TRANSITIONS IN THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF SOUTH-EAST AFRICA BEFORE 1840

by

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For my Mother and Father

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Abstract

The introduction explores the historiographic and conceptual context within which the present work is set. Two major and a number of sub-types of historical scholarship are identified and discussed with particular reference to Africa. A case is made against empirical History and for a more structural and comparative approach. The Marxist concept of social epochs is argued to be a fundamental tool of any structural approach to the study of the past.

In chapter II the focus narrows to south-east Africa. The region is defined, and the features of Nature in its local aspect introduced as historical variables. The argument then moves to an exploration of the changing relationship between Mankind and Nature in south-east Africa, beginning in chapter III with the presentation of a tentative sequence of early social epochs culminating sometime before the 16th century in a transition to Feudalism.

Chapter IV discusses the international history of Feudalism in order to enable the essential structural characteristics of the epoch to be identified. A parcellization of economic and political sovereignty is found to be particularly important. In chapter V the social formation of south-east Africa in the later 16th century, as presented in Portuguese documents of the time, is considered against this theoretical background. Chapter VI discusses the differential development of Feudalism in south-east Africa in the period 1600-1680. Particular attention is given to a contradiction emerging in some parts of south-east Africa between the pattern of social relations characteristic of Feudalism, and the structural imperatives associated with a growing commodity exchange component of the regional economy. Chapter VII discusses the manner in which this and other incipient contradictions

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came to be linked together in a general crisis of Feudalism in the northern part of the region.

In chapter VIII Absolutism is discussed at a theoretical level as the social epoch which has a tendency to develop as forces struggle to contain or resolve the contradiction between Feudalism and commodity exchange. Various possible lines of development from Absolutism are discussed. Chapters IX and X consider the various political, social and military changes which took place in south-east Africa in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, within the context of a general transition to Absolutism. The rise of a Zulu Empire and its particular characteristics are explored as the logical product of this general transition. Particular attention is given to the contradictions within the social formation of the Empire and the measures taken at the centre to try to control them.

Chapter XI argues that Absolutism was not able to establish itself as a dominant form in south-east Africa on a stable basis because it was unable to contain the contradictions both within itself and implicit in its relations with forces emanating from the recently strengthened Capitalist enclave at the Cape. The chapter devotes particular attention to a discussion of these forces and their relationship both to the general expansion of European Capitalism, and to the struggle taking place within the British Empire on the question of 'systematic colonisation'. The hunter-traders at Port Natal and the Voortrekkers are presented as the south-east African vanguard of these forces, each representative of a particular vision of the political economy of the future in south-east Africa. Zulu Absolutism lost its dominant position in the political economy of the region in 1838 under the weight of their combined impact, and the ability of these forces to exploit the internal contradictions within the Zulu Empire.

The conclusion introduces the various forces whose

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I

INTRODUCTION

Broadly speaking, there are two major modern traditions of historical scholarship.[1] The first utilises an 'empirical' approach, whilst the second is more 'structural' in orientation.[2]

Underpinning the work of the empiricists is the belief that the proper concern of History is the study of the particular. It is argued that the circumstances in which each event or process occurs in the past are unique. The fundamental lesson which it is therefore the task of History to reveal is this complexity of the human experience.[3]

Those who are critical of this approach argue that the empiricists, immersed in detail, specialise in the production of fragments of History which it is virtually impossible to assemble into a whole. As such, empirical History leads the reader, not towards a greater understanding of the forces which have operated and are operating in the World, but towards ever greater confusion. A stronger line of criticism suggests that

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[1] In the present work, 'history' is taken to be the sum total of events and processes taking place in past-time. As such it furnishes the raw material for the production of 'History' which represents the interpretation of the past by individuals through the labour process of 'historical scholarship'.

[2] For an introduction to these two traditions and the long-standing debate between them see A. Marwick, The Nature of History (Macmillan, 1970) pp.205-6.

[3] For a statement of this position see G.R. Elton, The Practice of History (Fontana, 1969) especially pp.37, 41-69.

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this confusion is politically intended; that it represents the ideological function of empiricism.[4]

For the historian sympathetic to the structural study of the past, the historical analysis of an event, process or whatever is of little value unless it can be set within a general framework for purposes of comparison and contrast across space as well as through time. Careful comparison and contrast of this kind, it is hoped, will lead eventually to the construction of a general theory capable of universal application in the process of historical scholarship, and from which certain conclusions may also be drawn regarding future political action.[5]

The present study of an aspect of the history of south-east Africa is written from a structural standpoint. It is conceived as a contribution to the emerging History of southern Africa set within the structural tradition.

The remainder of this introductory chapter is concerned to identify more precisely important characteristics of the empirical and structural traditions, to consider the manner of their application to the study of African history, and to discuss certain of the more controversial features of the methodology of structural history which are central to the construction of the present work.

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[4] For the general attack on empiricism see David and Judith Willer, Systematic Empiricism: Critique of a Pseudo-Science (New Jersey, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1973).

[5] Amongst the works which discuss the aims and methodologies of structural History is Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar, Reading Capital (New Left Books, 1970), esp. chapt. 'An Outline of the Concept of Historical Time'. Also set within this problematic are the remarks of Eric Hobsbawm in Hobsbawm, "Introduction", in Karl Marx, Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations, trans. Jack Cohen, ed. and intro. E.J. Hobsbawm (Lawrence & Wishart, 1964) pp.9-65. Also pertinent is Rodney Hilton, "Mediaeval Peasants: Any Lessons?", Journal of Peasant Studies I, 2 (Jan. 1974) pp.207-8.

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Each of the two major traditions of historical scholarship incorporates a number of strands. Occasionally a single strand provides the framework for a piece of History. More often two or more strands are interwoven, each given a different degree of prominence in the work of different historians. The balance is as much determined by the process of history itself, as by the conscious will of the historian, so that different strands have passed in and out of the respective traditions as the objective circumstances of history have changed.

Each strand employs its own methodology. An essential element of the methodology is sets of categories which reflect the assumptions upon which the particular strand is founded. It is largely through the deployment and manipulation of these categories that the past is explained - that historians, through their scholarship, establish a link between the actors of the past and the readers of History, who may be actors of the present or of the future.

Three strands of the empirical tradition will be considered here. The first, which is of long standing, places the focus upon the individual as the source of the dynamic of the process of historical change. Historians of this persuasion search for any deeper force of history in the personal psychology of their heroes and anti-heroes, rather than in the social context within which they operate. For these writers, the fundamental lesson to be drawn from the analysis of history is the uniqueness and power of the individual.

Within this strand, not all individuals are deemed to have contributed to the dynamic of history. Attention is confined to a handful of kings, queens and other 'important' people, and the categories employed in the periodisation of the past are based upon the span of their respective political careers.

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The strand represents an ideological approach to the past appropriate to an aristocratic age. It presents the picture of a very few special individuals able to wield power sufficient to shape not only the past but also, by implication, the present and the future. Although in many contemporary situations the structural conditions are inappropriate to the maintenance of this ideological approach to the past, it has taken a long time to die. Certainly in Britain it lingers on in some 'popular' works of History and biography, and in some school textbooks.[6]

A more recent introduction to the empirical tradition is a strand of thought which concedes that historical explanation cannot remain at the level of the individual. The past must be understood as the unfolding of social processes. As Marc Bloch pointed out, this was indeed a significant change;

> ".....in the study of history there have been few stages so decisive as the moment when 'Empires', dynasties, famous periods identified with some great name - in a word, all the old arbitrary divisions born of a monarchical and oratorical tradition - began to give place to another system of classification, based on the observation of social phenomena." 7

Unfortunately there is more than one way in which social phenomena may be observed. It follows that there is more than one way in which individual actors of the past may be set within a social context by the historian.

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[6] The approach was parodied as early as 1930 in W.C. Sellar and R.J. Yeatman, 1066 And All That (Methuen, 1930).

[7] Marc Bloch, Feudal Society, trans. L.A. Manyon, foreword M.M. Postan, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965); Vol.I, The Growth of Ties of Dependence p.xvii.

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Bloch's work is exceptional in according economic considerations importance, but the social contexts which have generally preoccupied empirical historians have tended to be those of religion, ethnicity or the modern geo-polity.

Within this range of positions the geo-political or national focus has tended to become dominant. The concentration has been upon charting the History of the essence which is 'Germany', 'Britain', 'India' and so on, together with that of the 'German people', the 'British people', and the 'Indian people'.

Relatively little attention is given to the possibility of social tensions within these national categories, or to the possible part played by social conflict in furnishing the dynamic for the process of historical change. On the occasions when social conflict is so overt as to be unavoidable, as in the 'Indian' case, it is analysed by means of the deployment of religious or ethnic categories.

The fundamental lesson of history presented by this strand of the empirical tradition is not the uniqueness and power of the individual but of the essence which is the nation. Historical scholarship is thus the study of the cultural experience of the nation. The role of history is to contribute towards the socialisation of the past, present and future generations into the nation. Where the nation is in fact a recent construction, the socialisation into it of the actors of the past is an urgent and difficult task. This helps to explain the heavy emphasis placed upon relatively early periods of history in the writing of the historians of these nations, and the close watch kept upon the ideological commitment of such writers to the fundamental national category.

This strand of empirical History is appropriate

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to an era dominated by a complex of national bourgeoisies.

More recently there has developed a strand within the empirical tradition which employs a social scientific approach. Its essential characteristic is the use of observationally-defined categories in the analysis of the past. The use of such categories effectively militates against international comparisons and contrasts being drawn. Such observationally-defined categories may be helpful in illuminating changes through time in a specific locality, but not across the myriad of political and cultural boundaries which have been imposed in space. The analysis has a tendency to remain confined within narrow limits imposed by a national focus.

Work undertaken from this standpoint sometimes successfully masquerades as structural History, even though the assumptions upon which it is founded are really far from those of the structural tradition. The problem arises because, contrary to the view of Hindess and Hirst,[8] all structural categories are ultimately observationally derived. It is not the way in which such categories are first arrived at which constitutes the negation of structuralism, but their continued multiplication. The aim of structuralism must always be the development of a common set of categories through the deployment and manipulation of which, the history of Mankind as a whole can be understood. The tendency of empiricism, by contrast, is to derive fresh observational categories from,and to describe,each new situation which is analysed.

Most historians of Africa adhere to a broadly empirical approach. The categories deployed and manipulated in order to explain the history of Africa

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[8] Barry Hindess and Paul Q. Hirst, Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975) pp.2-4. For further discussion of this problem ~~in relation to~~ the methodology of Marx and Engels see below pp.24-26.

have tended to be individual, ethnic, national and, to a lesser extent, religious. The approach makes it extremely difficult to draw structural comparisons and contrasts with the history of other parts of the World, and indeed even between different parts of Africa.

A struggle for predominance was fought in the 1960s amongst the representatives of these various strands within the empirical approach to the African past.[9] In view of the new conditions prevailing in the aftermath of the triumph of national categories in the objective sphere, it is hardly surprising that the struggle within the ideological sphere was largely resolved in favour of the national perspective.

With its hegemony assured, national History in Africa has permitted and even encouraged the development of other branches of the empirical tradition as subordinate strands. Ethnic History is permitted to operate at a more local level, and the sub-type of Racial History in analysing the forces operating in the colonial and neo-colonial eras. The degree to which these approaches are able to co-exist is perhaps indicative of the degree to which they are not fundamentally in contradiction.

There is also one increasingly important sphere in which national History is to some extent able to co-exist with a particular form of structural History.

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[9] For an example of the struggle in process see Donald Denoon and Adam Kuper, "Nationalist historians in search of a nation: the 'New Historiography' in Dar Es Salaam", African Affairs 69 (1970) pp.329-49; Terence Ranger, "The 'New Historiography' in Dar Es Salaam: An answer", Ibid., 70 (1971) pp.50-61. Denoon and Kuper accused Ranger and other practitioners of the then new national approach to the history of Africa, of projecting the spatial boundaries of the new nations back into the past, and in this and other ways hinting at an organic link between the people who lived within this area in the past and those who live there now. As such Denoon and Kuper were mounting an attack from an alternative strand within the empirical tradition, rather than from the standpoint of structuralism.

This is the area of scholarship concerned with the 'economic' aspects of the history of Africa. The approach to this theme has been dominated by the view that individual action is the historical force tending to bring about economic 'development', though the individuals concerned are defined by their membership within an international structural category of'entrepreneurs'.[10]

With the exception of this precise conjunction, national History cannot normally co-exist with structural History. The latter is rejected by national historians from a straightforward national standpoint, though to permit a wider mobilisation of kindred interests it tends to be expressed at the multi-national, continental or racial level. It is argued that the history of Africa and of Africans has been unique, just as the history of any other part of the globe has been unique. Therefore categories and methodologies evolved over the years in the study of a European or other non -African experience, however diverse, cannot and must not be applied to the analysis of the African experience.[11] It is a call which empiricists throughout the world can recognise and rally to, regardless of their own particular national affinities.

The nature of national History in Africa can be further understood by reference to the diverse sources from which it derives support within the continent. On the one hand it is subscribed to by all but a handful of historians of nations which are ruled by people of black

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[10] For the approach operating in relation to a 'black' African situation see A.G. Hopkins, An Economic History of West Africa (London, 1973). Two 'white' Africa examples are D. Hobart Houghton, The South African Economy (Oxford UP, 1964); R. Horwitz, The Political Economy of South Africa (Oxford UP, 1967). The approach owes much to the ideas of W.W. Rostow; see below p.19n .

[11] This seemed to me the consensus at the 1974 annual conference of the Historical Association of Kenya. The theme of the conference was 'Social change in East Africa'.

pigmentation. They argue that to apply categories derived from the analysis of a non-African experience is to perpetuate a form of ideological colonialism.

The national approach and the related opposition to structural History are both equally strongly entrenched in the south of the continent where nations are ruled by people of white pigmentation, not known for their sympathy towards the aspirations of black people who also live in those nations. In the south there has long been a reluctance to use structural categories drawn from the analysis of the European experience, since they often would not correspond with the ethnic distinctions around which political forces led historians to centre their explanations of the historical process, within that is the fundamental national categories of 'South Africa' and 'Rhodesia'.

Nowhere in fact is the national approach more apparent than in writing on the South African nation, indicative perhaps of the strength of its national bourgeoisie. Within the national approach, however, a number of sub-strands can be isolated. All assume the existence of the South African nation, but dispute the identity of the major social forces which produced the nation and which, by implication, should therefore benefit from its future. These social forces are presented in ethnic terms. The forms of historical scholarship, identified by the social force which it deems to have played a leading role in the historical process, are the 'white' or 'European', the 'English', the 'Dutch' or 'Afrikaner', the 'Black and white together' which is also known as the 'liberal' form, and the as yet embryonic separate 'black' or 'African' form.[12] The main axis of

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[12] L.M. Thompson, "South Africa", in R.W. Winks, ed., The Historiography of the British Empire-Commonwealth (Durham: North Carolina, 1966). See also Shula Marks, "Historians and South Africa", in J.D. Fage, ed., Africa Discovers Her Past (Oxford UP, 1970) pp.83-9. There is often an articulation with individual categories. 'Zulu' history is for example periodised by means of their deployment. Although not discussed here, the individualist strand of empiricism is still strong, as anyone who is familiar with the thesis output of South African universities will be familiar. Biography is a favourite form.

struggle is currently between the representatives of the 'Afrikaner' and 'liberal' forms.

Within the works of History written from these various standpoints, a broadly similar pattern of ethnic categories is deployed and manipulated in order to explain the past. This essential similarity is somewhat hidden by terminological shifts according to the standpoint employed and the objective historical timing of its use. Thus the same major ethnic categories may be peopled by 'Kaffirs', 'Natives', 'Bantu', 'Africans' or 'Blacks' on the one hand, and by 'Europeans', 'Whites', 'Settlers' or 'Colonists' on the other.

These major ethnic categories are then sub-divided. The first into 'Bantu' and 'Non-Bantu', and the second into 'Dutch' or 'Afrikaners' - 'English' or 'Britons'. Division of white people rarely goes beyond this stage, but that of black people has only just begun.

At the next level of analysis 'Non-Bantu' are divided into 'Khoi' and 'San', and then into a myriad of smaller categories. The sub-division of the 'Bantu' is even more systematic. The first stop is the 'Nguni' and 'Sotho' level and their equivalent. Following the 'Nguni' branch, the next distinction encountered is that between the 'Northern-Nguni' and the 'Southern or Cape-Nguni'. The process of ethnic sub-division continues with the distinction between 'Zulu', 'Mpondo', 'Xhosa' and their equivalent. There then ensues a very complex debate concerning the origin and layering of still further categories - 'Mbo', 'Lala' and the like.

It is the interaction of these ethnic categories as discrete entities which is taken to provide the essential dynamic of the historical process. In order that linguistically-derived categories should fulfil this role, it is necessary that they be given an active social existence in past-time which, in many cases, is also carried over by historians into present-time and by politicians into the future. Material on technologies,

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economic practices, cultural systems and ideologies are somehow fitted within or around each category. The 'Bantu' and 'Dutch' instances are particularly well known, but the process operates in other cases as well. The general plea, as amongst all empirical historians in Africa, is for more single ethnic or tribal histories, more work that is to give social reality to the lower levels of the hierarchy of ethnic categories.[13]

It is interesting that terms which, when stripped of their ideological overtones carry a certain structural meaning, terms such as 'boer' and 'bushman', are somehow redefined so as to be used in a manner which allows their easy substitution for well-known ethnic categories.

The 'Afrikaner' strand of national history is usually understood to be attempting to expand the use of ethnic categories into the realm of archaeology on the one hand and into the field of contemporary studies on the other.[14] What is less understood is the affinity which it enjoys with the 'liberal' strand.[15] In fact modern 'liberal' scholarship, as exemplified in most of the contributions to the recent Oxford History of South Africa, is often pictured as the total opposite of 'Afrikaner' History. As a reviewer of these volumes pointed out;

> ".....whereas the Afrikaner historians are in general concerned to show that

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[13] Shula Marks, "The Nguni, the Natalians, and their History", Journal of African History VIII, 3 (1967) p.540.

[14] For what amounts to a 'liberal' view of 'Afrikaner' History see L.M. Thompson, "Afrikaner nationalist historiography and the policy of Apartheid", Ibid., III (1962) pp.125-41. For the beginnings of a structural critique see Martin Legassick, "Review", African Historical Studies III, 2 (1970) pp.491-6. Legassick's remarks are directed in particular at one of the relatively few works from within this tradition readily available in English; C.F.J. Muller, Five Hundred Years: A History of South Africa (Pretoria & Cape Town: Academica, 1969).

[15] Martin Legassick is shortly to publish a major structural study of the 'liberal' tradition of South African History. For what amounts to a critique of the 'liberal' tradition by a 'European' historian see L.H. Gann, "Liberal Interpretations of South African History", Rhodes-Livingston Institute Journal XXV (1959).

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> separation between racial groups has been the only South African tradition, the editors of the Oxford History are concerned to show the opposite. They demonstrate instead the meeting points, the degree of acculturation and the amount of integration that has occurred between all the peoples of South Africa over the centuries". 16

Although concerned to stress the differences between the two approaches, she also inadvertently indicated their essential similarity - the agreed national framework in the category 'South Africa', and the use of ethnic sub-categories within it.[17]

Essentially the same approach has been applied by liberal writers to the history of south-east Africa. It is

> "....an attempt to avoid an emphasis on the history of any of the groups of people

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[16] Shula Marks, "African and Afrikaner history", Journal of African History XI, 3 (1970) p.440. See also Monica Wilson and Leonard M. Thompson, ed., The Oxford History of South Africa, 2 vols., (Oxford UP, 1969-1971), esp. I:v. The title of Marks' review is a little misleading. Neither she nor the authors reviewed actually write from within an 'African' tradition, in the precise sense of the term used at p.9 above. Marks is actually a spokeswoman in this article for 'liberal' History, and hence the aim of the review is to specify the point of difference between the 'liberal' and 'Afrikaner' strands, rather than their fundamental similarity. For a more structural critique of the Oxford History see Stanley Trapido, "South Africa and the historians", African Affairs 71, 285 (1972) pp.444-8; Martin Legassick, "The dynamics of modernisation in South Africa", Journal of African History XIII, 1 (1972) pp.145-50.

[17] The preoccupation of southern African History with the unfolding of national and ethnic essences was first drawn attention to by Martin Legassick, "The frontier tradition in South African historiography", in Shula Marks, ed., Collected Seminar Papers on the Societies of Southern Africa in the 19th and 20th Centuries, Vol.2 (London: Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 1971) pp.1-33.

> in Natal - Africans, Europeans or Asians. It is an attempt to steer a middle course..... to write an impartial history of all three groups who built Natal"18

In more sophisticated discussions, particularly of the 'pre-colonial' phase of south-east African history, the full hierarchy of ethnic categorisation is employed. Deep in the past the interaction of discrete entities such as 'Lala', 'Mbo' and 'Pure Nguni' can be discerned, and an attempt made to link them to the more structural categories employed by archaeology. Iron-working, for example, appears to be a cultural characteristic of the 'Lala'.[19] One awaits with trepidation the passage of the 'Central-Sudanic Speakers' into the mainstream of the literature. Their footsteps can already be heard and their particular cultural characteristics perceived.[20]

Though they have undertaken valuable work in the direction of unravelling the seeming ethnic complexity of the south-east African past, the empirical methodology of the historians concerned appears to have prevented a

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[18] E.H. Brookes and C. de B. Webb, ed., A History of Natal (Pietermaritzburg: Natal UP, 1965), preface.

[19] Shula Marks and A.E. Atmore, "The problem of the Nguni: an examination of the ethnic and linguistic situation in South Africa before the Mfecane", in D.Dalby, ed., Language and History in Africa (Cass, 1970) pp.120-32; Shula Marks, "The traditions of the Natal 'Nguni': a second look at the work of A.T. Bryant", in L.M. Thompson, ed., African Societies in Southern Africa (Heinemann, 1969) pp.126-44.

[20] Christopher Ehret, "Outlining southern African history: a reconsideration 100-1500 A.D.", Ufahamu III, 1 (1972) pp.9-27; "Patterns of Bantu and Central-Sudanic settlement in central and southern Africa, ca. 1000 B.C. - 500 A.D.", Transafrican Journal of History III, 1 & 2 (1973) pp.1-27. There are signs that the Central-Sudanic Speakers are to become the people of the sheep; Ehret, "Sheep and Central-Sudanic peoples in southern Africa", Journal of African History IX, 2 (1968) esp. pp.219-20.

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fundamental breakthrough from being made. The picture is still one of considerable confusion. A detailed discussion of this question is beyond the scope of the present work, but some indication may be given of the kind of progress which could be made if a structural approach to the problem is consistently employed. The starting point of the approach is the assumption that ethnic groups rarely have a concrete existence as constant, homogeneous, and discrete entities. They are more usually ideological representations of social reality which, like all historical phenomena, have a limited existence in time and space, and sometimes even in the eye of the beholder.

Though deployed and manipulated by empirical historians in the same manner, the historical derivation of ethnic terminologies is actually very varied. A preliminary analysis reveals three main types, though with important variations within them. The first comprises terms of modern observational derivation. 'Nguni' is the best known example. It purports to describe a social grouping existing in past as well as present time. This social category, though central to the whole ethnic explanation of the south-east African past, is also its weakest link. There is not even a consensus amongst empiricists as to its precise derivation and meaning.[21]

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[21] It may not even be of modern observational derivation, but of modern invention. It was first used by Bryant without explanation; A.T. Bryant, A Zulu-English Dictionary (Pietermaritzburg, 1905); Olden Times in Zululand and Natal (London, 1929). Some empiricist writers take the term to represent a broad cultural-linguistic category, others a simple directional referent meaning 'people to the west', and still others restrict membership of the 'Nguni' category to the descendants of a chief Nguni. The empiricists usually indicate in their work that they are well aware of the difficulties involved in using the term, and it is thus all the more surprising that they still persist in its usage. For their attempts to cope with the problem see N.J. Van Warmelo, Preliminary Survey of the Bantu Tribes of South Africa (Pretoria: Department of Native Affairs, 1935) part 3 p.59; "The Classification of Cultural Groups", in J.D. Hammond-Tooke, ed., The Bantu-Speaking Peoples of Southern Africa (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974) pp.58,60-1; Marks, "Traditions", pp.126-8; "Nguni, Natalians and their History", p.532n; Monica Wilson, "The Nguni People", in Oxford History, 1:129-30.

Similar in derivation is the distinction between the 'northern' and 'southern' Nguni. It would seem to be little more than a comment on a relatively recent divergence which appears to have taken place as a result of the farreaching changes north of the Tugela River which led to the construction of the Zulu Empire. Like 'Nguni' itself, the terms are sometimes projected backwards and given a social reality in the past in order to explain the very same historical forces which in fact produced them.

There is secondly a set of terms which derive from the historical record and which refer to political units of various types and sizes existing within past-time. They often seem to derive from the clan name of the then current ruling dynasty. Examples include Zulu, Ndwandwe, Ngwane, Tembe, Mthethwa, and Xhosa. Several problems arise in the handling of terms of this kind. There is the problem of matching the modern versions of the terms used here with those employed by actors in the past, not all of whom spoke the same language or owed allegiance to the polity concerned. Thus it seems that the 19th century term 'Xhosa' may be equated with the 17th century 'Magosse' of the Dutch castaways. At the same time terms undergo changes in meaning through time. In the 18th century this same geo-polity, existing between the Cape frontier and the 'Tambookie' country, was known as the country of the 'Kaffirs' by Dutch visitors. Within half a century this term, which already carried a class component, had lost its association with a specific polity and had been widened to a general term of contempt used by white settlers to refer to all blacks whom they held to be somehow inferior to themselves. Another problem stems from the complexity of the pattern of political relations which existed at various periods in the past. A major category may overlap in space with a number of other political units which are subordinate to it. The case of the Zulu Empire is well known, but the possibility must be allowed for that this was not the first complex polity to come into existence in south-east Africa. Care must be taken in distinguishing between levels of power and between different types of polity, especially as

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a term like 'Zulu' may refer at different points in the past to a small chiefdom or a great empire.

As political referents these terms have an active social life only for limited periods in the past. Thus, with the overthrow of Dingiswayo, the ruling dynasty of'Mtethwa'fades from view and that of 'Zulu' attains prominence. 'Hlubi' and other political categories are in turn crushed and disappear. The various and changing power of the polities to which these terms refer may conceivably be judged by the degree of congruence between the self-perception of the rulers and the ruled. Linguistic patterns may also be a clue to unravelling the structure of political relations, because language -transfer or non-transfer is ultimately a class question.

The third type of'ethnic' category which appears in the empirical literature is also derived from the stream of history. It appears as a term descriptive of a situation of social stratification. A surprisingly large number of terms appear to fall within this category in the south-east African instance. They include 'Lala', 'Abatwa', 'Mfengu', 'Hottwana', 'Vatwah', 'Ronga' and possibly even 'Sutu'. All these are ideological terms used by various ruling groups at various times to refer to groups of people which they had reduced to subordinate status or for other reasons had contempt. A number of them appear to have come into existence as generic terms used by a colonising group to describe all the people of the tract of country over which they now claimed political control. In time, like the equivalent terms 'Kaffir', and 'Native', they took on the meaning of 'serf' or 'commoner'. They became ideological referents descriptive either of a pattern of class relations existing in social reality, or one which the user of the term looked forward to bringing into existence. The term 'Lala' is a particularly good example. The fact that a term like 'Lala' is also found in the historical record of areas outside south-east Africa, may indicate more about the identity of the group which used the term than about the identity of the group to which it

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was applied.[22]

The identification of these three types of 'ethnic' terminology represents a preliminary attempt to cope with the problem of the ethnic approach to the south-east African past. Other types of terminology are, for example, conceivable.[23]

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[22] For the 'Lala' case see Bryant, Dictionary pp.6,26,30; S.M. Molema, The Bantu Past and Present (Edinburgh, 1920) p.36, cited by Marks, "Nguni, Natalians and their History", pp.531-2. For the 'Ronga' instance see Henri A. Junod, The Life of a South African Tribe (1912; repr. ed., 2 vols., New York: University Books, 1962), Vol.I, Social Life p.15. For the 'Honwana' see Junod, op.cit. II, Mental Life, pp.52,55,137. In the time of Dingane, the enTlangwini, who would probably be termed an 'Nguni' group by the empirical historians, were referred to as 'Abatwa'. The term seems to have been employed in the sense of a group of poor or subordinate people who scraped a living in the 'bush'. This particular community had been driven from their original settlements and were operating as elephant hunters in the Mkomanzi valley; Felix N.C. Okoye, "Dingane and the British traders 1828-38", University of California, 5/5/1965 (mimeograph) p.5 and note 28. As Bryant has pointed out, 'Vatwahs' are merely members of the same structural category as 'Abatwas'. The change in the nomenclature represents a linguistic shift; Bryant, Olden Times p.286. Use of these terms may indicate the existence of a strata of 'bushmen' within a state, who might but need not be bandits or rebels. The term could also be used more generally to indicate contempt on the part of the speaker. Thus it was possible for a group of 'Vatwahs' to invade the powerful Delagoa chiefdoms in the early part of the 19th century. No tiny bushman band could have been powerful enough to undertake such a raid; G.M. Theal, ed., Records of South-East Africa, 9 vols., (Cape Town, 1898-1903; repr. ed., Cape Town, 1964), II:469-70. For the 'Sutu' see Bryant, Olden Times p.286. Even 'Swazi' and 'Tonga' may be terms of this kind; Bryant, pp.286-7. 'Mfengu' denoted the structural condition of being a refugee. There may be other terms carrying a similar meaning.

[23] Monica Wilson, for example, has suggested that the term 'Mbo' may have been a simple directional referent applied by people in the south of the region to the people living to the north-east; Monica Wilson, "Nguni People", in Oxford History, I:129-30. The argument does not seem convincing; see below p 18.

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Enough has perhaps been said, however, to indicate the weakness of the ethnic approach to the south -east African past. Most of the ethnic terminology employed has some value, but it would certainly seem as if it should be used by historians rather more carefully than has usually been the case. Care must be taken to avoid giving these terms complete sets of convenient cultural baggage, and other attempts to give them a social reality beyond their specific form of existence in the past. Ethnic categories hardly warrant remaining the starting points of empirical let alone structural analysis.

None of the various approaches within the empirical tradition meets the essential requirement of structural History. No matter how precisely defined, individual, national and ethnic categories can never be sufficiently freed from their cultural context to permit their contribution to the comparative analysis of the history of Mankind as a whole. But the problem is more acute than this. The continued use of such categories effectively prevents the History which is produced from ever being successfully incorporated into such a framework. Empirical History and structural History are fundamentally in contradiction.

The structural approach to the study of history is of more recent origin than the empirical tradition. Its essential characteristic is the attempt to use methodologies, frameworks and categories which have meaning beyond the specific geographical or chronological focus of that analysis. The aim is to develop a general understanding of the process which is history.

The range of positions within the structural tradition is perhaps less wide, and the tradition generally less entrenched than in the empirical case. Many of the strands of structural History have tended to become woven in and around a dominant element which

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appears to provide the most comprehensive methodology capable of meeting the basic requirements of any structural approach to the past. The methodology is that of Marxist political economy.[24]

In view of this it is somewhat surprising to find that the notion of a structural approach to the study of the past has recently come under attack from two Marxist non-historians, as well as from the more familiar empirical sources. According to Hindess and Hirst, there can be no such thing as structural History, even if Marxist concepts are employed;

> "History is condemned by the nature of its object to empiricism". 25

The attack of Hindess and Hirst is concerted, and mounted at a number of levels within the general problematic of the relationship between history, History, Marxism and class struggle. A full consideration of their criticisms of structural History is beyond the scope of the present work. A particular target, however, is the notion of a theory of history based upon a general theory of modes of production. Since this theory is fundamental to the present work, some defence of it is perhaps necessary.

Contrary to the view of Hindess and Hirst, there is an essence of history. It is the articulation between Mankind and Nature. Mankind is obliged to retain a constant connexion with Nature, because Nature is essential to subsistence - to life itself. Mankind

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[24] Amongst the non-Marxist structural approaches to the study of the past is the cyclical approach employed by Spengler and Toynbee; Oswald Spengler, Decline of the West (London, 1918); Arnold Toynbee, A Study of History, 10 vols., (London, 1934-54). A linear approach to the study of the past based upon the idea of a progressive enlargement in the scale of social relations, was put forward by Godfrey and Monica Wilson, The Analysis of Social Change (1945). Rostow has set out the principles for an alternative linear approach which gives prominence to the 'economic' factor; W.W. Rostow, The Stages of Economic Growth (Cambridge UP, 1960). It is already highly influential.

[25] Hindess and Hirst, Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production p.310. See also pp.2-19, 308-23.

exists only in so far as the species is in articulation with Nature. It is this linkage which provides the element of continuity between the past, the present and the future. It is accordingly the analysis of this articulation which can provide the key to a structural understanding of the general process of history.

The connexion of Mankind with Nature is termed production. Production is both a function of Nature and a function of individual members of the species Mankind acting in settings of social relations. Nature furnishes the means of production, the material conditions determining the setting in which production will take place. But

> "In the process of production, human beings do not only enter into a relation with Nature. They produce only by working together in a specific manner and by reciprocally exchanging their activities. In order to produce, they enter into definite connexions and relations with one another, and only within these social connexions and relations does their connexion with Nature, i.e. production, take place". 26

Social relations do not therefore exist except in so far as they are also relations of production. They cannot be reduced to economic relations, nor separated from political relations. All form part of an integrated whole. An integrated system of relations of production is termed a mode of production.

Two levels of analysis of the position of individual actors in the past now become possible. First, they may be defined according to the mode of production into which they are integrated. Secondly, they may be defined according to their position within the setting of social relations which constitutes the mode. Ultimately both means of definition derive from a specification of their relationship to Nature.

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26 Karl Marx, Wage Labour and Capital (1848). This translation of the relevant passage occurs in Karl Marx, Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy, ed. and trans. T.B. Bottomore and M. Rubel, (Pelican, 1963) p.155.

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Changes in the past can be analysed in terms of changes in the mode of production. In the complex dialectics within Nature, in the complex relationship which links a part of Nature to a part of Mankind in a mode of production, in the complex of relations within a mode of production which often leads to the development of antagonistic social classes, and in the links which may develop between two or more modes of production, the possibilities for the emergence of contradictions are almost infinite. It is the objective necessity for these contradictions to be resolved which provides the dynamic for the process of historical change. Where the integration and level of the contradictions reaches critical proportions, the conditions are created for a major transition to a new mode of production.

The methodology of Marxist political economy next furnishes a set of tools by means of which the relationship between Mankind and Nature, which is production, may be periodised. This is the notion of a scale based upon the intensity of the relationship between Mankind and Nature. Its starting point is that at which Mankind is simply a part of Nature in the most direct sense - a species of the fauna of Nature. At the opposite extreme is a condition in which Mankind exerts a large measure of control over the dialectics of Nature. A range of positions is conceivable within these limits. It is therefore possible to speak of the progressive separation of Mankind from Nature. This is defined as the process of social development. The process and the scale indicative of positions along it both derive from theory. They are tools which may be used in the structural reconstruction of the past. It is not essential that Mankind should progress or regress along the scale. It is a matter to be ascertained by the process of historical scholarship.

Only at the lowest points on this scale is a setting of social relations - a social formation or

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society - characterised by a single mode of production.[27] Under such conditions the mode of production may be said to be universal within the social formation or society. Alternatively, an articulation may come into existence between two or more modes of production at different points on the scale of social development.[28]

For a time it may be possible for different modes of production to co-exist, and even to some extent interact on a basis of equality. At some point, however, initially through such processes as unequal exchange, the mode of production which is more advanced in terms of the scale of social development will tend to acquire a position of hegemony.[29]

The initial stage of hegemony is not one involving the total integration of the membership of the simpler mode into the more advanced. It is characterised by a pattern of dominance and subordination. Even at this stage, however, the relationship is an active one. The dominant mode of production operates as a determinate mode;

> "In all forms of society it is a determinate production and its relations which assign every other production and its relations their rank and influence. It is a general illumination in which all other colours are plunged and which modifies their specific tonalities. It is a specific ether which defines the specific gravity of everything found within it."30

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[27] For the purposes of the present study I have taken a 'social formation' to be an integrated setting of social relations existing at a specific point in time. A 'society' is a setting of social relations which has some degree of persistence through time.

[28] Samir Amin, "Underdevelopment and dependence in Black Africa - origins and contemporary forms", Journal of Modern African Studies 10, 4 (1972) pp.506-8.

[29] For the theory of unequal exchange see Arghiri Emmanuel, Unequal Exchange: A Study of the Imperialism of Trade (New Left Books, 1972). I am not convinced by the argument that the theory is only applicable to the articulation through trade of capitalist and pre-capitalist modes.

[30] Karl Marx, Grundrisse (Berlin, 1953) p.27.

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In time it is conceivable that the subordinate mode or modes of production would disappear, and the social relations of their membership be realigned completely in the manner appropriate to the more advanced mode. Essentially an expansion in the scale of this mode will have taken place. More likely is that the degree of complexity implicit in the new social formation would bring into existence a pattern of contradictions capable of bringing about a major social transition, to a situation in which a different mode of production would be dominant.

Certain modes of production may be universal or dominant in different parts of the World over a lengthy period of time. This permits a periodisation of the past to be undertaken. Each period is associated with, and characterised by, a particular mode of production, even though others may also have existed within it.

Where it can be shown that a similar mode of production has characterised periods of the past in a wide variety of parts of the World, then it can be said that such modes characterise major social epochs, which is to say periods in the historical experience of Mankind as a whole. Each social epoch may include a variety of modes of production in various relationships with one another, but only one amongst them is dominant to a sufficient degree to be said to characterise the epoch.

Social epochs in the history of Mankind are defined by their existence in structural time. It is not essential for the epochs to exist through the same portions of linear time in all parts of the World.

Thus Marxist political economy not only offers a common methodology and system of categories for structural social and historical analysis, but also, in the notion of a system of social epochs, a set of categories capable of being deployed so as to produce a new and more

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illuminating periodisation of the history of Africa and of various regions within it. The concept of social epochs can do much to restore the essential unity of the historical process which the activity of the empiricists has done so much to fragment.

The enormous variety of concrete situations possible within a social epoch suggests that a range of transitions to and from particular epochs is possible. In the incidence of a social epoch in a particular part of the World, the precise balance of forces at work may differ to some degree from that which may occur elsewhere. If in the final analysis the differences outweigh the similarities, the product of the interaction of the historical forces need not be the same. As Hindess and Hirst point out, particular transitions from one epoch to another cannot be taken for granted in any part of the World,-in past, present or future time - on the basis of a pre-determined theoretical model, but must be analysed in each concrete situation.

Nevertheless, the variety of possible transitions is not infinite. The scope for regression or progression to take place on the scale of social development is limited because any common social epoch can only be said to exist if the same mode of production is dominant within it. There is thus a <u>tendency</u> for similar patterns of contradictions to develop within the same epoch in different parts of the World. Since patterns of contradictions furnish the dynamic for the process of historical change, there is thus an underlying tendency for similar transitions to be produced.

Marx and Engels strove in their work to isolate from the complex stream of World history the major social epochs in the history of Mankind. So far as the study of pre-Socialist epochs was concerned, they worked according to a rigorous and scientific methodology of structural History, a point of which Hindess and Hirst appear blissfully unaware. The basic tools of political economy were constantly applied and re-applied to a range of observed phenomena

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in past and present time. These observations were constantly being augmented by further research.[31] In this way a preliminary formulation was arrived at;

> "in broad outlines Asiatic, ancient, feudal, and modern bourgeois modes of production can be designated as progressive epochs in the economic formation of a society". 32

Marx and Engels were not entirely satisfied with this formulation and continued to return to the problem from time to time until their deaths. Like all elements of Marxism, social epoch categories were applied to the analysis of past and present social relations by Marx and Engels in the sense of working hypotheses rather than proven "natural" laws. These hypotheses, though subject to constant testing against the stream of history which might conceivably have led to the need for their revision, served in the interim to illuminate the complex interconnexions of perceived phenomena. It was and still remains an approach to the study of the past which may legitimately claim to be scientific in the modern sense of the term.

Marx and Engels asked several questions of their preliminary framework of social epochs. To what extent were those identified the only major social epochs? To what extent could they be said to occur in a single sequence? To what extent were other sequences possible, and if they were possible, what determines the sequence which occurs in a particular part of the world? What determined the form of a particular transition within the sequence? Whilst grappling with these problems, constant attention was also given to defining each social epoch more rigorously in a structural manner.

As a result of these processes, the list of modes of production characteristic of social epochs was lengthened

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[31] For a discussion of the practical research undertaken by Marx and Engels on this question see Hobsbawm, "Introduction", in Marx, Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations.

[32] Karl Marx, Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, reproduced in Marx and Frederick Engels, Selected Works in One Volume (Lawrence & Wishart, 1968) p.182.

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to include the 'primitive communal', the 'Germanic', and the 'Slav', with the implication that there might be others. The epoch characterised by the bourgeois mode was defined more precisely as 'Capitalism'.[33]

Although Marx and Engels progressed far towards their goal of developing a general system of social epochs, they had not completed the task by the time of their deaths. It is necessary to proceed further in this direction on the firm foundations which they had established. An important tension in their work which remained partially unresolved, was that between the use of observationally-derived categories on the one hand, and structural categories on the other. As pioneers in the field of structural analysis, Marx and Engels were usually initially forced to apply observationally-derived categories. As they realised, however, this is ultimately not conducive to the realisation of the goals of structural History. As these observationally-derived categories were tested more widely, so they were in fact gradually defined more abstractly, eventually to be replaced by more genuinely structural categories capable of wide application regardless of any specific cultural or national antecedents. By the time of the deaths of Marx and Engels, 'Feudalism' and 'Capitalism', and to a lesser extent 'Primitive Communism' had been refined into rigorous structural categories. Considerable problems, however, still surrounded the remaining epochs.

The problem of sequence also remained well short of total solution. It was clear that 'Capitalism' could not precede any of the other epochs which had been identified from the stream of history, but beyond this there remained a number of unresolved problems. There were hints that the notion of alternative sequences was to be added to the tools available for the understanding of the past and the potential within the present.[34]

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[33] Marx, Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations, pp.67-120.

[34] Hobsbawm, "Introduction", in Ibid., pp.32,38. This opened up a vast range of practical and intellectual possibilities. As Lenin realised, not the least of the practical possibilities was the chance of a 'Socialist' revolution in Russia in 1917. A recent work which makes the most of the intellectual possibilities is Barrington Moore Jr., Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy (Peregrine, 1969).

The historian operating today thus inherits, if he or she so chooses, the basic tools and social categories for a periodisation of the past in a local or regional context, which is meaningful in a structural sense, because it is capable of being compared and contrasted with the periodisation of the past in other spatial contexts, and ultimately related to the history of Mankind as a whole. The historian has no need to devise new sets of observationally-derived social categories when confronted with each new situation requiring analysis, unless it is the deliberate intention to furnish the reader with a picture of empirical confusion.

This is certainly not to say that the Marxist system of social epochs, or indeed other elements of the methodology of political economy, is entirely satisfactory. Further work is needed to refine existing categories, to augment or reduce their number, and to pick out the sequence of transitions in different parts of the World. This work can only be accomplished, however, by following the methodology laid down by Marx and Engels, which involves the constant testing and re-testing of structural hypotheses against the stream of history. It is in this sense that the system of social epochs will be applied in this study.

Within the last decade, attempts have been made to develop and apply a <u>structural approach to the study of the history of Africa.</u> In the main, however, it has concentrated upon a particular question; that of the changing form of the articulation between pre-Capitalist modes of production based within Africa, and Capitalist or near-Capitalist modes of production based outside the continent. The initial form taken by this articulation is seen to be commercial, and it is analysed using the concept of 'unequal exchange'. Later,other forces contribute further to the process of the'development of underdevelopment'. A periodisation of the history of Africa is built up on the basis of changes in the nature of this fundamental articulation between Africa and forces emanating from outside it.

Within this broad tradition, studies now exist at various levels; continental,[35] regional,[36] and national.[37] The tradition has its intellectual roots in the efforts of A.G. Frank to cope with the general problem of the historical relationship between the 'developed' and'underdeveloped' parts of the World.[38] Works which employ Frank's methodology in regard to Africa, now stand within a much broader tradition of similar studies concerning the history of 'underdevelopment' in almost every part of the 'Third World'.[39]

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[35]Examples include Walter Rodney, How Europe Underdeveloped Africa (Dar Es Salaam: Tanzania Publishing House, 1972); Samir Amin, "Underdevelopment and dependence in Black Africa"; Immanuel Wallerstein, "The three stages of African involvement in the World Economy", in Peter Gutkind and I. Wallerstein, ed., The Political Economy of Contemporary Africa, Vol.I, (forthcoming).

[36]Examples include E. A. Alpers, Ivory and Slaves in East Central Africa (Heinemann, 1975); E.A. Brett, Colonialism and Underdevelopment in East Africa: The Politics of Economic Change 1919-39 (Heinemann, 1973).

[37]Examples include Colin Leys, Underdevelopment in Kenya: The Political Economy of Neo-Colonialism 1964-71 (Heinemann, 1975); Martin Legassick, "Development and underdevelopment in South Africa", London: Chatham House, Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1971 (mimeograph).

[38]For the roots of the methodology see A.G. Frank, "The development of underdevelopment", Monthly Review, 18, 4 (New York: 1966). The penetration of Frank's ideas into the field of African studies has been documented by E.A. Alpers, "Rethinking African economic history", Kenya Historical Review I, 2 (1973) pp.163-87. For what amounts to an empiricist's critique of this penetration see A.G. Hopkins, "On importing A.G. Frank into Africa", African Economic History Review 2, 1 (1975) pp.13-21.

[39]Frank, for example, first applied his ideas to the Latin American situation; A.G. Frank, Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America (New York: Modern Reader, 1969).

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The process of the 'development of underdevelopment' is now argued to have begun very deep in the African past. Alpers has recently suggested, for example, that the process pre-dates the articulation of African societies with a Capitalist mode of production based in Europe. Its origins must be sought in the much earlier articulation with 'developed', if not exactly 'Capitalist', 'Arab' and 'Indian' societies.[40]

In many respects this general approach represents a considerable advance over the limitations of empirical History. Nevertheless it must be said that it does not exactly meet the requirements of a genuinely structural approach to the study of the African past. It will be regarded here as a valuable, even necessary, bridging device between a mode of empirical thinking and a fully structural approach to the past. It is not a substitute for such an approach.[41]

Criticism of the indiscriminate use of the approach may be mounted at a number of levels. First, the tendency is to use non-structural categories in analysis. Patterns of relationships are usually characterised in simplistic continental, ethnic or national terms - 'Africa' and 'Africans', 'Kenya' and 'Kenyans', 'Europe' and 'Europeans', 'Britain' and 'the British'. Thus the categories most commonly deployed in explanations of the past are those of empricical History.

Secondly, the approach does not meet the particular requirement of Marxist structural History. Its starting point is not the continuing and fundamental connexion between Mankind and Nature which is production, but the less essential occasional connexion between members of different modes of production which is commodity exchange.

Thirdly, it is not an approach which is helpful in achieving a structural explanation of African history as

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[40] Alpers, Ivory and Slaves.

[41] This is not the first attempt at a critique from the structural standpoint. See for example J. Taylor, "Neomarxism and underdevelopment: a sociological phantasy", Journal of Contemporary Asia 4, 2 (1974) pp.5-23.

a whole, even though there are signs in the work of Alpers and others that it is coming to be used in this way. Its projection deep into the past leaves little room for forces emanating within Africa to fulfil a dynamic role in the analysis of change. In fact it sometimes seems as if employment of the approach does little to counter the old 'racist' argument that Africans were somehow without history before their articulation with non-African forces, and that even then they became largely sleeping partners in the relationship with these forces. Little attention is given to analysis of the situation before the moment of this articulation, or to continuing patterns of social dynamics within the continent.

All this is plainly unsatisfactory from a structural point of view. Moreover, the substitution of the approach for genuine structuralism also tends to lead to misleading answers being discovered to the important structural question which is actually at the heart of the approach. This is the question of the manner in which the various parts of Africa were brought within the bounds of the relatively recent process of Capitalist accumulation on a global scale.[41] It was largely the degree to which social development had taken place in Africa before the linkage to Capitalist forces which determined the manner in which different parts of the continent were absorbed into the expanding Capitalist system. This in turn determined many important features of the subsequent 'colonial' relationship, not least the pace and form of the return to 'neo-colonialism'. The relationship between 'Africa' and outside forces clearly evolved and continues to evolve through time, but it was never simply a case of external forces operating in a social vacuum. Marxist analysis has often lost sight of this important dialectic.

It is necessary to move beyond the neo-structural approach discussed here, to focus upon the broad sweep

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[41] For an overview of this process see Samir Amin, Accumulation on a World Scale (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974); Immanuel Wallerstein, The Modern World System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World Economy in the 16th Century (Academic Press, 1976); M. Barratt Brown, The Economics of Imperialism (Penguin, 1974) esp. pp.96-127.

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of structural changes which have taken place in the relationship between the species Mankind and Nature in Africa, and to set influences external to the continent within this overall framework.[42]

There is no reason why analysis of this kind should seek to devise new and somehow more 'Afrocentric' tools and social categories. Both are readily available from within the system of Marxist political economy. There is no reason why they should not form the starting points for analysis of the history of Africa, as of that of Europe or any other part of the World. Marxism stands or falls on its ability to offer tools and social categories capable of furnishing an understanding of all social situations, regardless of artificial limits in time and space.

