

Figure 3: Ruins of the old Border Post at Manhoca, 2003



Photograph by Wayne Matthews

CHAPTER TWO

FRAGMENTATION, COLONIALISM, APARTHEID AND HYBRIDISATION OF THE BORDERLAND

Actual borders are often determined by factors that have little to do with any real *political* process: the course of rivers, how far a horse can be ridden, or illegible or imaginative treaties implemented by guesswork, where one frightened army happened to catch up with another, and so on. These are the events in the histories of *countries*. It is otherwise for nations. Countries are distinguished from nations, tribes and ethnic groups by the kinds of narratives that define them, and by the rhetoric which evokes them.

Thornton (1994:9).

The most southern border of Mozambique with South Africa was established in 1875. For a century the borderline was nothing more than a row of beacons demarcating the boundary between a Portuguese colony and an area that changed, in constitutional status, from a British colony to a Union in the British Empire, to an independent Republic. However, when Mozambique gained independence in 1975 the nature of the borderline, and with it the borderland milieu, changed. Whereas the borderland could have been typified as interdependent,¹ it now became a militarised and alienated environment separating two countries practically at war with one another.

In this chapter I aim to accomplish two goals. Firstly, I wish present the necessary historical context of the borderland up to 1975, which is crucial for understanding the following chapters. Secondly, I aim illustrate how historical

¹ Here I use Martinez's (1994; 1998) typology of borderlands. Martinez (1998:6) discerns four models of borderland interaction, based on the level of interaction across the international border. When there is the least amount of contact across the borderline, the borderland is typified as *alienated*. At the other end of the continuum is an *integrated* borderland and in between these two extremes lie *coexistent* and *interdependent* borderlands.

processes contributed to the creation of a hybrid borderlandscape along the southern Mozambique/ South African border.

Whereas the borderlandscape could have been described as relatively homogenous at the time when the border was drawn, it had a much more diverse culture by 1975. North of the border the Portuguese advocated a system of political centralisation and cultural assimilation, forcing local people to adopt Portuguese culture. However, the Portuguese colonial administration gradually developed a system of indirect rule. South of the border, on the other hand, the British implemented a system of indirect rule, allowing local people to continue their own customs and political systems. However, during the period of Apartheid the South African government incorporated the remnants of the Mabudu (Tembe) chiefdom into their Zulu 'homeland', KwaZulu. Hereby it promoted a Zulu identity and culture throughout the area.

The landscape before fragmentation (1600-1875)

When the border was drawn in 1875 it bisected the Mabudu-Tembe or Tembe-Thonga chiefdom. According to Junod (1962:23), Tembe, the founding ancestor of the Tembe-Thonga², migrated from Karanga³ to the area surrounding Delagoa Bay⁴ in the middle of the seventeenth century. Tembe and his followers gradually established their authority over the people who lived in the Delagoa Bay hinterland.⁵ Due to the

² The Mabudu-Tembe, who is the subject of this chapter, is the junior branch of the Tembe-Thonga. They are also referred to as the Maputo, Tembe and Ronga.

³ In present-day Zimbabwe

⁴ Present-day Maputo.

⁵ The theory that the African societies of south-east Africa migrated there in fixed ethnic units, as in the case of the Tembe-Thonga, has been questioned by archaeological research and recent research on oral

abilities of their strong and charismatic leaders, the Tembe-Thonga remained a unified chiefdom and gradually extended their influence in the Delagoa Bay hinterland. This unity was upset in the middle of the eighteenth century when a split in the ruling lineage led to the fragmentation of the chiefdom. The division came after the death of Silamboya in 1746 (see Appendix E). The descendants of Silamboya's oldest son, Muhali, settled west of the Maputo River and north of the Usuthu River. This group, the senior branch of the Tembe-Thonga, became known as the Matutwen-Tembe. The other part of the Tembe-Thonga followed a junior son of Silamboya, Mangobe, and settled east of the Maputo River (see Map 5). This branch would later become known as the Mabudu or Maputo (Bryant 1965:290). The imposed international border of 1875 bisected the area where the Mabudu branch settled.

