

**Traditionalists, traitors and sell-outs:  
the roles and motives of ‘*amaqaba*’,  
‘*abangcatshi*’ and ‘*abathengisi*’ in the  
Pondoland Revolt of 1960 to 1961**

**by**

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The period between the late 1940s and early 1960s was an extremely turbulent time in the history of South Africa, because the newly elected National Party government directed all its efforts towards consolidating the apartheid state. The subsequent plethora of legislation attempted to entrench apartheid in all walks of life and in all spheres of South African society.<sup>1</sup> The result was an increased incidence of urban black protests such as the women's protest movements in the 1950s, the bus boycotts in Evaton and Alexandra between 1955 and 1957, and the Sharpeville crisis to name a few.<sup>2</sup>

But it was in the rural reserves where the changes were most acutely felt. The state started to increasingly interfere in the countryside when H.F. Verwoerd was appointed minister of Native Affairs on 18 October 1950. According to the historian D.M Scher this appointment, along with that of W.W.M. Eiselen<sup>3</sup> as secretary of Native Affairs, 'marked the elevation of the apartheid ideologies over the more pragmatic administrators of previous years.'<sup>4</sup>

In his early days as Minister Verwoerd sought to foster his policies on a tribal base for he believed that he could weaken the appeal of modern, western ways to young Africans by strengthening the tribal system. He therefore tried to rejuvenate what he considered 'the black man's traditional way of life' and Bantu Authorities were thus born. This was in fact nothing more than indirect rule, amounting to a perverted

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<sup>1</sup> D.M. Scher, 'The consolidation of the apartheid state', in B.J. Liebenberg & S.B. Spies (eds), *South Africa in the 20<sup>th</sup> century*, pp. 321-355. The full details on sources, including publishers and publication dates, are provided in the source list at the end of the study.

<sup>2</sup> T. Lodge, *Black politics in South Africa since 1945*, pp. 139-201.

<sup>3</sup> Werner Willi Max Eiselen established anthropology as a university subject at Stellenbosch University and would, as Secretary of Native Affairs (later Bantu Administration and Development) under Verwoerd, play a leading role in the formulation of apartheid. As the son of German Moravian missionaries raised between North Sotho peoples in a British colony, Eiselen felt himself a foreigner in 'a double sense' and was pushed in the direction of Afrikaner nationalism. As a contemporary of Verwoerd at Stellenbosch Eiselen came to share Verwoerd's preoccupation with the poor white question. Like Verwoerd he became totally fixated with race, and constructed arguments for the separation of blacks and whites on what he saw as 'cultural' criteria. (W.D. Hammond-Tooke, *Imperfect interpreters: South Africa's anthropologists, 1920-1990*, pp. 57-65)

<sup>4</sup> D.M. Scher, 'The consolidation of the apartheid state', in B.J. Liebenberg & S.B. Spies (eds), *South Africa in the 20<sup>th</sup> century*, p. 346.

tribalism, which undermined the credibility of traditional leaders among their followers. In order to consolidate tribalism, Verwoerd attempted to establish control over the minds of Africans – Africans were therefore to be afforded a special (and inferior) kind of education that would inculcate them with pride in their own ethnicity.<sup>5</sup>

After he became Prime Minister in 1958, Verwoerd moved away from *baasskap*<sup>6</sup> ('boss-ship') to a policy of separate development under which the government undertook to recognise in principle the 'right of black people to self-determination and independence, while ensuring at the same time that there would be no risk of whites being dominated by others.'<sup>7</sup> The logic of domination still dictated that the majority of the black population should remain in the reserves and mine compounds – contrary, as some historians would have it, to the logic of industrialisation that dictated that they should concentrate in urban centres where they could provide the labour necessary for economic expansion.<sup>8</sup> Other historians maintain, however, that this process created a peripheral reservoir of cheap black labour to fuel the economy.<sup>9</sup> Whatever the case may be, a process of social engineering that had as its aim to facilitate new economic and political functions disrupted longstanding social relationships in the reserves and robbed traditional authority of the little legitimacy it retained.

The consequences were an expanded area of conflict between the government and the people, and bloody reactions to the reshaping of rural societies. Cases in point are the rural rebellions that took place in Witzieshoek (1950), in Zeerust (1957 to 1959), in Eastern Pondoland (1960 to 1961) and in Tembuland (1962 to 1963).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> H. Kenney, *Power, pride and prejudice: the years of Afrikaner nationalist rule in South Africa*, pp. 36-79.

<sup>6</sup> *Baasskap* implied 'white supremacy based on a master-servant relationship where the servant enjoyed no inherent rights of domicile.' (D.M. Scher, 'The consolidation of the apartheid state', in B.J. Liebenberg & S.B. Spies (eds), *South Africa in the 20<sup>th</sup> century*, p. 353)

<sup>7</sup> D.M. Scher, 'The consolidation of the apartheid state', in B.J. Liebenberg & S.B. Spies, *South Africa in the 20<sup>th</sup> century*, p. 355.

<sup>8</sup> C.H. Feinstein, *An economic history of South Africa: conquest, discrimination and development*, p. 151.

<sup>9</sup> H. Wolpe, 'Capitalism and cheap labour power in South Africa: from segregation to apartheid', in *Economy and Society*, 1(4) 1972, pp. 425-456.

<sup>10</sup> T. Lodge, *Black politics in South Africa since 1945*, p. 261.

In a recently published biography of Oliver Tambo,<sup>11</sup> Luli Callinicos writes that the Pondo uprising was ultimately to influence the African National Congress (ANC) in its decision to take up armed struggle two or three years after the revolt.<sup>12</sup> Ben Turok<sup>13</sup> holds an analogous view, for he writes that the Pondo revolt was ‘the most important of the rural uprisings in the modern period’<sup>14</sup> and that it influenced the Congress Movement to ‘review our own approach to resistance in the country’.<sup>15</sup> In a similar vein Robin Kayser, in his study of the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM), writes that ‘[t]he Pondoland revolt occupies an important place in the history of the NEUM, for ... it had a profound impact on the political decisions taken by the NEUM leadership during the early 1960s.’<sup>16</sup> If Callinicos, Turok and Kayser are correct, the ultimately unsuccessful revolt that took place in the rural backwaters of the north-eastern Transkei in 1960 and 1961 could rightfully be described as ‘the high water mark of peasant resistance in South Africa’.<sup>17</sup> It is exactly this ‘zenith’ of modern rural resistance that will be the focus of this study.

The history of violent forms of black protest politics in the rural Eastern Cape, and Pondoland in particular, has long been analysed in terms of ‘peasant studies’. In his analysis of the Pondoland revolt, John Anthony Copelyn<sup>18</sup> for example leans heavily on the theories of Eric Wolf who, by way of a social-structural approach, ‘seeks to generalise inductively about peasant-based revolutions on the basis of in-depth histories

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<sup>11</sup> Oliver Reginald Tambo, who would become the secretary general of the ANC 1955 and charged with treason in 1956, was born in the Kantolo village of the Bizana district of Eastern Pondoland in 1917. He would, however, play no significant role in the revolt that swept through his home district in 1960 and 1961 as he left South Africa in the wake of the Sharpeville crisis. He continued to work as a political activist and as a leader of the ANC in exile. See J. Grobler, *A decisive clash? A short history of Black protest politics in South Africa 1875-1976*, pp. 194-195.

<sup>12</sup> L. Callinicos, *Oliver Tambo: beyond the Engeli Mountains*, p. 242.

<sup>13</sup> Ben Turok was born in Latvia in the latter half of the 1920s, and moved to South Africa with his parents in 1932. He grew up in Cape Town, was educated there and joined the Congress of Democrats and the South African Communist Party in the 1950s. At the time of the Pondo revolt he was the African representative in the Cape Provincial Council. As such he visited Pondoland at the time of the revolt. See B. Turok, *Nothing but the truth: behind the ANC's struggle politics*.

<sup>14</sup> B. Turok, *Nothing but the truth: behind the ANC's struggle politics*, p. 120.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>16</sup> R. Kayser, *Land and liberty! : the Non-European Unity Movement and the land question*, unpublished masters dissertation, University of Cape Town, p. 95.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>18</sup> J.A. Copelyn, *The Mpondo revolt 1960*, Unpublished BA (Hons.) dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand.



of six 20<sup>th</sup> century cases’;<sup>19</sup> and that of Barrington Moore who ‘explained peasant revolts and revolutions by looking, first, at the structural vulnerability to peasant insurrections of different kinds of premodern agrarian sociopolitical orders’ and then ‘investigated how, in “the process of modernization itself”, different degrees and forms of agricultural commercialization could enhance or preclude possibilities for peasant revolts against landed upper classes.’<sup>20</sup> As will be shown later, William Beinart<sup>21</sup> and Colin Bundy<sup>22</sup> also used parts of Wolf’s theory when analysing state intervention and rural resistance in the Transkei between 1900 and 1965.<sup>23</sup> This neo-Marxist approach, pioneered by scholars such as Wolf, Andre Gunder Frank and Giovanni Arrighi, employed a core/periphery model that held that industrial societies had an essentially harmful effect on their rural margins, and stressed the fact that economy and politics were inseparable and should be analysed as such. It also focussed on the classical Marxist problem of how to regard the peasantry.<sup>24</sup>

Academic literature brims with theories that offer broad, sweeping and in most cases speculative explanations as to why and under what circumstances ‘peasants’ revolt.<sup>25</sup> But, although helpful as a guiding principle, sweeping explanations cannot always successfully explain particularly nuanced situations. What is more, the terms ‘peasant’ and ‘peasantry’ have been imbued with so many different sets of meanings over time

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<sup>19</sup> T. Skocpol, *Social revolutions in the modern world*, p. 213.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, p. 229.

<sup>21</sup> The historian William Beinart was appointed Rhodes Professor of Race Relations at the University of Oxford in 1997. Before 1997 he worked in Historical Studies at the University of Bristol, and was co-editor of the *Journal of Southern African Studies* and chair of its editorial board. Beinart authored *The political economy of Pondoland* and numerous articles and chapters on the area and its people.

<sup>22</sup> During the 1970s Colin Bundy researched the reaction of peasants in the Herschel district of the Ciskei to new market opportunities in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. His political economy approach stressed the unity of the South African economy and explained economic backwardness by employing a core/periphery approach. His seminal work *The rise and fall of the South African peasantry* was based on his doctoral thesis at Oxford, and was very influential as it demonstrated black initiative and the devastation wrought by underdevelopment. See W.D. Hammond-Tooke, *Imperfect interpreters: South Africa’s anthropologists, 1920-1990*, p. 175.

<sup>23</sup> W. Beinart & C. Bundy, ‘State intervention and rural resistance: the Transkei, 1900–1965’, in M. Klein (Ed.), *Peasants in Africa: historical and contemporary perspectives*, Vol. 4.

<sup>24</sup> W.D. Hammond-Tooke, *Imperfect interpreters: South Africa’s anthropologists, 1920-1990*, pp. 170-171.

<sup>25</sup> See for example: B. Moore, *Social origins of dictatorship and democracy: lord and peasant in the making of the modern world*; E. Wolf, *Peasant wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century*; J. Migdal, *Peasants, politics, and revolutions: pressures toward political and social change in the 3<sup>rd</sup> world*; J. Paige, *Agrarian revolution: social movements and export agriculture in the underdeveloped world*; J. Scott, *The moral economy of the peasant*; J. Scott, *Hegemony and the peasantry*.

that they have become blunt analytical instruments.<sup>26</sup> Although the subject matter of this study relates to the broader framework of comparative ‘peasant studies’, I will – while using existing theory as a guiding principle – keep a relatively narrow focus on the individuality of the events that took place in Eastern Pondoland between 1959 and 1961.

I will furthermore attempt to address the revolt’s historiography; analyse the specifics of the origins of the revolt and the situation in Pondoland immediately prior to the revolt; describe the event history; and consider relatively closely the situation of certain key individuals who either actively partook in the revolt or were directly affected by it.

To a certain extent, a problem-oriented approach has thus governed the direction that my research would take, seeing that specific historical questions were formulated before I had studied the primary evidence – these questions having led me towards sources that seemed relevant and pertinent to finding answers. But my approach has also been source-oriented as I have focused my attention on one group of sources to the exclusion of others. In this study I made exclusive use of written source material in the form of primary archival evidence, contemporary newspaper reports and a host of secondary source material.<sup>27</sup>

All of these documentary sources, of course, have specific shortcomings. Archival sources, for example, tend to paint a picture that corresponds with the prevailing hegemonies. The voices of those in power tend to be articulated in these sources, while those of the weak or ‘subaltern’ are stifled. Once accessed, archival documents marked ‘classified’ or ‘secret’ can put this picture in perspective. On the whole, however, the story that emerges tends to be relatively one-sided.

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<sup>26</sup> W. Beinart, *The political economy of Pondoland 1860-1930*.

<sup>27</sup> Because I had been in the United Kingdom for the first year of this study, and as I have been in fulltime employment in Pretoria since then, it has been impossible for me to travel to the Eastern Cape for extensive periods to conduct interviews with participants in the revolt and with people who were affected by it due to the ‘tyranny of distance’. Consequently I have had to rely solely on documentary evidence.

Newspapers and periodicals have problems entirely their own. In 1959, just before Pondoland would erupt with violence, Morris Broughton<sup>28</sup> wrote that the ethical and actual value of the freedom of the South African press had been vitiated. He felt that, instead of being an arbiter, the newspaper press had become, through varied historical, political and economic causes, the vehicle of one or other section of society.<sup>29</sup>

This sentiment is neatly borne out by a statement by *D[i]e Burger's* first editor, the ex Dutch Reformed Minister Dr D.F. Malan, in the paper's first issue in 1915: 'we recognise the existence of an Afrikaner nationalism with which we are in accord, and of which we hope to be a representative and interpreter.'<sup>30</sup> *Die Burger* would remain a 'representative and interpreter' of Afrikaner nationalism until well after 1960. In fact, *Die Burger* was consistently the receiver and creator of information and policy. This direct influence only began to ebb after Verwoerd came to power.<sup>31</sup> Since the bulk of the Cape's white Afrikaans-speaking population read *Die Burger*, and as editorial executives at the time almost never sent staff members to check out stories that originated outside their own province, centre of publication and area of circulation,<sup>32</sup> *Die Burger* was the main Afrikaans language newspaper to report on the events in Pondoland between 1959 and 1961. As such it constitutes an important source in this study.

With a largely white English-speaking readership in the Cape, the *Cape Times* also represents an important source for the purposes of this study. Established in 1876 as South Africa's first daily newspaper it was conservative in Imperial matters, but progressive in local matters. By the 1960s it was one of only a few 'independent' (non-group affiliated) newspapers in the country. As such the paper was relatively outspoken against the National Party and its policies.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Broughton edited the *Cape Argus* newspaper for more than a decade.

<sup>29</sup> M. Broughton, *Press & politics in South Africa*, p. 5.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>31</sup> E. Potter, *The press as opposition: the political role of South African newspapers*, pp. 45-46; 72-75; 144-151.

<sup>32</sup> M. Broughton, *Press & politics in South Africa*, p. 36.

<sup>33</sup> E. Potter, *The press as opposition: the political role of South African newspapers*, pp. 38-87.

The *Cape Argus* was established in 1857. The paper would come to form part of the ‘English anti-apartheid conservative-liberal Press’ and was linked to ‘monopoly-mining-finance capital’.<sup>34</sup> As such it expressed views held by specific interest groups, and makes an important contribution to the source material utilised in this study.

The *East London Daily Dispatch* was an ‘independent’ non-group affiliated paper. The majority of the paper’s shares were held by a charitable trust and the remaining shares in the controlling company were held by employees of the company. According to Elaine Potter this enabled the paper to be one of the most outspoken newspapers in the country. In the 1960s the *Dispatch* had a sizeable distribution in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape and as such had a substantial black readership. In these years the *Dispatch* took advantage of the ‘backwater’ nature of the paper to criticize government in a particularly scathing manner.<sup>35</sup>

Started by Sir John Robinson as Durban’s first and only morning newspaper in 1854, the *Natal Mercury* was a fiercely loyal, imperialist newspaper, that after Union concerned itself with the defence of provincial, English – and for an extensive period – British interests. The *Mercury* was controlled by members of the Robinson family, who established the paper, and who always either managed or edited it.<sup>36</sup> The paper was thus controlled by monopoly capital<sup>37</sup> and expressed the views and promoted the interests of this specific grouping.

In May of 1952 the anti-government newspaper the *Guardian*, founded in Cape Town in 1937, was banned.<sup>38</sup> During the 1950s the *Guardian*’s successor, the *New Age*, acted as a link between organisations such as the ANC and their mass constituency. The organic leadership in a sense became media activists as the great distances between centres, the large number of associate organisations, and high levels of state repression

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<sup>34</sup> K. Tomaselli & P.E. Louw (eds), *The alternative press in South Africa: studies on the South African media*, p. 5.

<sup>35</sup> E. Potter, *The press as opposition: the political role of South African newspapers*, pp. 76-77; 89; 158-519.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 34; 43; 76-77

<sup>37</sup> K. Tomaselli & P.E. Louw (eds), *The alternative press in South Africa: studies on the South African media*, p. 6.

<sup>38</sup> C. Merrett, *A culture of censorship: secrecy and intellectual repression in South Africa*, p. 23.

made physical movement of activists perilous.<sup>39</sup> Some activists who wrote for and distributed the paper were in the Eastern Cape at the time of the revolt. The likes of Govan Mbeki and Joe Gqabi could consequently give almost first-hand accounts of the events that transpired. As such, the *New Age* constitutes a very important source for this study as it represents views that the National Party government tried its utmost to stifle.

*Fighting Talk* was a political and literary magazine that published black writers in particular.<sup>40</sup> Writers like Govan Mbeki contributed articles on Pondoland and, importantly, *Fighting Talk* reprinted sections of the memo that the Pondos had managed to smuggle to the United Nations.

This list of newspapers and periodicals is by no means exhaustive. Newspapers like *Spark*, which carried a substantial number of reports and articles on the Pondoland revolt, are notably absent. However, the sources listed do – to my mind – constitute an even-handed reflection of contemporaneous views held by different interest groups that comprised the printed media and to an extent therefore of those who read South African newspapers. However, the fact of publication limits the value of newspapers and periodicals, as these sources contain only what was considered fit for public consumption. This is the case because a controlling principle exists, which may limit, distort or falsify what is stated.

The use of oral sources could quite possibly have supplied evidence of how non-elite, mostly illiterate communities which generated precious little written evidence experienced the revolt and how they gave cultural meaning to those events.<sup>41</sup> This would perhaps have enabled me to construct a much more balanced account of the revolt. As was stated earlier, this was impossible and makes for the main weakness of this study.

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<sup>39</sup> K. Tomaselli & P.E. Louw (eds), *The alternative press in South Africa: studies on the South African media*, p. 147.

<sup>40</sup> C. Merrett, *A culture of censorship: secrecy and intellectual repression in South Africa*, p. 65.

<sup>41</sup> J. Tosh, *The pursuit of history*, pp. 43; 193-195.

## 1.1. Historiography

In 1974 John Anthony Copelyn noted that the Pondoland revolt was ‘often mentioned but rarely discussed’.<sup>42</sup> At that time, only two other accounts of the revolt had been published.

The first description of the revolt was Ben Turok’s eye-witness account, which was written during the final stages of the revolt. Turok was the Africans’ representative for the Western Cape in the Provincial Council until July 1961 when this position became redundant under the Bantu Self Government Act.<sup>43</sup> Published by the Congress of Democrats in the form of a pamphlet in 1960 or 1961, Turok’s account is a scathing attack on the National Party government’s Bantu Authorities Scheme.<sup>44</sup>

The second was Govan Mbeki’s<sup>45</sup> hugely influential account of the revolt, which was first published in 1964. In it Mbeki describes 1) the origins of the revolt, which he sees as having developed from local grievances that included Paramount Chief Botha Sigcau’s role in the ‘breakdown of the whole tribal structure’, the Bantu Authorities Scheme, Rehabilitation, the Bantu Education Act, increased taxation, and passes; 2) the methods of struggle, that included mass demonstrations, the burning of collaborators’ huts, refusal to pay taxes, and a boycott of local traders’ stores; and 3) the methods of state repression that included coercive measures by the army, police and headmen, and mass arrests and deportations under emergency regulations. He also describes the revolt’s progression, and attempts to prove the development of links between the revolt

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<sup>42</sup> J.A. Copelyn, *The Mpondo revolt 1960*, p. 1.

<sup>43</sup> B. Turok, ‘Africans no longer represented on any governing body’, in *New Age*, vol. 7, no. 38, 6 July 1961.

<sup>44</sup> B. Turok, *The Pondo Revolt*, Congress of Democrats, [c. 1960].

<sup>45</sup> Govan Archibald Mvunyelina Mbeki was born at the Mpukane Location of the Nqamakwe district of the Transkei on 4 July 1910. His father was a chief (who was a relatively prosperous cattle owner) and his mother the daughter of a Methodist minister. After attending mission schools and the Healdtown High School he graduated from the University College of Fort Hare with a BA degree and a diploma in education in 1936. He achieved the BEcon degree in social science from the University of South Africa in 1940. Mbeki first worked as a teacher and later as a journalist. He joined the ANC in the 1930s and the South African Communist Party (SACP) in the 1950s. He actively promoted the ANC in the Eastern Cape, helped to organize the Kliptown Congress of the People, and joined *Umkhonto we Sizwe* in 1962. He was sentenced to life imprisonment on Robben Island at the famous Rivonia trial. See J. Grobler, *A decisive clash? A short history of Black protest politics in South Africa 1875-1976*, p. 195; N. Worden, *A concise dictionary of South African history*, p. 100.

and the broader national struggle by claiming that the rebel movement adopted the ‘full programme of the African National Congress and its allies as embodied in the Freedom Charter’, and also that the term for the popular rebel movement, *Ikongo*, had its roots in the word *Congress*.<sup>46</sup>

The revolt has featured in the work of many historians since the two aforementioned accounts were published, but there also have been notable silences on the part of many other historians. As might be expected, Afrikaner nationalist historians have contributed least to the body of literature pertaining to the revolt. In fact, the school did not produce a single study on the topic,<sup>47</sup> and the revolt has not received any mention whatsoever in even the most general of histories of South Africa.<sup>48</sup> This silence was probably due to the fact that the revolt occurred during the years leading up to ‘*Republiekwording*’, and this momentous occasion in the history of the Afrikaner ‘*volk*’ would surely have been tainted if large segments of the country’s black population were shown to be desperately unhappy with policies forced upon them by the National Party government.

Liberal historians<sup>49</sup> have tended to pay more attention to the revolt in their general histories of South Africa. In their *South Africa: a Modern History*, Davenport<sup>50</sup> and Saunders<sup>51</sup> describe the revolt as the climax of rural violence in South Africa between 1956 and 1964. They attribute the revolt to ‘peasant conservatism in face of official attempts to introduce not merely Bantu Authorities but agricultural betterment schemes’, and a ‘fundamental suspicion over Government intentions.’<sup>52</sup> They also

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<sup>46</sup> G. Mbeki, *South Africa: the peasants’ revolt*, pp. 116-133.

<sup>47</sup> It is noteworthy that no Afrikaans speaking historian, regardless of the school to which s/he belongs, has produced a study of the Pondoland revolt.

<sup>48</sup> See for example: C.F.J. Muller (red.), *Vyfhonderd jaar van Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedenis*; and F.A. van Jaarsveld, *Van Van Riebeeck tot P.W. Botha*.

<sup>49</sup> Liberal historians, for the purposes of this study, denote those historians who reject racial discrimination in all its forms, but who, at the same time, see the capitalist system as an essential tool with which to bring about progress, and thereby ensure the well-being of all groups in South Africa. Race and racial interaction (and not class) are the integral themes in their analysis of South African history.

<sup>50</sup> This work can be considered to resort under the ‘liberal’ tradition, seeing that Davenport on occasion described himself as a ‘liberal Africanist’. See J. Lewin, ‘Review: *South Africa: a modern history*’, in *Journal of South African Studies*, 4(2), April 1978, pp. 272–273.

<sup>51</sup> Christopher Saunders is professor in the Department of History of the University of Cape Town. He specialises in Cape history, South African historiography, and recent Namibian history.

<sup>52</sup> T.R.H. Davenport & C. Saunders, *South Africa: a modern history*, p. 402.

mention Botha Sigcau as the ‘chosen agent of the new system’ as well as his controversial appointment as paramount in 1939; they briefly describe the formation of the Mountain Committee (*Intaba*) as a rival administration to the state, the burning of huts of government informers, intimidation of ‘waverers’ in unofficial courts, and the imposition of fines on the ‘selfish’ to provide a defence fund for those charged by the police. Furthermore, they point out that the resistance’s leadership arose from the ranks of people that neither belonged to the traditional leadership nor had contact with main political organisations in the urban areas (the Congress of Democrats in particular). They also, citing Tom Lodge, refer to the slump in the Natal sugar industry and infer that it probably released potential followers for the rebellious movement.<sup>53</sup>

Similarly, Wilson<sup>54</sup> and Thompson<sup>55</sup> describe the revolt in their *Oxford History* as having been (like other ‘peasant risings’ between 1957 and 1962) ‘a reaction to poverty, deprivation, and tension, heightened by the application of the Bantu Authorities Act, the deposition of chiefs, the imposition of rural rehabilitation schemes, the restriction on movement into the towns, and the requirement that women carry passes.’<sup>56</sup> They also describe its relatively large extent, the brutality of its suppression, and liken it to the Bambata rebellion in terms of the commonality of the widespread refusal to pay taxes. In addition, citing Govan Mbeki, they mention that the revolt became linked with the wider national liberation struggle.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 401–402.

<sup>54</sup> The anthropologist Monica Wilson authored the now classic ethnographic study on the Pondo entitled ‘*Reaction to conquest: effects of contact with Europeans on the Pondo of South Africa*’, under her maiden name Hunter, in 1936.

<sup>55</sup> Leonard Thompson’s academic career started at the University of Cape Town. He was a founding member of the Liberal Party of South Africa in 1953 and a staunch opponent of apartheid and the National Party. He traded South Africa for the United States in 1960 and became the director of Yale University’s Southern African Research Programme. He edited the *Oxford History of South Africa* in two volumes with Monica Wilson in 1969 and 1971. These texts were pioneering works in their time as they emphasised the role of black communities in South African history. This was in stark contrast to contemporary Eurocentric accounts that held that South Africa’s history started when whites first came to the country. *Oxford History* was condemned by leading Afrikaner historians like Floors van Jaarsveld who saw it as subjective, anti-white and anti-Afrikaner; a tool in the hands of people engaged in the international onslaught against white-controlled South Africa. Those on the left of the political spectrum also criticised the *Oxford History*, but for a different set of reasons: revisionists shunned it because it explained South African history along the lines of race, and not of class. See A. Mouton, ‘Voortreflike oorsig oor SA verlede’, in *Beeld*, 7 Augustus 2006, p. 19.

<sup>56</sup> M. Wilson & L. Thompson (eds), *The Oxford history of South Africa: II South Africa 1870–1966*, pp. 464–465.

<sup>57</sup> M. Wilson & L. Thompson (eds), *The Oxford history of South Africa: II South Africa 1870–1966*, p. 465.



Under the sub-heading *Other forms of black protest and resistance*, J.D. Omer-Cooper<sup>58</sup> ascribes the revolt to the introduction of Tribal Authorities under the 1951 Bantu Authorities Act. This new system, according to Omer-Cooper, caused Mpondo rebels to withdraw to the hills and establish ‘a mountain committee as a nucleus of an independent alternative government. Huts of government informers were burned and widespread intimidation was employed against all who followed government instructions. White storekeepers were warned to co-operate with the rebels or have their premises boycotted. The insurrection continued for several months and was only suppressed with the use of armoured units and planes.’<sup>59</sup>

But general histories, by their very nature, tend to be synopses of other more specific studies, and thus normally offer only little by way of interpretation. Some revisionists<sup>60</sup> and social historians<sup>61</sup> have analysed the revolt in more depth than liberal historians. The bulk of what has been written, in terms of specific studies of the revolt, tends to have come from their ranks.

The first truly academic study of the revolt was an honours dissertation submitted to the University of the Witwatersrand by John Copelyn in 1974. To this day it remains one of the most comprehensive investigations of the revolt.

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<sup>58</sup> In *History of Southern Africa* the author presents a synopsis rather than an interpretation of South African history, and a main feature of the book is that “South African history is linked to the broader history of the whole region”. See L. Harding, ‘Review: History of Southern Africa’, in *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 28(3), 1995, pp. 611–612.

<sup>59</sup> J.D. Omer-Cooper, *History of Southern Africa*.

<sup>60</sup> This group of historians rose to prominence in the 1970s and are heavily influenced by Marxist theory. They reject the liberal notion that capitalism is beneficent to society, and see capitalism as an inherently exploitative system. They also reject racial differences as the basis of conflict between groups, and explain conflict in terms of economic class differences. Economic forces are central to their analysis of South African history.

<sup>61</sup> Social historians, like revisionists, use Marxist theory as their point of departure, but admit more readily that other forces besides the economic are also influential in shaping history. As the name indicates, their studies tend to focus on social themes. The social history approach seeks to bring individual social actors back into the analysis through detailed ‘histories from below’. The thrust of this approach thus clearly differs from revisionism’s victim-centred theories in that it seeks to show the development of working-class consciousness and how marginalised people developed techniques of survival and attitudes of resistance to the forces that oppressed them. See W.D. Hammond-Tooke, *Imperfect interpreters: South Africa’s Anthropologists, 1920-1990*, p. 171.

Citing the anthropologist Eric Wolf<sup>62</sup>, Copelyn argues that the revolt – like many other ‘peasant revolts’ – ‘must be understood as the complex conjunction of both ‘local problems’ and ‘major social dislocations’’.<sup>63</sup> These ‘major social dislocations’ refer to the deterioration of the reserve areas during the twentieth century, and specifically to the effects on these areas of the National Party’s implementation of the Bantu Authorities Act (which Copelyn calls the ‘pillars of rural administration’<sup>64</sup>), betterment schemes and Rehabilitation programmes, that had as their aim to establish a reservoir of cheap black labour. (Here the author leans heavily on Harold Wolpe’s now famous theory regarding the symbiotic relationship between capitalism and apartheid<sup>65</sup>). These ‘reforms [that were] instituted through local administration, coupled with the authoritarian way in which they were executed, galvanized resentment into an intensive critique of local authority.’<sup>66</sup> The ‘local problems’ refer to 1) the unusual amount of power wielded by the Pondo paramount chief, Botha Sigcau; 2) his diminished legitimacy in the eyes of his people due to his unpopular, and government aided, succession in 1939; 3) abnormally high levels of corruption and graft (especially after Botha had accepted Bantu Authorities against the will of his people in 1958); and 4) high levels of internal class differentiation in Pondoland. The result was that the traditional political leadership in Eastern Pondoland was completely discredited, and the Pondo people consequently took it upon themselves to create new leadership structures.

Copelyn accounts for the revolt’s relative success in terms of the degree of popular control that the revolt’s leadership was able to establish in Eastern Pondoland; the ability of this rebellious movement to ‘grasp the initiative in its dealings with the state and to manipulate local elites effectively’;<sup>67</sup> and its ability to replace a broken down ‘system of authority’. He attributes the revolt’s strength to the leadership’s lack of experience of bureaucratic forms of political mobilisation; and the fact that the revolt’s

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<sup>62</sup> E. Wolf, *Peasant wars of the twentieth century*.

<sup>63</sup> J.A. Copelyn, *The Mpondo revolt 1960*, p. 27.

<sup>64</sup> J.A. Copelyn, *The Mpondo revolt, 1960*, paper presented at the African Studies Institute, University of the Witwatersrand, June 1977, p. 1.

<sup>65</sup> H. Wolpe, ‘Capitalism and cheap labour in South Africa: from segregation to apartheid’, in *Economy and Society* 1(4) 1972, p. 433.

<sup>66</sup> J.A. Copelyn, *The Mpondo revolt 1960*, p. 24.

<sup>67</sup> J.A. Copelyn, *The Mpondo revolt 1960*, p. ii.

following consisted of mostly young migrant men, who were present in the reserves at the time of the revolt (due to a slump in the Natal sugar industry).

Copelyn describes the governmental reaction to the revolt in terms of the state as an instrument of class oppression; thus in the language of Marxist-Leninist theory on the state. He explains the ultimate failure of the revolt in the following terms: '[t]he outcome of conflict between localized opposition and the state is in a sense a foregone conclusion. Isolated and unarmed pockets of resistance could not possibly have challenged the reliable and sophisticated instruments of coercion wielded by the administration.'<sup>68</sup>

Seeing that Copelyn's study saw the light in 1974, many archival sources that pertain directly to the revolt were inaccessible to him. These sources were classified as secret by the government and included the report of the Van Heerden Commission of Inquiry into the Disturbances in Eastern Pondoland, records of the South African Police, and some records of the Bantu Affairs Department. Copelyn therefore resorted to contemporary newspaper reports, interviews and court records. This is the study's main weakness.<sup>69</sup>

In *Black politics in South Africa since 1945*,<sup>70</sup> Tom Lodge bases much of his account of the revolt on Copelyn's dissertation and seminar papers on which it was based.<sup>71</sup> Lodge also seems to favour the idea that the revolt was, in large part, an articulation of the grievances of the poorest sections of the community: 'rehabilitation had laid a heavy burden on the poorest members of the community. For example, the prohibition on keeping goats ... removed access to the cheapest form of livestock.'<sup>72</sup> He also mentions

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<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, p. ii.