Only if the existing system of social epochs, and any refinements made to it, has been tested and found wanting in a wide variety of African contexts, will it be necessary for structural historians to discard it altogether.

This situation is very far from having been reached, yet it is nevertheless quite common to find, even amongst structural historians, an extreme reluctance to use the Marxist system of general social epochs outside of the immediate national, regional or continental context from which the categories which comprise it were originally observationally-derived.[43] The fact is that almost all the insights which Marx and Engels provide into the process of history derive initially from their examination of the 'European' situation, on the outlines of which they had a thorough grasp. It is reasonable to use the system of social epochs which they abstracted from this situation, just as it is reasonable to employ other structural categories, such as peasant, slave and proletarian, which were also the product of their 'European' investigations.

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[42] It must be said that some attempt to do this is made by the more careful neo-structuralists such as Rodney and Amin.

[43] See, for example, the discussion of the epochs of 'Feudalism' and 'Absolutism' below. Some writers have been only too eager to respond to the warnings; C. Coquery-Vidrovitch, "Research on an African mode of production", Critique of Anthropology 4 and 5 (1975) pp.38-71.

The failure to even attempt to apply the Marxist system of social epochs to African history would seem to invite the continued hegemony of the empiricists in this sphere. There is a constant danger of those who attempt to follow in the footsteps of Marx and Engels falling en route into the empirical trap, by analysing the past in terms of a myriad of social classes and local observationally-derived social epochs which have little comparative structural value. Marxism must constantly struggle against the myopia of empiricism which bourgeois-national pressures seek to impose upon it. It is perhaps necessary to remind ourselves of the fundamental unity of the Marxist methodological system, and the catholicism of its vision. The aim is nothing less than to establish the general mechanism of all social change.

As the empiricists are only too ready to point out, there is also another trap waiting to ensnare those structuralists who do not follow the methodological example of Marx and Engels precisely. This is the trap of determinism. Determinists apply a rigid and narrow system of social categories and social epochs to the past, rather than constantly testing them against the stream of history in the manner of scientific hypotheses.[44]

Some progress has been made in the field of anthropology and of contemporary studies to develop a more structural approach to the analysis of African situations,[45] but it is arguably only in relation to southern Africa that a school of historical writing employing a more or less structural approach has really begun to assert itself.

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[44] This accusation has been levelled against certain works emanating from the Soviet Union; Coquery-Vidrovitch, "Research on an African mode of production", p.38. The remarks in the article are directed in particular against a work which has been used as a textbook for African students at the Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow for many years; Mitropolski and V. Kerov, Aperçu d'Histoire et d'Economie, 1 : Formations Précapitalistes; La Communauté Primitive, la Société Esclaviste, la Société Féodale (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1960).

[45] Contributions which employ a structural anthropological approach may be found in the journals Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines, La Pensee, and Critique of Anthropology. Some examples are discussed in chapter 3 below. There is now a journal of contemporary studies committed to a structural approach: Review of African Political Economy.

The recent Oxford History of South Africa actually incorporates a strand of structuralism, which adds an element of unevenness to the broadly liberal-empiricist character of the work. The strand is not apparent, one must hasten to add, in the work of the contributors to these volumes who are fundamentally historians, but in that of writers trained within an archaeological or anthropological tradition.[46] The first volume in fact opens with a broadly structural approach. There are passages drawing upon archaeological material in which people are differentiated largely according to the productive, or at least the techno-economic base of their society. A chapter written by an anthropologist, and dealing with the "hunters and the herders", makes some attempt to continue this approach. There then follows a sharp and rather uneasy jump to more conventional passages of empirical history, where the categories used tend to be individual or ethnic.[47] The liberal-empirical approach dominates the remainder of the volume, and indeed the whole of the second volume with the notable if partial exception of Monica Wilson's contribution on the "Growth of peasant communities".[48]

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[46] This is certainly not to suggest that the approaches employed by these two disciplines is entirely satisfactory. A full critique is beyond the scope of the present work, but some remarks are offered in later chapters in relation to specific products of the approaches. Even the notion of a 'structural anthropology' would seem to beg a number of questions.

[47] There is actually a good deal of awareness amongst empiricists of the problems they face in trying to achieve this transition, but this awareness seems not to have led to any fundamental change of approach.

[48] Elsewhere I have begun to query the manner in which the structural category of the 'peasantry' is applied in this and other studies of the history of southern Africa; Henry Slater, "Peasants and primitive accumulation in southern Africa", in Christopher Hill and Peter Warwick, ed., Papers Presented at the 1975 University of York Annual Conference on Southern Africa Work in Progress (York: University of York Centre for Southern African Studies, forthcoming).

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The whole work is presented within a fundamental national category which is often projected backwards into a time -period in which it has no structural claim to exist.[49]

The leading practitioners of the structural approach to the southern African past have tended to be Marxists, however, and their work is not found within the pages of the Oxford History. The tradition is not new, though it has come to prominence within the last few years. Its roots may possibly be traced to an origin within the activist political tradition of a socialist character, which began to develop within the South African geo-polity in the 1920s. The development of the tradition at this time and in this geo-polity within the African continent was not accidental. It reflected the greater degree to which a pattern of Capitalist relations had come into operation in South Africa, relative to the situation elsewhere in the continent. To a large extent this distinction still exists.

Recent writing within this tradition has essentially been concerned to develop an understanding of the patterns of contradictions existing within the contemporary social formation of southern Africa, and therefore the structural possibilities for further transitions to take place within it. Wideranging comparisons and contrasts within the general social epoch of Capitalism, or at least within situations of Capitalist hegemony, serve to help illuminate the nature of the prevailing situation, and to suggest possible roads of social development and political struggle.[50]

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[49] As the editors take pains to point out in the preface to the work, everything discussed in the two volumes takes place "on South African soil"; Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson, "Preface", in Oxford History of South Africa, I:v. The emphasis in the quotation is mine, the capitals are supplied by the editors. There is no way that the geo-polity South Africa can be said to have existed before 1910. The title of volume one is thus an entirely ideological construction; South Africa to 1870. The national category's fundamental place in these volumes is actually rubbed home in the general title, which is not as usually cited The Oxford history of South Africa, but the Oxford History of SOUTH AFRICA.

[50] Space does not allow citation of these works, but at least the names of Trapido, Arrighi, Legassick and Wolpe may be mentioned.

Structural historians have so far not given attention to the history of southern Africa before the period of formal European colonisation, which is taken to mark the opening of the era of Capitalist hegemony. Situations which pre-date this are collectively subsumed within one of a number of static residual categories which, in themselves, have no explanatory value. 'Traditional society' and the 'traditional economy' are perhaps the best known of these categories. Sometimes a curious, but still static, ethno-structural combination is employed, such as the 'Sotho mode of production'. Alternatively,a category borrowed from bourgeois political economy is employed, without indicating its place within any historical sequence. Polanyi's notion of the 'redistributive economy' is perhaps the best known category of this type. Although the literature is dotted with occasional insights, I am not aware of any systematic treatment of pre-capitalist southern Africa from a structural standpoint.[51]

The task of removing this wall of silence is more urgent than is sometimes credited. Capitalism in southern Africa is far from universal, and the source of an understanding of certain of its contradictions may still lie in the study of its specific antecedents in the region.

It was, broadly speaking, from the structural standpoint that I began to attempt to analyse the history of rural 'Natal', originally in the time period 1838 to 1913.[52] In undertaking this task, it became apparent that, although the tools and parallels existed for the construction of such an analysis, the mode of thinking of which they formed part was completely different from that so far applied to the pre-1838 time-period. It accordingly proved very difficult to achieve a satisfactory opening linkage with existing work dealing with this earlier period, and to gain a full structural understanding of the contradictions

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[51] Nick Hyman's general study of class formation in southern Africa may eventually have important things to say on the subject.

[52] Henry Slater, "The changing pattern of economic and social relationships in rural Natal, 1838-1913", in Shula Marks, ed., Collected Seminar Papers, Vol.III (1973); "Land, labour and capital in Natal: The Natal Land & Colonisation Company, 1860-1948", Journal of African History XVI, 2 (1975) pp.257-83

which fuelled the historical process in the 'colonial' period.

Though useful work, albeit from an empirical standpoint, had been undertaken on aspects of commodity exchange relations and patterns of political change, virtually nothing had been said of the history of the totality which is production.[53] Bryant's long-standing assertion that there were essentially no changes in production, and that therefore production cannot form the starting point for a system of Historical explanation, remained unchallenged;

> "The Zulu daily life of a hundred, perhaps a thousand, years ago was precisely that which it is today". 54

It began to appear that the resolution of this contradiction between the methodological approach in use in relation to the 'pre-colonial' period of south-east African history, and the methodological approach of the structuralists to the 'colonial' period, was a more urgent task than the presentation of a structural explanation of the history of 'Natal' between 1838 and 1913. The task also appeared to be an essential prerequisite for the formulation of such an explanation which the author still proposes to undertake.

The work which follows does not claim to be a complete History of south-east Africa before 1840. Important dimensions are missing.[55] What the work does attempt to show is the extent to which the application of a set of structural tools to the analysis of south-east African history

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[53] This work will be introduced and discussed as the argument unfolds in later chapters.

[54] Bryant, Olden Times p.74.

[55] Amongst these, for example, is that of the 'voice' of social conflicts and social experience expressed in the words of the actors of the past themselves. Nick Hyman has already shown that some progress might be made in this direction by the careful analysis of 'praise' poems and other forms of oral literature; Nick Hyman, "Tentative propositions concerning class formation in southern Africa in the pre-colonial and colonial epochs", University of London, Centre of International & Area Studies, March 1972 (mimeograph).

before 1840, may serve to offer a deeper understanding, not only of the history of the region in this and subsequent periods, but also a means towards an understanding of its place in the history of Mankind as a whole.

The set of structural tools is derived from Marxist political economy. The author does not claim a total knowledge or understanding of these tools and the methodological system of which they form elements. Neither is a full knowledge claimed of all possible observable phenomena in the past of south-east Africa. Still less is it claimed that an entirely satisfactory linkage has been established between the two. The analysis is not therefore put forward as a definitive statement, but as a working hypothesis supported by investigative evidence; an alternative framework within which further study might be carried out, further testing undertaken, further questions asked and further hypotheses formed.

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PART ONE:

PRE-FEUDAL SOCIAL RELATIONS

II

SOUTH - EAST AFRICA AND THE DIALECTICS OF NATURE

Care must be taken in selecting the fundamental spatial category within which any structural History is to be presented. This is especially so in the case of studies which transcend the chronological and spatial limits of any specific geo-polity or 'ethnic' category. After all, from the standpoint of structural analysis, there are no 'peoples', 'nations' or 'ethnic' groups which exist as finite social categories in past, present and future time. There are only people living in different parts of the World, socialised into different modes of production and cultural systems over periods of varying length.

Ethnic or national categories, such as 'Nguni' or 'Zulu', even if capable of precise definition, cannot therefore be taken to provide a meaningful framework within which to attempt a structural analysis ranging deep into the past, because they cannot be taken as fundamental constants. They are historical variables.

By the same token, categories such as 'Natal', 'Zululand' and 'Pondoland' are geo-political constructions existing only in limited time, and can provide meaningful frameworks for structural analysis only in these periods. 'Natal' represents a partial exception to this rule. In addition to its relation to a specific geo-political construction, it has also been employed in a loose subjective sense to refer to a part of southern Africa, the prevailing structural realities of which, the users

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of the term were unaware.[1]

By contrast to the variety of social categories which have existed through time, simple spatial categories defined by geographical features can be taken as constants.[2] The setting for this particular case study in the history of Mankind is south-east Africa. For the purposes of the present work, this category is defined as that part of southern Africa which is bounded by the physical features currently known as the Indian Ocean, the Fish River, the Drakensberg Mountains, and Delagoa Bay.

Although some of these physical features have a tendency to impose a certain structural unity on the area, they have not been selected primarily because of this. The main reason for attempting a structural History within this category is the degree to which, as argued above, the prevailing approaches to the history of the area are unsatisfactory.

The selection of an arbitrary spatial category implies that it cannot be taken to represent, à priori, an integrated 'political economy'; though it is possible for the methodology of Marxist political-economy to be applied to the analysis of social relations which have from time to time existed within it and across its boundaries.

Nature forms the starting point for an analysis of this kind. Nature is a constant, but only in the precise

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[1] It was originally a term used by Vasco da Gama in 1497 to very roughly delineate a certain part of the coast and hinterland of south-east Africa which he had come across in the season of 'Natal', the season of Christmas. He may not even have set foot on it; Brookes and Webb, History of Natal p.3. Later it became a term used to delineate a specific geo-political category.

[2] The importance of the change from ethnic to geographical categories in the methodology of the presentation of the findings of historical scholarship has been pointed out by Perry Anderson, Passages From Antiquity to Feudalism (New Left Books, 1974) p.16. It must be said, however, that Anderson is much less careful in distinguishing between geographical and geo-political categories.

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Land over 6,000 ft.

Land between 6,000 and 4,000 ft. (Highveld)

Land between 4,000 and 2,000 ft. (Middleveld)

Land below 2,000 ft. (Lowveld)

Fig.1 South-east Africa : Main Features of Relief and Drainage.

sense of being a totality existing in almost limitless time and space. The totality is not homogeneous. It is rather a system of relations, the overall complexion of which is constantly changing. Change is induced partly by an inner dynamic - Nature's own system of dialectics, but also latterly by the capacity of Mankind to influence aspects of the operation of these dialectics. Thus Nature varies in time as well as in space. At any given point in time, a portion of Nature which is also limited in space, may be termed a natural environment.[3]

Theoretically therefore, it is not possible to specify the characteristics of the south-east African natural environment, except in so far as they existed at a particular moment in the past. In practice as historians we must make some attempt to do so, though constantly remaining aware of the degree to which any generalisations are no more than hypotheses about the past. Like all such hypotheses they are subject to constant testing in the light of fresh evidence.

It is reasonable to suppose that within the last few thousand years, relatively little change has taken place in the main characteristics of certain physical features; notably the altitudinal-zoning of the region, the major drainage pattern, and the nature and distribution of mineral deposits (except in so far as these have been consumed). No attempt will be made to describe these features in detail, but some attempt must be made to introduce aspects of them which appear to have taken on particular importance in the social sphere.

Taking first the interrelated questions of relief and drainage patterns: south-east Africa may be divided into four physical zones; the land above 6,000 ft., the land between 6,000 and 4,000 ft. also known as the 'highveld', the land between 4,000 and 2,000 ft. known as the 'middleveld', and the land below 2,000 ft. known as the 'lowveld'. A clear

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[3] For an introduction to the idea of Nature as a complex historical variable see Frederick Engels, Dialectics of Nature (Lawrence and Wishart, 1964).

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pattern is discernible in the landscape, which forms a plane sloping downwards from west to east, a fact which determines the orientation of the main drainage pattern.[4]

The land above 6,000 ft. is confined to the Drakensberg Mountains, which separate south-east Africa from the vast interior plateau to the west. In the south the range forms an abrupt and rugged escarpment, reaching heights in excess of 10,000 ft. in places. Northwards the range becomes lower and more broken until it disappears altogether. The Drakensberg are important in two respects. First, their existence ensures that south-east Africa, with the exception of that part of the 'lowveld' in the north-west, tends to have a much higher rainfall than the interior. Secondly, the mountains form a partial barrier to human interaction.

Sloping eastwards from the foot of the Drakensberg to the 4,000 ft. contour is the relatively even and undissected surface of the 'highveld'. When contrasted to the mountains to the west, and the rugged landscape to the east, the even surface of the 'highveld' suggests that it may have been well-suited to development of the major north-south arteries of human interaction and migration.

The landscape of the 'middleveld' is generally rugged. Here much of the original plateau surface has been deeply

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[4] Except where otherwise indicated, this discussion of the physical features of south-east Africa is based upon J.H. Wellington, Southern Africa: A Geographical Study, 2 vols., (Cambridge UP, 1955), Vol.1, Physical Geography; E.H. Brookes and N. Hurwitz, ed., The Natal Regional Survey, 13 vols., Vol.I, The Archaeology and Natural Resources of Natal (Cape Town: Oxford for Natal UP, 1951) pp.30-140; Vol. 3, The Distribution of Population in Natal (Cape Town: Oxford for Natal UP, 1955) pp.1-5.

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dissected by powerful-flowing rivers to produce a pattern of deep gorges separated by narrow spurs or ridges, both of which radiate eastwards from the foot of the Drakensberg escarpment. There is thus a tendency for the landscape within this zone to divide itself into a number of parallel corridors of a broadly west-east orientation. Only in the north and north-west, and occasionally where parts of the former plateau surface stand free, is the overall pattern disrupted. It is reasonable to suppose that the pattern of the landscape in this zone is such as to tend to inhibit north-south human interaction, and to channel east-west interaction along major corridors running from the 'highveld' to the sea. Corridors which led up to important Drakensberg passes, such as the Tugela and its tributary valleys, were especially well equipped to fulfil such a role.

Between the 2,000 ft. contour and the Indian Ocean is the coastal or 'lowveld' zone. In many parts of the region the drop from the 'middleveld' to the 'lowveld' takes the form of a steep escarpment. The width of the coastal zone varies considerably. Between the Fish and the Tugela Rivers it is usually less than 20 miles wide, but further north it opens out to merge with the extensive 'Mozambique' plain. The landscape of the 'lowveld' is also one of considerable variation. In the north the surface is the product of marine deposition and is low, sandy and fairly even. The river valleys are open with considerable expanses of alluvium bordering the river courses. Very few physical barriers are thus placed in the way of human interaction in any direction. On the other hand, in the south the surface becomes more uneven and the rivers flow in deep, narrow valleys. Here once more north-south human interaction faces physical obstacles, especially in the rainy season, though the seashore would form a partial exception to this. As in the case of the 'middleveld', the pattern of the landscape is such as to encourage east-west human interaction to take place along the river valleys.

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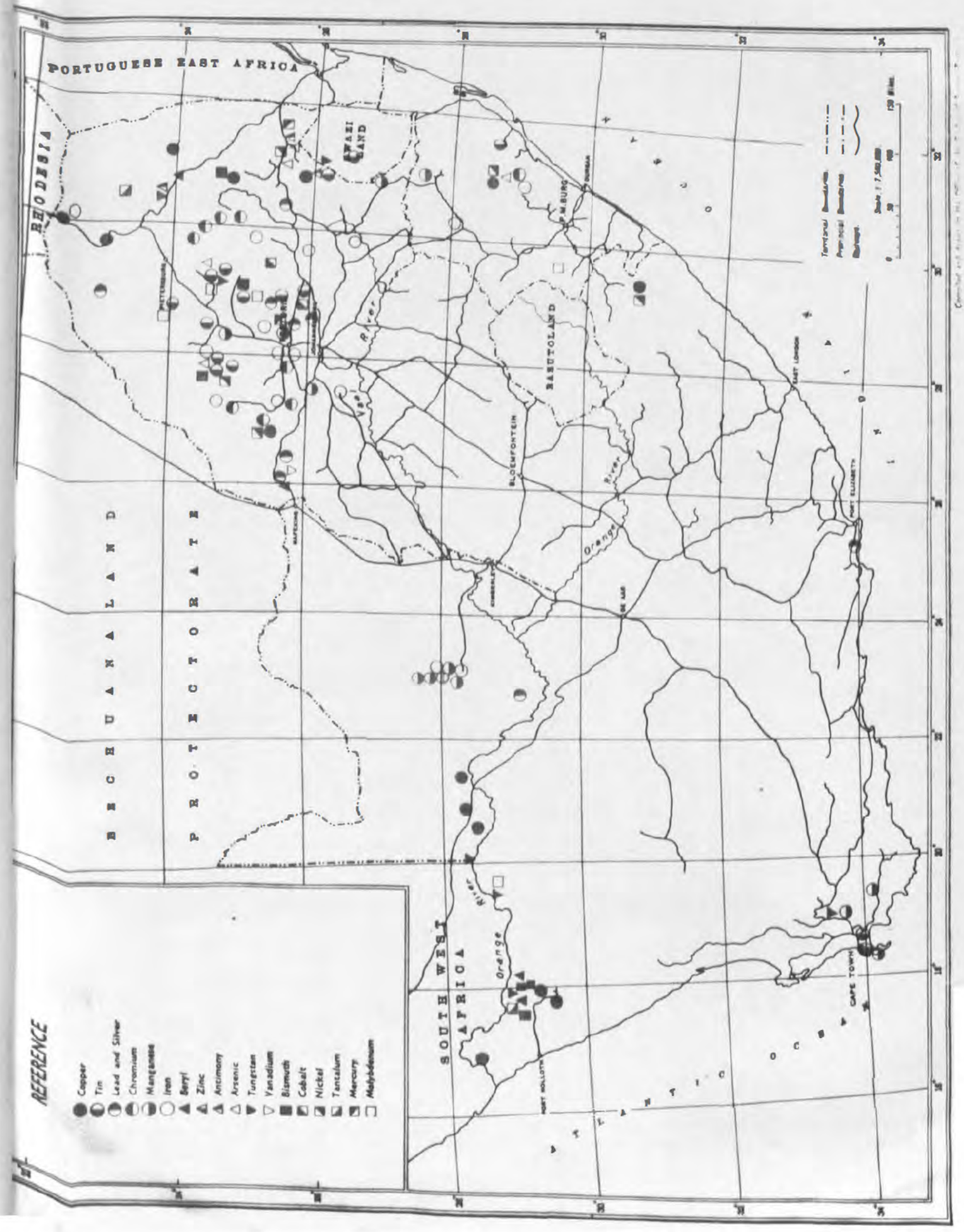
Fig.2 Southern Africa : Ores of the Base Minerals

Source: The Mineral Resources of the Union of South Africa (Pretoria: Dept. of Mines, 1936) between pp.165 and 169.



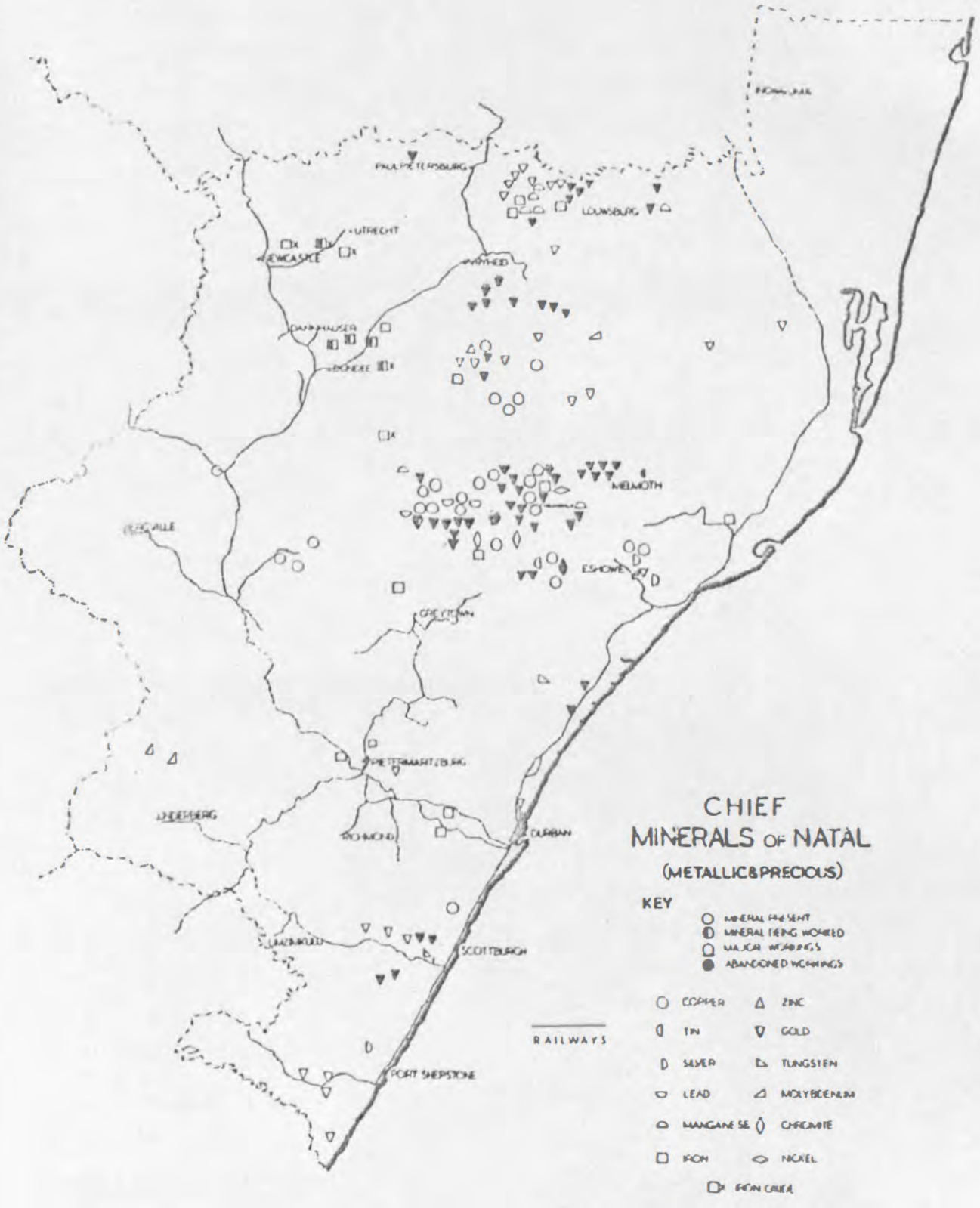


Fig.3 Chief Minerals of Natal (Metallic and Precious)

Source: Natal Regional Survey, vol.1, chart ix.

The tendency of the landscape to descend in steps from the Drakensberg Mountains to the Indian Ocean, inhibits navigation of the river system by boats, except in the extensive plains area around Delagoa Bay. There are relatively few inlets along the coast suitable for use as harbours.

South-east Africa is rich in minerals, including coal and the important metallic forms iron, copper, tin, zinc, gold, nickel, lead and silver. An obvious but important structural feature of mineral deposits is that they are not distributed evenly throughout the countryside, but exist in precise locations. In south-east Africa there is also a tendency for these deposits to be grouped in clusters.[5]

Generalisations about the incidence in time and space of climate, vegetation, soil, disease and fauna régimes are much more difficult to formulate. Jeff Guy has recently pointed out the incidence and possible social significance of local differences in south-east African natural environments.[6] These in turn must be set within the context of short and long-term changes through time. A range of techniques is now available to undertake the historical reconstruction of natural environments, but in the case of south-east Africa their application is only just beginning.[7] Until the fruits of such research become readily available, general conclusions have largely to be based on contemporary or near-contemporary data.

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[5] See maps figs. 2 and 3.

[6] J.J. Guy, "The destruction of the Zulu Kingdom: The Civil War in Zululand, 1879-1884", Ph.D. thesis, University of London, School of Oriental & African Studies, 1975, pp.11-21. See also Natal Regional Survey, I:63-4.

[7] For an early summary of work in this field see Ibid., I:1-8. An important new contribution is shortly to be published; Martin Hall, "The dendroclimatology of Natal since c.1320", Annals of the Natal Museum (forthcoming). I am not aware of any work which has been published on the question of soil history.

It seems likely that within the last few hundred years, the overall pattern of rainfall has remained closely related to relief. The regions of highest rainfall are currently along the coast south of Lake St. Lucia, and also along the Drakensberg Mountains and its transverse ridges or spurs. Mean annual rainfall in these areas exceeds 40 inches. Much of the 'middleveld', together with that part of the coast north of St. Lucia, has between 30 and 40 inches per year. The lowest rainfall is found in the northern and north-western interior. In these areas it reaches levels of 25 inches,or less in some places.

The bulk of this rain falls in summer, that is between the months of November and March. Beyond this, however, the distribution of rainfall through the year varies considerably from one part of south-east Africa to another. There is almost no dry season along most of the coast, but one exists inland and extends in duration towards the interior. Over much of the northern and north-western interior the drought period is protracted and severe, so that plant growth is retarded in winter. Five months are usual in certain restricted localities in these areas.

The number of rainy days is also a factor significant for plant growth. The summer-mist zone of part of the 'middleveld' has over 100 rainy days a year, and is thus particularly well-favoured in this respect. Along the coast high humidities have also favoured plant growth. In the north and north-west, the number of rainy days per year falls to under 60, restricting the range of plants which grew or could be grown in these areas before the application of technological innovations.

A further crucial rainfall variant is reliability. Unreliable rainfall can render an area of normally high annual totals marginal for human settlement. Some attempt to compute rainfall reliability statistically, and to transpose the information on to maps, has been made. Albeit on the basis of relatively recent data, it would seem that areas east of a line running approximately between the

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FIG. 4 South-east Africa : Mean Annual Rainfall

sites of the present towns of Durban and Vryheid, experience a relatively less reliable rainfall régime than areas on the western side of it.[8]

There is evidence to suggest then that the driest parts of south-east Africa have also been those most susceptible to drought. Moreover, much of the rainfall in these areas currently takes place in heavy storms, leading to flooding, soil erosion or hail damage to vegetation. The picture is not substantially altered by two moderating factors. First, because of the twin functions of the Drakensberg as catchment area and watershed, surface streams are plentiful in all parts, including the north-west areas lacking in rainfall. Secondly, because of the general humidity, the loss of ground and surface moisture to evaporation is lower in the region as a whole than in many other parts of southern Africa.

A great deal of attention is now being given to the historical study of drought in Africa in the relatively recent past, and to the possible relationship between significant instances of drought and farreaching political, economic and social developments in various parts of the continent.[9] Work of this kind in south-east Africa has hardly begun,[10] but already we have isolated suggestions of the possible social implications of drought in the history of the region.[11]

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[8] Wellington, Southern Africa: A Geographical Study, 1:254, fig.73a.

[9] In 1974, for example, a series of papers dealing with this theme were presented to the African History Seminar of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies at the University of London. A great many ingenious methods are now used to isolate drought régimes from the stream of history in Africa. 'Dendroclimatology', for example, involves deductions being made from the varying widths of the annual growth rings of old trees. Particularly interesting are the deductions being made concerning periods of drought in east Africa and 'Ethiopia' from the records which survive of the annual levels of the Nile at Alexandria dating back more than a thousand years. I am grateful to Ralph Herring for this information.

[10] But see Hall, "Dendroclimatology of Natal".

[11] A role has been suggested for drought (or famine) in the 'Shakan revolution'; Guy, "Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom", p.20. See also Bryant, Olden Times pp.63,88.

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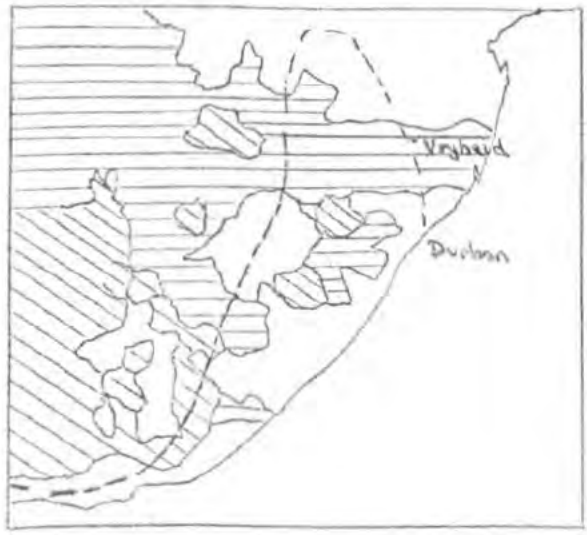

Nil

0 - 30 months

More than 30 months

85% rainfall reliability line

Fig. 5 South-east Africa : Rainfall Reliability and Areas Declared 'drought stricken' 1926-1939

After Wellington (1955) I:254, and M. Cole, South Africa (1961) p.59.

It must be remembered, however, that drought is an extremely complex concept and one which, like famine, is ultimately a social relation. It is a function of the relationship between a natural environment and people dwelling in it. Its possible impact cannot therefore be taken as a constant but will depend on a variety of factors including the size of population, the nature of the mode of production within which it is organised, possible connexions between this and other modes, and the position of the individual within the pattern of social relations which comprise the mode. Drought has undoubtedly played an important part in processes of social development and regression in south-east Africa, but it is a variable which must be handled with care and situated within a specific historical context.

South-east Africa currently enjoys a sub-tropical temperature régime. Frost is almost unknown at the coast, but it is a feature of the climate for between 30 and 60 days of the year further inland. Its particular significance lies in the manner in which it limits the planting and reaping seasons of entirely frost-intolerant crops. Several types of maize, for example, are tolerants of light frost in the early stages of growth, but other types, together with the seedlings of many crops including beans and melons, are not. Frosts late in the growing season affect ripening grains and, if severe, will damage the maize cobs themselves.[12]

Vegetation cover is an aspect of Nature in south-east Africa which has probably undergone the greatest change during the last few hundred years. Acocks, the leading student of this problem, has suggested that long ago southern Africa was covered with either forest or closed scrub forest. As late as 1400 the bushveld was probably a lot more extensive than it is today. Forest and bushveld have gradually given way to various forms of grasslands and, mostly in areas outside south-east Africa, even to desert.[13]

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[12] Wellington, Southern Africa: A Geographical Study, I:225.

[13] J.P.H. Acocks, Veld Types of South Africa (Pretoria: Botanical Survey of South Africa, 1953).

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The influence of human activity has undoubtedly been crucial in this respect. Forest-cover has been progressively cleared over the centuries to permit more extensive husbandry of animals and crops. Human activity has also been largely instrumental in bringing about change in the nature of the grasslands which were brought into existence by this clearance.

The characteristics of the grasslands are of fundamental importance for livestock-husbandry practices. An initial distinction may be made between 'sweet' and 'sour' grassveld. Areas occupied by 'sweet' species may be grazed upon throughout the year, even when they are dry. Areas taken up by 'sour' species are available for the summer months only. It must be a very long time since 'sweet' species dominated the landscape, and in the last few hundred years the balance has tipped decisively in favour of the 'sour' species.[14]

It is thus the late Autumn, Winter and early Spring months (from about the middle of March to the end of September) that pose problems for cattlemen in south-east Africa. It has been estimated that, left to their own resources on the natural sourveld, cattle may get a bare subsistence for only three out of these six or seven months. In the remaining three months an ox can easily lose 150 lbs. in weight, and become vulnerable to any number of diseases.[15] Cattlemen now, probably like their predecessors of the distant past, seek to have their cattle graze the sourveld in Summer in order to reserve the sweetveld for Winter use. Where these kinds of elementary rules of veld management were ignored, for whatever reason, overgrazing of the sweetveld would have resulted. Overgrazing not only serves to retard growth in the short-term, but can also have disastrous long-term consequences by allowing the spread of ranker grasses into areas which had once been the preserve

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[14] Wellington, Southern Africa: A Geographical Study, I:286; A.J. Christopher, "Natal: a study in colonial land settlement", Phd. thesis, University of Natal at Durban, 1969, p.20.

[15] Wellington, op.cit., p.291.

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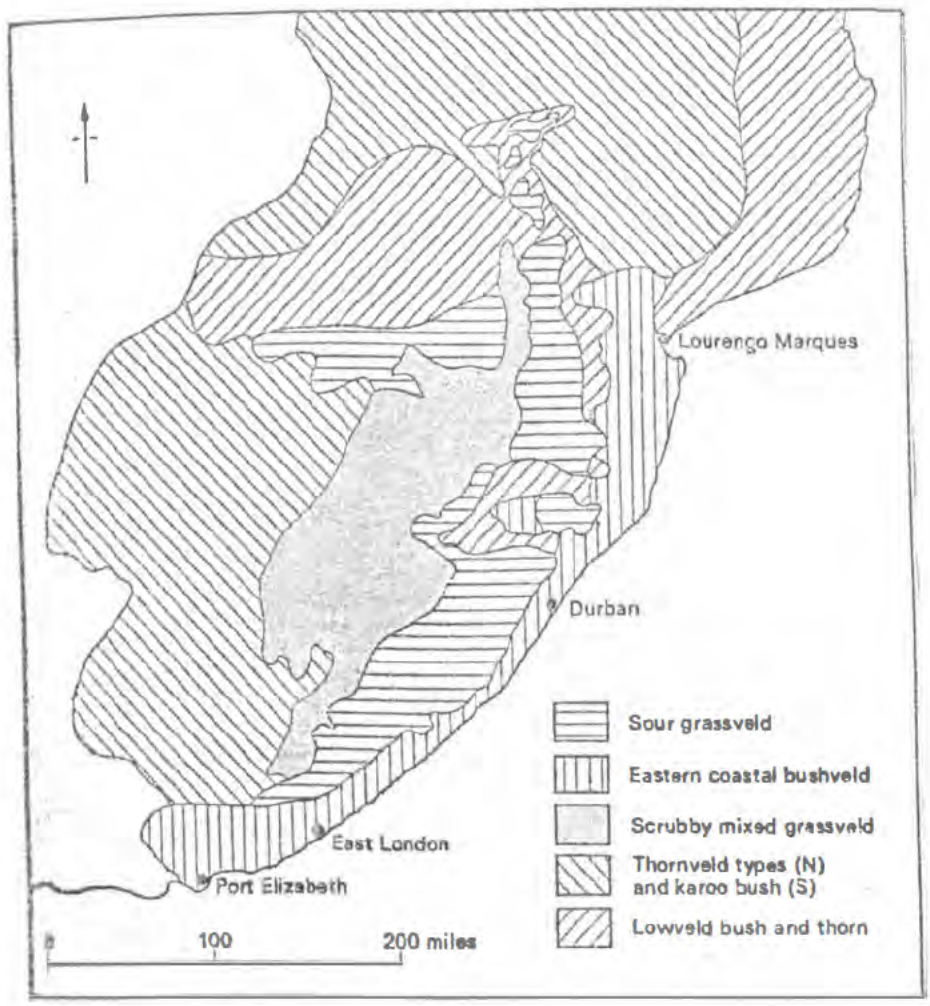

Fig.6 Veld Cover in Southern Africa

Source: Sansom, "Traditional economic systems", p.149, after Acocks (1953).

of sweet species. It is highly likely that this process has been taking place in south-east Africa for a very long time.[16]

When other factors are incorporated into the picture, it may be concluded that the carrying capacity of the veld varied greatly, not only from place to place, but also from season to season and year to year. In recent times it has become possible for farmers to partially control or otherwise overcome these variations by means of irrigation, the planting of new species, the application of fertilisers to the soil, and the use of forage. Before these technological developments, all of which appear to lie outside the period of south-east African history which forms the subject of this study, husbandmen must have jealously guarded the better sections of the veld, together with the right to move their herds and flocks from one place to another. By the same token, in the absence of technological changes, it would have meant that the question of access to the veld could easily have become an important political question, which is to say a source of tension in existing patterns of social relations.[17] It must be stressed, however, that this was probably only one aspect of natural environments over which social tensions might conceivably have developed.

Three major vegetational zones may currently be distinguished. At the coast there remains a belt of thick bush and evergreen forest, which shades into mangrove swamp in the more northerly part of the region. The type of vegetation cover and other factors have tended to inhibit use of the coastlands for livestock-husbandry, a situation which may have long prevailed.[18]

Between the coastal zone and the 3,000 ft. contour is the savannah or bushveld zone. Tree and grass types vary

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[16] Wellington, Southern Africa: A Geographical Study, 1:287; A.J. Christopher, "Natal: a study in colonial land settlement", p.21.

[17] Christopher has constructed a valuable map of the approximate Voortrekker assessment of 'Natal' as a cattle country in 1838. It shows clearly variations in the 'quality' of the veld at this time; see map fig.7.

[18] Ibid. This is also apparent from written records dating back to the 16th century and which are discussed below.

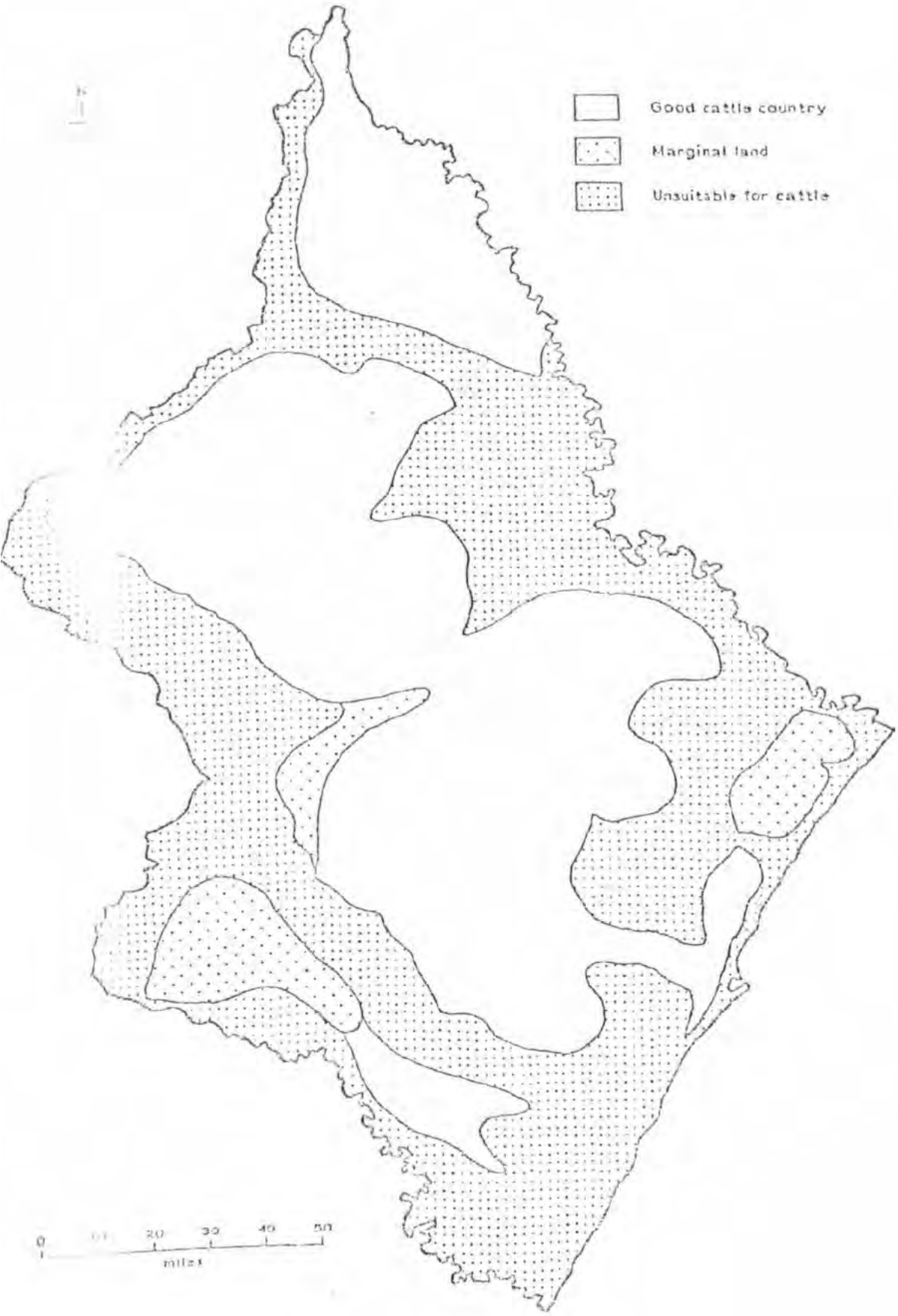

Fig.7 Approximate Voortrekker Assessment of Natal

Source: A.J. Christopher (1969) p.27.

in species and concentration, but a substantial part of the zone comprises the sub-type thornveld - made up of grasses and acacia thornscrub - which also extends into some of the deeper valleys penetrating the interior. As a pastoral area, the thornveld has certain important characteristics. Its sour grasses are nutritious in the early stages of growth as elsewhere, and the sweet grasses are excellent grazing the whole year through. Nowadays however, the sweet grasses are mostly fine, widely-spaced and thus easily overgrazed. It has been estimated that an area of this kind with a rainfall of 20 inches can carry 25 beasts to the square mile; about 50% of the rate of grassland with 25 inches and 20% of that for grassland with 30 inches.[19] Essentially then the thornveld is a brittle environment suited to nomadic pastoralism of low density, or, with its useful summer shade not found on the open grasslands, to act as one leg of a wider-based pastoral economy.

Much of the remainder of south-east Africa is now characterised by various types of grassveld, with isolated patches of forest in valleys and between the 3,000 and 4,000 ft. contours, all that now remains of what was probably a much more extensive forest cover.

Space does not allow discussion of the complex distribution of soil types; their characteristics and their history. It must suffice to point out that soils are not all of equal potential for agricultural activity. In some cases their exploitation by farmers may have been conditional on certain technological innovations (in the sphere of implements or crop types for example) having first taken place.

A number of human and livestock diseases are known to have been important at various stages in the history of south-east Africa, but one area of nagana is usually thought

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[19] Wellington, Southern Africa: A Geographical Study, I:300-1.

to have been of lasting significance. This is the zone of tsetse fly which currently takes up much of the northern lowveld, and is a formidable problem for cattlemen in the area. It is usually argued that the incidence of tsetse-borne sleeping-sickness was more general and more severe in earlier times, and that it may therefore have been important in determining livestock and human migration and settlement patterns.[20]

There is probably a good deal of truth in this argument, but there is also evidence to suggest that the incidence and social significance of tsetse fly should be seen within the context of the dialectical relationships within Nature and between Nature and the human factor. It has been pointed out, for example, that its incidence in cattle increases when the game population declines, because the possibility of the fly finding alternative hosts is reduced. The game population is of course a variable capable of being profoundly influenced by human activity. The incidence of the fly may also be influenced by a shift in the dominant disease régime. In the last years of the 19th century, when the game population had already been decimated, rinderpest disease in cattle sweeping southwards through the continent virtually wiped out the tsetse fly in south-east Africa, because neither wild nor domesticated hosts remained. As the livestock population was rebuilt, so too was that of the tsetse fly. The situation is further complicated by the fact that methods may have been devised, in relatively early as well as in modern times, to control the incidence of the fly and its associated disease.[21]

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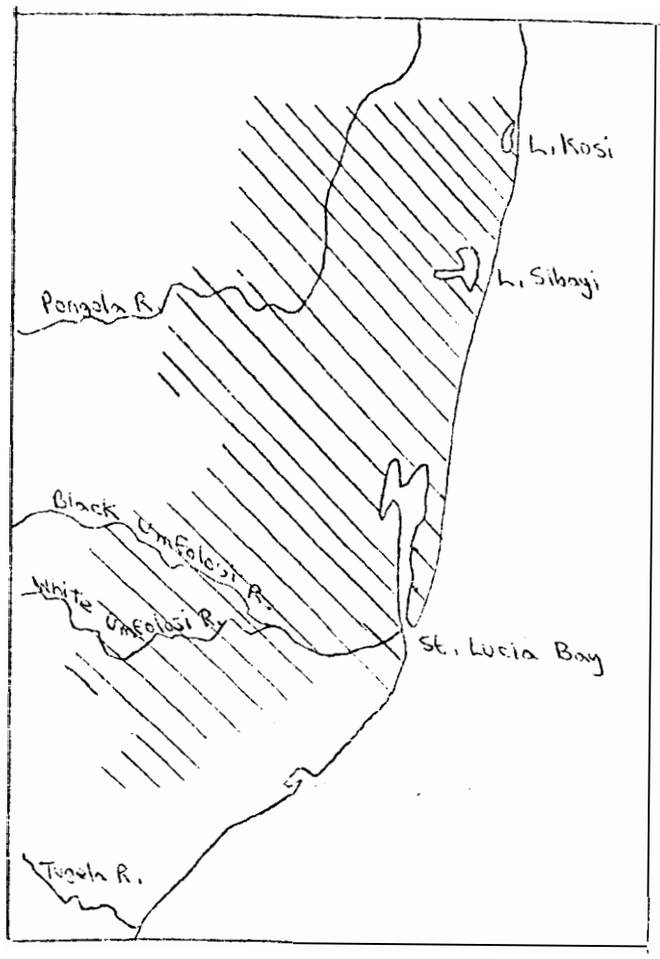
[20] Natal Regional Survey, I:89,96; Vol.VII, The Native Reserves of Natal (Cape Town: Oxford for Natal UP, 1957) pp.45,47; Brian Fagan, Ancient Peoples and Places : Southern Africa (Thames and Hudson, 1965) p.28; Wellington, Southern Africa: A Geographical Survey, Vol. II, Economic and Human Geography p.81; Monica Wilson, "Changes in social structure in southern Africa: the relevance of kinship studies to the historian", in L.M. Thompson, ed., African Societies in Southern Africa (Heinemann, 1969) p.79.

[21] Wellington, op.cit., II:81-2; J.B. McI. Daniel, "A geographical study of pre-Shakan Zululand", South African Geographical Journal 55, 1 (1973) p.30. For a wider perspective see J.J. McKelvey, Man Against Tsetse: Struggle for Africa (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1973); F.L. Narmbrecht, "Notions concerning the evolution of communicable diseases in Man", South African Journal of Science, 64 (1968)



Area infested with tsetse fly in 1945

Fig.8 Area of South-east Africa infested with Tsetse Fly in 1945

After Wellington (1955) II:81.

So far as the question of the fauna population is concerned, fossil evidence proves that the land-mass, rivers, coastal waters and skies of south-east Africa have long been the homes of a rich variety of insects, fish, birds and animals.

It is difficult to determine even a wildly approximate date for the emergence of Mankind as an identifiable species within the fauna of Nature in south-east Africa, and impossible to decide whether this development resulted from independent evolution or from immigration. It undoubtedly took place many thousands of years ago, and research being carried out in other parts of the continent seems to point to the possibility of a very distant origin in time.