Being unable to control the vast area under his control, the chief of the junior branch, Mangobe, placed his sons in strategic positions so as to ensure his control.⁶ When Mangobe died, his first son, Nkupo, was named chief. However, his younger son, Mabudu, soon established himself as the stronger leader and took the chieftainship from his older brother (Hedges 1978:137).

Mabudu is known as the chief (*ihosi* or *inkosi*) 'who lit the fire' (Hedges 1978:137). Mabudu's rise is attributed to his own leadership skills and his ability to

traditions of Zululand and Natal (Maggs 1989). Instead of migrating there in fixed ethnic groups, it is now argued that the African societies of south-east Africa emerged locally from long established communities of diverse origins and diverse cultures and languages. Nevertheless, whether the Tembe came from Karanga to establish their authority over the people of south-east Africa, or whether they emerged locally, reports from Portuguese sailors indicate that a chief Tembe was in control of the ruling chiefdom in the Delagoa Bay hinterland in the mid-1600s (Wright & C. Hamilton 1989:46-64 and Kuper 1997:74).

⁶ His eldest wife, Mitshydyhlwate, had three sons. Her eldest son, Nkupo, was placed in control of the northern part of the chiefdom, bordering Delagoa Bay. Mpanyela, her second son, was placed in an area called Matutuine, while her youngest son, Mabudu, was placed in the area south and east of the Maputo River. Ndumo, a fourth son of Mangobe from one of his junior wives, was placed in the area near the confluence of the Maputo and Usuthu rivers (Hedges 1978: 137).

have transformed the age regiments (*amabutho*)⁷ from initiation schools into military regiments. His control over the age regiments gave Mabudu control over both production and reproduction within the chiefdom, since the chief now decided when a man could get married. In some cases the chief also provided bride wealth to the affines of warriors from the regiments, thus increasing their own power at the expense of lineage heads who traditionally provided these goods (Wright & Hamilton 1989:63).

With the army now at his disposal Mabudu was able to dominate all trade between Europeans who landed at Delagoa Bay and local people living in the hinterland. Through this domination the Mabudu became, by the middle of the eighteenth century, the strongest political and economic unit in south-east Africa (Smith 1972:178-184). The people under his authority, which gradually increased, became known as the *abakwaMabudu* or the people of Mabudu's land (Webb and Wright 1979:157). By the early 1800s the Mabudu chiefdom stretched from the Maputo River in the west to the Indian Ocean in the east, and from Delagoa (Maputo) Bay in the north to as far south as Lake St. Lucia (see Map 5) (Felgate 1982:1).

During the early 1800s similar processes of political centralisation were taking place amongst the Mthetwa, Ndwandwe and later the Zulu chiefdoms. The Zulu eventually defeated the other groups and established themselves as the dominant power in south-east Africa (Wright & Hamilton 1989:67 and Laband 1995). The Mabudu were never attacked by, nor directly involved in any war with the Zulu. They were, however indirectly affected by wars of conquest the Zulu waged in the northern part of Zululand in the first half of the nineteenth century (Omer-Cooper 1975:57). Various groups of refugees passed through the Mabudu chiefdom during

⁷ Traditionally boys who have reached puberty would gather at the house of the chief. There they would go through an initiation ritual during which they were temporarily under the ritual authority of the chief. Mabudu transformed the system, using the *amabutho* to wage wars and to hunt on his behalf.

the reign of Shaka. Many of them settled among the Mabudu. The people who crossed the southern boundary of the Mabudu chiefdom brought with them languages and customs foreign to the Mabudu. Over time, Mabudu identity became less distinctive as people adopted many customs of those living south of them (Bryant 1964:292). As more and more people from the southern chiefdoms crossed into the Mabudu chiefdom, an increasing amount of prestige was attached to being Zulu and speaking isiZulu, since the Zulu were the dominant force.