<sup>69</sup> A weakness Copelyn readily acknowledges.

<sup>70</sup> According to Robert Ross, Lodge, a political scientist, "has made a very significant contribution to the historiography of modern South Africa ... Further research on black opposition in South Africa, and much else, will have to take its beginnings from Lodge's work." The work's major strength is its descriptions of local struggles, and the way in which it shows that "the issues around which it has proved possible to mobilize one section of the black population have not been so attractive in other areas of the country." (R. Ross, 'Review: Black politics in South Africa since 1945', in *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 18(2), 1985, pp. 369–370).

<sup>71</sup> Although he also cites Govan Mbeki's '*South Africa: the peasants' revolt*' and makes use of contemporary periodicals.

<sup>72</sup> T. Lodge, *Black politics in South Africa since 1945*, p. 281.

the fact that unemployed workers constituted a large part of those who took part in the revolt.<sup>73</sup> Since other sources (most notably Davenport and Saunders) rely heavily on Lodge's account of the revolt and Lodge in turn heavily relies on Copelyn's account, it can be assumed that Copelyn's work still underpins a substantial amount of what has been written on the revolt.

Like most other commentators, William Beinart and Colin Bundy ascribe the revolt to resistance to Bantu Authorities and all that it entailed, to Betterment, and to Rehabilitation (specifically the shift from 'reclamation' to 'stabilisation'). This resistance, according to Beinart and Bundy, took on new organisational forms.<sup>74</sup> Commenting on rural resistance in the Transkei in the period 1900 to 1965, they note that 'chiefs, headmen and some educated, locally employed people were forced or absorbed into broadly collaborationist positions ... [and] for the most part ceased to reproduce themselves purely as a wealthier peasantry; although most of them kept a stake in the land, they were absorbed into the structures of dominance as bureaucrats and salaried employees. Their ability to command mass loyalty declined steadily...'<sup>75</sup> They also note that 'control over and access to rural resources – especially land and livestock – remained central objectives of those involved in resistance',<sup>76</sup> that '[f]rom the 1930s onward, the core of militant resistance in the Transkei appears to have been provided by traditionalist middle migrants or peasant-migrants'<sup>77</sup> and 'after World War II large-scale state intervention was met with political action aimed against the state as a whole, more violent in character than earlier episodes, and with some conception of an alternative political system.'<sup>78</sup> These broad patterns are also applicable to the events that took place in Eastern Pondoland between 1959 and 1961.

Like Lodge, Beinart and Bundy see returned migrants as having played a significant role in the revolt. Unlike Lodge, however, they emphasise the fact that these migrants

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 279–283; p. 293.

<sup>74</sup> W. Beinart & C. Bundy, 'State intervention and rural resistance: the Transkei, 1900–1965', in M. Klein (ed.), *Peasants in Africa: historical and contemporary perspectives*, Vol. 4, p. 305–308.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 310.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 310–311.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 312.

<sup>78</sup> W. Beinart & C. Bundy, 'State intervention and rural resistance: the Transkei, 1900–1965', in M. Klein (ed.), *Peasants in Africa: historical and contemporary perspectives*, Vol. 4, pp. 312–313.

were staunch traditionalists – and not that they were ‘unemployed’ and thus poor.<sup>79</sup> In fact, Beinart thinks that the revolt ‘... was not particularly a revolt of the poor, but of those protecting rural resources and ... the leadership were probably above average in land holding and livestock’.<sup>80</sup>

In his *Twentieth-century South Africa*,<sup>81</sup> Beinart argues that the revolt took place because Botha Sigcau – whose chieftaincy had been disputed since 1938 – sided with the authorities in their homeland policy: ‘[d]isputes escalated about popular access to forests for firewood, about Betterment, plantations, and coastal grazing lands. As power was devolved to the unpopular paramount, so his opponents argued that he had ‘sold the people to the government’.’<sup>82</sup> He then mentions that the rebels burned huts belonging to, and killed a few of, Sigcau’s councillors, and that the government consequently sent in the police and the army who shot and killed people at a mass meeting at Lusikisiki. Beinart also notes that for Solomon Madikizela (rebel leader, Methodist evangelist and ‘peasant’ farmer), the revolt had as a central aim to establish a legitimate chieftaincy and a measure of local independence. Furthermore, Beinart mentions that the rebels did link with Congress in Durban; that they did attempt to acquire arms; and that there seemed to be potential ‘for an anti-colonial struggle linking nationalists and peasants, town and countryside.’<sup>83</sup>

It has to be borne in mind that *Twentieth-century South Africa* was written as an undergraduate textbook, and therefore represents a simplified version of Beinart’s thoughts regarding the revolt. As a general history, it also presents a synopsis, rather than an interpretation, of the revolt. Although he has not written any piece with the revolt as the only topic of discussion, Beinart has analysed its complexities in a number of works.

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<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*, p. 308.

<sup>80</sup> Email correspondence with the author on 2005/10/28.

<sup>81</sup> The organisational framework of this work is political history that “frequent[ly] nods toward materialist and class analysis of the state.” (N. Clark, ‘Review: Twentieth-century South Africa’, in *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 29(3), 1997, pp. 633–636.

<sup>82</sup> W. Beinart, *Twentieth-century South Africa*, p. 158.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, p. 158.

In 1982 Beinart believed that the revolt could serve as ‘an important vantage point from which to analyse’ issues such as ‘the emergence of mass nationalist movements after the Second World War’ and ‘the links between urban-based action and the series of rural rebellions which spread through the countryside, and particularly the African ‘reserves’, in the 1950s.’ He ‘soon became convinced, however, that the revolts could not be explained merely by reference to the broader nationalist movements nor by the specific state policies, land rehabilitation and the ‘Bantu Authorities’ which triggered them off. Ultimately, [he states] an understanding of the position of the African reserves had to be located in an analysis of the way in which formerly independent African chiefdoms had been transformed by the development of industrial capitalism in South Africa.’<sup>84</sup> Beinart’s analysis was thus firmly located within the political economy; his focus being protest and worker consciousness.<sup>85</sup> The set of interviews he conducted in Bizana in 1982 redirected his analysis to include the politics of gender and the symbolism of style. He consequently wrote on the vibrant strands of migrant culture that developed from the material conditions of mine migration before the 1970s. Of specific interest to him was the predominant youth organisation (the *indlavini*) that formed in Pondoland during the entrenchment of the system of oscillating labour migration. He concluded, however, that evidence of *indlavini* involvement in the revolt was ‘not strong’.<sup>86</sup>

In *South Africa’s Transkei: the political economy of an ‘independent’ Bantustan*, Roger Southall presents a detailed description of the revolt, which he sees as having resulted from the process of transition to Transkeian ‘independence’.<sup>87</sup> According to Southall, this ‘process of transition’ brought about the land question and Betterment- and Rehabilitation Schemes, which led to the revolt.<sup>88</sup> Southall’s analysis is in essence ‘an excellent and well researched summary of previous Marxian analyses of the

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<sup>84</sup> W. Beinart, *The political economy of Pondoland, 1860–1930*, p. vii.

<sup>85</sup> See for example: W. Beinart, ‘Worker consciousness, ethnic particularism and nationalism: the experiences of a South African migrant, 1930–1960’, in S. Marks & S. Trapido (eds), *The politics of race, class and nationalism in twentieth-century South Africa*, pp. 286–309.

<sup>86</sup> W. Beinart, ‘The origins of the *Indlavini*: male associations and migrant labour in the Transkei’, in P.A. McAllister & A.D. Spiegel (eds), *Tradition and transition in Southern Africa: Festschrift for Philip and Iona Mayer*, p. 121.

<sup>87</sup> F. Curtis, ‘Review: South Africa’s Transkei: the political economy of an ‘independent’ Bantustan’, in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 2, April 1986, pp. 326–327.

<sup>88</sup> R. Southall, *South Africa’s Transkei: the political economy of an ‘independent’ Bantustan*, p. 108.

Transkei'.<sup>89</sup> Although Southall's work is a summary and his analyses of the Pondoland revolt forms part of a larger project, it is cited by authors of general histories of South Africa like Paul Maylam<sup>90</sup> and should therefore be considered an important source.

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

In an article entitled *Government witchcraft: taxation, the supernatural, and the Mpondo revolt in the Transkei, South Africa, 1955-1963*, Sean Redding argues that one needs to grasp the political, social and cultural consciousness of the people involved in the revolt in order to understand why the revolt took place when it did. Following on the work of Karen Fields,<sup>91</sup> Redding maintains that the colonial government established and kept control over the African population by 'indirect rule through African political consciousness' and employing local idioms of power – in this case beliefs in witchcraft.<sup>92</sup> Redding states that this can be seen as a variation of what Jean and John Comaroff call 'the colonisation of consciousness.'<sup>93</sup> In the late 1950s and early 1960s, at a time of increasing material deprivation, Redding argues that the Pondo people explained their material conditions in terms of spiritual beliefs that, in turn, 'strongly shaped the timing and the substance of the revolt.' In fact,

*The idea that the state had been manipulating supernatural powers through its taxation policies and law enforcement policies to maintain its control over Africans had historically helped make it possible for a small number of whites and the Africans they employed to rule a large number of Africans. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, witchcraft beliefs played a role in an attempt to overturn that rule. The malevolent nature of state witchcraft became increasingly obvious to many Africans during the late*

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<sup>89</sup> F. Curtis, 'Review: South Africa's Transkei: the political economy of an 'independent' Bantustan', in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 2, April 1986, pp. 326-327.

<sup>90</sup> P. Maylam, *A history of the African people of South Africa: from the early Iron Age to the 1970s*, pp. 191-192.

<sup>91</sup> K. Fields, 'Political contingencies of witchcraft in colonial central Africa: culture and state in Marxist theory', in *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 16, 1982.

<sup>92</sup> S. Redding, 'Government witchcraft: taxation, the supernatural, and the Mpondo revolt in the Transkei, South Africa, 1955-1963', in *African Affairs*, Vol. 95, No. 381, October 1996, pp. 555-579.

<sup>93</sup> J. Comaroff, & J. Comaroff, *Of revelation and revolution*, Vol. I, p.4.

*1950s, as increases in stock theft, taxation, cattle culling, and other rehabilitation measures resulted in social destabilisation that undercut the state's legitimacy.*<sup>94</sup>

All this, according to Redding, substantiates Philip Mayer's<sup>95</sup> 'argument that African rural culture provided a rallying point for resistance to the state in the late 1950s and early 1960s'.<sup>96</sup> Robert Ross seems to share Redding's sentiments to a large extent, for he states that

*[t]here [in eastern Pondoland], the increased presence of government agencies was seen as illegitimate, probably as an exercise of the state's occult powers in a much more direct way than previously. The poll tax, for instance, was known as impundulu, at once bloodsucker, and the lightning bird by which witches destroy their opponents. Moreover, the state's actions were clearly seen to be driven by malevolence. Stock theft, an endemic evil in all cattle-owning societies, was increasing, and government was not doing anything to prevent it. To the contrary ...*<sup>97</sup>

In *The politics of evil: magic, state power, and the political imagination in South Africa*, Clifton Crais builds on Redding's argument and attempts to show how local people understood authoritarianism in their own cultural terms. Crais argues that insufficient attention has been paid to the problem of evil within the political imagination and consciousness of South Africa's 'subaltern' black population. In fact, he contends that 'since the nineteenth century, the majority of the colonised population of the Eastern Cape have viewed the state as an inherently evil and destructive force and have marshalled a range of resources, including their cultural knowledge of magic and supernatural powers, to defend themselves against it, to contain its influence, and

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<sup>94</sup> S. Redding, 'Government witchcraft: taxation, the supernatural, and the Mpondo revolt in the Transkei, South Africa, 1955-1963', in *African Affairs*, Vol. 95, No. 381, October 1996, p. 577.

<sup>95</sup> The anthropologist Philip Mayer was educated at Heidelberg and Oxford universities. He was appointed to the Chair of Social Anthropology at Rhodes University in 1953, after which he held positions at Wits (1964-1966), Durham (1966-1970), and again at Rhodes (from 1970). Mayer's contribution to South African studies mainly came in the form of his analyses of social change, which he described in terms of a shifting balance between town-centred and rural-centred networks. See W.D. Hammond-Tooke, *Imperfect interpreters: South Africa's anthropologists, 1920-1990*, pp. 145-151.

<sup>96</sup> S. Redding, 'Government witchcraft: taxation, the supernatural, and the Mpondo revolt in the Transkei, South Africa, 1955-1963', in *African Affairs*, Vol. 95, No. 381, October 1996, p. 578.

<sup>97</sup> R. Ross, *A concise history of South Africa*, p. 127.



ultimately to vanquish it.’<sup>98</sup> According to Crais, rural Africans employed witchcraft beliefs as an idiom with which to create a space where the state could be portrayed as illegitimate and ‘evil’.<sup>99</sup> They thus used ‘magic’ as a means to try and rid themselves of what they found socially unhealthy or ‘evil’. Crais’ conceptualisation of the ‘politics of evil’ – a term that he uses to describe both the injustices of the state ‘and of the state’s subjects and victims that transcends a given political moment’ – has been so well received that it now enjoys international currency.<sup>100</sup>

Crais uses evidence from the Eastern Cape to try and substantiate his theory, and dedicates a chapter entitled *The men of the mountain* to the revolt in Eastern Pondoland.<sup>101</sup> The historian Timothy Keegan describes this chapter as a valuable and ‘closely researched historical exploration’ that provides a ‘historically informed view of the complexities of subaltern politics’.<sup>102</sup>

Crais locates the origin of the *Congo* movement in the 1940s and asserts that the movement developed in a linear fashion into the movement that featured so prominently during the revolt of 1960.<sup>103</sup> As we shall see in a later chapter, however, Robin Kayser convincingly argues that the term *Congo/Ikongo* could have had (and probably did have) many etymological sources and that the term was used to describe various groups at different junctions in time. The *Congo* movement stands central to Crais’ discussion and explanation of the revolt, and he describes the *Congo* as

... *imagining their world by “looking over the shoulders” of the dominant forces in their lives, appropriating in often enigmatic ways symbols and social processes that cohered in new, enduring and ... potentially revolutionary forms.*

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<sup>98</sup> L. Bank, ‘Review: The Politics of Evil’, in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 4, December 2004, pp. 912-915.

<sup>99</sup> C. Crais, *The politics of evil: magic, state power, and the political imagination in South Africa*, p. 112.

<sup>100</sup> L. Bank, ‘Review: The Politics of Evil’, in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 4, December 2004, pp. 912-915.

<sup>101</sup> C. Crais, *The politics of evil: magic, state power, and the political imagination in South Africa*, pp. 178–208.

<sup>102</sup> T. Keegan, ‘Review: Magic and subaltern nationalism in South Africa’, in *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 45, No. 1, 2004, p. 145.

<sup>103</sup> C. Crais, *The politics of evil: magic, state power, and the political imagination in South Africa*, pp. 181–193.

*In the meetings of the Congo ... people elaborated a critique of the state and its local collaborators. And they gave voice to a politics at the center of which lay the ancient and enduring problem of authority and social health. ...Here, then, was a subaltern politics ... The Congo especially emerged as a kind of polymorphous polity that had attained popular legitimacy. Summoning chiefs, headmen, and colonial officials to its meetings, and ultimately in violence itself, the Congo struggled to refashion a world that had gone terrible awry. ...By 1957, in Pondoland the Congo had become not only a powerful center of political critique but, ultimately, also a new and competing node of political authority in the region.*

...

*The revolt, it seems, was as much about getting rid of the Bantu Authorities system as it was ridding the world of the evil that had so overcome it.*<sup>104</sup>

Diana Wylie makes the point that, in claiming that the inhabitants of the rural Eastern Cape used ‘magic’ as a means to try and rid themselves of what they found socially unhealthy or ‘evil’, Crais extends ‘the individualistic purposes of witchcraft into the realm of social strategy.’<sup>105</sup> This is also true of, and raises legitimate questions about, Redding’s argument.

Wylie subsequently raises the important point that if it is assumed that witchcraft accusations normally derived from wealth differences, evidence is needed of who were not extremely poor, why they were not, what happened to them as a result of their relative wealth, and what their ‘political imaginations’ might have looked like.<sup>106</sup> Moreover, she states that the paucity of Crais’ data merely allows him to assert rather than to prove the truth of his hypotheses – however interesting and provocative they may be.<sup>107</sup> The anthropologist Leslie Bank concurs, for he writes that ‘while the arguments are interesting and the prose persuasive, Crais is ultimately let down by a lack of evidence... In his longer and fuller account of the Congo movement and the ‘men of the mountain’ of Pondoland, there is more to latch onto – a religious slant to

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<sup>104</sup> *Ibid*, p. 191; 192; 193; 205.

<sup>105</sup> D. Wylie, ‘Review: The politics of evil: magic, state power, and the political imagination in South Africa’, in *The international journal of African historical studies*, Vol. 35 No. 2/3 (2002), p. 497.

<sup>106</sup> D. Wylie, ‘Review: The politics of evil: magic, state power, and the political imagination in South Africa’, in *The international journal of African historical studies*, Vol. 35 No. 2/3 (2002), p. 498.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid*, p. 497.

the language of power, stories of witches and nocturnal forces – but one is still left wondering whether this movement was not really more about the politics of chieftaincy than the question of evil.<sup>108</sup>

Although witchcraft frequently involved political contestation and although it was perceived as ‘the destructive power of the subordinate, activated by emotions of envy and resentment’, it is important to note that those who found themselves in subordinate positions almost always lacked the capacity to employ witchcraft accusations to challenge injustice and inequality. Moreover, witchcraft accusations were frequently employed to entrench social inequality – witchcraft thus had both ‘accumulative’ and ‘levelling’ aspects to it. However, the ‘accumulative’ aspect was most apparent in West Africa while the ‘levelling’ aspect was more evident in east and southern Africa, and although witchcraft was used as an idiom with which to critique white domination, white people themselves were very rarely (if ever) imbued with magical powers of their own.<sup>109</sup> Seen in this light, Crais’ and Redding’s arguments thus become hard to sustain – and should be read only as interesting conjecture and speculation.

Furthermore, Keegan makes the important point that Crais’ ‘nominal focus on witchcraft as a central element in African political consciousness runs the risk of relegating the mass of South Africa’s people to a pre-modern world, in which magic and superstition rule supreme’,<sup>110</sup> thereby consigning certain aspects of culture to the a-temporal.

Diana Wylie states that the revolt’s causes lay ‘explicitly in resentment against betterment and the imposition of Bantu Authorities.’ According to Wylie, betterment and Bantu Authorities were underpinned by haughty perceptions regarding ‘the other’ (read Africans) and their ‘unscientific’ methods of production and consumption. This cultural arrogance manifested most acutely in the ‘hubris of high Modernism’,

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<sup>108</sup> L. Bank, ‘Review: The Politics of Evil’, in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 4, December 2004, p. 915.

<sup>109</sup> I. Niehaus, *Witchcraft, power and politics: exploring the occult in the South African Lowveld*, pp. 2-11; 183-192.

<sup>110</sup> T. Keegan, ‘Review: Magic and subaltern nationalism in South Africa’, in *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 45, No. 1, 2004, pp. 143-145.

apartheid. Following Clifton Crais' argument, Wylie partly attributes the Pondo Revolt to 'the moral panic betterment caused by making it harder to control the movement of strangers who might be witches or stock thieves.' Wylie believes that 'Pondo resentment had been provoked by the intrusive social engineering that affected them simultaneously at the levels of political life and subsistence.' Importantly, she also believes that the rebellious *Intaba* (hill) required more well-off peasant farmers to financially contribute to the coffers of the movement (on pain of having their homesteads burnt down), but that they didn't single out poorer peasants.<sup>111</sup>

A younger generation of South African historians have also recently turned their scholarly attention to the Pondoland revolt.

In his recent analysis of the Non-European Unity Movement and the land question, Robin Kayser describes the origins of the revolt, its course and its meaning, which he sees as 'the government's attempt to impose the Bantu Authorities system on the population' and, more importantly, 'the burning issue of the land question which reflected itself most acutely through the government's Rehabilitation Scheme' and 'the fact that the African population were denied representation in Parliament'.<sup>112</sup> He pays particular attention to the role of the African National Congress, the All African Convention and the Cape African Teachers Association. Kayser contributes and adds value to the discussion around the revolt through excellent use of many archival sources, and insights gleaned from a series of interviews conducted with Gideon Mahanjana, Fanele Nxasana, Mpitsi Ncenjana, Pindiso Zimamabane and Mjungula Nonkwenkwe.

In a chapter on rural resistance in Pondoland and Thembuland in *The Road to Democracy in South Africa: Volume 1 (1960–1970)*, Sukude Matoti<sup>113</sup> and Lungisile

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<sup>111</sup> D. Wylie, *Starving on a full stomach: Hunger and the triumph of cultural racism in modern South Africa*, pp. 232-234.

<sup>112</sup> R. Kayser, *Land and liberty! : the Non-European Unity Movement and the land question*, p. 96; p. 107.

<sup>113</sup> Matoti teaches at the Walter Sisulu University.

Ntsebeza<sup>114</sup>, like most other commentators, ascribe the revolt to the introduction of the Bantu Authorities system and development plans linked to it, and to the coercive way in which it was implemented. They describe the course of the revolt, the state's response, methods of resistance, and the role of political organisations in the revolt. They provide new insights through the analysis of a series of interviews conducted with role-players like Anderson Ganyile, Leonard Mdingi, S. Slangwe, C.K. Gxabu, M. Mzobotshi and M. Mahlangu.<sup>115</sup> According to Saul Dubow, *The Road to Democracy*

*represents a serious-minded and valuable effort to record vital aspects of the history of resistance to apartheid ... Interviews with participants add significantly to what is already known about these regions from the work of ... Bundy and Beinart ... The key landmarks and waystations of th[e] struggle have already been laid out by pioneering scholars like ... Lodge. Building on this well established lineage, the contributors to this volume add much new material, drawing on previously unknown or proscribed sources: court records, state archives, around 200 personal interviews, as well as the effusion of biographies that have appeared over the past fifteen years of so ... Taken as a whole, the institution based and leadership-centric approach which mark many of the first-wave accounts of resistance, are ... significantly modified as the experiences of less well-known activists are brought to the fore.*<sup>116</sup>

In general terms there exists a broad consensus among scholars regarding the causes of the revolt. But while most revisionists and social historians emphasise the political economy, those of a post-modern/discursive disposition stress cultural factors. Whatever the case may be, or whichever narrative one chooses to believe, there can be no disputing the fact that the heavy-handed way in which Bantu Authorities and betterment were implemented in Eastern Pondoland is seen as having been the salient feature – the spark that lit the revolutionary embers in that erstwhile peaceful corner of the North Eastern Cape.

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<sup>114</sup> Ntsebeza was a senior researcher in the University of the Western Cape School of Government's Programme for Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS), and now teaches at the University of Cape Town.

<sup>115</sup> S. Matoti & L. Ntsebeza, 'Rural resistance in Mpondoland and Tembuland, 1960–1963', in SADET, *The road to democracy in South Africa: volume 1 (1960–1970)*, pp. 177–208.

<sup>116</sup> S. Dubow. 'Review: South African Democracy Education Trust, *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*', H-SAfrica, H-Net Reviews, 2006, pp. 1–2. Available online at: <http://www.h-net.msu.edu/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=157651143228611>.

## 2. THE LAY OF THE LAND, EASTERN PONDOLAND CIRCA 1960

In this chapter I attempt to describe the situation in Eastern Pondoland just prior to the revolt taking place. In order to do so I have subdivided the chapter into the following sections: 1) geography, demographics and resource endowment; 2) political organisation, and 3) socio-economic organisation.<sup>117</sup> Since concepts such as demographics and political- and socio-economic organisation are by no means static and atemporal, I will try to show how, over an extended period of time, the prevailing situation in Eastern Pondoland by 1960, was shaped by ever changing circumstances in that region, in the wider Eastern Cape, and indeed in the whole of South Africa.

### 2.1. Geography, demographics and resource endowment

*A crowd of little hills tumble down to the sea, and grassy ridges, emerging like islands out of the sea mist which fills the valleys at dawn, are covered with round brown huts. Two hundred and sixty thousand Pondo live in groups of huts (umzi, pl. imizi), scattered through their 3 900 square miles of country at irregular distances, of anything from fifty yards to a mile or more apart.*<sup>118</sup>

Monica Hunter's prosaic description of Pondoland in 1936 neatly outlines how the geography of the area shaped the prevailing settlement pattern. By 1960 the bulk of her description would probably still ring true, but for a few changes and additions in statistics.

Geographically, the Transkei comprises four main physical regions, namely the coastal belt, the midlands, the highlands and the great escarpment.<sup>119</sup> The coastal belt rises

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<sup>117</sup> For practical purposes (so as to render the chapter manageable) I have chosen to make use of these categories although they quite obviously overlap to a tremendous extent.

<sup>118</sup> M. Hunter, *Reaction to conquest: effects of contact with Europeans on the Pondo of South Africa*, p. 15.

<sup>119</sup> W.D. Hammond-Tooke, *Command or consensus: the development of Transkeian local government*, p. 10.

from about thirty to a hundred metres above sea level at the coast to around seven hundred meters toward the interior. The belt is a plateau, deeply dissected into great gorges by rivers that open up into the sea. North of the UmZimvubu River there are extensive flats cut into blocks by narrow gorges. The shoreline is generally regular and provides no good harbours. Deep river canyons make direct north-south movement along the coastal belt almost impossible. Along the coastal strip is found a narrow belt of tropical vegetation that includes grasses, palms, wild bananas, evergreen forests of indigenous yellowwoods and ironwoods, and streambank bush.<sup>120</sup>

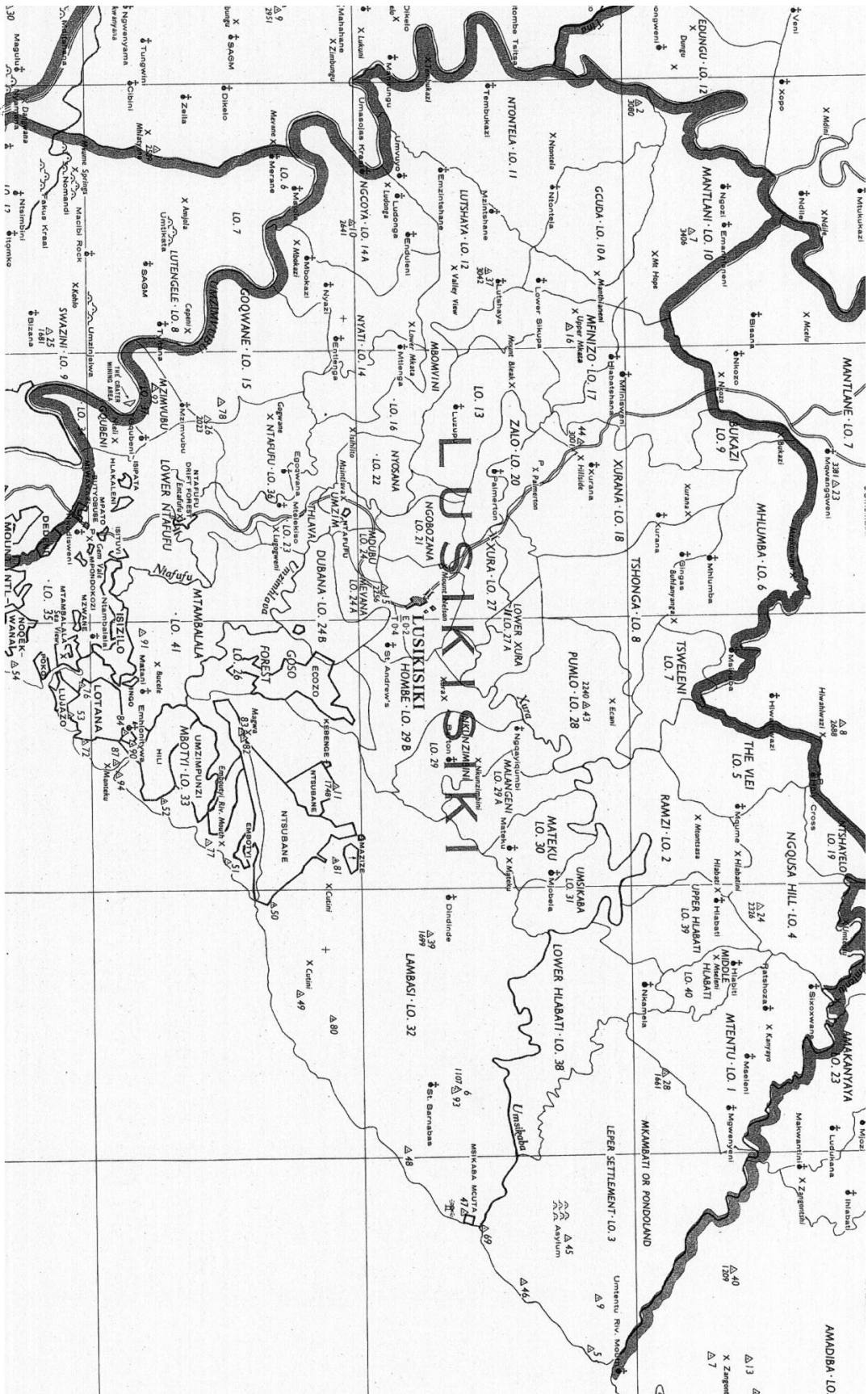
In Eastern Pondoland only the districts of Bizana and Lusikisiki are located within the coastal belt. Lusikisiki lies to the north of the UmZimvubu River and to the south of the UmTentu River. It is the southernmost district of Eastern Pondoland. The name Lusikisiki is believed to have been derived from the sound of the wind blowing through the marsh reeds near the Pondo capital at evening time, which is said to have made the sound 'lusikisiki'. Qawukeni (or Qaukeni), the 'Great Place' and seat of power of the Pondo paramount was located in this district.<sup>121</sup> The Bizana district lies to the north of Lusikisiki. It is situated between the UmTamvuna River to the north and the UmTentu River to the south, and forms Pondoland's northern border with Natal. Prior to annexation the area was largely dominated by immigrant chiefs.<sup>122</sup> See maps on pages 27 and 28.

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<sup>120</sup> W.D. Hammond-Tooke, *Command or consensus: the development of Transkeian local government*, pp. 10–11.

<sup>121</sup> V. Mayhew (ed.), *Reader's Digest illustrated guide to Southern Africa*, pp. 399-401.

<sup>122</sup> W. Beinart, *The political economy of Pondoland*, p. 37.



Map 3: Lusiki (Department of Lands Survey Board - Topo - Cadastral Series, Sheet 42, Umatafa, Magisterial Districts Revised, 1950)





The midlands rise from seven hundred metres to around a thousand three hundred metres and can be described as undulating country with an almost endless succession of hills, valleys, *tafelberge* and *spitskoppies*. North of Umtata the country becomes progressively more mountainous until the doleritic masses of Tabankulu and Mount Ayliff are reached. The midlands are predominantly grass-covered except that in the low-lying sheltered valleys the vegetation is almost of Karoo type with thornbush, succulents, aloe and euphorbia. A great number of sheep is kept in the midlands.<sup>123</sup>

The highlands (1 300 to 2 000 metres) is a region of considerable diversity and, like the midlands, is predominantly covered with grass. Large numbers of sheep are kept in the highlands as well. The great escarpment climbs in places to 2 700 metres in the ramparts of the Drakensberg, along which runs the Lesotho border. In the mountain ravines on the windward side of the scarp, there are patches of temperate forest. A sizeable proportion of the area is eminently suitable for cattle-ranching.<sup>124</sup>

Flagstaff and Tabankulu are inland areas. Prior to annexation Flagstaff comprised areas mainly under the control of a number of leading Mpondo subchiefs, while immigrant chiefs dominated in Tabankulu. These areas were endowed with thinner grass-cover, steeper ground, and lower average rainfall than were the coastal areas.<sup>125</sup> Rainfall normally came in the form of storms within the period of a few months annually. By the 1920s, due to steady population growth and consequent overgrazing, these areas were beginning to show signs of erosion.<sup>126</sup> Flagstaff was a picturesque trading centre located in the high hill country of Pondoland. Its name is believed to have been derived from the flagpole, erected on Sundays by the owner of a trading store who believed in Sunday observance, to denote to the locals that the shop was closed for business. A

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<sup>123</sup> W.D. Hammond-Tooke, *Command or consensus: the development of Transkeian local government*, pp. 10–12.

<sup>124</sup> W.D. Hammond-Tooke, *Command or consensus: the development of Transkeian local government*, pp. 11–12.

<sup>125</sup> The average annual rainfall measured between 1909 and 1961 at Lusikikisiki TNK was 1005mm, whereas a figure of 622mm per year was measured at Tabankulu prison for the period 1898 to 1953. (South African Weather Service)

<sup>126</sup> W. Beinart, *The political economy of Pondoland*, p. 37; 82.