The economic potentialities implicit in aspects of Nature in south-east Africa have already been hinted at, notably in relation to animal husbandry and mineral production. The region also clearly contained potential for various forms of food-gathering, hunting, fishing and agriculture. The realisation of these potentialities, however, is a social question determined by the complex interaction of natural and human forces. Thus a human activity such as agriculture cannot be introduced into a work of history as an aspect of the 'geographical' or 'economic' background considered largely in static terms, but like Nature itself, must be added to the list of variables contributing to the stream of history requiring analysis by the techniques of historical scholarship.

Early European travellers to south-east Africa were so impressed by the appearance of the natural environment with which they were confronted, that they told themselves they had reached the Promised land. Later settlers, encouraged by the propaganda distributed in the European metropolis by unscrupulous emigration agents, arrived in the geo-polity of 'Natal' with a similar vision before them. Both these groups quickly came to find farming in south-east Africa much more difficult than they had ever

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expected , and many left the land or the region because of it. Their problems partly derived from the prevailing patterns of social forces, but they also had an environmental component. They had discovered that Nature in south-east Africa is a totality of considerable complexity in space as well as time, and that it has proved capable of providing successive generations of people with difficult problems. The point is made here because the image of south-east Africa as a relatively homogeneous natural environment, unchanging through time and consistently welcoming to successive waves of 'immigrant' farmers, is not entirely dead and sometimes even seems to be alive and well in the work of influential historians.[22]

The complex patterns of relations which comprise Nature in its south-east African aspect, suggest that explanations of the social history of the region which rely entirely upon notions of diffusion - the migration of people, animals, technologies, ideas and social forms - may be at least partially misleading. The complex dialectics of Nature in south-east Africa are clearly capable of having generated forces which could furnish the initial dynamic, and subsequently help to guide the direction, of processes of social development in the region. This needs to be borne in mind as the human factor is introduced into the analysis.

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[22] A simple distinction between the 'natural environment' of south-east Africa and of the interior, together with its homogeneity in time and space, is for example fundamental to the argument of J.D. Omer-Cooper, The Zulu Aftermath: A Nineteenth Century Revolution in Bantu Africa (Longmans, 1966) p.25.

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III

SOCIAL TRANSITIONS IN SOUTH - EAST AFRICA BEFORE 1550

As much care must be taken by historians and others in approaching the study of the connexion between people and the natural environment, as in discussing the characteristics of the natural environment itself. Unfortunately this care is not always taken.

The present chapter discusses first, the problem of isolating a genuinely structural methodology, from amongst the various ways in which particular writers have approached the study of the connexion between people and the natural environment. Secondly, the chapter introduces the sources which are available for the study of the early forms taken by this connexion in south-east Africa, and considers their respective possibilities and limitations. Thirdly, an attempt is made at synthesis between the methodological perspective offered by the structural approach and the observational data offered by these sources. The paucity of the data ensures that the synthesis remains at the level of a highly tentative hypothesis supported by preliminary investigative evidence. The attempt is made because the roots of ethno-empirical History are tending to thrust ever deeper into the past, on the basis of a range of observations which is certainly no less unsatisfactory. In order to counter this tendency it is important to establish from the outset of the analysis of the south-east African past, a mode of structural thinking concerning the patterns of social relations which comprise the stream of history in the region.

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There is a tendency for some anthropologists to posit a direct, almost deterministic relationship, between the natural environment and the manner in which people live in settings of social relations. The approach not only attempts to offer an explanation of broad settlement patterns and their differences, but also the pattern of economic life and the form taken by a number of socio-political institutions. An example in the field of southern African studies, is Basil Sansom's distinction between two dominant types of African society in the region: an 'eastern', coastal or 'Nguni' type; and a 'western', interior highveld or 'Sotho' type.[1]

Such models avoid the diachronic limitations of empirical History, but in doing so fall into the synchronic trap of empirical anthropology. Anthropologists' models are essentially functionalist, in the sense that the relationship between people and the natural environment is virtually taken to be a constant existing in present, past and future time. The analysis of Sansom and others describes the manner in which people are integrated into near-static modes of adaptation, rather than into modes of production which have a limited existence in time as well as space.

The approach which is criticised here is also discernible in the work of anthropologists who have a reputation for standing within the structural tradition. Thus Meillassoux's 'peasantry' is a social category analysed in terms of a simple relationship between people and the natural environment which takes the form of the economic

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[1] Basil Sansom, "Traditional economic systems", in Hammond-Tooke, Bantu-Speaking Peoples of Southern Africa, pp.135-75. In other respects I have found Sansom's work extremely interesting and challenging. Amongst other literature which adopts a similar perspective are I. Sachs, "Environment and styles of development", Environment in Africa I, 1 (1974) pp.9-34; E.J. De Jager, "Settlement types of the Nguni and Sotho tribes", Fort Hare Papers III (1964) pp.19-30.

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practice which is cultivation. There is no account taken of forces generated from the political environment within which the practice of cultivation also occurs.[2] Yet it is usually agreed, by Marxists and non-Marxists alike, that one of the defining characteristics of the peasantry as a social category, is that it represents a stratum within a wider society, and that this society includes political forces capable of influencing the pattern of cultivation and the distribution of any surpluses which may result from it.[3] A generous interpretation of Meillassoux's position would be that he is not actually analysing a peasantry at all, but a group of simple cultivators who may or may not exist in social reality.[4] A more hostile interpretation would be that Meillassoux is not really describing relations of production at all, but relations of adaptation.

There is a temptation for historians to join the anthropologists in picturing people existing in a direct relationship with the natural environment, though the possibility of change is now allowed for. Thus it has recently been suggested that Zulu Kings in south-east Africa did not permit their warriors to take wives for much of their economically-active lives, because the

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[2] Claude Meillassoux, "The social organisation of the peasantry: the economic basis of kinship", Journal of Peasant Studies I, 1 (1973) pp.81-90; also in David Seddon, ed., Marxist Approaches to Economic Anthropology (Cass, 1974). The other environment which Meillassoux takes account of in his analysis is that connected with the reproduction of the species.

[3] Eric R. Wolf, Peasants (New Jersey, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1966) pp.2-4; Don Barnett, Peasant Types and Revolutionary Potential in Colonial Africa (British Columbia, Richmond: LSM Press, 1973) pp.2-3.

[4] For this general distinction see Wolf, op.cit. An attempt was made to apply it to the African situation in Lloyd A. Fallers, "Are African cultivators to be called peasants?", Current Anthropology 2 (1961) pp.108-110. Fallers asked the right question, but arguably took too little account of the possibility of changes through time in formulating his answer.

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natural environment was incapable of sustaining further increases in population.[5]

There are undoubtedly certain short and long-term forces emanating from the dialectics of Nature in any particular part of the World, which have a tendency to influence many aspects of social organisation. Nevertheless, these forces do not operate in a social vacuum, and thus do not operate in a deterministic fashion. In very simple societies these forces may be very influential indeed. The societies described by Sansom and Meillassoux (and almost all historians) are very far from being simple societies, and their relationship with Nature is accordingly not direct, but operates through complex networks of social relations.

The connexion with Nature, and the possibilities for change in its character, are both conditioned by the degree to which the processes of social and technological development have progressed. These levels determine the broad limits of the relationships with Nature which are possible in any given situation. Thus the resources which the natural environment may contain, must be distinguished from the means of production which they may come to represent in a given social context. Two instances may serve to illustrate the point. The first concerns the mineral resources of south-east Africa. The degree to which these constitute a part of the means of production is a social function limited in time by such considerations as knowledge of their location, knowledge of the technology required for their extraction and use, and the degree to which other social factors could permit the development of a new mode of production based upon their exploitation. Secondly, the degree to which the land resources of south-east Africa constitute a means of agricultural production is conditioned by the degree to which appropriate food plants are available, together with

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[5] Guy, "Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom", p.29.

tools suitable for the clearance of the forest cover and for the working of the soil. Broadly the same is true of all aspects of the physical environment. Nature only represents a source of the means of production under restricted social conditions.

It has already been pointed out above that historians have so far been little concerned with specifying the changing relationship between people and Nature in south-east Africa from a structural point of view. There has been no attempt at a history of production.[6] To some extent this may be understood without reference to the assumptions and methodologies of the historians who have interested themselves in the early history of the region. Any attempt to study the history of the period before the 16th century is immediately confronted with serious difficulties. In addition to the problem of determining the environmental forces operating at the time, considerable problems are posed by the relative paucity and by the precise nature of the source materials available.

Before the 16th century there are no known written records of observed phenomena from which the history of the region can be analysed. Written records may function, however, as a source of indirect insight, which, though valuable, must be handled with great care. The records of south-east Africa in the 16th century, and of adjacent parts of the continent in much earlier times, both fall into this category.[7] They help to enable the boundaries of the historically-possible to be defined. Their function is similar to those of the insights furnished by the work of anthropologists and structural Historians in relation to later time-periods and other parts of the world.

The oral traditions of the people of the region are

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[6] See above p.36.

[7] The 16th century records are discussed in chapter V below. Arab chroniclers were writing as early as the 11th century of the complex societies existing along the Zambesi at the time. The Zambesi is some 650 miles north of Delagoa Bay, which is a lesser distance than from the Bay to the Fish River

only slightly more useful. Here an initial distinction must be drawn between the traditions which have been collected at an earlier date, and those which may be collected in the field at the present time.[8]

The major work already undertaken in the field of collecting oral traditions is that of Bryant, Soga and Stuart respectively.[9] None of these traditions were collected before the late 19th century, and only Stuart

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[8] For a general discussion of the possibilities and problems inherent in oral tradition as a historical source see Jan Vansina, Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965). It is sometimes thought that oral tradition is a historian's tool peculiar to the study of the African past. This is not the case, and a good deal of attention is currently being given, for example, to its use in the field of 'English' social history.

[9] The main works of A.T. Bryant are A Zulu-English Dictionary, published in 1905, and Olden Times in Zululand and Natal, published in 1929. Also of interest by the same author are Zulu People (Pietermaritzburg, 1949); Bantu Origins (Cape Town, 1963); A History of the Zulu and Neighbouring Tribes (Cape Town: Struik, 1964). This last work first appeared as a series of articles in the Mariannhill periodical Izindaba Zabata during 1911 and 1913; Marks, "Traditions of the Natal 'Nguni'", p.127n. The main works of J.H. Soga are The South-Eastern Bantu (Johannesburg, 1930) and The Ama-Xosa: Life and Customs (Lovedale: Mission Press, 1932). The freehand, detailed and unsorted mass of data collected by James Stuart from more than 200 informants in the period between the 1890s and the 1920s, has long lain in the archives of the Killie Campbell Museum of Africana in Durban. In 1970 the Department of History and Political Science of the University of Natal at Pietermaritzburg launched a project aimed at extracting the 'historical evidence' from the collection and publishing it in printed form. The first work in the projected series is now available; James Stuart, The James Stuart Archive of Recorded Evidence Relating to the History of Zulu and Neighbouring Peoples, ed. and trans. C. de B. Webb and J.B. Wright, 5 vols., 1975- , Volume One (Pietermaritzburg: Natal UP, and Durban: Killie Campbell Africana Library, 1975).

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attempted to observe what has become the modern historian's method, of maintaining a certain distance between the oral traditions of observed phenomena which he recorded, and their use in the presentation of a work of History.

Handling of these materials also provide a number of other problems for the historian. They tend to record the traditions only of the more important lineages, rather than the perspective of the subordinate strata over which they held sway until this position was in turn undermined by European colonial agencies.[10] An emphasis on problems of royal genealogy stems partly from this, and partly from the ethno-empirical mode of thinking of those who undertook the task of collection. Students whose interest lies in reconstructing the changing pattern of social relations in south-east Africa can find precious little of value in any of these sources. The collectors of the traditions placed little emphasis on the themes necessary for a reconstruction of these changes. The problem is compounded by the fact that Bryant used the occasional information gleaned, to assemble what must be regarded as a highly suspect ahistorical picture of 'Nguni' or 'Zulu' economy. The crucial dimension of time is absent.[11]

It is doubtful if fresh collections of traditions can do much to overcome these problems, except in relation to the relatively recent past. It has been suggested that in south-east Africa traditions are rarely accurate beyond a time-depth of 300 years, which effectively rules out the possibility of meaningful discoveries being made regarding the pre-1550 period.[12]

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[10] N.J. Van Warmelo, "The classification of cultural groups", in Hammond-Tooke, The Bantu-Speaking Peoples of Southern Africa, pp.55-7.

[11] See above p.36.

[12] Marks, "Traditions of the Natal 'Nguni'", p.131. The lack of political continuity between the present and this time-depth would seem to make even this degree of accuracy questionable.

One also wonders the degree to which data concerning production, rather than more obvious political phenomena, is really remembered.

The science of linguistics may one day contribute valuable insights into patterns of social relations in the distant past, but at the present time investigations in this field are sorely compromised by their being constrained within the kind of ethnic straitjacket discussed in the opening chapter.

The primary direct source of evidence regarding the history of south-east Africa before the 16th century is therefore archaeology. A considerable amount of research has been undertaken in south-east Africa from the standpoint of this discipline, though many of the important discoveries have yet to be dated precisely, and no work has yet been undertaken in the lowland area around Delagoa Bay. There is also a disturbing tendency for archaeologists to feel the need to marry their findings with those of linguistics and to present the whole within the kind of broad ethnic categories which historians have long been wont to project into the distant past.[13] Certain other problems related to the methodology of archaeology will be discussed later in the chapter.

A general methodological question which is raised by the paucity and nature of the source materials available for the study of the early history of production in south-east Africa, is the degree to which historians can legitimately devise methods to develop an analysis of continuity and change when little material exists on which to formulate conclusions. If there is no evidence for a phenomenon, does this therefore entitle a historian to conclude that it did not exist, when there is equally no evidence upon which to base this conclusion? If archaeology is, by the nature of the technology currently

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[13] An example is D.W. Phillipson, "Who was there first?", Sunday Nation, Nairobi, 14/10/73. The article, by one of the leading archaeologists of the Iron-Age in the region, well illustrates the point that archaeologists as well as historians have felt the need to inject considerations of ethnicity or nationality into their work.

available to it, unable to 'prove' the existence of food storage systems before their reportage in the written sources of the 16th and 17th centuries, is the historian to conclude that they therefore did not exist before this point in time? Arguably, it is at this point in the analysis that the insights of comparative structuralism,and in certain circumstances of retrospective observation, may be brought to bear on the past. Each may act as a control on the other.

As elsewhere, a very early stage in the separation of Mankind from Nature in south-east Africa probably involved a growing differentiation from other species within the fauna of the region, made possible by a diversification of the subsistence base. From a dependence upon one food-type, there was a shift to a diet including, where available, a range of wild vegetables, fruits, and insects. A nomadic pattern was probably essential for the maintenance of such a form of production.[14]

At a later stage, game, birds and fish were added to the diet. Simple technologies were devised to facilitate production of this kind, notably the means of making fire, and tools made of wood, stone and bone. There is plenty of evidence of this stage of social development in the archaeological record of south-east Africa.[15] Though precise dates are usually missing, its origins are clearly very distant in the past. Some idea of the time-depth involved may be gleaned from the radio-carbon dates for Stone-Age settlement which have been established for the Ngwenya site in present-day Swaziland, which is on the north-western margin of south-east Africa. They extend back no less than 28,000 years before the birth of Christ. At the same site, the 'mining' of red haematite

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[14] For a generalised structural introduction to the early phases of social development see Frederick Engels, The Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man, reproduced in Marx and Engels, Selected Works in One Volume, pp.354-64.

[15] The best general account is probably still that by O. Davies in Natal Regional Survey, I:1-29.

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pigment, itself a fairly sophisticated form of Stone -Age production, has been dated to 7[illegible]0 BC .[16]

At this stage of social development, people were probably predators upon Nature. Production was undertaken with little regard for the capacity of Nature to reproduce the resources which were consumed. The resources of the natural environment were used as subjects of labour. When these resources were exhausted, people moved on into a fresh tract of country.

An important change in the relationship of Mankind to Nature involved the former becoming husbandmen of Nature rather than predators upon it. In the consumption of each type of food, allowance came to be made for the need for a recovery period to enable Nature to reproduce it. In the case of both food-gathering and hunting this necessitated an awareness of season. In the case of hunting it also necessitated an awareness of the sex of the animals hunted, and the need to preserve the females, especially if they were with young. The resources of Nature, able to be utilised within the limits of the social organisation and technologies of the time, gradually began to be regarded as instruments of labour.[17]

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[16] R.A. Dart and P.B. Beaumont, "Ratification and retrocession of earlier Swaziland iron-ore mining radio-carbon datings", South African Journal of Science 64, 6 (1968) pp.241-4. When mixed with oil or fat, it is thought that the pigment was used as a cosmetic. Recent work on the southern margins of south-east Africa is discussed in John Parkington, "Recent advances in the archaeology of the Later Stone Age in South Africa, with special reference to the Cape Province", University of London, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 7/11/74. For the wider context see R.R. Inskeep, "The archaeological background", in Oxford History of South Africa, I:1-31; J. Desmond Clark, The Prehistory of Africa (Thames and Hudson, 1970).

[17] The distinction between 'subject' and 'instrument' of labour was originally drawn by Meillassoux, though I have widened use of the latter concept beyond his application of it in relation to land and agriculture; Claude Meillassoux, "Recherche d'un niveau de détermination dans la société cynégétique", L'Homme et la Société, 6 (1967).

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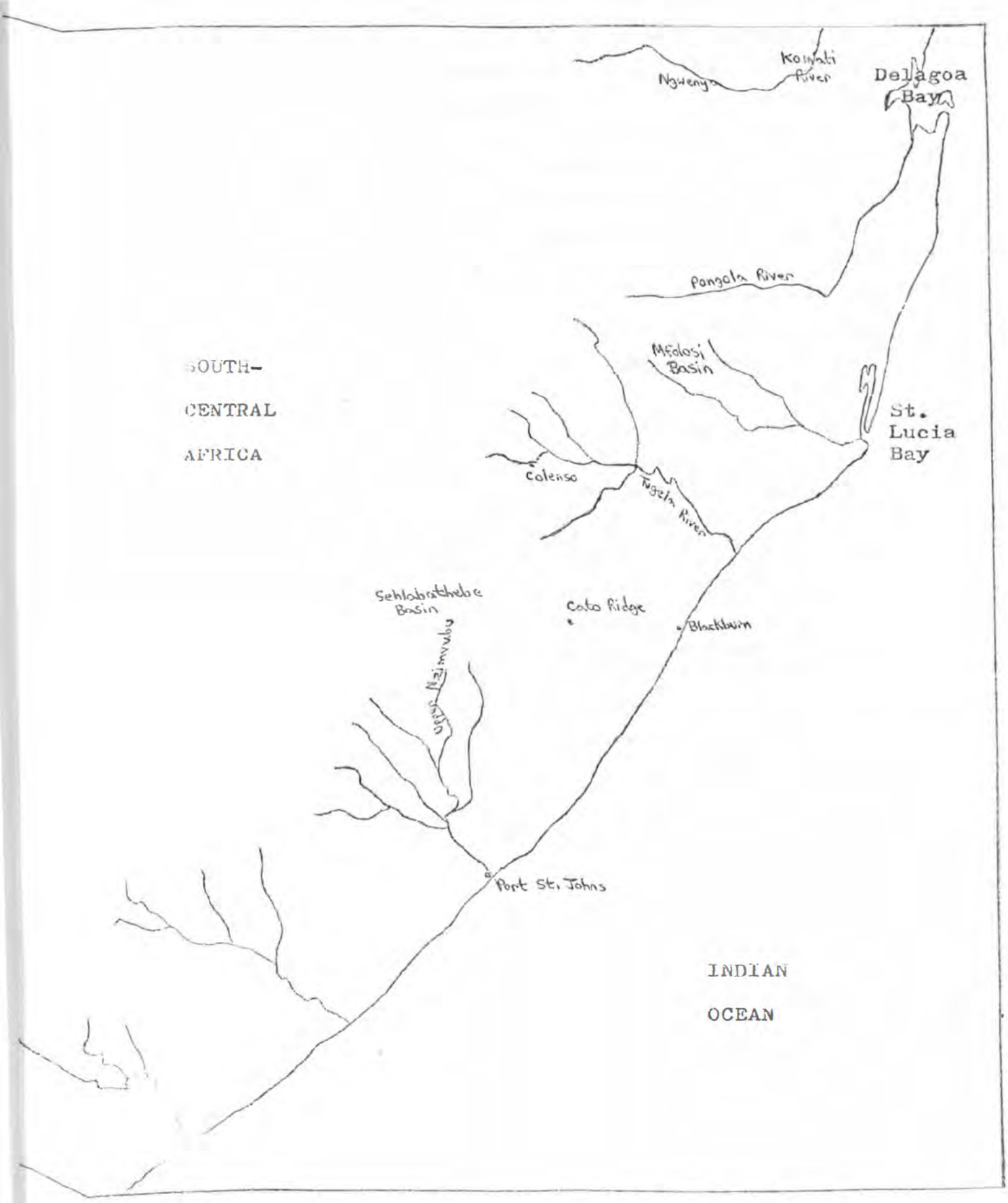

Fig.9 South-east Africa : Archaeological Sites Mentioned in the Text

This change in the relationship between people and Nature led to the development of transhumance; that is a form of production which no longer involved a wandering existence, but was based upon a regular pattern of migrations within an annual cycle. Evidence has been found for the existence of such forms of production in the south-east African past. Carter, for example, has suggested a two-stage cycle for the Sehlabathebe Basin. People may have spent Summer in the highland sourveld under the Drakensberg, and then followed the migration of the game population to winter in the thornveld at lower altitudes.[18] Such a pattern would be generally consistent with the known behaviour of Late Stone-Age communities elsewhere.[19]

As Gabel has suggested for Late Stone-Age communities in general,

> "There is little reason to believe, from either archaeological or surviving ethnographic sources, that Late Stone-Age food-collectors were impoverished populations living on the brink of disaster, barely holding their own until food-producing methods were introduced to them by others." 20

Micro-environments in many parts of south-east Africa were undoubtedly rich in a large number of useful food plants. Even today, certain groups in neighbouring south-central Africa make use of no less than 96 different varieties of plants from the veld.[21] In addition caterpillars, termites,

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[18] P.L. Carter, "Late Stone-Age exploitation patterns in southern Natal", South African Archaeological Bulletin XXV (1970), pp.55-8.

[19] Creighton Gabel, "Terminal food-collectors and agricultural initiative in east and southern Africa", International Journal of African Historical Studies VII, 1 (1974) p.59.

[20] Ibid., p.67. The same point is made in a wider context by Marshall Sahlins, Stone Age Economics (Tavistock, 1974), chapt.1.

[21] B. Reynolds, The Material Culture of the Peoples of the Gwembe Valley (Manchester UP, 1968), cited by Gabel, op.cit., p.62.

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locusts and wild honey were probably also collected.[22] It has also been pointed out that the size of game biomasses in southern Africa are, even today, extraordinarily large. In times gone by they would undoubtedly have been greater, and would thus have represented a vast store of the means of production for people who included hunting within their economy.[23] Fish and shellfish also offered an abundant and valuable source of protein-rich food to those who included the seashore amongst the micro-environments within which they undertook production. For communities of Stone-Age hunter-gatherers in south-east Africa, Nature clearly offered a wide range of rich subsistence possibilities.

In order to exploit these potentialities efficiently, and to survive against threats from wild animals which disputed dominance of the veld, forms of social cooperation were necessary, together with an elementary division of labour. A kin group or 'clan' operated as a unit in defence of the resources of a number of micro-environments, as well as in defence of its members against threats from outside the group. Within these micro-environments, the task of hunting was probably the communal task of the menfolk. Women undertook responsibility for food-collection practices, including that of shellfish along the shore.[24] The products of the hunt were probably shared within the group, though each woman may have been responsible only for the gathering of food for nuclear units within the group. It is usually thought that groups of this kind were small and loosely organised, with leadership a function of natural status possibly based upon age-seniority. The versatility of the subsistence base, and

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[22] Monica Wilson, "The hunters and herders", in Oxford History of South Africa, I:47-8.

[23] F. Bourliere, "Observations on the ecology of some large African mammals", in F.C. Howell and F. Bourliere, ed., African Ecology and Human Evolution (New York, 1963) pp.43-54.

[24] Fagan, Southern Africa, p.40. Some of the written records discussed in chapts. V, VI and VII below, mention reports of women observed collecting shellfish at the shore.

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thus the capacity of this form of production to cope with drought and other forces generated by the natural environment, meant that there was little incentive to develop technologies related to food storage. Without such technologies, there could be no accumulation of surpluses, and thus little or no social stratification. It is perhaps this mode of production, rather than the simpler forms of predation which preceded it and the more complex forms which followed it, which is properly designated as primitive-communism.[25] It is characterised by the immediate and simple redistribution of surplus within the group.[26]

At some stage, the seashore leg of the primitive-communal transhumance economy may have provided the basis for a transition to a form of production which incorporated a semi-sedentary component within the annual cycle. At coastal and especially river-mouth locations, there existed an all-year-round source of protein-rich foodstuffs. A partial stabilisation of settlement in such locations would have provided the incentive to develop pottery and other simple technologies appropriate to a semi-sedentary way of life. There certainly seems to be some evidence for the proposition in the archaeological record of south-east Africa. A large number of coastal and otherwise water-adjacent village sites have been unearthed, and the incidence of shellfish debris indicates the importance of this form of food in their subsistence base. A large amount of pottery has also been found in conjunction with these sites.[27]

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[25] The notion of 'primitive communalism' is not at all clearly articulated in the writings of Marx and Engels. At times it seems to be little more than a generic term for a variety of relatively simple forms of society, including the 'Germanic', 'Slav', and others. Elsewhere it takes on a more precise identity as a specific mode of production; Hobsbawm, "Introduction", in Marx, Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations, pp.27,51.

[26] Hindess and Hirst, Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production, esp.p.47.

[27] J.F. Schofield, "Natal coastal pottery from the Durban district", South African Journal of Science XXXII (1935) pp.508-27, XXXIII (1936) pp.993-1009; Primitive Pottery (Cape Town: South African Arch. Society, 1948).

A number of problems surround the historical as opposed to the archaeological interpretation of this coastal data. Some of the mixed assemblages include not only pottery, but also grains of millet, cattle remains and scraps of iron.[28] This makes it extremely difficult to situate the sites within either linear or structural time, except with the aid of very precise dating of various levels within each site. Precise dating is particularly urgent since travellers came across coastal villages, inhabited by people heavily dependent upon shellfish , as late as the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries.[29] Unfortunately much of the research which originally unearthed these sites was undertaken by Schofield in the 1930s, before accurate methods of dating finds were available. Recent research is only slightly more helpful. At the Blackburn site near Umhlanga, for example, only one date has been produced. It suggests occupation of the village concerned in the 11th century A.D.; but unless the site can be taken to consist of various levels dated to different periods, it makes some of the mixed assemblages found difficult to explain from a historical point of view.[30]

An important stage in the development of the husbandry of nature is sometimes termed the Neolithic Revolution. It involved the beginnings of cultivation and of livestock-husbandry.[31] Very little is really known of these changes

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[28] Brian Fagan, "The Later Iron-Age in South Africa", in Thompson, ed., African Societies in Southern Africa, p.65.

[29] See below chapts. V, VI and VII .

[30] Oliver Davies, "Excavations at Blackburn", South African Archaeological Bulletin 26, 103/4 (1971) pp.165-78.

[31] Sonia Cole, The Neolithic Revolution (British Museum of Natural History, 1967), pp.vii-ix. For an overview of the Neolithic in Africa see Clark, Prehistory of Africa, pp.187-210.

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in the history of south-east Africa, and there has generally been a tendency to lump them together with iron-technology as part of a cultural complex, which diffused into southern Africa as a complete entity in association with a 'Bantu' migration sometime about the beginning of the Christian era. Although this hypothesis has hardly been 'proven' according to any scientific methodology, the paucity of the source materials relating to these questions makes it extremely difficult to arrive at new conclusions. Problems remain in dating the constituent parts of the Neolithic Revolution, in deciding whether they occurred separately or in concert, in picking out the respective and precise directions of their spread, and in abstracting materials for a structural historical analysis from what amounts to a predetermined ethnic framework.[32]

What is known without doubt is that the full range of Neolithic food production practices existed in fairly sophisticated form over much of south-east Africa in the later 16th century, though they were not quite universal within the region.[33] The widespread distribution and sophisticated form of both agriculture and husbandry at this time, suggests that they were both of fairly ancient origin. If, as one suspects but cannot prove, cultivation

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[32] For the debate on these questions see D.W. Phillipson, "Early iron-using peoples of southern Africa", in Thompson, ed., African Societies in Southern Africa, p.44; Monica Wilson, "Changes in social structure", pp.83-5; Christopher Ehret, "Cattle-keeping and milking in eastern and southern African history: the linguistic evidence", Journal of African History VIII, 1 (1967), esp. pp.2,16; "Sheep and Central-Sudanic peoples in southern Africa", Ibid., IX, 2 (1968) esp. pp.219-20; Inskeep, "Archaeological background", pp.23,29-30; Monica Wilson, "Hunters and herders", pp.55-8; "The Nguni", pp.103-7.

[33] See chapt.V below.

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and animal husbandry practices developed in south-east Africa or were introduced into the region before iron-usage, it would suggest a date earlier than the 5th century A.D.. In parts of northern Africa these practices are known to have developed more than 3,000 years ago, making an earlier date than the 5th century A.D. at least plausible for south-east Africa. [34]

Though collectively termed a 'revolution', the introduction of food-production processes would have been a gradual process. Even today cultivation exists in articulation with food-gathering in a neighbouring part of the continent to south-east Africa.[35] A number of stages are conceivable; the first perhaps involving the development of a primitive 'vegeculture', and a second being characterised by the harnessing of one or more indigenous or imported grains.[36] The free spread of agricultural production would probably have been severely limited before the introduction of metal technologies for use in clearing thick bush and in tilling heavier ground. A similar pattern of stages may have characterised the husbandry component of the Neolithic.

What is particularly important in connexion with the present work are the structural implications of these changes for the pattern of social relations in south-east Africa. Somewhat different structural forces would seem

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[34] See, for example, Cole, Neolithic Revolution pp.ix,29,43.

[35] Thayer Scudder, Gathering Among African Woodland Savannah Cultivators, A Case Study : The Gwembe Tonga (Manchester UP, 1971).

[36] At least three types of cultivation may be distinguished; 'primitive vegeculture', 'planting agriculture' which does not involve seed, and 'seed agriculture' of which grain culture is by far the most important form. For these distinctions see E. Stokes and R. Brown, ed. and intro., The Zambesian Past (Manchester UP, 1966), p.xiv ; Meillassoux, "Social organisation of the peasantry", p.85. There are few indications of 'planting agriculture' - of yam and cassava cultivation - ever having been dominant in south-east Africa. This may be partly a reflection of the high rates of decomposition to which vegetable matter is subject, so that there is a tendency for 'planting agriculture' not to appear in the archaeological record; Gabel, "Terminal food collectors", pp.62,64. It is more likely to be a function of climate. Plant crops such as yam and cassava do not thrive outside tropical latitudes.

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to be generated by each aspect of the Neolithic production complex.

Agricultural activity furthers the tendency towards the establishment of sedentary communities. Even with slash and burn techniques, there is only a need for communities to move from a settlement site after several year's production on different plots within its vicinity. Also implicit in the notion of agriculture, and tending to operate in a similar direction, is the need for a number of people to gather around a given product, resulting from their combined labour investment.

In the case of 'planting agriculture', the resulting social organisation may have a tendency to be fairly diffuse, and patterns of matrilineality may be appropriate. This is partly because the product may be stored dispersed in the field for part of the year, and because relatively little consumption has to be foregone in order to furnish the means of production for the next year's planting.[37]

The forces implicit in grain cultivation are arguably more likely to encourage the development of stratified societies; those which have come to be linked with the euphemistic term 'civilisation'.[38] Here the product cannot be stored dispersed in the fields, but must be harvested immediately and its storage centralised within the production unit. There is a need to forego a substantial proportion of the product in order to furnish seed for the new year's planting. Defence of this store of seeds against internal or external immediate consumption, is occasionally rendered more difficult and more urgent by the greater vulnerability of grain culture to the vagaries of short-term environmental changes such as drought. Undertaken primarily in the wetter tropical regions, 'planting agriculture' is much less vulnerable to such threats. All these factors tend to encourage

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[37] Meillassoux, "Social organisation of the peasantry", p.85.

[38] Cole, Neolithic Revolution, p.4.

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a movement towards patrilineality and a more rigid social organisation of the production unit in the case of grain culture than in that of 'planting agriculture'.[39] The incentives for such organisation are considerable, for in optimum environmental and social conditions, grain culture is a highly efficient source of food in the sense that it is capable of releasing a substantial quantity of surplus -labour from amongst the members of the production unit.

At some point in the distant past of south-east Africa, grain culture became the central component of the agricultural production complex and the theoretical structural tendencies associated with it were thus introduced into the stream of history. Yet the epoch when a simple agriculture formed the sole source of subsistence would appear to be so distant in the past, in so far as it ever existed, that it would seem unnecessary to discuss here the lineage mode of production which other writers have suggested is characteristic of simple agricultural societies.[40] In south-east Africa, an articulation of agriculture with livestock-husbandry forms a much more plausible starting point for structural analysis.

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[39] Meillassoux, "Social organisation of the peasantry", pp.85-6.

[40] This concept has been the focus of attention of a number of French 'structural' or Marxist anthropologists for some time, including Rey, Terray, Meillassoux, Godelier and Chesnaux. For an introduction to the concept see P.P. Rey, "The lineage mode of production", Critique of Anthropology 3 (1975) pp.27-79; Emmanuel Terray, Marxism and Primitive Societies (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972). Much of the debate within the ranks of these writers surrounds the theoretical question of the degree to which a class structure and therefore a state can be brought into existence on the basis of agricultural production alone. Also pertinent is Frederick Engels, Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State, reproduced in Marx and Engels, Selected Works in One Volume, pp.449-583.

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A different range of structural forces is implict in the notion of livestock-husbandry. Unlike agriculture, the addition of animal husbandry to the subsistence base can, in certain respects, be readily absorbed within the nomadic or semi-nomadic pattern of living characteristic of the epoch of Primitive-Communism. In the absence of the technological innovation represented by the idea of silage, livestock must be moved according to a regular cycle to take full advantage of seasonal changes and regional variations in natural grazing conditions. Occasionally, as in time of drought, the normal spatial limits of these migrations may need to be transcended, with the resulting potential for conflict with neighbouring groups. Since livestock in such economies are an important source of subsistence, the communities dependent upon them must also move in order to have full and regular access to their products.

If this was the sole impact of animal husbandry, a primitive-communal mode of production would have to change little in order to absorb it. But the addition of livestock to the subsistence base also introduces the potential for accumulation of private wealth, and its use to build up retinues of political dependants. There are now much wider possibilities for exchange, and for social and political differentiation to occur. If the potential of animal-husbandry is seen from this point of view, it is but a small step to the idea, expressed more than once in relation to the southern African context, that the institution of 'chiefship' emerges with the herders.[41]

The sedentary and centralising tendencies of grain culture, coupled with the potential for accumulation and social differentiation implicit in animal husbandry, would clearly represent a particularly formidable economic combination - particularly in a patrilineal context.[42]

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[41] See for example, Monica Wilson, "Hunters and herders", p.60.

[42] For discussion of an aspect of this potential see Monica Wilson, "Changes in social structure in southern Africa", pp.71-85.

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This articulation is clearly in evidence in the first written records of the area, which date from the 16th century.[4] On the basis of this, it is suggested that the articulation came into existence in south-east Africa at a considerably earlier date than the 16th century, and that it was the potential implicit within the articulation which helped to generate the forces which led to the subsequent transition to the epoch of Feudalism.

Although Marx wrote very little about it, the 'Germanic', or what I would prefer to term the 'homestead' mode of production, seems to be a particularly useful concept for the understanding of this kind of situation.[44] Yet, so far as I am aware, it has so far still to be applied in an African context. The crux of the homestead mode of production is scattered settlement in economically self-sustaining family units;

> "At bottom every individual household contains an entire economy, forming as it does an independent centre of production (manufacture merely the domestic subsidiary labour of the women etc.). In classical antiquity the city with its attached territory formed the economic whole, in the Germanic world, the individual home, which itself appears merely as a point in the land belonging to it; there is no concentration of a multiplicity of proprietors, but the family as an independent unit". 45

In south-east Africa, certain features of Nature tended to encourage the development of a dispersed pattern of settlement appropriate to the mode. Much of the region

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[43] See chapt.V below.

[44] The change of terminology is perhaps justified in the particular circumstances of the case. Marx clearly devoted little thought to the general mode of production which he represented by the term 'Germanic'. Had he done so, it seems highly likely that he would himself have rejected such an obviously observationally-derived term, with a specific regional or ethno-cultural implication, for one more abstract and thus more structural in its derivation. The clearest formulation of the mode is contained in Marx, Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations, pp.77-80.

[45] Ibid., p.79.

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is made up of a complex of valleys and hills, amongst which the 'eyes' of cultivable land are dispersed. Surface water is readily available throughout the region. The large number of hills and ridges offer ideal defensible settlement sites, though are usually small enough to be unfavourable for large settlement concentrations.

As individual homesteads expanded their membership through natural reproduction and other agencies, there was a tendency for offshoots to be generated so that a homestead cluster developed, loosely linked by kinship ties. Although retaining independent control over production, homesteads surrendered certain limited elements of sovereignty to the cluster. It operated as the sovereign unit

> "for war, religion, the settlement of legal disputes, etc." 46

The cluster also operated as a unit for the protection of the pasture and hunting territory which was used in common.

The property relation implicit in this particular form of social organisation was thought especially important by Marx. The resources of the natural environment were used by each homestead within the cluster as an individual production unit. They were not used, as in primitive-communal or lineage societies, by the individual as a representative of the common whole;

> "It is genuinely the common property of the individual owners, and not of the union of owners". 47

It is the emergence of this individualistic element, which above all would seem to distinguish the social relations characteristic of the homestead mode from those of primitive-communism. It is suggested that the relation may have existed in embryonic form in both agricultural and livestock-husbandry societies, but that its full potential was released where a synthesis had occurred between these two forms.

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46 Marx, Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations, p.80.

47 Ibid.,

The homestead has a long history in southern Africa, and a number of idealised pictures of its operational characteristics appear in the literature. Attention is especially drawn to the kin link between the various members of a homestead, the division of labour between the sexes, the powerful position of the patriarch or male homestead-proprietor, polygamous marriage, the distribution of the product within the family which comprises the homestead, and its ability to produce without injections of labour from outside.[48]

Though the homestead can be clearly seen in outline in a variety of social formations existing in south-east Africa up to the present time, its form cannot be taken as constant. Although the homestead cannot exist outside of the combination of agriculture and livestock husbandry, it is quite possible for the balance between these forms to vary, and for hunting, fishing and food-gathering practices to exist, to varying degrees, in articulation with the dominant economic practices. Other elements, such as craft manufacture, may also grow to prominence within it. At the same time its form may vary in proportion to the time since the moment of the establishment of the homestead, and to the wealth of the proprietor. Above all the form may be changed by the characteristics of the socio-political environment within which the homestead exists; that is the extent to which it represents a dominant or subordinate mode of production and, if the latter, the nature of the demands placed upon it by the dominant mode.

Commentaries on the place of the homestead mode of production within the Marxist system of social epochs have not always been helpful, and it is perhaps better to

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[48] See for example, A.P. Newton, E.A. Benians and Eric A. Walker, ed., The Cambridge History of the British Empire, Vol.VIII : South Africa. Rhodesia and the Protectorates (Cambridge UP, 1936) pp.42-3; James Walton, African Village (Pretoria, 1956) esp. p.150; Guy, "Destruction of the Zulu kingdom", pp.26-7.

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proceed from the hints of Marx himself.[49] In particular, Marx appears to have regarded the homestead mode of production as an especially dynamic form, capable of generating from within itself the forces required to enable a transition to be made to a new historical epoch not characterised by the dominance of the homestead.[50]

The dynamic of the homestead mode derives from a combination of elements. First, under optimum conditions it permits a high and regular output of foodstuffs relative to the labour-input required for their production, and thus the generation of a substantial labour-surplus.[51] The form of social organisation which is the homestead ensures that the social component of these optimum conditions is met. It efficiently combines the labour-power of several individuals . A sufficiency of labour is permanently at hand throughout the production cycle, and an efficient division of labour could be developed on the basis of sex and age considerations. In optimum conditions this would involve men clearing the land for cultivation and taking responsibility for the livestock, youths undertaking herding, women the tasks of planting and weeding, children being stationed in the fields to prevent grain losses to the birds, and all sharing in the harvesting of the crops. Other work within the homestead would be similarly divided.[52]

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[49] Hobsbawm's comments, for example, sometimes appear misleading. There is nothing in the original formulation to warrant the suggestion that the mode is a subordinate form differentiated from Feudalism by its association with towns, still less that it represents a development out of Feudalism; Hobsbawm, "Introduction", in Marx, Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations, pp.35-8, 43-4.

[50] Hobsbawm, op.cit., pp.35,44.

[51] This is recognised by Morris, though he mistakes the nature of this surplus. It may appear concretely in a number of forms including stocks of food, accumulated wealth, trading imports, dependants, craft production and so on, as well as in the form of the leisure-time available to the menfolk which Morris has in mind. Thus labour cannot be described as the only surplus generated by the homestead. In the Marxist sense of the term, 'surplus' is by definition 'surplus labour'. See D.R. Morris, The Washing of the Spears: The Rise and Fall of the Zulu Nation (Jonathan Cape, 1966) p. .

[52] For the relation between labour and the cycle of production see for example Junod, Life of a South African Tribe, II:22,24.

Secondly, societies dominated by the homestead mode of production are organised in such a manner as to permit the retention of the product within the ranks of the direct producers. In its simplest form, the beneficiaries may include both the men and the women of the homestead, with the sexual division of labour not developed into a form of social stratification.

Thirdly, and perhaps most important of all, a sedentary existence partially based upon grain culture encourages innovation in the field of food storage. Although the nature of these technologies in the south-east African instance may not have permitted their appearance in the archaeological record, they are reported in the first written sources pertaining to the region.[53] It seems highly likely that their introduction considerably pre-dates their 16th century appearance in these sources.

In certain circumstances, the storage of food can permit the accumulation of wealth on a long-term basis. It is suggested that the usual pattern which may have developed in south-east Africa was for surplus to be generated each year by each homestead in the form of a quantity of food grains surplus to direct consumption requirements of the homestead membership. Surplus of this kind was generated whenever climate and other factors permitted. At this point, however, accumulation had yet to take place. It was still only a notional surplus, because two important functions in the production cycle remained to be fulfilled by this grain. Part was for use as seed in the next year's planting, whilst the balance served as an insurance against the failure of the new harvest. Only when the next year's harvest was assured to be a success, in that a new notional surplus had been brought into existence, could the previous year's grain stocks be released for direct consumption, trade or whatever. In other words, only when the production cycle had run its second full annual course successfully, was a notional surplus translated into a real surplus.

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[53] See chapt.V below.

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The breaking of this strict cycle on more than an isolated occasion would have constituted a considerable threat to the survival of the homestead as an independent production unit. In such circumstances, the homestead-proprietor would have been faced with a number of alternatives. Livestock could have been bartered to others or mortgaged to homesteads in a more favourable situation, in return for foodstuffs. In the case of grain, food could easily be transported over relatively short distances in pottery or basket containers. Cattle, of course, are in themselves a mobile source of subsistence.[54] In so far as any market for it had come into existence, labour-power could have been disposed of in return for food or items negotiable as food. Cattle could have been borrowed for the regular supply of milk which they yield.[55] Livestock could have been slaughtered for food, or as a last resort grain eaten which had been kept for seed. At the end of this slope, people would have been forced into dependence upon veld produce, shellfish or game, or into relationships of personal dependence with those who still retained control over the means of immediate consumption and of future production. Equally dire consequences might follow from loss of control over any other aspect of the homestead production complex.[56]

These possibilities for the emergence of social differentiation are partly conditional on the notion of surplus accumulation. Yet, because of deterioration, grain cannot form a permanent store of wealth. Even real surplus cannot therefore be accumulated directly within a solely agricultural society. In the homestead case it is probably

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[54] For the notion of the origins of local trade in the unevenness of production due to drought and other forces stemming from differentiation within the natural environment, see Sansom, "Traditional economic systems", p.136.

[55] For an introduction to the notion of temporary cattle-transfer and the structural implications of the practice in the field of 'interest' and dependency see Ibid., pp.149-53; Morris, Washing of the Spears, pp.28-9.

[56] The impact on the homestead of the loss of female labour, for example, is well illustrated by the remark the paramount Faku is said to have uttered when first shown a plough in operation; "It is worth six wives!"; D.J. Kotze, ed., Letters of the American Missionaries, 1835-38 (Cape Town, 1950) p.115.

best regarded as a pre-requisite for accumulation to take place. Its main function appears to have been to ensure that accumulation in the livestock sphere of the economy of the homestead, was not threatened by the need to use these domestic animals for immediate consumption purposes, either by killing them for food or by exchanging them for food from others.

Stocks of wealth can be built up in the livestock sphere of the economy on a long-term basis for a number of structural reasons implicit in the notion of livestock, and especially in the notion of cattle. First, no special methods of storage need to be devised to enable cattle and other livestock to be kept over long periods. They are stored 'on the hoof'. Secondly, like grain, livestock derive their basic source of value from their function as a source of food. Unlike grain, however, there is no lengthy annual production cycle required. Cattle and goats in particular yield a daily food product in the form of milk. Thirdly, the natural mobility of livestock ensures that, unlike grain plants growing in the field, they are somewhat less a prisoner of drought and other forces emanating from the natural environment. Fourthly, livestock can also be moved and defended more easily against raiders than stores of grain and other crops. Fifthly, the natural life of livestock is probably greater than that of grain, given the limitations of the storage technologies of the period. Sixthly, livestock represents a store of wealth which is capable both of self-development and self-reproduction, whereas grain suffers a steady deterioration from the moment of harvest. Finally, livestock furnish a number of useful non-food products in the form of hides, wool, bone, grease and so on, whereas the use of grain is entirely confined to its use as food, as a simple form of ornament and possibly as a source of oil.

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Cattle and goats would seem to be especially versatile forms of domestic livestock, and the difference between them essentially a function of scale and the physical conditions needed for each to thrive. Sheep and poultry, though deriving value from a range of uses, would appear to be rather less versatile. Generally though, it seems reasonable to assume that livestock was not killed, except for special feasts or in honour of important guests, or at the behest of the powerful. Neither would livestock have been traded, except by those extremely desperate or, which is more likely, by those very secure in the means of subsistence who were offered what they regarded as equally precious items in exchange. In the early history of the homestead mode, such items may have been confined to women - regarded as a store of future labour and reproductive power,[57] and such craft manufactures which the homestead did not possess the technological expertise or have access to the raw materials to produce, but which it possessed the labour-power to set to work.

Like all forms of wealth, in certain limited social conditions which were not found in south-east Africa in the epoch in which the homestead was the dominant mode of production, livestock and especially cattle could also function as capital.[58]

The ability of the homestead to produce, accumulate, exchange and otherwise manipulate surplus, introduced various possibilities for further social and political differentiation in areas where it came to operate as the determinate mode. These possibilities were compounded by

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[57] The 'lobola' system, which was built around the notion of marriage as a reciprocal exchange of wealth between homesteads of different clusters, is usually thought to have been of ancient origin in south-east Africa. There is no way in which its origin can be dated precisely.

[58] The emergence of the social relation which is 'capital' in south-east Africa is discussed in chapter X below. For some of the positions taken up by non-Marxists on the question of the use of the term in relation to cattle in Africa see Lars Sundström, The Exchange Economy of Pre-Colonial Tropical Africa (Hurst, 1974) pp.114-5; Sansom, "Traditional economic systems", pp.149-53; Daniel, "Geographical study of pre-Shakan Zululand", p.24.

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forces generated by the dialectics of Nature in the region. Some homestead clusters were able to expand to subordinate weaker homestead clusters, and primitive-communal remnant groups, and to incorporate refugees as dependants. The result was a relatively large number of small principalities or dynastic states dispersed across the countryside, each dominated by a separate 'royal' lineage, but in which individual homestead-proprietors retained a large degree of autonomy.

A variety of mechanisms gradually came into operation in these states by means of which a partial transfer of surplus took place, from the individual homestead-proprietors to the chief at the apex, who was the representative of the ruling lineage. These mechanisms may have involved direct tribute, but indirect forms of transfer are perhaps more likely. Included amongst these may have been religious and judicial mechanisms, and monopolies in relation to hunting, trade and the fruits of war.

It is suggested that, long before the homestead mode of production had subordinated all the remaining pockets in south-east Africa in which simpler modes continued to exist, its own determinate role began to be challenged. The dynamic within the homestead mode enabled a different mode of production to develop in certain of its interstices. Characteristic of the transition was the reduction of many homestead-proprietors to the status of <u>peasant-proprietors,</u> and the partial transfer of surplus to the members of the ruling lineage in the form of tribute. The form has been termed a <u>tributary mode of production.</u>[59]

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[59] Amin, "Underdevelopment and dependence in Black Africa", p.507. I have also benefitted from a discussion with Martin Fransman on this point. Amin's formulation specifies a parallel existence of a village community and a socio-political structure which exploited the former by exacting a tribute. In the south-east African instance it would seem reasonable to equate the 'homestead' with the 'village' of Amin's formulation. Early visitors to the region in fact often described individual homesteads as villages. Homesteads were almost certainly greater in size before their systematic reduction to the attenuated form characteristic of the later 19th century and beyond. The temptation to develop the concept of the 'tributary mode of production' into a social category peculiar to Africa, and seemingly generalised within it over a long period, must be resisted. Unfortunately the position is already extant; Coquery-Vidrovitch, "Research on an African mode of production".