However, the Zulu cultural influence in Maputaland was not complete. People who fled the onslaught of the Zulu only stayed in Maputaland for a short period before they moved on, largely due to the ecology of the region which makes it unsuitable to keep cattle (Felgate 1982:11). Furthermore, in exchange for tribute paid by the Mabudu, the Zulu recognised them as leaders of a vast territory. This, to an extent, secured their sovereignty (Bradley 1974). The relationship between the Mabudu and the Zulu differed markedly from that which the Zulu instituted with other chiefdoms. Ballard (1978) states that although the Mabudu ‘paid tribute to the Zulu kings and co-operated on a military and economic level (p.36)’; they enjoyed much greater independence than the chiefdoms south of St. Lucia.

Despite the Zulu influence, Maputaland remained politically and culturally distinct from areas to the north, south and west. The people of Maputaland spoke a unified language – xiRonga (Thonga). With some exceptions, notably the Ngubane and Khumalo, they accepted the rule of Mabudu chiefs (Felgate 1982:11). They practised customs that were unique to the area and differed from those of their Zulu, Swazi and Tsonga neighbours (Webster 1991:250). When the border was drawn it thus separated a largely unified political and cultural community.

MacMahon and the drawing of the border

The Portuguese and British had long disputed each other's rights to the territory south of Delagoa Bay. The conflict between Britain and Portugal came to a head in 1868 when President Pretorius of the South African Republic, issued a declaration extending the eastern boundary of the Republic to the sea. The British government immediately informed the South African Republic that Britain claimed authority over the territories on the banks of the Pongola (Maputo) River, while Portugal in turn objected to the British claim (Felgate 1982:18).

In 1875 Portugal and Britain agreed to put the matter in front of the French President, Marshal MacMahon, for arbitration. MacMahon drew a straight line along the 26° 30' S that divided the Portuguese and British spheres of influence in south-east Africa. Since he awarded the disputed area south of Delagoa Bay to Portugal, MacMahon's decision came to be known as the MacMahon Award (Felgate 1982:18).

The Mabudu were neither consulted nor informed about the fact that the largest part of their country had been awarded to Portugal. According to Bulpin (1969):

The effect of the MacMahon Award on the Tonga people themselves would have been comic if it wasn't pathetic. Far away in Paris a politician in striped pants sat down and drew a sharp line straight through their tribal possessions while they sat drinking lala wine, quarrelling over women and scratching themselves in the sun. Nobody took the trouble to inform the Tongas of the profound change in their territorial possessions. Accordingly, when the Portuguese, after a few years of enertia, started demanding taxes on account of the Tongas now being their subjects, there was a certain amount of surprise (p. 359).

In 1887 the regent queen of the Mabudu, Zambili, asked for British protection over the entire area under her control, which she defined as stretching northwards from the Mkuze River to the Portuguese border and east of the Swazi border.

Arguing that they had always been tributaries of the Zulu, the Mabudu asked to be placed under British protection, since Zululand was now under British authority (De Bruin 1987:5).

A preliminary treaty was signed on 6 July 1887. The treaty acknowledged the request of the Mabudu to be British citizens without actually granting them that status. The treaty also stipulated that the Mabudu were not allowed to sign treaties or engage in correspondence with any other European powers, without British consent. In return Britain guaranteed 'peace and friendship' (Bulpin 1969:396).

A British deputation, under C.R. Saunders visited Maputaland and officially signed the treaty at Emifihleni, the royal homestead, in October 1887. The Saunders treaty stipulated that 'Thongaland' included the entire area north of the Mkhuze River, between the Lubombo Mountains and the Indian Ocean (see Map 6) (De Bruin 1987:5). In 1888 Britain shifted the boundaries of 'Thongaland', marking Lake Sibayi, some distance north of the Mkhuze River as the northern boundary of Zululand (Bulpin 1969:402) (see Map 6).

The Mabudu complained that the Mkhuze River had traditionally been the southern boundary of their chiefdom. In April 1889 Queen Zambili sent a deputation to Pietermaritzburg to complain about the new boundary between Zululand and Thongaland (Maputaland). The deputation complained about the way in which Maputaland had been cut in half, and asked that the Mabudu be freed from their treaty with the British. The request was rejected. A similar deputation was sent to the Portuguese Government. The deputation arrived in Lisbon in May 1889, but met a similar fate. The queen appealed to Portugal to annex the entire chiefdom, rather than sharing it with Britain. However, Portugal's answer was that the matter had already been resolved (Hedges 1978:135).

