebo, to describe labour-tenancy, by which he referred to labour-tenancy on farms kept by absentee white landowners exclusively for pasturage. This word is more commonly used to describe cattle-posts where herdsmen live while at their mountain pastures in uplands Lesotho and in the Drakensberg ridge marking the boundary between Qacha's Nek and Matatiele (cf. Paroz, 1974: 491). According to my Ladybrand informant, however, cattle-posts there are known by an alternative term viz. moraka (cf. Paroz, 1974: 419). He described moraka in much the same terms as the word motebo had been explained to me elsewhere: ie. land which one owns or controls oneself (not owned by a white or controlled directly by a chief), which is some distance from one's place of residence, and where one's own cattle are left in the care of herders who remain with the stock away from their places of residence (cf. Sheddick, 1954: 154). Paroz (1974) translates both words merely as cattle-post. This informant understood sethabathaba as tax.

Roger Keesing (1989) has recently pointed out that understanding people's use of metaphor does not mean reading those metaphors literally. And he has alerted us to the the need for scepticism of "interpretations for which the main evidence lies in the stuff of language ... [unless] ... strongly supported by folk exegeses or other evidence of corresponding 'beliefs'" (1989: 467; 467 n20). Keesing develops his own argument around the problems of interpretation of the 'indigenous' matter in Malaita languages, particularly Kwaio. Sensibly he does not complicate his problem by attempting to deal with the use of metaphors in Kwaio which are 'borrowed' from another language which 'belongs' to politically powerful 'invaders'.<sup>9</sup>

In the case of my own material on land-use patterns in chapter 6, as in those of Comaroff and Comaroff (1987) who follow Alverson (1978), and of Robertson (1987) this is precisely what has been done: viz. we all look at terms we have heard used and which we can source etymologically either to the vernacular in which they are used (Sesotho or Tswana) or to Afrikaans, a language often associated with *apartheid* because it is the language of those who have dominated the South African polity since the implementation of the racial order thus described.<sup>10</sup>

Unlike the Comaroffs and Robertson, however, I am not inclined towards allowing my discovery of these differing etymologies to lead me to an essentially structuralist interpretation that people consistently maintain a perception of two opposed worlds: one, associated with Afrikaans through Afrikaans-derived tropes, which is industrial, alienating, anomic and where exchanges are based on the principle of balanced reciprocity; the other, signalled by use of 'authentic' vernacular tropes, where generalised reciprocity occurs

<sup>9</sup> Although Keesing has written widely about the creation and understanding of *kastom* (a pidgin term used on Malaita which derives from the English 'custom'), his analyses never suggest that the term's etymology can lead one assume that *kastom* represents something alien to people on the island. Indeed, his whole argument is that they have created *kastom* in order to encapsulate what is 'truly theirs' as opposed to what is alien. Their instrumentally invented traditions are thus described by themselves by a term which itself seems to come from outside what is 'authentic'. Their use of the term reflects most clearly the inventedness of its content.

<sup>10</sup> The Soweto uprisings in 1976 exacerbated this perception of Afrikaans as the 'language of the oppressor' because their proximate cause was an insistence by the relevant government department that both Afrikaans and English (the two 'official' languages of the state) should be used equally as mediums of instruction in all African high schools.

in an idyllic setting of equality and cooperation. My own examination of two terms used to describe tenancy in Matatiele, *maloso* (Afrikaans-sourced) and *sethabatha* (Sesotho) did not result in my being able to demonstrate the ideational existence of two opposed cohesive cosmologies and 'cultures' purely on the basis of people's use of those two terms. On the contrary, I could only argue for people's *pragmatic* drawing upon language as a cultural resource.

This is not to deny that people can and do construct such cosmologies which they then set up against one another if the political environment demands it. But I would argue that we need to make quite explicit what those circumstances are - particularly at the micro-level of social interaction - rather than to assume such constructions from structuralist principles. It is for this reason that I have argued, also in chapter 6, that the use, in Matatiele, of the Afrikaans-sourced word *sekoropo* does reflect such a construction, precisely because it can be contextualised in local power-relations.