This partial redistribution of surplus from the homestead permitted wealth to be accumulated by chiefs and their lineage associates. This could be used to recruit and equip dependants as military followers, groups of which were frequently seen by the first European travellers to the region.[60] Warrior retinues attached to major homesteads, provided the mechanism for further expansion and development of a powerholder's position. Control over a military force independent of the citizenry of the state, permitted a stabilisation of power. It permitted the enforcement of hereditary succession, so that it became possible for a lineage to maintain and perpetuate a position of political dominance over a state composed predominantly of non-kin. As in Europe, the presence of household warrior retinues was an essential ingredient of the conditions required to permit a transition to a new social epoch to take place in south-east Africa - the epoch of Feudalism.

This transition to Feudalism in south-east Africa appears to have been closely linked with the development and widespread, though not universal application of metal technologies. Iron was especially important. On the one hand, the labour organisation of the homestead was such that it could efficiently set to work agricultural technologies which utilised iron. At the same time, the emergence of household retinues introduced a form of labour which could make effective use of expensive technological developments in the sphere of weaponry based upon iron.

Based on the latest radiocarbon dates which are available, and a new method of analysing them, Phillipson has argued that the complex of technological changes associated with the Early Iron-Age entered southern Africa in two streams, which probably overlapped by the time of their arrival on the north-western margins of south-east Africa.[61] What is more important for the present study, however, is the approximate date at which this complex of

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[60] See below chapt.V.

[61] D.W. Phillipson, "The chronology of the Iron-Age in Bantu Africa", Journal of African History XVI, 3 (1975) pp.321-42.

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technological changes was set to work in the region.

The earliest date which has been established comes from the Ngwenya site in modern-day Swaziland on the extreme north-western margin of south-east Africa. Here the mining of the haematite ores for their red pigment gave way to their being mined for the iron they contained not later than the 4th or 5th century A.D.[62] Given the prevailing technological limitations of the period in the sphere of transport, it was probably essential for the ore to be smelted in situ, and the site contains evidence of smelted iron, though it is surprising that the technical reports on the site make no mention of the presence of furnaces. It is clear that several thousand tons of ore have been moved from primitive mines in this area over the centuries.[63] Another north-western site, this time on the Pongola River, contains very clear evidence of iron-smelting and has been dated to the 7th century A.D.[64]

A number of other iron-mining and smelting sites have been discovered further to the south, but as yet full technical reports and firm dates are still awaited. These include sites at Cato Ridge and in the Tugela valley.[65] There is important work in progress on Iron-Age sites in the Mfolosi valley,[66] and there are almost certainly other sites which have yet to be unearthed. No work has been done, for example, on the archaeology of the 'Mozambique' plain, south or north of Delagoa Bay. In addition, written sources

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[62] Dart and Beaumont, "Ratification and retrocession", p.242.

[63] Ibid., pp.242-3.

[64] Phillipson, "Who was there first?".

[65] Davies, "Excavations at Blackburn", p.175.

[66] This work, more precisely on the Mfolosi Basin, is being undertaken by Martin Hall of the Natal Museum. I am grateful to John Wright of the Department of History at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, for this information; private communication, 13/3/76.

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relating to a later period, include references to iron-mining operations. It is conceivable that these mines were first worked at much earlier dates, possibly even prior to the 16th century.[67] There is plenty of evidence of the relatively early and systematic development of mining in southern Africa as a whole.[68]

By far the most interesting of the sites which currently lack firm dates and full technical reports is that in the Tugela Valley. In a tributary valley of the Tugela proper, 20 miles below the site of the modern town of Colenso, evidence has been discovered of a rich Iron-Age industrial complex. It includes an iron mine, comprising mostly surface workings, but incorporating one vertical shaft not yet examined. A horizontal coal shaft has been found, together with no less than 80 furnaces. Two local inhabitants think that the complex had been in operation before the beginning of the European colonial era in the 1830s, but how far back in time the complex began to function has yet to be ascertained.[69]

Until the fruits of this research become available to the historian, Phillipson's general conclusion may be taken

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[67] In Dingane's time, for example, iron was being mined near the headwaters of the Amatikula River, which is a small river running a little way into the hinterland north of the mouth of the Tugela; Captain Gardiner, "First interview with Dingane", February 1835, in John Bird,ed., The Annals of Natal 1495 to 1845, 2 vols., (Pietermaritzburg: Davis, 1888), Vol. I, pp.305-6.

[68] For general discussion of the early history of mining in southern Africa as a whole see R.A. Dart and P.B. Beaumont, "Amazing antiquity of mining in southern Africa", Nature 216, 5113 (1967) pp.407-8; A.K. Boshier, "Mining genesis", Mining Survey 64 (1969) pp.21-8; G.N.G. Hamilton, "Ancient workings in southern Swaziland", South African Journal of Science 32 (1935) pp.582-6; T.G. Trevor, "Some observations on ancient mineworkings in the Transvaal", Journal of the Chemical, Metal and Mineral Society of South Africa 12 (1912) pp.267-75, 370-72, 414-5; 13 (1912) pp.148-9; Fagan, Southern Africa, pp.153-7.

[69] The discoveries have been made by a team led by Tim Maggs of the Natal Museum. Once again I am grateful to John Wright for this information; private communication, 13/3/76.

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as the starting point for the historical analysis of the spread and impact of these changes;

> "By the close of the first millenium it appears that most of the Transvaal, together with parts at least of Swaziland and the northern strip of Natal were subject to Iron-Age settlement". 70

In many respects, however, generalisations of this kind pose more problems than they solve. Phillipson is essentially concerned with dating the 'floruit' of the Iron-Age in various parts of Africa. In coping with such a broad perspective, he is obliged to obscure a number of important distinctions which might prove crucial in the development of a historical analysis of the past. First, as Phillipson himself points out, even if the qualifying terms 'early' and 'late' are employed to add an element of precision to the analysis, still the Early Iron-Age industrial complex is "capable of sub-division at various levels". Archaeologists tend to use at these levels the kind of observationally-derived categories which make structural comparisons and contrasts very difficult. Secondly, major social distinctions tend to be obscured. These include that between metals production and metals consumption; that between those whose labour is expended in production of the raw material or of the finished manufacture, and those who control the production process; and that between the various uses to which metals are put. These kinds of distinctions appear crucial in enabling a historical understanding of the 'Iron-Age' in south-east Africa to be reached.

It is suggested that small-scale iron mining, smelting and manufacturing began in south-east Africa during the first millenium A.D..At this stage, technological applications of iron may have come to include ornaments, easily transported and negotiated stores of value, hunting impliments, weapons,and finally agricultural and bush-clearing tools. Production at this stage would have been

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70 Phillipson, "Chronology of the Iron-Age", p.330.

relatively inefficient in that it consumed large amounts of surplus-labour, and its manufactured output would probably have been 'expensive' relative to cattle and other items which derived their value from a linkage to the process of subsistence. Metal manufactures were therefore scarce, and could only be put into operation by the more wealthy homestead proprietors.

At some point, the mining and smelting of copper ore may also have begun in south-east Africa, or the metal imported in its refined state from neighbouring regions.[71] Technological applications of the metal were probably confined to the overlapping spheres of ornamentation and 'currency'. That is, a range of technological applications of the metal which was much narrower than in the case of iron.

This gradual pattern of changes seems to have been overtaken by forces emanating from the north-western and western margins of south-east Africa. In south-central Africa, and to a lesser extent on the highveld west of the Drakensberg, there is considerable evidence from archaeology, Arabic written sources, and oral tradition, that mighty empires had come into existence at a time when the pattern of technological changes characteristic of the Iron-Age was only just being brought into operation in south-east Africa itself. In these areas trade in ivory and various kinds of minerals with Arab merchants linked to a system of Indian Ocean commerce, came into existence at an early date. Control of labour, markets and the sources of trading commodities became important over a wide area of central and southern Africa. An early technological application of iron in the sphere of weaponry gave these empires an important advantage over the small-scale principalities of the surrounding territories.

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[71] South-east Africa certainly possesses resources of the ore; see above p.44. The metal was certainly in use in the 16th century on a limited scale; see below chapt.V. 19th century sources spoke of it having been mined in the 'Pondoland' region at some point in the past.

As Jack Goody has argued, the bow and stone-tipped arrow is essentially a 'democratic' weapons system, in that its distribution cannot be controlled. By contrast, iron-tipped pikes and spears are not freely available in simple societies, because their iron content is 'expensive'. Providing labour is freely available to set them to work, they also represent an efficient weapons system. With the development of iron weapons, farreaching social and political transformations are on the cards.[72] As Alan Smith has written in connection with an invasion into the area north of Delagoa Bay;

> "Informants recall that the invaders brought iron assagais and laid their claims to rule on the basis of this superiority". 73

With the aid of warriors equipped with this kind of weapons system, offshoots of these interior empires established themselves in the Lebombo Hills and other points on the north-western, and possibly western, margins of south-east Africa. In time, important lineages associated with these groups sent offshoots to dominate tracts of countryside further into south-east Africa. Before the 16th century, several of these lineages had established themselves as ruling aristocracies in different parts of south-east Africa. The paramountcies which they brought into existence included those of Tembe and Inhaca based on the shores of Delagoa Bay,[74] that of Vambe - the country

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[72] Jack Goody, Technology, Tradition and the State (Oxford UP, 1971) p.46.

[73] Alan K. Smith, "The peoples of southern Mozambique: an historical survey", Journal of African History XIV, 4 (1973) p.575.

[74] Both of these states are mentioned in the 16th century written records; see below chapt.V. It is impossible to decide at what point in time they came into existence, though it must obviously have been a point in time prior to the first recorded observation of them. Various types of terminology are used in the contemporary and secondary literature in relation to these states. The Portuguese, for example, referred to the state of 'Zembe', and modern Africanists translate the Portuguese rendition of 'Inhaca', for the word they heard spoken, as 'Nyaka'. I have generally prefered to employ the terms which appear in the early written records, as I feel they need very careful analysis before modern 'Africanisms' can be substituted for them. For no particular reason, I have chosen to break this rule in the case of 'Tembe'.

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of the Mbo - which extended its power on either side of the Tugela valley,[75] that of a paramountcy established on the Dedesi tributary of the upper Mzimvubu,[76] and probably a number of others.[77]

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[75]The existence of this paramountcy was reported by 16th century European visitors. The fact that they remarked upon a Portuguese trading connexion with it suggests that 'Vambe' was already well-established by this date; see below chapt.V. As in so many other instances in south-east African history, there is a good deal of overlapping terminology reflecting different people's perception of reality, and the different attempts of successive generations of Europeans with different languages to render the various names which they thought they heard being used. As Bryant points out, for example, 'va' seems to have been a prefix in use in the northern part of south-east Africa, and was equivalent to 'aba' which was used further south. People in the south also used the prefix 'e' to distinguish the country from the people;'eMbo' - 'abaMbo'. I find Bryant entirely convincing on the link between 'Vambe' and 'Mbo'; Bryant, Olden Times, pp.289, 313,315. Bryant also suggests that the state owed its origin to a general extension of political power by a polity established on the Nkomati River; Ibid., pp.289, 314. There is evidence from archaeology which suggests that there was a state on the Nkomati capable of generating such a colonising movement. Ngwenya, the important iron mining and smelting complex which came into existence not later than the 5th century A.D., was located on a ridge overlooking the main Nkomati valley; see above p.83. This extension of political power gradually spread southwards along the Lebombo Hills; Bryant, op.cit., pp.289,314. A number of states were established as offshoots of this general political expansion, of which 'Vambe' was one. In turn, 'Vambe' probably came to generate offshoots of its own; Bryant, op.cit., pp.289, 314. The important iron industrial complex on the Pongola, which began to operate not later than the 8th century A.D., appears to have been located on the approximate route of this colonising movement; see above p.83. The question of the location of the 'Vambe' heartland in the later 16th century, and its possible relation to an important iron industrial complex, is discussed in chapt.V below. Like Theal, and for a number of reasons which space does not allow to be discussed, I find Bryant's argument and the general 'political' interpretation of this question quite convincing. By the same token, I cannot accept the objections mounted by Monica Wilson and others; Monica Wilson, "The early history of the Transkei-Ciskei", African Studies XVIII, 4 (1958) p.174; C.R. Boxer, The Tragic History of the Sea, 1589-1622 (Cambridge UP, 1959) p.70n. See also above p.17.

[76]This paramountcy, at some point before the late 17th century, produced the 'Thembu' and'Xhosa' offshoots. 'Mpondomisse' had a similar origin; Wilson, op.cit., pp.174-5; Omer-Cooper, Zulu Aftermath,p.13.

[77]'Mpondo', for example; Wilson, op.cit., p.175.

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Several of these paramountcies appear to have shared common roots.[78] This, together with a number of other pieces of evidence, suggests that they may have come into existence as satellite states on the periphery of one or more imperial system centred in the south-central or southern African interior. 'Venda-Kalanga' was certainly one such system,[79]

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[78] Thus one cluster appears to have come to include Mbo (Vambe), Ngwane, Ndwandwe, Dlamini, Hlubi, Mpondo etc., and to have been offshoots - directly or indirectly - of a state located on the Nkomati River; Bryant, Olden Times, pp.289, 314; Wilson, "Early history of the Transkei-Ciskei", p.175. The interpretation is supported by the fact that the same term of greeting was in use from the Mzimvubu to Lake Sibayi; Bryant, op.cit., pp.10-11. Tembe was probably also part of this system; Alan Smith, "The trade of Delagoa Bay as a factor in Nguni politics, 1750-1835", in Thompson, African Societies in southern Africa, p.180 and n. For other material on the pattern of interlinkages see above p.88 and n.; Marks, "Traditions of the Natal 'Nguni'", pp.136-43; Van Warmelo, "The classification of cultural groups", p.65; Alan Smith, "The peoples of southern Mozambique", pp.565-81; Junod, Life of a South African Tribe, I:4,22-3,330.

[79] 'Tembe' appears to have had a 'Kalanga' origin; Junod, op.cit., I:23. As has been pointed out in note 79 above, 'Tembe' seems to have shared a common origin with a number of other early paramountcies. Apparently the correct rendition of the late 18th century paramount of the Ndwandwe is not 'Zwide' but 'Zwide ka Langa'; R.C.A. Samuelson, Long, Long Ago (Durban, 1929) p.402; H. Von Sicard, "Shaka and the north", African Studies 14, 4 (1955) p.147. In the 16th century Delagoa Bay was known as "this bay of Mocranges"; Theal, Records, II:202. Soga suggests that the whole of south-east Africa was, at one time, dominated by Kalanga groups, Soga, South-Eastern Bantu, p.30. See also the interesting discussion in Monica Wilson, "The Sotho, Venda and Tsonga", in Oxford History of South Africa, I:167-76. Although Bryant did not go so far as to suggest such a Kalanga connexion with south-east Africa, he did think that the migration streams or political clusters which he identified, ultimately derived from the Upper Limpopo, a conclusion quite consistent with the argument advanced here; Bryant, Olden Times, pp.6-10. All this makes the hypothesis of Welch, that at one time the whole of south-east Africa up to and including 'Natal' had been part of the mighty Mwenemutapa Empire, entirely plausible; S.R. Welch, South Africa Under John III: 1521-1557 (Cape Town, 1948) pp. 278-9. Although, as the title of this particular book indicates, Welch's perspective is not entirely adequate, his work is constantly challenging to the reader enclined to lapse back into thinking about pre-16th century south-east Africa in terms of static and simple societies. His work deserves to be better known.

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but there may just have been others.[80]

These colonisers may have been initially interested in the ivory and hunting products, iron, copper and possibly salt and labour-power of the region. Copper ornaments of more or less precise weight may have been a common currency and store of value which underpinned the commodity exchange relations within these imperial systems. They certainly seem to have been performing these functions in the 16th century.[81]

The empires of south-central Africa had established an early commercial link with Arab merchants operating in association with a general Indian Ocean system of trade. The Delagoa Bay states may have been established as ports to serve the needs of an expansion of this commerce to include much of Africa south of the Limpopo River. There is a good deal of circumstantial evidence which suggests an ancient Arab trading connexion with south-east Africa, pre-dating the 16th century origins of the Portuguese connexion.[82]

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[80] 'Inhaca' may possibly have been the Delagoa Bay foothold of a rival system. It certainly seems to have had poor relations in the 16th and 17th centuries with some of the states of the 'Kalanga-group'. I have not been able to find any precise information on its political antecedents. On the other hand it may have originally been a part of the 'Kalanga-group', but in the 16th and 17th centuries was moving towards a position of autonomy.

[81] See below chapt.v.

[82] If Sofala was sufficiently important in the 11th century to be visited by the Arab chronicler Al Haj, then it seems at least possible that there was some Arab commercial activity or indirect commercial links further south before the 16th century. There is some archaeological evidence in support of this proposition, in the form of what is thought to have been a Swahili-Arab trading site at Port St. Johns. Some Ming china and red beads have been found, but a thorough investigation has yet to be undertaken; Marks, "Nguni, the Natalians and their history", p.531. There are also a number of linguistic clues; Bryant, Dictionary, p.463; Van Warmelo, "The classification of cultural groups", p.59. It has been suggested that the Dutch settlers inherited the term 'Caffer' (kaffir - 'unbeliever') from the Arabs, possibly via the Portuguese. The Arabs probably used it as a generic term for all with whom they had dealings on the coast, but the Dutch at the Cape initially used it to refer to the 'Xhosa' alone, as this was the only group they knew to exist; George Thompson,

With the exception of the Delagoa Bay states, all the paramountcies of the colonisers appear to have been located, at this period, inland from the sea. From these positions they could easily control the people and resources of the various parallel corridors leading from the foothills of the Drakensberg to the sea, as well as the even ground of the 'highveld' which probably constituted the main north-south artery of trade and other human communication at the time. The Tugela corridor leading up to the Drakensberg passes may have been especially important.

The various groups of people which were subjected to the rule of these colonial aristocracies were given certain generic terms to distinguish them from those who ruled over them. In the north one such term appears to have been 'Honwana', whilst 'Lala' was the equivalent in use further south. These terms may originally have meant 'the people who went before', or 'the outsiders', but they quickly came to take on the connotation of 'the subordinate class'. In view of this it is not strange that writers have discovered a connexion between the 'Lala' and iron-working. The 'Lala' are, by definition, the 'workers' - of iron as of everything else.[83]

It is important not to overestimate the degree of class polarisation and the incidence of commodity exchange at this stage of south-east African history. Both existed, but neither was the determinate aspect of the social formation

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Travels and Adventures in Southern Africa, ed. with notes by Vernon S. Forbes (London, 1827; 2nd ed., 2 vols., Cape Town, Van Riebeeck Society, 1967) Vol.I, part 1, p.160.

[83] For fuller discussion of the use of these terms see above p.16-17 and n. See also Von Sicard, "Shaka and the north", pp.150-51. The distinction in the literature between 'Honwana' and 'Lala' may suggest that two imperial systems with different languages were involved, or that 'Honwana' actually bore some relation a name of self-identification in use in the north. 'Lala' seems to be too general over southern and south-central Africa for it to have been in any sense a term of self-identification. For the 'Lala' connexion with iron-working see Marks, "Traditions of the Natal 'Nguni'", p.134, after Soga.

The numbers fully enserfed at this stage may have been small, and only a trickle of long-distance trade may have been involved. In order to maintain their positions of dominance, the new aristocracies may have been obliged to permit levels of intermediate power to remain in the hands of local 'royal' lineages. A three-tiered pattern of feudal sovereignty was brought into operation involving homestead-proprietors, lineages which had once dominated independent principalities but which were in process of being reduced to vassal status, and a number of paramountcies at the apex. These paramountcies may have been loosely combined in a 'Kalanga' confederacy or imperial commercial system.

A progression of social transitions has been suggested in south-east Africa before 1550. The incidence of some modes of production across space and through time, may have been sufficient for them to characterise important social epochs in the history of the region. A particular mode of production rarely became universal in the region before a new mode developed within its interstices. At later points in the progression, 'frontier' struggles between different modes of production gave way to what amount to class struggles within wider economic and political frameworks.

The evidence presented in support of the various hypotheses is not always conclusive, but it is suggested that something like the pattern of changes described must have taken place in south-east Africa before 1550, if the complexity and precise character of the social formation existing in the region in the later 16th century is to be understood. Though simpler modes of production persisted as subordinated forms, at some point before the later 16th century, south-east Africa had entered the social epoch of feudalism.

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PART TWO :

THE TRANSITION TO FEUDALISM

IV

A NOTE ON THE CONCEPT OF FEUDALISM

Before describing the south-east African situation as it appeared to visitors in the second half of the 16th century, and considering to what it extent it can be said to have been characterised by patterns of feudal social relations, some consideration of the concept of 'Feudalism' itself is necessary. Though initially applied to Medieval western Europe, the term has since come to be used more widely,[1] including a number of general and more local applications to Africa.[2] There has been a tentative attempt to apply the concept to certain southern African situations.[3]

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[1] For a work which introduces a number of these applications see Rushton Coulborn, ed., Feudalism in History (Princeton UP, 1956).

[2] For an introduction to major works published before 1963, see Jack Goody, "Feudalism in Africa?", Journal of African History IV, 1 (1963) pp.1-18. Amongst these works were S.F. Nadel, A Black Byzantium (1942); E.M. Chilver, "Feudalism", in A. Richards, ed., East African Chiefs: A Study of Political Development in Some Uganda and Tanganyika Tribes (1960) pp. 378-93; Jaques J. Maquet, The Premise of Inequality in Ruanda 1961); "A research definition of African feudality", Journal of African History III (1962) pp.307-10. More recent applications include those of Walter Rodney and Samir Amin respectively; Rodney, How Europe Underdeveloped Africa , chapt. 2; Amin, "Underdevelopment and dependence in Black Africa", p.507.

[3] Both Nick Hyman and Richard Moorsom, respectively, have spoken of an 'incipient feudalism' in relation to certain southern African situations pre-dating the era of European colonisation; Hyman, "Tentative propositions concerning class formation in southern Africa in the pre-colonial and colonial epochs", p.1; "Four questions concerning the relation between class and national formation in southern Africa in the pre-colonial and colonial epochs", University of London, Centre of International and Area Studies, May 1972, (mimeograph) pp.1-2; Richard Moorsom, "Underdevelopment and class formation: the origins of migrant labour in Namibia, 1850-1915", University of Sussex, n.d. 1973?, (mimeograph) p.13.

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Historians and others are not agreed on the wisdom of applying the term 'feudal' outside the Medieval western European context. The possibility of a wider application of the term was first hinted at by Voltaire:

> "Feudalism is not an event; it is a very old form which, with differences in its working, subsists in three-quatrers of our hemisphere". 4

The position received support from Marx Bloch, one of the leading modern analysts of Feudalism in Medieval Europe;

> "Like all the phenomena revealed by that science of eternal change which is history, the society thus characterised (as feudal) certainly bore the peculiar stamp of an age and an environment. Yet just as the matrilineal or agnatic clan or even certain types of economic enterprise are found in much the same forms in very different societies, it is by no means impossible that societies different from our own should have passed through a phase closely resembling that which has just been defined. If so, it is legitimate to call them feudal during that phase".5

Indeed, Bloch regarded as

> "a question of the deepest interest whether there have been other societies, in other times and in other parts of the world, whose social structures in their fundamental characteristics have sufficiently resembled that of our Western feudalism to justify us in applying the term 'feudal' to them as well." 6

It is conceivable that, but for his premature death, Bloch himself might have gone on to analyse a range of 'feudal' situations outside the context of Medieval Europe. His initial reading on the question, and particularly on Japan, had already

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[4] Voltaire, cited by Bloch, Feudal Society, 2:441.

[5] Bloch, op.cit., 2:446.

[6] Ibid., 1:xviii.

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led him to the conclusion that

> "Feudalism was not an event which happened once in the world". 7

Despite Bloch's standing in the field of Medieval studies, his commitment to the use of the term 'feudal' outside the European context is still only shared by a minority of historians and social scientists. Opposition to the wider application of the term is of two main types. There is firstly an extreme position, the characteristics of which have been discussed fully above, and which entirely rejects the comparative method. It rests on the assumption that persons, events and institutions defy comparison because they are unique. From this point of view, the term 'feudal' is a purely chronological referent which can be used only in connexion with a particular phase in the history of the western European experience. The position was first put forward by Montesquieu,[8] but that of the modern writer Boutruche is not far from it;

> "La féodalité est médiévale. Elle ne doit rien à l'Afrique, rien sans doute à l'Asie, le Japon éxcepté. Elle est fille de l'Occident." 9

A second and more moderate attack is levelled by a number of writers who, whilst claiming to accept the principle of comparative analysis, feel obliged to reject the use of term 'feudal'. One argument has been that the use of the term in relation to situations outside Europe is to bring to their study an undesirably Eurocentric approach.[10] There are really two points here. One relates to the philological antecedents of the term and is easily dismissed. The structural approach to the study of Mankind was first developed in Europe, and its terminology inevitably still reflects this. It should not

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[7] Bloch, Feudal Society, 2:447.

[8] Montesquieu, cited by Bloch, op.cit., 2:441.

[9] Robert Boutruche, Seigneurie et féodalité (Paris, 1959) p.297, cited by Goody, "Feudalism in Africa?", p.14n.

[10] Goody, op.cit., pp.10-11.

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daunt a historian genuinely committed to work within a comparative framework. More fundamental is the question of the cultural carry-overs implicit in the use of the term 'feudal'. This is only a problem, however, if the term is defined and so applied in a culture-bound way. The problem can be overcome by rigorous structural definition of the concept with which the term is associated. The limitations of the knowledge of the time necessitated Bloch using the European experience in formulating a more or less structural definition of feudalism.[11] Ideally it is necessary to push beyond this. Although it may yet be too early to derive a structural definition from the comparative analysis of a range of societies, this must remain as the ultimate aim.

More worrying to some has been the seeming linkage of the term 'feudal' to the Marxist theory of social epochs.[12] There is a fear that to use the term is to indicate a sharing of this viewpoint. Marxists certainly are concerned with using the concept in this way, though this is not to say that everyone must do so. The question of the place occupied by feudalism in an overall system of social epochs, can be separated from a desire to form generalisations about societies with similar patterns of relationships in a wide range of time-periods and parts of the world.

A third kind of moderate criticism, and one which must be respected, is that the term and the concept with which it is associated have often not been used with sufficient rigour.[13] This is however, a criticism to be levelled at the work of particular historians and social scientists rather than a contribution to the basic theoretical debate.

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[11]Bloch, Feudal Society, 2:441.

[12]Goody, "Feudalism in Africa?", p.11.

[13]Ibid., p.2.

Ultimately many of the criticisms levelled from the moderate point of view ring somewhat hollow. The position of Jack Goody, the leading discussant of the problems involved in the application of the term and the concept of 'feudalism' to Africa, is a good example. He argues that

> "If we are to take up and develop the tradition of comparative work, which has been so neglected in recent years by historians, sociologists and anthropologists alike, then the best strategy at this stage is to avoid the kind of overall comparisons that are invited by words like tribalism, feudalism, capitalism. These abstractions make for too crude a level of analysis." 14

Exactly what 'comparative' concepts Goody would substitute is not entirely clear. In attacking the use of the term 'feudal' he looks with favour on such notions as 'clientage',[15] and the 'segmentary state'.[16] Yet he does not seem entirely happy with these kinds of generalisations either and the final statement of his position casts doubt on his very commitment to the comparative method itself;

> "The extent to which the developments in Africa resembled those that occurred in Western Europe is certainly worth pursuing and could even shed some light on the major historical problems that engaged the attention of Marx and Weber. But in this, as in other comparative work, we must start with less worn counters, with more operational concepts...."17

It is in the continued multiplication of 'operational' or observationally-derived concepts that the comparative method is negated. A commitment to their use as primary tools of analysis ultimately must represent a commitment to the particularism of the empiricists.

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[14] Goody, "Feudalism in Africa?", p.13.

[15] Ibid., pp.5-7,9-10,14.

[16] Ibid., p.8.

[17] Ibid., p.16. See also his remarks in Goody, Technology, Tradition and the State, pp.17,21.

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Comprehensive categories must, of necessity, oversimplify the reality which they attempt to encapsulate. Their use is fraught with danger. Nevertheless, as Postan has pointed out, they are the same dangers as are inherent in all general terms, and

> "without generalised terms representing entire groups of phenomena not only history but all intelligent discourse would be impossible". 18

Moreover,

> "if generalised concepts are to be used, there is much to be said for employing only the useful ones, i.e. those which help us to distinguish one historical situation from another, and to align similar situations in different countries and even in different periods". 19

It is for this reason that an attempt is made to employ the concept of 'Feudalism' in the present work.

From the point of view of Marxist structural History, the term 'feudal' is employed to characterise a particular mode of production. On the other hand, the term 'Feudalism' is used to identify a particular epoch in the process of social development; one in which the incidence of the feudal mode of production is sufficient for it to be said to characterise the epoch, even though it may not be universal within it.

Unfortunately, neither Marx nor Engels devoted very much attention to the precise analysis of the feudal mode of production, or the nature of the transitions which may be possible to and from it. As Hobsbawm has pointed out, their primary concern was to isolate the features of the feudal epoch in Europe, which appeared to facilitate the transition to the Capitalist epoch in that part of the World.[20] Their

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[18] M.M. Postan, "Foreword", in Bloch, Feudal Society, 1:xiv.

[19] Postan, op.cit.

[20] Hobsbawm, "Introduction", in Marx, Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations, p.11.

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analysis of Feudalism in general is accordingly very incomplete. Much more than in the case of Capitalism, the remarks of Marx and Engels on this question must be taken as work in progress, a source of useful insight on which to build.

Three clusters of problems are associated with the term Feudalism in Marxism. First, the precise nature of the mode of production designated as Feudal. Secondly, the nature of the transition to Feudalism from other social epochs. Thirdly, the nature of the transition from Feudalism to social epochs dominated by other modes of production. At this point in the argument we are concerned to discuss only the first and second clusters of problems. The third cluster is considered below.[21]

The lack of clear conceptualisation of the Feudal mode of production in Marxism necessitates a re-examination of the concrete historical situation to which the term was first applied. As Bloch defined it;

> "from the 8th century onwards there was a sharply demarcated group of societies in Western and Central Europe, whose elements, however diverse, were cemented solidly together by profound resemblances and constant relationships". 22

The age of Feudalism in western and central Europe is usually thought to have been all but over by the 13th or 14th centuries,[23] though some see a revival of it in 'bastard' form during the 15th century.[24] Other parts of Europe are either thought not to have developed sufficiently in a similar direction to warrant the use of the term,[25] or, as in Perry Anderson's

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[21] See chapter VIII.

[22] Marc Bloch, Mélanges Historigues (Paris, 1963) Vol.1, p.123, cited by Anderson, Passages From Antiquity to Feudalism, p.16.

[23] Anderson, op.cit., pp.182,263.

[24] K.B. MacFarlane, "Bastard Feudalism", cited by M.M. Postan, The Medieval Economy and Society (Pelican, 1975) p.195.

[25] Bloch, Mélanges Historiques, p.124; Feudal Society, 2:445-6.

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formulation in regard to eastern Europe, to have experienced the flowering of Feudalism rather later.[26] Since there is consensus only on the question of western and central Europe, it is on the historical experience of these areas that attention will be concentrated.

Unfortunately, even within these limits, there is little agreement as to exactly what constituted the essence of the concrete historical situation to which the term Feudal has been applied. There is first the view taken by the Anglo-German 'legalist' school, which uses the term in a narrow technical sense to be

> "merely a name for the legal or customary principles embodied in the 'Feudum' as the universal principle of military organisation. Thus told the history of feudalism is mainly the story of baronial and knightly contracts of service". 27

There is secondly the view that would widen the use of the term to characterise a complete society.[28]

The second and wider of these two views is now accepted by a majority of students of the subject. Within this broad position, however, there is little consensus as to the elements which must be isolated as fundamental to the notion of Feudal society. Rather than discuss these viewpoints within a competitive framework, I propose to regard them as essentially complementary and to use them to highlight certain of the economic, social, political and military relationships of society which seem to make up the general nexus characterised as Feudal. After all,

> "the framework of institutions which governs a society can in the last resort be understood only through a knowledge of the whole human environment". 29

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[26] Anderson, Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism, pp.161-4, 215-6,229,263; Bloch, Feudal Society, 1:180, 2:446.

[27] Postan, "Foreword", in Bloch, op.cit., 1:xii. See also Postan, Medieval Economy and Society, pp.89-92; Goody, "Feudalism in Africa?", p.3.

[28] For the emergence of this viewpoint see Bloch, op.cit., 1:xvii-xviii. For Bloch's commitment to it see Ibid., 1:xx.

[29] Bloch, op.cit., 1:59. See also 1:268.

The economy of European Feudal society was essentially rural, with urban centres - in so far as they existed at all - being subordinate to the countryside.[30] It was characterised by a relatively low level of the forces of production.[31] In the important rural sector, they included a dynamic agricultural component and a possibly less significant animal husbandry.

The dominance of the rural sector in the Feudal economy makes the patterns of socio-economic relationships which developed in association with it of considerable interest. For some the essence of Feudal society consisted in the relationships developed between men and the land,[32] and in particular the situation of dependent land tenure implicit in the notion of the 'fief'.[33] Yet this may be to generalise from an observational model limited to a particular European historical situation. The Roman law which guided property relations during Feudal times was not a product of the Feudal era, but a carry-over from an earlier historical epoch. Looked at from a structural point of view, property 'ownership' under Roman law can be seen as a bundle of rights, the proportion being held by any single landowner or peasant varying considerably.[34] Unlike the concept of Roman property law, that of a bundle of rights in relation to land is freely capable of an application outside the narrow confines of the particular historical context of Medieval western Europe.

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[30] Anderson, Passages From Antiquity to Feudalism, pp.24,150. This is an important component of the Feudal mode of production; Marx, Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations, pp.77-8.

[31] Anderson, op.cit., p.142.

[32] Benjamin Guerard, cited by Bloch, Feudal Society, 2:441.

[33] Works cited by Bloch, op.cit., 1:xvii; Goody, "Feudalism in Africa?", p.3.

[34] Hindess and Hirst, Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production, p.235; Goody, op.cit., p.6.

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Approached from a different direction, the essence of socio-economic relationships in the rural sector of Feudal society was not dependent land tenure, but dependent cultivation.[35] But the relative intensity of the relationship of dependence appears crucial. The form of labour organisation which was characteristic was neither 'slave' nor 'free' but something in between. The precise form varied a great deal along a 'serf' - 'peasant' continuum.[36]

Descriptions of these relationships in the rural sector sometimes emphasise the element of class domination and economic exploitation of the humble by the powerful.[37] In other accounts stress is laid on the degree of reciprocity between the parties involved.[38] More important than the question of the origin of these social relationships, is their precise structure. They invariably involved a proportion of the direct producer's labour -time, or a proportion of the product resulting from the application of his labour, being extracted to help support the subsistence and supra-subsistence requirements of a non-labouring class. There was an extraction of 'rent', but this took a decentralised form under Feudal conditions.[39]

At one time writers moved beyond the notions of dependent land tenure and dependent cultivation to see the manorial system

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35 Postan, Medieval Economy and society, p.90. See also pp.64 and 88 of the same work.

36 Anderson, Passsages From Antiquity to Feudalism, p.24; Postan, op.cit., pp.98-9,102,140,144,153,164-9.

37 Postan, "Foreword", in Bloch, Feudal Society, 1:xiii; Bloch, op.cit., 2:443.

38 See note 55 below.

39 Hindess and Hirst, Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production, pp.224 -5.

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as being an essential ingredient of Feudalism. On closer examination of the situation, however, this view has since been rejected.[40] The distribution of the manorial system within Feudal Europe was closely related to topographical factors,[41] and the specific legacy of an earlier period.[42] As such it represented not the essence of Feudal society, but a particular assemblage within the general framework.

Although it is certainly difficult to picture a Feudal economy without an agricultural component, to concentrate entirely on the relations of cultivation may yet be to employ a definition which is too restrictive. It automatically excludes animal husbandry and other types of production. This seems an unreasonable exclusion. The essence of the structure of the rural economy under Feudal conditions was not dependent cultivation, but dependent production. Dependent production existed in the sense that economic power, which is to say control over the means and fruits of production, was unequally distributed.

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[40] Bloch, Feudal Society, 1:279; 2:442; Postan, "Foreword", in Bloch, op.cit., 1:xv.

[41] The typical manor, and the nucleated village with which it was often associated, represented a production complex appropriate to predominantly arable plains-country. The pastoral practices and pocket cultivation which were associated with hilly, upland topography was a production complex, which in its lower cooperative work requirement, lent itself more readily to the existence of a less servile peasantry and its greater dispersal across the countryside. On this question see Postan, Medieval Economy and Society, pp.100,124; Anderson, Passages From Antiquity to Feudalism, p.155. For the extension of this more flexible position to take account of situations outside Europe see Bloch, op.cit., 2:447; Goody, "Feudalism in Africa?", p.10.

[42] Bloch, op.cit., 2;442. For the development of the manorial system see Anderson, op.cit., p.140; Postan, Medieval Economy and Society, pp.90-91. The manorial system had an altogether longer history than Feudalism itself; Bloch, op.cit., 2:442.

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Once more however, the degree of inequality and the distribution of the surplus extracted in the form of 'rent' appears crucial to an understanding of Feudalism. Economic power was certainly not distributed equally, but neither was it entirely concentrated in the hands of a particular individual or single social class. The monarch, and the aristocracy from whose ranks he had emerged, enjoyed access to a rental income extracted from the individual serf or peasant households. This economic power was not complete, because the subordinate class was not totally separated from control over the means of production. It was not concentrated in the hands of the monarch or a handful of individuals, but decentralised to varying degrees amongst a large number of powerholders. Economic power was thus partially diffused through the various levels of Feudal society.[43]

The subordination of one man to another, which was evident in the 'economic' sphere of social relations, was in fact common to the whole of Feudal society.[44] It was clearly apparent

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[43] It might at first appear as if the point is untenable in the case of some of the intermediate powerholders of Feudal society. Attachment to the household of a patron is sometimes seen as an alternative to an independent economic base in land. If however, as many writers have suggested, the emergence of a household retinue system is one of the structural changes in society marking a passage away from Primitive-Communism, then the replacement of household dependence with land grants is probably one of the indicators of the completion of the transition to Feudalism. Intermediate strata, like those above and below them, now also possessed a proportion of the bundle of rights in land which amounts to the concept of 'ownership'. Thus they too had acquired an economic base which allowed them a substantial degree of freedom from their patrons. For the significance of the retinue system in general see Anderson, Passages From Antiquity to Feudalism, pp.108,116,232. For the system of household attachment see Bloch, Feudal Society, 1:151,169. For the fusion of vassallage and grant of land, which took place in Europe from about the 8th century A.D., see Anderson, op.cit., pp.139,233; Bloch, op.cit., 1:158. For the related shift away from a 'citizen' or 'peasant' army or militia see Bloch, op.cit., 1:152.

[44] Bloch, op.cit., 1:145.

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in the sphere of 'politics'. Here various levels of dependency existed; from the humblest serf, through various intermediate levels of 'chiefs', to the paramountcy at the apex of the system.[45] 'Vassalage', with its strong military connotations, was not the essence of Feudalism but a form of dependent political relationship found at certain levels.[46]

Despite the superficial resemblance to a simple hierarchically-organised structure, in fact

> "It was an unequal society, rather than a hierarchical one - with chiefs rather than nobles....." 47

The structure of political relationships was such that, although power was not equally distributed, neither could it be easily concentrated at any level. Political as well as economic power was partially diffused, or locally-centred.[48] To use Anderson's phrase, Feudal society was generally characterised by a 'parcellization of sovereignty'.[49] Those who wielded economic and political power, were also in a position to wield judicial and other forms of power in their local sphere of influence.[50] The general decentralisation of power obviated the need for bureaucratic administrative structures.[51]

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[45] Postan, Medieval Economy and Society, p.92; Anderson, Passages From Antiquity to Feudalism, pp.139,147; Bloch, Feudal Society, 1:146,170. The 'political' sphere is extremely important to an understanding of Feudal society; Hindess and Hirst, Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production, pp.224,226.

[46] Bloch, op.cit., 1:147.

[47] Ibid., 2:443.

[48] Goody, "Feudalism in Africa?", p.4.

[49] Anderson, op.cit., p.147.

[50] Ibid., p.152; Postan, Medieval Economy and Society, p.82; Bloch, op.cit., 2:442.

[51] Anderson, op.cit., p.153.

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The existence but undoubted weakness of the position of the powerholder at the apex of the political system, was perhaps of particular importance.[52] The powerholder at the apex did not possess a power base which transcended his personal wealth. He could not, for example, exploit the mass of the peasantry directly.[53] Relationships of this kind were confined to the estates or homesteads under his personal control. Beyond this, relationships with the peasantry could only be developed indirectly through the mediation of one or more of the intermediate levels in the political structure, and would require the cooperation of powerholders at these levels. This in turn depended upon the ability of the powerholder at the apex to gain and maintain their allegiance, usually through the distribution of favours. The powerholder at the apex was a 'paramount' rather than a 'king'. His power was very far from being 'absolute'.

The individual's occupation of a position at one of the levels within the political structure involved at one and the same time, his protection by - and subordination to - another.[54] This dual element in the political system has allowed some writers to see the individual relationships involved as having been instituted from below through feelings of insecurity, and others to see them as having been developed from above through the use of force.[55] It is however, the actuality rather than

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[52] Bloch, Feudal Society, 2:443,445.

[53] Anderson, Passages From Antiquity to Feudalism, p.151.

[54] In some parts of Feudal Europe this was to be seen plainly reflected in the 'castellar' landscape; Ibid., p.142.

[55] Goody, "Feudalism in Africa?", pp.6,14; Bloch, Feudal Society, 1:171.

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the origin of the relationship which concerns us at this stage.

At the lower levels of Feudal society, relationships of dependence were often freely revealed in aspects of day-to-day living. At higher levels it was often the case that they were hardly revealed at all, except in time of financial crisis at the apex, or more usually, in time of the paramount's involvement in war. On such occasions dependants would be expected to offer military assistance. In many parts of Europe the 'knights', who were amongst the intermediate powerholders of Feudal society, seem to have actually formed an active warrior aristocracy. This situation has led some writers to include amongst the defining characteristics of Feudal society, the virtual identity of the class of 'chiefs' with that of professional warriors.[56] Yet on closer examination this may prove to be less an essential structural requirement than a particular feature of the European (and the Japanese) system at a stage in its development. As Anderson has pointed out, the essential commitment of a dependant to his patron was to provide a 'military effective'. This might take the form of a body of retainers or a sum of money. Only on exceptional occasions was the dependant obliged to attend in person and actively participate in battle.[57]

Unlike in certain Primitive-Communal situations, the network of social relations which comprised Feudal society was not based solely upon 'natural' considerations. Although kin links remained significant, they were not of paramount importance in determining the pattern of social relations.[58] Similarly, economic and political inequalities went far beyond considerations of 'natural' status such as age.[59]

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[56] Bloch, Feudal Society, 2:444.

[57] Anderson, Passages in the Transition From Antiquity to Feudalism p.147. See also Postan, Medieval Economy and Society, p.95.

[58] Goody, "Feudalism in Africa?", pp.1,6; Bloch, Feudal Society, 1:142, 2:441,443.

[59] Goody, op.cit., p.7.

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Having isolated some of the essential features of the various spheres of Feudal society, it is necessary to once more draw the threads together into a coherent whole. For Bloch a simple listing was sufficient;

> "A subject peasantry; widespread use of the service tenement (i.e. the fief) instead of a salary which was out of the question ; the supremacy of a class of specialised warriors; ties of obedience and protection which bind man to man and, within the warrior class, assume the distinctive form called vassalage; fragmentation of authority - leading inevitably to disorder; and, in the midst of all this, the survival of other forms of association, family and State, of which the latter, during the second feudal age, was to acquire renewed strength - such then seem to be the fundamental features of European feudalism".60

Bloch's listing of the essential features of Feudal society does not quite go far enough. In order that the concept of Feudalism can be fully applied in comparative structural analysis, it must not only invoke the really essential features of Feudal society, it must also show them in their dynamic interdependence.[61] It is necessary therefore to show the manner of their integration into a particular Feudal mode of production.

This task has been attempted by Perry Anderson. For him the Feudal mode of production in Europe was one

> "dominated by the land and a natural economy, in which neither labour nor the products of labour were commodities. The immediate producer - the peasant - was united to the means of production - the soil - by a specific social relationship. The literal formula of this relationship was provided by the legal definition of serfdom - 'glebae adscripti' or bound to the earth; serfs had judicially restricted mobility. The peasants who occupied and tilled the land were not its owners. Agrarian property was privately

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60 Bloch, Feudal Society, 2:446.

61 Postan, "Foreword", in Bloch, op.cit,. 1:xiv.

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> controlled by a class of feudal lords who extracted a surplus from the peasants by politico-legal relations of compulsion. This extra-economic coercion, taking the form of labour services, rents in kind or customary dues owed to the individual lord by the peasant, was exercised both on the manorial demesne attached directly to the person of the lord, and on the strip tenancies or virgates cultivated by the peasant. Its necessary result was a juridical amalgamation of economic exploitation with political authority. The peasant was subject to the jurisdiction of his lord. At the same time, the property rights of the lord over his land were typically of degree only: he was invested in them by a superior noble (or nobles), to whom he would owe knight - service - provision of a military effective in time of war. His estates were, in other words, held as a fief. The liege lord in his turn would often be the vassal of a feudal superior, and the chain of such dependent tenures linked to military service would extend upwards to the highest peak of the system - in most cases, a monarch - of whom all land could in the ultimate instance be in principle the eminent domain.....
> The consequence of such a system was that political sovereignty was never focussed in a single centre. The functions of the State were disintegrated in a vertical allocation downwards, at each level of which political and economic relations were, on the other hand, integrated. This parcellization of sovereignty was constitutive of the whole feudal mode of production".62

Broadly speaking, it will be against Anderson's formulation that the south-east African situation will be tested. Anderson, however, was concerned with the development of an operational definition of the Feudal mode of production as it functioned in a particular historical situation. Accordingly, it incorporates a number of more or less culture-bound components and is therefore not entirely satisfactory as a general structural definition of the Feudal mode of production as a widespread form. Certain regard must also be paid to structural points already raised in the discussion of Feudalism. Other points will be considered as they arise in the analysis of the south-east African situation.

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62 Anderson, Passages From Antiquity to Feudalism, p.147.

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It is necessary to consider now the second of the clusters of problems which surround use of the term Feudalism in Marxist thought. That is, problems associated with the transition to the Feudal mode of production or to a social epoch characterised by it. The weakness of the Marxist explanation of the transition to Feudalism is well known;

> "The genesis of capitalism has been the object of many studies inspired by historical materialism ..... . The genesis of feudalism, by contrast, has remained largely unstudied within the same tradition: as a distinct type of transition to a new mode of production, it has never been integrated into the general corpus of Marxist theory." 63

So far as western and central Europe are concerned, two inputs are commonly agreed to have been of great importance; the Roman legacy and the Germanic conquests. Beyond this, however, agreement breaks down. Some stress the importance of the Roman legacy; European Feudalism is seen to be the result of the collapse of the Roman Empire. Many of the organisational forms, and notably the manorial system, are seen to be direct or indirect carry-overs from Roman times.[64]

A second viewpoint stresses the Germanic input. The origin of Feudal institutions, and notably the system of vassalage, is seen to originate within the German tribal societies which then spread them to other parts of Europe through the mechanism of conquest.[65]

A third viewpoint, which usually concedes supremacy to one or other of the above-mentioned views, reminds us of the importance of pre-Roman and pre-Germanic elements in the development of the particular forms associated with the Feudal era in western and central Europe.[66]

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[63] Anderson, Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism, p.18.

[64] See the discussion in Bloch, Feudal Society, 1:148.

[65] See the discussion in Postan, Medieval Economy and Society, pp.2-13.

[66] Ibid., p.5.

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A fourth view, and perhaps that most commonly accepted, whilst conceding that two of the characteristic elements of Feudal society in Europe - the manor and the vassal system - had their respective origins in Roman and German societies, argues that the balancing of the relative importance of these two inputs in the genesis of Feudalism in this area constitutes a fruitless exercise.[67] The particular form taken by Feudalism in western and central Europe resulted from the violent collision of two complete systems. Anderson has expressed the point succinctly;

> "the catastrophic collision of two dissolving anterior modes of production - primitive and ancient - eventually produced the feudal order which spread throughout medieval Europe".[68]

In essence it is no more than the argument which had been put forward by Bloch more than thirty years before.[69]

Satisfying though the Bloch-Anderson explanation may be, for the particular form taken by the transition to Feudalism in western and central Europe, it cannot be taken as a structural formulation for the rise of Feudalism in general. As the writers are obliged to concede, a transition to Feudalism - albeit more slow - did occur in parts of Europe where the elements for this kind of synthesis were not present. It was notably the case in eastern Europe.[70] A more general explanation is therefore required.

Various general explanations of the transition to Feudalism have been put forward, usually based on one or other of the viewpoints developed in relation to the particular European situation. Coulborn's formulation, for example, is clearly influenced by the 'Roman-legacy' viewpoint. He argues

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[67] Bloch, Feudal Society, 1:148; 2:443; Anderson, Passages From Antiquity to Feudalism, pp.128-30.