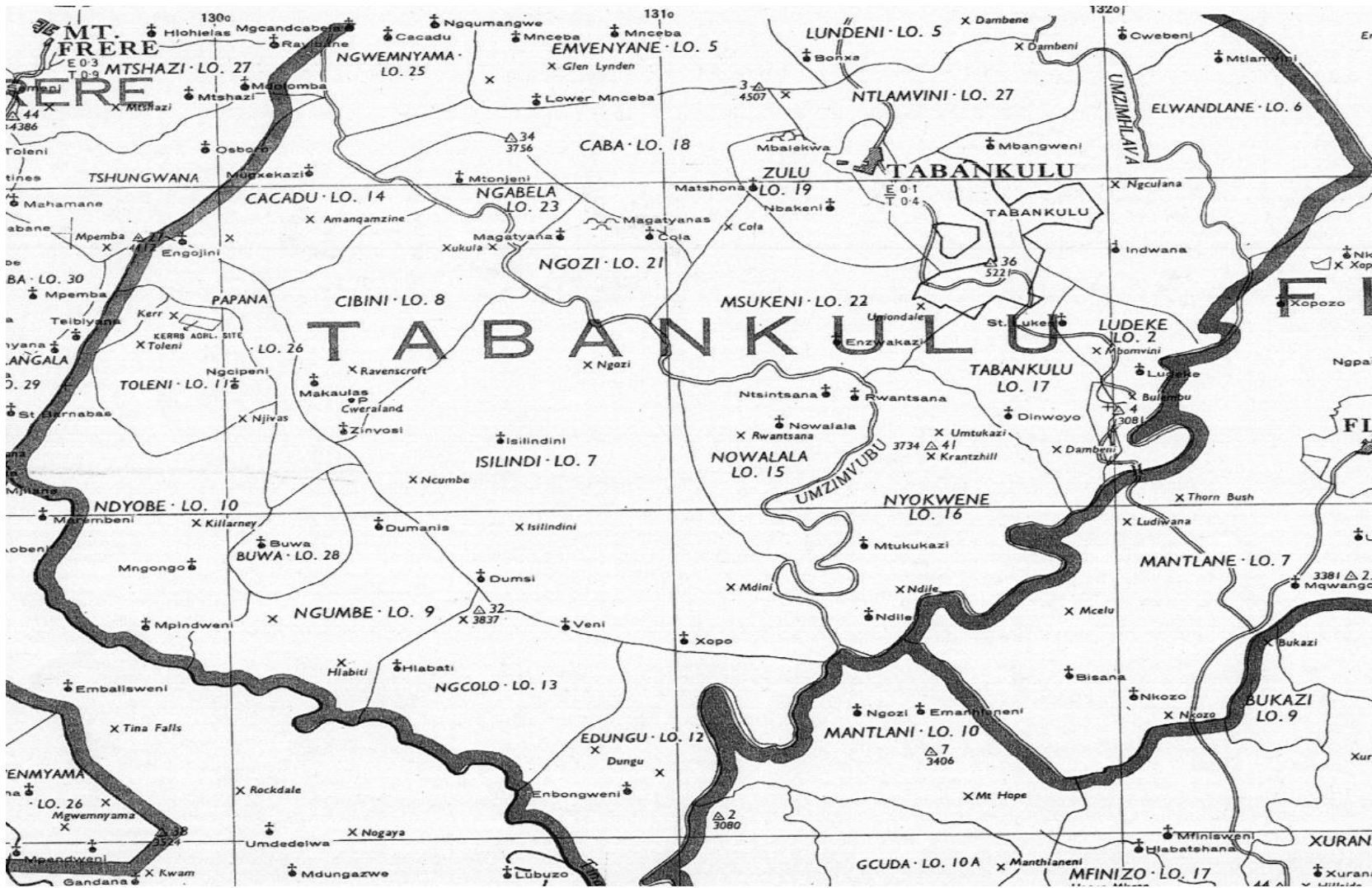
large hospital was founded near the town at the Holy Cross Mission Station in 1911.<sup>127</sup>  
See maps on pages 31 and 32.

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<sup>127</sup> V. Mayhew (ed.), *Reader's Digest illustrated guide to Southern Africa*, pp. 398-399.



Map 4: Flagstaff (Department of Lands Survey Board - Topo - Cadastral Series, Sheet 42, Umtata, Magisterial Districts Revised, 1950)



**Map 5: Tabankulu (Department of Lands Survey Board - Topo - Cadastral Series, Sheet 42, Umtata, Magisterial Districts Revised, 1950)**

The major Mpondo groups were settled in an inner ring around the paramount's great place at Qaukeni (in Lusikisiki), while large immigrant groups such as the Nci and Cwera in Tabankulu, the (imi)Zizi in Bizana and the Cele, under their own chiefs, formed an outer ring on the periphery of the chiefdom.<sup>128</sup>

In Eastern Pondoland, very dramatic hill country extends for almost a hundred kilometres inland from the shores of the Indian Ocean. Plentiful rains fell mainly between the months of October and March and normally kept the area well supplied with grain. Indeed, such were the rains that roads often became too slippery for oxen and rivers swelled to the extent that they could not be crossed.<sup>129</sup> The following table serves to illustrate the average monthly rainfall measured over an extended time period at different centres in the four districts of Eastern Pondoland:

<b>Average monthly rainfall<sup>130</sup></b>	<b>Flafstaff Prison<sup>131</sup></b>	<b>Lusikisiki TNK<sup>132</sup></b>	<b>Tabankulu Prison<sup>133</sup></b>	<b>Bizana Bos<sup>134</sup></b>
January	110mm	122mm	82mm	104mm
February	117mm	125mm	84mm	109mm
March	106mm	136mm	67mm	102mm
April	51mm	60mm	42mm	52mm
May	32mm	49mm	36mm	32mm
June	21mm	29mm	22mm	20mm
July	23mm	30mm	19mm	18mm
August	27mm	34mm	21mm	28mm
September	52mm	71mm	34mm	47mm

<sup>128</sup> W. Beinart, *The political economy of Pondoland, 1860–1930*, p. 12; W.D. Hammond-Tooke, *Command or consensus: the development of Transkeian local government*, p. 28.

<sup>129</sup> D. Wylie, *Starving on a full stomach: hunger and the triumph of cultural racism in modern South Africa*, pp. 64–65; 165–168.

<sup>130</sup> Data supplied by the South African Weather Service.

<sup>131</sup> These figures are based on measurements taken between 1900 and 1961.

<sup>132</sup> These figures are based on measurements taken between 1909 and 1961.

<sup>133</sup> These figures are based on measurements taken between 1898 and 1960.

<sup>134</sup> These figures are based on measurements taken between 1914 and 1961.

October	76mm	96mm	51mm	85mm
November	110mm	131mm	76mm	106mm
December	114mm	122mm	87mm	111mm

The mean annual rainfall measured in Lusikisiki in the table above was 1005mm and is more than double the mean for the rest of South Africa, which is only 497mm.<sup>135</sup> The figures above do therefore indeed indicate ‘plentiful’ rains.

Planting and weeding took place between the months of September and November. In September fields would be cleared, ploughing would begin, and women would plant hand plots. In October clearing would be followed by ploughing, after which weeding would commence. Pot-making would also begin. In November weeding and early maize ripening would take place. In December further weeding would take place along with pumpkin ripening. Green maize would be ready and first-fruit ceremonies would take place. January and February were months of weeding. In March huts were repaired and erected. First green and then dried grains were harvested between March and June. In April rushes for basketwork would be cut. In May livestock were let back into the fields, festivals began and hut building and repairing took place. This continued in June while much basketwork and woodwork was also done. In July grain was threshed, and basket- and mat-making would take place along with woodwork and hut building and repairing. There were more festivals and grain-pits were cleaned. In August further threshing took place, grain was stored, fields were cleared, basket- and wood-work took place, and there were further festivals.<sup>136</sup>

## 2.2. Political organisation

The formation of the area that came to be known as the Transkei was prompted by a series of annexations by the Cape Colony that started with Fingoland in 1879 and

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<sup>135</sup> L. Niewoudt & J. Groenewald (eds), *Challenge and change: agriculture, land and the South African economy*, p. 21.

<sup>136</sup> D. Wylie, *Starving on a full stomach: hunger and the triumph of cultural racism in modern South Africa*, p. 182; M. Hunter, *Reaction to conquest: effects of contact with Europeans on the Pondo of South Africa*, p. 111.

culminated in the incorporation of Pondoland in 1894. Before this process there was no political unity in the area; rather, there existed a number of self-governing communities in the form of chiefdoms.<sup>137</sup> Politically these chiefdoms, all of which were Southern Nguni<sup>138</sup> societies, comprised of governmental structures in the form of a well-developed hierarchy of courts and administrative and judicial officers. As such they constituted primitive states or state-like polities, which could well be described as unitary states, because in each there existed territorial authority, centralised government, specialised administrative staff and a monopoly over the use of legitimate force.<sup>139</sup>

The African peoples in the area all spoke dialects of Xhosa, but the twelve mainly unrelated chiefdom clusters (independent chiefdoms organised into larger structures which were the largest organisations in Southern Nguni societies to acknowledge ranking) each had its own history, customs and sense of distinctiveness. Most of these clusters were divided into independent chiefdoms, the chiefs of which being either related to one another through membership of a royal patrilineage, or associated with the cluster through having become tributary to the paramount.<sup>140</sup> In the case of such large immigrant groups in pre-annexation Pondoland the chiefs of these groups would acknowledge the paramount, attend his councils, exchange wives with him and presumably mobilise men for his campaigns.<sup>141</sup> The paramount, however, did not generally have sovereignty over the territories of his junior chiefs and the chiefdoms that resorted under a paramount operated without interference by the paramount in their respective internal affairs.<sup>142</sup> This was also the case in Pondoland in pre-annexation times and tributary chiefs were by and large left to regulate their own internal affairs.

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<sup>137</sup> A chiefdom can be defined as a group of people that inhabits a common territory and acknowledges the authority of a chief who is independent of other chiefs. See W.D. Hammond-Tooke, *Command or consensus: the development of Transkeian local government*, p. 6.

<sup>138</sup> The term refers to “the congeries of patrilineal, pastoral hoe-culturalist peoples that inhabit the eastern seaboard of the Republic of South Africa, from the Natal border in the north to approximately a line just west of Port Elizabeth in the south.” W.D. Hammond-Tooke, *Command or consensus: the development of Transkeian local government*, p. 7.

<sup>139</sup> W.D. Hammond-Tooke, *Command or consensus: the development of Transkeian local government*, p. 2; p. 5; p. 6; p. 21; p. 34.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid*, p. 9; pp. 33–35.

<sup>141</sup> W. Beinart, *The political economy of Pondoland, 1860–1930*, p. 13.

<sup>142</sup> W.D. Hammond-Tooke, *Command or consensus: the development of Transkeian local government*, p. 9; pp. 33–35.



By the latter half of the nineteenth century political authority was beginning to devolve in the subchiefs.<sup>143</sup>

Among the Southern Nguni political authority seems to have resulted from the concentration of wealth in the hands of certain lineages, which emerged as the royal lineages of chiefdoms. The chieftainship then became ritualised with the chief at the centre of rituals, thus reifying his position at the top of the political structure. Chieftainship was governed by a hereditary principle, and emphasis on descent from a great house was so strong that only the rightful heir was acceptable to the people.<sup>144</sup> In Pondoland tradition also dictated rules that governed succession: it is probable that Nyawuza established a 'great house' two generations before the reign of chief Faku (c. 1820–1867) and that around this time the practice became institutionalised that one of a paramount's wives' bridewealth would be paid by the people (not from the royal herds). The eldest son of this publicly designated 'great wife' would be considered the legitimate heir.<sup>145</sup>

A tributary relationship between a chief and his people implied that arable land and pasturage would be made available to them.<sup>146</sup> This rendered the basic nature of the relationship between a chief and his people an economic, quasi-clientship one, in which the chief provided food and protection.<sup>147</sup>

Chiefdom cohesion in the form of political integration was achieved through mechanisms besides the purely political. These can be described as kinship, religious and ideological mechanisms. On the kinship level affinal bonds were forged throughout the chiefdom by the operation of exogamy rules; on the religious level communal rituals centred on the chief and the members of the chiefdom were subject to the power of the royal ancestors – the shades of past chiefs; and on the ideological level cohesion

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<sup>143</sup> W. Beinart, *The political economy of Pondoland, 1860–1930*, p. 13; p. 29.

<sup>144</sup> W.D. Hammond-Tooke, *Command or consensus: the development of Transkeian local government*, p. 30; p. 104; p. 105.

<sup>145</sup> W. Beinart, *The political economy of Pondoland, 1860–1930*, p. 9; p. 13.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid*, 1860–1930, p. 18.

<sup>147</sup> W.D. Hammond-Tooke, *Command or consensus: the development of Transkeian local government*, p. 30; p. 104; p. 105.

was expressed by members of the chiefdom referring to themselves as ‘the people of’ a certain chief, and by tribal marks such as the tattoos of the Mpondo.<sup>148</sup>

The theory that underpinned political organisation of Southern Nguni societies in pre-annexation times resulted in what David Hammond-Tooke calls an ‘extreme democratic system’ or ‘tribal democracy’. Achieving consensus lay at the heart of the traditional decision-making process; indeed, ‘decision-making was a product of an essentially ‘political’ interaction between council members who were equal to one another.’ The basic dictum of this political theory was thus that a chief should always defer to the general opinion of his council. When a chief did assert his authority and acted dictatorially the potential for secession was created, and it follows that fission was most commonly precipitated by dissatisfaction with a ruling chief who had acted dictatorially.<sup>149</sup>

But Nguni political units were, by their very nature, unstable, and the heir to the right-hand house of a chief had the right to establish his own independent chiefdom when his father died. The division between Eastern- and Western Pondoland came about in this way: chief Faku advised Ndamase, the son of his right-hand house, to cross the Umizimvubu River and establish his own quasi-independent chiefdom in the area that came to be known as Western Pondoland. This happened principally due to friction between Mqileka, Faku’s heir<sup>150</sup> (who reigned from 1867 to 1887<sup>151</sup>), and Ndamase. Sometimes, minor houses also broke away to establish new chiefdoms.<sup>152</sup> From the 1860s the frontier between the Mpondo and their neighbours were closing and frontier areas consequently became progressively less fluid. By 1883 Mqileka commented that pasturage had become scarce.<sup>153</sup> The implication is that secession became increasingly unlikely from the latter part of the nineteenth century due to unavailability of land to settle.

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<sup>148</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 37–38.

<sup>149</sup> W.D. Hammond-Tooke, *Command or consensus: the development of Transkeian local government*, p. 36, p. 141.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 31–36.

<sup>151</sup> W. Beinart, *The political economy of Pondoland, 1860–1930*, p. 29.

<sup>152</sup> W.D. Hammond-Tooke, *Command or consensus: the development of Transkeian local government*, pp. 31–36.

<sup>153</sup> W. Beinart, *The political economy of Pondoland, 1860–1930*, p. 27.

The traditional Southern Nguni political authority structure was hierarchical, with its three most important positions being the chief at the apex, a headman under him and a homestead head at the bottom of the structure. The extreme democratic nature of consensual decision making was so deeply ingrained in Southern Nguni political theory that it shaped people's role expectations of chiefs and headmen.<sup>154</sup> Before annexation, chiefly politics in Pondoland revolved around trade in firearms as intertribal relations in the period seem to have been characterised by frequent conflict, and it is generally thought that most chiefs confined their roles in internal politics to merely acting as mouthpieces of the court or moot.<sup>155</sup>

After the annexation of Pondoland in 1894 the area was divided into seven magisterial districts, namely Port St. Johns, Libode, Nqeleni, Lusikisiki, Flagstaff, Tabankulu and Bizana. Port St. Johns, Libode and Nqeleni were located to the south of the umZimvubu River and the north of the umThatha River and constituted Western Pondoland. The rest comprised Eastern Pondoland.<sup>156</sup>

Under the new colonial system (that would in time come to be known as the Transkeian Council System) most chiefs became headmen of locations. This meant that some chiefs, who had previously controlled vast geographical areas, were now limited to one location. In areas previously under the authority of petty chiefs or commoner leaders one of their number was elevated to the position of headman.<sup>157</sup> Extension of colonial political and social control took place through a process of 'indirect rule'.<sup>158</sup> As the new office bearers and representatives of the white colonial state and simultaneously direct representatives of the local people, headmen increasingly found themselves in intercalary, or inter-hierarchical, roles. This was due to the fact that they became the

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<sup>154</sup> W.D. Hammond-Tooke, *Command or consensus: the development of Transkeian local government*, p. 219; p. 224.

<sup>155</sup> W. Beinart, *The political economy of Pondoland, 1860–1930*, p. 37; W.D. Hammond-Tooke, *Command or consensus: the development of Transkeian local government*, p. 36; p. 40.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid*, p. 82.

<sup>157</sup> W. Beinart, *The political economy of Pondoland*, p. 37.

<sup>158</sup> F.P. Christensen, *Pondo migrant workers in Natal: rural and urban strains*, unpublished masters dissertation, University of Natal, Durban, p. 38.

confluence of two conflicting systems of role expectations, which oftentimes involved them in unsolvable quandaries.<sup>159</sup>

Eastern Pondoland officially joined the Transkeian Territories General Council (or *Bunga*, as it was referred to in the *lingua franca*) in 1932 after the Pondoland General Council (that existed since 1911, but only included Eastern Pondoland after 1927) was amalgamated with the former body under Proclamations 279 of 1930 and 191 of 1932. The United Transkeian Territorial Authority thus came into being. The Council System had as its aim to develop the Transkeian Territories socially and economically by engaging the whole of the populace in 'local matters'. However, according to Hammond-Tooke the electoral system failed to produce any real leadership despite the fact that it should have been able to do so in principle. This was probably due to the *Bunga's* lack of legitimate bona fide power and to the failure of leaders themselves.<sup>160</sup>

In 1956 a new era in Transkeian local government was ushered in. In that year the Council System was officially replaced by the Bantu Authorities structure, which was a system based explicitly on traditional chieftainships.<sup>161</sup> This transition was facilitated by Proclamation 180 of 1956, which replaced the *Bunga* with a Territorial Authority and simultaneously transmitted to the Territorial Authority the material- and human resources of the former body. District authorities were inserted between the tribal and regional levels of the old three tiered system. This created a four tier system that consisted of a tribal level at the bottom, district and regional levels in the middle, and a tribal authority at the apex of the hierarchy.<sup>162</sup>

The foundation of the new system was the tribal authority, which was based on the old chiefdoms. The heads of the different tribal authorities in a district and their councillors together constituted the district authority. The district authority was thus made up of one or more chiefs and the heads of any community located within the district.

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<sup>159</sup> W.D. Hammond-Tooke, *Command or consensus: the development of Transkeian local government*, p. 218.

<sup>160</sup> W.D. Hammond-Tooke, 'The Transkeian Council System 1895-1955: an appraisal', in *The Journal of African History* Vol. 9, No. 3, 1968, pp. 455-477.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 455-477.

<sup>162</sup> W.D. Hammond-Tooke, *Command or consensus: the development of Transkeian local government*, p. 206.

Regional authorities banded together districts and were based on geographical and ethnic criteria. In broad terms, they reflected what was called the old 'chiefdom clusters'. Qaukeni Regional Authority was thus the old Eastern Pondoland. At the top of the hierarchy was the Transkeian Territorial Authority that was constituted of all the chiefs, and a few councillors.<sup>163</sup> The territorial authority thus linked local government in the Transkei to the wider South African political system.

The new system explicitly attempted to strengthen the chieftainship. The new role of the paramount chief as the chairman of both district and regional authorities stretched much further than his traditional powers, which were merely of a ceremonial and moral nature. In Cape Nguni society the chief was never a tyrant. In most circumstances he could not act in opposition to the wishes of his people. He was a conservative element. He usually acted as the interpreter and upholder of tradition, he was seldom a legislator. Chiefs very seldom, if ever, took a leading part in the discussions at tribal moots. Typically a chief would be stately, heavy set, taciturn, and above political wrangling. According to Hammond-Tooke the Bantu Authorities system involved chiefs in a role-conflict situation, for under it they had to be at once progressive and conservative. Under the old system of 'tribal democracy' consensus was all important, but under the Bantu Authorities system a chief had no choice but to implement laws without the consent of his people. The reserves reverberated with cries of 'the chief is killing us' and many chiefs and the new Bantu Authorities they represented came to be thoroughly despised.<sup>164</sup>

The elevation of chiefs had a very definite effect on the status of headmen. Essentially, they were now 'hired and fired' by the tribal authority. This meant that they were now subsumed by the tribal authority. Their functions included overseeing the maintenance of minor location roads, tracks and fords; the organisation of agricultural competitions and shows; education; soil conservation, rehabilitation and the combating of soil erosion. In terms of land administration their functions were confined to making recommendations to the Bantu Affairs Commissioner. As far as education was

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<sup>163</sup> W. D. Hammond-Tooke, *Command or consensus: the development of Transkeian local government*, pp. 206-208.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 208-213.

concerned they were limited to the construction and repair of primary schools, the nomination of members of school committees and the disbursement of tribal and community taxes for educational purposes. In addition they were responsible for the registration of work-seekers and the weekly forwarding of labour returns to the Employment Bureau, the screening of applicants for pensions and other social benefits, the registration of births and deaths, the reporting of damage to pasturage and installations and the prevention of cruelty to animals. It was also proposed that civil and criminal jurisdiction be conferred on tribal authorities. Headmen were paid very little by the Tribal Authority and bribery and corruption consequently became rife.<sup>165</sup>

Like headmen before them, chiefs thus became involved in intercalary roles. Three basic courses of action were open to them: they could act as ‘loyal’ representatives of white bureaucracy, support the people in opposition to commands from above, or side-step the conflict altogether.<sup>166</sup>

### 2.3. Socio-economic organisation

In his exposition of the Algerian revolution entitled *A Dying Colonialism*,<sup>167</sup> Frantz Fanon<sup>168</sup> gave a detailed account of what he thought had happened to the ‘Algerian family’ before, during and as a result of their struggle for national liberation, and critically, how those processes impacted on the course of the revolution itself. Although

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<sup>165</sup> W.D. Hammond-Tooke, *Command or consensus: the development of Transkeian local government*, p. 210.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid*, p. 218.

<sup>167</sup> F. Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, pp. 99–121.

<sup>168</sup> Fanon was born in Martinique in 1925. He studied medicine in France, specialising in psychiatry, and joined the National Liberation Front (FLN) in Algeria in 1956, after which he served as diplomatic attaché in several African states. To Fanon colonialism was a system of racial oppression all the more insidious because its impact was both mental and physical. It subsequently distorted attitudes and behaviour alike. As a result, genuine liberation could not be achieved by peaceful negotiation, as was attempted elsewhere in Africa in the early 1960s, but could, according to Fanon, only result from protracted violence involving direct, collective action by the masses. Fanon had reservations about nationalist movements, on account of their privileged, urban, middle-class leadership, which he thought to be susceptible to colonial penetration. To him the only reliable revolutionary force was the peasantry, who had nothing to lose and an inherent capacity for spontaneous protest and explosions of violence. Fanon died of leukemia before Algeria acquired its independence in 1962. His theory of revolution is most clearly illustrated in his last book, *The Wretched of the Earth*. See I. McLean, (ed.), *The Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics*, p. 177.

much criticised, much maligned, and possibly very much outdated, Fanon must be credited for seeing that the structure and dynamics of the family played a significant role in the way the revolutionary process panned out. Similarly, the anthropologist Heinz Kuckertz is of the opinion that the homestead – defined as a spatially discernible domestic unit, which constituted both a socio-economic and a legal entity, and existed under the control of a homestead head – can be used as the analytical focal point when Mpondo social life is studied<sup>169</sup> since all the basic concepts inherent to – and at all levels of – social life were repeatedly recreated therein.<sup>170</sup> An understanding of the way in which the family within the context of Mpondo society was structured in 1960 thus seems crucial if one is to understand why and how the revolt took place in the way that it did.

Traditionally each Mpondo homestead (*umzi*) tended to be in possession of its own field and transmitted property to its respective children, and also stood in court on its own.<sup>171</sup> The homestead could thus be seen as the essential unit of production<sup>172</sup> and of consumption.<sup>173</sup> In Mpondo society families usually functioned as separate households, but *Amalima* (work parties), that were comprised of family and neighbours, were extensively made during periods of cultivation when it was difficult to cope with labour intensive activities.<sup>174</sup>

The composition of any given homestead would vary according to its position on the family life cycle. When a son moved out of his father's house (a practice known as *ukhuzakhela* – to build for one-self) a nuclear family would be formed. This nuclear

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<sup>169</sup> This is because of process rather than structure – each homestead (and thus also each family) undergoes a cyclical progression; one which sees it coming into existence, growing into maturity, and protracting after the death of the homestead head.

<sup>170</sup> H. Kuckertz, *The Image of the Homestead in Mpondo Social Life*, p. 21.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid*, p. 172.

<sup>172</sup> William Beinart argues that the homestead became the basic unit of production because of the decline in hunting and raiding that coincided with the expansion of the cultivation of grain in the last few decades of the nineteenth century. See W. Beinart, 'Labour Migrancy and Rural Reproduction: Pondoland c. 1900–1950', in P. Mayer (ed.), *Black Villagers in an Industrial Society: Anthropological Perspectives on Labour Migration in South Africa*, p. 83.

<sup>173</sup> P. Mayer., 'The Origin and Decline of Two Rural Resistance Ideologies', in P. Mayer (ed.), *Black Villagers in an Industrial Society: Anthropological Perspectives on Labour Migration in South Africa*, p. 6.

<sup>174</sup> M. Hunter, *Reaction to Conquest: Effects of Contact with Europeans on the Pondo of South Africa*, pp. 74–93.

family would expand when children were born, and a three-generational household was once again formed when children grew up and married. As the grand-filial generation reached marital age, either the eldest or the youngest of the grandchildren would move out. The original (grand-) parental generation would eventually die out, once again giving the impression of a nuclear family. A process of expansion is thus followed by a process of contraction.<sup>175</sup> Both Kuckertz (in the 1970s) and Monica Hunter (in the 1930s) found that there normally lived one adult for every one child in an *umzi*. Hunter stated that an average *umzi* contained four to five adults and five children. Kuckertz, however, stated that the average household diminished in size<sup>176</sup> by almost a quarter<sup>177</sup> between the mid 1930s and the late 1970s.<sup>178</sup> Anecdotal evidence supplied by Govan Mbeki in early 1961 seems to support Kuckertz's estimates for it indicates that the average family of a middle-aged man in Pondoland at the time consisted of around six members in total.<sup>179</sup>

The site that comprised the homestead was typically occupied by one or more houses (usually huts) spaced a few metres apart. Houses were normally built in a semi-circle or in a straight line with their entrances facing north-east. Opposite the houses there were often a cattle byre and a garden.<sup>180</sup> Where communal tenure prevailed, homesteads were strung out along ridges in much the same way as the customary Nguni pattern of scattered homesteads. However, the enforcement of so-called betterment schemes caused settlement to take place much denser than had once been the custom.<sup>181</sup>

The normative 'head' of the family was usually the father, his position having been allocated to him by tradition. This normative position was strongly related to the head's

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<sup>175</sup> This was the traditional Mpondo family life cycle. As the twentieth century progressed, sons left their father's homesteads at a younger age than was traditionally the norm as the result of the impact of the process of labour migration.

<sup>176</sup> Monica Hunter argued in 1936 that a reason for the *umzi*'s decreasing size was the fact that a concentration of people was no longer necessary for defence against man and beast. See M. Hunter, *Reaction to Conquest: Effects of Contact with Europeans on the Pondo of South Africa*, p. 59. One must of course not discount the effects of contact with the cash economy and labour migration.

<sup>177</sup> The ratio, however, stayed approximately 1:1.

<sup>178</sup> H. Kuckertz, *The Image of the Homestead in Mpondo Social Life*, pp. 157–69.

<sup>179</sup> G. Mbeki, 'Starvation threat in Pondoland', in *New Age*, Vol. 7, No. 17, 9 February 1961, p. 3.

<sup>180</sup> H. Kuckertz, *The Image of the Homestead in Mpondo Social Life*, p. 157.

<sup>181</sup> P. Mayer, *Black Villagers in an Industrial Society: Anthropological Perspectives on Labour Migration in South Africa*, p. xiii.



control over land, inheritance, and traditional rites. When control over these resources was lost, the normative reinforcement could decline until the individual lost his authority.<sup>182</sup> Among the Mpondo, the normative ‘head’ of a household was the homestead head. During the course of the formation of a new homestead, the juridical authority of the homestead head was constituted. The homestead head had juridical authority over all the members of his homestead, and his authority was thus defined by his control of the homestead. This authority didn’t reside in an institution, but was the result of a social process. Status, not sex, determined who controlled the homestead – and thus who the normative ‘head’ of a homestead was. Because of the legal dominance of men in Mpondo society, however, a woman who controlled a homestead wasn’t entitled to become a member of the court jury at the village headman’s place. She thus couldn’t become a ‘legal authority’ within the society.<sup>183</sup>

In Pondoland the homestead head was accountable for obtaining wealth in the form of cattle<sup>184</sup> by marrying off daughters or by borrowing from wealthier men, and for making sure that the dowry of each male member of the household was paid. In addition, he was responsible for the payment of the torts of law incurred by household members. As the 20<sup>th</sup> century progressed, due to factors like migration and shifting economic and political power balances, younger men increasingly became responsible for stock restoration and for earning their own dowry.<sup>185</sup>

After 1894 the Mpondo retained most of the land that they had occupied prior to annexation. They were consequently not, unlike other chiefdoms, forced onto the labour market through the loss of land. Hunting and raiding declined with annexation and the concomitant solidifying of borders. As a result the homestead, and not

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<sup>182</sup> D. Kayongo-Male & P. Onyango, *The Sociology of the African Family*, p. 28.

<sup>183</sup> H. Kuckertz, *The Image of the Homestead in Mpondo Social Life*, pp. 22 – 161.

<sup>184</sup> Cattle were of primary economic importance to the Pondo as it was their favoured store of wealth, the means with which to obtain wives, and because milk and meat played important parts in the Pondo diet. See M. Hunter, *Reaction to conquest: effects of contact with Europeans on the Pondo of South Africa*, pp. 68-71.

<sup>185</sup> W. Beinart, ‘Labour migrancy and rural production, 1900-1950’, in P. Mayer (ed.), *Black villagers in an industrial society: Anthropological perspectives on labour migration in South Africa*, p. 86.

communal groups organised by chiefs as had been the case before 1894, started to become the basic unit of production.<sup>186</sup>

But the Mpondo were certainly not untouched by migrancy. After unification in 1910 one of the foremost goals of the new South African government was to ensure adequate labour supplies for the mines. The result was the infamous Land Act of 1913, which had as its purpose to severely restrict Africans' access to land outside the allotted reserves (7.8 percent of the country's farmland). The Act, although difficult to implement, forced many Africans into the reserves; thus contributing to overcrowding and consequent underdevelopment. It also had symbolic value for, according to the historian Johnny Hyslop, 'the political leadership of the new state was committing itself to racial segregation on an enormous scale.'<sup>187</sup> Colin Bundy, in turn, likened the Act to the proverbial swish of the curtain on black peasant agriculture in South Africa.<sup>188</sup> The Act definitely did contribute greatly to an increase in black proletarianisation. It thus forced a substantial part of the black South African populace into wage labour and also into structural labour migrancy.

The East Coast Fever epidemic of 1912 and 1913 killed up to 80 percent of the cattle in the Transkei. The system of cattle advances operated by the mines at the time acted to push many inhabitants of the reserve into migrancy in order to replenish their depleted stocks. This pressure was compounded by drought conditions and maize shortages in 1912.<sup>189</sup>

Three broad phases in the development of the South African migrant labour system, all related to the transition of capital accumulation, are discernible. The first began with the discovery of minerals after 1867 and continued until the early twentieth century. It was characterised by a demand on mines and farms for cheap and unskilled African labour. These demands were met by the introduction of taxes, pass laws, location laws

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<sup>186</sup> W. Beinart, 'Labour migrancy and rural production: Pondoland c. 1900-1950', in P. Mayer (ed.), *Black villagers in an industrial society: anthropological perspectives on labour migration in South Africa*, pp. 82-83.

<sup>187</sup> J. Hyslop, *The notorious syndicalist: J.T. Bain: a Scottish rebel in colonial South Africa*, p. 212.

<sup>188</sup> C. Bundy, *The rise and fall of the South African peasantry*.

<sup>189</sup> F.P. Christensen, *Pondo migrant workers in Natal: rural and urban strains*, p. 39.

and vagrancy laws. The second phase commenced with the growth of manufacturing in the early 1920s and continued until roughly 1945. The third phase witnessed the restructuring of the African labour force into more semi-skilled and unskilled positions after 1945.<sup>190</sup>

Pondoland was one of the most self sufficient parts of the South African reserves, and thus one of the last to be forced to abandon homestead agriculture<sup>191</sup> (this would only happen after 1970). Nevertheless, labour migration was popular among Pondo men. The reasons are multiple.