By doing this I show that examination of linguistic metaphor only is inconclusive, as Keesing has pointed out (1989). Much of the Comaroffs', Robertson's and my own arguments all tend towards overinterpretation of lexical items, probably because they are based on quite thin ethnographic data lacking any really detailed 'folk exegeses'. The reason I have adopted the approach in chapter 6 is in order to show how easily it can be used to produce explanations both supportive of and directly opposed to one that finds cohesive cosmologies through purely structuralist principles. This is why I would ultimately wish to adopt Keesing's position and deny the legitimacy of a purely language-based approach.

It is necessary, however, to go at least one step beyond a position which argues that because the existence of cohesive cosmologies is inconclusive, we must therefore restrict ourselves to a pragmatic approach. Language use and construction is far more complex than any southern Africanist anthropologists have yet explicitly recognised. We are thus lacking in thorough and systematic analyses of the historical construction of metaphor and

the 'grammaticalization' of lexical forms in the region, with its multiplicity of languages which have long borrowed from one another. By saying this I do not mean to ignore the scholarly work on vernacular praise-poetry (cf. Kunene, 1971; Damane and Sanders, 1974; Wainwright, 1980; Opland, 1983; Gunner, 1986), nor the important growing corpus on migrants' poetry (Coplan, 1987; Moletsane, 1982; Mokitimi, 1982). The problem with these texts, however, is that they are concerned with metaphors used in extraordinary circumstances. Unless, and until, we have thorough and systematic analyses of everyday metaphor, however, we will have to continue to work with the kind of pragmatic approach I outline and propose in this thesis, particularly in chapter 6. This is because such an approach prevents our assuming "that ... peoples' [and people's] schemes of *conventional* metaphor are ... deeply expressive of cosmological schemes ... or that 'cultural models' are uniform" (Keesing, 1989: 463; emphasis added). The southern African experience continues to deny such separate wholenesses in any absolute sense.

This does not, however, mean that we can assume cultural uniformity throughout southern Africa - that is patent nonsense, as even the most cursory empirical observation demonstrates. Indeed, the very diversity of cultural practice to be found in southern Africa is what has partly motivated this thesis.<sup>11</sup> I am thus ultimately concerned to find ways of understanding the persistences of such cultural differences. But, as must by now be clear, I find structuralist interpretations unsatisfactory, and it is for this reason that I have turned to the notion of practical consciousness to understand those continuities.

In a recent unpublished but increasingly widely cited paper, Kottler (1988) has suggested that there are two discrete and often opposing discourses prevalent among contemporary social anthropologists in southern Africa. One of these, which adopts what Kottler labels 'the similarities position', insists that any

<sup>11</sup> It also appears to have motivated a recent psychology thesis (Swartz, 1989) where the author is concerned to deal with the ways in which cultural diversity is approached by psychiatrists in South Africa. Although Swartz offers important insights for my own work, his thesis was not available to me in time to consider any of those here.

observed cultural differences must be located in terms of the single political-economic structure of racial capitalism (*apartheid*). For that position's protagonists, she argues, the primary question to be asked about cultural differences is *why* they occur: how can these apparent differences be explained in terms of the domination and exploitation that inhere in that single regionally-unifying system? This is the discourse to which most of my earlier work contributed and, as pointed out earlier, it is motivated by political concerns and relies heavily on the insights of political-economic analysis.

The other discourse, adopting what Kottler calls 'the differences position', presents itself as speaking for people themselves. It does this through structurally encoding "The system of concepts and values embodied in a culture" and "nourish[ing] a sense of identity and of possession of a heritage" in order to empower people with self-confidence and pride and a means to "interpret experience as it is brought by new lifestyles and selectively thus to integrate the new with the established ways of life" (Ngubane, 1988: 12 in Kottler, 1988: 9-10). As Kottler (1988: 10) points out, this is clearly as politically motivated a position as the 'similarities position' although at least one protagonist denies this.