[68] Anderson, op.cit., p.128. See also pp.18-19,137,142,154,213.

[69] Bloch, op.cit., 2:443.

[70] See above p.101, note 26.

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that Feudalism is a mode of revival of a society whose polity has disintegrated.[71] This is certainly an interesting idea, though it seems unlikely that Feudalism could result from the breakdown of any imperial system. It is hard to imagine, for example, that the end of the 20th century British Empire could ever have produced a revival of Feudalism in the metropolis. The level of the forces of production must clearly also be taken into account.

The 'Germanic-conquest' view of the transition to Feudalism in western and central Europe has given rise to the notion of a path of 'unaided development' to Feudalism, which also helps to explain the transition east of the Elbe.[72] The possibility of such a transition was recognised by Marx as a result of his researches into the east European situation. In a letter to Engels discussing Polish developments, Marx wrote that

> "here serfdom can be shown to have arisen in a purely economic way, without the intermediate link of conquest and ethnic dualism". 73

It may well be that Feudalism can arise both from a regression from an advanced stage of social differentiation, as hinted by Coulborn, and from a development towards an intermediate stage of social differentiation, as indicated in the letter of Marx to Engels. Hobsbawm has traced the occasional thoughts of Marx and Engels on the nature of this transition, and shown in fact how a tentative conclusion was reached that a variety of different transitions to Feudalism was possible.[74]

Moreover, the transition to Feudalism need not occur in

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[71] Coulborn, Feudalism in History, p.364. See also Goody, "Feudalism in Africa?", pp.7,9.

[72] The term is employed by Anderson, Passages From Antiquity to Feudalism, p.216.

[73] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Selected Correspondence (Lawrence and Wishart, 1965) p.95, cited by Anderson, op.cit., p.229.

[74] Hobsbawm, "Introduction", in Marx, Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations, pp.9-54.

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every part of the World. As Hobsbawm points out;

> "Feudalism appears to be an alternative evolution out of primitive communalism, under conditions in which no cities develop, because the density of population over a large region is low".75

Not all the transitions to Feudalism which appear to be theoretically possible need be discussed here. It is suggested that in the south-east African case, the underlying trend accords closely with the 'unaided development' model. A passage from forms of Primitive-Communalism to an epoch characterised by the homestead is discernible, and the dynamic implicit in this mode of production was in the process of creating the necessary social and technological forms which were the preconditions for an independent transition to Feudalism. In the event, however, these processes were overtaken by a colonising movement instituted by more socially developed societies located in the interior of south-central or southern Africa. These colonising groups came to supply the Feudal aristocracy, which by the 16th century, was already in process of establishing a position of hegemony in many if not all parts of south-east Africa. It is to the description of this Feudal situation in late 16th century south-east Africa that we now turn.

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75 Hobsbawm, "Introduction", in Marx, Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations, p.28. See also p.32 of Hobsbawm's same contribution.

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V

A POLITICAL ECONOMY OF SOUTH-EAST AFRICA IN THE LATER 16th CENTURY

The first written records which can be used by historians of south-east Africa date from the later 16th century.[1] It thus becomes possible to build up a more detailed picture of social relations in the region after 1550 than for earlier periods. The most important later 16th century accounts are those of the experiences of survivors of Portuguese shipwrecks.[2] Four main accounts are known to exist. They have been collected and translated by Theal and Boxer respectively.[3] These records

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[1] The possibility of a pre-1550 Arab or Indian trading link with the region, and thus the possibility of earlier written records, cannot be discounted altogether. In 1498 Vasco da Gama made a brief landfall, but his report of the incident conveys little of interest. Early 16th century Portuguese records contain some references to Delagoa Bay, but not to the situation prevailing elsewhere in the region.

[2] Between 1500 and 1635 some 550 Portuguese ships sailed from the East to Portugal. Only 470 of these ships ever reached Lisbon. A large number were lost on the African coast. Unlike the outward voyage, a coastal route through the Mozambique Channel was usually followed on the homeward journey by the annual fleet, which averaged 5 vessels in the mid 16th century; Boxer, Portuguese Seaborne Empire, pp.208 -9, 221.

[3] The accounts of survivors of wrecks in 1552, 1554, 1589 and 1593 appear in Theal, Records of South-East Africa, Vols. 1 and 2. The 1589 and 1593 accounts also appear in Boxer, Tragic History of the Sea. Boxer claims to have translated independently and more literally from earlier editions of the original Portuguese texts. He freely acknowledges a substantial debt to Theal, however, and the difference between the two versions of the 1589 and 1593 accounts is seldom considerable.

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are especially valuable since they relate the experiences of people who undertook lengthy journeys along the coast, and sometimes through part of the interior. Their aim was to reach Delagoa Bay, or other points further along the coast where Portuguese vessels were known to call.

Even these valuable documents pose a number of problems for the historian. Not all the writers paid equal attention to describing the features of the communities encountered, and possibly only one is actually the work of an eye-witness.[4] All the accounts are very uncertain in establishing the geographical location of physical features and societies encountered. The assembly of material from these accounts into a balanced overall picture is further complicated by their coastal bias, the different seasons in which the parties were travelling, the different routes followed, and the different extent to which each party was equipped with guns and trade-goods. These factors, when combined with the unsystematic geographical and chronological span of the reports, means that such sources can admittedly amount to no more than a fragmentary record.

Moreover, the accounts naturally only describe the relations between the shipwreck parties and the various societies which they encountered. With the exception of the Delagoa polity of Inhaca, no group of travellers lived within one of these societies or interacted with it over sufficient time for it to gain an intimate knowledge of the inner structure of the society, or of the pattern of its interrelationships with other societies. It is reasonable to assume therefore, that throughout the region, both of these types of relationship were much more complex and wideranging than the records indicate directly. To take two examples; there is no mention made of local trading networks, and

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[4] This is the 1554 account written by Perestrello. The brevity and lack of balance of the 1552 account suggests a secondary origin. As Boxer points out, the 1589 and 1593 accounts are the work of contemporary Portuguese chroniclers, though they almost certainly had access to eye-witnesses and/or first-hand sources which have not survived; Boxer, Tragic History, pp.39-40,46.

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little or no direct reference to extraction of surplus from the peasantry. The overall level of social development indicated in the accounts suggests, however, that the existence of both might reasonably be expected. It is possible that they are absent from the historical record because the diarists were never in a position to observe their operation. The same may be true of a number of other important indicators of the general stage of social development which had been reached in the region.

Despite these obstacles, some attempt must be made to reconstruct the political economy of south-east Africa in the later 16th century on the basis of these records, if earlier and subsequent changes in the pattern of social relations in the region are to be understood. This chapter first introduces the four accounts on the basis of which conclusions are to be formulated, and then the general settlement pattern which they appear to reveal. Secondly, the overall social formation is analysed from the standpoint of the degree to which patterns of social relations characteristic of various modes of production can be said to have existed within it. These modes are respectively; the Primitive-communal, the Homestead, the Tributary, and the Feudal. To facilitate this analysis, a simple threefold geographical division of south-east Africa is made. Thirdly, and using this system of geographical categories, a conclusion is formulated which draws attention to the uneven pattern of social development in south-east Africa as a whole. Finally, certain outstanding contradictions present in the overall social formation are isolated and suggested to furnish a part of the dynamic necessary to bring about further social transitions in the region.

The first of the four accounts to be considered dates from 1552, and concerns the survivors of the Portuguese ship SÃO JOÃO. The ship foundered in June, a little to the north-east of the mouth of the Mzimvubu River.[5] Some 500 people survived the wreck. The majority were not Portuguese, but

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[5] G.M. Theal, The Portuguese in South Africa (1896) p.168. The full account of the wreck and the subsequent journey of the survivors occurs in Theal, Records, 1:136-149.

slaves.[6] The party of survivors left the site of the wreck early in July 1552, and reached Delagoa Bay in October.[7] The party clearly followed the coast, but the account of their journey which has survived offers only brief remarks on this phase of their expedition. The account is chiefly interesting for its description of social relations at the Bay itself. Mistaking Delagoa Bay for a lesser river, the party sought to circumvent it, only to find themselves at the mercy of an unfriendly king on its northern shore.[8] Eventually only a handful of survivors were picked up by a Portuguese ship which visited this part of the Bay from Mozambique.[9]

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[6] Between 300 and 400 slaves had actually been aboard the ship, but 60 died in the wreck itself; Theal, Records, I:136. The whole Portuguese Empire, including its shipping, was heavily dependent upon slave labour in the period. The shipwreck accounts make it plain that these slaves were obtained from various parts of India and the Far East, as well as from Africa. Amongst the African slaves were small numbers sent annually from Mozambique to Goa in order to make up deficiencies in the crews of the fleet. This helps to explain the familiarity of some of the shipwrecked slaves with the languages encountered on parts of the south-east African coast. Many of the slaves aboard ship were used for menial work at sea, but others appear to have been the property of officers and Portuguese passengers. Their number included women as well as men; G.M. Theal, The Beginning of South African History (1902) p.379; Boxer, Portuguese Seaborne Empire, pp.57,207,213-22; E.A. Alpers, The East African Slave Trade (Dar Es Salaam: Historical Association of Tanzania, 1967) p.5.

[7] Theal, Records, I:136,138.

[8] Ibid., I:139-46.

[9] Ibid., I:147-8; Theal, Beginning, p.141.

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In April 1554 the SAO BENTO was wrecked somewhere on the Transkei coast between the Kasuka and Mtata rivers.[10] After some days spent in the vicinity of the wreck, a party comprising 224 slaves and 98 Portuguese set off overland in the direction of Delagoa Bay.[11] Unlike that of the 1552 party, their route appears to have alternated between the shore and a course much further inland. Reduced to 56 Portuguese and 6 slaves, the party arrived at the capital of Inhaca on the southern shores of Delagoa Bay in July 1554.[12] Only 20 Portuguese and 3 slaves finally survived to be taken off by a Portuguese vessel which called at the Bay in 1555.[13] The account which this party has left behind is altogether much fuller than that of its predecessor.[14]

The SAO TOME was wrecked on the south-east African coast in March 1589. The precise position has not been identified, but was probably a little south of St. Lucia Bay.[15] It took the survivors only about a month to reach the capital of Inhaca at the Bay.[16] A few remained there awaiting the arrival of a Portuguese vessel, but others attempted to press on overland in the direction of Inhambane and Sofala.[17] A detailed account of the party's experiences has survived, which includes important information on the overall pattern of political relations in the northern part of the region.[18]

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[10] For the debate surrounding the precise location see Theal, Beginning, p.282; Records, III:xii; Wilson, "Nguni", p.79.

[11] Theal, Records, I:227.

[12] Ibid., I:270; Theal, Beginning, p.285.

[13] Theal, Records, I:280-1; H.A. Junod, "The condition of the natives of south-east Africa in the 16th century according to the early Portuguese documents", South African Journal of Science 10 (1913) p.142.

[14] The full account of the journey is in Theal, Records, I: 218-85.

[15] For the debate on the precise location see Boxer, Tragic History, pp.65-6,69; Wilson, "Nguni", p.79.

[16] Boxer, op.cit., p.81.

[17] Ibid., pp.82-3.

[18] Ibid., pp.54-104.

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Finally, in March 1593 the SAO ALBERTO was wrecked on the Transkei coast, near to the Mbashe River or even further to the south.[19] The survivors of the wreck comprised 125 Portuguese and 160 slaves.[20] This party also travelled to the capital of the Inhaca at Delagoa Bay, which they reached early in July. 117 Portuguese and 65 slaves completed the journey.[21] The account of the party's experiences is of especial importance because, unlike other parties, this group consistently followed an inland route.[22]

As Monica Wilson has already pointed out in an important pioneering work, the settlement pattern which emerges from these shipwreck records is of a sparsely populated coast, but with many settlements further inland. The 1593 party, travelling inland and NNE, were told that they would always find settlements with provisions in this direction, as indeed they did.[23]

An especially well-settled part of the region appears to have lain between about the Mzimkulu and Mfolozi rivers, and some miles inland from the coast, though it is not clear how far into the hinterland this zone extended. Nevertheless, even in this well-settled inland zone in the heart of south-east Africa, there were also belts of almost uninhabited country.[24]

More interesting than the general distribution of settlement in the region are the different modes of production with which this settlement appears to have been associated. Patterns of social relations characteristic of four modes of production may be distinguished; Primitive-communal, Homestead, Tributary and Feudal. The problem is to decide to what extent these modes of production existed in pure or independent form.

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[19] For the debate on this location see Boxer, Tragic History, pp.108, 114-5; Theal, Records, II:xxvi, 293-4; Theal, Beginning, p.296; Wilson, "Nguni", pp.79-80.

[20] Boxer, op.cit., p.115.

[21] Ibid., pp.181-5.

[22] The full account occurs in Ibid., pp.107-88.

[23] Wilson, "Early history", p.172.

[24] Ibid.

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An initial geographical division is suggested to facilitate the analysis. First, a southern zone extending approximately from the Fish to the Mzimkulu rivers. Secondly, a central zone extending between the Mzimkulu and Mfolozi. Thirdly, a northern zone extending from the Mfolozi to the shores of Delagoa Bay. The boundaries of these zones are sometimes difficult to relate to features mentioned in the various accounts, and the attempt to set observations within this framework must be regarded as tentative. It is not suggested that the divisions necessarily conform to any structural distinctions which the analysis of the overall social formation of south-east Africa may reveal. The division is merely a tool to facilitate such an analysis, and will be used in this way throughout the remainder of the present work.

It is quite clear from the shipwreck accounts that Primitive-Communism, or modes of production closely related to it, did not dominate the social formation which existed in south-east Africa in the later 16th century.[25] It is more difficult to decide the extent to which the Primitive-Communal mode can be said to have existed as an independent mode of production at all. At first glance there would appear to be some evidence for the proposition. Certainly, the hunting and gathering practices characteristic of a migratory or semi-migratory Primitive-Communal mode of production can be shown to have persisted into the period.

The 1554 party of survivors from their wreck on the Transkei coast, initially set out inland in an attempt to reach Delagoa Bay. They found no inhabited settlements or evidence of farming activities. Only one empty settlement site was encountered, comprising

> "about twenty huts built with poles and thatched with dry grass, in form and size like a baker's oven, such as is usual among all the peoples of this coast. They move them from place to place with the seasons, according to the abundance or barrenness of the ground, upon the wild fruit of which they principally subsist".26

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[25] For discussion of the concept of Primitive-Communism, see above pp.64-66.

[26] Theal, Records, I:230.

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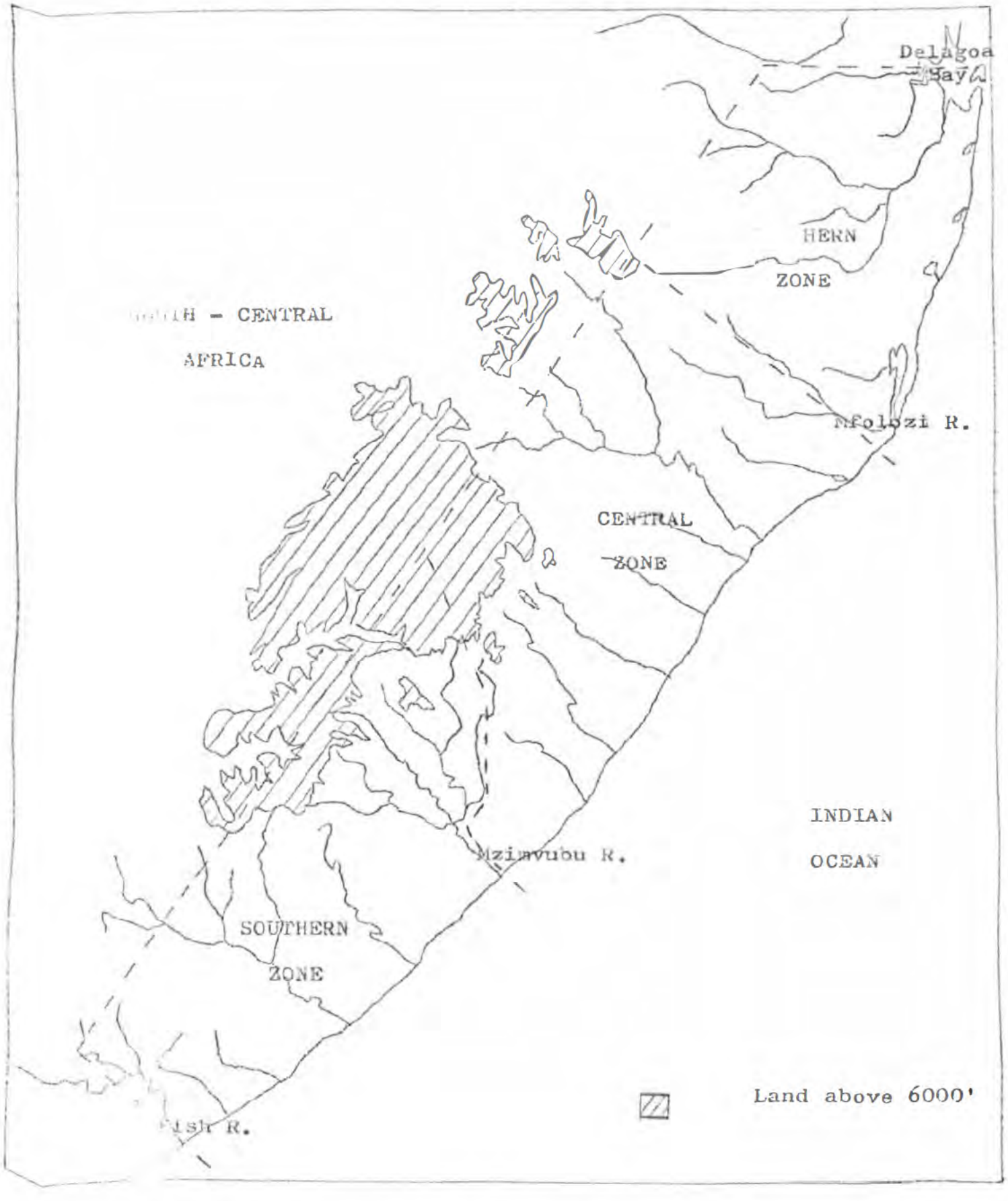

Fig. 10 South-east Africa : Zonal Classification used in the Text

Veering back to the shore in search of food,[27] the party was nevertheless obliged to travel for 22 days before finding any group prepared to barter foodstuffs with them.[28] During this time the party clearly came across some settlements, because small groups of inhabitants emerged to pursue them with considerable hostility.[29] In order to obtain food, the travellers were obliged to adopt a migratory gathering mode of production themselves, relying upon shellfish, an occasional fish or animal which they caught or which they stumbled upon already dead, together with fruits, roots, insects and other wild produce of the bush.[30] The large number in the party, and their lack of intimate knowledge of the food possibilities of the environment, meant that the survival of its members was always tenuous.

The coastal population, however sparse it may have been, was clearly either unwilling or unable to furnish the food which the travellers required. Junod argued for the former possibility. He suggested that the party carried few goods suitable for barter, and so were not welcome in the area.[31] Although the party had foolishly discarded some of the iron which it had salvaged from the wreck,[32] Junod's suggestion still seems unlikely. In particular, it is known that the party proved very successful in bartering for food later in their journey. It would therefore seem that the party was unsuccessful at this stage for other reasons. It is suggested that the Primitive-

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[27] Theal, Records, I:233.

[28] Wilson, "Early history", p.168.

[29] Theal, Records, I:225,228,234.

[30] Ibid., I:234; Theal, Beginning, pp.283-4.

[31] Junod, "Condition of the natives", p.141.

[32] For the goods salvaged see Theal, Beginning, p.283. For the abandonment of part of the iron see Theal, Records, I:229.

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Communal mode of production which may have characterised the area, did not furnish sufficient food-surplus, or embrace technologies of food storage, which could enable it to supply foodstuffs to what must have been a party of more than 300 people. The continual harassment of the party by small and relatively disorganised bands of local inhabitants is consistent with the idea of primitive-communists attempting to defend the limited resources of the environment which formed their means of production.

At a river which may have been the Mzimkulu,[33] the 1554 party once more veered inland, and their experience of hardship ceased abruptly. Primitive-Communism gave way to a different mode of production with an altogether more developed subsistence base. It is not clear whether, in the 1550s, this different mode of production occupied the interior for some way south of the river as well as beyond it. If it extended - continuously or intermittently - as far south as the Mtata River where the party had initially gone inland, it can only have done so at a considerable distance in the interior.

To return to the incidence of Primitive-Communalism south of the Mzimkulu; even in this restricted part of south-east Africa there were signs that the days of Primitive-Communalism as an independent mode of production were numbered, if they had not already passed. At their Transkei wreck, after its presence had been well-noted by 7 or 8 men on a hill, the 1554 party had an encounter with a distinguished-looking man escorted by a heavily-armed retinue of 100 warriors. Some amongst these warriors carried iron-tipped assagais, and their leader wore a kind of red bead which the Portuguese identified as having come from the Cambay part of India and which were known to have featured in the Delagoa Bay commerce. People who may have been associated with this force stripped the wreck for its metal content, and regarded cloth as well as iron as a highly acceptable gift. The fact that the retinue of warriors was seen to subsist largely on roots gathered from the veld, and the travellers could not obtain food in barter, suggests that the subsistence base was not yet very developed in the

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[33] Wilson, "Early history", p.168.

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area. The contradiction between this undeveloped subsistence base, and social features totally inappropriate to Primitive-Communism, suggests that the retinue was associated with a mode of production centred outside the area, a notion which is consistent with the different character of the language of this group relative to that more usual on this part of the coast.[34] The group may have been a trading or hunting party, the vanguard of a people in process of establishing itself as a colonial aristocracy in the area, or a police detachment associated with a polity centred some distance inland but which claimed control over the people of the coast and events taking place on the shore.

In the central zone, between the Mzimkulu and Mfolozi, production practices characteristic of Primitive-Communism were again in evidence. The experience of the 1552 party, which traversed the entire coastline of this zone, appears in many respects to have been similar to that of the 1554 party further to the south.[35] One aspect of this experience also serves to support the notion that, even inland, farming practices were not established or at least not continuous south of about the Mzimkulu River. Before setting out from their wreck near the Mzimvubu, a section of the party explored a little way inland, but found only a cluster of huts which were empty except for a number of 'arrows'.[36] The observation

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[34] Theal, Records, I:223-5.

[35] Ibid., I:135-8.

[36] Ibid., I:135. There is often a problem in dealing with the nomenclature of weaponry used in the shipwreck accounts. On this occasion Theal equated 'arrow' with 'assagai', but the 1593 account refers to a group with both 'arrows' and 'assagais', suggesting that the terms may not be interchangeable; Boxer, Tragic History, p.166. The context suggests, however, that 'arrows' were not part of the bow and arrow weapons system which is hardly ever mentioned in the accounts, but was, like the 'assagai', a type of throwing weapon. Various types of throwing weapons, designed for slightly different purposes, are known to have come into use at some point in the south-east African past. A stabbing weapon was also in use at Delagoa Bay in 1554; Theal, op.cit., I:276; L.E. Maingard, "History and distribution of the bow and arrow in South Africa", South African Journal of Science 29 (1932) pp.711-23; Thompson, Travels and Adventures, I:165; Gerrit Harinck, "Interaction between Xhosa and Khoi: emphasis on the period 1620-1750", in Thompson, African Societies in southern Africa, p.147. Precise

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suggests the incidence in the area of a relatively simple economy based upon transhumance, with people adjusting their subsistence base and moving their settlement sites with the seasons in a regular pattern.

This kind of economy cannot have extended very far inland, because the 1554 party found the interior of the central zone characterised by a different and more complex mode of production. Only occasionally did travellers in the interior come across small bands of hunters, and even then only in the tracts of uninhabited country which were intermittent within the central zone.[37]

Even at the coast there were signs that the economic practices associated with Primitive-Communism were in the process of being brought into articulation with economic practices characteristic of other modes of production. Thus, before setting out from their wreck, the 1552 party had a strange encounter with a small group of people leading a cow. They were clearly anxious to barter the animal for iron carried by the travellers, but were warned against it by others who arrived on the scene.[38] This may indicate either that the animal was thought too precious to be exchanged, or that it was not actually the property of those who herded it. The incident certainly suggests that livestock-husbandry was being practised in close proximity to the coast, if not actually at the coast itself.

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identification of the weaponry in use in a historical situation is important for establishing the pace and direction of technological change, and ultimately for the periodisation of social development in the region under consideration. So far as 16th century south-east Africa is concerned, the main problem is to decide the extent to which iron-tipped weapons had replaced those of wood or those with stone tips. Nomenclature is again a problem. Are the 'darts' referred to in some accounts to be equated with the 'fire-hardened sticks' of others? Are 'assagais' and 'launces' iron-tipped by definition, or are they general terms which may hide either a wooden or metal construction? There is enough evidence, however, to indicate that the use of iron-tipped weapons was not universal in the later 16th century. See, for example, Boxer, Tragic History, p.79; Wilson, "Early history", p.168. Since it is difficult to imagine how a wooden instrument could be a more effective weapon than one with a blade made of iron, it seems reasonable to conclude that the distribution of iron weapons was a function of wealth, cost or class, rather than of knowledge or choice.

[37] Boxer, op.cit., p.148.

[38] Theal, Records, 1:135.

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The 1593 reference to hunters operating in the interior of the central zone makes it quite clear that they were not associated with an independent Primitive-Communal mode of production. Although the hunters were accompanied by their women in the manner of a Primitive-Communal hunting band, they were also able to offer millet to the shipwreck survivors.[39] This may indicate an agricultural component of their economy, or as may be more likely in this case, a linkage to a mode of production which included groups prepared to furnish grain in exchange for a proportion of the products of the hunt.

In the northern zone, beyond the Mfolozi River, there was further evidence of hunting and food-gathering - economic practices characteristic of Primitive-Communism. Fishing, a form of production representative of an early stage of development from Primitive-Communism, was also reported. In this zone, however, it is even clearer that these economic practices were not integrated into a Primitive-Communal mode of production which existed in pure and independent form. Instead they were integrated into a more complex mode of production, and were being increasingly subordinated to other economic practices within it.

The 1554 party veered back to the coast in time to traverse most of the coast of the northern zone.[40] Its experience was in some respects consistent with that further to the south, and with the general impression of the 1552 party. Relatively few settlements were encountered, and these were described as 'poor'.[41] In the immediate hinterland of the coast, and particularly in marshy localities, travellers found plenty of evidence of systematic hunting activity. These areas were teeming with large game including elephant, buffalo, zebra and 'sea-horse'.[42] Small parties of hunters were seen at

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[39] Boxer, Tragic History, p.148.

[40] Theal, Records, I:237-8. The precise point at which the party returned to the coast is not clear from the account.

[41] Ibid., I:244.

[42] Ibid., I:239,258; Boxer, Tragic History, pp.172-3. The term 'sea-horse' often appears in 16th century and later accounts,

work,[43] and buffalo and other game meat was sometimes bartered by the parties from settlements in the area.[44]

There is evidence to suggest that these hunting practices were taking place in the midst of, and possibly in articulation with, a complex mode of production which included commodity exchange amongst its characteristic range of economic activities. Travellers along the shore of the northern zone noticed the presence of ambergris.[45] This is a resource of the natural environment which has no immediate use-value to a primitive-communalist, but one which had an international exchange value in the period, and one which is known to have been exported from south-east Africa. At one of the settlements in the immediate hinterland of the coast, the 1554 party were shown another item the value of which derived from considerations of commodity exchange rather than direct consumption by the immediate producer. This was an ivory tusk which was to be taken for eventual exchange with Europeans at a 'river' some distance further on.[46]

The travellers came across evidence of the social complexity of the northern zone in the period. Some of the settlements appeared to include a not very systematic agriculture and animal-husbandry in their subsistence base.[47]

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but so too does the term 'sea cow'. From the context of their use, it seems that two different animals are intended. The 'sea horse' appears to have yielded a product of interest to European merchants. It was probably the rhinocerous, the horns of which were in demand in India in this period; an early 18th century visitor to Delagoa Bay spoke of seeing "several rhinocerous horns brought thence to Bombay. much larger than ever I saw in India or China"; Alexander Hamilton, A New Account of the East Indies, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1729; 2nd ed. London, 1930), I:16. See also Welch, South Africa Under John III, p.276. 'Sea cows' seem to have been hippo. Thus the same 18th visitor to Delagoa Bay saw "sea cows and rhino and elephants"; Hamilton, op.cit., I:16. Even in some contemporary accounts, however, the distinction is sometimes blurred. There are also puzzling references to trade in the 'teeth' of 'sea cows'.

[43] Boxer, Tragic History, pp.172-3.

[44] Theal, Records, I:257,269.

[45] See below p.201n.

[46] Theal, op.cit., I:245. The 'river' was almost certainly Delagoa Bay.

[47] See below pp.148-50.

Bracelets and other metal ornaments were seen,[48] and attempts made to steal metals from the shipwreck parties.[49] Occasionally the parties were confronted by groups of armed men, who seem to have been more concerned with separating stragglers from their clothes than with protecting the resources of the environment in the manner of primitive-communists.[50]

Fishing was also reported as an aspect of the economy of the northern zone. It seems not to have been a total source of subsistence, but an element within a mode of production which included food-gathering, together with a little grain culture and livestock husbandry. Fishing settlements seem to have been located on river banks a little way inland from the sea.[51]

In the interior of the northern zone, economic practices characteristic of Primitive-Communism also existed in articulation with economic practices characteristic of a more complex mode of production. In the ivory accumulations reported to be controlled by powerholders in the Lebombo Hills,[52] and in other references to the ivory industry and commerce,[53] there is indirect evidence of the incidence of hunting pursuits. But hunting was clearly primarily undertaken in order to yield a commodity, an item which derived its value from exchange rather than from direct consumption by the producer. Hunting was no longer an element

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[48] That is, ornaments untypical of a Primitive-Communal mode of production; Theal, Records, I:247.

[49] Ibid., I:247,255.

[50] Ibid., I:247-8,250,260-1,262,264,266.

[51] Ibid., I:237-8; Boxer, Tragic History, p.79. Fishing is here distinguished from the simpler production form of gathering shellfish along the shore.

[52] Boxer, op.cit., p.74. There are hints of a seasonal movement of elephants between the Lebombo Hills and the marshland of the plain below; Ibid., p.172.

[53] Ibid., pp.66,69.

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of a Primitive-Communal mode of production in the area, but was a subordinate component of a more complex mode of production.

Much the same pattern prevailed in the vicinity of Delagoa Bay itself. Fishing was clearly important at the Bay, for the 1554 party noticed a sophisticated fish-trapping device in operation - the first to be reported in any of the 16th century accounts.[54] The 1552 party commented that

> ".....this country was poor in means of subsistence, not that it could not produce them, but because the Kaffirs were people who only sowed very few seeds and ate nothing but the beasts which they killed". 55

The same emphasis on hunting and gathering pursuits occurs in the 1554 account;

> "The people of these parts, ..., live in forests, naked, without law, without custom, without clothing, and have no other wants which may induce them to gather provisions and keep the surplus which they may obtain in favourable times for times of scarcity. They live on roots and herbs which the bush provides, and sometimes on the flesh of elephants and hippopotomi, without tilling the ground by the products of which they all live, chiefs as well as subjects.....". 56

Large game was clearly plentiful in the vicinity of the

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[54] Theal, Records, I:54. As in the case of all forms of the economic exploitation of the resources of Nature, the act of fishing is capable of taking a variety of forms - of existing within a range of different modes of production. The differences between these forms are a function of the physical environment, of technology, of forms of labour organisation, and of the manner of the distribution of the product. Change in the mode may be induced by change in any one of these inputs. For discussion of the incidence of elements of these forms at various points in time and space within the southern African context see P.I.R. Maclaren, "The fishing devices of Central and Southern Africa", Occasional Papers of the Rhodes-Livingstone Museum 12 (1958) pp.1-48; Junod, Life of a South African Tribe, II:85-6,88. It is difficult to identify all the features of fishing production in south-east Africa in the later 16th century.

[55] Theal, Records, I:138.

[56] Junod, "Condition of the natives", p.155, after Theal, op. cit., I:272-4.

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southern shores of Delagoa Bay.[57] When large animals were killed, the Inhaca paramount was called to go into the bush to inspect and feast on the product.[58]

In conclusion, economic pursuits characteristic of Primitive-Communism still persisted into the later 16th century over large areas of south-east Africa, but in many cases as subordinate elements of an articulation with economic practices characteristic of more complex modes of production. This was only partially the case in the southern part of the region; but further north, and especially north of the Mfolozi River, these elements were subordinated to commodity production and other elements characteristic of a mode of production which was not Primitive-Communal in its overall complexion.

In the case of hunting, the subordination of Primitive-Communal forms implied that a proportion of the surplus-labour of the direct producer was now extracted by powerholders in the form of ivory, the value of which derived from considerations of commodity exchange rather than of immediate consumption. To some extent this form of surplus can be regarded as 'natural': an inevitable by-product of the act of hunting certain kinds of large game, which were already highly valued for their meat.[59] That is, these animals already yielded a product with an intrinsic use-value for the immediate producer. It required no great production revolution for the ivory by-product to be exchanged or given up in tribute or rent.

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[57] In the 1550s, the power balance was still tipped slightly in favour of the substantial population of large game. Animals seem to have been able to raid into large human settlements on the southern shores of the Bay with impunity; Theal, Records, I:274-5.

[58] Ibid., I:273-4. This is the only direct clue to the nature of the relationship between the Inhaca and the hunters in the period.

[59] They retained this intrinsic use-value right into the 19th century; Junod, Life of a South African Tribe, II:55; Alpers, Ivory and Slaves, pp.11,69; Tom Fynn, "Reminiscences of Chief Tom Fynn, Alfred County 1899", Natal Archives, Bird Papers, Vol.5; Bird, Annals of Natal, I:297-8; Erasmus Smit, The Diary of Erasmus Smit, ed. H.F. Schoon, trans. W.G.A. Mears (Cape Town: Struik, 1972) p.85.

In the early years of the ivory industry, a relatively simple articulation was therefore possible between Primitive-Communism and a mode of production in which commodity exchange was an important element. In the early years of the ivory commerce, the principal function of the Delagoa middlemen may have been simply to co-ordinate the collection and storage of the product, and to negotiate at the point of exchange with Arab and later European merchant agents.

There are obvious limitations to this. The hunting of big-game is a hazardous process, as the intensity of the rituals surrounding it indicate.[60] When small handfuls of men are involved, much is also left to chance. It is a form of production which readily lends itself to innovation in the fields of technology and large-scale labour mobilisation and direction. Various reports of big-game hunting in the relatively distant past of southern Africa exist, many revealing to a greater or lesser extent innovations in these two spheres.[61] Unfortunately the 16th century shipwreck accounts throw no light on the form of production characteristic of south-east Africa at this time. On the basis of this silence, and the occasional references to small groups of hunters, it is suggested that innovations of this kind had yet to be systematically employed. The simple pit-trap method, which is described in the 17th century accounts, may have been the basis of the dominant form of hunting. Pits were dug in the marshy tracks leading to and from watering places known to be frequented by the game animals being

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[60] For description of some of these which persisted into the early years of the 20th century see Junod, Life of a South African Tribe, II:80.

[61] For examples of some of the more complex forms of big-game hunting operative in various parts of Africa before the introduction of the firearm see Junod, op.cit., II:52-60, 68-70,74-5; Sundström, Exchange Economy of Pre-Colonial Africa, pp.63-4; Alpers, Ivory and Slaves, pp.11-12,16-20, 24-5,27-8; Shaw, "Material culture", p.98; Junod, "Condition of the Natives", p.165; Wilson, "Hunters and herders", pp. 48-9; "Nguni", p.110. Forms of production in the era of firearms are discussed below, chapts.9-10.

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hunted. Stakes tipped with poison were driven into the bottom of the pits, and the whole disguised with branches and vegetation. Hunters seem to have located themselves in huts established in the area for the purpose of supporting the hunting activity which took place there from time to time. Once an animal had been caught, the hunters were able to kill and eat it at their leisure. No large-scale labour organisation or sophisticated weaponry was necessitated by this form of production.[62]

If indeed this was the form of hunting production in south-east Africa in the later 16th century, then the function of the Delagoa middlemen would still have been concerned with the organisation of the collection and storage of the product of small-scale hunters, and with ensuring that this product was not lost to rival trading states. There are indications, however, that the Delagoa middlemen only dealt directly with the hunters, if at all, in the immediate hinterland of the Bay. Further inland there existed powerholders who were sufficiently powerful to act as a further intermediate stage between the direct producers of ivory in the interior of south-east Africa, and the final consumers of the product, who, at this stage of the commerce, were located in India.[63]

The question of the persistence into the later 16th century of the Homestead mode of production must next be considered. As suggested above,[64] the Homestead mode is characterised essentially by a complex articulation between

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[62] The notion that this was one of the earliest forms of big-game hunting to be practised in the region is suggested by the traditions collected by Junod, Life of a South African Tribe, II:55,57-8. It is not to be confused with more sophisticated labour-intensive forms which were also based on the use of pits. See also Alpers, Ivory and Slaves, p.16.

[63] In 1589, the ranks of these powerholders certainly included the Lebombo Hills paramount 'Monhimpeca'; Boxer, Tragic History, p.74. There were almost certainly others.

[64] See above pp.73-81.

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agriculture and livestock-husbandry, to which all other economic practices are subordinate. Neither extensive commodity exchange, nor systematic extraction of surplus by a class outside the homestead, are characteristic of the mode.

The limited experience of the southern zone which was gained by travellers in the 1550s, revealed no evidence of a mode of production based upon systematic agriculture and livestock husbandry. The travellers' experience of the zone was confined, however, to the coastlands north of the Mtata River, and to rare and short forays inland. The possibility of the agriculture with livestock-husbandry articulation having existed further inland, or even perhaps further to the south, cannot be ruled out altogether.

Certainly, by 1593 there is clear evidence of this production complex existing in some parts of the southern zone. The party of shipwreck survivors which came ashore on the Transkei coast in this year was fortunate to have dealings with a chief called Luspance, who was escorted by a retinue of 60 men. He presented them with two large sheep "of the Ormuz breed", and then entered into trade by exchanging two cows and two further sheep, together with milk and millet, for some of the copper carried by the Portuguese.[65] As in the case of the organised force encountered by the 1554 party on a similar section of the coast, Luspance spoke a language which, unlike that of some other people along the coast, was intelligible to one or two slaves of the party.[66]

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65. The four animals were exchanged for three pieces of copper the size of a hand; Boxer, Tragic History, pp.119-20,126. Most of the contemporary references to sheep in the area refer to them being 'fat-tailed'; probably of the same breed. Ormuz was an island at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, which was the site of an ancient Arab entrepôt. It was captured by the Portuguese in 1515; hence the familiarity of the shipwreck survivors with Ormuz; Boxer, Portuguese Seaborne Empire, pp.40,46,62. It is difficult to decide from the reference whether the sheep in south-east Africa were of the same breed as those at Ormuz, or simply appeared to be similar. If the former, it might suggest an early Arab commerce as the origin of the breed in south-east Africa.

66. Boxer, op.cit., p.119.

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The survivors were recommended by Luspance to follow an inland route towards Delagoa Bay, which tallied with their own conclusion based upon a reading of the account of the unfortunate 1552 expedition.[67] The route proved to follow ground which was

> "very good and level, ... abounding with pasture and water". 68

As promised by Luspance, they came across plenty of settlements.

Several examples of the 1593 party's dealings with these settlements are recorded. At one point, for example, it came across a number of small homesteads with millet standing in fields associated with them. Cows were once again bartered for pieces of copper.[69] Further on,

> "they came to a village consisting of a few houses around a kraal, in which there were about a hundred cows and a hundred and twenty very large sheep of the Ormuz breed. Here lived an old man with his sons and grandsons, who with great surprise and joy received our people, and brought them gourds full of milk." 70

Here four cows were obtained in exchange for small pieces of copper "worth as many pence".[71]

Soon after, the party reached the homestead of Ubabu, where milk was available in exchange for iron nails, but high prices were demanded for cows. A complete copper cauldron was asked in exchange for four cows, and Ubabu was also interested in a brass candlestick for which he was prepared to offer three cows. The party regarded these prices as exorbitant, but it seems some business was done.[72]

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[67] Boxer, Tragic History, p.126.

[68] Ibid., p.128; Wilson, "Early history", p.169.

[69] Eight cows for copper worth 2 cruzadoes; Boxer, op.cit., p.128. For another example of such a transaction see Ibid., p.129.

[70] Boxer, op.cit., p.130.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Three cows for copper worth 200 reis or 5d in Elizabethan money; Ibid., pp.132-4. The bartering of small provisions for nails seems to have been possible almost throughout south-east Africa in the period.

Having crossed what may have been the Mzimvubu River, the party passed through another cluster of homesteads. Here they met Vibo, who was described as a chief more powerful than any they had yet encountered. He was seen supervising a group of men who were driving a herd of "some hundred cows". Two of these animals were given to the party before formal exchange relations were entered into. Here

> "they had no difficulty in purchasing as many horned cattle, sheep, hens, gourds and millet cakes, and as much milk and millet as they need". 73

It is not clear what items were given in exchange.

There is then plenty of evidence for the existence of the particular combination of economic practices characteristic of the homestead, in the interior of the southern zone in the last decade of the 16th century. There is no direct evidence of an item of the combination existing in isolation, suggesting that the articulation was of ancient origin. It is less clear whether the combination was of recent introduction into the southern zone as a whole, or had existed for some time but in parts of the region which had not been visited by the 1552 and 1554 parties. There is a certain amount of evidence in support of the latter view.[74]

Not only agriculture and livestock-husbandry were in existence in the southern zone in 1593, but also the homestead production unit itself. Each homestead appears to have been presided over by a proprietor, but to have included perhaps three generations of males, together with wives and dependants.[75] Polygyny was clearly an aspect of the social organisation . Ubabu, for example, possessed seven wives.[76]

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[73] Boxer, Tragic History, pp.135-6. It is not clear whether this was fresh or stored millet. It was April, which is to say the season when the harvest was due, but a few days earlier the travellers had noticed that the crop was still green in the fields.

[74] Notably the traditions of ancient settlements located inland, before migration towards the coast in the modern period; see above p.88, n76.

[75] See above p.134.

[76] Boxer, op.cit., p.131.

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Individual homesteads not only controlled considerable resources in reproductive and labour power, but also in livestock. The willingness to trade cattle and foodstuffs suggests that it was customary to produce a surplus of these items, and that this was being smoothly translated into a real surplus at the end of each production cycle. In turn this real surplus could be accumulated in the form of livestock.[77]

There is some evidence to suggest, however, that the homestead in these areas did not exist as an independent mode of production. Copper, and in one case brass, were in demand, although there is no evidence that such items possessed any intrinsic use-value in the societies encountered. They appear to have functioned as lubricants in a widespread pattern of exchange relations. Metals, and especially copper, carried the status of stores of wealth, of accumulated exchange values, which could be displayed and carried in the form of ornaments, but which could also be readily translated into items of more direct use-value. In the absence of an indication of technologies based upon copper and brass, the prevailing demand for them may be taken as an indication of the articulation of the homestead with a mode of production in which a commodity market existed.[78] There are further indications of this in the red trade beads which were seen being worn by some people; and which, like those encountered by an earlier party which visited the southern zone, were thought to have come from India via Delagoa Bay.[79]

The pattern of political relations reported is consistent with the idea that the homestead no longer functioned as an independent mode of production. The individual

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[77] For discussion of these concepts and processes see above pp.77-9.

[78] For the notion of metal ornaments as readily transported stores of wealth see Sundström, Exchange Economy of Pre-Colonial Africa, pp.119,258. For copper in this role see Ibid., pp.261-2.

[79] Boxer, Tragic History, p.133.

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homestead-proprietor was no longer the level at which political and economic sovereignty was exercised in full. Thus one homestead-proprietor felt obliged to conduct the party to his chief.[80] The reference to a retinue, in this case 60 men acting as an escort to the chief Luspance, suggests either linkages between several homesteads, or the existence of a class of people dependent upon the more powerful homestead-proprietors. The description of the chief Vibo, certainly indicates that not all homestead proprietors were equally powerful.

At the same time, however, there is no evidence of the rigid control of homestead-proprietors by powerholders occupying a level of sovereignty above them. The loss of sovereignty was partial. The clearest indication of this is perhaps the fact that the proprietor who conducted a party of Portuguese travellers to his chief, felt quite free to first engage in a spot of trading on his own behalf.[81] There is no definite evidence of surplus being transfered from individual homesteads to those powerholders who were in process of establishing a level of sovereignty above them, though it must be emphasised that the reports on which these conclusions are based are extremely sketchy.

It is suggested that the interior of the southern zone in the late 16th century was characterised by the loose subordination of the homestead to powerholders who dominated small tracts of country. Control was exercised through the agency of small personal retinues, and by having the homesteads of different members of the ruling dynasty dotted about the territory of the respective states. These people appear to have been the only officers of the state to which important

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[80] Boxer, Tragic History, p.129.

[81] Ibid.

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business could be entrusted, and young members of the dynasty were invariably the men supplied to the travellers as guides.[82] It is a pattern of politics characteristic of the Tributary mode of production, which has been isolated as an intermediate form in the process of transition from Primitive-Communism, through the Homestead, to a fully-fledged Feudalism.[83] These dynastic states are perhaps the 'small fissiparous chiefdoms' which empirical History has identified as being characteristic of the era of south-east African history before the advent of Shaka.

There are also indications of linkages between the various dynastic states, and then onward to communities outside the southern zone, though it is not clear whether any dependence upon these outside communities was yet implied. Thus Luspance seems to have introduced the 1593 party to a well-worn route, along which a succession of guides could be obtained to conduct the party on to the next territory. The party appears to have stumbled across a trade route linking the southern zone to regions to the north and south of it.

Before reaching the banks of the Mzimkulu River, which has been taken to mark the beginning of a central zone of south-east Africa, the 1593 party had first to negotiate an extensive tract of uninhabited country. It took the party 14 days to cross it, a period in which the travellers were forced to fall back upon the gathering of roots for their subsistence. Derricourt has identified the tract of country as the 'nomansland' of what was to become East Griqualand.[84] It was probably the same tract of uninhabited country that the forays inland of the 1554 party had also revealed.[85] It is more difficult to decide the reason for this gap in the inland belt of settlement. It may, like the situation at the coast in these latitudes, have been a reflection of the inhospitable nature of the environment for farming purposes. Alternatively, and perhaps more likely, it marked an important

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[82] Boxer, Tragic History, pp.126,128,130-2,134,136. These young members of the dynasty controlled smaller retinues; Ibid.,p.134.

[83] See above p.81.

[84] Boxer, op.cit., pp.136-8; Derricourt, "Settlement in the Transkei and Ciskei", p.61.

[85] See above p.121.

political boundary.[86]

Much fuller records exist of the central zone than of the areas to the south of it. Both the 1554 and 1593 parties reported their experience of it in a fair amount of detail. In particular they reported having encountered a much larger and more settled population than appeared to be the case further south. As Theal pointed out, that part of south-east Africa which was eventually to become the 19th century 'Natal' they found thickly populated, at least away from the immediate coastal strip.[87]

The mode of production which dominated the central zone closely resembled that already encountered in the southern interior, though in this case there was no question but that it existed in the 1550s as well as later in the 16th century. Agriculture and animal husbandry were the key economic pursuits; and the homestead the fundamental, though probably not the independent, unit of production. The overall social complexion of the zone is clearly described in the 1593 account;

> "The dress of these Kaffirs is a mantle of ox-hide, with the hair outwards, which they rub with grease to make it soft. They are shod with two or three soles of raw leather fastened together in a round shape, and secured to the feet with straps; in these they run with great lightness. In their hands they carry the tail of an ape or a fox fastened to a thin piece of wood, with which they clean themselves and shade their eyes when observing. This dress is used by almost all the negroes of Kaffraria, and their kings and chiefs wear, hanging to the left ear, a copper ornament made after their own fashion.

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[86] In addition to their function as political buffer zones, empty tracts of country may also have been important for hunting; Wilson, "Nguni", p.107. Some human interaction took place across these zones. In this particular instance, a man was seen travelling in the company of two women; Boxer, Tragic History, p.138. Perhaps this may be an indication of 'diplomatic marriage' across major political boundaries. For the notion of diplomatic marriage and its significance, see below chapt. 9.

[87] Theal, Beginning, pp.299,301. See also Records, 1:234.

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> These and all other Kaffirs are herdsmen and cultivators of the ground, by which means they subsist. They cultivate millet, which is white and the size of a pepper-corn; it is the fruit of a plant of the size and appearance of a reed. Of this millet, ground between the two stones or in wooden mortars, they make flour, and of this they make cakes, which they cook among embers. Of the same grain they make wine, mixing it with a quantity of water which, when it has fermented in a vessel of clay and has cooled and turned sour, they drink with great enjoyment.
> Their cattle are very fat, tender, well - flavoured, and large, the pastures being very rich. Most of them are hornless, and the greater number are cows, in the abundance of which their riches consist. They use milk and the butter which they make from it. They live in small villages, in huts made of reed mats, which do not keep out the rain. These huts are round and low..... .....They surround the huts with a hedge, within which they keep the cattle .....They obey chiefs whom they call Inkosis.
> The language is the same in nearly all Kaffraria, the difference being only one like that between the different dialects of Italy and the ordinary dialects of Spain. The people never go far from their villages, and thus they know and hear nothing except what concerns their immediate neighbours....." 88

Other evidence from the period augments this picture of the societies of the central zone. A flourishing agriculture existed in articulation with livestock husbandry. Although centred on the grain-crop millet, certain root and other crops were grown.[89] There is no convincing evidence

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[88] Wilson, "Early history", p.169, after Theal's translation of the original Portuguese. Although the passage appears at the beginning of the narrative, the author makes plain that the remarks relate generally to most of south-east Africa; Boxer, Tragic History, p.124.