For the Mpondo ‘manhood’ (*ubudoda*) – defined as the ability to preside justly, wisely and generously over a rural homestead (*umzi*) – was, since at least the 1930s, predicated upon migrant labour. Achieving ‘manhood’ was realised by a process of capital accumulation facilitated by labour migration (usually to the mines). This process would enable a male to establish a homestead; to build up a capital base through the acquisition of land, stock and implements; and finally to attain a position from which he could retire from migrant labour and sustain himself and his family independently.<sup>192</sup>

Resistance to proletarianisation thus took the form of building and sustaining a rural base by means of wage labour. This gave rise to cultural patterns in which migrant men shaped continuities between wage work and subsistence agriculture. Resistance would only be rendered futile once the possibility of acquiring arable land had fallen away or when fathers or lineage elders no longer had a say in matters of land allocation.<sup>193</sup>

By the 1930s Bizana, along with the other coastal districts of Pondoland, supplied Natal’s sugar estates with a relatively steady stream of migrant labour. Wages on these estates were on average lower than in those paid by the mines (at the time the minimum mine wage was set at 3s. 4d. per day<sup>194</sup>). Though the work was equally arduous and

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<sup>190</sup> F.P. Christensen, *Pondo migrant workers in Natal: rural and urban strains*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>191</sup> T.D. Moodie, *Going for gold: men, mines and migration*, p. 33.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid*, p. 22.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid*, p. 22.

<sup>194</sup> ‘African mine wages to go up’, *New Age*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 19 October 1961, p. 1.

dangerous the estates did, however, offer some advantages over the mines: the work was above ground, contracts were usually shorter, estates were more accessible than the mines, and workers could spend more time at home. Estates also employed men who had been rejected by the mines on the grounds of bad health, as well as boys between the ages of sixteen and eighteen – where the mines were only allowed to employ over eighteen year olds.<sup>195</sup>

In Natal the coal mining and sugar industries preferred to employ ‘malaria resistant’ labour from outside the region; and Pondoland in particular.<sup>196</sup> Many Pondo men also ventured to the gold mines on the Witwatersrand.

Mine compounds were particularly suited to men with ambitions of rural patriarchal proprietorship. The system of deferred pay and full keep made it possible for them to send the bulk of their pay back to Pondoland and to invest the bulk thereof in cattle and homestead production. The compounds also insulated migrant men from full exposure to urban life,<sup>197</sup> thus keeping them firmly rooted in rural society.<sup>198</sup>

Labour migrancy had become so important that almost all respondents in a survey of Pondo workers conducted by Finn Piers Christensen in the late 1980s indicated that their fathers had been migrants to the mines or sugar plantations in the years before 1960.<sup>199</sup>

It seems logical that migrant cultures that bridged the divide between *umzi* building in the reserves and work on the mines would develop. In fact, two main types arose.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> W. Beinart, *The political economy of Pondoland*, p. 146.

<sup>196</sup> F.P. Christensen, *Pondo migrant workers in Natal: rural and urban strains*, p 30.

<sup>197</sup> Men who severed their ties in the reserves and effectively became ‘creatures of the city’ were called *amatshipa*. They normally failed to build up any significant rural base and many of them returned to their home districts when they could no longer support themselves to die in abject poverty. See T.D. Moodie, *Going for gold: men, mines and migration*, p. 143.

<sup>198</sup> T.D. Moodie, *Going for gold: men, mines and migration*, p. 33.

<sup>199</sup> F.P. Christensen, *Pondo migrant workers in Natal: rural and urban strains*, p. 47.

<sup>200</sup> A third yet less important group of migrants called *amanene* (‘respectables’) also developed. This group mainly consisted of people with education beyond standard six. They were normally adherents of the ‘School’ as opposed to the ‘Red’ ideology. When they migrated to the mines (they did so very infrequently) they worked as clerks and stayed with their families in the mine village. They were generally looked down on by *indlavini* as ‘soft’ and were despised for becoming ‘school’ people and thus for abandoning rural values. Still other Pondos migrated to the cities permanently and settled there

The first manifestation of these were the so-called *igubura* youth organisations, which were expressions of the traditional *amaqaba* (red) culture. The ‘red’ (*amaqaba*) ideology presented a comprehensive pattern of belief that laid down guidelines for most aspects of life. It was conservative and supported the reproduction of existing social forms, and discouraged change. Cattle predominated in the red value system, and the *umzi* represented the focus of economic, social and religious life. In 1960 48 percent of black people resident in the Transkei west of the UmZimvubu and 77 percent east of it could conceivably have been classified as ‘red’ seeing that they claimed no attachment to a church.<sup>201</sup> Adherents (members of *igubura* groups) had access to land in the reserves and would migrate to the mines with the sole purpose of earning money for bridewealth in order to set up an *umzi*. They thus all aspired to rural proprietorship. Where possible they would migrate to the same mines, live in the same compounds and socialise with only *igubura*.<sup>202</sup>

*Indlavini* youth organisations constituted the second strand, and embodied the semi-schooled and churching section of rural migrant society. Like *igubura*, members of *indlavini* organisations aspired to rural proprietorship. Unlike *igubura*, however, *indlavini* were distinctly untraditional in their dress code, in the way in which internal group organisation took place, and importantly in the unruly way in which most *indlavini* acted (they were, however, subject to high levels of internal discipline).<sup>203</sup> *Indlavini* groups will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3.

Returning migrants had a very real effect upon life in the reserves: older men started to complain that youths could no longer be controlled; the roles and influence of women in patriarchal society progressively changed as they were increasingly burdened with responsibility in the absence of their men; and families became ever more nuclear as the incidence of male migration increased with time.<sup>204</sup>

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permanently yet ‘illegally’. See T.D. Moodie, *Going for gold: men, mines and migration*, p. 34; F.P. Christensen, *Pondo migrant workers in Natal: rural and urban strains*.

<sup>201</sup> P. Mayer, ‘The origin and decline of two rural resistance ideologies’, in P. Mayer (ed.), *Black villagers in an industrial society: anthropological perspectives on labour migration in South Africa*, pp. 5-40.

<sup>202</sup> T.D. Moodie, *Going for gold: men, mines and migration*, pp. 34-36.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 34-37.

<sup>204</sup> T.D. Moodie, *Going for gold: men, mines and migration*, p. 37.

Those migrants with aims of building and sustaining an *umzi* saw the role of women as firmly located within rural society. Women were vital in maintaining the home end of migrant culture. Womanhood (*ubafazi*) could thus be seen as reinforcing manhood – *ubudoda*. The two terms were sometimes even conflated. The system of bridewealth reinforced patriarchal society in that it acted as a conduit through which money earned by young men migrating to the mines could be transferred to older men back in the reserves.<sup>205</sup>

In what has become a seminal article, Jeff Guy argues that the control exercised by men over the labour and fertility of women was crucial to the organisation of pre-colonial society, since the productive and reproductive cycle encompassed within the homestead unit constituted the singularly most vital economic relationship within pre-colonial chiefdoms and kingdoms. Due to their critical importance to society women enjoyed considerable status and autonomy, and this ‘control’ should thus not be seen as ‘oppression’ in the truest sense of the word.<sup>206</sup> This remained true for migrants who wished to establish and maintain a foothold in rural society. *Igubura* and *indlavini* alike fiercely competed for the attention and ultimately control over the productive and reproductive powers of females. Pondo society before 1970 could thus still to some extent be described as pre-capitalist in that homestead production was still considered by a substantial proportion of the population as being more important than wages or cash income earned in external markets. It follows that agricultural meddling in the reserves on the part of the state would have a tremendous impact on the people of Pondoland.

Since the 1930s the South African government became worried about the possibility that the reserves could develop into a ‘dustbowl’. They therefore implemented a wide array of successive conservation schemes and policies, known collectively as betterment,<sup>207</sup> in the reserves. But conservationism was more than a brief response to

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<sup>205</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 35-40.

<sup>206</sup> J. Guy, ‘Gender oppression in southern Africa’s precapitalist societies’, in C. Walker (ed.), *Women and gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, pp. 33-47.

<sup>207</sup> Betterment will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

scares about soil erosion in the reserves or a mere rationalisation of the restructuring of rural communities. Its particular form developed from perceived threats to the future of agrarian production. The resultant interventions presupposed that capitalist social relations prevailed and that landowners had the ability to reshape land usage on whole units of production. Interventions were not socially neutral and they became linked to broader attempts to reshape rural societies. These policies were all very unpopular among the bulk of the local populace as they interfered with the way in which agriculture was practiced in the reserves and therefore threatened the very foundations of patriarchal proprietorship. Rural resistance thus became geared to opposing the kinds of controls and social disruption which this kind of planning seemed to hold in store.<sup>208</sup> Combined with the highly unpopular Bantu Authorities system, betterment schemes would serve as the backdrop to the events that would transpire in Eastern Pondoland in 1960.

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<sup>208</sup> W. Beinart, 'Soil erosion, conservationism and ideas about development: a Southern African exploration, 1900-1960', in *Journal of South African Studies*, 11(1), October 1984.

### 3. ORIGINS OF THE REVOLT

#### 3.1. Thus the antebellum ends

On the occasion of the opening of the Transkeian Territorial Authority in Umtata on the 26<sup>th</sup> of May 1959, the retiring Chief Magistrate of the Transkei expressed grave concern at the mounting violence in the area.<sup>209</sup> Organised clashes became ‘ever more frequent’, some government supporters and their families were reported to be abandoning their homesteads and sleeping in the open veld at night, and outbreaks of violence were such that Govan Mbeki wrote that ‘the population is drifting towards a state of open civil war’.<sup>210</sup> One observer even went as far as stating that ‘A tense atmosphere reminiscent of the tribal wars of the last century hangs ominously over the whole area.’<sup>211</sup>

Local vigilante groups known as *Makhuluspani* (the Big Team), that were originally formed to combat stock theft, started to threaten chiefs and headmen who they regarded as cooperating too closely with the Government in the districts of Tsolo and Qumbu by the late 1950s.<sup>212</sup>

In March 1959 Kaizer Matanzima refused to allow speakers to put questions to the Native Commissioner who had come to install a chief under the Bantu Authorities scheme. Consequently, around a hundred and fifty people walked away before the ceremony had ended, and an infuriated and humiliated Matanzima issued summons for their arrest, which they ignored. He then ordered his delinquent tribesmen fetched, fined each £15 and imposed a communal fine that amounted to five flocks of sheep or goat. When the people again ignored their chief, he had them locked up without water and food for a day and had their huts, in the Mbizana location of the Glen Grey District,

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<sup>209</sup> G. Mbeki, ‘Transkei circus in session’, *New Age*, Vol. 5, No. 33, 4 June 1959, p. 6.

<sup>210</sup> G. Mbeki, ‘Civil war in the Transkei: murder and arson as people fight Bantu Authorities’, *New Age*, Vol. 6, No. 28, 22 September 1960, p. 1; p. 8.

<sup>211</sup> ‘Bantu Authorities leads to tribal war in the Transkei’, *New Age*, Vol. 5, No. 33, 4 June 1959, p. 6.

<sup>212</sup> W. Beinart & C. Bundy, ‘State intervention and rural resistance: the Transkei, 1900–1965’, in M.A. Klein (ed.), *Peasants in Africa: historical and contemporary perspectives*, Vol. 4, 1980, p. 307.



burnt.<sup>213</sup> Later, Vintwembi Manzana, a Bantu Authorities supporter, was speared to death after his hut had been burnt. Other collaborators with the Bantu Authorities also had their homesteads set alight after a group of women had been accosted and summonsed while they were busy collecting thatching grass.<sup>214</sup>

Sustained unrest, punctuated by violence, prevailed in Thembuland between 1960 and 1965. This resistance, however, remained 'sporadic and disjointed', and although the pattern of events there closely paralleled those in Pondoland, it failed to achieve the mass involvement and the relatively organised form of the revolt in Pondoland.<sup>215</sup>

Even in Chief Victor Poto's supposedly placid Western Pondoland, people opposed to stock culling under betterment and to Bantu Authorities in the districts of Port St. John's and Ngqeleni were reported to have resorted to violent forms of resistance by 1961. Hut burnings were also reported in the Libode district – supposedly for the same set of reasons.<sup>216</sup>

The wider revolt in Eastern Pondoland was triggered by the failure of a chief, in the Isikelo location of the Bizana district, to consult with his people before he accepted the Bantu Authorities scheme. At the first meeting of the Isikelo Tribal Authority, the newly appointed counsellors were beaten up, and the rebels retreated into the hills to hold meetings. These 'Hill Committees' denounced collaboration with the state on the part of Botha Sigcau and his chiefs, increased taxation, and rehabilitation and closer settlement villages. As the revolt spread, a series of Hill Committees sprang up around Eastern Pondoland, all of which seem to have acknowledged the leadership of the Hill

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<sup>213</sup> 'Bantu Authorities leads to tribal war in the Transkei', *New Age*, Vol. 5, No. 33, 4 June 1959, p. 1; p. 6.

<sup>214</sup> G. Mbeki, 'Civil war in the Transkei: murder and arson as people fight Bantu Authorities', *New Age*, Vol. 6, No. 28, 22 September 1960, p. 1; p. 8

<sup>215</sup> W. Beinart & C. Bundy, 'State intervention and rural resistance: the Transkei, 1900–1965', in M.A. Klein (ed.), *Peasants in Africa: historical and contemporary perspectives*, Vol. 4, 1980, p. 307; T. Lodge, *Black politics in South Africa since 1945*, p. 261.

<sup>216</sup> 'Headache for chief Poto this time as resistance flares in west Pondoland', *New Age*, Vol. 7, No. 23, 23 March 1961, p. 5.

Committee in Bizana. Their *modus operandi* was to burn down the homesteads of collaborators, and force the inhabitants to flee the area.<sup>217</sup>

### 3.2. Chiefly Realpolitik

In February 1959 Govan Mbeki observed that ‘[s]ince Botha accepted Bantu Authorities he became so unpopular that people stopped attending the open air meetings which were a feature of tribal life’.<sup>218</sup> A year and some months later the newspaper *New Age* reported that ‘[n]oted for their cheerfulness and hospitality, the Pondos have changed almost overnight to a grim and determined people – determined to oppose their chief, Manzandle Botha Sigcau, and his councillors who have accepted Bantu Authorities; determined never to accept Bantu Authorities at any price.’<sup>219</sup> The article then describes how Botha Sigcau and the Chief Magistrate of the Transkei had, since 1957, tried to persuade the Pondo to accept the Bantu Authorities Act, and that ‘... on each occasion the people rejected them.’<sup>220</sup>

Then, in 1958 ‘... Botha Sigcau in conjunction with the Native Affairs Department organised a feast to which all the people were invited. They did not know that they were being called to give the impression that the Pondos had accepted what they had in fact rejected. The Minister of Native Affairs, Mr. De Wet Nel, announced at this “Indaba” that the government had decided to implement Bantu Authorities in their area.’ After this announcement a common perception was that ‘bribery and corruption became the order of the day’.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> W. Beinart & C. Bundy, ‘State intervention and rural resistance: the Transkei, 1900–1965’, in M.A. Klein (ed.), *Peasants in Africa: historical and contemporary perspectives*, Vol. 4, 1980, pp. 307–308.

<sup>218</sup> G. Mbeki, ‘Govt. measures provoke Pondos to violence: police, riot vans, rushed to Bizana as white traders flee’, *New Age*, Vol. 6, No. 19, 25 February 1960, p. 5.

<sup>219</sup> ‘Pondos rebel against Bantu Authorities’, *New Age*, Vol. 6, No. 26, 8 September 1960, p. 1.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*

The memo<sup>222</sup> that the Pondos had smuggled to the United Nations in order to utter their grievances and list the causes of the revolt in Eastern Pondoland, elaborated on the dual processes of bribery and corruption:

*As the chiefs and councillors of the courts are chosen by Botha without consultation with the people these courts have no interest in us, their obligation being only to Botha. Decisions by the courts are unfair ... Because the councillors are not responsible to the people they are open to bribery and corruption ...*<sup>223</sup>

The Pondo people thus felt that they had been duped by their paramount chief into ‘accepting’ a system of local government, and they were certain that this new system would favour him and do so at their detriment. They had thus been ‘sold out’. This perception was not novel. The fear of being ‘sold out’ by their chief had been a recurrent theme in prevailing rural ideologies in Eastern Pondoland for almost a century. In 1982 William Beinart noted that

*When Mhlangaso, chief councillor to the Paramount of Eastern Pondoland, pursued a policy of encouraging the activities of traders and concessionaries in the 1880s, rumours spread among the people that he was ‘selling’ them and the land for his own benefit. When, twenty years later, Sigcau, the paramount chief, promised to help mobilise migrants and was thought to have taken gifts from labour recruiters, he heard that certain headmen had brought the same charge against him. Over half a century on, in 1960, popular opposition to rehabilitation schemes and Bantu Authorities coalesced around the belief ‘that Chief Botha [Sigcau’s grandson] sold the Pondos and the country for his own ends’ ... One demand of the popular movement was a revival of Nelson’s*

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<sup>222</sup> A report of the South African Police, marked ‘SECRET’, indicates that “Volgens inligting het ‘n bantoeman, Enoch Mbhele van Bizana, gedurende Augustus na Durban vertrek, oënskynlik om geld te gaan insamel vir Bantoes wat weens brandstigting aangekla is. Verdere inligting dui daarop dat hy op 1.9.60 in Swaziland aangekom het, en op 3.9.60 daarvandaan saam met ander sogenaamde politieke vlugteling, per vliegtuig na Betsjoeanaland vertrek het onderweg na Ghana. Hy het ‘n lywige memorandum met hom saamgeneem wat vermoedelik in Durban deur [Rowley] Arenstein of ander “Congress” leiers voorberei is terwyl hy daar vertoef het.” [According to information a Bantu man, Enoch Mbhele of Bizana, went to Durban in August, apparently to collect money for Bantus who were accused of arson. Further information indicates that he arrived in Swaziland on 1.9.60, and departed for Betsjoeanaland underway to Ghana with other so-called political refugees on 3.9.60. He took a substantial memorandum with him that is thought to have been prepared in Durban by [Rowley] Arenstein or other “Congress” leaders during his stay there.] (National Archives Repository, Pretoria, SAP 597, SAP15/5/60, Memorandum: Geheim: Onluste: Pondoland, p.6)

<sup>223</sup> ‘Pondoland goes to the United Nations’, *Fighting Talk*, Vol. 14, No. 5, October 1960, p. 3.

*[Botha's half brother] claims, although by this stage popular expression and organisation were to some extent by-passing the chieftaincy.*<sup>224</sup>

The state of affairs was compounded by the fact that '[t]he method of appointment of the local "tribal community" authorities in Eastern Pondoland is different from that in the other eight regions [that, together with Pondoland, comprised the Transkeian Territorial Authority]. In Eastern Pondoland, the tribal authorities – lowest council on the four-rung ladder of the territorial authority – has three-quarters of its members appointed by the Paramount Chief and the remaining quarter appointed by the Bantu Commissioner. In all the other regions, one-third of the tribal authority members are appointed by the chief and two-thirds are elected by the Native taxpayers.'<sup>225</sup> Thus Botha Sigcau had the power to appoint a disproportionate number of counsellors, and because the people of Eastern Pondoland had no power in this regard, Botha and his counsellors were no longer kept in check by the workings of the redistributive economy. The system of 'Tribal democracy' had thus been completely supplanted in Eastern Pondoland and had been usurped by Botha Sigcau and the National Party government.

Chiefly Realpolitik was, however, not seen by all as the sole culprit. The implementation of the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951 and subsequent attempts at 'retribalisation' under the Bantustan policy by the NP government were also apportioned a substantial degree of blame.

### 3.3. The Bantustan Behemoth

*We accept apartheid voluntarily because it accords full recognition to Native cultural institutions, customs, laws and language. We can assure the Bantu organizations in South Africa, who attack the policy of separate development, that we are not in sympathy with their activities.*<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> W. Beinart, *The political economy of Pondoland 1860–1930*, p. 2; p. 160.

<sup>225</sup> "'Mercury' refused permit to enter Pondoland', *Natal Mercury*, 2 December 1960.

<sup>226</sup> Paramount Chief Botha Sigcau quoted in: M. Broughton, *Press and politics in South Africa*, p. 219.

On 13 December 1960, Daan De Wet Nel, Minister of Bantu Administration and Development, gave the *Burger* newspaper the assurance that the ‘trouble’ in Pondoland had nothing to do with the implementation of Bantu Authorities in the area. What’s more, he was convinced that Bantu Authorities was ‘what’s best for the Bantu’.<sup>227</sup>

Not everyone shared the honourable minister’s opinion, however. In December 1960 the *Cape Times* newspaper reported that ‘a leading [white] citizen of Lusikisiki’ said that ‘The fact has to be faced that a large body of Natives here opposes the Government’s Bantustan policy and what it means for them’,<sup>228</sup> and the *Cape Argus* newspaper stated that its reporters had collected ‘... a multiplicity of statements by Bantu and Europeans living in the area [Eastern Pondoland] that opposition to Bantu authorities is the cause of the unrest.’<sup>229</sup> Moreover, it asserted that

*Bantu authorities are a method of implementing separate development and in the Transkei the chiefs and headmen who are the core of the various types of Bantu authorities have been given judicial powers that they had lacked for many years before 1952. This was inevitable if tribalism was to be restored to its condition of a century ago. It was a continuation of early Bantu institutions and history but took no account of the changes which the institutions had undergone and of recent history. In the context of history long past, tribalism was the essence of Bantu life. When the soil was exhausted, the tribe moved on; the chief acted in the closest sympathy with the feelings of the tribe, receiving orders from no one else; the tribe knew no system of justice save its own. That is all changed: soil cannot be abandoned but must be rehabilitated; the chief is primarily the servant of the Government: there has been experience of incorruptible courts... if the Bantu had not lost all their share in the central government, they might not look upon the chiefs as the servants of an alien government; if the Pondos had not once had the right to choose the White man’s civil courts, they might not equate corruption with oppression by their own people. In 1956 the Tomlinson Report recommended steps that would have broken down the tribal tenure of land and modernized the economic structure of the reserves, but the Government rejected them. Then followed the acceptance of Bantu*

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<sup>227</sup> ‘Pondoland: niks te vrees nie, sê min. Nel’, *Burger*, 14 December 1960.

<sup>228</sup> ‘Pondoland whites in the dark’, *Cape Times*, 13 December 1960.

<sup>229</sup> ‘Failure in Pondoland’, *Cape Argus*, 1 December 1960.

*authorities by the chiefs, not the tribesmen. Now there is serious unrest in Pondoland, which it is hard to believe can be ascribed to a couple of 'Communist agitators'.*<sup>230</sup>

T. Gray Hughes, representative of the Transkeian Territories in Parliament, voiced the opinion that

*The Bantu authorities system has caused the trouble in Pondoland. The strong opposition to the Pondo chief, Botha Sigcau, has not arisen because of rival claims to the chieftainship but simply because Botha has acquiesced in the Government's demands. To say, as the Government do, that the trouble is simply faction fighting is nonsense. Perhaps the biggest cause of complaint is the new powers given to the chiefs' courts. Previously a chief's court had no power to give default judgement in civil actions. Now it has this power. This means that if the plaintiff in a civil action goes to the chief's court, the defendant is bound to do so as well, or else have judgement given against him. Many people object to going to the chiefs' courts instead of to the Native Commissioner's courts ... The appointment of headmen has also caused trouble. The ordinary tribesman says he can get nothing without having to pay for it. Headmen have always received small gifts, but apparently this custom has now developed into something on a large scale. These are the things that the ordinary tribesman resent. There is no foundation for any theory that they accept the new Government policy.*<sup>231</sup>

In a letter to the *New Age* newspaper, which would later be used in an attempt to prove ANC involvement in the revolt in the report of the Van Heerden Commission, Dan Ganyile stated that

*... Mr. De Wet Nel [Minister of Bantu Administration and Development], a man of fat face and short stature, delivered a speech about the government of the Pondos in their own country (Bantustan). He pointed out that Chief Sigcau will be chairman only to pass Government laws. It is clear the Chiefs will never be independent, but only the tools of the government.*<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> 'Failure in Pondoland', *Cape Argus*, 1 December 1960.

<sup>231</sup> 'M.P. on causes of trouble in Pondoland', *Cape Argus*, 27 October 1960.

<sup>232</sup> D. Ganyilye, 'No guns for Bantustan chiefs', *New Age*, Vol. 5, No. 49, 24 September 1959, p. 2.

Narrowly related to the Bantu Authorities system was a new policy of Bantu Education. In the same letter cited above, Ganyile succinctly summarised the educated, bourgeois sentiment held by people in organisations like the ANC when he pointed out that

*Mr. Maree [Minister of Bantu Education] ... said, Fort Hare would become a Xhosa-speaking people's college and no other people would be admitted. Here in Pondoland a Pondo High School will be opened – for Pondos to be taught according to their mode of living I presume. ... Is Mr. Maree empty-headed? How can Pondos acquire civilisation if they are kept away from other peoples?*<sup>233</sup>

It was, however, not only the educated elite that saw Bantu Education as an instrument of Bantu Authorities. At a Congo meeting held at Ndhlovu Hill on 5 November 1960 it was decided that no members of school committees or school boards would be allowed to attend any 'mountain gathering'.<sup>234</sup> This was because those involved with Bantu Education were perceived as supporters of Bantu Authorities. The Report of the Van Heerden Commission into the disturbances also found that there were allegations that 'some school boards [had been] abusing their powers and that there has been corruption'.<sup>235</sup>

The imposition of Bantu Authorities also brought about tighter influx control which, in turn, brought about reference books. The memo that the Pondos smuggled to the United Nations – sections of which were reprinted in the newspaper *Fighting Talk* – very poignantly stated that:

*When the new passes were issued the Pondos were told that the old passes were being abolished and that they would be issued with new pass books which would enable them to move anywhere in SA without trouble. These new reference books would contain everything in connection with the identity of a man. Thus the book was welcomed by many Pondos. But the Pondo people were quickly disillusioned when it came to looking for work. When they went to seek work in the towns, often hundreds of miles away from*

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<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>234</sup> National Archives Repository, Pretoria, SAP 596, Geheim, Druktelegram aan veiligheidstak Pretoria van veiligheidstak Umtata, Bantoe onrus: Pondoland-oos, 7.11.1960, p. 1.

<sup>235</sup> 'Breakdown in Pondoland', *Cape Argus*, 13 October 1960.

*their homes, they were told by the Bantu Administration Department of the Town Councils to return to their home districts to obtain permits (another word for passes) from the home districts permitting them to go and seek work in the particular town. But when a tribesman returns home for the necessary permit he is told that he cannot get the permit unless he has work promised to him in the town. Thus the tribesman does not know where to start first. To get a permit to go to the town he must first have a job in that town, to get a job in that town he must first have a permit to seek work, to get a permit to seek work he must have a permit to go to the town. Thus he is in a vicious circle. If, however, he does manage to get an employer to agree to employ him, he does not get the permit immediately. His permit might still be refused on the ground that there are too many people in the particular town seeking work. Thus before a person can get work he has many fruitless journeys with much outlays in expenses and on top of it has to wait many weeks before he can get work. Often this means that the work seeker has to borrow money for his outlays which can be as much as £9 or £10 before he even begins working for wages that are far below the breadline. In town while seeking work he is permitted to stay only in Municipal hostels or locations. Very often these hostels are full. Living elsewhere can result in arrests and fines and gaol sentences. If he stays in hostels he cannot have his wife visit him. After having obtained employment, if he is unlucky to lose his job and is unable to find employment within two weeks he is ordered out of the urban area. By then he might still be owing the money he borrowed for his outlay to obtain employment and he might have to start all over again when seeking employment in the next urban area. Thus very often tribesmen are forced to seek work on the farms where conditions of work are usually unfavourable and where laws protecting farm labourers are almost nil. To the Pondos the pass laws have become a further weapon to force many of them to work for the farmers.<sup>236</sup>*

A peasant farmer succinctly summarised the economic plight of inhabitants of the reserves who were directly affected by influx control and the resultant overpopulation in the phrase ‘men and beasts beget, but land does not beget’.<sup>237</sup> The report of the Van Heerden Commission found that ‘...hardship was sometimes experienced by work seekers, but it was caused by non-compliance with the law ... and that many

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<sup>236</sup> ‘Pondoland goes to the United Nations’, *Fighting Talk*, Vol. 14, No. 5, October 1960, p. 4.

<sup>237</sup> D.Hobart Houghton, ‘Land reform in the Bantu areas and its effects upon the urban labour market’, in *South African Journal of Economics*, Vol. 29, No. 3, September 1961, pp. 165-175.



advantages of these books [reference books] had not been explained to the people.’<sup>238</sup> It conveniently failed to explain exactly what these ‘many advantages’ were, however.

Official state discourse attempted to paint an altogether different picture of why the revolt took place. It consequently never contemplated even the remotest possibility that the National Party’s Bantustan policy could be iniquitous and therefore responsible for the ructions in Pondoland.

### 3.4. Awful Twins: ‘Red Menace’ and ‘Black Peril’

Since the late 1930s NP propaganda frequently fused the twin threats of ‘Red Menace’ (communism) and ‘Black Peril’ (possible African uprising) to crush any opposition it considered a radical threat. The Suppression of Communism Act of 1950 gave the government the power to ban publications that it believed would advance the objectives of communism, and to ‘name’ people and then bar them from holding office, from practicing as lawyers, or from attending meetings. Its definition of communism was so broad and unrefined that anyone who opposed the government of the day ran the risk of being prosecuted under the Act.<sup>239</sup> It seems hardly surprising then that the government’s official line regarding the origins of the revolt – after it became abundantly clear that blaming the violence on faction fighting was not going to be successful – was that it was due in large part to ‘the work of outside agitators and communists’.

Minister of Bantu Administration and Development, Daan De Wet Nel, stated categorically that ‘Blanke agitators uit Natal en die res van Kaapland is daarvoor [the trouble in Pondoland] verantwoordelik.’<sup>240</sup> Later he told the *Cape Times* that “White

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<sup>238</sup> ‘Some complaints are justified Pondos told: 13000 hear inquiry finding’, *Cape Argus*, 11 October 1960.

<sup>239</sup> H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: biography of a people*, p. 499.

<sup>240</sup> White agitators from Natal and the rest of the Cape are responsible for it [the trouble in Pondoland]. (‘Pondoland: niks te vrees nie, sê min. Nel’, *Burger*, 14 December 1960)

communist agitators' were behind the Transkei troubles'.<sup>241</sup> Assistant Chief Native Commissioner, R.H. Midgley, expressed his view thus:

*The people who have instigated and incited this unlawful conduct have claimed that it is a demonstration of their opposition to Bantu Authorities and their rejection of the Chiefs and Headmen, who, they say forced Bantu Authorities upon them without consulting them. It is, however, on record in this office that Chief Botha Sigcau consulted the people of Eastern Pondoland in the Bantu customary method by summoning Chiefs, Headmen and people to his Great Place and holding a Tribal Council about the matter ... It is also on record that all Headmen of the District held meetings of the people and explained the matter to them and took vote on the constitution of the Tribal Authorities. Points of significance which point unmistakably to outside subversive influence in the matter that the whole conduct of the people since its inception is entirely foreign to Native custom and traditional behaviour. The demonstration and insults to the Paramount Chief at this Office on 30.9.1957 are quite unknown in the history of the Pondo people and the method and manner which they have adopted to compel the Government to withdraw the Bantu Authorities system of Administration is quite unknown to Pondo custom ... The whole pattern is well known to the Government and follows that of the A.N.C. and kindred bodies who are inspired and incited by Communistic influence.*<sup>242</sup>

This view was also held by those on the bench. Justice De Villiers of the Cape Provincial Division of the Supreme Court of South Africa, while passing sentence in the special circuit court in Kokstad, said that he 'fully understood the reasons for the general dissatisfaction among Pondo tribesmen which led to the widespread disturbances in Pondoland ... Outside agitators had fanned the dissatisfaction into open trouble ... The average tribesmen did not understand the new measures or the fact that the rehabilitation scheme was for the benefit of the Pondos themselves. Outside agitators and leaders of an organization known as "The Congo" had used this dissatisfaction to turn the tribesmen against the headmen.'<sup>243</sup> Magistrate A.R. Midgley, in passing sentence in a different case, expressed the same sentiment. He

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<sup>241</sup> 'Pondo arrests rumour 'move to upset Dag's visit', *Cape Times*, 6 January 1961.

<sup>242</sup> National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria, SAP 597, *Views as expressed by Mr. R.H. Midgley: Assistant Chief Native Commissioner: Eastern Pondoland*, p. 3.