In order to settle the boundary dispute the British government sent Saunders to Thongaland on 22 July 1889. He visited the smaller chiefdoms between Lake Sibayi and the Mkhuzi River, and set up beacons to delineate the boundaries. The Mabudu sent an official complaint, but were ignored.

On June 11 1891, Britain and Portugal fixed the international border on the parallel of the confluence of the Pongola River with the Usuthu River to the sea. This is where it lies today, some 40 kilometres south of the MacMahon line. On 30 May 1895 Saunders formally annexed Thongaland as a British Protectorate. British AmaThongaland was officially declared a British Protectorate on 29 June 1896 and on the 28th of December 1897, British AmaThongaland and Zululand were incorporated into Natal (Bulpin 1969:402-405).

Colonialism, Apartheid and the creation of diversity in the former unified chiefdom

Felgate (1982) states that during ‘the early years of the previous century the control the Portuguese exercised over southern Mozambique was ineffectual (p.21).’

Ngwanase, the Mabudu chief, and his successors still appointed headmen (*izinduna*) in southern Mozambique, collected taxes from the people and heard court cases arising out of disputes between people living in Mozambique. However, from the 1940s onwards the ‘border has become a reality for the Thonga (ibid.).’

Britain and Portugal implemented two vastly differing systems of colonial administration in their African colonies. These contradictory systems of political and social control left its mark on Maputaland, creating political and cultural divisions between the two parts of the former unified chiefdom.

Britain implemented a system of indirect-rule, using established systems of chiefs and chiefdoms to administer its colonies. The British favoured separate development for African people and European settlers. As Mamdani (1996) notes, the British system of indirect rule, as implemented in Natal, was based on ‘aggregating the natives in separate locations and administering their day-to-day activities under a “system of justice” that “should conform as much to their own law as is compatible within the principle of ours”’ (p.63). In terms of the British system of ‘indirect rule’ indigenous authorities continued to exact control and colonial subjects were allowed to practice their own customs and ways of life, provided they paid homage to the British crown (Mamdani 1996:62-71). Mamdani (1996) describes indirect rule as ‘decentralised despotism’, since African chiefs governed their people, ‘not as independent but as dependent Rulers’ (p.78). British colonial policy in Africa was mediated through ‘native chiefs working through native institutions’ (p.77). However, as Mamdani (1996:77) notes, neither the personnel nor the institutions desired for the implementation of indirect rule were necessarily in existence. Furthermore, in cases where chiefs with large territories existed, they were oftentimes independent and not readily willing to become ‘dependent rulers’. In reality, as Mamdani (1996) aptly explains, ‘native institutions were given life and substance through a policy that combined a recognition of existing facts with creative modification and even outright fabrication’ (p.77). The belief was that the peoples of Africa were organised into neat tribes, each with its own ‘territory, customs and leadership.’ The British merely had to control the leadership to control the ‘tribe’. Britain exacted this through a system of alliances with the chiefs, devolving power to the chiefs to collect taxes and to rule over specific territories on authority of the British monarch (Mamdani 1996:77-79).

Under the colonial government of Natal, the southern portion of the once unified Mabuđu chiefdom became known as British Amathongaland or Reserve 14, and was administered as part of the Zululand Native Trust until 1910 when Natal became part of the Union of South Africa (Bishop 1998:9). On 5 November 1926 Tongaland became known as the Ingwavuma district of Natal and was administered, like all the other districts of Natal, as an integral part of the Province (Tomlinson *et al.* 1982: 23).

From 1910 until 1948, South Africa's Union government implemented a system of separate development for Europeans and Africans, which largely correlated with indirect rule, although 'native policies' of the four provinces of the Union differed. This changed in 1948 when the National Party won the general election in South Africa.

The new South African government decided unilaterally, that the black population of South Africa consists of a group of 'nations' each of which is entitled to a separate nation-state or homeland (Butler *et al.* 1977:1). Accordingly, the population of South Africa was divided into ten black 'nations' and three 'non-black nations'. Each black nation was to have its own Bantustan, later to be called Homelands, with its own language and bureaucratic structure (Dlamini 2001:198).