[89] Boxer, op.cit., pp.140-2,151-2,155-6,160; Theal, Records, I:234. See also Wilson, "Nguni", p.109.

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of maize cultivation in the period.[90] At least one method of grain storage was seen in operation, that of the basket;[91] but it seems reasonable to assume that the mode of storage based upon grain pits dug in the cattle kraal at the heart of the homestead,was also in existence by this time.[92] Iron

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[90] The nomenclature used in the various 16th century and later accounts to describe grain crops, is difficult to follow. I have followed Theal and Boxer in taking 'millet' to be that crop usually referred to in the Portuguese accounts as 'nacharre', 'nachami', 'nachenim', 'nechinim', 'nechinim milho' and possibly 'alpistre'. It is not entirely clear whether these are Portuguese terms or Portuguese renderings of local names. See Junod, "Condition of the natives", p.156. Junod describes the millet grain as small, round and blackish; Junod, Life of a South African Tribe, II:10. The colouring is difficult to reconcile with that mentioned in relation to the main grain reported by the 1593 travellers; see above p.140. This may reflect a reluctance to distinguish between 'millet' and 'sorghum', which has carried over into modern times. In this I prefer to follow Junod who draws a firm distinction between the two. The 'millet' referred to here is probably that which has come to be known as 'mabele' or 'kafir-corn'. Intensive research has failed to reveal any reason to dispute Monica Wilson's conclusion that maize was still absent from the subsistence base in the later 16th century; Wilson, "Nguni", p.109. The whole question of the history of grain cultivation in southern Africa badly needs careful investigation. The question is important, because the grain crop in use carries certain structural imperatives, as does the introduction of any new types or varieties. At the level of the preliminary structural analysis being attempted here, the important point to establish is that there was cereal cultivation, and thus a grain product.

[91] Theal, Records, I:236. The report was by the 1554 party.

[92] For the earliest recorded example of this mode see below p. 237 . As Frobenius recognised many years ago, the method of grain storage is equally as important as the fact of storage itself. Different forms of grain storage have existed in different parts of Africa at different times; Eike Haberland, ed., Leo Frobenius 1873-1973: An Anthology (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GmbH, 1973) pp.9-13; Leo Frobenius and Ludwig Von Wilm, ed., Atlas Africanus: Belege Zur Morpologie der afrikanischen Kulturen, part 1 (Munich, 1937?); Walton, African Village, pp.147-50; Theal, Ethnography and Condition of South Africa Before 1505 (2nd ed., 1919) p.268; Marks, "Traditions of the Natal 'Nguni'", p.142; Wilson, "Nguni", p.113; Junod, Life, op.cit., II:26; Shaw, "Material culture", pp.87-8. The problem is to decide exactly what is indicated by the form of grain storage employed, and then what conclusions may be drawn from the general incidence of the form in relation to migration patterns, spread of technologies, colonisation movements and so on. Is the form of storage a function of environment, cultural 'tradition', of considerations of mobility and permanence, immediate consumption requirements & future needs, size of surplus, of the articulation with husbandry or the lack of it, of the type of grain, or of the prevailing level of the forces of production?

hatchets were in use to facilitate the clearance of new farming land.[93] The livestock component of the economy included cattle, sheep and goats; the last-mentioned seemingly to a minor extent. Poultry were less important than in areas further to the north.[94]

There seems little reason to doubt that in most areas the homestead production complex was capable of generating a real surplus which could be translated into accumulated wealth in the form of livestock or other readily negotiable items. Certainly the travellers found small provisions readily available in exchange for iron nails or crystal beads;[95] together with sheep and cattle for copper, or copper augmented by iron.[96] The abundance of cattle was reflected in the relatively low price demanded. At one point the 1593 party obtained no less than 24 cows for "copper of small value".[97] The party was able to build up a substantial store of transportable wealth in the form of cattle. At one point their herd numbered 22 animals.[98]

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[93] Boxer, Tragic History, p.122. An observation for the whole region traversed by the party, it suggests that technologies had been evolved to permit the reclamation from Nature of land for farming, a process which has sometimes been suggested to constitute an important element in the drive towards the social epoch of Feudalism in European conditions. Variations in geographical and class distribution of the technology in the period cannot be ruled out.

[94] Theal, Records, I:234-5; Boxer, op.cit., pp.140-3,151,154-8, 160. I have taken the availability of milk as additional to the more obvious indicators of livestock husbandry. The relative lack of importance of poultry compared to the north is reflected in the lack of ritual devised to protect and control this form of husbandry; Wilson, "Nguni", p.109.

[95] Theal, op.cit., I:234-6; Boxer, op.cit., pp.140-2,150. For the bartering of small provisions against unspecified trade goods, see Boxer, op.cit., pp.140,152,154,156-7,160.

[96] Theal, op.cit., I:234-5; Boxer, op.cit., pp.140,142-3,151,155

[97] Boxer, op.cit., p.151.

[98] Ibid., p.142.

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The degree to which copper, and to a lesser extent beads, were freely negotiable items in the central zone, would also seem to indicate the articulation of the homestead with a mode of production which included the exchange of commodities, for there is no evidence that either copper or beads carried a direct use-value. The evidence suggests that this linkage may ultimately have been with the Delagoa Bay trading states. The 1593 party was able to obtain information regarding the date when the next Portuguese ship was expected to be at the Bay.[99] Whilst still some 300 miles from this destination, the party also discovered that the guide they had obtained for a particular section of the journey

> "affirmed that he had already been to the land of the Inhaca where he had seen Portuguese and the pangaio." 100

There were not only clear indications of a level of political and economic sovereignty above the individual homestead-proprietor, but also of a degree of social differentiation which transcended that which had been encountered further to the south. Here labour-power was also a commodity on occasions, for guides and messengers could be obtained in return for payment in metals.[101] Here there was competition amongst homestead-proprietors for the right to be first to trade with the travellers,[102] though here also there were some chiefs powerful enough to force such people to seek permission before engaging in trade with strangers.[103] There were chiefs who dealt with the travellers only in the company of armed retinues comprising up to 50 warriors.[104] The institution of chiefship was sufficiently developed for some of its incumbents to control directly the surplus generated by a number of different homesteads. The surplus was consumed in situ, by the chief and his retinue residing for a period of the year at each.[105] Here too were chiefs powerful enough to

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[99] Boxer, Tragic History, p.146.

[100] Ibid., p.156.

[101] Ibid., pp.144,155-7,160. Brass and copper for major tasks, and iron nails for fording rivers with messages or passengers. A proportion of the charge for these services may have accrued to a chief; see below pp.143-4.

[102] Boxer, op.cit., p.149.

[103] Ibid., p.155.

[104] Ibid., pp.151,160,162.

[105] Ibid., p.151.

demand payment for the services of guides whom they were in a position to supply, and who appear to have been familiar with the routes to Delagoa Bay.[106]

Consistent with the general picture of social differentiation, is the impression given by the 1593 account of the travellers crossing a succession of territories controlled by different powerholders, and which appear to have possessed fairly discrete frontiers.[107] Sometimes the travellers referred to these territories by the names of the chiefs whom they found controlling them, and who they were continually obliged to honour.[108] On other occasions they were more firmly identified as 'countries' with specific names.[10] The belts of uninhabited territory encountered from time to time may have represented important political divisions.[110] Certainly guides were sometimes extremely fearful of crossing them. In one case no less than a brass candlestick was demanded for their trouble, and even then the guides fled at the first opportunity.[111] The travellers found that old and new routes existed through the countryside, and that they were generally assured passages more free from political or military confrontations by keeping to the newer ones.[112]

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[106] Boxer, Tragic History, pp.156-7.

[107] This is my impression based upon a reading of the relevant portion of the account; Ibid., pp.151-9.

[108] These included (in no particular order); Mabomborucassobelo, Mocongolo, Gogambampolo, Mutua dondom-matale, Inhancunha, and Ukinyane. Further linguistic analysis is probably required before these rough approximations of the names heard by the shipwreck survivors can be rendered fully intelligible to a local African audience, or related to existing genealogies.

[109] Thus Inhancunha was a chief in the country of Ospidainhama; Boxer, op.cit., pp.140-2.

[110] For two major frontiers of this kind see Ibid., pp.143-8,159-160.

[111] Ibid., pp.143-8.

[112] It seems doubtful that a route could 'wear out' in any physical sense, and a change in the route used probably reflected a change in the local balance of military and political power.

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Nearing the northern margin of the central zone, the 1593 party appears to have crossed a particularly important frontier, and one which also appears to have been in dispute. On one side of it was the frontier chiefdom of Ukinyane. He was only in a position to offer the travellers small provisions, and indicated to the party that this was because he was at war and that therefore his subjects were forbidden to barter their cattle in case they might be required by the army.[113] On the other side of a small river which may have marked the current position of the frontier, was the chiefdom of Mutua dondom-Matale. Once again only small provisions were available, indicating perhaps that this chiefdom was also organised on a war-footing and was the enemy about which Ukinyane had been concerned. In fact the travellers were told that they were lucky to be allowed to pass at all. Parties headed for Delagoa Bay were normally not permitted to cross this frontier at all.[114] A more natural boundary - a large river which was probably the Tugela - was encountered a little way further on.[115] The fact that the forces of Mutua dondom-Matale dominated both banks of this river, may indicate that he was the vanguard of a political system in process of extending its hegemony southwards, and had already gained control of this particular strategic Tugela crossing point. Control of important river crossings carried with it the power to extract a proportion of the surplus product implicit in the goods passing across it. The travellers had already come across such a situation prevailing in another part of the central zone.[116]

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[113] Boxer, Tragic History, p.160.

[114] Ibid. If the ban really was total and of long-standing, then it may represent an attempt by northern powerholders to gain a monopoly of the supply function to the Bay, by preventing a linkage between Delagoa Bay and ivory producers far to the south. If the incident has suffered in translation, it may rather indicate a toll barrier, or an insistence that commodities be exchanged or new porters and guides taken on at this point, so that the chief and the social groups which he represented could share in the middleman profits of the commerce.

[115] Ibid., p.162. It was known as the 'Vchugel' river.

[116] Ibid., p.160. The guides then with the party knew they would not be allowed to cross the frontier. The chief on the other side of it provided fresh guides for the party.

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The interior of the central zone in the later 16th century appears to have been characterised by a mode of production in which the homestead was the fundamental unit of production, but in which full economic and political sovereignty was not vested in the individual homestead proprietor. A level of sovereignty existed above the homestead proprietor, which reduced him to the status of a peasant. This level of sovereignty existed in the form of the small but powerful chiefdoms which have been described. The power exercised by these chiefs was very far from being absolute. Each homestead-proprietor retained control of the means of production, and possibly suffered only indirect forms of surplus extraction.

The power of these chiefs was also constrained by the fact that a third level of paramount sovereignty also seems to have existed in the central zone. The 1589 party learned that, running south from a 'kingdom' called Mocalapapa, was another known as Vambe. It included "a great part of the land they call Natal". That is, it dominated the geographical area which has been termed the central zone.[117] Theal thought that the Vambe paramountcy dominated country on either side of the Tugela valley, which probably meant that it was in a position to control one of the most important iron-mining and manufacturing complexes in the whole of south-east Africa.[118] It is not entirely clear whether the paramountcy had developed independently out of the homestead and tributary forms, or whether it had been superimposed by invaders from outside the central zone. The second of these possibilities seems the more

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[117] Boxer, Tragic History, p.70. See also above pp.87-8.

[118] For a description of this complex see above p.84. The point rests on a satisfactory date being ascertained for the complex. See also Fagan, Southern Africa, p.160. Control of mineral production is often thought to have been fundamental to the power of major African state systems, such as those associated with the 'ruin peoples' of south-central Africa; Ibid., pp.88,100; Monica Wilson, "Changes in social structure", p.82. The point is usually made, however, in relation to 'precious' metals such as copper and gold, and it is perhaps questionable whether iron production carries with it quite the same structural imperatives. Various simple and more complex modes of iron mining and smelting are conceivable, and there is unfortunately no direct report of the mode characteristic of south-east Africa in this period.

plausible.[119]

The parcellization of sovereignty between powerholders at various levels, gave the central zone in the later 16th century a pattern of social relations which was characteristically Feudal. Sovereignty was shared between a primary level of peasant homestead-proprietors, an intermediate level of regional chiefs, and a paramountcy which from time to time demanded vassal obligations from these chiefs. Unfortunately the 16th century records contain no detailed evidence of the forms of surplus extraction which were characteristic of this mode of production, but it is certainly clear that power was not concentrated at any one level. In fact there are signs that the paramountcy was relatively weak, with considerable power shared between the intermediate and primary levels.

A further characteristic of the mode needs to be stressed. The general interest shown in acquiring items such as copper, brass and beads, which appear to have carried no direct use-value, is suggestive of the degree to which commodity exchange was emerging alongside subsistence agriculture and livestock-husbandry. One commodity of importance was ivory, for the 1589 party learned that the lands of the Vambe paramountcy were one source of the ivory which reached the Portuguese at Delagoa Bay.[120] This in turn suggests an articulation of the mode with the hunting pursuits reported from the coast and the belts of nomansland in the interior, though there is no clear evidence of the form taken by this linkage.

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[119] Theal, largely following Bryant, certainly thought a colonising movement likely. He saw the 'Mbo' as having gradually extended their power down the Tugela valley and into the hinterland on either side of it, though his suggestion of a later 16th century date for this movement must be questionable; Theal, History of South Africa Since 1795, 1:373,398. See also Krige, Social System of the Zulus, p.2. If indeed the Mbo was a powerful lineage extending its control over south-east Africa from the interior, then it would help to explain why there could also be Mbos ('Mumbos') in east-central Africa; Alpers, Ivory and Slaves, p.49. It would point to an origin on the north-west margins of south-east Africa.

[120] Boxer, Tragic History, pp.70-71.

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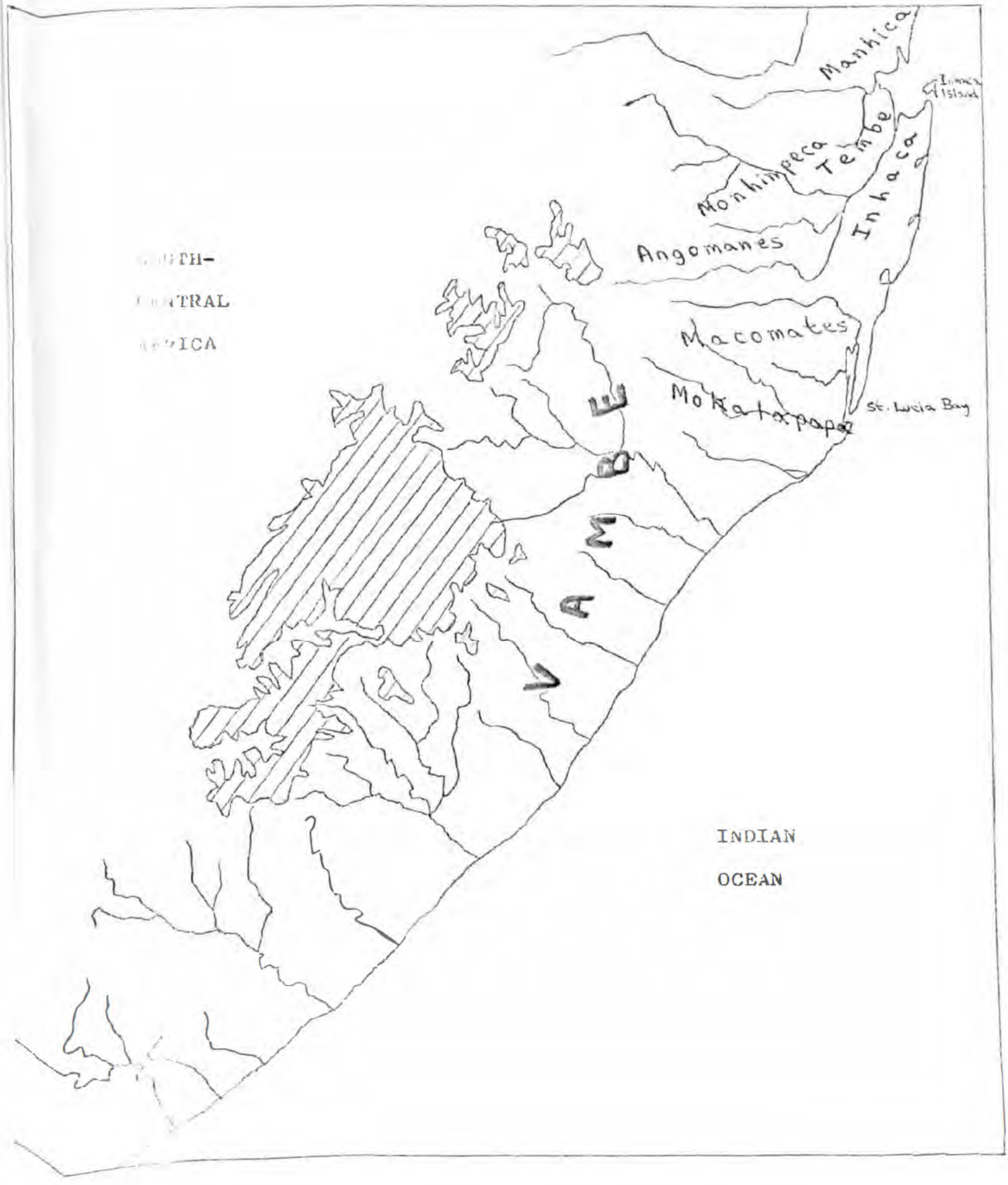

Fig.11 South-east Africa : Main Political Configurations as Known to the Portuguese c.1600

The description given by the 1589 party of the political situation south of the feudal paramountcy of Vambe is consistent with the picture already presented of the southern zone, and indicates a contrast with the situation further north. From the Vambe paramountcy

> "to the Cape of Good Hope there are no kings, but all is in the possession of chiefs called Ancoses." 121

As the various parties of travellers passed into the northern zone, they generally seem to have found the economic pursuits characteristic of the homestead form much less developed than was the case further to the south. The exception to this was the Lebombo Hills country to the west. Here one or more powerful state existed, which not only controlled substantial resources in ivory, but which were also underpinned by a subsistence base in which both agriculture and livestock-husbandry seem to have been well established.[122]

The position on the plains beneath these hills was rather different. The 1552 and 1554 parties appear to have seen hardly any cattle, and a cow was bartered on only one occasion.[123] Goats and hens were quite common, but even the former were found to be extraordinarily expensive relative to the prices which were asked for fat cattle further south.[124] Millet was sometimes available, but even the great Inhaca himself appears to have had insufficient for his needs.[125]

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[121] Boxer, Tragic History, pp.70-71.

[122] Ibid., pp.74,164-5.

[123] Theal, Records, I:238.

[124] Ibid., I:238,245,250. Poultry have an ancient origin in this region; Junod, Life of a South African Tribe, I:357; II:51-2.

[125] Ibid., I:238,245,260,270-1,273.

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It has already been pointed out that parts of these northern plains were probably vulnerable to drought, and this may have temporarily influenced the situation which the parties encountered.[126] Generally, however, they were struck by the lack of farming development in the whole country about Delagoa Bay, and their accounts emphasise the importance of hunting and gathering pursuits in the subsistence base.[127]

Later accounts of the plains and the Bay hinterland confirm this picture in part,[128] but also suggest that a number of changes may have been in process. The cereal crop amachueria was reported,[129] and was available at the Bay even in 1593 which was apparently a year of drought.[130] Now cattle and sheep were occasionally seen, though most appear to have been concentrated at the homesteads of the leading figures in the Delagoa Bay trading states.[131] This accumulation appears not to have been entirely the result of natural reproduction or the operation of abstract market forces. There is clear evidence of cattle being taken by prominent figures in these states from those in the interior who were not powerful enough to defend them.[132] There were signs that processes of 'underdevelopment' associated with

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[126] See above pp.45-6 and map fig.5.

[127] See above p.129

[128] Boxer, Tragic History, pp.79,82-3,168,170,177,181.

[129] Ibid., pp.82,181. The nomenclature of crops in the northern zone is just as problematic as in the case of areas to the south. In Boxer's translation it is rendered as 'ameixoeira'. The term seems not to have been applied to any of the crops grown further south, suggesting either that it designates a different crop or that it belongs to a different language grouping. Junod thought millet the oldest grain crop in the northern zone, and that 'ameixoeria' was the term for the small grey sorghum, later to become known as 'kaffir corn'; Junod, "Condition of the natives", p.20; see also Life of a South African Tribe, II:9-14. This does not entirely solve the problem of grain terminology, for a number of seeming contradictions remain to be resolved; see above p.141n. On the basis of the lack of 'first fruits' regulations to control its late 19th century production, Junod concluded that maize was of modern introduction to the region; Junod, op.cit., Life, II:9-14. There is no clear evidence of it in the later 16th century.

[130] Boxer, op.cit., pp. 181,162.

[131] Ibid., pp.83,170,174,182.

[132] Ibid., p.172; Theal, Records, I:139. People fled into the bush when strangers arrived, because they feared raiding parties.

a polarisation of social classes was already underway.

Commodity exchange was clearly an important economic practice throughout the northern zone;

> "These Negroes are more covetous and self-interested than those met earlier in the journey....." 133

Iron, beads and copper still all carried some value, but as the travellers passed beyond St. Lucia Bay, cloth and even Turkish and other coinage was found to be already acceptable in trading relationships - a clear contrast to the situation encountered further south.[134] In one area the travellers found that the coral which they had picked from the distant shore could be used in exchange relations.[135] Gold and jewels were coveted by members of a local aristocracy who knew their exchange value with the Portuguese who called at the Bay. These two items were not desired for their own sake, but because they could be exchanged for beads - a far more useful currency in south-east Africa as a whole.[136] Copper ornaments and imported beads were both seen to be in evidence.[137]

Other aspects of these northern societies also indicated the importance of commodity exchange within them. The travellers sometimes found, for example, that rivers represented economic or political frontiers, and that tolls were levied on those seeking to cross them.[138] Numbers of canoes were seen quite far inland along the navigable rivers which made their way across the northern plains-country, suggesting that an efficient mode of transport for bulky items may already have been linking the Delagoa Bay port with

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133 Boxer, Tragic History, p.161.

134 Ibid., pp.79,82,168,177; Theal, Records, I:143,269; Junod, "Condition of the natives", p.142. The writer of the 1593 account (who was not the original diarist of the journey) concluded that cloth was especially valuable in large transactions involving cattle; Boxer, op.cit., p.161. There is no evidence from the accounts as presented that this was the case, and cloth was used in transactions involving small provisions as well, suggesting perhaps that it cannot have been that valuable, except in relation to the south. In the south it was sometimes given as a gift to a chief but it was not freely negotiable. In fact all these items were 'cheap' relative to cattle; Boxer, op.cit., pp.162-4.

135 Boxer, op.cit., p.166. Could it have been ambergris?

136 Theal, Records, I:270-71,277.

137 Ibid., I:140.268; Boxer, op. cit., p.169.

138 Theal, op.cit., I:140-41.

important states in the interior.[139]

It is quite clear that the central component of the commodity exchange element of the northern economy was ivory, and that its primary destination in the later 16th century was the ships which visited Delagoa Bay. In addition to the evidence already cited,[140] the travellers were able to get up-to-date information throughout the northern zone regarding the state of shipping at Delagoa Bay.[141] Away from the important river routes, they occasionally also learned of the passage of ivory-bearing caravans headed for the Bay.[142] Guides were readily available to conduct them from one chiefdom to the next along the current routes to the Bay.[143] Unfortunately there is very little information concerning the pattern of exchange relations with the Portuguese at the Bay itself, though beads seem to have been one important import in the period.[144] The most important trading partner of the Portuguese was said to have been the Inhaca himself, though commerce was certainly not monopolised by him at this stage.[145]

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[139] Theal, Records, I:140,141.

[140] See above p.128.

[141] Theal, op.cit., I:141; Boxer, Tragic History, p.178.

[142] Boxer, op.cit., pp.173-4.

[143] See for example, Ibid., pp.172-77.

[144] Theal, Records, I:268,281. The cloth which was seen worn by important people in the northern zone may have been of local manufacture, or was an additional import. It is important to understand the precise nature of these imports in the later 16th century. They were neither useless 'trinkets', nor 'European manufactures'. The Portuguese had simply captured an ancient Indian Ocean commerce. Most of the beads and cloth probably still came from 'Cambay' - that part of India now known as Gujerat - and it was this region which also consumed most of the ivory which was exported from south-east Africa; see, for example, Boxer, op.cit., p.175n. The beads were not 'trinkets' but, like copper before them, functioned as specie in the lubrication of a wideranging internal trading network. It is possible that beads were imported to perform this function either because copper was already devalued by its general availability, or because copper ornaments were too cumbersome to form a satisfactory currency.

[145] Theal, op.cit., I:268; Boxer, op.cit., pp.71,81.

By the later 16th century exchange relations at Delagoa Bay had taken on a predictable routine. A Portuguese trading vessel or 'pangayo' was regularly sent to the Bay from the Portuguese entrepôt at Mozambique Island. Annual visits had been normal at least as far back as 1548, but in 1580 these were placed upon a biennial basis. It was usual for the pangayo to arrive at the Bay early in the year, and to spend several months there. Boats crewed by Swahili people were sent from the ships to engage in trade with the paramounts, members of the aristocracy, and important vassal chiefs who resided at the shore or a little way inland along the major rivers. The Portuguese constructed a complex of huts on one of the islands controlled by the Inhaca, where they spent their time whilst trade was being carried on. The pangayo finally left the Bay during the season of the westerly monsoon, which usually began in June or July.[146]

The articulation of ivory and other commodity production with an Indian Ocean commerce certainly did not begin in the later 16th century. An ancient Arab trading connexion is plausible,[147] but even Portuguese participation in the Delagoa commerce began early in the 16th century. The flurry of Portuguese official activity around mid-century, was simply a successful attempt by the Portuguese Crown to capture a commerce which was already flourishing in private Portuguese hands, and one from which up to then the Crown had been content to derive an indirect income.[148] It is reasonable to assume that a proportion of this commerce took place with groups to the south of the Bay.

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[146] Welch, South Africa Under John III, p.272; Junod, "Condition of the natives", p.139; Boxer, Tragic History, pp.71,73,83, 146,181-2,184-5; Theal, Records, I:280,282-3; Wilson, "Nguni", p.78. For the wider Indian Ocean context see Theal, Beginning, pp.204,206,220,274-5; Boxer, Portuguese Seaborne Empire, esp, pp.1,6,47.

[147] See above p.90; and Welch, op.cit., p.288.

[148] Welch, op.cit., pp.155,269,271,272,276-7; Alpers, Ivory and Slaves, p.42; Boxer, Tragic History, p.71; Welch, South Africa Under King Manuel, p.233; E. Axelson, South-East Africa 1488-1530 (1940) p.80. The Bay gained its title of the Bay of Lourenço Marques after a Portuguese merchant who operated there in this period; Wellington, Southern Africa : A Geographical Study, I:183.

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What is much less clear is whether commodity exchange originated in the northern zone, and indeed in south-east Africa as a whole, with the ivory industry; or whether it pre-dated this industry. The latter possibility is perhaps suggested by the fact that copper seems to have been regarded as a store of exchange values from the very first moment when the records of the ivory commerce begin, and may thus have functioned in this capacity before it.

The complex articulation of hunting, gathering, cultivation, livestock-husbandry, fishing and commodity exchange was reflected in the high degree of social differentiation in the northern zone relative to the situation prevailing further to the south. It seems that little economic and political sovereignty now remained with the individual homestead-proprietor or hunter-gatherer.

The whole of the northern zone appears to have been divided up into a number of countries. These were not all of equal power, and it is perhaps possible to pick out a number of paramountcies; Tembe, Inhaca, Mocalapapa, the lands of Monhimpeca, of Macomates and of Angomanes.[149] It is suggested that these were the equivalent of the feudal paramountcy of Vambe which dominated the central zone. These states had an identity and a permanence separate from the individual powerholder who dominated them at any given time, and they based their integrity on considerations of power rather than on any 'natural' ethnic homogeneity or continuity.[150] Physical features which formed the frontiers between these states, reflected in their current names the prevailing balance of power.[151]

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[149] Boxer, Tragic History, pp.70-4,182; Theal, Records, I:262, 267.

[150] Thus one of the countries seems to have been inhabited by the people called 'Macomates' and ruled by the paramount called 'Viragune'; Welch, Portuguese, pp.90-91 'Inhaca' seems at once to have been the name of a paramountcy and the term of respect associated with those who held the paramountcy or other high office in the state; in other words the honour-name taken by members of the ruling dynasty.

[151] Thus one and the same river was termed 'Melengane' and 'Zembe', and perhaps later as 'Maputo', depending upon the period and from whom the information was obtained.

There seem to have been friendly links between certain of these paramountcies, notably between Tembe and the Lebombo Hills state ruled by Monhimpeca.[152] In other cases major frontiers appear to have existed between them. Particularly important was that between the lands of Inhaca and those of powerholders located further to the west who probably looked upon themselves as part of a rival Tembe commercial and political alliance system. This frontier seems not only to have comprised a deep river, but also an extensive nomansland in which only an impoverished group of 'bandits' were seen to be operating. Powerholders to the west of this divide seem to have been totally unwilling to commit either their guides or their trade goods to a passage across it.[153]

Each of these territorial paramountcies were controlled by means of a number of intermediate regional powerholders. Some of these were members of the appropriate ruling dynasty,[154] but along the marches of the larger paramountcies were the chiefdoms of vassal 'captains'. These men, whilst owing allegiance to the state and wielding power on behalf of it, were probably not members of the ruling dynasty.[155] Beneath this intermediate level of power were local headmen or 'manumuze',[156] and then the various groups of direct producers.

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[152] Boxer, Tragic History, p.74. There were probably linkages beyond this to states within the central and southern zones; see above p.89

[153] Boxer, op.cit., pp.166-7.

[154] Oral traditions make it clear that this was the way in which the Tembe lineage initially came to control a portion of the northern zone; Junod, Life of a South African Tribe, . The Inhaca also seems to have had his relatives dotted about the countryside in this period; Boxer, op.cit., p.176. See also Omer-Cooper, Zulu Aftermath, p.19.

[155] Amongst the vassals of Tembe were the chief Masamana (in the 1550s) and the small state of 'Fumo' (Mfumo). The allegiance of the small chiefdoms ruled by Malangana, Gamabela and Belingane is unclear; Boxer, op.cit., pp. 160,166,170,182. For two examples within the Inhaca system see Ibid., p.174. One was the chief Bambe, who is not to be confused with the central zone paramountcy of Vambe.

[156] Boxer, op.cit., p.169.

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A situation of parcellised or Feudal sovereignty was apparent, though at a relatively more advanced stage than in the central zone. Here very little power remained at the level of the direct producer, and it was largely diffused between the paramountcies and the various intermediate levels. In the sphere of political relations, for example, the Inhaca paramount was assisted by councillors - by a court aristocracy - in making decisions.[157] There were other indications that the power of the paramount level was far from being absolute in the period. On occasion the Inhaca requested payment from shipwreck survivors in recognition of his attempts to protect them from the more rapacious of his countrymen.[158] In 1554 the chief Masamana, who was one of the vassals of Tembe, appears to have been in a position to trade with the Portuguese on his own account. When this led to conflict, the forces of the paramountcy were not automatically committed to his defence, even though the paramount was clearly aware of Masamana's problem.[159] The main indication of allegiance of intermediate powerholders to the feudal paramountcies seems to have occurred in time of the paramount's involvement in conflict. Occasionally vassal chiefdoms were called upon to supply military effectives to enable the paramount to expropriate the cattle surpluses accumulated by chiefs and homestead-proprietors who had elected to try to retain a measure of independence from the paramountcy concerned. The 1552 shipwreck party had been called upon to supply just such a military effective to the ruling Inhaca to enable him to subordinate a 'rebellious kafir'.[160]

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157 Theal, Records, I:271.

158 Ibid., I:276-7.

159 Ibid., I:282. The paramount had clearly held back to see the way the battle progressed. He was rewarded by the Portuguese after their victory with a number of Masamana's women.

160 Ibid., I:139.

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Parcellised sovereignty gave a number of individuals a power-base on which to build. Conflict was endemic. Thus an intermediate powerholder Gimbacucubaba, had recently been exiled from the territory over which he had ruled, and had been forced to take refuge with an ally in the central zone. The new ruler of the territory was one of the vassal chiefs or captains of the Inhaca.[161] Feudal patterns of political sovereignty also meant that a number of members of the ruling dynasty were in a position to compete for the position of the paramountcy, and there is evidence that this in fact took place. If successful, the candidate took over the title of head of state, together with whatever modes of exploitation were then appropriate to the office.[162]

Patterns of feudal sovereignty were possible within the political sphere, because economic sovereignty had also yet to be concentrated at the apex. Members of the aristocracy, and even vassal captains, probably controlled more than one homestead directly, but they did not control concentrations of food sufficient to enable them to feed large numbers of visitors.[163] The travellers found that it was necessary to divide up their number into small groups that could then enter into relationships with a large number of different production units or homesteads.[164] Though paramounts frowned on private barter relationships, they seem to have been powerless to prevent them.[165] The division of economic sovereignty, like that of political power, followed the characteristic Feudal form.

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[161] Boxer, Tragic History, p.160

[162] Thus the Inhaca paramount encountered by the 1552 and 1554 parties, and referred to in another Portuguese account written in 1575, seems to have been one and the same man. He seems to have been still alive in 1593, but was living inland having been ousted from the paramountcy. The office was then in the hands of one of his sons who, fearing rivals for the succession, had staged a coup by prematurely usurping his father; Boxer, op.cit., p.181. Struggles of this kind within feudal aristocracies are well known to historians of Medieval Europe, and they were to be a recurrent aspect of south-east African politics for some time to come.

[163] Theal, Records, 1:273. When grain was forthcoming it seems to have come from different production units. These may have belonged to the paramount, or he may have had to purchase the grain or levy it in tribute; Ibid., I:270-1,273.

[164] Ibid., I: 143,278-9; Boxer, op.cit., p.83.

[165] Theal, op.cit., I:270-3; Boxer, op.cit., p.83.

Other aspects of the societies encountered in the northern zone were consistent with a stage of Feudalism in which social differentiation was far advanced. In addition to the ubiquitous warrior-retinues,[166] there were also messengers, translators and other holders of bureaucratic office.[167] Dress was an indication of wealth and status, with the aristocracy wearing cloth and brass.[168] The more powerful appear to have been separated from their subjects and others by a number of elementary distancing devices.[169] The whole of the northern zone seems to have been known as the land of 'Fumos' - the land of the 'kings',[170] and their capitals reflected their wealth and power. The principal homestead of the Inhaca in 1554 was

> "large and with many inhabitants, with its court-yards and paths in a not very disorderly state, and was surrounded by a kind of prickly pine trees which grow in that country, thickly set, with three or four entrances where they were necessary. While we rested in the court-yard before the King's rustic mountain palace, he commanded certain huts to be cleared in which we slept that night". 171

The shipwreck parties found plentiful evidence in their own experience of the degree to which the survival of individuals and groups in the northern zone rested on considerations of wealth and power. They found the metals, beads and cloth which they had salvaged, fundamental to their survival, but only so long as their possession of

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166 Theal, Records, I:247,248,266,269; Boxer, Tragic History, pp.81,167,170,178. Retinues sometimes stopped the travellers to demand their business; Theal, op.cit., I:141-2.

167 Theal, op.cit., I:269,278-9; Boxer, op.cit., pp.81,178.

168 Boxer, op.cit., pp.81,180.

169 The 1552 party, for example, was not allowed to enter the capital of one of the kings to the north of the Bay; Theal, op. cit., I:143. The Inhaca received visitors whilst seated upon a throne.

170 Boxer, op.cit., p.71. 'Fuma' is apparently the local verb 'to rule'.

171 Theal, op.cit., I:270. The Inhaca also had other homesteads in the vicinity.

firearms enabled them to control these items as property.[172] Attempts were made to separate the travellers from these commodities, and firing of muskets was often necessary to prevent it.[173] Bandits appear to have been operating in the interior of the northern zone, possibly with a view to robbing caravans of this kind,[174] and even some of the vassal captains of the Inhaca were known as thieves by the people subject to their rule.[175] Separated from their firearms and trading goods, the travellers were either reduced to a form of labour relationship with powerful homestead-proprietors,which was akin to slavery;[176] or else they were left to scavenge in the bush, until an offer of ransom payable in beads saw their being rounded-up and exchanged with the Portuguese as yet another commodity.[177]

In view of this evidence, it is not difficult to imagine how expansion came to take place in the size of household retinues. In fact one source of late 16th century recruitment throughout south-east Africa seems to have been the shipwreck parties themselves. African and Indian slaves, and occasionally Portuguese as well, chose to abandon the parties of travellers, or were forced to do so by ill-health, in order to enter into relationships with homestead-proprietors or local powerholders. Several were encountered

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[172] Theal, Records, I:226; Boxer, Tragic History, pp.67,117, 119.

[173] The shipwreck parties were attacked from time to time throughout their journeys, but these seem to have increased in number and intensity as they moved into the northern zone; Theal, op.cit., I:236,247,248,250,260-2, 264; Boxer, op.cit., pp.126-7,161-2. Some chiefs took a close interest in the working and potential of the firearms; Boxer, op.cit., p.161.

[174] Boxer, op.cit., p.166. The report refers to the plains beneath the Lebombo Hills.

[175] The chief Bambe, for example. See above p.154n.

[176] This was the fate of the 1554 party at the Bay; Theal, op.cit., I:278-9.

[177] The fate of the 1552 party; Ibid., I:143-8. Even the 1554 party eventually found itself ransomed to the Portuguese; Ibid., I:281.

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by later parties. They were reported to be well-established, and most declined the opportunity to resume the journey to Delagoa Bay. Some were amongst the bureaucratic office-holders of the northern trading states.[178]

In conclusion it may be said that the social formation which was south-east Africa in the later 16th century, exhibited many of the features characteristic of the social epoch of Feudalism in an African context. Over much of the region, indicators of the transition to Feudalism - such as personal retinues and the reclamation of the bush through the use of iron tools - were already co-existing with indicators of the existence of Feudalism itself. Most important amongst these were the patterns of parcellised economic and political sovereignty characteristic of the epoch.

The incidence of feudal patterns of social relations was sufficient in the later 16th century, for the Feudal mode of production to be regarded as the determinate mode in the overall social formation which was south-east Africa within the period. Nevertheless, Feudalism was far from being universal within this social formation. Neither did it exist in a pure and fully-developed form anywhere within it. There is evidence of the existence of pre-Feudal carry-overs, and of the existence in relatively undeveloped form of features such as commodity exchange which are characteristic of later social epochs.[179]

A threefold geographical division has been used to try to illustrate the unevenness of social development within the region. South of the Mzimkulu there were signs that the social relations characteristic of Feudalism were as yet relatively undeveloped, though there were clear indications that the transition was in process. Commodity exchange was only just beginning to make an impact.

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[178] Theal, Records, I:235-8,251; Boxer, Tragic History, pp. 130,140,151,178.

[179] For similar conclusions in relation to the epoch of Feudalism in Europe see Bloch, Feudal Society, I:279; Anderson, Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism, p.148.

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In the central zone - between about the Mzimkulu and Mfolozi rivers - Feudalism had arguably reached its purest form in the region. In the kingdom of Vambe a feudal paramountcy existed, but the group of small principalities or vassal chiefdoms which sheltered beneath this umbrella, enjoyed a substantial degree of autonomy. This was evidenced by the frontiers the travellers came across, and the seeming ability of these chiefs to control traffic passing across them. Even homestead-proprietors may have enjoyed a high degree of autonomy. The hunting and gathering practices characteristic of a pre-Feudal epoch, and the commodity-exchange characteristic of a post-Feudal epoch, were both in evidence; but they were subordinate to the flourishing agricultural and livestock-husbandry pursuits characteristic of Feudalism.

The northern zone may be divided into two parts. In the highland areas of the western interior, the mode of production seems to have borne certain structural similarities to that prevailing in the central zone, though with a possible intensification of the commodity-exchange component.

Further to the east on the plains of the northern zone, and in the immediate hinterland of Delagoa Bay itself, a rather different pattern of social relations was in evidence. Here a pattern of parcellised economic and political sovereignty survived, but in the context of an extremely weakly developed subsistence base. The articulation was primarily between hunting and commodity exchange, with gathering, fishing, agriculture and livestock-husbandry as subordinate aspects of the economy. Direct producers appear to have been held in a much more subordinate condition than was the case further south. It is not entirely clear whether this situation resulted from the enserfment of previous generations of homestead-proprietors, or from the thrust of a Feudal aristocracy into an area previously characterised by Primitive-Communalism, though most evidence would seem to point to the latter possibility.

The social formation which was south-east Africa in the later 16th century was clearly extremely complex, even though the Feudal mode of production was broadly determinate

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within it. It was fraught with contradictions capable of generating the forces which could bring about a transition to a new social epoch. Those in the northern zone were the more immediate, and some had already spilled over into open conflict. As Alan Smith has pointed out, most of the more overt contradictions in the northern zone at this stage already revolved around the process of commodity exchange.[180]

Within the northern zone four contradictions had erupted into conflict. The first was that between the two major commercial systems centred on Tembe and Inhaca respectively.[181] The second was the conflict within the ranks of the various aristocracies and ultimately for the control of the paramountcy with which they were associated.[182] The third involved the expansion of the various paramountcies through the agency of frontier vassals, in an attempt to gain more direct control over the sources of the ivory supply and over the main trading routes leading northwards to Delagoa Bay.[183] Finally there was the related attempt of Inhaca to resolve the contradiction between its developed social institutions and wretched subsistence base, by extending its hegemony to permit direct expropriations of homestead surpluses accumulated beyond its existing frontiers.[184] Some of these processes of expansion involving powerholders in the northern zone, may already have threatened the paramountcy of Vambe, and in particularly its vassal chiefs on the northern margins of the central zone.[185]

A further pattern of contradictions is discernible in the relations between the states of the northern zone and the Portuguese. The relationship at this stage was based upon commodity exchange rather than Portuguese Imperial

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[180] Alan Smith, "Delagoa Bay and the trade of south-east Africa", in R.Gray and D. Birmingham, ed., Pre-Colonial African Trade (Oxford UP, 1970) p.265.

[181] Junod, "Condition of the natives", p153. See also above p.154.

[182] See above p.156 and n.

[183] Boxer, Tragic History, p.157, and above pp.145,156.

[184] See above p.149.

[185] See above p.145.

control.[186] The Portuguese position in the western Indian Ocean was simply not entrenched sufficiently for this European commercial empire to contemplate dispensing with the intermediary services of a number of south-east African powerholders. The Portuguese Empire simply did not have the resources at hand to do this, or even to attempt a subordination of the powerholders with whom it had dealings.

Nevertheless some tension in the pattern of relations with the Portuguese was already in evidence. In 1554, for example, a Portuguese trading embassy had clashed violently with one of the vassal trading chiefdoms of the Tembe paramountcy.[187] At least one attempt had also been made to open up a direct sea link with **Macomates**.[188] Located in the vicinity of St. Lucia Bay and the Mfolozi, this was probably one of the important ivory suppliers in the period. Had the Portuguese succeeded in dealing with it directly, the whole middleman position of a state like Inhaca would probably have collapsed completely. It is not entirely clear whether the attempt failed because of the lack of a suitable harbour, or because of the virulence of opposition from Inhaca.

The heavy involvement of the northern states in the ivory industry and commerce, also placed them in positions on the margin of a European commercial empire as well as an African one. As such they were already vulnerable to fluctuations in the pattern of global commercial relations upon which this empire was based. Decisions such as that made in 1580 to change from an annual to a biennial pangayo

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[186] Theal, Beginning, p.220.

[187] See above p.155.

[188] Boxer, Tragic History, p.69.

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sent to the Bay to trade, cannot have been without their structural impact on the prevailing patterns of relations in south-east Africa, and particularly those of the northern zone.

The existence of these various contradictions meant that, implicit in the social formation which was south-east Africa in the later 16th century, were forces capable of bringing about a transition to a post-feudal epoch of social relations. The further development of these contradictions, the emergence of others, and the initial consequences of their dynamic interaction in the period between 1600 and 1680, forms the subject of the next chapter.

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VI

PATTERNS OF CONTINUITY AND CHANGE 1600-1680

During the period 1600-1680, a number of forces, some new but most with roots in the past, were serving to reshape elements of the later 16th century social formation of south-east Africa. Two of these forces were especially dynamic. The first was the further extension of agricultural and livestock -husbandry practices into new areas, together with technological innovations in the areas in which these practices were already well-established. By 1680 only a few areas in the extreme south remained dominated by Primitive-Communalism as a more or less independent mode of production. These developments were tending to permit the persistence of existing patterns of Feudal social relations, and their extension into new areas.

The second force was in some respects running contrary to these Feudal tendencies, and worked to frustrate the full development of Feudalism in south-east Africa. This was the intensification and geographical expansion of commodity production and exchange. Ivory was the most important of these commodities. There was an underlying tension between these two developments, but as yet there were still few overt signs of crisis.

Employing the same three simple geographical categories as were utilised in the analysis of the social formation of south-east Africa in the later 16th century, this chapter will attempt to chart the main lines of continuity and change in the period between 1600 and 1680. The source materials employed in the reconstruction are primarily the accounts of the survivors of Portuguese shipwrecks, and offer the same

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kinds of opportunities and disadvantages as their later 16th century equivalents.[1]

Within the southern zone, an initial distinction may be made between the country south of about the Kei river, and that between about the Kei and the Mzimkulu.

South of the Kei there was evidence of the persistence into the 1600-1680 period of Primitive-Communism as a largely independent mode of production. Most of the evidence for this conclusion is drawn from coastal reports, but there are hints of the extension of this situation into the interior.

In 1622, the SAO JOAO BAPTISTA was wrecked on this section of the south-east African coast.[2] The party of survivors found themselves in an area in which

> "there is a lack of fruit and provisions, though it seems as if the soil would yield abundant crops of anything sown in it. The inhabitants thereof live solely on shellfish, some roots which look like truffles, and the produce of the chase. They have no knowledge of any seed planting, or of any other kind of provisions". 3

When the party eventually left the site of the wreck after one month and six days,[4] they did so in the knowledge - gleaned from an African of 'Mozambique' whom they met in the vicinity of the wreck - that ahead of them, far to the north, was a prosperous land;

> ".....a region where there were cows, but it was all a wilderness as far as that". 5

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[1] Accounts of the experiences of four sets of castaways have survived. They relate to wrecks in 1622, 1635, and two in 1647. Portuguese official records of the commerce passing through Delagoa Bay may also be available for the period, though they have not been used in the compilation of the present account.

[2] For the debate on the precise site of the wreck see Theal, History and Ethnography, III:68; Boxer, Tragic History, pp.49,197,238; Wilson, "Early history", p.170; Derricourt, "Settlement in the Transkei and Ciskei", p.62. The whole problem arises because of the notoriously inaccurate calculations of latitude in the period by the Portuguese. The account is particularly important because it is written by an eye-witness; Boxer, op.cit., p.49.

The party initially kept close to the shore and existed by collecting herbs, fruit and shellfish. On this section of their journey, the travellers met one group of hunters from whom they bartered hippo meat. At another point on the journey they obtained shrimps by the same barter method.[6]

The survivors of a wreck in 1635 set out on their overland journey too far north for their experiences to cast any additional light on patterns of production south of the Kei. A similar picture was reported, however, by the survivors of the NOSSA SENHORA DA ATALAYA, wrecked on the Ciskei coast in 1647;[7]

> "They sow no grain, and live only on roots, the produce of the chase, and some shell-fish when they come down to the shore". [8]

The comments of this party also hint that a pattern of transhumance was characteristic of these small coastal communities, a conclusion borne out by evidence from other sources. Travelling along the coast in winter, this party

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[3]Boxer, Tragic History, p.200.

[4]Ibid., p.198.

[5]Ibid., p.201. It is not clear whether the man from 'Mozambique' was a survivor of a previous wreck, or had travelled south to undertake some function in the area.

[6]Theal, Records, VIII:79,81.

[7]Wilson, "Early history", p.171. In addition to this wreck in the period, there is also a report of another on the coast in 1643. The survivors of a small Portuguese vessel apparently travelled overland to Delagoa Bay and beyond, but no account of their journey seems to have survived. See Theal, op.cit., VIII:307,341.

[8]Wilson, "Early history", p.171, after the Portuguese original.

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encountered settlements from which fish could be obtained to augment the shellfish collected by the party from the shore. A little way inland large animal traps were seen, with a cluster of five empty huts close by.[9]

The picture presented in these two accounts is corroborated by what little is known of the survivors of the SACRAMENTO, a ship which had also been wrecked in 1647, but a considerable distance further south than the ATALAYA.[10]

The general experience of these parties on the first stage of their journeys northwards, was all the more frustrating because from time to time they came across pockets along the coast where separate elements of the Neolithic production complex were evident. Far to the south, the 1622 survivors had been approached at the site of their wreck by people who offered milk and a few cattle. Business was done in exchange for "some pieces of iron hoops", but the party was never able to obtain sufficient to meet the provisioning needs of all its 279 members. These cattle were clearly very precious to the former owners, for some which had been traded were stolen back "by a subterfuge in the night".[11] This is consistent with the lack of reference to any agricultural component of their economy. This encounter was rather different from others further north on the coast. The group was almost certainly not associated with an inland zone of homestead-farmers, for it included women and children as well as the men who herded the cattle. The survivors'

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[9] Theal, Records, VIII:310-314.