<sup>243</sup> 'Judge blames agitators for Pondo murders', *Cape Times*, 26 August 1961.

said: 'Ek hoop dat die Pondos sal 'n les leer uit hul bitter ervaring en nooit weer toelaat dat hulle deur onverantwoordelike mense mislei word nie ...'<sup>244</sup>

Eric M. Warren, the chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner and Magistrate of Bizana, stated in no uncertain terms that in his opinion 'the disturbances were caused by members of the African National Congress'. He did, however, acknowledge that 'tribal customs were disregarded' during the institution of the tribal authorities, and that Botha Sigcau had gone about his duties in this regard in a very incompetent manner.<sup>245</sup>

The Commission of Inquiry into the Pondoland disturbances, chaired by the Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner of the Ciskei, J.A. van Heerden, found that attorneys from outside Bizana had been anxious to make cases so that money could be collected to pay these same attorneys and that some of them did in fact make a lot of money. They were thus seen as 'outside agitators'.<sup>246</sup> Rowley Arenstein, who represented Pondo tribesmen in a number of cases, was confined to the Durban magisterial area for a period of five years under the Suppression of Communism Act and the Riotous Assembly Act. He was, however, allowed to try cases that he had already been paid for.<sup>247</sup> The attorney R.S. Canca, who defended Pondos accused of arson, was also detained under the Emergency Regulations.<sup>248</sup> But the committee's report also acknowledged irregularities regarding the establishment of tribal authorities.<sup>249</sup> It found that the old customs of the tribes around Bizana were not observed when tribal authorities were formed, as the people were not given the opportunity to say who they wanted as councillors after the Paramount had consulted the tribe. According to the commission's report, headmen

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<sup>244</sup> I hope that the Pondos will learn a lesson from their bitter experience and never again allow themselves to be misled by irresponsible people. ('Agitators het Pondos mislei sê landdros', *Die Burger*, 27 Maart 1961)

<sup>245</sup> Cape Town Archives Repository, 1/BIZ, 6/47, E.M. Warren, *Disturbances in the district of Bizana and Eastern Pondoland*, 1960.

<sup>246</sup> 'Pondos 'misled', 15 000 told by commission', *Cape Times*, 12 October 1960.

<sup>247</sup> 'Banned lawyer to defend Pondos', *Cape Times*, 20 October 1960.

<sup>248</sup> Canca and his assistant, Digby Koyana, were arrested in Idutywa on 14 December 1960. They helped to defend Pondos charged during the revolt, and were concerned in the inquest into the deaths at Ngquza hill. ('Transkei sweeps to continue: 80 arrested in Pondoland', *Natal Mercury*, 16 December 1960; 'Arrest without warrant, detention without trial: police are absolute in the Transkei', *Natal Mercury*, 15 December 1960)

<sup>249</sup> 'Pondos want time to consider findings: may seek relief, inquiry told', *Cape Times*, 13 October 1960; 'Banned lawyer to defend Pondos', *Cape Times*, 20 October 1960.

who were not heads of tribal authorities should also not have been allowed to try cases.<sup>250</sup>

A few contemporary white observers took the combined threats of ‘Red Peril’ and ‘Black Menace’ so seriously that they believed Soviet Russia to be directly involved in the instigation of the trouble in Pondoland. The *East London Daily Dispatch* of 6 December 1960 reported that Pondos had been picked up by Russian submarines and taken to Russia where they were trained for ‘subversive work against established authority’, and that the belief existed among Transkeians that ‘Russia was showing the masses of Africa how to ‘liberate’ themselves.’ The article also asserted that

*...the present troubles in East Pondoland have revealed a degree of organisational ability which is ... quite beyond the capacity of the simple peasants living there. A new element has made its presence felt and this new element could quite conceivably be Natives who have had training in Communist methods of subversion.*<sup>251</sup>

Although no concrete evidence exists that Soviet submarines were indeed active along the coast of Pondoland during 1960<sup>252</sup> or that any Pondo went to Russia in that year,<sup>253</sup> the above line of argument is not surprising seeing that the government took this ‘threat’ so seriously that navy patrols along the Pondoland coast were implemented,<sup>254</sup> and supplemented by air force spotter planes.<sup>255</sup> What is perhaps surprising is that local black Transkeians believed that the Russians had been picking people up off the Pondoland coast for a number of years prior to 1960.<sup>256</sup> A possible explanation for this

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<sup>250</sup> ‘People had every right to complain: 3-man commission admits malpractices’, *New Age*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 20 October 1960, p. 8.

<sup>251</sup> ‘Evidence of Red subs off coast’, *East London Daily Dispatch*, 6 December 1960.

<sup>252</sup> In December 1960 Colonel C.K. Smith, Deputy Commissioner of the Police in the Transkei, denied reports that submarines had landed Russian trained agitators on the Pondoland coast. (‘Families reported moving into Bizana: Pondoland “quiet” but rumours fly’, *Natal Mercury*, 5 December 1960)

<sup>253</sup> Oliver Tambo first visited the USSR in 1963. (L. Callinicos, *Oliver Tambo: beyond the Engeli Mountains*, p. 296)

<sup>254</sup> This seems true although Mr. Fouche, Minister of Defence, later claimed that “...no vessels of the South African Navy had been used in connection with the emergency in Pondoland” seeing that “...government could no longer deny those reports because the naval patrols had become a regular institution along the coast.” (‘Contradictory reports about Pondos: Erasmus now admits to arrests of 4771’, *Cape Times*, 28 January 1961; ‘Attack on handling of Pondo unrest: need for army ‘could have been avoided’’, *Cape Times*, 25 January 1961)

<sup>255</sup> ‘Voorsorg teen duikbote: kus van Pondoland gepatrolleer’, *Burger*, 8 December 1960.

<sup>256</sup> ‘Evidence of Red subs off coast’, *East London Daily Dispatch*, 6 December 1960.

belief could lay in the fact that the cold war was in full swing – Soviet Russia was leading the space race, it posed a very real military threat to the western powers, and it was beginning to actively support liberation movements in Africa. The conviction that Russian submarines were landing at the Pondoland coast could very likely thus have been a wishful expression of the hope that the Soviet Union would help the people of South Africa in their struggle for liberation. This is reminiscent of a similar situation that occurred in neighbouring Xhosaland in the 1850s. There, in 1854, at a time of mass cattle culling due to lungsickness and a number of bad harvests, the news that erstwhile Governor Cathcart had been killed in the Crimean War caused a belief among the local inhabitants that the Russians were the resurrected spirits of dead Xhosa warriors who would come to the aid of the Xhosa and drive the English into the sea. Indeed, '[f]or months after the news of Cathcart's death, the Xhosa posted lookouts on the higher hills to watch for the arrival of Russian ships.'<sup>257</sup> To infer that, in 1960, the Pondo might have thought that the Russians were the incarnations of long dead warriors would, of course, be spurious. The similarity in these situations is the expression of hope that the Russians (being a power that could successfully vie with an oppressive colonial regime) would come to aid the people of the Transkei in their attempts at unseating what they perceived to be a hated and oppressive regime.

Much more pragmatically, some observers attributed the revolt in Pondoland to broader nationalist movements rather than foreign agitators, and there were concerted attempts by the police and government to prove ANC involvement in the revolt. Police reports located Nelson Mandela in Bizana during January 1960.<sup>258</sup> His father-in-law, Columbus Madikizela, indeed lived in the district, but seeing that Columbus (a schoolteacher and local businessman) was a staunch supporter of Bantu Authorities,<sup>259</sup> who was attacked by Congo supporters on 25/26 November 1960<sup>260</sup> and whose

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<sup>257</sup> J. Peires, *The dead will arise: the great Xhosa cattle-killing of 1856-7*, pp. 95-97.

<sup>258</sup> National Archives Repository, Pretoria, SAP 596, Geheim, Onluste: Bizana en Lusikisiki, p. 3.

<sup>259</sup> Columbus would later serve in the cabinet of Kaizer Matanzima. Matanzima was Mandela's nephew. (N. Mandela, *Long walk to freedom*, pp. 199-200; 218; 496)

<sup>260</sup> National Archives Repository, Pretoria, SAP 596, Geheim, druktelegram aan veiligheidstak Pretoria van veiligheidstak Umtata, Bantoe onluste: Pondoland: oorsig van veiligheidstoestand: afdeling Transkei, 27.11.1960, p. 1.

business interests were boycotted during the revolt,<sup>261</sup> it is unlikely that Mandela's visit was (if it did occur at all) anything other than social in nature.

Anderson Ganyile, a member of the ANC Youth League who was expelled from Fort Hare University due to political activities, who later served as interpreter for Rowley Arenstein and would become famous for being abducted by government agents whilst in hiding in Lesotho, was accorded a leading role in the peasants' struggle by Govan Mbeki. However, Copelyn convincingly argues that there exists only a small likelihood that Ganyile exerted any great deal of influence over significant sections of the population during the revolt due to Ganyile's relative youth.<sup>262</sup> Ben Turok affirms Copelyn's sentiment in a description of two Hill Committee members that he met during a visit to the troubled area: '...old men with that particular dignity etched on their faces that was a distinguishing characteristic of rural Africans in South Africa. They sat bolt upright and behaved as though they expected to be treated with great respect and deference.'<sup>263</sup>

Mbeki also claimed that the rebel movement called '*Ikongo*' or 'Congo' adopted the Freedom Charter and that the word 'Congo' was a local rendering of 'Congress'. However, Robin Kayser points out that this etymology is very dubious and that the word could very likely have been used to evoke a sense of mystery and of revolution associated with Patrice Lumumba's liberation struggle against the Belgians in the Congo. He also notes that the word was used to describe the resistance movement in the Mount Ayliff District in the 1940s (a movement that operated until and during the revolt).<sup>264</sup>

Some leaders of the revolt such as the retired schoolteacher Elijah Lande<sup>265</sup> were members of the All African Convention (AAC) and the Cape African Teachers

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<sup>261</sup> National Archives Repository, Pretoria, SAP 596, Geheim, Druktelegram aan veiligheidstak Pretoria van veiligheidstak Umtata, Bantoe onrus: Pondoland-oos, 7.11.1960, p. 1.

<sup>262</sup> J.A. Copelyn, *The Mpondo revolt 1960*, p. 80; see also R. Kayser, *Land and liberty! : the Non-European Unity Movement and the land question, 1933-1976*, p. 103.

<sup>263</sup> B. Turok, *Nothing but the truth: behind the ANC's struggle politics*, p. 121.

<sup>264</sup> R. Kayser, *Land and liberty! : the Non-European Unity Movement and the land question, 1933-1976*, pp. 101-102.

<sup>265</sup> He would become an *Intaba* leader in Bizana.

Association,<sup>266</sup> but – as Matoti and Ntsebesa point out – ‘[p]rotest action was strictly *ad hoc*, and the intellectuals in the AAC were far from ‘organic’.’<sup>267</sup> Here they refer to Gramsci’s notion of the organic intellectual of whom Gramsci speaks in his *Prison Notebooks*.<sup>268</sup> The ‘organic intellectual’ actively partakes in practical life, as ‘constructor, organiser, “permanent persuader” and not just simple orator.’<sup>269</sup>

Indeed, party politics seems not to have played any significant role in the organisation of rural resistance in Pondoland, as Colin Bundy points out: ‘from the 1920s until the 1950s the various organs of the national liberation movement linked only fitfully and unsystematically with a wide range of localised rural movements.’<sup>270</sup>

### 3.5. Imposed ‘development’ and ‘Witchcraft of the State’

Many analysts see the land question as it manifested in the government’s betterment- and rehabilitation schemes as the overriding cause of the revolt.<sup>271</sup> According to Matoti and Ntsebeza, the term betterment ‘is used loosely to describe the various conservation measures that the state embarked on from the 1930s. There were various phases: betterment (1939-45), rehabilitation (1945-55) and stabilisation when tribal authorities were introduced.’<sup>272</sup>

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<sup>266</sup> R. Kayser, *Land and liberty! : the Non-European Unity Movement and the land question, 1933-1976*, p. 103.

<sup>267</sup> S. Matoti & L. Ntsebeza, ‘Rural resistance in Mpondoland and Thembuland, 1960-1963’, in SADET, *The road to democracy in South Africa: Vol. I (1960-1970)*, p. 208.

<sup>268</sup> A. Gramsci, *Selections from the prison notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*.

<sup>269</sup> S. Matoti & L. Ntsebeza, ‘Rural resistance in Mpondoland and Thembuland, 1960-1963’, in SADET, *The road to democracy in South Africa: Vol. I (1960-1970)*, p. 208.

<sup>270</sup> C. Bundy, ‘Land and liberation: popular rural protest and the national liberation movements in South Africa’, 1920 – 1960’, in S. Marks and S. Trapido (eds), *The politics of race, class and nationalism in twentieth-century South Africa*, pp. 254–279.

<sup>271</sup> See for example: R. Kayser, *Land and liberty! : the Non-European Unity Movement and the land question, 1933-1976*, p. 96; C. Bundy, ‘Land and liberation: popular rural protest and the national liberation movements in South Africa’, 1920 – 1960’, in S. Marks and S. Trapido (eds), *The politics of race, class and nationalism in twentieth-century South Africa*, p. 275; T. Lodge, *Black politics in South Africa since 1945*, p. 279; R. Southall, *South Africa’s Transkei: the political economy of an ‘independent’ Bantustan*, p. 108.

<sup>272</sup> S. Matoti & L. Ntsebeza, ‘Rural resistance in Mpondoland and Thembuland, 1960-1963’, in SADET, *The road to democracy in South Africa: Vol. I (1960-1970)*, p. 177.

According to the anthropologist Patrick McAllister betterment, as delineated by the 1936 Native Trust and Land Act and other pieces of legislation, was intended to transform and ‘rationalise’ the pattern of land use in the reserves. This would be done by separating rural locations into residential, cultivation and grazing units, by the fencing of grazing camps and fields, and by arranging homesteads together into village-like settlements. Occasionally, such schemes in addition included plans for soil conservation and veld reclamation, afforestation, enhanced agricultural extension services, and other limited development projects. Betterment policy underwent various modifications over time and was applied dissimilarly in different parts of the country. Where efforts were made to implement betterment schemes, opposition was encountered from the affected populace, who came to relate the schemes to loss of livestock (through culling), to limits on the use of grazing, and to cutbacks in the amounts of available land for cultivation. In the 1950s and 1960s resistance to betterment became enmeshed with resistance to the Bantu Authorities Act.<sup>273</sup>

Right through the reserves betterment was rebuffed. This was the case primarily because it was perceived as unjustified meddling, and because it was seen as being a cause of economic adversity and destitution. A range of non-material costs of betterment have also been acknowledged. Stock limitation disregarded the social and religious significance of cattle, and communities subjected to betterment lost political control over important spheres of their lives.<sup>274</sup>

Rural people opposed betterment schemes because it meant an assault on established political and territorial units, economic hardship and a weakening of their capability to provide a proportion of survival needs, heightened reliance on migrant labour earnings and further contact with urban-industrial lifestyles and values.<sup>275</sup>

Major socio-political dislocations resulted from this enforced move from an ‘organic’ relationship between scattered homesteads and the environment. Betterment, despite

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<sup>273</sup> P.A. McAllister, ‘Resistance to ‘betterment’ in the Transkei: a case study from Willowvale district’, in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 2, January 1989, pp. 346-368.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>275</sup> P.A. McAllister, ‘Resistance to ‘betterment’ in the Transkei: a case study from Willowvale district’, in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 2, January 1989, pp. 346-368



the positive aims of its planners, had a devastating effect on rural social life. Betterment was thus yet another example of the unintended consequences that so frequently accompany social engineering.<sup>276</sup>

Betterment set the scene for escalations in disputes around popular access to firewood and forests,<sup>277</sup> plantations,<sup>278</sup> and coastal grazing lands<sup>279</sup> in Eastern Pondoland by the 1950s.<sup>280</sup> It was against this backdrop that the people's anger eventually boiled over.

In the Lusikisiki district of Eastern Pondoland overt resistance to the rehabilitation scheme can be traced as far back as 1952. In June of that year Botha Sigcau praised the rehabilitation scheme as a good measure against soil erosion at a meeting he attended along with the Magistrate of Lusikisiki in order to convince the people of the Mtambala and Lower Ntafufu locations to move from those areas because they were ostensibly destroying forested areas. In response, a spokesperson for the people stated:

*If our words and prayers still fail to convince you that we reject the [rehabilitation] Scheme, then we will certainly be forced to convince you by anything else at our disposal. We swear, here and now, that we shall resist the Rehabilitation Scheme ... You will first have to wipe out all the Mantusini and others before you interfere with the scratch of land left for our already finished stock and for growing the few cobs of mealies on which we have to live.*<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> W.D. Hammond-Tooke, *Imperfect interpreters: South Africa's anthropologists, 1920-1990*, p. 168.

<sup>277</sup> The *New Age* newspaper reported that where tribesmen had been in charge of allocating grass for the purpose of roof thatching in the past, people were now forced to pay their chiefs for this privilege. ('Pondos rebel against Bantu Authorities', *New Age*, Vol. 6, No. 26, 8 September 1960, p. 1.)

<sup>278</sup> The *New Age* newspaper reported that chiefs in some areas of Eastern Pondoland seized plantations which had previously belonged to the local people and claimed them as their own. ('Pondos rebel against Bantu Authorities', *New Age*, Vol. 6, No. 26, 8 September 1960, p. 1.)

<sup>279</sup> According to a report in the *New Age* newspaper, Bantu Authorities allocated all land within five miles from the coast for use by 'Europeans only'. These areas constituted some of the most fertile lands in Pondoland, and people resented the measure. ('Behind the trouble in Bizana', *New Age*, Vol. 6, No. 24, 31 March 1960, p. 2.)

<sup>280</sup> W. Beinart, *Twentieth-century South Africa*, p. 158.

<sup>281</sup> Quoted from: R. Kayser, *Land and liberty! : the Non-European Unity Movement and the land question, 1933-1976*, p. 96.

Before the meeting broke up when the people in attendance booed the chief and the officials off the stage, a man<sup>282</sup> danced towards Sigcau and showed him his bare buttocks while driving a spear into the ground. Mbeki interprets this gesture as ‘a sign of non-confidence’,<sup>283</sup> while Kayser, citing the Deputy Commissioner of the South African Police, calls the action ‘the gravest insult that could be inflicted to persons in authority and ... a definite declaration of war.’<sup>284</sup> The ‘ringleaders’ Maqutu and Pikani then took to the forests with a considerable following after they had been ‘charged with obstructing and insulting the Magistrate and Botha Sigcau.’<sup>285</sup> Kayser notes that this following was ‘armed and prepared to resist any attempts by the police to arrest them’<sup>286</sup>, while Mbeki goes as far as calling them a ‘peasant army’ and an ‘*impi*’.<sup>287</sup> When it seemed that the government had given up on the matter, Pikani disbanded his following, emerged from the forest and returned to his homestead. He was, however, arrested and deported from the district.<sup>288</sup>

At a quarterly meeting of chiefs, headmen and people held in Bizana on 30 September 1957, which had as a ‘main object ... to explain Rehabilitation to the people and to try and obtain their acceptance’,<sup>289</sup> the people jeered Botha Sigcau and wouldn’t allow him to speak. The Bantu Affairs Commissioner also tried to explain rehabilitation, but was denied a hearing. According to Eric M. Warren, the people connected rehabilitation to Tribal Authorities. He quoted them as saying:

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<sup>282</sup> Govan Mbeki believed him to be Mngqingo Pikani, while Robin Kayser refers to him as Mnyungula Maqutu. Kayser seems to be correct in this case since he cites a letter from the Deputy Commissioner of Police in Umtata to the Commissioner of Police in Pretoria that confirms his account. (G. Mbeki, *South Africa: the peasants’ revolt*, p. 118; R. Kayser, *Land and liberty! : the Non-European Unity Movement and the land question, 1933-1976*, p. 96)

<sup>283</sup> G. Mbeki, *South Africa: the peasants’ revolt*, p. 118.

<sup>284</sup> Quoted from: R. Kayser, *Land and liberty! : the Non-European Unity Movement and the land question, 1933-1976*, p. 97.

<sup>285</sup> R. Kayser, *Land and liberty! : the Non-European Unity Movement and the land question, 1933-1976*, p. 97.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>287</sup> G. Mbeki, *South Africa: the peasants’ revolt*, p. 118.

<sup>288</sup> R. Kayser, *Land and liberty! : the Non-European Unity Movement and the land question, 1933-1976*, p. 97; G. Mbeki, *South Africa: the peasants’ revolt*, p. 118.

<sup>289</sup> Cape Town Archives Repository, 1/BIZ 6/47, E.M. Warren, *Disturbances in the district of Bizana and Eastern Pondoland 1960*, p. 10.

*First of all Tribal Authority are forced on us against our will. After that, the Tribal Authority intends forcing Rehabilitation on us against our will.*<sup>290</sup>

Rehabilitation was most staunchly opposed by the people William Beinart and Colin Bundy (following on the work of Eric Wolf<sup>291</sup>) call ‘middle migrants’ or ‘peasant migrants’ – as opposed to their more thoroughly proletarianised brethren (the landless migrants).<sup>292</sup>

Sean Redding argues that the material deprivation associated with Bantu (Tribal) Authorities and rehabilitation was interpreted by many Pondos as malevolent state witchcraft – regardless of which side of the ‘Red’/‘School’ divide they found themselves. According to Redding these beliefs “strongly shaped both the substance and timing of the revolt.”<sup>293</sup> The malevolent nature of state witchcraft to which Redding refers manifested in increased taxation, cattle culling and other rehabilitation measures that resulted in social destabilisation that undercut the legitimacy of the state. The resultant crisis

*...could only be met with witchcraft eradication techniques. State witchcraft depended upon local witches or wizards, and it was these people upon whom rebels [would] focus... their attacks. ... Witchcraft beliefs were important because they ... were present in attitudes about the state and African chiefs; they carried over into agricultural practices and influenced livestock ownership; and they provided a partial explanation for the misfortunes suffered by African farmers while suggesting a possible remedy. In the 1950s and 1960s they influenced the decision to revolt.*<sup>294</sup>

The memo that the Pondos had smuggled to the United Nations did indeed mention all the rehabilitation measures Redding refers to, and it is not difficult to identify a very

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<sup>290</sup> Cape Town Archives Repository, 1/BIZ 6/47, E.M. Warren, *Disturbances in the district of Bizana and Eastern Pondoland 1960*, p. 10.

<sup>291</sup> E. Wolf, *Peasant wars of the twentieth century*.

<sup>292</sup> W. Beinart & C. Bundy, ‘State intervention and rural resistance: the Transkei, 1900–1965’, in M.A. Klein (ed.), *Peasants in Africa: historical and contemporary perspectives*, Vol. 4, 1980, p. 303.

<sup>293</sup> S. Redding, ‘Government witchcraft: taxation, the supernatural, and the Mpondo revolt in the Transkei, South Africa, 1955-1963’, in *African Affairs*, Vol. 95, No. 381, October 1996, pp. 555-579.

<sup>294</sup> S. Redding, ‘Government witchcraft: taxation, the supernatural, and the Mpondo revolt in the Transkei, South Africa, 1955-1963’, in *African Affairs*, Vol. 95, No. 381, October 1996, pp. 577.

deep general suspicion towards the intentions of the government on the part of the memo's authors – possibly even a suspicion of malevolent witchcraft on the part of the state.

However, the part of the memo that refers to betterment is couched in a language that explicitly rejects superstition and beliefs in the supernatural in that mention is made of the 1857 cattle killing, when Nongqawuse, a young Xhosa girl, made a fantastic prophecy of the resurrection that lured large sections of the population of Xhosaland to kill all their cattle and to stop planting – a prophecy that led to mass starvation in the area. Jeff Peires makes the point that '[t]he last evidence of anybody still thinking that Nongqawuse might have been telling the truth was recorded in 1877.'<sup>295</sup> But the memo does seem to accuse the government of trying to dupe the people of Pondoland into accepting measures that would be harmful to them by employing local idioms – it could thus even be conceived as being couched in the language of Clifton Crais' 'politics of evil'. It stated:

*We have been told that if we reduce our stock, reduce our land, live in locations, we will become wealthier. This reminds us of the story of Nongqause the daughter of Mhelkaze [this obviously refers to the prophetess Nongqawuse and her uncle Mhlakaza, the principle interpreter of her prophecies<sup>296</sup>] ... Now we are expected to believe the Government propaganda ... We are not against the improvement of our land by the use of modern methods of agriculture. But we do not see the necessity of reducing our land. There is enough land for all the Pondos in Pondoland. Years ago agricultural demonstrators were first introduced into Pondoland. They were Pondos and we trusted them and welcomed them. We gave them free board and lodging in our homes. We gave the government a farm as an experimental station. We accepted the advice of the demonstration and began growing vegetables, and we learnt about vitamins. It was in about 1939 that the first agricultural demonstrators came to our areas and taught us modern methods of agriculture e.g. how to plough deeply, dry farming, poultry farming, breeding of cattle, vegetable gardens competitions etc. This was appreciated by our people. But now the government is changing all this. The agricultural demonstrators have become officials of the soil conservation committees. Their ploughing areas*

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<sup>295</sup> J. Peires, *The dead will arise: Nongqawuse and the great cattle-killing of 1856-7*, p. 386.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid*, p. 19.

*(ploughs, harrows, etc.) have now been sold. Paid by our poll tax they are now remaining not to help us but to harm us. All they do is to show us how to make barricades to prevent soil erosion. They no longer teach us improved methods of agriculture ...*<sup>297</sup>

The memo also mentions the increases in taxation that Redding likens to ‘state witchcraft’, but it is hard to discern any suspicion of malevolent magic from the text:

*At first taxation on livestock was 6d. per head of animal per year. After some years it was increased to 9d. per head. Later there were further increases up to 1/- and 1/3. In each of these cases the Pondos were consulted about the increases and agreed to them. Now, without their consultation and without their consent there has been a further increase to 1/9.*<sup>298</sup>

For residents of the reserves the list of payable taxes consisted of poll tax,<sup>299</sup> quit rent, stock rate, general levy, and moneys required by the Government Chiefs.<sup>300</sup> Increases in these taxes can much rather be linked to the shift from rehabilitation/reclamation (substantial improvement of small areas and intensive soil conservation) to stabilisation (more extensive work aimed at arresting deterioration in a larger area), which coincided with a transfer in the responsibility for these programmes to the new Bantu Authorities.<sup>301</sup> The imposition of Bantu Authorities exacerbated the resentment that most people already felt towards betterment- and rehabilitation measures.<sup>302</sup> William Beinart and Colin Bundy note that ‘rehabilitation brought about a much sharper conflict between the mass of people and the administrative elite of chiefs, headmen and councillors. ... In the 1950s, the powers of the administrative elite were consolidated and broadened into the Bantu Authorities Act. The struggle against rehabilitation

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<sup>297</sup> ‘Pondoland goes to the United Nations’, *Fighting Talk*, Vol. 14, No. 5, October 1960, p. 4.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>299</sup> According to the *Oxford concise dictionary of politics* the poll tax can be defined as a tax levied at a flat rate per head on each inhabitant of a given district (‘poll’ meaning ‘the human head’, hence ‘person on a list’).

<sup>300</sup> E.B. Mkabile, ‘Africans are too heavily taxed’, *New Age*, Vol. 6, No. 9, 25 February 1960.

<sup>301</sup> W. Beinart & C. Bundy, ‘State intervention and rural resistance: the Transkei, 1900–1965’, in M.A. Klein (ed.), *Peasants in Africa: historical and contemporary perspectives*, Vol. 4, 1980, p. 306.

<sup>302</sup> Eric Wolf describes such situations beautifully: “... economic callousness [is coupled] with a particular kind of stupidity, the kind of stupidity which ascribes to the people themselves responsibility for the evils to which they are subject.” See E. Wolf, *Peasant wars of the twentieth century*, p. 286.

measures increasingly became caught up in resistance to the new administrative system and its local agents.<sup>303</sup>

Beinart and Bundy's point is well illustrated by the following examples. In March 1960 the *New Age* newspaper reported that the 300 Pondos that burnt the kraal of Tribal Authorities Councillor Saul Mabude sang 'Mabude you have brought us stock culling and fencing',<sup>304</sup> while they were putting his homestead to the torch. A month previously Govan Mbeki reported that the Bizana Pondos had told Paramount Chief Botha Sigcau in no uncertain terms that 'they wouldn't accept any measures aimed at the reduction of their stock'.<sup>305</sup> Mbeki also noted that trouble in the area started after the Native Commissioner had given an order that people should stop ploughing lands they had tilled for years,<sup>306</sup> and that '[d]aily they are becoming better organised. Daily they are carrying the fight against BA [Bantu Authorities] to their enemies – the Chiefs who have accepted this law.'<sup>307</sup>

But it has to be kept in mind that while it is true that the population of Pondoland rebelled primarily against economic injustices, they definitely also felt their moral economy<sup>308</sup> violated – which was influenced by both economics and aspects of culture. This was due to the fact that social arrangements, which were evolved over a long period of time to iron out the 'ripples that might drown a man', like patterns of reciprocity, forced generosity, communal land and work-sharing<sup>309</sup> were upset by the major social disruptions caused by ever-increasing government interference in the reserves. In this sense it seems possible to marry Crais and Redding's post-structural arguments that emphasise conceptions of 'magic' and 'evil' to those of most other historians of the Pondo revolt who emphasise the political economy.

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<sup>303</sup> W. Beinart & C. Bundy, 'State intervention and rural resistance: the Transkei, 1900–1965', in M.A. Klein (ed.), *Peasants in Africa: historical and contemporary perspectives*, Vol. 4, 1980, p. 304.

<sup>304</sup> 'Pondos revolt against Bantu Authorities: chief's home razed to the ground', *New Age*, Vol. 6, No. 24, 31 March 1960.

<sup>305</sup> G. Mbeki, 'Government measures provoke Pondos to violence: police, riot vans, rushed to Bizana as white traders flee', *New Age*, Vol. 6, No. 19, 25 February 1960, p. 5.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>307</sup> 'Pondos rebel against Bantu Authorities', *New Age*, Vol. 6, No. 26, 8 September 1960, p. 6.

<sup>308</sup> The term moral economy was first employed by the British historian E.P. Thompson and denotes a group's notion of economic justice and their working definition of exploitation. See E.P. Thompson, *The making of the English working class*, p. 68; J. Scott, *The moral economy of the peasant*, p. 3.

<sup>309</sup> J. Scott, *The moral economy of the peasant*, pp. 1-4.

### 3.6. An altogether different kind of Ducktail

Socio-economic factors wrought by tremendous political change seem to have been the pre-eminent reasons why the revolt broke out in Pondoland, but it is possible that cultural factors relatively unique to the area could have made an important contribution.

Unlike their neighbours the Xhosa, the Pondo did not practice ritual circumcision of young men as a form of manhood initiation. As a result, according to the anthropologist Philip Mayer, young Pondo males were not (from the age of eighteen on) offered a similarly flattering reception by adult society as were their Xhosa neighbours. The sectarian all-male youth groups called *indlavini* found in Pondoland thus pitted their wits against adult society,<sup>310</sup> because whereas for Xhosa youths the process of circumcision-initiation ‘opens the way to manhood; ... to economic independence and married adulthood; and ... gives a young man individuality’<sup>311</sup> these doors could remain closed to Pondo youths for much longer periods of time.

*Indlavini* groups consisted mainly of youths and men who (at one stage or another) migrated to the mines, sugar estates, and/or cities in order to accumulate enough resources to marry and start an *umzi* (homestead) of their own, thereby getting a foothold in the rural economy. These groups were starting to act increasingly violently by the 1950s; in all probability to protect rural resources. They were also highly organised and subject to internal discipline, and were – as was noted – prone to acts of violence to achieve their goals. In numerical terms, membership to *indlavini* associations also reached a zenith at the time of the revolt.<sup>312</sup> What’s more,

*Witnesses before the Van Heerden Committee of Enquiry into the Pondoland ‘unrest’ of 1960 made references to unruly youths (though not the indlavini by name) as being*

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<sup>310</sup> P. Mayer & I. Mayer, ‘Socialization by peers: the youth organisation of the Red Xhosa’, in P. Mayer, (ed.), *Socialization: the approach from social anthropology*, pp. 159-189.

<sup>311</sup> M. Gluckman, ‘Gang formation among Xhosa and Samburu: a comment by Max Gluckman’, in P. Mayer, (ed.), *Socialization: the approach from social anthropology*, pp. 187-189.

<sup>312</sup> W. Beinart, ‘Worker consciousness, ethnic particularism and nationalism: the experiences of a South African migrant, 1930-1960, in S. Marks & S. Trapido (eds), *The politics of race, class and nationalism in twentieth-century South Africa*, pp. 286-300.

*responsible for some of the more violent episodes of that rebellion. The existence of a large, violent and anti-authoritarian male association in these districts, and apparently not in others, might offer an explanation for the particular form of one of the most sustained rural insurrections of the time.*<sup>313</sup>

The material conditions of mine migration before the 1970s gave rise to vibrant strands of migrant culture with resistance to proletarianisation as their central theme. The *indlavini* were no exceptions. Although they were primarily rural organisations, the rigidly structured life of the compounds to which large numbers of their members were exposed certainly influenced the way in which *indlavini* groups came to be structured. *Indlavini* subculture extended local male networks, linking youths from different locations and districts in Eastern Pondoland and provided them with a tight associational attachment. In the 1930s, the *Indlavini* were social innovators, but by the 1950s they had become guardians of what they perceived to be Mpondo rural traditions.<sup>314</sup>

The *indlavini* can be said to have bridged the rural and urban divide. In a report on the ‘disturbances in the district of Bizana and Eastern Pondoland’, the Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner of Bizana, Eric Michael Warren, stated that ‘...agitators had been spreading propaganda throughout Native Compounds and that they have been doing this undetected...’<sup>315</sup> *Indlavini* were certainly among those that Warren could have suspected of bringing propaganda to Pondoland from the compounds.