If both 'positions' are politically motivated, one needs to ask which one is likely to be more effective as a political strategy, and towards what ends. For the present discussion, however, it is far more significant and appropriate to recognise that both positions depend on and reinforce structuralist analyses which are inadequately mediated by concerns with social process.

This is why I have been drawn to Giddens' notion of structuration and particularly to attempting to apply his distinction between discursive and practical consciousness, and to searching for ways of discovering the latter empirically. Firstly, such an approach provides a powerful means of avoiding the structures-versus-processes and structures-versus-human agency oppositions which have long bedevilled social theory. Secondly, it provides a way of bridging the gap between macro- and micro-levels of analysis. Consciousness, whether discursive or practical, is not epistemologically tied to social structures in the way notions of

cultures and ideologies are. Using the notion of practical consciousness to understand what lies behind people's behaviour (their culture) helps one to avoid conceptually encapsulating those ideas and prevents the kind of easy reification which has occurred in the past.

If one asks the question 'why are there cultural differences and why do they persist?' one needs to have at one's disposal a means of finding different answers for different kinds of continuities. On the one hand it is as insufficient to say that the political economy is so structured that it determines such persistence as it is to say that the cultural makeup of (a) people is so tightly structured that it predetermines their behaviour. On the other hand, it is inadequate to understand all practices as responses to political-economic pressures and to argue that all tradition is thus invented, either for immediate political goals or merely for purposes of stimulating self-confidence and pride. Such a perspective is vitally important but it must not be allowed to dominate our thinking and to submerge our ability to conceive continuities which occur because of the momentum of habit. As Ortner (1985) has argued, we need to focus our attention on practice in and of itself, and not restrict ourselves to seeing practice exclusively as response. In other words, we need to counterbalance an approach that assumes that all behaviour can be traced to ratiocinated decisions or structural functions with another that is theoretically equipped to understand how people 'go on' by applying their tacit knowledge. And we must beware of the pitfalls in the way of looking for tight structures in that tacit knowledge, linguistic analogies notwithstanding.

I have been concerned with different kinds of continuities because I have wanted to find a means of understanding how and why practical differences persist. I have been concerned to use Giddens' notions of discursive and practical consciousness in order to differentiate between those practices that are instrumentally maintained or even created and those that persist for other reasons. I have wanted to find a means of dealing with apparent differences without resorting to cultural structuralisms which seem to support separatist ideologies and without going to the extreme of denying those

differences. I have been looking for a way of bridging the gap between the 'similarities' and the 'differences' positions without abandoning one of the fundamental principle of the former, and that is that there are no absolute boundaries in social and cultural life.

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## APPENDIX A

### ADDITIONAL TABLES OF TRANSKEI AND MATATIELE MIGRATION STATISTICS

**Table A.1** Numbers of Transkeians registered as workers in the common area in terms of the Black Labour Act

Year	Number	Source
1977	464 689	SAIRR, 1979: 177
1978	500 294	SAIRR, 1980: 209-10
1979	499 012	SAIRR, 1981: 115
1980	549 704	SAIRR, 1982: 134
1981	544 237	SAIRR, 1983: 84
1982	527 138	SAIRR, 1984: 136
1983	372 814 [a]	SAIRR, 1985: 257
1984	387 492	SAIRR, 1986: 144
1985	375 413	SAIRR, 1988: 72
1986	338 834	SAIRR, 1989: 312

Note a. The reduction in the number of Transkeians registered in terms of the Black Labour Act between 1982 and 1983 is the result of a change in the definition of the categories of workers thus registered (SAIRR, 1985: 257), and does not reflect a 29% drop in the number of Transkeians employed in the common area.