[10] Ibid., VIII:349-52.

[11] Ibid., VIII:78; Roland Oliver and Caroline Oliver, ed., Africa in the Days of Exploration (New Jersey, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, Spectrum Books, 1965) pp.132-3. In addition to using the cattle as a food reserve, the party left the wreck with 17 oxen which it had trained to carry people and baggage.

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description of other aspects of these people suggests that they were a 'Khoi' community of herders, operating on the north-eastern margin of the region normally thought to have been their homeland.[12]

Although the evidence is not conclusive, it seems likely that these coastal communities were not peripheral to a more developed hinterland. The 1622 party had been warned to expect a lengthy period of wilderness. At one point on its journey the 1647 party turned inland in desperate search of food, only to find a lack of both settlement and foodstuffs, which drove them once more back to the coast where at least they could scavenge along the shore.[13]

Metals of all kinds were extremely scarce south of the Kei river, and local people scoured the shipwrecks for iron nails.[14] As soon as they realised the value of the metals to which they had access, parties took steps to build whole economies around them. Stocks were built up from the wrecks by the survivors, and steps taken to preserve their monopoly against the threat from local scavengers amongst the debris.[15] Equipped with firearms, the travellers were in a position to control these metals

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[12]They were described, for example, as having been "whiter than mulattoes", and speakers of a language which was unintelligible even to the slaves of the party, because of the click-sounds which it incorporated; Boxer, Tragic History, pp.197-8.

[13]Theal, Records, VIII:316

[14]Ibid., VIII:211,221.

[15]Ibid., VIII:211,248. The 1622 party in particular burnt their ship "that the Kaffirs might not take the nails and make the barter high for us". Presumably the nails were collected after the fire, otherwise burning would have simply improved the chances of local people retrieving the metal. See also Ibid., VIII:77.

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as property. They were able to establish themselves as merchant caravans purveying scarce commodities.

Before crossing the Kei river, the travellers found plenty of other indications of the scarcity of metals. Reference has already been made to a barter transaction which revealed that iron was even expensive relative to cattle.[16] Iron had yet to be employed in weapons technology, for the 1622 party reported that people south of about the Kei river used wooden assagais,[17] and the 1647 party suffered an attack in this area by a group which could only throw 'darts' at them.[18]

The evidence suggests that, although the Primitive-Communal mode of production was probably still the dominant mode in that part of south-east Africa south of the Kei river, it was not quite universal within it. There was evidence of at least a co-existence, if not an articulation, with a mode of production centred upon a semi-migratory livestock-husbandry. In the presence of the man from 'Mozambique', there may even be an indication of a simple articulation with commodity production and exchange.

The zone of transition to a different mode of production appears to have begun in the vicinity of the Kei river. The 1647 party traded cattle at the coast a few days south of what was probably this landmark. Here were a number of huts within sight of the shore, the inhabitants of which included women as well as men, suggesting that they were not simply temporary hunting shelters. One of the members of the settlement was a former

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[16] See above p.167.

[17] Theal, Records, VIII:81; Boxer, Tragic History, pp.204, 208.

[18] Theal, op.cit., VIII:314. For a discussion of weaponry in south-east Africa, see above pp.124-5 and n.

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slave who had escaped from the 1635 party, and had presumably travelled southwards from the site of that wreck.[19] In addition, a "few grains" of millet were traded by the 1647 party at the huts of people at the coast who were thought to have been fishermen.[20]

Eventually a little copper procured a guide for the 1647 party. He immediately led it inland, to a zone where there were many homesteads. Millet, bread and cattle were said to be abundant, and could be bartered for copper. By the time the party reached the central zone, it was herding 42 cattle. It felt economically and militarily secure enough to divide into two groups.[21]

A much more detailed account of their experiences of the southern zone between about the Kei and Mzimkulu rivers, was given by the 1622 and 1635 parties.

After having struggled for so long to find food, the 1622 party was on constant lookout for the land of plenty which they had been promised lay ahead of them. A little over a month after leaving their wreck far to the south, and still travelling along the shore, the party began to notice signs of a denser pattern of settlement, associated with a more varied subsistence base, than they had found south of the Kei. The surplus accumulated at the first of the villages encountered, which comprised fifteen straw huts, was apparently insufficient for the occupants to be prepared to offer any food to the travellers, even in exchange for metal. Resorting to force, the party could still only find fish, calabashes and melons.[22] They did acquire the

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[19] Theal, Records, VIII:313-4.

[20] Ibid., VIII:312.

[21] Ibid., VIII:318-25.

[22] Ibid., VIII:86; Boxer, Tragic History, pp.207-8. They may have reached the Mtata river; Wilson, "Early history", p.170.

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important information, however, that cows and grain could be found inland.[23]

Although a deputation from the party seems to have travelled inland, the deviation proved temporary. For reasons which are not apparent, the party resumed its former course along the coast. Here they found occasional settlements of fisherfolk. At the first of these they also found signs of an articulation with agriculture, for they were able to barter a little dough made of fines seeds from a herb.[24] Further on the party found only shellfish at the shore, and resorted to eating the dead bodies of their comrades.[25]

In desperate straits, the party eventually acquired a guide in exchange for copper. He led them inland where the party found

> "many kraals and cows at all of them". 26

The party finally deduced that it would do better by remaining inland, and soon afterwards it entered the first zone of plenty it was to encounter;

> "On meeting some Negroes we asked them about the villages, and they replied that if we walked fast we would reach them when the sun was in the meridian. Being eager and in want, though weak, we kept on climbing, and in the afternoon we reached the top of a range from which we had the most beautiful view that our eyes could desire, for many valleys lay before us, intersected by rivers and smaller hills, in which were an infinite number of villages with herds of cattle and garden plots." 27

The party was given a friendly welcome and plenty of food was forthcoming in barter. A lot of cattle, milk and fruit was traded in exchange for copper and another metal which

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[23] Theal, Records, VIII:85-6.

[24] Ibid., VIII:87.

[25] Ibid., VIII:89-90,99.

[26] Ibid., VIII:90.

[27] Boxer, Tragic History, p.214.

may have been brass.[28]

Soon after leaving this area, the party was faced with the need to travel for two days further into the interior in order to ford a very powerfully-flowing river.[29] It is difficult to be precise, but it may have been the Mzimkulu, the landmark which has been taken as the boundary between the southern and central geographical zones.

The picture of the productive base between the Kei and Mzimkulu rivers can be corroborated and expanded from another source. This is the account of the survivors of the NOSSA SENHORA DE BELEM, wrecked between the Bashee and Umtomvuna rivers in June or July 1635. 272 people were saved from the wreck.[30] Unlike previous groups of survivors, this group did not set out to walk to Delagoa Bay. Instead they moved only a short way to a river mouth near the wreck, where they set about the construction of boats in which they planned to sail south, and then eventually on to the Portuguese settlements in Angola. This task took them six months.[31] In consequence, the account of the experiences of this party tells us little about the region as a whole, but a good deal of the way of life of the people in the vicinity of the wreck. It is the closest to an in-depth study of a particular society that survives from this period.

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[28] Boxer, Tragic History, pp.215-7; Theal, Records, VIII:90-92. Translation of the Portuguese term for this second metal seems to be one of the few points on which Theal and Boxer disagree. It is usually referred to by Theal as 'tin', and by Boxer as 'brass'. For other examples see Theal, op.cit., VIII:111-12; Boxer, op.cit., pp.239, 241. On this point I have followed Boxer. Unlike Theal, he devoted his whole life to translating and working with Portuguese documentation.

[29] Theal, op.cit., VIII:93-4, 100-101.

[30] Theal, Beginning, p.379; Wilson, "Early history", p.170.

[31] Wilson, op.cit., p.170.

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Along the shore the party saw only a small group of "wretches" looking for mussels.[32] Close by, however, a little millet was bartered for copper,[33] but an offer of no less than two brass bracelets for a cow was refused, suggestive perhaps of the relative poverty of the community concerned, or of its lack of control over the full cluster of property rights of the cattle which it herded.[34] From a mulatto survivor of an earlier wreck who came to introduce himself to the party, it was learned that there were kraals with a more developed subsistence base further inland.

A deputation was sent to follow up this advice. Some nine miles into the hinterland along a valley, they found themselves at the point where the water flowing in the river was no longer salty. Here a zone of denser settlement began. There were

> "many kraals along the banks, and various crops of millet, gourds and beans; we saw also herds of horned cattle upon the hills". 35

The party's slave interpreter from 'Mozambique' could comprehend only a few of the words spoken by these people. From the people in this area, and from sorties further inland, the party obtained no less than 219 cattle.[36]

The general subsistence base of the area which was reported by the 1635 party included hunting, cultivation, animal-husbandry and food collection; though it is possible that their comments do not distinguish between the situation prevailing at the coast and in the richer hinterland.

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[32] Theal, Records, VIII:211.

[33] Ibid., VIII:205.

[34] Ibid., VIII:216.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid., VIII:218

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So far as the hunting component of the economy was concerned;

> "They all have dogs with ears and tails cropped, with which they hunt wild pigs and stags, as well as buffaloes, elephants, tigers and lions. There are many hippopotami". 37

Hunting pits were seen dug into tracks frequented by large animals, and hippo meat was clearly relished.[38]

Their agriculture was centred on

> "millet as large or larger than linseed. They have maize also, and plant large melons which are very good, and beans and gourds of many kinds, also sugar canes, though they brought us very few of these". 39

The clear reference to maize suggests that agricultural practices were sufficiently well-developed in the area for new technological innovations - in this case a new crop - to be set to work. Maize is known to be a highly efficient crop in the natural environmental conditions characteristic of more or less this part of south-east Africa.[40] There is no indication however that the crop was yet at all widespread.

The cattle of this people were

> "very fine and the tamest cattle I have ever seen in any country. In the milk season they live chiefly upon it, making curds and turning it sour, which was little to our taste". [41]

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[37] Theal, Records, VIII:205.

[38] Ibid., VIII:223.

[39] Ibid., VIII:205.

[40] In the 1950s the highest maize yields per acre in the whole of the Union of South Africa were recorded in the southern part of Natal; that is, only marginally to the north of the area under consideration; Wellington, Southern Africa: A Geographical Study, II:7. Of course, a whole range of other factors must be taken into account, but in optimum social conditions maize is clearly a highly efficient crop in the area.

[41] Theal, op.cit., VIII:205.

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Despite this flourishing hunting, agriculture , and livestock-husbandry,

> "they also eat a certain root which resembles spurge laurel, and they say it is very strengthening. There are others yielding a fine seed, which also grows under ground. They eat this with great enjoyment, and also the gum from the trees....."[42]

Iron was still scarce in this area, and was seemingly not applied at all in the sphere of agricultural tools. According to the 1635 account, the women were seen

> "planting and tilling the earth with sticks to prepare for their grain". 43

Iron was applied in the field of hunting instruments and weaponry, but its use in these spheres was by no means universal. Iron assagais seem to have been carried in particular by warrior retinues associated with important powerholders. Equipment of this kind represented a very substantial investment in the context of the time and area. The 1622 party encountered a military force comprising no less than 100 warriors, all of whom were armed with iron assagais.[44] The 1635 account speaks of

> "assagais with broad well-fashioned heads". 45

But the 1647 party drew the general conclusion that

> "their arms are of fire-hardened wood and a few iron assagais". 46

As was the case over most of south-east Africa in the period, the division of labour was probably primarily sexual. Women were reported to have been involved in the work of planting and tilling, but it is not clear how other tasks were apportioned.

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[42] Theal, Records, VIII:205.

[43] Wilson, "Early history", p.171.

[44] See below p.177.

[45] Wilson, op.cit., p.170.

[46] Ibid., p.171

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The social formation existing between about the Kei and Mzimkulu rivers was very different from that in the extreme south. It involved a complex articulation between the economic practices characteristic of the homestead, and those characteristic of Primitive-Communalism. In the exchange value of copper, and to a lesser extent of brass, there was also a hint of a further articulation with practices of commodity production and exchange. Ivory may have been involved. The labour-services of guides, as well as large and small provisions, could be obtained in exchange for copper. The possibility of distant commercial linkages, or even a relatively recent conquest of the area, was suggested by the fact that the travellers came across people whose language was intelligible to some of the slaves of the party, most of whom had probably been taken to India via Mozambique from some point in east or east-central Africa.[47] Some people at the coast appear to have been able to understand this language, but not to speak it fluently with the slave interpreters of the shipwreck parties.

A firm political link appears to have existed between the poorer people at the coast and the prosperous homesteads of the interior. Thus the 1622 party came across a coastal community which professed its allegiance to a powerholder in the interior, and warned the castaways that a message had already been sent to inform him of the party's arrival and its activities at the coast.[48]

The general impression given by the accounts is that the natural line of communication led inland from the coast to the wealthier interior settlements. The parties generally seem to have found lateral movement at the coast,and in its immediate hinterland, extremely difficult. There seem to have been few clearly-defined paths, clashes were not uncommon, and guides reluctant to travel in this direction. Travel

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[47] Theal, Records, VIII:77,85,307.

[48] Ibid., VIII:86.

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along the valley corridors into the hinterland was much easier, and the natural inclination of guides seems to have been to follow this route, possibly with a view to joining a main north-south route along the even highveld country.[49]

These corridors into the interior seem not only to have been associated with major rivers, but were also clearly defined in a political sense. Each appears to have been controlled by a powerholder located in the interior. Thus the 1622 party, striking inland in the company of a guide,

> "travelled for a day and a night. Journeying farther on he met in a valley the son of the king of whom the Kaffir had spoken, accompanied by a hundred Kaffir warriors all well armed with iron assegais". 50

Receiving news from the coast, the interior powerholder had despatched this strong force,under the leadership of a young member of the ruling dynasty, to intercept the travellers. An ox was presented as a gesture of good faith, and then exchange relations entered into for a few cows. The travellers were promised 20 more if they could wait a day, and as many as they wished if they were prepared to wait 8 days.[51] By the time the cattle had been brought, however, the travellers had already chosen to move on.[52]

The wealth and power of the state concerned in this incident was indicated by the size of the retinue, the weaponry of the warriors comprised entirely of iron-tipped assagais, its ability to receive messages from a distant coast, its ability to mobilise a substantial force of well-

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[49] The castaways were suspicious of guides who did not lead them directly towards Delagoa Bay, and some were killed for guiding the parties in the 'wrong' direction.

[50] Boxer, Tragic History, pp.209-210.

[51] Ibid., p.210; Theal, Records, VIII:86.

[52] The party received this information from some slaves who had deserted from the main party at this point, only to rejoin it later. 40 cattle were actually produced; Theal, op.cit., VIII:97.

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disciplined warriors at short notice, its ability to present an ox as a token of goodwill, and its ability - given time - to round up substantial resources in cattle which it was prepared to dispose of in barter transactions. If,as the quotation indicates, the guide really was prepared to travel by night as well as by day, then the power of the state was also indicated by its ability to guarantee the security of its subjects and friendly visitors.

The travellers came across indications of other concentrations of wealth and power in the interior. People spoke respectfully of "negroes of higher rank", and parties dealt on occasion with chiefs, one of whom was "a warlike chief with a large following". A clash with a similar force caused one group of travellers to retire back to the poverty but relative safety of the coast.[53]

The social formation existing between about the Kei and Mzimkulu rivers thus exhibited a number of features indicative of a transition to Feudalism in process. In the interior there was evidence of an economy centred upon relatively highly developed agricultural and livestock -husbandry practices. Though the presence of chiefs and warrior retinues indicated at least one level of sovereignty above the homestead, the seeming wide distribution of cattle, and the ease with which members of homesteads entered into barter relations with the travellers, suggests that a substantial measure of economic sovereignty remained at the level of the homestead-proprietor. The chiefs and retinues may have been especially concerned with a commodity exchange component of the economy, centred on ivory. There is no direct evidence of the existence of a Feudal paramountcy, and the social

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[53] Theal, Records, VIII:220,225; Boxer, Tragic History, p.217

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formation may have still been characterised by the dominance of a tributary mode of production. The use of wooden agricultural instruments, suggests that there was still considerable scope for improvement in what was already a relatively well-developed subsistence base.

As the parties of travellers moved into the central zone, they found that the prosperous farming settlements encountered in the interior between the Kei and Mzimkulu, continued intermittently.[54] As the 1622 party, still untrusting of guides, struggled laterally across one difficult ridge after another, they sometimes came across people prepared to barter cattle. When this was refused, theft was resorted to by the castaways. On the other hand, only a little stale millet could be bartered, possibly because they were travelling through the area in January and February - months when the new crop was still green in the fields.[55]

Having crossed a large river, which required the use of a raft, the party passed through a zone of poor kraals which they found to be located on the fringe of a belt of prosperity;

> "Next day we reached the kraals of the longed for plenty where they at once brought for sale many goats, cows, cakes as big as Flemish cheeses and so much millet that afterwards we could not carry it all". 56

Food of all types, including hens, was generally plentiful.[57] Thereafter the party

> "marched along the top of the hills on the slopes of which there were so many and such fine looking kraals that it was admirable to see the great quantity of cattle which came out of them. They brought us along the wayside a lot of milk for sale..."[58]

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[54] Theal, Records, VIII:100,102,104.

[55] Ibid., VIII:102,105; Boxer, Tragic History, pp.229,231.

[56] Boxer, op.cit., p.233.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid., pp.233-4.

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This picture of prosperity continued for some way further. The party bartered for foodstuffs without their having to request them. On a number of occasions they were approached by many people "all bringing something for sale", including cows and cakes.[59] A final transaction involving hens, cakes, and millet beer took place in the vicinity of a big river. Having reached this river, which may have been the Tugela, in the rainy season, they found it impossible to cross at the point chosen - six miles from the shore - for some days. The local people were able to cross it on "bits of wood".[60] Before the party could cross the river, it was the victim of the most concerted attack it had yet encountered, and one which was to cause them to dub the river, the 'Blood river'. Mention will be made of this attack later. It was to cause the party to return to the relative security of the shore.[61]

Although the two sections of the 1647 party were able to barter foodstuffs from individual homesteads in the interior of the central zone, like the 1622 party they too suffered a number of attacks from more or less organised armed groups. Harassed to distraction by these attacks, the parties eventually veered back to the safety of the coast and regrouped. It seems that they had been far inland when these attacks began, because it took them several days, "walking six or seven leagues every day", to regain the coast.

The 1647 party found, however, that even at the coast in the central zone adequate food could be bartered to meet its needs; including millet, fish, hens, goats and cows.[62] At one point near the coast, the party

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[59] Boxer, Tragic History, pp.234-5.

[60] Ibid., pp.236-8; Theal, Records, VIII:110. Boxer has argued that this river was the Mzimkulu and that the Tugela was reached later; Boxer, op.cit., pp.238n,241n.

[61] See below p.188 .

[62] Theal, Records, VIII:334-6,339.

obtained

> "a great quantity of millet, native bread and sesame, the first we had seen; and everything was brought to us in such abundance as we had not experienced before". 63

Only two or three miles inland, the party made its camp in sight of

> "many kraals on a plain near a river, where they brought us such quantities of provisions to barter that there were more than a thousand loaves of crushed millet, the best bread in all Kaffraria, hens, millet, cows, goats, and sugar canes, all in great quantities".64

Further on, the party

> "ascended a high sand-hill covered with a thicket on the top and as we were about to descend again we caught sight .....of the fairest plain our eyes had ever beheld, studded with many kraals, traversed by rivers of fresh water, and covered with many cattle. There came to us so many Kaffirs, men and women, that the plain was black with them, and they brought us so much barter that we rested a little in their sight". 65

From the landmarks mentioned by the writer of this account, it is extremely difficult to follow its precise movement, particularly since major rivers would not have commanded so much attention at this, the drier time of the year. A little later, however, the 1647 party probably crossed into the northern zone.

In certain respects the social formation encountered in the central zone in the period 1600-1680 exhibited similarities with that prevailing between about the Kei and Mzimkulu rivers, but there were also indications of change. One difference was that Primitive-Communism seems

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63 Theal, Records, VIII:336.

64 Ibid., VIII:337.

65 Ibid., VIII:340. The party thought that it was then between latitudes 27 and 28°S, which would have put them north of St. Lucia Bay. This is impossible for, by their own admission, they were still several rivers and several days' journey south of 'Santa Lucia'. They were even south of the 'Pescarias river', which was usually the term used for the Tugela, but in this case may have been the Mfolozi.

not to have existed as an independent mode of production anywhere in the central zone. The homestead production complex now extended to the coast in most places, and was probably limited more by environmental and class considerations than by any lack of knowledge of the technologies involved. The homestead existed throughout the zone as the fundamental unit of subsistence production, and the dynamism of the form was indicated by its ability to harness new crops such as sesame and possibly maize.[66] Imfe or sugar cane was being grown, possibly not as a new crop, but certainly as one which was scarce and not readily bartered to strangers. No great restrictions appear to have been placed in the way of homestead - proprietors seeking to barter small provisions to the travellers.

There were hints that technologies associated with the exchange function were even more developed than in the south. Copper was especially useful. It was

> "the best article for barter in these parts". 67

Copper cauldrons, drinking cups and other copper impliments were stolen from the camps of travellers and from stragglers amongst their number. The parties were convinced that these were not taken because of their use -value as impliments, but because of the exchange value of their copper content.[68]

Some of the parties had anticipated that such a situation would arise, and had taken early precautions to ensure that not only were they equipped with this valuable

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[66] Walton, African Village, p.63; and Wilson, "Nguni", p.109, after Theal, Records, VIII:157,205. For sesame see above p.181. There is no evidence that either crop was widely grown in the central zone in the period.

[67] Theal, op.cit., VIII:218,323; Boxer, Tragic History, pp.209,214,239.

[68] Theal, op.cit., VIII:108,206,225,312; Boxer, op.cit., pp.204,235.

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metal, but also with the weapons which would enable them to control it as property. Before the 1647 wreck, for example,

> "the captain had already ordered the gunner.....to put some powder and balls in barrels, and to collect all the arms he could and all the copper and bronze for the maintenance of the camp, as this is the current coin of Kaffraria, that we might trade for what was necessary". 69

The parties were aware that a number of other factors determined the exchange value of the copper and other metals which they controlled. One of these was the number of suppliers, and an attempt was made to preserve the status of the parties as single monopolistic suppliers of scarce commodities in a market comprising a number of competing buyers drawn from the ranks of individual homesteads. Offenders within the shipwreck parties were severely punished.[70]

In some respects brass was comparable to copper, for

> "it is certain that throughout all Kaffraria copper and brass are valued more highly than all goods".71

Yet there was also an important difference. Brass was not nearly as readily negotiable as copper. This was partly due to the fact that it probably carried an extremely high exchange value, but it was also a reflection of its special function as a symbol of the highest levels of political authority in the region. It was a metal which common folk thought twice about being seen handling at all.[72]

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[69] Theal, Records, VIII:304.

[70] Ibid., VIII:91.

[71] See also Boxer, Tragic History, p.239.

[72] See, for example, Theal, VIII:216.

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Another factor which influenced the value of the metals which the parties carried was the degree to which a surplus of foodstuffs was available, and the extent to which it actually remained the property of the direct producers to use as they thought fit. Season was an important factor here,[73] but there were also signs that cattle were not always controlled as property by the people who were seen herding them. Sometimes the offer of exchange relations was refused altogether, or an extremely high price demanded.[74]

From time to time the travellers were obliged to give demonstrations of the power of their muskets before it was acknowledged that access to the metals they carried could only be gained through exchange relations.[75]

In addition to the ability of individuals to offer cattle and provisions in barter, there were also other indicators of social stratification. At the level of the homestead

> "there are rich and poor among them, but this is according to the number of their cattle." 76

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[73] Theal, Records, VIII: 102,225,340,348,352; Boxer, Tragic History, pp.229, 231. "Stale millet" had been obtained in February; Theal, op.cit., VIII:105; Boxer, op.cit., p.231.

[74] Theal, op.cit., VIII:96; Boxer, op.cit., p.234. Such instances were less frequent than they might otherwise have been, due to the parties' indication in their manner that a refusal to trade would be likely to lead to conflict.

[75] Theal, op.cit., VIII: 106,220,326; Boxer, op.cit., pp.215, 227.

[76] Wilson, "Early History", p.170.

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Another indicator of the wealth of a homestead proprietor was the number of wives he had married, for an exchange of property was involved.[77] By the same token, and as a slightly later account pointed out, a homestead-proprietor could also be rich in his daughters, for

> "They.....give cows for wives, and therefore the richest man is he that hath most daughters..... 78

Other ways in which the wealth of the homestead was indicated included the kind of shield a man carried,[79] together with the mode of dress of himself and his wives.[80]

In general, there were signs that within the homestead a simple sexual division of labour was in process of giving way to a distinction between those who laboured, and those who controlled labour as property. There were indications that women were being thrust into the role of serf-labour under the control of their husbands. They could no longer own property themselves for

> "even their ornaments go to the men".81

Married women not only undertook the bulk of the labour in and about the homestead, but generally

> "become as slaves to their husbands".82

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[77] The account is not entirely clear as to what constituted a wealthy man in this regard, and to what extent wealth was evenly distributed. At one point it is suggested that "the kings have four, five and seven wives". At another the implication is that all men "choose six or seven"; Theal, Records, VIII:204-5.

[78] 1686 report in Bird, Annals, 1:59. Apparently a man could also be rich in his 'sisters', though I do not pretend that I entirely understand how this could be possible.

[79] Theal, op.cit., VIII:204-5.

[80] Ibid., VIII:205.

[81] Ibid.

[82] Ibid.

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Although the individual homestead-proprietor was in a position to oppress the womenfolk under his control, his power was otherwise far from absolute. Homestead-proprietors were subordinate to a number of chiefs, some of whom were encountered by the travellers on their journeys.[83] There seems also to have existed a level of intermediate power between the homestead-proprietors and the chiefs. Visitors sometimes found themselves confronted by important-looking men at the head of sizeable bodies of armed retainers. The leader of one such force introduced himself to the 1622 party as the 'manumuze' of the tract of country through which they were then travelling. He demonstrated his connexion with a society of wealth and power by presenting the party with a bull.[84] The camp of the 1647 party was visited by an important-looking man accompanied by a body of 300 men. He wore many copper arm-rings, and addressed the castaways in Portuguese.[85] His role is unclear, but it may have been that of another minor powerholder, or a state official in the sphere of commodity exchange.

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[83] Boxer, Tragic History, p.217; Theal, Records, VIII:92-3.

[84] Boxer, op.cit., p.233; Theal, op.cit., VIII:106. I am grateful to Jeff Guy for pointing out to me that 'manumuze' is a corruption of a common word in the area meaning 'head of the household', and that it may be used in a relative sense in relation to any level of power which commands respect. In this case it may indicate a local headman.

[85] Theal, op.cit., VIII:326,328.

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It is interesting that, unlike most other men of authority the parties had encountered, this Portuguese-speaking man did not introduce himself as a chief or as the son of a chief, suggesting that he was not actually a member of the ruling lineage or dynasty to which he owed allegiance, and from which he derived his authority. The travellers thought his background may have been that of a slave escaped from an earlier party of castaways. This is quite conceivable, because former slaves and Portuguese were both often encountered along the way, and sometimes found to have acquired elements of wealth and status. Individuals continually abandoned the parties with this kind of vision in mind.[86] An alternative explanation of this particular man's ability to speak Portuguese would be that he was a visitor or immigrant to the area from one of the Delagoa trading states. Certainly, at the Bay there existed by this time a small group of officials who found a command of Portuguese useful in their frequent dealings with outsiders.

A number of clashes took place within the central zone between the shipwreck parties and organised groups of warriors. One attack involved "hundreds brandishing assagais".[87] Another involved some 200 warriors equipped with assagais and large shields.[88] Although no decisive victories were achieved by these groups of warriors, the degree of harassment was sufficient to cause the castaways to veer back to the coast where, although the subsistence opportunities were fewer, security of strangers was more assured.

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[86] Castaways encountered by travellers along the coast included Portuguese, Africans who had been bought as slaves by the Portuguese at Mozambique Island but who would have come from a variety of localities in the hinterland of east-central Africa, 'mulattoes', 'cabras' who were descendants of mulatto men and black women, Javanese, Indian 'Malabar blacks', and by the 1680s English sailors. Most were sufficiently established to have acquired wives and cattle. Some had acquired additional status as rainmakers, or were otherwise associated with powerholders. The fate of women settler-castaways is not recorded; Theal, Records, VIII:86,94,102-3,107,217,220,313,117,328,334,316,321,336-8, 380; Boxer, Tragic History, pp.228,230; Bird, Annals, I:59.

[87] Theal, op.cit., VIII:326-7.

[88] Ibid., VIII:327.

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Some interior groups preferred to harass the parties with stones,and 'cudgels' or 'knobkerries'.[89] If these men also carried iron-tipped assagais, their reluctance to use them in battle is understandable. As so far developed, iron-tipped weapons were essentially throwing instruments. They could only be recovered from the field after a successful battle. This was the practice in the southern zone as late as the early years of the 19th century. Lichtenstein learned that the Xhosa burnt the grass after a hunt that they might recover the blades of iron-tipped assagais.[90] Failure in battle, defined as a force being driven from the field, left the defeated group without weapons, which could only be replaced over a considerable time and at considerable expense in terms of the expenditure of accumulated surplus labour. The victorious force,which controlled the field of battle, was immediately placed in possession of an increased stock of the same weapons without cost to its own reserves of accumulated surplus. In time of peace the iron content could easily be translated into other forms of technology, or exchanged for other forms of wealth. In the southern zone there was a reluctance to commit iron to use in combat as late as 1782. The survivors of the wreck of the GROSVENOR reported that

> "not choosing to lose the iron of the lance, they drew out the lance-staffs and sharpened the end, and threw these staffs at our people". 91

The 1622 party inflicted a defeat on a force which was sufficiently confident of victory to commit iron weapons to the battle, and it is tempting to speculate on the cost to the society involved. The battle took place in the

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[89] Theal, Records, VIII:331. Such weapons were not confined to poorer communities, but were amongst the full equipment of the warriors of the most military groups in the area. Stones, for example, were used in the 'Blood River' clash described below.

[90] H. Lichtenstein, Travels in Southern Africa in the Years 1803,1804,1805, trans. A. Plumptre, 2 vols. (Cape Town: 1928-30), I:332.

[91] P.R. Kirby, ed. and intro., Source Book on the Wreck of the Grosvenor East Indiaman (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 1953) p.37.

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vicinity of a major river valley, which may have been that of the Tugela. The attack took place at night, and may have been carefully planned to take advantage of the rain which had fallen unceasingly for three days. Some of the techniques involved may antedate, by some two hundred years, aspects of the military revolution attributed to the Zulu state. Certainly the attack took place on three sides, not unlike the cow-horn fighting formation of the Zulu armies in later years. In general the travellers thought that

> "These Kaffirs have a better mode of fighting than those previously met, for they used shields like targets of wild buffalo hide, which are very strong, and covering themselves therewith they hurled countless assagais.....". 92

In the attack, there was no reluctance to use both the common wooden assagai, and a large number of iron-tipped examples. The attackers' confidence was not misplaced, for they had chosen their moment well. The rain rendered useless the powder needed for the firearms of the defenders. Some of the local people were clearly well aware of the threat from these firearms, for only two days before an 'arquebus' had been stolen from the same camp. It is possible therefore that there was also knowledge of their unsatisfactory performance in wet weather.[93]

In this initial phase of the battle, the party of shipwreck survivors suffered heavy losses;

> ".....they almost drove us from our camp, with such extraordinary war cries and whistling as if hell were loose. They killed Manuel Alvares and a bombardier whose name was..... Carvalho, both of whom died on the spot, and they seriously wounded sixty others, of whom Antonio Borges died next day.....we had suffered so severely that little

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[92] Theal, Records, VIII:109.

[93] Ibid., VIII:108.

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> would have sufficed to put an end to us.....not one of us escaped without damage from an assagai or stone." 94

The party survived only through the vision of its commander and a monumental slice of luck. Immediately it was seen that the firearms would not function, the commander ordered that they be placed by the fire to dry out. Eventually, the firearms were brought into service, and the battle tipped in favour of the Portuguese. Soon after, the rain ceased and the former imbalance between the two weapons systems was restored.

The following morning the survivors amongst the castaways counted the drain to the resources of the attackers that defeat in the battle had involved. The camp was littered with countless assagais. Like all other communities in south-east Africa in the period, the shipwreck survivors were only too aware of the use, and value in small transactions, of the iron content of these weapons, and had no intention of giving their attackers or anybody else a chance to recover it;

> ".....five hundred and thirty were found of iron alone, not including many from which the iron had been taken and concealed in order to trade with. Those of fire-hardened wood were so numerous that they could not be counted". 95

In a matter of a few hours, the attackers had lost iron which it would have taken a considerable investment of accumulated surplus to replace. The defenders were richer by an equivalent amount.

Another point is suggested by this incident. It is that even in the central zone in the period, warriors were not totally equipped with iron-tipped weapons. Iron was still a relatively scarce commodity.

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94 Theal, Records, VIII:109.

95 Ibid.; Boxer, Tragic History, p.237. Boxer, in a footnote, perhaps misinterprets this passage. In this instance it seems not to have been the attackers who removed the iron after the battle, but individual members of the party of castaways, who acted in advance of the community.

A remark of the defenders in this battle begs the question as to why metal weapons were used at all. They claimed that the iron-tipped assagais did them no more damage than those made of wood.[96] This may be something of an exaggeration, but it does suggest that iron weapons were not yet particularly efficient. It may be that those which were usually carried had been primarily designed as a technological innovation in the sphere of big-game hunting. Certainly, shipwreck parties found the hide of the elephants and hippos sufficiently thick for gun-shot from their light firearms to simply bounce off the target. Only a lucky shot, which hit behind the shoulder or some other place where the animal was vulnerable, could bring it down.[97] Wooden assagais are therefore likely to have been a lot less efficient than the heavier and sharper iron-tipped variety. Poorer hunting communities may have obtained access to such weapons by entering into 'hunting-on-the-half' relationships with powerholders in a position to provide them with sets of these weapons. Much the same kind of relationship certainly came to develop around the later hunting technology of the firearm.

There is some circumstantial evidence in favour of such a proposition. The attack took place on a height overlooking a river valley in which this particular party saw elephants for the first time.[98] A day's journey from the site of the battle, the party had seen what may have been the headquarters of an absent hunting group, a place where ivory was traded for carriage to Delagoa Bay, or the homestead of an important powerholder who had an interest in both these activities. This community was said to have included one of the renegade Portuguese castaways who had chosen to settle in the area, rather than seek an escape route. The settlement comprised;

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[96] Theal, Records, VIII:109.

[97] Ibid., VIII:223.

[98] Ibid., VIII:110

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> "many kraals. Among them
> was a very large one which
> the.....Kaffir pointed
> out, saying 'There is the city
> of the Portuguese'. We
> approached nearer to the said
> kraal, and saw a thatched
> house with four corners, a
> thing we had not seen before
> during our journey, for all
> the others were smaller and round.
> We urged the Kaffir to go and
> call the occupant, but he told
> us not to tire ourselves in
> vain, for he would not come." 99

The absence of this important man from the settlement may conceivably have been related to the pattern of the ivory trade. The incident occurred in February, that is at the time of year when the arrival of the pangayo at Delagoa Bay was imminent, and possibly the time of year when the carriage of ivory to the Bay trading states reached a peak.

At the same time there was evidence that warriors equipped with iron weapons who had participated in the 'Blood River' battle, may have been associated with a major interior concentration of power, which also controlled substantial resources in iron. If, as I suspect, the 'River of Blood' was the river which has come to be known as the Tugela, then an important centre of iron-mining and iron-smelting cannot have been far away. The intensity of the conflict may have been a reflection of the fact that the travellers had penetrated close to this complex, and were actually within an important area of ivory production. Both may have been associated with the Vambe paramountcy which was thought to have dominated the central zone in the later 16th century, and which was seemingly still in existence in the 1680s.

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99 Theal, Records, VIII:108; Boxer, Tragic History, p.235. An escaped slave was also a member of this community, and other castaways were settled nearby; Boxer, op.cit., p.228.

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In conclusion, there is no evidence of the persistence of primitive-communalism in the central zone into the 1600-1680 period as an independent mode of production, though there are a number of hints that hunting was practised with a view to obtaining exchange commodities, and notably ivory. The primary economic articulation was between agriculture and livestock-husbandry organised on the basis of homestead production units. Commodity production and exchange involving ivory and iron were important though remained secondary to this primary articulation. The predominance of agriculture and livestock husbandry tended to permit the persistence of feudal patterns of sovereignty, and there is no evidence of a concentration of economic and political power at any one of the four levels of sovereignty identifiable in the social formation - homestead-proprietor, 'manumuze', chief and Vambe paramount.

Nevertheless some tension does appear evident in this articulation. The social polarisation within the homestead may indicate the degree to which outside forces were impinging upon it, and tending to reshape its social organisation. There were clear indications of social and political differentiation, though it is difficult to pinpoint instances of open conflict. There was a seeming contradiction between the willingness of homestead-proprietors to engage in barter trade, and the apparent wish of certain powerholders to use the warriors whom they controlled to drive the parties of strange merchants from their territories. It is possible that these powerholders owed their allegiance to a distant paramountcy rather than to regional chiefs, who generally appear to have been relatively 'weak'. The possibility

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of a somewhat more centralised pattern of political control is suggested also by the relative insignificance of frontiers within the central zone, compared to the situation which seemed to exist in the later 16th century. There seems to have taken place a decline in the number of frontiers, and in the size of the belts of 'nomansland' which formerly tended to separate the most important of them. It is likely that such steps towards the centralisation of power would have been associated with the commodity production and exchange component of the economic articulation, rather than with the food production activities of the homestead.

The discussion has so far been concerned to characterise the social formation prevailing in each of the southern and central zones of south-east Africa in the period 1600-1680. It remains to examine the situation in the northern zone, that is between about the Mfolozi river and the southern shores of Delagoa Bay.

Once it had crossed the 'Blood river', on its journey northwards along the coast, the 1622 party was faced with a difficult decision. Experience had taught it that the best sources of bartered provisions lay inland. Yet here too were organised military forces which had harassed the party to an all but fatal degree. In the event the threat of future clashes proved decisive, because the party set out once more along the shore.[100]

At the shore the party occasionally came across evidence of systematic fishing activity, and settlements from which the product could be obtained in exchange for copper.[101] This is consistent with the picture presented in the 1647 account, of fish-traps along estuaries.[102]

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[100] Theal, Records, VIII:110.

[101] Ibid., VIII:113.

[102] Ibid., VIII:342,345.

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The 1622 party also came across plenty of signs of a second element of the economy of the coastal region. Countless elephants were seen,[103] and the extensive tracts of marshy ground were littered with game-pits to trap these, and other large animals such as the hippopotamus.[104] Although similar traps were reported much further south near the coast, their number appears to have been much larger in this area.

From time to time, both the 1622 and 1647 parties made detours into the hinterland; either deliberately in search of food, or in order to circumvent a particularly difficult section of a river or lake. The picture presented in the accounts is one of sharp contrast. On the one hand the 1622 party found homesteads from which hens, millet, "alpistre called ameichueria", and even cattle could be obtained.[105] Going inland to circumvent St. Lucia Bay, the 1647 party found numerous homesteads occupying a cultivated plain. Gourds, melons and, for the first time on their journey, tobacco could be obtained. Millet and sesame, though grown,were not available because it was November and the crops were still green in the fields.[106] Cattle were seen, but seemingly only in large concentrations. At one point the party bartered for no less than 140 animals.[107] Even as the castaways once more followed the shore, only a few days from Delagoa Bay and in a region which was dry with great sand hills and without surface water, detours a little inland yielded sesame, hens, gourds and melons.[108]

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[103] Theal, Records, VIII:110,112,342,347.

[104] Ibid., VIII:342-3.

[105] Ibid., VIII:111,113-5.

[106] Ibid., VIII:346,348-9,352.

[107] Ibid., VIII:347-8.

[108] Ibid., VIII:352.

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Other parts of the accounts of the experiences of the castaways in the northern zone in the period, contradict this picture of prosperous homesteads. It is not clear whether the contrast was a function of natural environment, politics, class differentiation, or some combination of the three. Parts of the northern zone formed flat, barren country "inhabited by very poor people".[109] Some controlled no cattle and others very few. Very high prices were asked for these animals, and people were much more concerned to sell to the travellers tusks of ivory.[110] One account suggests that north of St. Lucia Bay, no cattle were seen at all. At some of the poorer settlements, men who appeared to be familiar with the work of porterage, came forward to offer their labour-services to the parties of castaways.[111]

As the parties neared Delagoa Bay, they began to enter the territories immediately associated with members of the aristocracy of the middlemen trading states. The first of these was associated with the son of the Inhaca Sangane. In 1623, the homesteads of this man were situated three miles from the shore. Here the party was offered goats, honey and bananas, but seemingly not grain or cattle. The homestead cluster of the Inhaca Sangane himself, was situated on a height between two small hills, in the interior two days' journey from the Bay. Here the party obtained goats, sheep, hens and ameichueria in exchange for copper. There is no direct reference to the cultivation of other grain-types, or to cattle-keeping.[112]

The court of the Inhaca Sangane, and its immediate surroundings, seem to have been rather more prosperous when visted by the 1647 party. Here salt was available, the first reported by any of the 16th and 17th century

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[109] Boxer, Tragic History, pp.240-1.

[110] Theal, Records, VIII:349.

[111] Ibid., VIII:111.

[112] Ibid., VIII:117.

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parties, though cattle are still not mentioned;

> "The food for barter was plentiful, consisting of fish, salt, the first we had seen, sesame, millet, honey, butter, eggs, hens, she-goats, and sheep, all in such abundance that it seemed to us that we had reached a land of plenty". 113

At the court itself, the Inhaca ordered that his guests be lodged in huts, whereupon

> "they brought us plentiful barter of sesame, hens, sweet potatoes, butter and fish". 114

The party stayed at the court for 15 days, during which time they were able to obtain sufficient food for their needs.

The 1622 party went on from the Inhaca Sangane's, to visit the court of the Inhaca Manganheira, located on or close to an island in Delagoa Bay. On the instructions of the Inhaca, it obtained fish, hens, ameichueria and a few sheep, but not cattle or other types of grain.[115] The later party did not visit this court, and was only able to obtain gourds and melons as it travelled round the shore of the Bay.[116]

Even in this northern zone, where there were indications of a relatively high degree of social differentiation, shipwreck parties obtained their provisions by private barter from individual homesteads, rather than by dealing with a central powerholder.

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[113] Theal, Records, VIII:354. The problem is to decide whether this salt was produced locally or imported from some other part of Africa, and whether it had been in use previous to this 17th century observation. There is some evidence to suggest both that it was produced locally, and that its origin in the area dates from well before the 17th century. Several different methods of salt production have been reported from different parts of Africa in the 'pre-colonial' era. South-east Africa possessed the resources for most of these, and Junod thought salt production to have had an ancient origin in the region. He details some of the methods in use in the northern zone in the 19th century; Junod, Life of a South African Tribe, II:35; Alpers, Ivory and Slaves, pp.16,26.

[114] Theal, op.cit., VIII:354.

[115] Ibid., VIII:118.

[116] Ibid., VIII:356.

One important difference was evident, however, from the situation in the central and southern zones, and confirmed a trend already apparent in the later 16th century. In the northern zone, and especially north of St. Lucia Bay, the relative exchange values of items controlled by the castaways underwent change. The value of copper declined,[117] and cloth replaced it as the most useful item in barter transactions. Up to this point in their journeys, the castaways had sometimes given up cloth voluntarily in honour of powerholders along the route, but it had never been traded.[118] Near the Bay, on the other hand, cloth was not only worn by important people,[119] and used in decoration at the courts of the leading powerholders,[120] but was even in high demand amongst the poorer people of the countryside. Parties obtained their supplies of food in this way;

> "Everyone bartered freely for pieces of cloth and old rotten rags, in whatever state they were, as if they had been without a hole." 121

Another quotation makes it clear that the castaways were disposing of cloth rather than purchasing it;

> ".....they brought us plentiful barter.....which each one traded for at will with pieces of shirts, trousers and handkerchiefs, and every kind of cloth....." 122

When the crews of Portuguese trading ships were billeted ashore amongst various homesteads, it cost the Portuguese treasury three pieces of cloth per man per month.[123] When ships finally sailed from the Bay, they took with them large quantities of provisions which they had obtained through barter, but it is not clear whether cloth was also involved in these transactions.[124]

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[117] Theal, Records, VIII:348. One of the 1647 party, who had been wrecked before on the coast, and had already travelled through the northern zone, told his comrades that they might as well dispose of all their copper in trade before they reached St. Lucia Bay, for from this point onwards it was of little value.

[118] See, for example, Theal, op.cit., VIII:76.

[119] Ibid., VIII:116.

[120] Ibid., VIII:118,354.

[121] Ibid., VIII:353.

[122] Ibid., VIII:354.

[123] Ibid., VIII:357-8.

[124] Ibid., VIII:358.

The Delagoa trading states were clearly important centres of wealth and power in the period. This was apparent in the brass ornaments and cloth worn by the paramounts and the members of the aristocracy; in the rare items such as salt which visitors could obtain; in the existence of specialist groups of state officials, such as those of messengers and interpreters who could speak Portuguese;[125] and above all in the elaborate courts which were occupied by the major powerholders. In 1623, the principal homestead of the Inhaca Manganheira was

> "composed of large houses with palisades and courtyards". 126

The Inhaca, who was old and fat, sat on a throne covered with imported cloth when receiving visitors.[127] The Inhaca Sangane occupied a "large thatched house", which was also clearly very different from the small beehive-shaped grass huts characteristic of poorer people throughout south-east Africa.[128]

The position of these Delagoa states, and of the ruling lineages within them, rested upon their function as middlemen within a commercial system linking south-east Africa, south-central Africa, and various points around the periphery of the Indian Ocean. Although the south-central African component of this pattern of commerce is only hinted at in the source materials of the period, there is plenty of evidence of the other two elements of the articulation.

The Indian Ocean connexion was indicated by the various references to a Portuguese presence at the Bay, the Portuguese having usurped Arab and Indian interests in the 16th century as the principal organisers and carriers of the trade. Large quantities of 'European'

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[125] See, for example, Theal, Records, VIII:354.

[126] Oliver and Oliver, Africa in the Days of Exploration, p.144.

[127] Theal, op.cit., VIII:118.

[128] Oliver and Oliver, op.cit., p.142.

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trade goods were seen scattered around at the Inhaca Manganheira's in 1623, though one suspects that at this time they were probably only 'European' in the sense of having been traded by the Portuguese, rather than having actually been manufactured in Europe.[129] At the same time, the Inhaca Sangane was clearly well-acquainted with the recent comings and goings of the Portuguese at the Bay, and many Portuguese apparently visited his court each year. Dealing with the 1623 party through his Portuguese-speaking interpreter, he expressed a wish for further trade with the Portuguese.[130] In 1647 he was described as an important Delagoa merchant.[131]

In addition to a commercial linkage to parts of the central and southern zone, evidence of which has already been presented at various points in the argument above, the trading states also controlled an immediate hinterland more directly. Travellers in the northern zone often came across important-looking men who appeared to be associated with one or other of these trading states. One party was visited at the shore, near what was possibly the Mfolozi river, by the manumuze of the district; suggesting that even the shore itself was part of his jurisdiction. His wealth and status was indicated by the brass collar which he wore, the assertion that he was the son of a chief, and his ability to present the party with an ox as a token of goodwill.[132] A second meeting with a man of similar importance took place a little closer to Delagoa Bay.[133] Some days north of St. Lucia Bay, the travellers encountered a man who appeared to be of particularly high status. His dress included cloth

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[129] Oliver and Oliver, Africa in the Days of Exploration, p.144.

[130] Theal, Records, VIII:117.

[131] Ibid., VIII:354.

[132] Boxer, Tragic History, p.239; Theal, op.cit., VIII:111.

[133] Boxer, op.cit., p.241.

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as well as a considerable array of brass ornamentation, and he was attended by six retainers. He introduced himself as a son of the Inhaca Sangane.[134]

There were indications that people in the northern zone owed allegiance to such representatives of important powerholders. A former slave-castaway, whom the 1647 party encountered near the coast, acknowledged that his position was that of a political dependant. He explained to the party that his "king lived at a great distance".[135] It is not clear in what practical way dependent groups demonstrated their allegiance to such powerholders, but tribute in the form of labour-power, ivory or ambergris may have been involved.[136]

The southern shores and immediate hinterland of Delagoa Bay were dominated, as in the later 16th century, by a number of important merchant powerholders. In 1647, the main ones were the Inhaca Sangane, Machavane who may have been the successor to the Inhaca Manganheira, Tembe the Elder, and Tembe the Younger. All were situated within a total distance of only about 36 miles along the shore of the Bay. Other powerholders existed to the west and north of the Bay.[137] There were differences in the extent of their power. Machavane was more powerful than his neighbour the Inhaca Sangane, whilst Tembe the Younger was already a paramount "rich in subjects and cattle".[138] Although the evidence is not conclusive, it would seem possible that there were still only two paramountcies on the southern shores of the Bay - those

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[134] Theal, Records, VIII:116,354.

[135] Ibid., VIII:338.