It is not known whether *indlavini* members were to be found in the upper echelons of the leadership of the Hill, but Leonard Mdingi,<sup>316</sup> an *indlavini* member who was interviewed by William Beinart in 1982, claimed that he was an advisor to Theophilus

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<sup>313</sup> W. Beinart, ‘The origins of the *Indlavini*: male associations and migrant labour in the Transkei’, in A.D. Spiegel & P.A. McAllister (eds), *Tradition and transition in South Africa: festschrift for Philip and Iona Mayer*, p. 105.

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1

<sup>315</sup> Cape Town Archives Repository, 1/BIZ, 6/47, E.M. Warren, *Disturbances in the district of Bizana and Eastern Pondoland: 1960*, p. 46.

<sup>316</sup> In his recent autobiography, Ben Turok claims that Mdingi not only briefed the ANC office in Durban about the happenings in Pondoland, but that Mdingi also accompanied Turok and Tom Nkobi – a national organiser of the ANC – to Pondoland during the revolt and that he put them into contact with leaders of the Hill Committee. See B. Turok, *Nothing but the truth: behind the ANC’s struggle politics*, pp. 120-122.



Tshangela during the time of the revolt. Tshangela was certainly one of the five most important leaders of the revolt.<sup>317</sup> It is interesting to note what the Chief Magistrate and Bantu Affairs Commissioner of Bizana, Eric Warren, thought about Tshangela:

*...The rebel leader, Theophilus Tshangela, seems to think he is the government... I do not believe that an illiterate Pondo who is mostly interested in beer and women can think up or even remember a list of grievances which go back for many years...*<sup>318</sup>

This statement certainly needs to be read within the proper context – Warren held posts within both the executive and judicial branches of government. As an instrument of government he therefore probably felt obligated to discredit the rebel in any way he possibly could. Another statement that aimed at discrediting those involved in the revolt is to be found in a December 1960 issue of the pro-NP newspaper, *Die Burger*, which commented that:

*Die Pondo's het ook hul eie "eendsterte". Hulle word dhlavini's [indlavini] genoem en is gewoonlik te lui om te werk. Hulle dra dikwels hoë pette, broeke met wye pype en 'n stuk doek om die linkervoorarm. Hulle hou van kieriegevegte en sal seker maklik oorreed word om te moor en te plunder.*<sup>319</sup>

Any likelihood of *Indlavini* participation in the Pondo revolt certainly cannot be attributed to a propensity to 'murder and plunder' or 'being lazy' as *Die Burger* suggested, but the quote does contain some valid observations. *Indlavini* groups (like the ducktails of the 1950s) were indeed more gang-like than the *Bhungu* youth movements that preceded them – they structured themselves along militia lines with a

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<sup>317</sup> W. Beinart, 'Worker consciousness, ethnic particularism and nationalism: the experiences of a South African migrant, 1930 – 1960', in S. Marks & S. Trapido (eds), *The politics of race, class and nationalism in twentieth-century South Africa*, pp. 286–300.

<sup>318</sup> Cape Town Archives Repository, 1/BIZ, 6/47, E.M. Warren, *Disturbances in the district of Bizana and Eastern Pondoland: 1960*, pp. 42–43.

<sup>319</sup> The Pondos also have their own "ducktails". They are called dhlavinis [*indlavini*] and are normally too lazy to work. They frequently wear high caps, bellbottom trousers and a piece of cloth around the left forearm. They like stick-fights and will probably easily be convinced to murder and plunder. ('Pondo's het hul eie "eendsterte"', *Die Burger*, 2 Desember 1960, p. 4)

hierarchy of sergeants, policemen, messengers and, in some cases, even spies.<sup>320</sup> They were prone to violence and indeed liked fighting with sticks. This is linked to the construction of masculinity, but it has to be noted that violence seems to have increased after 1945. They also dressed very distinctively – flapping bell-bottomed trousers were worn with shirts and not jackets. This form of dress was probably copied from Bhaca workers on the mines – William Beinart noted that ‘it is tempting to suggest that the exaggerated size of the trousers was a symbolic means to suggest that the *indlavini* had left their blankets behind.’<sup>321</sup> There is evidence to suggest that some ‘Hill Committees’ were also structured along militia lines: ‘... landdroste, konstabels en ‘n voorsitter [is] gekies om die vrede te bewaar.’<sup>322</sup>

*Indlavini* groups were highly disciplined. ‘They drew up a code of rules (*imithetho*) relating to courting, access to women, loyalty and discipline, fighting and weapons, as well as membership lists and lists of girlfriends, all recorded by each group’s secretary.’<sup>323</sup> When these rules weren’t strictly adhered to, guilty members could expect punishment that ranged from hefty fines to severe beatings. Similarly, the ‘Hill Committee’ imposed fines on Pondos who were considered to have been disloyal and resorted to violent measures if fines weren’t paid. The Committee also managed to exercise a great deal of discipline during the revolt:

*Feuds between locations that were apparently of years standing appear to have provided no obstacle to combined organisation. The degree of discipline demonstrated in a number of Hill campaigns would suggest at least that ‘aggression against other ingroup members’ was held well in check, if not channelled toward the objects of the struggle.*<sup>324</sup>

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<sup>320</sup> A. Mager, ‘Youth organisations and the construction of masculine identities in the Ciskei and Transkei, 1945 – 1960’, in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 4, December 1998, pp. 653–667.

<sup>321</sup> W. Beinart, ‘The origins of the *Indlavini*: male associations and migrant labour in the Transkei’, in A.D. Spiegel & P.A. McAllister (eds), *Tradition and transition in South Africa: festschrift for Philip and Iona Mayer*, p. 116. Members of the *Bhunga* associations that preceded the *Indlavini* were distinguishable by the blankets that they wore.

<sup>322</sup> ‘...magistrates, constables and a chairman [are] chosen to keep the peace.’ (‘Pondo’s het hul eie “eendsterte”’, *Die Burger*, 2 Desember 1960, p. 4)

<sup>323</sup> W. Beinart, ‘Worker consciousness, ethnic particularism and nationalism: the experiences of a South African migrant, 1930 – 1960’, in S. Marks & S. Trapido (eds), *The politics of race, class and nationalism in twentieth-century South Africa*, pp. 286–300.

<sup>324</sup> J. Copelyn, *The Mpondo revolt 1960*, pp. 44–45.

*Indlavini* groups expected new members to pay a joining fee of five shillings so that the groups could accumulate reserves.<sup>325</sup> Likewise, all members of Hill Committees were expected to pay an amount of money that went towards paying the legal costs of detained Pondo rebels – ‘Alle lede van die Heuwel word belas. Hulle betaal eers 1s., dan 2s. 6d. en dan 10s. om die hofkoste van Pondo’s te help dek...’<sup>326</sup>

Some *Indlavini* groups met secretly on mountains (*entabeni*) – ‘local hilltops where they could gather privately and regulate attendance.’<sup>327</sup> Here, the similarity between *indlavini* and the ‘Hill Committees’ is obvious.

Clifton Crais also mentions that Congo groups, like *indlavini* groups, ‘met regularly on Saturdays, collected dues, and met at the same spot.’<sup>328</sup> Interestingly, he also notes that there might, on occasion, have been a conflation of the two terms and that this could have served as a ‘central node of political authority’ alternative to that of the chief and his Great Place.<sup>329</sup>

Unfortunately, primary documentary evidence that specifically deal with *indlavini* is scant to the point of being virtually nonexistent – thus it is impossible to prove their involvement in the revolt on the basis thereof. Consequently, using the available documentary evidence, I will attempt to infer possible *Indlavini* involvement in the revolt of 1960.

On 7 October 1961, Thomas Dinwa Blayi was convicted (along with his father and uncle) of the murder of Manana Maqewu at the Esikumbeni Location in the District of Bizana on 17 December 1960. He was sentenced to death. Maqewu was supposedly

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<sup>325</sup> W. Beinart, ‘The origins of the *Indlavini*: male associations and migrant labour in the Transkei’, in A.D. Spiegel & P.A. McAllister (eds), *Tradition and transition in South Africa: festschrift for Philip and Iona Mayer*, p. 115.

<sup>326</sup> All members of the Hill are taxed. At first they pay 1s., then 2s. 6d. and then 10s to help cover the court costs of Pundos. (‘Pondo’s het hul eie “eendsterte”’, *Die Burger*, 2 Desember 1960, p. 4).

<sup>327</sup> W. Beinart, ‘The origins of the *Indlavini*: male associations and migrant labour in the Transkei’, in A.D. Spiegel & P.A. McAllister (eds), *Tradition and transition in South Africa: festschrift for Philip and Iona Mayer*, p. 115.

<sup>328</sup> C. Crais, *The politics of evil: magic, state power, and the political imagination in South Africa*, p. 187.

<sup>329</sup> C. Crais, *The politics of evil: magic, state power, and the political imagination in South Africa*, pp. 185-186.

killed because he was an *impimpi* (informer or spy). Sticks (*kieries*) were reported to have been employed in the attack. Blayi was shown by the court not only to have instigated the crime, but also to have been a ringleader in its execution. Blayi (a local leader of the revolt) was also implicated in a reign of terror conducted against non-members of the Hill and those suspected of informing the police of its activities. Those who Blayi chose to attack, apart from being possible *impimpis*, were also considered by officials of the court to be persons who were ‘...goed met aardse goedere, veral vee bedeel was, [and that was for Blayi] klaarblyklik ‘n belangrike oorweging.’ Court records also show that Blayi had previously been convicted of assault with the intention of inflicting grievous bodily harm, and that he had been sentenced (on 9 December 1954) to three months imprisonment.<sup>330</sup>

Blayi seems to fit the profile of *indlavini* perfectly. When he was convicted of assault in 1954 he was twenty two or twenty three years old<sup>331</sup> – not an uncommon age for a young *indlavini* member to be attempting to assert himself by fighting with sticks. It is also a well known fact that *indlavini* groups were becoming ever more violent by the 1950s.<sup>332</sup>

Furthermore, due to his three-month stay in prison in 1954, it is not unlikely that Blayi came into contact with *Isitshozi*: criminal gangs that were active in prisons and the compounds on the Rand. These gangs, whose membership included quite a few Pondos, purportedly contributed towards the growing violence among *indlavini* during the 1950s.<sup>333</sup>

That the people Blayi targeted were rather well-off in material terms and that all of them owned substantial amounts of livestock doesn’t necessarily mean – as the court

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<sup>330</sup> ‘...well-off in material terms, specifically with regards to livestock [and that for Blayi] this was an important consideration.’ (National Archives Repository, Pretoria, SAB, URU, 4311, *The state versus Nyamayipeli Dinwa Blayi, Thomas Dinwa Blayi and Hlati Blayi: murder*).

<sup>331</sup> National Archives Repository, Pretoria, SAB, URU, 4311, *The state versus Nyamayipeli Dinwa Blayi, Thomas Dinwa Blayi and Hlati Blayi: murder*.

<sup>332</sup> W. Beinart, ‘The origins of the *Indlavini*: male associations and migrant labour in the Transkei’, in A.D. Spiegel & P.A. McAllister (eds), *Tradition and transition in South Africa: festschrift for Philip and Iona Mayer*, p. 115–118.

<sup>333</sup> K. Breckenridge, ‘Migrancy, crime and faction fighting: the role of *Isitshozi* in the development of ethnic organizations in the compounds’, in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 1, March 1990, pp. 55–78.

records would have us believe – that Blayi was committing atrocities for the sole purpose of enriching himself. It could also be (indicative of the fact) that Blayi was targeting the local elite – supporters of the Bantu Authorities scheme that was seen to be threatening the very existence of the *indlavini* as ‘middle migrants’. The fact that Blayi was also implicated in the murder of Bernard Mlomu (a government employee and agricultural demonstrator)<sup>334</sup> attests to this possibility.

William Beinart, after interviewing several *indlavini* in the 1980s, concluded that ‘evidence of their involvement in the Pondoland revolt is not strong.’<sup>335</sup> He also found that some important *indlavini* members sided with Botha Sigcau during the revolt. In fact, one leading light in the *indlavini* became a guard for Sigcau’s Great Place.<sup>336</sup> Philip Mayer also asserted that the *indlavini* ‘practiced a youth counter-culture with little articulated ideological content.’<sup>337</sup>

In the light of an evident lack of documentary evidence I cannot dispute either contention. I do, however, feel that *indlavini* associations might well have been a vehicle for the expression of popular dissent during 1959 and 1960 and that they could have provided a possible template on which Hill Committees could have been formed.

### 3.7. The special case of the Reserves/Bantustans

It was not only in Pondoland that tensions existed. Copelyn’s assertion that the revolt in Eastern Pondoland ‘must be understood as the complex conjunction of both ‘local problems’ and ‘major social dislocations’’,<sup>338</sup> seems to hold true inasmuch as similar patterns occurred in response to the effects of apartheid policy in other

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<sup>334</sup> National Archives Repository, Pretoria, SAB, URU, 4311, The state versus Nyamayipeli Dinwa Blayi, Thomas Dinwa Blayi and Hlati Blayi: murder.

<sup>335</sup> W. Beinart, ‘The origins of the *Indlavini*: male associations and migrant labour in the Transkei’, in A.D. Spiegel & P.A. McAllister (eds), *Tradition and transition in South Africa: festschrift for Philip and Iona Mayer*, p. 121.

<sup>336</sup> Private email correspondence on July 2, 2007.

<sup>337</sup> W. Beinart, ‘The origins of the *Indlavini*: male associations and migrant labour in the Transkei’, in A.D. Spiegel & P.A. McAllister (eds), *Tradition and transition in South Africa: festschrift for Philip and Iona Mayer*, p. 107.

<sup>338</sup> J.A. Copelyn, *The Mpondo revolt 1960*, p. 27.

reserve/Bantustan areas around South Africa. Govan Mbeki very eloquently linked the events in Pondoland with the rest of the country:

*The leading architects of the concept of Apartheid – Dr. Verwoerd, Dr. Eiselen, officers of the State and BAD [Bantu Administration and Development] information divisions, Afrikaner intellectuals in SABRA and those like Minister De Wet Nel and Commissioner General Hans Abraham who try with asinine stupidity to work apartheid in the field – are striving with might and main to convince a world that refuses to ‘understand’ that **an idea which has not even taken final form in their own minds must work** [emphasis in the original] ... Thus, God’s ‘chosen race’ is still seeking a way of entrenching racial domination in a manner that will give it a semblance of moral justification in the eyes of the world! ... It is against this false concept, on the basis of which an entire people is being forced to travel an uncharted course in the history of social organisation, that the peasants in Pondoland, in the rest of the Transkei, in Zeerust, Sekhukhuniland, Zululand and elsewhere, are waging a heroic struggle.*<sup>339</sup>

It is important to note that Mbeki only likens the unrest in Eastern Pondoland to other contemporary rural struggles, and not with those waged in South Africa’s urban areas. For although some Pondo leaders such as Leonard Mdingi<sup>340</sup> had tried to establish links between urban and rural protest movements, these attempts remained largely fruitless. It is possible that this was the case because ‘migrant workers of the period identified themselves as ‘peasants’ rather than full-fledged proletarians.’<sup>341</sup>

In his landmark study Colin Bundy ascribes the high incidence of rural resistance in the 1950s and early 1960s to the relationship between two processes that were inextricably linked to the Bantustan policies of the Verwoerd-Vorster years. The processes referred to were that of indirect rule through chiefs and headmen, and agricultural reforms in the

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<sup>339</sup> G. Mbeki, ‘Jackboot over Pondoland’, *Fighting Talk*, Vol. 15, No. 1, February 1961, p. 4.

<sup>340</sup> Mdingi was an *Indlavini* member, ANC activist and chairman of the Pondo migrant association in Durban. The Congo movement made appeals for material assistance to this association. See W. Beinart, ‘Worker consciousness, ethnic particularism and nationalism: the experiences of a South African migrant, 1930-1960, in S. Marks & S. Trapido (eds), *The politics of race, class and nationalism in twentieth-century South Africa*, pp. 286-300; R. Kayser, *Land and liberty! : the Non-European Unity Movement and the land question, 1933-1976*, p. 97; G. Mbeki, *South Africa: the peasants’ revolt*, p. 106.

<sup>341</sup> S. Matoti & L. Ntsebeza, ‘Rural resistance in Mpondoland and Thembuland, 1960-1963’, in SADET, *The road to democracy in South Africa: Vol. I (1960-1970)*, p. 208 see also T. Lodge, *Black politics in South Africa since 1945*, p. 290.

homelands/Bantustans. According to these policies it was an absolute necessity to halt or reverse ‘underdevelopment so severe that it menaced even the Reserves’ capacity to maintain and reproduce a migrant labour force’.<sup>342</sup> Chiefs and headmen thus ‘became an arm of the governmental apparatus; their power and status were no longer derived from nor checked by the workings of the redistributive economy,’<sup>343</sup> and the steps to halt the disintegration of rural economy took the form of betterment- and rehabilitation Schemes.<sup>344</sup>

This was also the case in Pondoland. Indeed, the introduction and operation of the Bantu Authorities scheme was ‘met with hostility, overt opposition, and a good deal of violent resistance.’<sup>345</sup> This was due to the fact that Bantu Authorities

*...introduced significant changes in the nature of local administration in the Reserves/Homelands... chiefs now controlled clusters of locations; they retained their customary powers and were granted an agglomerate of new administrative roles, including powers previously executed by headmen and magistrates... Bantu Authorities reduced the weight of the elected element at every level and greatly cut back the popular participation previously enjoyed at the district council level. No public meetings of more than ten people could be held legally without the permission of the Bantu commissioner. Financially, the Bantu Authorities involved new fees and taxes: the direct taxation paid by household heads almost doubled between 1955 and 1960. The proliferation of bureaucratic posts was marked by a sharp rise in graft and corruption, with minor officials demanding cash payments before allowing commoners access to courts, licensing offices, and so on. Crucially, the powers allotted to the new authorities meant that chiefs became more visibly and directly the symbols of social control. Greater power meant diminished legitimacy. Chiefs were no longer perceived as intermediaries between the state and their followers, but unambiguously as the instruments of the South African state. The position of the chiefs was highlighted by their greater identification with the rehabilitation programs. From the mid-1950s there were ... changes in betterment/rehabilitation policy... the responsibility of carrying out the program was*

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<sup>342</sup> C. Bundy, *The rise and fall of the South African peasantry*, p. 226.

<sup>343</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 226–228.

<sup>345</sup> W. Beinart & C. Bundy, ‘State intervention and rural resistance: the Transkei, 1900–1965’, in M.A. Klein (ed.), *Peasants in Africa: historical and contemporary perspectives*, Vol. 4, 1980, p. 307.

*largely transferred to the new Bantu Authorities... The long-standing authority of the chiefs over land allocation had been transmuted and distorted into the execution of the state's rehabilitation schemes... Chiefs had to move families under the Land Rehabilitation Scheme, to compel the culling of stock, and to dispossess some people of their arable allotments in the name of soil conservation.*<sup>346</sup>

The NP government struggled to validate its 'Bantustan' policies ethically in the eyes of large sections of the population of Eastern Pondoland, because it was unable to establish the necessary legitimacy upon which such a relationship of domination could rest. This is despite of the fact that the government attempted to couch its policies in the language of two of the ideal types of legitimacy (as defined by Max Weber), namely that of traditional authority, which is based upon a belief in the 'sanctity of age-old rules and powers', and legal authority, which implies acceptance of impersonal norms that are consciously established within a context of rationality.<sup>347</sup> Many Pondos consequently rebelled against what they perceived to be an authority derived by illegitimate means; a rebellion that would, in time, become known as the Pondoland revolt.

It is clear that the 'introduction and imposition of Bantu Authorities' led to a general state of civil unrest in the Transkeian areas in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and that the Pondos' grievances reflected those of people in other parts of the Transkei and reserve areas in the rest of the country. But why did the popular resistance in paramount chief Botha Sigcau's veritable 'fiefdom' stand out in terms of its intensity, its organisation and its longevity during the period? Why did the National Party government deem it necessary to issue Emergency Regulations in November 1960, and why did the police, army, chiefs and headmen have to resort to continuous violent measures under these Emergency Regulations to eventually subdue a determined and resilient population?

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<sup>346</sup> W. Beinart & C. Bundy, 'State intervention and rural resistance: the Transkei, 1900–1965', in M.A. Klein (ed.), *Peasants in Africa: historical and contemporary perspectives*, Vol. 4, 1980, pp. 306–307.

<sup>347</sup> For a discussion of power, legitimacy and authority see: A. Giddens, *Capitalism and modern social theory: an analysis of the writings of Marx, Durkheim and Max Weber*, pp. 154–163.



### 3.8. Tactical mobility

Eric Wolf argues that the decisive factor which ultimately makes a ‘peasant rebellion’ possible lies in the relationship of the ‘peasantry’ to the field of power that surrounds it. A rebellion can only be ignited, Wolf argues, when people are not completely powerless – when they are not ‘impotent’. He asserts that a ‘middle peasantry’ (a group that has secure access to land, which it cultivates with family labour) is most likely to revolt as this group has its own resources, which provides the minimal tactical freedom that is required to challenge an ‘overlord’. This also holds true for the ‘poor middle peasantry’, (whose land is only under marginal control from the outside), as this group can secure ‘latitude of movement’ by activities such as casual labour, livestock-raising and smuggling. This ‘culturally conservative stratum’ is, according to Wolf, ‘the most instrumental in dynamiting the peasant social order’, because it is exactly this stratum that relies most heavily on ‘traditional social relations of kin and mutual aid between neighbours’ – it is consequently this stratum that suffers most when these relations are interfered with. Wolf furthermore asserts that it is the middle peasant that is most likely to be influenced by the developing proletariat, as he is likely to send his children to work in town where they are subject to the influences of the working classes – the ‘development of the industrial workforce is’ thus ‘still closely geared to life in the villages’.<sup>348</sup>

All this seems true of Eastern Pondoland: William Beinart has shown that the inhabitants of Pondoland took much longer to become fully proletarianised than most of their Transkeian neighbours; the remittances sent back to Pondoland from the mines of the Witwatersrand were substantially larger until much later than those of their Transkeian neighbours – their foothold in the rural economy thus stronger;<sup>349</sup> ‘Red’ *amaqaba* culture was also stronger in Pondoland than elsewhere in the Transkei, rendering large sections of the populace very much ‘traditionally’ orientated;<sup>350</sup> and it

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<sup>348</sup> E. Wolf, *Peasant wars of the twentieth century*, pp. 290-292.

<sup>349</sup> W. Beinart, *The political economy of Pondoland 1860-1930*.

<sup>350</sup> See chapter two.

has been shown that the inhabitants of Pondoland became desperately unhappy when their ‘traditional social relations’ were interfered with.<sup>351</sup>

Furthermore, Wolf notes that the ‘peripheral location with regard to the centre of state control’ increases the likelihood of revolt. The location can thus add to a population’s tactical mobility.<sup>352</sup> The remote and inaccessible nature of Eastern Pondoland’s geography has been addressed in a previous chapter,<sup>353</sup> but a few points need to be made in addition in order to take this issue out of the realm of conjecture. The *Cape Argus* of 3 December 1960 reported that ‘[i]t is true that the police face great difficulties. Pondoland is a region of valley and bush and if hundreds of tribesmen remain lawless and there are sporadic outbursts of murder and arson conventional policing becomes very difficult indeed.’<sup>354</sup> The text from a secret police memo on the ‘disturbances’ in Pondoland seems to corroborate the previous statement: ‘[o]mdat die terrein van Pondoland strategies in die guns van die organiseerders van die berghof is, en die gedurige misbedekking wat hulle bewegings daarheen onopsigtelik maak is polisie-optrede aansienlik bemoeilik.’<sup>355</sup> Another police document states that ‘[w]eens die bergagtige geaardheid van die Transkei is dit besonder moeilik om onluste in daardie gebied te onderdruk.’<sup>356</sup>

It thus seems safe to say that the revolt in Eastern Pondoland was caused by a parochial reaction to a major social dislocation and that it was made possible by high levels of tactical mobility. The moral economy of the population of Eastern Pondoland was violated by a government that could not validate itself ethically in the eyes of the populace and hence had lost any semblance of legitimacy. The proverbial straw that broke the camel’s back or the spark that lit the revolutionary embers came in the form

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<sup>351</sup> See 3.5 above.

<sup>352</sup> E. Wolf, *Peasant wars of the twentieth century*, p. 293.

<sup>353</sup> See chapter two.

<sup>354</sup> ‘Murder in Pondoland’, *Cape Argus*, 3 December 1960.

<sup>355</sup> ‘[B]ecause the terrain of Pondoland strategically favours the organisers of the mountain-court, and because of constant misty conditions that make their movements hard to keep under surveillance, police actions are rendered very difficult.’ (National Archives Repository, Pretoria, SAP 597, *Memo: Onluste: Pondoland, Geheim*, p. 6)

<sup>356</sup> ‘Due to the mountainous nature of the Transkei it is exceptionally difficult to suppress rebellions in that region.’ (National Archives Repository, Pretoria, SAP 596, *SAP.15/5/60(1), Die waarnemende kommissaris van die Suid-Afrikaanse Polisie, Bantoe-onluste: Lusikisiki, Bisana en Flagstaff*, p. 1)

of the commonly held perception that Botha Sigcau, the embodiment of traditional leadership, had sold his people out – he consequently lost all legitimate authority.

## 4. EVENT HISTORY

Between 1939 and 1952 the National Party leaders witnessed with horror how South Africa's urban black population almost doubled. After achieving electoral victory in 1948, apartheid's policymakers consequently tightened pass laws, introduced the Bantu Authorities system, and made a concerted effort to control black labour.<sup>357</sup> As a result more and more people would be confined to the reserves, where a growing population was to put enormous pressure on an increasingly overstocked and over-farmed geographical surface area that did not expand along with it. Although Pondoland might not have been as hard hit by this phenomenon as other parts of the Transkei and Ciskei, the effects thereof were certainly being felt. It was against this backdrop that events in Bizana would eventually fitfully erupt.

### 4.1. Sporadic and disjointed violence

It was late January 1960.<sup>358</sup> The new-year had come and gone much like mist giving way to the morning sun in the valleys of Pondoland. *Amalima* (work parties) had a month or two ago finished the arduous, labour intensive task of planting and weeding. It was the middle of the rainy season, and the people of Eastern Pondoland were with bated breath hoping for a good harvest in a couple months' time. January was traditionally 'hunger month' in the reserves and recruitment figures show a seasonal jump at this time as young recruits steadily filed into the compounds.<sup>359</sup>

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<sup>357</sup> For a discussion of the political economy of this era see: S. Terreblanche & N. Nattrass, 'The periodisation of the political economy from 1910', in N. Nattrass & E. Ardington, *The political economy of South Africa*, pp. 6-23.

<sup>358</sup> Copelyn correctly traces acts of sporadic violence back to as far as mid-1959 when residents of the Amadengane location in Bizana threatened and tried to chase from their midst the evangelist at the Dutch Reformed Mission because he supposedly supported Bantu Authorities (see: J. Copelyn, *The Mpondo revolt 1960*, p. 34), but it was only in the beginning of 1960 that the incidence of sporadic and disjointed violence became such that it could be considered truly significant.

<sup>359</sup> 'Child labour recruiting for farms and mines', *New Age*, Vol. 5, No. 16, 5 February 1959, p. 3.

On the morning of 28 January 1960 Eric Michael Warren, the Bizana Magistrate, left his office to inspect soil erosion and ploughable lands near the mouth of the Myanen River in the Unqunqundhlovu Location, located around 45 miles from the Bizana village. Prior to his departure he had let the local headman know about his intended visit, and had instructed him to meet him at the sites that were to be inspected. His welcoming committee would, however, not consist of only the headman – and he would be made to feel anything but welcome. Forty to fifty locals awaited his arrival. They would not allow him to meet their headman, nor to address them.<sup>360</sup> This act of blatant defiance on the part of the Xolobeni Pondos was interpreted by the *New Age* as a ‘resounding NO’ to the system of Bantu Authorities and betterment schemes that were perceived to be closely linked to it.<sup>361</sup> Warren had no option but to return to Bizana with his tail between his legs and what was in all probability a considerably scarred ego. Upon his arrival back in Bizana he laid charges of obstruction of justice (under Article 2(9) of Act 23/1943) and of illegal ploughing (under Article 12(2) of Proclamation 26 of 1936).

A couple of weeks later a native constable was despatched to serve four summonses on the recalcitrant tribesmen. Upon serving the fourth summons, the constable was asked what the summons stated. This the constable duly related to the old farmer being summonsed. He was then asked why someone should be summonsed for ploughing lands that he had tilled for many years. As is the wont of many a low-ranking bureaucrat, the constable then told the old farmer that he was merely doing his job and that he did not know the specifics of the case. Understandably the old man was not satisfied and, at first, refused to take possession of the summons. When he was eventually coaxed into accepting the inevitable, the constable saw a man armed with *kieries* (sticks) and a shield approaching him. At this sight the location headman, who had accompanied the constable, told him that they should flee or face a severe beating. The advice was duly heeded; they mounted their horses and rode to where Inspector Barlow and Constable Du Toit were conducting investigations into the magistrate’s other allegations. Here they were all picked up by the police van, and they travelled back through the location. When they reached the spot where the native constable and

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<sup>360</sup> National Archive Repository Pretoria, SAP 596, 18/2/60, *Onluste Bizana op 16/2/60*.

<sup>361</sup> ‘Behind the troubles in Bizana’, *New Age*, Vol. 6, No. 24, 31 March 1960, p. 2.

the headman had fled from they found that a trench, three feet wide, had been dug across the road. As the police van decelerated roughly a hundred Pondos jumped out of the bushes where they had been hiding, and tried to attack the police with assegais. The driver of the police van was forced to swerve, to turn the van around and to speed away.

On 17 February Captain Gerhardy, accompanied by twenty four policemen armed with sten guns, went back to the location to serve the outstanding summonses and to arrest those who had obstructed the police in carrying out their duties. The man who had attempted to stab the driver of the police van was identified and arrested, and so was one of the three implicated in obstruction of justice (the rest were away from home – supposedly on the mines). A group of fifty to sixty men then assembled at the headman’s kraal to notify the authorities that they had in fact been paying the headman to plough the lands that they were now being summonsed for, and that a man in the employment of the department of agriculture was also ploughing illegally.<sup>362</sup>

Later in the same month the *Natal Mercury* reported that, also on the 17<sup>th</sup>, ‘a riotous mob of more than 100 native men and women ... threatened to burn all (traders’) property in the area. All day the natives marched along the roads ... hounding the traders and telling them to “get out”’.<sup>363</sup> Shortly thereafter reports started to circulate that white traders were being forced to flee from outstations. Armed police, riot trucks and vans were consequently rushed to Bizana from Umtata and neighbouring areas to quell possible outbreaks of violence.<sup>364</sup>

Copelyn explained these sporadic outbursts by utilising Talcott Parsons’ set of abstract, generalising concepts describing the social system. Parsons’ structural-functionalism can be best understood as a vast classificatory scheme that that enables one to categorise at any level of social life, at any level of analysis. This allowed Copelyn to, probably correctly, label the sporadic violence in Pondoland ‘an expressive orientation

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<sup>362</sup> National Archive Repository Pretoria, SAP 596, 18/2/60, *Onluste Bizana op 16/2/60*.

<sup>363</sup> Quoted from: J. Copelyn, *The Pondo revolt 1960*, p. 34.

<sup>364</sup> G. Mbeki, ‘Govt. measures provoke Pondos to violence: police, riot vans, rushed to Bizana as white traders flee’, in *New Age*, Vol. 6, No. 19, 25 February 1960, p. 5; ‘Grim diary of death in Pondoland: 22 Pondos killed: 363 huts, stores burnt’, *Cape Times*, 2 December 1960.

where there is no calculated attempt to confront problems directly’ and ‘acting out the need disposition itself’ is the essential point.<sup>365</sup> This type of violence was thus void of any instrumental orientation as there was no discernible goal outside the immediate situation. Instrumentality could (and would) only be acquired once the violence became organised and disciplined.

## 4.2. The violence becomes organised

Events that transpired in the Isikelo location of the Bizana district were to trigger the wider revolt.<sup>366</sup> The Isikelo location was located fourteen miles from the Bizana village, situated on the road to Harding in Natal. On March 10 1960, Lieutenant Colonel C.K. Smith, Deputy Commissioner of the South African Police in the Transkei, reported to the Commissioner of the South African Police in Pretoria that three councillors of the Isikelo tribal authority had been assaulted by between 150 and 200 *kierie* wielding natives at the homestead of Sub-chief Mhlabuvelile Hlamandana<sup>367</sup> the day before. The councillors were Obadiah Pingama, Mobolana Nqagamatyane and Robert Godlimpi.<sup>368</sup>

On March 11 Smith travelled to the troubled location accompanied by the District Commandant at Kokstad, his District Officer, and sixteen white and five native constables. Smith found the location to be ‘quiet and peaceful’ and he interviewed Mhlabuvelile at his homestead. According to Smith’s report, Mhlabuvelile received word from a resident of his location on March 6 that there was going to be trouble on

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<sup>365</sup> J. Copelyn, *The Pondo revolt 1960*, pp. 34-35.