The National Party government passed the first laws with regards to the self-government for black people in South Africa in 1951 (Vosloo *et al.* 1974:58). In accordance with the Bantu Authorities Act (Act 68 of 1951), the Tembe Tribal Authority⁸ was instituted in the Ingwavuma district (Thongaland) on 18 April 1958. In 1959 the system of indirect representation of black people in the 'white' South African legislature was amended with the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act

⁸ Presently known as the Tembe Traditional Authority (TTA).

(Act 46 of 1959) (Breytenbach 1974:7). Official recognition was given to eight ‘Bantu nations’ who would live in nine ‘nation-states’.⁹ This was followed in May 1960 with the institution of the Ingwavuma Regional Authority comprising of the three tribal authorities.¹⁰

Portugal, on the other hand, implemented a more centralised system of administration, particularly in southern Mozambique. Two charter companies ruled the northern areas of the country in a largely autonomous manner until 1929 and 1941 respectively. The central areas, corresponding roughly with the Zambezi Valley, were divided between plantation companies, which were also largely autonomous. By contrast, the area south of the Sabi River was placed under direct government control. It was predominantly in this southern region of the country that the Portuguese government exerted the most control, and started to implement its colonial policy of centralisation and assimilation (Newitt 2002:187 and Smith & Nöthling 1993:287).

The Portuguese divided Mozambique into ten districts (see Map 1) that were in turn divided into *concelhos* and *circumeriçãos*. A *concelho* was a relatively developed area with a measure of local governance. A *circumeriçã* was a rural area not yet developed enough to qualify as a *concelho*. At the head of the *circumeriçã* was an *administrador*, responsible for the development (assimilation) of the indigenous people. Those areas that were the least developed were further divided into *postos administrativos*, with a *chef do poste* in charge of every *poste*. These areas were mostly black-dominated areas where few Portuguese had settled. To facilitate administration, the *postos administrativos* were further divided into

⁹ The Xhosa were granted two ‘nation-states’.

¹⁰ The Tembe Tribal Authority, the Matenjwa Tribal Authority and the Nyawo Tribal Authority.

regedorias under the leadership of a *regulo* or under a traditional leader (Van Aswegen & Verhoef 1982:18-19 and Seegers 1977:65).

The southernmost district of Mozambique was called Maputo and the southernmost district of Maputo, bordering Natal, was called Matutuine. The former area of the Mabudu chiefdom situated in Mozambique lay entirely within the boundaries of Matutuine, which covered approximately 5, 403 square kilometres. The administrator for Matutuine was based at Bela Vista. Four *chefs du postos*, controlling each of the four administrative areas in the district, assisted him. This system remained in place in the Mozambican part of Maputaland throughout the colonial period and is still in place today (Els & Kloppers 2002: B-6).

On the social level, the Portuguese saw their God-given task as bringing ‘civilisation’ to Africa, and to foster the social integration and cultural assimilation of Africans. On the basis of this policy, the inhabitants of Mozambique were divided into two groups, namely the *indigenas* and the *não-indigenas* (or *civilizados*). The *indigenas* were that part of the indigenous population who had not yet, according to the Portuguese, reached a high enough standard of civilisation. This group, comprising some five thousand people in Mozambique by 1950, were the proper concern of native policy, systematized as the *Estatuto Polico Civil e Criminal des Indigenas* in 1929. According to this statute, native people were not viewed as individuals, but ‘as part of a community ruled directly by a chief, and subject in the first instance to African customary law’ (Mamdani 19996:87). This system recognised African peoples’ rights to communal land, in exchange for certain ‘native taxes.’ This system was thus very close to the British system of indirect rule. However, the difference in the Portuguese colonies was that Portugal actively encouraged Africans to adopt Portuguese language and customs in exchange for

certain social and financial rewards. Britain, on the other hand turned its back on the educated African elite in favour of traditional chiefs. As Mamdani (1996) explains, ‘as the link with traditional authorities was forged, so the alliance with the educated strata was severed’ (p.77).