**Table A.2** Numbers of Transkeians recruited by, and 'on strength' with TEBA - mine workers only

Year	Number recruited (a)	No. on strength 31 December (b)	ratio (b):(a) %	Source
1977	147 393	98 591	66,89	TEBA, 1977
1978	132 238	116 850	88,36	TEBA, 1978
1979	115 579	123 617	106,95	TEBA, 1979
1980	111 114	128 124	115,31	TEBA, 1980
1981	125 657	135 284	107,66	TEBA, 1981
1982	122 190	131 724	107,80	TEBA, 1982
1983	113 320	135 664	119,72	TEBA, 1983
1984	122 575	140 458	114,59	TEBA, 1984
1985	130 602	143 870	110,16	TEBA, 1985
1986	117 109	142 536	121,71	TEBA, 1986
1987	112 628	126 981	112,74	TEBA, 1987

Source TEBA Annual Reports and Financial Statements, 1977-1987

**Table A.3** Numbers of male Transkeian workers in contract employment in the common area

Year:	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973
Number:	174 223	184 788	191 600	225 330	231 969
Year:	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978
Number:	256 971	303 233	377 760	403 828	425 230
Year:	1979	1980			
Number:	341 553	345 116			

Source: *Transkei Development Review* 1 (2): 83

Note: It is not clear from the source whether these are recruitment of 'on-strength' figures. Comparison with figures in table A.1 suggests the latter.

**Table A.4** Numbers of TEBA-Matatiele recruits attesting for 6-, 9-, and 12-month contracts, and proportions holding VRGs, 1978-1984

Year	6 mth	9 mth	12 mth	Total	VRG holders [a] %
1978	4 898	5 329	65	10 292	33,3
1979	5 022	3 927	38	8 987	50,1
1980	3 923	3 953	255	8 131	55,9
1981	4 004	5 311	275	9 590	47,8
1982	3 597	5 559	641	9 797	58,1
1983	2 918	4 138	1 305	8 376	72,4
1984 [b]	1 420	2 719	2 448	6 587	82,0

Notes a. VRG = Valid re-engagement guarantee (certificate) (cf. Spiegel, 1980b: 3-4)

b. The 1984 figures are for the period January to August only.

c. While an increase in the number of VRG-holders is not wholly unexpected, this 1984 ratio must be treated with caution. It does not represent the annual position, because there is usually a drop-off in the number of VRG-holding recruits towards year's end.

## APPENDIX B

## INTERVIEW SCHEDULE USED FOR FORMAL CENSUS-TYPE INTERVIEWS

This is a summarised version of the interview schedule, which I used rather more as an *aide memoire* than as a strict schedule of questions to be followed. The items were thus not always addressed in the same order, nor did I attempt to restrict conversation to the questions laid out. Item 8, in particular, often took precedence over the others, but I did manage to obtain most of the data which the schedule could generate from my random sample.

I used the schedule both as a means to get to know people and later as a means to confirm data obtained in less formalised ways.

## 1. Site and household identification

- a. Name of household head/s
- b. Name of respondent
- c. Household/s number
- d. Interview number
- e. Date

## 2. Residents on site/ in household/s

- a. Names
- b. Relationships household/s head/s
- c. Year and place of birth
- d. Years of completed schooling
- e. Present occupation
- f. Place of occupation
- g. Religious affiliation
- h. Clan membership
- i. Fertility rates of adult women and survival rates of their children
- j. Frequency and amounts of remittances from each wage-earner

## 3. Stockholding

- a. Number of different types of livestock
- b. Sales, purchases, other transfers, consumption and losses of livestock in past year

**4. Landholding**

- a. Numbers of fields/gardens
- b. When and how obtained
- c. Use of others' fields
- d. Yields from fields and gardens in past year/s
- e. Sales (if any) of crops

**5. How, and by whom, fields and gardens worked**

- a. Ploughing, planting, type of seed, fertiliser, weeding, threshing, harvesting
- b. Sharecropping on own and others' fields
- c. Details of help given and received in agricultural activities
  - sharecropping; labour for use of implements; labour for payment in kind; labour for payment in cash; reciprocal help

**6. Other sources of cash income****7. Household maintenance tasks**

Age and gender division of household labour

**8. Open-ended discussion**

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