<sup>366</sup> W. Beinart & C. Bundy, ‘State intervention and rural resistance: the Transkei, 1900-1965’, in M.A. Klein (ed.), *Peasants in Africa: historical and contemporary perspectives*, p. 307.

<sup>367</sup> Mhlabuvelile, a member of the royal family of Hlamandana and a direct descendent of Faku, was appointed head of the Isikelo Tribal Authority, and therefore as Sub-chief of the Pondos resident in the five locations that resorted under it. These were the Isikelo, Esikumbeni, Enkantolo, Izilangwe, Amantshangase and Amandela locations. (Cape Town Archive Repository, 1/BIZ, 11.6.1960, *Disturbances in the district of Bizana and Eastern Pondoland 1960*, E.M. Warren, pp. 4-8)

<sup>368</sup> National Archive Repository Pretoria, SAP 596, 14/3/1960, *Druktelegram van Luitenant-Kolonel C.K. Smith aan die Kommissaris van die Suid-Afrikaanse Polisie, Pretoria: Onlus: Bizana*. The description of events that are presented on the next three pages is based on this source.

the occasion of the next tribal moot. Mhlabuvelile did not know what form the ‘trouble’ would take and did nothing to prevent it.

On March 9, the appointed day of the tribal moot, Mhlabuvelile sat in front of his hut at his homestead as this was where the moot was to take place. From his vantage point he saw a large body of tribesmen approaching. They briefly stopped behind a hill roughly 250 paces from his homestead and then proceeded towards his homestead. Given the fact that he was forewarned this was very likely to have frightened Mhlabuvelile since the sight caused him to flee into his hut. He then sent his secretary to hide in a hut around 300 paces from there and ordered him not come out until things had quietened down.

From the relative safety of his hut Mhlabuvelile sent his brother to ask the approaching tribesmen what they wanted. They bluntly refused to answer the questions put to them by his brother and grimly proceeded in the direction of his homestead. Mhlabuvelile’s brother reported this to him. Once again he sent his brother to ask the reason for their imminent visit, and again his brother received no answer. Clearly having no other option, Mhlabuvelile left his hut, asked the tribesmen the purpose of their visit and, upon receiving no answer, saddled his horse and rode to the hill where the tribesmen had stopped to check if they had concealed weapons at that spot. He found none.

When he returned to his homestead the tribal authority councillors were busy arriving for the moot that was due to take place. Three men who were residents of his location, but strangely unknown to him, then asked Mhlabuvelile why Saul Mabude – secretary to paramount chief Botha Sigcau – visited Mhlabuvelile’s homestead the week before. They also wanted to know who nominated the new tribal councillors to their positions and how their names appeared on the list supplied by magistrate. They also alleged that Mhlabuvelile had sold himself to the government, that he had sold the Isikelo location to the authorities, and that they were consequently going to lose their land as a result. Hence, they thought that Mhlabuvelile was ‘killing the location’.



Someone in the back of the audience then supposedly shouted ‘what must be done to the councillors that are killing their people?’ whereupon the crowd answered ‘they must be killed!’ Mhlabuvelile supposedly also did not know who called out these words. The crowd now started to attack the councillors. Completely incongruous with his earlier act of cowardice (hiding in his hut and sending his brother to confront the crowd on his behalf) Mhlabuvelile claimed that he now tried to defend his hapless councillors by standing with legs spread over one of the fallen – thus protecting him. He purported to have been hit on the forearm and the side while standing thus, and to have ripped a *kierie* out of someone’s hand that was aiming a blow to his head.

He then called to his supporters for his *kieries* to be brought to him and yelled ‘if you want to kill someone you will have to kill me first!’ At this, the crowd started to dissipate. The wounded were carried to a hut belonging to Mhlabuvelile’s mother where they received attention. From there they were later driven to Bizana hospital in Mhlabuvelile’s secretary’s car. They had numerous wounds that needed attention and their conditions were described by medical personnel as ‘relatively serious’. At the hospital the councillors made sworn statements to the police. These statements led to the issuing of warrants for the arrest of two of the attackers.

Colonel Smith found many parts of Mhlabuvelile’s account unreliable. He listed many reasons for this belief. Firstly, most of the people present when the councillors were attacked were from Mhlabuvelile’s location. It was consequently very strange that he claimed to recognise none of them. Secondly, when Smith arrived at Mhlabuvelile’s homestead the latter had made no effort to establish who were responsible for and who were present during the attack.

Thirdly, it struck Smith as strange that Mhlabuvelile was not personally assaulted (his very slight injuries resulted from blows aimed at others) as he was the one accused of selling the people’s land from underneath them. It would only be logical to assume that the people would vent their anger primarily at him. Fourthly, it made little sense that, immediately after the attack, Mhlabuvelile went to a *lobola* ceremony where members of his location were present.

In the fifth place, he found it strange that Mhlabuvelile never explained the reason for Saul Mabude's visit to his people. Mabude visited Mhlabuvelile the week before to instruct him to hand over the torts that he had collected and had supposedly been keeping for himself illegally. In the sixth place, Smith also found it odd that Mhlabuvelile did not tell his people to leave their weapons outside of the area of the moot.

In the seventh place, a group of tribesmen who were interviewed on March 11 was too afraid to speak openly about what had occurred in the previous couple of days. Lastly, the magistrate of Bizana, Eric Warren, corroborated Smith's belief as he made it clear to Smith that he was convinced that it was Mhlabuvelile himself that encouraged the residents of his location to attack the councillors.<sup>369</sup>

What makes this incident significant is not how lieutenant-colonel Smith expertly exposed the half truths in sub-headman Mhlabuvelile's story, but rather how well it illustrates the predicament in which many local government employees in the reserves found themselves to be after the imposition of the Bantu Authorities system. Headmen and chiefs increasingly found themselves in intercalary or inter-hierarchical roles – as Hammond-Tooke calls them – due to the fact that they became the confluence of two conflicting systems of role expectations, which often involved them in unsolvable quandaries. Three basic courses of action were open to them: they could act as 'loyal' representatives of white bureaucracy, support the people in opposition to commands from above, or side-step the conflict altogether.<sup>370</sup>

Govan Mbeki described the effects of this pattern on the general populace as early as September 1960, when he reported that people were divided into three groups, namely those who clubbed around government chiefs for bribes, those who remained neutral for fear of antagonising chiefs, and the majority who resisted Bantu Authorities because

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<sup>369</sup> National Archive Repository Pretoria, SAP 596, 14/3/1960, *Druktelegram van Luitenant-Kolonel C.K. Smith aan die Kommissaris van die Suid-Afrikaanse Polisie, Pretoria: Onlus: Bizana.*

<sup>370</sup> See p. 34 and p. 37 above.

of the hardship it brought to the peasants.<sup>371</sup> The case of sub-headman Mhlabuvelile shows just how precarious this situation and its effects could be for headmen and chiefs. This seems especially true when one considers that only 1.9% of residents of the Isikelo location supported Bantu Authorities and that 6%, 0%, 1.2%, 10.9% and 5.5% of the Esikumbeni-, Enkantolo-, Izilangwe-, Amantshangase-, and Amandela locations respectively favoured of this system of governance.<sup>372</sup>

After the incident at Mhlabuvelile's homestead the rebels retreated into the hills to hold meetings. The *modus operandi* of the 'Hill Committees',<sup>373</sup> that grew out of these meetings would be to put the homesteads of suspected traitors, collaborators or spies to the torch, forcing them to flee.<sup>374</sup> This lent structure to the revolt and it thus started to become organised. The hut burnings that followed in the Isikelo location were mainly aimed at 'Bantu Authorities chiefs and their lackeys'. A report in the *New Age* stressed, however, that at 'no stage were crops and cattle destroyed' and that 'women and children were always warned if huts were going to be burnt.'<sup>375</sup>

One of the very first people to suffer at the hands of the arsonists and their tactics was the secretary to paramount chief Botha Sigcau, Saul Mabude. On Saturday March 19 a war cry was sent out and on Sunday March 20 Mabude's house – in the Isikelo location of the Bizana district – was put to the torch by hundreds of Pondos.<sup>376</sup> Mabude seems to have been singled out for special treatment as he was a particularly hated figure. 'His beautiful home of two substantial houses and six huts was burnt to the ground while all livestock found at his home was killed and the green mealies on his lands completely destroyed. The people were singing "Mabude you have brought us stock culling and fencing"' while they put his homestead to the torch. 'Mabude, who fled on an

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<sup>371</sup> G. Mbeki, 'Civil war in the Transkei: murder and arson as people fight Bantu Authorities', *New Age*, Vol. 6, No. 28, 22 September 1960, p. 1.

<sup>372</sup> Cape Town Archive Repository, 1/BIZ, 11.6.1960, *Disturbances in the district of Bizana and Eastern Pondoland 1960*, E.M. Warren, pp. 4-8

<sup>373</sup> Hill Committees were also called 'Intaba' or 'Mountain' committees, the 'Congo' or 'Ikongo', and the 'Pondoland National Committee' by those of a more nationalist disposition. See 'Was it kidnapping?', *New Age*, Vol. 7, No. 23, 23 March 1961, p. 5.

<sup>374</sup> W. Beinart & C. Bundy, 'State intervention and rural resistance: the Transkei, 1900-1965', in M.A. Klein (ed.), *Peasants in Africa: historical and contemporary perspectives*, p. 308.

<sup>375</sup> 'Pondos rebel against Bantu Authorities', *New Age*, Vol. 6, No. 26, 8 September 1960, p. 6.

<sup>376</sup> G. Mbeki, 'Thousands of men and women have been jailed ... Transkei emergency is 1 year old', in *New Age*, Vol. 8, No. 6, 23 November 1961, p. 4.

unsaddled and unbridled horse, is reported to have escaped death by a hair's breadth.' After the incident he was guarded by police and no one was allowed nearby.<sup>377</sup> This established the pattern for the resistance. In fact, 'from then to the end of November, when the emergency was declared, the police failed to cope with the wrath of the people.'<sup>378</sup> The homestead of councillor Isaiah Xaka was burnt down on March 23. The homestead of headman Sigwinta Hlamandana of the Esikumbeni location followed on April 20, 1960.<sup>379</sup>

According to magistrate Warren the Isikelo Pondos then sent emissaries to all the other locations in the district in an attempt to subvert them and to enlist their support. Thereafter 'cells' sprang up in each location and a determined effort was made by the rebels to subvert the whole district and to obtain the support of every single Pondo in the district. The rebels attempted to obtain support by persuasion but, when this did not have the desired effect, they resorted to intimidation.<sup>380</sup> A *New Age* journalist described the activities and functions of these organisations:

*...the village courts or hill committees grew up. Hut burnings of B.A. [Bantu Authorities] heads were a warning to them and others that pro-Government men were outcasts. Men who continued to work the machinery of the B.A. were sentenced by the village courts in their absence. Fines were collected from the 'Impimpi' were used to pay for the defence of those Pondos charged with the burnings.*<sup>381</sup>

Warren elaborated:

*The activities of each rebel 'cell' in each location followed the same pattern:-*

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<sup>377</sup> 'Pondos revolt against Bantu Authorities: chief's home razed to the ground', *New Age*, Vol. 6, No. 24, 31 March 1960.

<sup>378</sup> G. Mbeki, 'Thousands of men and women have been jailed ... Transkei emergency is 1 year old', in *New Age*, Vol. 8, No. 6, 23 November 1961, p. 4.

<sup>379</sup> Cape Town Archive Repository, 1/BIZ, 11.6.1960, *Disturbances in the district of Bizana and Eastern Pondoland 1960*, E.M. Warren, p. 28.

<sup>380</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>381</sup> 'All Pondoland awaits commission's report next week: new outbreaks possible unless Bantu Authorities scrapped', *New Age*, Vol. 6, No. 30, 6 October 1960, p. 4.

- (1) *Illegal meetings were held on the tops of high hills. These meetings were held during the day, at first, and later on at night.*
- (2) *The people were threatened that their kraals would be burned if they failed to attend the illegal meetings.*
- (3) *An amount of one shilling was collected from each person for 'the defence fund'. If a man refused to pay one shilling then he was threatened that his kraal would be burned.*
- (4) *Prominent people who had assisted the government in any way in the past were fined £5. If they refused to pay they were told that their kraals would be burned.*
- (5) *Even though a man paid his £5 fine he was informed that this would not prevent his kraal being burned. He was told that he was required to prove his loyalty to the rebel movement by attending every meeting and by burning the kraals of Government supporters when he was told to do so.*
- (6) *When the rebels went to burn the kraals of loyal Natives every single person who had joined the rebel movement was required to become a member of the burning party. If he refused to do so, his own kraal would be burned.*
- (7) *Each 'cell' in each location had its own 'people's court', its own leader, who was both prosecutor and judge, and its own treasurer.*
- (8) *The National Headquarters of the Rebel movement was at Ndlovu Hill in Entsimbini Location. All the rebels from all over the district were expected to attend the meetings at Ndlovu Hill. From those meetings each 'cell' returned to its own location to carry out the decisions made at the National Headquarters.<sup>382</sup>*

By the beginning of October there were burnt homesteads in the Bizana locations of Amagengane, Isikelo, Amanikwe, Emonti and Amadiba, and the *New Age* reported that three of the four biggest centres of Eastern Pondoland – namely Bizana, Lusikisiki and Flagstaff – had all but collapsed. The paper also speculated that the struggle was about to spread to the fourth centre, Tabankulu.<sup>383</sup> As late as November 29 lieutenant-colonel

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<sup>382</sup> Cape Town Archive Repository, 1/BIZ, 11.6.1960, *Disturbances in the district of Bizana and Eastern Pondoland 1960*, E.M. Warren, pp. 28-29.

<sup>383</sup> 'All Pondoland awaits commission's report next week: new outbreaks possible unless Bantu Authorities scrapped', *New Age*, Vol. 6, No. 30, 6 October 1960, p. 4.

C.K. Smith reported that in the eight preceding days 200 huts had been burnt, leaving 600 people homeless.<sup>384</sup>

After the attack at Mhlabuvelile's homestead, the torching of Mabude's homestead and the subsequent establishment of a 'Hill Committee' in Bizana a series of local 'Hill Committees' (all of which seem to have acknowledged the leadership of the committee in Bizana) sprang up over Eastern Pondoland. According to Beinart and Bundy:

*The committees held well-attended meetings, were sensitive to local opinion, and were able to direct and coordinate the political activities of large numbers; they levied taxes, dispensed justice, and devised policy. Their main tactics included attacks on the homes and persons of collaborators, boycotts of trading stores, large marches, and selective violence coupled with passive resistance.*<sup>385</sup>

In Bizana no taxes were paid until emergency regulations were passed by the government in November 1960, and the residents were forced to do so. The population census was also boycotted as no government agent – not even a census enumerator – dared enter the village on government business.<sup>386</sup>

Furthermore, a boycott of all white owned trading stores in Bizana was successfully organised and kept going for months. The boycott was a reaction to the report of the Van Heerden Commission of Inquiry into the disturbances in Eastern Pondoland in October 1960.<sup>387</sup>

Hill Committees also now started to take on overtly political and judicial dimensions as villagers set up their own hillside courts where they tried and sentenced pro-government chiefs and headmen (and collaborators), and settled disputes between

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<sup>384</sup> 'Grim diary of death in Pondoland: 22 Pondos killed: 363 huts, stores burnt', *Cape Times*, Friday, December 2, 1960.

<sup>385</sup> W. Beinart & C. Bundy, 'State intervention and rural resistance: the Transkei, 1900-1965', in M.A. Klein (ed.), *Peasants in Africa: historical and contemporary perspectives*, p. 308.

<sup>386</sup> 'All Pondoland awaits commission's report next week: new outbreaks possible unless Bantu Authorities scrapped', *New Age*, Vol. 6, No. 30, 6 October 1960, p. 4.

<sup>387</sup> This report will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

villagers. These village courts acted as a substitute for the Bantu Authorities setup. Because of Bantu Authorities, chiefs or headmen who became part of the Bantu Authorities system were branded stooges or *impimpi*. These ‘*abangcatshi*’ (traitors) or ‘*abathengisi*’ (sell-outs) were summoned to the villagers’ courts to face charges of pro-government activities. Those who ignored the summons saw their homesteads burnt. These burnings were warnings that government men were outcasts from Pondo life and that they should leave the area.<sup>388</sup>

Someone accused by a village court of support of a Bantu Authority would be fined, and forgiven if repentant. But those who persisted in their support of Bantu Authorities were hounded from the villages.<sup>389</sup>

The rebel movement definitely had a religious slant to it. In fact, three of the ringleaders were evangelists. At the start of *Ikongo* meetings rebels prostrated themselves on the ground with their foreheads touching the ground. What’s more, they referred to their headquarters at Ndhlovu Hill as a ‘Holy Court’ and claimed to have found a list containing the names of tribal councillors that were to be burnt out under a stone. The believed that it was left there by a deity. Warren thought that some of them might have even believed that they were conducting a holy war.<sup>390</sup> This gives credence to Clifton Crais’ claims about a ‘politics of evil’ and how it shaped the political imagination and consciousness of South Africa’s ‘subaltern’ black population. It also seems to support Sean Redding’s ideas of how the Pondo people explained their material conditions in terms of spiritual beliefs that ‘strongly shaped the timing and the substance of the revolt.’ It also speaks of a people whose moral economy had been transgressed, and of how they reacted as a consequence.<sup>391</sup>

In the Lusikisiki district the activities of the Hill Committee included the killing of tribal authority councillor Celi and the torching of his homestead on May 25, 1960.

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<sup>388</sup> ‘All Pondoland awaits commission’s report next week: new outbreaks possible unless Bantu Authorities scrapped’, *New Age*, Vol. 6, No. 30, 6 October 1960, p. 4.

<sup>389</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>390</sup> Cape Town Archive Repository, 1/BIZ, 11.6.1960, *Disturbances in the district of Bizana and Eastern Pondoland 1960*, E.M. Warren, p. 33.

<sup>391</sup> See chapters 1 and 3 for a more in depth discussion of these concepts.

Later in the same day councillor Dana was wounded, and shots were reportedly fired at the police. The evening before, the homestead of councillor Mtankulu Mcamba, consisting of twelve huts, was burnt to the ground. The situation in the district was to stay 'very tense' for months thereafter.<sup>392</sup>

In the Flagstaff district the work of the Hill Committee reached a peak in November when Sub-chief Vukayibambe Sigcau (a brother of paramount chief Botha and the head of the Ntlenzi Tribal Authority) was murdered and his homestead of ten buildings destroyed.<sup>393</sup> Clifton Crais graphically, while taking some poetic licence and employing a vivid imagination, describes the events on that fateful Sunday night:

*“Here are people – they have come. You are going to die.” A crowd of nearly two hundred angry people stood near the doorway of the house of Chief Vukwayibambe Sigcau, brother of Paramount Chief Botha Sigcau and head of the Ntlenzi tribal authority in Flagstaff district, Pondoland, created under Bantu Authorities Act. It was a Sunday night, the evening of the Lord’s day... Mhlawa closed the door, turned on his heels and ran to the back of the house. “Wake up,” he shouted to Vukwayibambe. “The people have come ... Take the gun and shoot.” Someone shattered one of the windows. A shot rang out in the house. But the chief could not find his weapon. He had been deceived – a “young man has taken it away.”*

*Panicking, concerned with saving his own life as much as the chief’s, Mhlahlwa hid underneath the bed. The house, however, was on fire. Reaching the thatch from inside the broken window, someone had set fire to the roof. Composed enough to put on his overcoat and shoes, Vukwayibambe stepped through the entrance of his house to face his accusers.*

*“I am asking for forgiveness from your chiefs,” he pleaded to the crowd, affecting deference to the mob, “don’t kill me.”*

*Mkatazo, who stood just outside the door, screamed to the men: “here is Vukwayibambe.” A man of some forty-four years, Mkatazo gripped in his hand an axe or a knife used by workers to slice the tough cane on the sugar*

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<sup>392</sup> National Archive Repository, Pretoria, SAP 596, *Memorandum insake Bantoe-onluste te (1) Bizana en (2) Lusikisiki op 21.5.60.*

<sup>393</sup> ‘Murder of chief: 5 in court’, *Cape Times*, 21 December 1960; ‘Doodsvonnis vir 7 Pundos’, *Burger*, 22 September 1961.



*plantations of Natal. He struck Vukwayibambe as he stood outside his house. The weapon shattered the back of his skull, cutting a deep, mortal wound to the chief's brain.*

*Then Mkatazo, or someone else, took the chief's right hand and severed each of his fingers where they joined the palm; the rebels also cut off his left ear. Vukwayibambe's body lay crumpled in the mud. Blood gushed from his broken skull and the deep trauma to the brain, mixing with the rain and the soil. Mkatazo stood over the dying chief. "You have shitted now." "You are the man who" called "the police vans on us."<sup>394</sup>*

It seems fair to say that most of Eastern Pondoland had indeed been 'brought to its knees' by the organised and sustained efforts of the Hill Committees.

### 4.3. Doomed attempts at arbitration and reconciliation

The Pondos attempted to express their grievances to the government at a meeting at Ndhlovu Hill near Bizana. They were told to elect three spokesmen from amongst themselves to speak to the Chief Magistrate on their behalf. Before the three could have their interview, however, they were arrested.<sup>395</sup>

According to Eric Warren, the Bantu Affairs Commissioner of Bizana, Ndhlovu Hill was the 'National Headquarters of the Rebel movement' (see above). When he learnt that illegal meetings were being held there he claims to have tried to hold a meeting with the rebels to ascertain what their grievances were. He requested headman Gwebityala, in whose location Ndhlovu Hill was situated, to arrange a meeting. Despite Gwebityala being very uncooperative, Warren eventually managed to meet with the rebels on April 29, 1960.

On May 11, 1960 the rebels telephoned Warren from Ndhlovu store. They put an ultimatum to him: they demanded that he withdraw all police vans from the area, which

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<sup>394</sup> C. Crais, *The politics of evil: magic, state power, and the political imagination in South Africa*, pp. 178-179.

<sup>395</sup> 'Pondos rebel against Bantu Authorities', *New Age*, Vol. 6, No. 26, 8 September 1960, p. 3.

he answered he was unable to do. They then demanded that Warren and the policemen who were responsible for sending vans into the area come to Ndhlovu Hill to meet with them.

Warren now consulted the police and sought instructions from the Chief Magistrate in Umtata. They decided that the rebels were out to make trouble and in a truculent and demanding mood. He therefore refused to comply with the rebels' ultimatum. He decided to rather invite the rebels to send a delegation to Bizana to discuss the matter in his office. The rebels declined his invitation.

On Saturday May 21, 1960 the rebels once again held a meeting at Ndhlovu Hill. Warren received information that led him to believe that it would be decided at this meeting to burn the homesteads of the Tribal Authority councillors. He consequently decided to ask the District Commandant of the police at Kokstad to arrest the ringleaders. The Commandant replied that he could only do so once the burnings had taken place. This is exactly what happened next.

Warren believes that the rebel movement at this moment changed into a fully fledged rebellion against the government as law and order did not exist anymore, and the rebels assumed control of most of the district. He thought the police to be powerless to protect law abiding residents of Pondoland and that the rebels did exactly as they pleased.<sup>396</sup>

On July 6, 1960 a meeting was held at Ngquza Hill near the Holy Cross Mission Station in the Lusikisiki district. According to the *New Age* the meeting was convened because the Pondo people still wanted to present their case to the government. The meeting started at around midday. While people were gathering helicopters and a spotter plane approached over the hill.<sup>397</sup> [There were in fact two Harvard planes and one helicopter<sup>398</sup>]. The Pondo raised a white flag at this. Elijah Lande claimed that the flag was raised because the plane started to drop teargas bombs on the assembled

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<sup>396</sup> Cape Town Archive Repository, 1/BIZ, 11.6.1960, *Disturbances in the district of Bizana and Eastern Pondoland 1960*, E.M. Warren, pp. 27-31.

<sup>397</sup> 'Pondos rebel against Bantu Authorities', *New Age*, Vol. 6, No. 26, 8 September 1960, p. 6.

<sup>398</sup> National Archive Repository, Pretoria, SAP 596, 14.6.1960, *Use of teargas: Lusikisiki*.

crowd and the people associated the red colour of the plane with blood, they consequently raised the white flag to indicate that they came in peace).<sup>399</sup>

Sixteen vans filled with armed police then reportedly arrived on either side of the meeting place (seven on one side and nine on the other). Helicopters simultaneously landed more men. The men then converged onto the meeting at the bottom of the hill. Mr. Johnson – a coloured man accepted by the Pondo through association – stood up and held a white flag high. He was shot through the leg and again when he fell, the last shot killing him. In the meantime a veld fire had broken out, possibly as a result of the teargas dropped by the spotter plane. The meeting scattered and police opened fire. Eleven Pondos were killed and fifteen seriously wounded. Twenty one were arrested. The dead were buried at the bottom of the hill.<sup>400</sup>

As could be expected the official version of events markedly differed from that of the *New Age* as related above. According to a police memorandum members of the force just so happened to come across<sup>401</sup> an illegal meeting at Ngquza Hill, which they attempted to break up. Shots aimed at the police supposedly rang out from the crowd and the police, in self defence, returned fire. Eleven Pondos were reported dead and thirteen wounded. No policemen were hurt. The situation in Eastern Pondoland was reported to escalate after this incident, ‘arson and violence becoming almost daily occurrences.’<sup>402</sup>

The issue was hotly disputed and at an inquest into the events. George Muller, Queen’s Council, argued that the police operation was punitive and not permissible in South African law.<sup>403</sup> Albie Sachs, who appeared on behalf of the relatives of the Pondos killed at Ngquza Hill, submitted to the court that at no time were the police in any

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<sup>399</sup> ‘Pondo sê wit vlag is gehys na ‘bloed’ in die lug’, *Burger*, 29 Oktober 1960.

<sup>400</sup> ‘Pondos rebel against Bantu Authorities’, *New Age*, Vol. 6, No. 26, 8 September 1960, p. 6.

<sup>401</sup> The Afrikaans memo reads: ‘Op 6.6.60 het die polisie afgekom op ‘n onwettige vergadering te Ngusa Hill ... en het probeer om dit op te breek.’ [On 6.6.60 the police came across / stumbled upon an illegal meeting at Ngquza Hill ... and attempted to break it up.] See National Archive Repository, Pretoria, SAP 597, 11.1.1961, *Memorandum. Onluste: Pondoland*, p. 4.

<sup>402</sup> National Archive Repository, Pretoria, SAP 597, 11.1.1961, *Memorandum. Onluste: Pondoland*, p. 4.

<sup>403</sup> ‘Pondo operation was punitive, Q.C. argues’, *Cape Argus*, 29 October 1960.

physical danger and that some people were shot down as they fled from a valley clearing near the hill.<sup>404</sup>

Mhlatwana Quantsi, a Pondo who was shot at Ngquza Hill and lost his right leg as a consequence, gave evidence to the effect that he was sitting down when he saw several groups of policemen descending the hill. He said that teargas that had been dropped by an aircraft that flew by brought tears to his eyes. While tears were streaming from his eyes, four policemen approached over a small rise and opened fire on the Pondo. Quantsi waved his hands and shouted ‘no, we are just talking, not fighting!’ As he squatted a bullet passed through his lower leg, shattering the bone and penetrating his right upper thigh. He fell and lost consciousness. Eventually, when the police left, Quantsi still lay there. He was later taken to the hospital, but it was too late to save his leg.

Another Pondo, Gybilisi Basa, showed the court entrance- and exit holes in his shirt and vest where a bullet had ripped through his midriff. He said he was shot by the police and that he spent six weeks in hospital as a result. He said that he was shot by four policemen while he sat in a clearing. While Basa fled the scene, the heel of his right shoe was shot off as he ran into the bushes.<sup>405</sup>

In a very emotional letter about the incident at Ngquza Hill, addressed to Secretary of the Department of Justice in Pretoria, a Pondo who witnessed the event wrote:

*...worse still [was the] mockeries made by your police to the wives of the dead [that were] beyond humane “go and fetch your dogs we have killed them.”<sup>406</sup>*

In February 13, 1961 Magistrate W.H. Olivier gave his findings at the inquest on the deaths of eleven Pondos at Lusikisiki. He found that the firing of Sten-gun bullets by Sergeant J.J. Fourie at Ngquza Hill were unjustified and excessive, even reckless, in spite of alleged provocation. He also found that the firing of 46 individual shots in

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<sup>404</sup> ‘Bombs dropped on Pondos ‘were tear-gas’’, *Cape Times*, 26 October 1960.

<sup>405</sup> ‘Pondo says police shot him as he wept from gas’, *Cape Times*, 29 October 1960.

<sup>406</sup> National Archive Repository, Pretoria, SAP 596, 8.6.60, *Shooting by the S.A.P. 22 dead.*

approximately ten minutes by Constable J.C. Kleynhans had been unjustified. He noted that the unlawful killings *prima facie* amounted to culpable homicide. Olivier found, however, that the shooting in self defence by Constable F.A. Morrow, Constable C. Van Staden and Sergeant B.D. Dreyer into the bush, from where the Pondo were firing at them from concealed positions, was neither excessive nor unreasonable and appeared justified under the circumstances.<sup>407</sup>

On September 24, 1960 Suza Baloyi, who was very active in the revolt, addressed a meeting at the Nkunzimbini location of the Lusikisiki district. Here it was decided that a period of mourning would be instated for the victims of Ngquza Hill, that all white trading stores in the area would be boycotted, that a boycott of the government would be organised, that no taxes would be paid and that telephone wires would be cut as of December 1960.<sup>408</sup>

#### 4.4. The government reacts

The first concerted government reaction to the rebellion in Eastern Pondoland came in February of 1960 when police reinforcements were sent to Bizana from Kokstad.

In June of 1960 the government decided to put an end to hilltop meetings by force.<sup>409</sup> As of this moment, stereotyped violence became the order of the day. The brutality becomes clearly evident when one considers the heavy handed suppression of the meeting at Ngquza Hill in June 1960.

Before the announcement of the findings of the Van Heerden Commission of Inquiry into the unrest in Eastern Pondoland, police units were seen 'streaming into Bizana',<sup>410</sup> in October of 1960. A special firearms unit in four vehicles also arrived in the area.

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<sup>407</sup> 'Shooting at Pundos by two policemen 'unjustified'', *Cape Argus*, 13 February 1961.

<sup>408</sup> National Archive Repository, Pretoria, SAP 597, 7.12.1960, *Onluste: Pondoland-Oos, Alwyn Petrus Burger verklaar*.

<sup>409</sup> J.A. Copelyn, *The Mpondo revolt 1960*, p. 69.

<sup>410</sup> 'Police stream into Pondo troubled area', *Cape Times*, 5 October 1960.

This unit under Captain Gerardy had as its purpose to give special attention to the possible illicit smuggling of firearms into Pondoland.<sup>411</sup>

The Van Heerden Commission reported its findings to the people in Bizana and Lusikisiki in October of 1960. It found that the Pondos had some legitimate grievances, but suggested no real tangible changes. It furthermore stated that the people had been incited by outside agitators. The Pondo were understandably infuriated, and a boycott of all white owned trading stores in Bizana, that lasted for a number of months, ensued. Arson and violence also continued.

On November 11 Proclamation Nr. 400 of 1960 was published. This made meetings of more than ten people in the Transkei illegal. It also restricted the movement of people in the area in that it established controls as to who may enter and leave the reserve. It gave special powers to the police, army and government appointed chiefs and headmen. It instituted measures to trace ‘offenders’ and gave special powers of arrest and supplied indemnity to those acting on behalf of the government. This was supplemented by Proclamation Nr. R.413 on December 14, 1960, which extended the powers of Native Commissioners, and extended the police’s power to arrest and detain residents of the Transkei. The reserve thus effectively became a police state.

Soon hereafter the existing police force was supplemented by two mobile units of the army who was to supply ‘unlimited support in scouting and communication systems’ and would also help with ‘cleaning up work’. The mobile units travelled in Saracen armoured vehicles, which may well be likened to tanks.<sup>412</sup>

Furthermore, home guards were established to protect chiefs and some headmen. They were to be assisted by twenty specially vetted and trained sergeants of the police. A mounted unit was also sent to Pondoland to try and negotiate the difficult terrain in the area.<sup>413</sup>

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<sup>411</sup> *Ibid*; National Archive Repository, Pretoria, SAP 597, *Memorandum: onluste: Pondoland*, p. 5.

<sup>412</sup> National Archive Repository, Pretoria, SAP 597, *Memorandum: onluste: Pondoland*, p. 5.

<sup>413</sup> *Ibid*.