Africans in Mozambique who assimilated the Portuguese lifestyle were known in administrative circles as the *não-indigenas*. This group comprised all white Portuguese, assimilated black people and *mestiços* (people of mixed origin), were governed by Portuguese laws (Van Aswegen 1980:362). The difference between an *indigena* and a *não-indigena* could be changed by law if a black person had proved himself/herself worthy of the Portuguese culture. In this way, people could achieve the status of *assimilado*, which excused them from various taxes and allowed them extra privileges (Van Aswegen & Verhoef 1982:36). Mamdani (1996) explains that, ‘accompanied by a certain measure of education Christianity qualified a native to be treated as civilised, and was considered sufficient qualification for equal political and judicial rights’ (p.87).

There were no laws in the Portuguese colonies that prohibited racial integration, and the law was not constituted along racial lines, but along cultural lines. Any person, white or black, could become a Portuguese citizen. Much status and many privileges were attached to being an *assimilado*, people strove to attain this status, which further strengthened cultural assimilation (Van Aswegen & Verhoef 1982:37).

There was therefore a huge difference in social administration south and north of the imposed southern Mozambique/ South Africa border. While north of the border people adopted elements of the Portuguese culture, most notably Catholicism and Portuguese language and customs, south of the border the more traditional

‘Thonga’ culture and language was retained, although it came under attack through an increase in Zulu cultural dominance in the area (Webster 1986:243-269).

The institution of new governments north and south of the border

From the late 1960s resistance against Portuguese rule in Mozambique started to gain momentum as the resistance forces became more organised. The campaign was championed by FRELIMO (*Frente da Libertação de Moçambique*) under the leadership of Eduardo Mondlane (Isaacman & Isaacman 1983:80-81). FRELIMO launched its military campaign on 25 September 1964 with an attack on a Portuguese base in northern Mozambique. It also issued a proclamation of independence and a call to arms of all indigenous people in Mozambique (Van Aswegen & Verhoef 1982:50). From its bases in Tanzania, FRELIMO penetrated Mozambique. The northern provinces of the country soon became a warzone, while many military engagements also occurred south of Maputo (Van Aswegen & Verhoef 1982:50).

The Portuguese gradually became unable to justify the war on the international stage and at home. After a coup in Portugal in 1974, Portugal moved quickly to grant independence to its colonies. A FRELIMO-dominated transitional government was established in Mozambique in September 1974 with full independence promised for June 1975 (Isaacman & Isaacman 1983:190).

While the war was raging in Mozambique, constitutional developments south of the border led to the strengthening of Zulu political and cultural influence in Maputaland. In March 1970 the South African Prime Minister, John Vorster, announced that any homeland was free to ask for complete independence from the Republic of South Africa. This led to the creation of a Zululand Regional

Government on 11 June 1970, which incorporated all the tribes in Natal for which tribal and regional authorities have previously been instituted (Breytenbach 1974:7).

The Zululand Legislative Assembly changed the name of Zululand to KwaZulu on 1 April 1972. Though Zululand previously only included areas north of the Tugela River, the KwaZulu Legislature now also exercised authority in areas south of the river (Kotzé 1975:31-50). On 28 January 1977, by Proclamation R11 of 28 January 1977, KwaZulu was given self-governing status. In deciding which areas and people to include in KwaZulu, the government followed the ethnic paradigm of Apartheid. However, it should be asked whether the South African government adhered to its philosophy of a separate state for every 'nation' in the creation of KwaZulu, especially with regards to the Mabudu-Tembe. Surely, if the government viewed the Mabudu as a 'nation', it should also have been granted a homeland and the right to preserve its identity. Initially the Mabudu were indeed seen as a separate 'nation', or at least not as part of the Zulu 'nation'. Previously the government classified the Mabudu as being part of the Tsonga 'tribe'. However, in 1977 the government suddenly accepted the Mabudu to be Zulu, and included the Mabudu chiefdom (Tembe Tribal Authority) into KwaZulu as one of the 203 tribal authorities.