In December the press was banned from Pondoland. This measure was universally criticized and was even lamented by the pro-government *Die Burger*.<sup>414</sup> The government's heavy handed tactics reverberated internationally; as far afield as Britain, China (Radio Peking), the Soviet Union (Radio Moscow), and the Congo (Radio Brazzaville).<sup>415</sup>

A total of 4 771 people were estimated to have been arrested and detained under the emergency regulations. Of this number only 2 067 were brought to trial by January 1961.<sup>416</sup> Opponents of the government like chief Mhlabuvelile Hlamandana were deported to places as far afield as Groblersdal in present-day Limpopo.<sup>417</sup> What is more, the *New Age* reported that government chiefs, aided by the police and home guards, started to employ starvation tactics and that they conducted 'a reign of terror'.<sup>418</sup>

The anthropologist Monica Hunter, who had written extensively on the people of Pondoland and who had lived in the area for a long time, wrote a particularly scathing letter to the *Cape Times*. She likened the government action in Pondoland to that of the Nazis under Hitler:

*I believe that a technique of terrorism has been developed and is being applied to one area after another. It involves setting African against African and goading 'Bantu Authorities' and their 'bodyguards', supported by special police, to intimidate the population.*<sup>419</sup>

The rebellion was effectively suppressed by February of 1961, and the army left the area soon thereafter. But it should not be surprising that an industrialised state, once it really set its mind to it, managed to suppress a relatively isolated rural rebellion. What should be surprising is that a determined and resilient 'peasant' population managed to

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<sup>414</sup> "'Burger' criticizes press ban on Pondoland', *Natal Mercury*, 7 December 1960.

<sup>415</sup> 'Letterbox: Overseas broadcasts about Pondos', *New Age*, Vol. 7, No. 12, 5 January 1961, p. 2.

<sup>416</sup> 'Contradictory reports about Pondos', *Cape Times*, 28 January 1961.

<sup>417</sup> 'Many banished in 1960: some released, sent into exile again', *New Age*, Vol. 7, No. 14, 19 January 1961, p. 4.

<sup>418</sup> 'Starvation tactics in Pondoland', *New Age*, Vol. 7, No. 15, 26 January 1961, p. 1.

<sup>419</sup> 'Technique of terrorism in South Africa', *Cape Times*, 13 December 1961.

organise themselves so very well and to hold their own for so long against such brutal state suppression.



## 5. RURAL DIFFERENTIATION

Conventional wisdom dictates that the most concerted resistance to betterment and rehabilitation in the reserves during the 1950s and early 1960s came from ‘middle migrants’ or ‘peasant migrants’ who stood to lose most from the changes wrought by these schemes. It follows logically that the poorest inhabitants of the reserves (who were more likely to be landless) did not always support this struggle.

Seeing that resistance to betterment- and rehabilitation schemes was a key element that sparked off the revolt in Eastern Pondoland in 1960, it seems possible to test the above hypothesis by determining the class positions of those Pondos who stayed loyal to paramount chief Botha Sigcau during the course of the revolt. I attempt to do this by analyzing the reported losses incurred by those who had their dwellings burnt down (because they were considered loyal to Sigcau) by the *Ikongo* movement in the Bizana district (the epicenter of the revolt) between March and December 1960.

This specific data set is utilised because it represents a relatively complete set of records submitted to the magistrate at Bizana that describe the losses incurred during the period. What was stated in these records was in most cases corroborated by the Bizana police who investigated all cases of arson. They were also frequently reported on by the newspaper press.

It must be noted that only one of the lists described included any cattle. This is important because in traditional Mpondo society, cattle were essential to rural production and the process of social reproduction: cattle were of primary economic importance because it was the Mpondos’ favoured store of wealth and their preferred method of payment; it was used to satisfy sexual needs (legal marriages couldn’t take place without the passage of cattle); races were held using oxen; cattle were slaughtered and sacrificed for ritual purposes; and wealth and status were measured by the quantity of cattle a man possessed – the more cattle a man possessed, the richer he was

considered to be.<sup>420</sup> Nonetheless, one does get a limited impression of levels of rural differentiation when one considers the losses reported by the 36 men described below. What's more, it was mentioned earlier that the *New Age* reported that cattle and crops were not harmed during the arson campaign. This seems to be true in all cases except for that of Saul Mabude.

## 5.1. Hypothesis<sup>421</sup>

The data list claims, for property destroyed during the revolt, of a certain part – to be called group A – of the Pondoland community during the time concerned. This list of claims can be used as proxy for the wealth of the part of the community in which I am interested. Thus it is natural to have as null hypothesis that the wealth distribution of group A is the same as that of the Pondo community. The idea is to use statistical methodology to test the null hypothesis. An alternative hypothesis is thus required. The alternative hypothesis is that the middle class (or the 'middle peasantry') is missing from group A.

I need a statistical quantity such that the hypotheses above are at opposite ends of the scale of values that this quantity could assume. Here I choose the Gini<sup>422</sup> coefficient, a measure of inequality in a population of values. Small values of the Gini coefficient indicate equality, and large values inequality. In my case, values of a Gini coefficient larger than that of the broad Transkeian population would, if large enough, favour the alternative hypothesis over the null hypothesis.

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<sup>420</sup> M. Hunter., *Reaction to Conquest: Effects of Contact with Europeans on the Pondo of South Africa*, pp. 67 – 69; W. Beinart, 'Labour Migrancy and Rural Production: Pondoland c. 1910 – 1950', in P. Mayer (ed.), *Black Villagers in an Industrial Society: Anthropological Perspectives on Labour Migration in South Africa*, p. 84.

<sup>421</sup> I am very much indebted to Mr. A. van Zyl, a friend who just so happens to also be a mathematician, for his patient advice and capable assistance with this chapter.

<sup>422</sup> A weakness of this calculation is that I am interested in the absence of a middle class, whereas the Gini coefficient measures inequality and this may not be exactly the same thing. Thus, using a different quantity (metric), with the statistical precautions kept in mind, may enable me to reject the null hypothesis. However, given the paucity of the data set this is not very likely.

To reject the null hypothesis, on a so called 5 percent level, entails that one gets the observed statistical quantity, and finds that it is so large that, if the null hypothesis were true, this quantity would be smaller with 95 percent probability.

## 5.2. The data set: following the arsonists' trail

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of March 1960 **Saul Mabude**'s kraal, in the Isikelo Location of the Bizana District, was burnt to the ground.<sup>423</sup> Mabude was born in or around 1898, completed a university diploma in Bantu Studies (Civil Service Law), served as Secretary to Paramount Chief Botha Sigcau since 1939 and as a member of the Tribal Authority, and was a Methodist preacher.<sup>424</sup> Mabude also owned the Mlacu butchery in the Esikumbeni Location of the Bizana District.<sup>425</sup> After his homestead was torched he reported losses consisting of 1 kraal and 8 huts (including furniture, clothing, household effects, farming implements, a library, 4 pigs and a number of fowls). He estimated that the losses he had incurred amounted to £2 500.<sup>426</sup>

On the night of the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March 1960 the homestead of **Isaiah Xaka**, in the Esikumbeni Location of the Bizana District, was put to the torch. Xaka reported losses of 1 kraal (consisting of 5 huts, furniture, clothing, household effects, farming implements and a library). He estimated that his losses amounted to £182=18=6d.<sup>427</sup> On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April a coffee shop and 4 huts that belonged to Xaka were also razed.<sup>428</sup> Xaka was born in around 1896, was educated as a teacher (thus finished Std. 8), was a member of the Tribal Authority (he served as a District Counsellor), and owned a rural trading store. He was also a Methodist preacher.<sup>429</sup>

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<sup>423</sup> National Archives Repository, Pretoria, SAP 623, 21.4.1960, *Report from the station commander Bizana to District Commandant, Kokstad.*

<sup>424</sup> Cape Town Archives Repository, 1/BIZ, N1/10/3/5/10, *Passes: Exemptions: Saul Mabude.*

<sup>425</sup> Cape Town Archives Repository, 1/BIZ, N2/4/3-124, *Rural trading and business sites: Saul Mabude (Mlacu Butchery).*

<sup>426</sup> National Archives Repository, Pretoria, SAP 623, 21.4.1960, *Report from the station commander Bizana to District Commandant, Kokstad.*

<sup>427</sup> National Archives Repository, Pretoria, SAP 623.

<sup>428</sup> Cape Town Archives Repository, 1/BIZ, 6/48, C9/6/7, *Disturbances in the District of Bizana.*

<sup>429</sup> Cape Town Archives Repository, 1/BIZ, N1/10/3/32/10, *Passes: Exemptions: Isaiah Xaka.*

On the night of the 20<sup>th</sup> of April 1960 the homestead of **Headman Sigwinta Hlamandane**, in the Esikumbeni Location of the Bizana District, was burnt to the ground. Two kraals consisting of 13 huts were destroyed.<sup>430</sup>

On the night of the 5<sup>th</sup> of May 1960 **Sub Headman Mankofu Gaxa**'s homestead, in the Esikumbeni Location of the Bizana District, was razed. Three huts and household effects were consumed by the fire.<sup>431</sup>

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of May 1960 the homestead of **Sub-Chief** and Member of the Tribal Authority, **Makasonke Sigcau**, was burnt to the ground in the Amandengane Location of the Bizana District. Six huts to an estimated value of £200 were destroyed by the fire.<sup>432</sup> Makasonke was a half brother of paramount chief Botha Sigcau. It was alleged that he abused his judicial powers and suspected that he was open to bribery and that by misusing the powers conferred on him he took money from the people, which he used for his own purposes.<sup>433</sup>

On the night of the 21<sup>st</sup> of May 1960 the homestead of **Headman Meje Galankulu**, in the Amangutyana Location of the District Bizana, was put to the torch. Two houses and three huts to the value of £780 were destroyed.<sup>434</sup>

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of May 1960 the homestead (consisting of 7 huts) of a suspected *impimpi* and supporter of Chief Mbungwa Langasiki, **Ndlanganyana Mvunyiswa**, was burnt to the ground in the Entsimbisi Location of the Bizana District. According to the police report, Mvunyiswa's total losses amounted to £219=6=6d.<sup>435</sup> Mvunyiswa later made a list that detailed some of the losses that he had incurred (that came to a total of £197=19=9d). What is interesting about this list is that Mvunyiswa not only tallied all his household possessions, but also submitted as part of the list a set of calculations of

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<sup>430</sup> National Archives Repository, Pretoria, SAP 623, 21.4.1960, *Report from the station commander Bizana to District Commandant, Kokstad.*

<sup>431</sup> National Archives Repository, Pretoria, SAP 623.

<sup>432</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>433</sup> Cape Town Archive Repository, 1/BIZ, 11.6.1960, *Disturbances in the district of Bizana and Eastern Pondoland 1960, E.M. Warren, p. 34.*

<sup>434</sup> National Archives Repository, Pretoria, SAP 623.

<sup>435</sup> National Archives Repository, Pretoria, SAP 623.

the construction costs of 3 of his huts.<sup>436</sup> This included the erection of walls (£1=10=0d, £1=5=0d and £1=15=0 for the three huts respectively); structural poles (15=0d, 15=0d and 18=0 for the three huts respectively); thatching grass and the costs of thatching (£3=5=0d, £3=10=0d and £1=10=0d, and £2=10=0d and £1=15=0d for the three huts respectively); nails (3=0d, 3=0d and 6=0d for the three huts respectively); and rope (12=6d in the case of the last house). If Mvunyiswa was correct in his estimations, the construction of a hut could be considered to cost roughly in the order of £4.

It was only possible to establish the complete household contents of one of Mvunyiswa's huts. This consisted of a cupboard (£2=10=0d), washing basin (£4=0d), tray (4=0d), cups (to a total value of 9=0d), a teapot (13=0d), two pairs of trousers (£3=15=0d), shirts (to a total value of 15=0d), vests (to a total value of 4=0d), and mealies (to a value of £24=0=0d).<sup>437</sup> If one considers that this list represents the content of only one of Mvunyiswa's seven huts, it can safely be assumed that he was a relatively successful peasant producer. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of September 1960 the Magistrate of Bizana sent a list of additional damages claimed by Mvunyiswa to the Chief Magistrate, Umtata. These totalled £21=6=9d and included 2 pairs of shoes (at £2=10=0d each), 4 blankets (to a total value of £7=5=0d), a lamp (13=0d), 1 big and 1 small axe (17=0d and 8=0d), a bush knife (4=9d), a sickle (2=6d), a hat (£1=2=6d), a brush (1=6d), 2 belts (10=0d each), an umbrella (12=6d), 2 'callabages' (5=0d each), and 1 'Tunga' (6=0d).<sup>438</sup>

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May 1960 the homestead of **Headman Koster Mbalwa**, in the Amanikwe Location of the Bizana District, was put to the torch. It was alleged that he extorted money from his people by misusing the powers. He reported losses of 1 hut which was valued at £40. However, Mbalwa managed to chase the mob away and his

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<sup>436</sup> I am indebted to my colleagues Vuyo Kuboni, Palesa Mphuthing and Sthembiso Msweli for their aid in deciphering and translating a series of scribbled lists from isiXhosa to English.

<sup>437</sup> Cape Town Archives Repository, 1/BIZ, 6/48, C9/6/7, *Disturbances in the District of Bizana: damages claimed by Ndlanganyana Mvunyiswa of the Amangutyana Tribal Authority*, 6.08.1960.

<sup>438</sup> Cape Town Archives Repository, 1/BIZ, 6/48, C9/6/7, *Disturbances in the District of Bizana: additional damages claimed by Ndlanganyana Mvunyiswa: Ntsimbisi Location*, 6.09.1960.

loss consequently doesn't reflect the total value of his property/assets.<sup>439</sup> Mbalwa was appointed head of the Amanikwe Tribal Authority in 1959, and as such was responsible for "civil and criminal jurisdiction, land administration, education, development of a parochial nature, combating soil erosion, agricultural shows, farmers associations, crop growing competitions, destruction of vermin, eradication of weeds, control of grass burning, water supplies, registration of work seekers, registration of births and deaths, rules: criminal sanctions, prevention of cruelty to animals, pounds."<sup>440</sup>

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May 1960 the homestead, consisting of 1 hut and 4 square buildings, belonging to **Samuel Mkizwana** of the Amankanyayo Location of the Bizana District were razed. The reported losses amounted to £350,<sup>441</sup> although Mkizwana later claimed losses amounting to £400. Mkizwana was a Counsellor in the Amapisi Tribal Authority under Sub-chief Xatakile and a Christian minister.<sup>442</sup>

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May 1960 the homestead of **Charlie Cele**, in the Amangutyana Location of the Bizana District, was burnt down. Five huts to the reported value of £900 were destroyed in the fire.<sup>443</sup> Cele was a member of the district council and owned a butchery in the Kanyayo Location (he received a butcher's licence in 1946 and completed the building in 1952).<sup>444</sup>

On the night of the 24<sup>th</sup> of May 1960 the homestead of Tribal Authorities supporter, **Kaizer Touchen**, in the Emonti Location of the Bizana District, was burnt down. His homestead consisted of a solitary hut and he estimated his losses to have been £8.<sup>445</sup>

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of May 1960 the homestead of **Sub-Chief Mbungwa Langasiki**, in the Emonti Location of the Bizana District, was razed. His homestead consisted of 6 huts

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<sup>439</sup> National Archives Repository, Pretoria, SAP 623.

<sup>440</sup> Cape Town Archives Repository, 1/BIZ, 6/53, *Native affairs: personal file: headman Koster Mbalwa*; Cape Town Archives Repository, 1/BIZ, N11/1/3/5, *Tribal Authority: Koster Mbalwa: Amanikwe*; Cape Town Archive Repository, 1/BIZ, 11.6.1960, *Disturbances in the district of Bizana and Eastern Pondoland 1960*, E.M. Warren, p. 36.

<sup>441</sup> National Archives Repository, Pretoria, SAP 623.

<sup>442</sup> Cape Town Archives Repository, 1/BIZ, 6/48, C9/6/7, *Statement by S. Mkizwana*, 27.5.1960.

<sup>443</sup> National Archives Repository, Pretoria, SAP 623.

<sup>444</sup> Cape Town Archives Repository, 1/BIZ, N2/4B/73, *Rural trading and business sites: Charlie Cele: native butcher*.

<sup>445</sup> National Archives Repository, Pretoria, SAP 623.

and he estimated his losses to have amounted to £250.<sup>446</sup> Langasiki was the government appointed sub-chief of the Emonti Location. On 12 September 1960 he made an inventory of his possessions, which consisted of 2 kraals (13 huts; 6 of which were destroyed), 30 cattle, 40 sheep and 4 horses.<sup>447</sup>

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of May 1960 12 huts that belonged to **Xotuvu Mcamba** were burnt to the ground in the Amagutyana Location of the District Bizana. The reported damages totalled £100.<sup>448</sup>

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of May 1960 4 huts that belonged to **Sub-Headman Katwa Zololo** were burnt down in the Amadiba Location of the Bizana District. The reported losses amounted to £60.

On an unspecified day in May of 1960 the homestead of a Methodist minister, **Reverend I.A. Madolo**, situated at the Ndlovu Mission in the Entsimbini Location of the Bizana District, was put to the torch, because he was considered an *impimpi*. The reverend reported losses of £74=15=0d, that included a sewing machine (to the value of £25), a 'Jezzy Heifer' (£30), a tea set (£4=15=0d), and portrait photos (£15=0=0d).<sup>449</sup>

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June 1960 2 huts that belonged to **Dick Ncame** were burnt down in the Amadiba Location of the Bizana District.<sup>450</sup>

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of June 1960 the homestead of **Walter Mda**, in the Emonti Location of the Bizana District, was burnt down. Four huts to the value of £250 were destroyed.<sup>451</sup> Mda was a trader (he applied for a licence in October 1958); his store was located next to the Nyanisweni mission.<sup>452</sup>

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<sup>446</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>447</sup> Cape Town Archives Repository, CMT 3/1035, *Arms and ammunition: Mbungwa Langasiki: Bizana.*

<sup>448</sup> National Archives Repository, Pretoria, SAP 623.

<sup>449</sup> Cape Town Archives Repository, 1/BIZ, 6/48, C9/6/7, *Disturbances in the District of Bizana: Amangutyana Tribal Authority: damages claimed by I.A. Madolo*, 8.9.1960.

<sup>450</sup> National Archives Repository, Pretoria, SAP 623.

<sup>451</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>452</sup> Cape Town Archives Repository, 1/BIZ, N2/4/3(112), *Rural trading and business sites: Walter G. Mda.*

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of June 1960 the homestead of **Mjilo Dumani**, in the Entsimbini Location of the Bizana District, was put to the torch. According to the police report, eleven huts to the value of £300 were destroyed<sup>453</sup> although Dumani later claimed damages of £634=9=3d.<sup>454</sup>

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of June 1960 3 huts that belonged to **Mbati Sankosi** were burnt to the ground in the Emonti Location of the District Bizana. He was also murdered.<sup>455</sup>

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of June 1960 4 huts that belonged to **Nomnawana Zingongwa** were burnt down in the Emonti Location of the Bizana District. The police report stated that damages totalled £100.<sup>456</sup>

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of June 1960 the homestead of **Sub-Headman Makelana Nganani** was burnt to the ground in the Amakanyayo Location of the Bizana District. He reported losses of £148.<sup>457</sup>

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of June 1960 7 huts that belonged to **Zintwana Mdelwa** were burnt down in the Amadiba Location of the Bizana District. Damages were estimated at £57=10=0d.<sup>458</sup>

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of June 1960 the homestead of **Mgogo Mkwane** was burnt to the ground in the Entsimbini Location of the Bizana District. Six huts to a reported value of £900 were destroyed.<sup>459</sup> Mkwane submitted a detailed report of his losses to the Magistrate of Bizana. He reported the loss of the following items: 4 suits (£50); 4 pairs of shoes (£12=0=0d); 3 over coats (£30); 3 coats (£10=10=0d); 7 pairs of trousers (£18); 9 shirts (£7=10=0); 5 vests (£1=5=0d); 13 pairs of socks (£1=5=0d); 4 under pants (£1=10=0d); 3 huts (£6); riding breaches (£5); coat (£5); 'cammaste' or leggings (£1); rain-coat (£3);

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<sup>453</sup> National Archives Repository, Pretoria, SAP 623.

<sup>454</sup> Cape Town Archives Repository, 1/BIZ, 6/48, C9/6/7, *Disturbances in the District of Bizana: damages claimed by Mjilo Dumani: Entsimbini Location*, 6.09.1960.

<sup>455</sup> National Archives Repository, Pretoria, SAP 623.

<sup>456</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>457</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>458</sup> National Archives Repository, Pretoria, SAP 623.

<sup>459</sup> *Ibid.*



8 blankets (£14); 11 sheets (£15); 5 bed spreads (£20); 5 bed 'steads' (£34); 5 mattresses (£15); 6 pillowcases (£5); 2 saddles (£19=10=0d); 3 bridles (£6); chains (£5); cultivators (£8); planter (£17); 3 ploughs (£20); 8 yokes (£8); 8 chains for oxen (£8); cupboard (£10); sideboard (£5); 12 chairs (£36); table (£3); 3 teapots (£1=17=6d); 16 cups (£2); 12 plates (£2=8=0d); 10 knives (£1); bicycle (£16); mealies (£60); 70 fowls (£25); gramophone (£9=10=0d); 3 primus stoves (£7=10=0d); stove (£7); 5 blankets (£7=10=0d); money (£99); 2 big pots (£1); 4 small pots (£1); bathing basin (£2); 6 rolls of wire (£12); netting wire (£6); bag of salt (£1=7=6d); bag of sugar (£2=5=0d); half pocket beans (£4); washing basin (10=0d); 47 pumpkins (£8); 3 tea pots (£2=1=0d); 2 trays (6=0d); 12 glasses (12=6d); 15 cups (£1=10=9d); 3 mugs (5=0d); cupboard (£4); 5 benches (£5); tables (£1=10=0d); 11 mats (£2); baskets (5=0d); jug (3=0d); big pot (12=6d); 3 small pots (15=0d); box (£1=10=0d); 3 suitcases (£2=5=0d); 12 teaspoons (3=0d); gramophone (£7=15=0d); 24 records (£3=15=0d); machine (£11); bucket (10=0d); 3 'clain' pots (15=0d); 9 spoons (£1=7=0d); cycles (7=0d); 67 fowls (£15); hoes (16=0d); pick axe (7=7/8d); bush-knife (3=6d); 'crash mealies' (£8=10=0d); 4 windows (£3); 3 doves (£1=10=0d); greatcoat (£3=10=0d); mealies (£23); 47 pumpkins (£14 or £16); bags of beans (£9); half pocket of beans (£4=10=0d); 14 bags of fertilizer (£7=10=9d); 6 huts (£90); and a pig (£10).<sup>460</sup>

Mkwane's list is consistent with the material possessions of a successful peasant producer with two wives<sup>461</sup> (many entries are in duplicate and can be taken to represent the household effects of two households).

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of June 1960 the homestead of **Philip Nontetana** was burnt to the ground in the Amangutyana Location of the Bizana District. Two huts to the estimated value of £100 were destroyed.<sup>462</sup>

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of August 1960 the homestead of **Sub-headman Sijobo Mciteni** was burnt down in the Amanikwe Location of the Bizana District. Three huts to an estimated value of £100 were consumed by the flames.<sup>463</sup>

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<sup>460</sup> Cape Town Archives Repository, 1/BIZ, 6/48, C9/6/7, *Statement by Mgogo Mkwane*, 21.6.1960.

<sup>461</sup> Cape Town Archives Repository, 1/BIZ, 6/48, C9/6/7, *Statement by Mgogo Mkwane*, 21.6.1960.

<sup>462</sup> National Archives Repository, Pretoria, SAP 623.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of August 1960 the homestead of **Sub-headmen Agrippa Mozaza** was burnt in the Amanikwe Location of the Bizana District. Three huts to an estimated value of £100 were destroyed.<sup>464</sup>

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October 1960 the homestead of **Msunywa Mkwenkwe** was burnt down in the Amadiba Location of the Bizana District. Seven huts to an estimated value of £400 were destroyed.<sup>465</sup>

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 1960 the homestead of **Nodilinga Sotaba** was burnt down in the Amanikwe Location of the Bizana District. Four huts to an estimated value of £150 were destroyed in the fire.<sup>466</sup>

On the night of Saturday the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 1960 the homestead of **Bernard Mlomo**, an agricultural demonstrator and suspected *impimpi*, was burnt to the ground in the Esikumbeni Location of the Bizana District. Two huts to an estimated value of £100 were destroyed.<sup>467</sup>

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 1960 the homestead of **Sub-chief Stanford Nomagqwetikana** (a cousin of Botha Sigcau) in the Imizizi Location of the Bizana District was burnt down by a mob of between 1000 and 2000 Pondos. Two huts to an estimated value of £100 were destroyed. He was killed along with four of his body guards because he allegedly conducted a reign of terror in the district, robbed homesteads and abused his powers.<sup>468</sup>

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<sup>463</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>464</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>465</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>466</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>467</sup> National Archives Repository, Pretoria, SAP 623; '5 years' jail for suspected Pondo killing', *Cape Argus*, 14 October 1961; 'Pondoland: 4 killed; 45 huts burnt over week-end', *Natal Mercury*, 6 December 1960.

<sup>468</sup> National Archives Repository, Pretoria, SAP 623; '30 accused of killing headman', *Cape Times*, 27 April 1961; 'Six Pondo tribesmen sentenced to death for chief's murder', *Cape Argus*, 28 October 1961.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 1960 the homestead of **King Mcitini**, in the Amanikwe Location of the Bizana District, was burnt down. One hut to the reported value of £4 was destroyed.<sup>469</sup>

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 1960 the homestead of **Tena Tshatsha**, in the Amanikwe Location of the Bizana District, was burnt down. Three huts were destroyed in the fire. Tshatsha reported losses amounting to £100.<sup>470</sup>

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 1960 the homestead of **Mbuyelwa Mqijimi**, in the Amanikwe Location of the Bizana District, was burnt down. Five huts to a reported value of £50 were consumed by the fire.<sup>471</sup>

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 1960 the homestead of **Pelekaya Mqijimi**, in the Amanikwe Location of the Bizana District, was burnt to the ground. Three huts to a reported value of £16=15=0d were destroyed.<sup>472</sup>

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 1960 the homestead of **Luza Zaduka**, in the Amanikwe Location of the Bizana District, was burnt to the ground. Two huts to a reported value of £50 were destroyed.<sup>473</sup>

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 1960 the homestead of **Wathatha Mahlangana**, in the Amanikwe Location of the Bizana District, was burnt to the ground. Two huts to a reported value of £9 were destroyed.<sup>474</sup>

### 5.3. Calculation and interpretation

The Gini coefficient of my data set is 62.99%. This is fairly large for a Gini coefficient and indicates high inequality. However, the Gini coefficients for the livestock wealth of

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<sup>469</sup> National Archives Repository, Pretoria, SAP 623.

<sup>470</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>471</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>472</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>473</sup> National Archives Repository, Pretoria, SAP 623.

<sup>474</sup> *Ibid.*

the broader Transkei population, which one would suspect to be quite similar to that of the broader Pondo population, and therefore also to the Bizana population, range between 49% for chicken ownership and 87% for sheep ownership.<sup>475</sup>

Thus the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. The observed Gini coefficient of group A cannot be said to be larger than that of the broader population. No probability calculations need to be done, since these probability calculations indicate how much larger – than stipulated by the null hypothesis – the observed value should be in order to reject the null hypothesis. The observed value needs to be higher by a certain margin – given probability theory – to reject the null hypothesis. Yet it is not higher than the null hypothesis at all.

The balance of evidence presented here seems to indicate then that a middle class was not ‘missing’ or ‘absent’ from the loyalists in Bizana. In fact, it seems to suggest that loyalists were a highly differentiated group. This is clearly shown by the following.

Out of a list of 36, there were 3 sub-Chiefs, 3 Headmen, 5 sub-Headmen, 6 Members of the Tribal Authority, 4 local businessmen, 4 church ministers and 1 agricultural demonstrator. A substantial amount of their number thus had preferential access to rural resources. Indeed, the two most financially successful Bizana Pondos who were loyal to Sigcau, Saul Mabude and Charlie Cele, were local salaried officials (Mabude was a member of the Tribal Authority and a minister, and Cele served as a Member of the Tribal Authority). Both were also local businessmen (both owned butcheries). This seems to support William Beinart’s notion that the key loyalists tended to consist of those close to the paramountcy and leading lights in the Bunga and local educated elite. In this sense they would display above average wealth. However, there existed notable exceptions such as the Ganyiles.<sup>476</sup>

It is evident that lesser chiefs and headmen loyal to Sigcau were a highly differentiated group: Headman Meje Galankulu lost property to a value of £780, while sub-Chief

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<sup>475</sup> See: N.D. Muller, *Rural and urban poverty and the measurement of development performance in the Transkei*, p. 18, table 7.

<sup>476</sup> Private email correspondence on July 2, 2007.

Stanford Nomagwetikana reported losses of £100 and sub-Headman Katwa Zololo losses of only £60. Zololo was, however, the poorest of this group and it would seem that no lesser chiefs and headmen could be considered truly poor by the standards of the day.

A large group of ‘middle peasants’ also seem to have supported Sigcau. Most loyalists whose homesteads were burnt reported losses of between £100 and £200 (of the 36, 11 – almost a third – reported losses in this range).

But there were also those who were thoroughly proletarianised. Six people reported total losses of £50 or less. The poorest of the poor were the ironically named King Mcitini and Kaizer Touchen. These men reported losses of only £4 and £8 respectively – astonishingly low amounts if one considers Ndlanganyana Mvunyiswa’s estimation of what the construction of a hut would cost (around £4). It follows that most of these men were almost certainly landless. I am of the opinion that the bulk of this group were not necessarily loyal to Paramount Sigcau, but rather that they were apathetic: they didn’t take part in the revolt because they didn’t stand to lose a substantial amount by the changes that were being wrought by betterment- and rehabilitation schemes and the imposition of Tribal Authorities in the Transkei. They also probably didn’t stand to gain very much if the revolt was successful.

The evidence presented here seems to support the notion that the poorest inhabitants of the reserves did not necessarily support the struggle against betterment as it manifested in the revolt in Eastern Pondoland in 1960. But this segment of society was almost definitely not, in its entirety, opposed to it. In fact, William Beinart found many divisions between loyalist and rebel groups among the rural poor in Pondoland – due in large part to the complex rural networks that existed there – a fact that seems to indicate that there was possibly no decisive division.<sup>477</sup> It is also evident that a highly differentiated group of people supported the Paramount of Eastern Pondoland, Botha Sigcau, and by extension the government that he represented during the revolt.

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<sup>477</sup> Private email correspondence on July 2, 2007.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study certainly raised more questions than it succeeded in answering. Given its scope, this should not be surprising though. If it shows anything at all, it shows that the Pondoland revolt framed not only the effects that Apartheid in its guises of Bantu Authorities, rehabilitation and betterment schemes had on rural South Africans, but also how wider processes of industrialisation and the shifting sands of state formation impacted on relations between people.

The editor of the *Cape Argus*, when commenting on the incidents at Ngquza Hill and Cato Manor, not only summarised the situation in those areas, but also very succinctly described the broader political context in South Africa at the time. He wrote that these situations ‘indicate just how brittle is the humour of many people in South Africa today. They reflect a breakdown in human relationships which, somehow, must be changed.’<sup>478</sup>

Without ever having studied the Pondoland revolt in detail, the anthropologist Eric Wolf in his now seminal study of six peasant wars in South East Asia in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, perhaps inadvertently also described exactly what transpired in Pondoland between 1959 and 1961:

*...the peasant rebellions of the twentieth century are no longer simple responses to local problems, if indeed ever they were. They are but parochial reactions to major social dislocations, set in motion by overwhelming social change.*<sup>479</sup>

Apartheid really was the hubris of high modernism. Social engineering based on pseudo science wrenched groups of people and groups within those groups apart. This revolt in the rural backwaters of the north eastern Transkei illustrates this exceedingly well.

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<sup>478</sup> ‘Split second decision’, *Cape Argus*, 15 February 1961.

<sup>479</sup> E. Wolf, *Peasant wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century*, p. 295.

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## SUMMARY

South African society was in a state of flux by the early 1960s. The main reason for this state of affairs was that the National Party government had, for the last decade or so, plied social engineering at degrees previously unheard of in the history of the country with a view to consolidating apartheid at all levels and in all spheres of South African life. As a result tensions flared and reached breaking point in urban and rural areas alike within a matter of months. In some cases these situations escalated into fully fledged uprisings; most of which ultimately were put down in a heavy handed manner by the apparatus of state.

This study busies itself with an uprising that may well be described as the apex of resistance in the South African countryside during the period mentioned, for it not only stood out due to its intensity, but also for the remarkable levels of its organization and for the length of its duration. What is more, if secondary sources are to be believed, it galvanized the struggle movement in its decision to take up arms a year or so later.

By looking at a vast array of primary and secondary source documents an attempt is made at: (1) critically weighing up what has been written about the revolt that took place in Eastern Pondoland in 1960 and 1961; (2) describing the situation in the area immediately prior to it taking place; (3) analyzing the causes thereof; (4) describing the course of events that constituted the revolt; and (5) attempting to establish the class positions of a sample of people resident at the epicenter of the revolt, who were directly affected by it.

Due to its scope this study is by no means meant to be exhaustive. It is merely intended to contribute to the existing literature as an exploratory inquiry into the focus areas listed above.