Webster (1986) states that this 'fact needs not confuse us, as the government's attempts at social engineering can change a person's ethnicity, race or nationality at the stroke of a pen. Thus the area that was until recently referred to as "British AmaThongaland" became an integral part of KwaZulu (p.615-616).' However, it was not only social engineering by government that strengthened the Zulu influence south of the border. Due to social and economic reasons, men who migrated from Ingwavuma to work in South Africa's mining and industrial centres gradually

identified themselves as Zulu (Webster 1991:253-255). This process strengthened the social boundaries along the Mozambique/ South Africa border.

The view from the periphery: life in the borderland before 1975

These social and political changes have had important consequences, not merely for life in the borderlandscape, but also for people's ability to cross the border and utilise resources in both countries. Despite being residents of a Portuguese colony, people in southern Mozambique retained important social and economic links to South Africa. The government of Mozambique was extremely dependent on remittances from migrant labourers working on mines and farms in South Africa, and on South Africa's use of the harbour of Maputo for imports and exports (Newitt 2002:186).¹¹

Due to the bi-national economic, social and cultural ties that existed between Mozambique and South Africa, the borderland between South Africa and Mozambique during the period before independence can be described as interdependent in nature. In other words, the great flow in economic and human resources across the border structurally bound the economies of the two countries together. However, the relationship was asymmetrical with South Africa playing a dominant role and, although a symbiotic relationship existed between the two countries and their border regions, a number of policies still retained state separation at the boundary (Martinez 1994:4).

Prior to 1975, border crossings were predominantly from Mozambique to South Africa, temporary and driven by economic necessity. According to R. E.

¹¹ The close economic ties between South Africa and Mozambique were re-enforced in the 1960s when Britain withdrew from Southern Africa, granting independence to its former colonies. This left South Africa, Angola, Mozambique and Rhodesia as the only countries in Southern Africa under white minority rule. Their efforts to aid one another in combating the tide of black liberation drew the countries stronger toward each other (Barber & Barrat 1990:175).

Rutherford, whose family owned a chain of stores on the South African side of the border, South Africans would flock across the border to visit stores in Mozambique that sold liquor to black people, since black people were not allowed to buy alcohol in South Africa. Mozambican borderlanders, in turn, would visit stores in South Africa for their food requirements (Rutherford 1995:39). McGregor (1998:45-46) states that many of the people living in the borderland in Matutuine had ‘relatively strong contacts outside Mozambique; some could get citizenship papers in neighbouring countries, could draw on a Zulu or Swazi identity, and were re-absorbed in other sectors of the South African and Swaziland labour markets.’ This was the case of Jonas Tembe.

Case 2.1: Jonas Tembe: A life in the borderland before 1975

Jonas was born at Zitundo in the late 1940s. He grew up in this small village, situated about twelve kilometres north of the South African border. Jonas learned from elders when he was a child that the Portuguese put up stone cairns (many of them still standing today) to mark the border. In the 1940s the South African authorities started to construct a border fence. When Jonas turned sixteen he, like most of his peers, decided to go to South Africa to look for work. Hence, Jonas crossed the border for the first time in the 1950s.

Jonas remembers that there used to be a gate at Manhoca where people were allowed to cross the border. The gate was actually nothing more than a pole barrier with a padlock. This used to be the only border post between South Africa and Mozambique along the eighty kilometres stretch of border. The border post was staffed by members of the South African Police (stationed at Manguze) and members

of the Customs Department. One could cross the border at either sides of the border post since there were no man-made obstacles. The only thing stopping people from crossing at points removed from the border post was natural barriers such as the muddy terrain and the thick bush and fear of being caught by the authorities.

The Manhoca post was about six kilometres north of the actual South African border. People were asked to show their ‘papers’ to the Portuguese police and thereafter walked southwards to the South African border post at Muzi. There were two buildings at the Muzi post. The border post used to be staffed by the South African Police and mainly served migrant labourers from Mozambique leaving or returning to that country.

The first time he left Mozambique, Jonas went to work in Durban, the second time in Empangeni and the third time in Pietermaritzburg. He never went to the Witwatersrand to work on the mines. Jonas explained that, like him, most Mozambicans used to cross the border many times to look for work, but would always return home after their contracts had ended. No one wanted to leave the area permanently as they were able to make a ‘good life’ in Mozambique.

Jonas’ story is extremely common among older people in the borderland. Most of these older men from southern Mozambique worked in one of the South African cities and most can speak Fanagalo¹² and a bit of Afrikaans.

Although the war of independence was largely confined to the north of Mozambique, fear of the spreading violence reached the far southern parts of the country as well. The mere threat of the Mozambican war of liberation, led to the

¹² The *lingua franca* of the mines. Fanagalo is a mixture of mainly isiZulu, Afrikaans and English words and phrases.

flight of many people from Mozambique to neighbouring countries. Grace Gumede and her family is one such an example.

Case 2.2: Grace Gumede's border crossing

Grace lived with her father and mother in Manhoca in southern Mozambique. She does not remember the exact date that they left Mozambique, but it was during the early reign of Chief Mzimba Tembe (around 1967), the father of current chief of the Mabudu-Tembe. Grace's father had heard rumours that the war in northern Mozambique was going to spread to the south and decided to leave. He moved his family across the border to Bhekabantu, an area some ten kilometres south of the divide. Grace still remembers the dangers of their trip across the Usuthu River, and to this day she has not returned to Mozambique for fear of repeating the frightful journey.

Grace's example is however, uncommon. The southern part of Mozambique did not see much of the hostilities of the war of independence, and it was more the fear that the fighting might spread that led people like Grace to cross the border than the reality of war.

Apart from the examples of Jonas and Grace, there are countless other examples of people moving freely across the border before 1975 to visit relatives and friends. Informants recalled how easy it used to be for them to move from one side of the border to the other. Although there was a fence, the authorities allowed local people, whom they knew, relative free movement across the border. Older informants stated that apart from occasional patrols by the police at Muzi and Manhoca, no real

policing occurred at the border. This made crossings of the border extremely easy for the borderlanders.

Conclusion

The historical events that took place in south-eastern Africa between the early nineteenth century and the late twentieth century had a remarkable effect on the cultural landscape. However, despite an increasing Zulu influence in the southern parts of the Mabudu chiefdom from 1815 onwards, Maputaland remained a relatively homogenous social, cultural and political zone. As Bruton and Cooper (1980) remark:

The amaThonga settled some centuries ago in an area which was, on the whole, low-lying, inclement and unhealthy, and not well-suited to stock farming or extensive agriculture. As a result, they explored other ways of making a living. They hunted and snared wild game, made extensive use of indigenous fruits and vegetables, and fished extensively in the coastal lagoons, lakes and rivers, which is unusual amongst the southern Bantu. The fabric of their society is therefore closely interwoven with the seasonal and diet availability of natural resources, and they have developed a remarkable knowledge and understanding of natural principles and processes (p.508).

The political unity and cultural homogeneity that existed within the Mabudu chiefdom was disrupted with the creation of the Mozambique/ South Africa border in 1875. This homogeneity was further disrupted through the implementation of greatly contradictory plans of social engineering north and south of the border. Portuguese centralisation and assimilation, British indirect rule and South African Apartheid all contributed to the creation of a hybrid community in the borderland that did not reflect, as clearly, the historical unity in culture and society that existed across the imposed border.

However, continued social and cultural contact across the imposed border, as well as the natural environment of the borderland have worked against the processes of disunity in the borderland and have been able to maintain a certain amount of homogeneity within the borderland. This was greatly disrupted during the Mozambican war that started almost immediately after independence. The war led to the displacement of millions of people and to an almost complete de-population of the Mozambican side of the borderland. When the war ended, demobilised soldiers, returning refugees and displaced people from all over the country inhabited the borderlandscape. Returning refugees and displaced people have brought with them foreign languages and cultures. In this manner the war and the deterritorialisation it brought on, led to the creation of a far greater degree of cultural diversity in the borderland than colonialism and Apartheid could master. Therefore, in the next chapter, I discuss the Mozambican war and its impact on the borderlandscape.