[136] Ambergris is a wax-like odoriferous substance, which is used in perfumery and was once used also in cooking. It is found floating in tropical seas and in the insides of whales. Travellers in the northern zone of south-east Afric in the 16th century came across it along the shore; Boxer, Tragic History, p.66n. It was also found north of the Bay; Ibid., p.263; Theal, op.cit., VIII:131. For a 17th century reference to a shipment from Delagoa Bay see Theal, Beginning, p.406. See also below p.244 and chapt.IX. It was also available at Inhambane; Theal, op.cit., VIII:135-6 Its importance may be the reason why Manumuze in the northern zone even watched closely travellers along the shore; see above p.200. It is sometimes termed 'amber', although the term should actually be reserved for a different substance - a fossil resin used in jewellery.

[137] Theal, op.cit., VIII:354-6.

[138] Ibid., VIII:355-6.

of Tembe and Inhaca - but a considerable degree of competition within these paramountcies amongst the ranks of the two ruling lineages. A foothold at the Bay, and control of the paramountcy itself, may have been the two main points at issue.

The social formation which was the northern zone in the period 1600-1680 was characterised by a complex articulation involving agriculture, livestock-husbandry, fishing, hunting, and commodity production and exchange. The essential difference from situations further south, was that the commodity production and exchange components of the articulation, were competing with subsistence food production for the position of dominance within it.

The contradiction which appeared to exist in the later 16th century; between the development of complex social institutions associated with a middleman commercial function, and a poverty-stricken subsistence base; had been partially resolved by class polarisation. Cattle appear to have been concentrated in fewer hands, and there were signs that labour and even perhaps food had taken on the status of exchange commodites. The more general spread of agricultural practices, may also have helped to avoid the contradiction reaching crisis proportions.[139]

A corollary of the growing importance of commodity production and exchange, was the further fading from view of certain elements characteristic of the social epoch of Feudalism, though the overall complexion of the social formation of the northern zone was arguably still Feudal. Production of food crops,and of small livestock, still seems to have been organised in individual homestead units, which also retained a fair degree of control over the destiny of their surpluses. At the same time, control over patterns of commodity production and exchange, and the exercise of political sovereignty, was

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[139] There were also technological innovations in the sphere of agricultural production. Tobacco, for example, is a crop mentioned in the 17th century accounts which is not mentioned in those of the 16th century. It is more doubtful whether sesame can be taken to be a new food crop. It only seems to occur in the 1647 account, which, unlike that of the 1622-3 castaways, makes no mention of 'ameichueria'. It is possible that the two terms relate to the same crop.

becoming concentrated within the ranks of aristocracies from which the incumbents of the paramountcies emerged. Even here, however, elements of a feudal pattern survived, because the power of the paramountcies was still hardly differentiated from that of individual members of the aristocracy. There was a parcellisation of sovereignty, and considerable scope for competition between powerholders beneath the umbrella of the paramountcies, and even for competition for the control of the paramountcies themselves.

The social formation of the northern zone was not stable. Implicit in it were a number of forces tending to produce further social differentiation. Subsistence, was still a problem. Drought, for example, was a persistent threat in parts of the northern zone; there had been very little rain for five years before 1647.[140]

Other pressures derived from the articulation with the Portuguese seaborne-Empire. One element here was the structure of Portuguese commercial relations with the Bay merchants. The practice of sending a biennial - or even an annual - trading pangayo to the Bay, meant that goods had to be stockpiled for many months. The increasing competition for the trade amongst powerholders within south-east Africa, meant that ivory could no longer be left with direct producers until ships called at the Bay. The ivory had to be collected and stored, either by the Bay states themselves, or by interior powerholders who sought to monopolise the supply function in a particular area. Specialised cadres of officials to organise the caravans and to undertake the trade; together with warriors to protect the sources of supply, trade routes, and accumulated stocks against commercial rivals; all added to the amount of expense incurred by the middlemen states during this time lag.

Worse still, these time-lags could be extended

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[140] Theal, Records, VIII:352. The drought was said to have been accompanied by plagues of locusts, and to have caused widespread famine.

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to an indeterminate length, due to fluctuations in the overall pattern of the world economy, and especially of the Portuguese commercial empire within it. These fluctuations could be generated by events hundreds or thousands of miles beyond the shores of south-east Africa, and were totally beyond the control of the Bay states. Before 1647, for example, no ships had called at Delagoa Bay for three or four years! [141]

Sometimes individual polities were deliberately excluded from the trade by the Portuguese for a period, in order to demonstrate the reality of their dependence upon it. Such a fate seems to have befallen the once-powerful Inhaca Manganheira. As early as 1623, he was bemoaning the fact that, because of a clash a year or so before, no Portuguese trading vessels were calling at his capital. He was under great pressure, because

> "his houses were full of ivory and ambergris". 142

With such a complex of pressures to which powerholders in the northern zone were subjected during the period 1600-1680, it was increasingly difficult to maintain a position of relative independence. Clashes between the major trading systems centred on Tembe and Inhaca may have become more frequent. Certainly there is evidence of clashes within the ranks of the aristocracies. In the case of Inhaca, for example, sometime before 1623 the Inhaca Sangane was ousted from the paramountcy by the Inhaca Manganheira. By 1647, however, the Inhaca Sangane had recovered a good deal of his former position, and the party of castaways of that year do not mention the Inhaca Manganheira at all.[143]

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[141] Theal, Records, VIII:355.

[142] Ibid., VIII:119-20.

[143] Ibid., VIII:354.

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The social formation of south-east Africa as a whole in the period 1600-1680, was clearly extremely complex, and incorporated a number of local and more general contradictions capable of producing a transition to a new social epoch. One of the most important general contradictions, was that between the structural imperatives implicit in the spread of commodity production and exchange, and the Feudal patterns of social relations which had come into existence at a time when these economic practices were relatively little developed. There were already signs, particularly in the northern zone, that Feudal patterns of social relations were crumbling under the increasing pressure stemming from this incipient contradiction. The further development of this and other contradictions, and their dynamic interaction which produced a general crisis of Feudalism over a large part of south-east Africa, form the subject matter of the next chapter.

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VII

THE FEUDAL CRISIS 1680 - 1750

The complex historical development of the social epoch of Feudalism in south-east Africa was reflected in the pattern of the Feudal crisis which was eventually produced. The crisis proved to be neither simple nor universal throughout south-east Africa.

The geographical location of the crisis had much to do with the uneven pace of the spread of patterns of feudal relations to different parts of the region. It was almost at the very moment when a pattern of feudal relations was clearly distinguishable in the southernmost parts of south-east Africa for the first time, that a long incipient contradiction within the social formation of the northern part of the region was brought to a head. Patterns of feudal sovereignty could not cope with the structural imperatives which were the consequence of the articulation of feudalism with commodity production and exchange. There were other elements to the crisis, but these appear to have been closely interrelated with this contradiction and essentially subordinate to it.

The articulation between feudalism and commodity production and exchange was of longstanding, and some changes had clearly taken place in the social formation by way of adjustment to it. There were limits, however, to the extent to which these adjustments could take a gradual, and largely peaceful form. During the period 1680 to 1750 there were sign that the intensity and complexity of the articulation had reached levels at which a fundamental, even revolutionary readjustment of the social forces was becoming inevitable.

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The growing intensity and complexity of the articulati with commodity production and exchange is partly reflected in the kinds of written sources which are available for the reconstruction of the history of south-east Africa in this period. Portuguese ships were no longer wrecked upon this section of the African coast.[1] The principal written sources for the history of the area south of Delagoa Bay now comprised the reports of English and Dutch visitors to the region. Some are the accounts of shipwrecked parties, but others relate the experiences of men who made landfalls in the region with commercial contacts specifically in mind. Some idea of the volume of commercial traffic passing along the south-east African coast at this time can be gained from the fact that, during the short period from 1683 to 1689, we know something of the activities of men from eight ships, some of which made more than one voyage to the area.[2] There were almost certainly others, including of course the regular Portuguese pangayo to Delagoa Bay.[3]

Groups from many of these ships spent a considerable time ashore and recorded their experiences. Some spent months or even years in the area. Yet in some ways these

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[1] In fact there were fewer Portuguese shipwrecks in general in this period; Boxer, Tragic History, p.26.

[2] These were, with the approximate dates of their landfalls in the area, the British ships JOHANNA (1683), GOOD HOPE (May 1685), CAPTAIN WYNNFORD (July 1685), BONAVENTURA (1686) and BAUDEN (1687); and the Dutch vessels STAVENISSE (1686) and NOORD (two visits in 1689). The CENTAUR, originally built by castaways to carry them to the Cape early in 1687, made a further voyage to the area in 1688 under the colours of the Dutch East India Company.

[3] See Bird, Annals, I:25-6, 56-7, 59; Theal, Beginning, pp.406-7.

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accounts are less revealing than those which relate to earlier periods. Unlike the all-embracing descriptions left by the wandering castaways of an earlier era, in the main the accounts are pre-occupied with the question of the incidence of commodity exchange, though this in itself is a reflection of the importance of the activity in the social formation of the period.

As in earlier chapters, a simple threefold geographical division of the region will be employed to convey the uneven pattern of social development in south-east Africa, and to highlight the particular crisis which, by 1750, came to characterise the social formation of the northern zone.

The southern zone was now characterised by the intermittent existence of the homestead production complex of agriculture and livestock-husbandry throughout its full extent from the Mzimkulu to the Fish River, though pockets of settlement associated with simpler forms of subsistence production probably still existed.[4]

The wreck of the Dutch ship STAVENISSE took place in 1686 not far from the Mzimkulu River. The report that up to 1,000 armed men were present at the wreck at any one time would seem to suggest the presence in the area of a polity able to organise and control a substantial number of warriors.[5] Parties which traversed the country south of the wreck reported passing through countries controlled by a number of such kingdoms, some or all of which represented the exercise of power at the level of the feudal paramountcy.[6] Monica Wilson has identified these

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[4] For the collection of honey and roots see Bird, Annals, I:47. For fishing see Ibid., I:58. For hunting see below.

[5] Theal, History and Ethnography, II:291.

[6] Bird, op.cit., I:40-42,45,47; Wilson, "Early history", p.172. One survivor reported the countries of the Temboes, Mapontemousse, Maponte, Matimbas, Maligryghas and Magossebe. Another, who may have followed a different route (nearer to the coast or further inland), mentioned Emboas, Mapontes, Matimbes, Magrigas and Magosse.

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as the Mbo, at and almost certainly to the north of the wreck; and in succession to the southwards, the Mpondomisse, Mpondo, Thembu, Riligwa, and Xhosa.[7] Beyond to the south was a tract of country difficult for the traveller, because no polity was then in a position to guarantee security within it. Its principal inhabitants were 'bandits', who used bows and arrows, and were known as the Makanaena.[8]

The accounts of the castaways in this period tell us very little of the social organisation of the countries through which they travelled. This is not particularly surprising. The castaways hurried through this zone in the hope of reaching the Cape, and probably only passed through the periphery of states, the centres of which lay inland.[9] They would not have lingered in any one place sufficiently to enable them to report in detail on the prevailing social formation. Their brief picture is borne out by oral tradition. The genealogies of the ruling lineages of the groupings identified from these accounts by Monica Wilson, go back several generations before the 1680s, and there are indications in most of a presence in the region at this period, though some may still have been centred a little way inland.[10]

There is one very important exception to this generally brief picture of the social formation presented in the accounts. This concerns the 'Magosse' or 'Xhosa' people. Reports of the dangers of travelling onward through the country of the Makanaena, persuaded most of the castaways to halt their overland journeys in the Xhosa country. They learned very little about the Xhosa

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[7] Wilson, "Early history", p.172.

[8] Bird, Annals, I:42.

[9] The castaways sometimes travelled along the shore itself; Ibid., I:40.

[10] Wilson, op.cit., p.174.

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paramountcy itself, an indication perhaps of its relative lack of development. They did report in considerable detail, however, on the pattern of social relations prevailing within one of the chiefdoms which comprised the loose Xhosa feudal confederacy. The castaways spent many months living in this chiefdom.[11] Precise identification of the polity concerned is difficult, but it may have been Gonaqua.[12] It is suggested that the patterns of social relations prevailing within this chiefdom, were probably fairly typical of those which characterised the southern zone as a whole in the period.

This particular 'Magossebe', 'Magosse' or 'Xhosa' chiefdom, was a formidable structure in the late 17th century. It dominated a tract of country which was "incredibly populous", and situated in the vicinity of the Fish river.[13] The land was fertile, and the subsistence base built around well-developed cultivation and animal-husbandry.[14] The geographical extent of the state cannot be estimated, though the coast may have formed one boundary.[15]

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[11] Some castaways were taken off by ship from this country 2 years and 11 months after they had originally been victims of the wreck. They had taken up to 22 months to reach it, sometimes travelling along the shore, and sometimes up to 90 miles inland; Bird, Annals, I:40,45.

[12] Magamma, the name of the chief in whose territory the castaways resided, does not seem to feature in the genealogies of the Xhosa royal-descent group; Harinck, "Interaction between Xhosa and Khoi", pp.154-5 and n. There was, however, a ruler of the Gonaqua called Gamma who was alive at about this time. According to Harinck, Gonaqua was located a little inland in the vicinity of the Fish and Keiskamma rivers; Ibid., pp.163-5. This location tallies with the accounts of the castaways. The chiefdom was said to have been located in latitude 33°42'. It was separated from the STAVENISSE wreck by some 130 leagues (390 miles approx.), and four great rivers. The wreck probably lay not more than 70 miles south of 'Port Natal'; Bird, op.cit., I: 40,45; Theal, History and Ethnography, II:291.

[13] Wilson, "Early history", pp.171-2; Bird, op.cit., I:46.

[14] There were plenty of cattle, and some sheep and goats. In addition to the usual range of vegetable crops and fruits, three types of grain are mentioned. One of these

The chiefdom was largely autonomous, but did acknowledge a level of feudal paramountcy beyond it, however loose this relationship may have been. The chief, through the mediating agency of an aristocracy of "great men", normally determined the outcome of disputes and effected punishment;[16]

> "but should the matter in dispute be of great importance, and when he cannot rely upon his own judgement, he refers the parties to an older King in his neighbourhood". 17

It is not clear what general obligations were due by the chief to the paramountcy, though support in time of war may have been one.

Within the chiefdom, the main centripetal force was a structure in which the various levels of political and economic power more or less coincided. The then current chief was the young Magamma.[18] His position appears to have been relatively little differentiated from that of an aristocracy of "great men", from amongst the ranks of which he was doubtless drawn. Below this came a level of individual homestead-proprietors, possibly with their own level of dependants. The class structure may have been of recent origin, reflecting the reduction of an independent Gonaqua chiefdom to the status of a Xhosa vassal state. Magamma and the "great men" may have been members of a colonial aristocracy. Certainly, by the middle of the 18th century, it was said that the

> "Gonaquas.....all.....resided among

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may have been maize, but if so it is strange that the castaways did not mention it by name. See Bird, Annals, I:42-4,46-7.

15 The centre of the chiefdom may have been some way inland, but some of the castaways stayed at homesteads which, though owing allegiance to it, could not have been far from the sea, since they were able to come down to the shore quickly once they learned that a ship had been sighted.

16 Bird, op.cit., I:46.

17 Report of a castaway quoted in D. Moodie, ed., The Record Or a Series of Official Papers Relative to the Condition and Treatment of the Native Tribes of South Africa (fasc. repr. ed., Amsterdam, 1960) p.431.

18 Bird, op.cit., I:42.

the Caffers and served them". 19

The power of Magamma was far from being absolute. Not only was he subject to an outside paramountcy, and to the demands of his "great men"; but he was also obliged to take into account the need to maintain and reward the loyalty of his subject people. The operation of the system can be clearly seen in the manner in which the products of war or raiding were distributed;

> "When the Magossebe have a dispute with any of their enemies, and declare a war, the booty of cattle taken from the enemy is divided between the King and the other great men: but the iron and copper is worn as a mark of bravery by those who get it." 20

A number of state monopolies were essential to the day-to-day maintenance of the chiefdom, and of the power of the chief within it. In addition to the state's major share in the distribution of the products of war, it also claimed a monopoly over the hunting of large-game, and over the distribution of the product;

> "On going to hunt, and killing any game of value, they bring the same before the king, who keeps it, rewarding the bringers by slaughtering an ox". 21

The monopoly probably had some relation to the ivory industry. Certainly there were elephants amongst the game seen in the area by visitors, although there is no direct mention made in the accounts of an ivory commerce.[22]

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[19] Report of a Dutch East India Company expedition to the eastern Cape in 1752, quoted by Harinck, "Interaction between Xhosa and Khoi", p.167n. 'Caffer' is used here in the restricted sense of the people of the 'Caffer' or 'Xhosa' nation.

[20] Bird, Annals, I:43. The repeated use of the term 'King' in the account is a little misleading. Magamma seems to have been implied. His power was well short of that of a 'king'.

[21] Bird, op.cit., I:43-4.

[22] Ibid., I:44.

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Complementing the hunting monopoly of the state, was an equally centralised control over trading relationships with external agencies;

> "No one must presume to barter anything to a stranger without the King's consent". 23

The pattern in Magamma's chiefdom, as in many other south-east African polities at the time, seems to have been that in theory the state maintained the right to control and profit from all trade. In practice immunities were allowed to homestead-proprietors to trade in small provisions, without the state levying any direct charge on the transaction. The monopoly was particularly concerned with long-distance trade goods; such as ivory, metals and rare skins.[24] Much the same situation still prevailed in the 17th century at Delagoa Bay itself.

By this time, no attempt seems to have been made to systematically reorganise the prevailing relations of subsistence production. The homestead remained the fundamental subsistence-production unit in Magamma's chiefdom, and the head of each was left with a large degree of autonomy in regard to the organisation of the production process;

> "land is in common, each grazing his cattle or cultivating the ground where he likes; they may also remove from place to place, provided that they remain within the boundaries of the kingdom". 25

The territorial limitation on the scope for movement was fundamental to the maintenance of the state; because, in Feudal conditions, its position rested upon the extraction of rent or tribute from the homesteads in various forms. For a homestead-proprietor to remove his labour-force, and other aspects of his production unit, beyond these limits, constituted an act of open rebellion.

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[23] Bird, Annals, I:43.

[24] The production and commercial exchange of rare animal skins was an important industry over much of south-east Africa in the period. They were becoming extensively used in providing distinctive military and other uniforms of the various states.

[25] Bird, op.cit., I:46. See also below chapts. X and XI.

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The absence of a concentration of sovereignty in the sphere of the economy concerned with subsistence production, was brought home to the castaways within hours of their arrival in the chiefdom. Though Magamma was not displeased by their arrival, he was not in a position to offer them subsistence on his own behalf. The castaways were obliged to enter into direct relationships with individual homesteads. They first begged for food from homesteads which they came across, but later they seem to have been formally distributed more evenly amongst them. Presumably they were called upon to assist in the work of the homesteads, though there is no direct mention of this in the accounts.[26]

The mode of surplus extraction upon which the state was founded, seems to have involved the exploitation of the homestead as a collective unit of production. In effect each homestead was in process of being reduced to the status of a peasant household. There is no evidence that the mechanisms used at this time involved the direct expropriation of surplus through the use of force. Rather more subtle mechanisms were employed, which nevertheless amounted to the extraction of rent, because they effectively involved levies on the surplus-labour generated, in various forms, by the homestead production unit. The operation of these mechanisms by the state worked to the benefit of the aristocracy of "great men", as well as to that of the chief himself.

The most important of these mechanisms involved part of the fruits of the labour expended in war or in hunting, being demanded by Magamma and the aristocracy over and above their direct participation in such activities.[27] Though the direct-producer in these cases retained access to a proportion of the product of his labour as warrior or hunter, if indeed any was forthcoming, the surplus

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[26] Bird, Annals, 1:45.

[27] See above p.212.

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accruing to a number of men by virtue of their collective labour was creamed off to support the position of chief and aristocracy.

Two other mechanisms had a similar effect. One of these was the system by which the state levied fines on its subjects in the form of cattle.[28] The second was that by which cattle sacrifices were offered up to the state's religious leaders, of whom the chief himself was the most important.[29]

A final mechanism involved the state's ability, through its insistence upon a trading monopoly, to manipulate the pattern of exchange relations to its benefit, and to the detriment of individual homestead-proprietors. Outsiders had first to barter with the chief, in the full knowledge that all other producers were forbidden to trade until such time as his price had been met. The price paid in subsequent transactions would tend to have been lower, both in view of the larger number of producers involved, and by virtue of the fact that a portion of the purchaser's requirements had already been met.

Although these various mechanisms involved the transfer of surplus from the homestead to levels of sovereignty above it, none directly attacked the capacity of the homestead to continue to produce this surplus. Moreover, the intensity of exploitation was not great. Visitors usually painted a fairly rosy picture of the situation of the Magosse people, even to the extent of pointing out that their women wore better quality ornaments than those who lived closer to the Dutch settlements at the Cape.[30]

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[28] Bird, Annals, I:46.

[29] Ibid., I:43. An important part of the power of 'Nguni' political leaders came to derive from this close association of 'church and state'. See also Wilson, "Nguni", p.126.

[30] Bird, op.cit., I:42.

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The surplus accruing to the chiefs in such states was not used in conspicuous consumption, in so far as this would have been possible in the context of the level of the forces of production at the time;

> "Their houses are like hay-cocks in Europe, and only a little larger than the common huts, and they wear the skins of the deer or tiger, but in other respects they are quite like the common people.". 31

In this and other respects, the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of powerholders seems to have been somewhat less than in the most complex of the states of the northern zone.

Metals were amongst the items most highly valued in this particular Magosse chiefdom. According to one observer

> "their riches consist in cattle and assagais, also copper and iron". 32

Lobola payments involved copper, iron, assagais which may have been iron-tipped, and the more familiar cattle.[33] Rituals surrounding death were also structured in such a way that, although the individual was lost to the community, his or her store of copper and iron was preserved.[34]

The importance of metals is also indicated by the part played by them in major state ceremonies and rituals. A key element of the ritual surrounding the death of the chief, involved the whole population immediately laying

> "aside the copper rings worn as ornaments on the necks and arms.....". 35

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[31] Bird, Annals, I:46.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid., I:43.

[34] Ibid., I:46.

[35] Ibid.

There is no evidence that copper ore was actually mined within the territorial limits of the chiefdom. In fact both the chief and his subjects appeared pleased to trade their cattle for copper carried by an occasional European visitor.[36] The chiefdom may have been an important manufacturing and dispersal centre for copper ornaments, for which it appears to have possessed a smelting capacity. 'Natal' was known as the main regional centre of iron manufacture, but the Magosse seem to have been unusual in their ability to work in copper;

> "As the Natal Hottentots smelt their iron, so they (the Magosse) can smelt the metal for arm-rings: they may also have some knowledge of minerals." 37

Identification of the source of the copper ore is more problematic. Part of it may have come from the north, for a copper-mining complex is known to have existed in the early 19th century at the junction of the Mzimhlanga and Mzimvubu rivers;

> "The people living on the spot sold to the parts of tribes living at a distance this ore, which they called Mqgabu, 'green paint'." 38

This mining complex must have been located close to the Dedesi tributary of the Upper-Mzimvubu river, which is reported to have been the dispersal point of the Xhosa,

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[36] Bird, Annals, I:39.

[37] Ibid., I:42. From the context it seems that 'Hottentots' is used here as a general derogatory term for the African population of the area, regardless of ethnicity. Harinck has taken the quotation to be a reference to iron-smelting amongst the Magosse. The interpretation here is based on the assumption that arm-rings were almost always made from copper. This interpretation would also seem to fit the sentence construction rather better. Monica Wilson has recorded that the accounts include reference to the making of various tools and ornaments; Wilson, "Early history", p.172. Yet there is nothing in Bird's collection of these descriptions to indicate manufacturing in iron, or of the use of any iron tools beyond the assagai, which might well have been imported. All other sources speak of iron having been scarce in the southern zone right up to the 19th century.

[38] R.B. Hulley, "An account of the Rev. Owen's visit to Zululand in 1837 as related by R.B. Hulley", Natal Archives, Private papers collection, no.12, p.2. Hulley had travelled with Owen from Butterworth as interpreter and artisan.

Thembu, and Mpondomisse groups from what may have been a parent Mpondo lineage.[39]

On the other hand, at some point trading relations involving the importation of refined copper may also have been opened up with the Tswana people and the Khoi in the southern African interior, and later with the Dutch at the Cape.[40] The presence of special guest huts at each major 'village' or homestead suggests a pattern of considerable interaction between the chiefdom and outside groups.[41]

Although there is evidence in Magamma's chiefdom of an articulation between the food production practices characteristic of the homestead, and elements of commodity production and exchange, there is no indication that the incipient contradiction involved had reached anything like crisis proportions. A loose pattern of social relations appears to have characterised the social formation, and the castaways saw no evidence of preparations for conflict with outside forces, or of civil turmoil, during the period of their residence in the state. If later evidence is any guide, there were still possibilities for the application of technological innovations in the sphere of agricultural production, and for further social differentiation, before a situation would be reached which demanded a more fundamental readjustment of the social forces. It was not a society particularly under stress, and perhaps in this regard fairly typical of the situation prevailing in the southern zone as a whole during the 1680 to 1750 period.

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[39] See above p.88n.

[40] Harinck, "Interaction between Xhosa and Khoi", pp.160-166,170 fig.7.

[41] Bird, Annals, I:46.

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In the central zone, that is between about the Mzimkulu and Mfolozi rivers, there were signs of a much more developed commodity production and exchange component within the overall economic articulation than was the case further to the south. In fact in the vicinity of a bay on this section of the south-east African coast in the period, there took place the first stirrings of developments which provided an internal threat to the position of the Delagoa Bay trading empires.

The impression is usually given in historical writing on south-east Africa, that throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, Delagoa Bay remained the only harbour linking overland and Indian Ocean commercial networks.[42] This was not the case. During the later part of the 17th century, 'Port Natal' began to emerge as a rival. By the 1680s it could be reported that

> "This river is the principal one on the coast of Natal, and has been frequently visited by merchant vessels". 43

Amongst these ships were a number of English vessels. A Captain Rogers visited the 'Bay of Natal' on a number of occasions before 1685, and brought back to the metropolis a detailed account of the country. At 'Port Natal' he also found two men from a ship wrecked five years previously.[44]

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[42] Alan Smith's excellent studies of commercial and political patterns in south-east Africa are concerned only with the Delagoa Bay dimension, and relatively little attention is paid to developments before 1720; Alan Smith, The Struggle for Control of Southern Mozambique, 1720-1835, Ph.D. thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1970; "Trade as a factor"; "Delagoa Bay and the trade of south-east Africa".

[43] Unattributed mss. in Dessinian Collection, Cape Town, reproduced in Bird, Annals, I:27.

[44] Others amongst the survivors of this vessel had tried to make their way to Delagoa Bay. There is no known record of their having arrived, and accordingly no account of their experiences. See William Dampier, Voyages and Discoveries (1699; 2nd ed., ed. and intro. Clennel Wilkinson, 1931) pp.296-7. Extracts from this work are reproduced in Bird, op.cit., I:56-9.

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The ships which called at the 'Port' in this early phase of its history, did not do so as a result of chance landfalls. As early as 1684 there is a report of a ship being fitted out in England with trade goods for "Rio de Natal".[45]

The captains and merchant backers of these vessels seem not, at this stage, to have been primarily interested in ivory. After all, ivory was available at Delagoa Bay and elsewhere further north on the coast, and the potential of the central and southern zones in this regard was perhaps only just becoming discovered. The demand was for cattle and their products, probably for use mainly as provisions for the crews - and perhaps for their anticipated cargoes of slaves. The Dutch were making the taking-on of provisions by English ships at the Cape extremely difficult.[46]

Cattle were not kept by ordinary homesteads north of about St. Lucia Bay, but only by the powerful. In consequence the BONAVENTURA found the price asked for cattle at Delagoa Bay more than it could meet, and put to sea once more intending to make a landfall to the south, where trading prospects were expected to be brighter.[47] Unlike this ship, the CAPTAIN WYNNFORD actually made straight for 'Port Natal' from the metropolis, and entered the harbour in July 1685.[48] The primary aim of its captain was to secure a cargo of beef, and a tiny

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[45] This was the GOOD HOPE which left Gravesend in November 1684 with a crew of 50. It made straight for the 'Natal' coast which it reached in May 1685. It was partially wrecked on crossing the sand 'bar' into the harbour of the 'Port'; Bird, Annals, I:34. Some of the survivors put to sea again in what was probably the deck-boat of this ship, whilst others joined the CAPTAIN WYNNFORD. A third group of survivors remained at the 'Port', and on one occasion made a lengthy journey inland. They were eventually joined by the BONAVENTURA survivors, and most of the STAVENISSE people, in constructing the CENTAUR, a vessel in which all but five of this combined party sailed to the Cape in February 1687; Ibid., I:29,31-5.

[46] Alexander Hamilton, A New Account of the East Indies (Edinburgh, 1727; repr. ed., 2 vols., London, 1930) I:14.

[47] Bird, op.cit., I:33.

[48] This was a small vessel of only 35 tons; Ibid., I:34.

amount of ivory seems to have constituted little more than a souvenir of the voyage. A party from the ship,

> "Having gone more than 13 or 14 mijlen inland.....returned with two elephants' teeth of two or three pounds weight; and after having purchased, killed, and salted a good many oxen and cows, sailed again....".49

It was not long, however, before the availability of ivory began to interest visitors to 'Port Natal' as much, if not more than the supply of cattle and cattle products. Amongst the first systematic ivory traders at the 'Port' were survivors of shipwrecks. Before the late 17th century, the first thought of castaways had been to seek their overland escape from the area, or to join African societies on a more or less permanent basis. Now they could establish themselves as traders in the confident expectation that they could later join one of the small ships which were now putting into the 'Port' for provisions. After all, there were many precedents for itinerant European traders establishing themselves in a similar way on other margins of expanding European commercial empires.[50]

The first group known to have followed this course of action comprised five English sailors of the GOOD HOPE, in May 1685. Having refused the opportunity of joining other vessels, and

> "finding that their copper rings were much prized, they sold them for elephants' teeth, and in a short time they had collected, as he guessed, three tons". 51

The ivory was eventually shipped out to the Cape in the CENTAUR in February 1687.[52] Another group of sailors

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[49] Bird, Annals, I:34. See also Theal, History and Ethnography, II:293. The Dutch 'mijl' was very variable, but usually taken as the equivalent of the English 'league' in this period, i.e. some 3 miles; C.R. Boxer, The Dutch Seaborne Empire, 1600-1800 (Hutchinson, 1965) p.305. I have used this equivalent whenever the term has arisen.

[50] For examples from the early stages of the Portuguese relationship with west Africa, see Boxer, Portuguese Seaborne Empire, p.31.

[51] Bird, op.cit., I:34. See also Theal, op.cit., II:291,293-5

[52] Bird, op.cit., I:34.

stayed behind, probably with a similar aim in mind.[53]

It is not entirely clear from what source or sources the men of the GOOD HOPE obtained this ivory. One possibility is that it had been obtained through trade with one or more interior powerholder, who was probably accustomed to collecting ivory for eventual exchange at Delagoa Bay. Certainly, on at least one occasion, the party travelled between 75 and 150 miles into the hinterland of 'Port Natal', and had dealings with a powerholder whose high status was indicated by the heavy and unusual metal ornament which he wore.[54] The group was also familiar with the then current rates for the hire of porters in the area.[55] It is equally plausible, however, that some or all of this store of ivory had been accumulated through a number of dealings with direct producers operating in the marshy country nearer the coast; though it would then be strange that powerholders who were used to controlling the ivory industry did not move swiftly to remove this threat to their monopoly.

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[53] They comprised 4 Englishmen and 1 Frenchman. See Theal, History and Ethnography, II:295; J.S. Christopher, Natal. Cape of Good Hope.....Comprising Description of this Colony etc. (1850) pp.16-17.

[54] The journey was of 50 mijlen or 150 miles, but it is not clear whether this was the total for the round - trip, or simply the furthest point reached; Theal, op.cit., II:294; Christopher, op.cit., pp.16-18. The castaways thought that the metal ornament was gold, but it was perhaps more likely to have been brass. Brass was beginning to be imported through Delagoa Bay from the English at about this time; Smith, Struggle for Control of Southern Mozambique, p.164. As in the case of copper, however, it is just possible that these imports were undercutting an indigenous brass-smelting industry, albeit probably at an embryonic stage of development. The raw materials for the smelting of brass, and its near relative bronze, notably copper and tin, were available and being traded in southern Africa in this period. There are hints in the archaeological record of smelting of this type, but they have yet to be systematically dated. See, for example, P.A. Wagner, "Bronze from an ancient smelter in the Waterberg district of the Transvaal", South African Journal of Science, 23 (1926) pp.899-900; "Further notes.....", Ibid., 26 (1929) pp.563-74; L.C. Thompson, "A native-made tin ingot", Nada 31 (1954) p.41; M. Baumann, "Ancient tin mines of the Transvaal", Journal of the Chemical, Metallurgical and Mineral Society of South Africa 19, pp.120-32; 20, pp.32-4.

[55] See below p.233.

Visitors to the central zone in this period spoke in enthusiastic terms of the potential of the country for the ivory industry. They drew attention to the presence of large numbers of elephants, their concentration in herds, and their substantial size;

> "Elephants are so plenty here that they feed together in great troops, a thousand or fifteen hundred in a company". 56

The orders of magnitude in another account, whilst remaining impressive, seem rather more realistic;

> "There are elephants of an incredible size, and in such numbers, that 50 or 60 are seen together". 57

There were also 'sea horses' in the area.[58] There is no clear indication where precisely these concentrations of large-game were to be found, though earlier parties of travellers had seen elephants or game-traps in marshy country near the coast, and along the major river valleys.

Interested parties in the metropolis and its overseas satellites, who were in touch with the rather specialised literature relating to the expansion of European commercial activities, could now read sanguine accounts of the productive potential of these lands;

> "This same Natal is said to be a fertile country, and everything will grow there the same as in Europe". 59

In remarks such as these can be discerned the first stirrings of a mode of thinking which was to become the foundation for a 'Natal lobby'; a collection of interest groups which came to press for the European colonisation of the region.

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[56] Dampier, Voyages, p.297; also in Bird, Annals, I:57. Although the orders of magnitude are perhaps too large to be credible, this does not seem adequate reason for their reduction to 100 and 150 respectively in a work which includes this quotation; J.S. Christopher, Natal, Description, p.15.

[57] Bird, op.cit., I:32; Christopher, op.cit., pp.16-17. For another reference to the presence of elephants at this time see Bird, op.cit., I:25.

[58] Dampier, op.cit., p.297. See also above p.126 n42, and below

[59] Johan Daniel Butna, "A true account and description of the Cape of Good Hope", mss. c.1685, Dessinian Collection, Cape Town, reproduced in Bird, op.cit., I:26.

In more 'popular' works, impressions of the region were already beginning to be set within a racist ideological framework. It was to reach its apogee in the 19th century, and came to serve as a rationale, both for the initial extension of capitalist relations of production to the region, and for the various forms of labour coercion which became necessary for the extraction of profit;

> "The natural fertility of these countries makes the inhabitants lazy, indolent, indocile and simple". 60

Again,

> "They are nimble people, but very lazy: which probably is for want of commerce". 61

English sailors and the English merchant backers of 'privateers' which called at 'Port Natal' in this period, were not alone in showing interest in the commercial and other possibilities of the central zone of south-east Africa.[62] The Dutch were equally active, but in this case with the backing of a monopolistic chartered company. Cape representatives of the Dutch East India Company, probably because of the competitive situation at Delagoa Bay, showed considerable interest in 'Port Natal' in the period. As early as the 1680s it was reported that

> "The East India Company would have taken possession of this fertile land (Terra de Natal) years past but for seeing at the mouth of the Port a reef or a sand -bank that no galiot without touching could get over without danger; so that a small vessel could not safely go in there". 63

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60 Hamilton, East Indies, I:15, citing a survivor of the JOANNA wrecked in 1683, who travelled overland to the Cape. Another version gives 'imbecile' rather than 'indocile'; Bird, Annals, I:25. The gist is of course the same.

61 Dampier, Voyages, p.298.

62 The term 'privateer' is used here to denote merchant vessels not of the English East India Company, which in theory, had a monopoly of all English trade with the Indies, a term which included south-east Africa in the period. Ships wishing to trade in the 'Indies' had to purchase a licence from the Company for each voyage. It is doubtful whether this regulation was always complied with. See Arthur W. Secord, Robert Drury's Journal and Other Studies (Urbana: Illinois UP, 1961) p. .

63 Butna, "True account", in Bird, op.cit., I:26.

The catalyst for change in this policy was the arrival of the CENTAUR at the Cape in February 1687, with a number of Dutch and English castaways aboard, survivors of various recent wrecks on the 'Natal' coast.[64] The passengers of this ship not only brought to the Cape a quantity of ivory, but also important news concerning the productive potential of the area in regard to this and other items. To the dismay of the Company's representatives, however, the ship also brought the information that a small group of "foreigners" had settled in at 'Port Natal' and had refused to join the CENTAUR.[65]

Faced with this situation, the Company's representatives at the Cape moved swiftly. First, they bought the provisions of beef and grain which had been left over from the voyage. On examination the grain was found to be different from that already known at the Cape, but valuable nevertheless for making bread.[66] This confirmation of the picture the Council had already received of the productive potential of 'Natal', was of considerable importance at the time. The Council was then concerned to find a supply of grain which could be tapped to supply the subsistence of an influx of new 'free' men or settlers who were shortly expected to arrive at the Cape from Europe.[67]

The Council's second move was to buy the CENTAUR itself, and to hire two of its passengers - English sailors from the wreck of the GOOD HOPE - to act as guides on a voyage back along the coast.[68] This expedition was thought

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[64] Bird, Annals, I:35-6. See also above p.222.

[65] Ibid., I:35. These men had "thought it better and more advantageous to remain there than to trust themselves to the uncertain waves of the sea and of fortune".

[66] Ibid., I:32,36. The grain was either 'millet' or 'sorghum', because maize was known to officials at the Cape by this time. Van Riebeeck had sent for maize samples as early as 1652; Van Riebeeck to Batavia, 13/5/1652, cited by A,H.H.Goodwin, "The Origin of maize", South African Archaelogical Bulletin, VIII, (March 1953) p.13.

[67] Bird,op.cit., I:48.

[68] Ibid., I:32-3,36. At least one of these men, by the name of Kingston, had been amongst thos who had built up a stock of ivory through trade; Ibid., I:32,34. See also above p.221.

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necessary by the Council,

> "that the five Englishmen left there by the packet may be brought hither in order by these means to deprive European potentates of the possession of these countries". 69

The vessel sailed from the Cape in November 1687. It was able to take off all but six castaways residing in the 'Magosse' country, though it is not clear whether a landfall was made at 'Port Natal' itself.[70]

The remaining castaways dotted along the coast, provided the public justification for another Company expedition to these parts. In October 1688 the Company vessel NOORD was sent along the coast, ostensibly for this purpose. The primary object of the voyage was in reality rather different. It was to survey the harbours and commercial potential of the whole of south-east Africa. After sounding and surveying Delagoa Bay, the captain was to

> "form a minute description of all the advantages offered to the Company by the intervening country, either on the coast or in the interior.....and also to recover the men still missing of the crew of the STAVENISSE." 71

The ship visited Delagoa Bay, 'Port Natal', and the coast near the STAVENISSE wreck, but was prevented by storms from entering Algoa Bay. It returned to the Cape in February 1689.[72]

Encouraged by the reports brought back by the CENTAUR and the NOORD, the Council which managed the Dutch East India Company's affairs at the Cape, was anxious to bring the whole of south-east Africa into a dependent colonial

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[69] Records of the Council, quoted in Bird, Annals, I:32.

[70] Ibid., I:36-7. Three castaways declined to be taken off, and three others were away at the STAVENISSE wreck.

[71] Records of the Council, quoted by Bird, op.cit., I:44.

[72] Ibid., I:45,48-53.

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relationship with its particular Company satellite. The dream of an overland trading link between the Cape and these productive lands was already clearly in evidence of the thinking of the Council. A 'mission' was required to investigate Algoa Bay and enter into commercial relationships with the people of that area, and then

> "also to try whether we could not open a road in this direction to Terra de Natal, procure some intelligence of the missing crew of the STAVENISSE, and discover the whole country as far as Rio De la Goa, so as to bring into the hands of the Company, and of this Colony, whatever profits that country may afford". 73

In the event, a mission by sea was thought more likely to succeed, and the NOORD was once more sent along the coast in October 1689. The expansionist aims of the Council at this time are quite explicitly stated in the instructions given to the captain of the vessel;

> "Watching a fit opportunity, you will enter into a negotiation with the chief, or so-called Ingose, solemnly to purchase from him, for the Honourable Company, for beads, copper, ironmongery, and such other articles as they have a liking for, the bay Natal and the adjoining land, and you will have a deed of conveyance.....passed before commissioned members of the ship's council, and signed by the chief Ingose and some of his nearest relatives, taking good care that the articles of merchandise for which the bay and adjoining land is purchased are not noticed in the deed, except in general terms, and that the amount of the same be estimated at nineteen or twenty thousand guldens". 74

As the instructions imply, the value of the items was a hypothetical figure designed to impress other European powers. The actual transfer of wealth to be involved was but a fraction of this figure.[75] Similar instructions

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[73] Records of the Council, quoted in Bird, Annals, I:48. This may not have been the first time that an overland trading link to south-east Africa had been projected at the Cape. There is an unclear reference to some 'colonists' having been authorised by the Company to make such a journey in 1684, though the fate of this expedition is not mentioned; Ibid., I:26.

[74] Ibid., I:54

[75] Brookes and Webb, History of Natal, p.5.

were issued in regard to Algoa Bay, but only those concerning 'Port Natal' were in fact carried out.[76]

Although the Company headquarters in the Netherlands seems generally to have been well disposed to the idea of Cape expansion into south-east Africa; the policy itself, as in so many other cases in the history of the empires of European merchant capital, seems to have had its roots in the Cape Council.[77] There were already local Cape merchant interests which stood to gain from such a connexion, and their number was to continue to increase. The 'men on the spot' were eventually to have a substantial influence on the 19th century decisions to annex the region, and even on the form that this annexation was to take.

In the event, the Dutch did not carry through their ambitious plans for the central zone of south-east Africa. Attention was switched, in the early decades of the 18th century, from the potentialities of 'Natal' and its port, to the already proven commercial opportunities of Delagoa Bay. The 'Port' was not, however, totally abandoned. There are hints that as early as 1699 attempts were being made to place the ivory trade there on a sounder footing. In this year two men were left by an English ship which called at 'Port Natal'. They were instructed to gather ivory for subsequent collection. They must have been successful, for two others were left behind by the vessel which called to make the collection.[78] It is not clear whether this became a regular practice, though it does seem that vessels put into the 'Port' at fairly regular intervals to trade in this period. According to one source, 'Port Natal' came to be frequented by so many English that it came to be known to Dutch sailors as the 'Engelsche Logie'.[79]

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[76] Bird, Annals, I:55-6. The ship entered the Bay of Natal in late December 1689 and left again early in January 1690

[77] See for example, Bird, op.cit., I:53.

[78] Theal, History and Ethnography, II:398.

[79] C.F. Shuter, Englishman's Inn (Pietermaritzburg, 1963), cited by Brookes and Webb, History of Natal, p.6. The CLAPHAM may have been one such vessel. It is known to have traded beads and copper rings for ivory, at some point on the coast south of Delagoa in 1714; Derricourt, "Settlement", p.41.

There is also a clear reference to slaves being traded by an English ship which called at 'Port Natal' in 1719;

> "Here we traded for slaves, with large brass rings, or rather collars, and other things: we bought in a fortnight's time, 74 boys and girls: these are better slaves for working, than those of Madagascar, being stronger, also blacker". 80

Although this is the only recorded example of slave-trading at 'Port Natal' during the whole era of the European commerce in human cargoes, it is quite clear that this particular transaction was based upon exchange rather than force. The slaver seems to have offered a particularly high 'price'; it is doubtful if anything was more valuable in south-east Africa at this time than brass neck-rings. The exchange was presumably negotiated with a major powerholder, though this is not mentioned in the report of the incident. Morris thought that the slaves may have been sold by a group of recent migrants from the north, though there is no direct evidence for this.[81]

The trade passing through 'Port Natal' in this period was of sufficient importance for an attempt to be made in 1729 to establish a permanent factory. For reasons which are not entirely clear, the project was abandoned after a short time.[82]

Thus, in the period between about 1680 and 1730, there were signs of the development of 'Port Natal' as an alternative to Delagoa Bay as a link between the states of the interior of the central zone of south-east

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[80] Robert Drury, Madagascar : Robert Drury's Journal (2nd. ed., London, 1729) p.445. At one point the work was thought to have been the product of the imagination of the novelist Daniel Defoe, but for a convincing demonstration of its authenticity see Secord, Robert Drury's Journal. Secord has much else to say of value on the question of English involvement in Indian Ocean commerce in the period.

[81] Morris, Washing of the Spears, p.69.

[82] J.C. Chase, ed., The Natal Papers, A Reprint of all Notices and Public Documents, 1488-1843 (Grahamstown, 1843) p.13.

Africa, and the network of Indian Ocean commerce. Here the initial function of coastal middleman, involving the collection of ivory from the interior to be loaded onto the ships, was not being performed as at the Bay by African states, but by a handful of itinerant European traders. Unlike the situation at Delagoa Bay, therefore, there were no structural grounds for the emergence of a contradiction between the interests of European merchants, and local coastal middlemen. There were, however, strong grounds for the emergence of an open contradiction between those parties - African and European - who had become involved in the 'Port Natal' commerce, and the powerful Delagoa states, which stood to lose a great deal if the new trading routes linking 'Port Natal' and the heartland of south-east Africa were to become established. A further twist was given to the pattern of contradictions already existing between the Delagoa states, and those associated with the Vambe paramountcy of the central zone.

After 1730, 'Port Natal' appears to have undergone a sharp decline; its first period of rivalry with Delagoa Bay for the trade of south-east Africa at an end. Trade did not revive until the early part of the 19th century.[83] The possible reasons for this decline are discussed later in the chapter.

From the various comings and goings of visitors and castaways, it is possible to build up a picture of the prevailing pattern of exchange relations in the central zone between about 1680 and 1750. The evidence suggests that a surplus of foodstuffs was generally still being generated, and that people were free and interested to offer foodstuffs in barter relations with visitors. At 'Port Natal', plenty of food could be obtained by

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[83] I have only found one definite reference to a ship calling at the 'Port' between 1730 and 1820. This was a Dutch vessel which paid a visit during, or a little before 1757. Its activities are not described; Theal, Beginning, p.424. A careful examination of the appropriate European shipping records might conceivably reveal others. The revival of the trade in the 1820s is discussed in chapter 11 below.

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this method, including milk, bread, beans, poultry and pumpkins. Cattle and other livestock could be obtained by short journeys inland. A similar situation prevailed in the hinterland of the STAVENISSE wreck, some 70 miles south of 'Port Natal', near the Mzimkulu river.[84]

As in earlier times, the castaways and other visitors found that bartering relationships were a political as well as an economic function. The limits within which exchange could take place, were ultimately determined by the relative levels of force available to the negotiating parties. The STAVENISSE people reported that

> "The natives, indeed, offered us bread and cattle for sale, but we had nothing wherewith to purchase the one or the other. Nothing is esteemed there but beads and copper rings for the neck or arms. For nails, bolts and other ironwork of the wreck, we, indeed, got some bread and corn, but as the natives set to work themselves, and by chopping and burning fully supplied themselves with iron, we not being at first aware that it was so much regarded, nor daring to prevent them for fear of provoking them, as they had sometimes fully a thousand armed men, they had everything in abundance, while we suffered from want". 85

In desperate straits, some of these castaways welcomed the opportunity of joining with the survivors of the GOOD HOPE and BONAVENTURA at 'Port Natal'.[86]

The attraction of joining this combined party lay in the fact that, equipped with adequate firearms and

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[84] Bird, Annals, I:35,50; J.S. Christopher, Natal, Descriptio pp.18-19; Theal, History of South Africa, II:300. See also other examples quoted in the text of the chapter.

[85] Bird, op.cit., I:28-9. The ship was wrecked in February 1686. One section of the survivors set out to make the overland journey to the Cape, but travelled only as far as the 'Magosse' or 'Xhosa' country, from which most were eventually taken off; Ibid., I:28-9,31,40,75. For those who moved to 'Port Natal', see below on this page.

[86] Bird, op.cit., I:29.

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powder, it had been able to retain control of a substantial store of two of the most valuable types of trade goods in use in the central zone at this time; beads and copper. The five sailors of the GOOD HOPE, who declined various opportunities to leave the area, had been paid off by their former captain in goods of value in the local barter trade. They had

> "received from him for the wages they had earned, each 68 lbs. of copper arm, neck, and ear rings, and 14 lbs. of beads, 7 guns in all, with some powder and lead". 87

By the judicious barter of the beads alone, they were able to meet their subsistence needs in bread, meat, beer, milk, fruits and roots. The copper was used specifically for purchasing ivory.[88]

Drawing on this store of trade goods, the combined party of the castaways from the three ships was able to accumulate a vast store of foodstuffs with which to stock the CENTAUR - the vessel built by them at 'Port Natal'. When the vessel eventually sailed, for what proved to be a twelve day voyage to Cape Town, it had been stocked with

> "some provisions of ground meal, and two or three tons of corn, two or three hundred fowls, about 1000 lbs. of salted and smoked beef, with 20 goats, 150 pumpkins.....and all purchased for the copper and beads of the English". 89

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87 Bird, Annals, I:29,34.

88 Ibid.

89 This quotation is taken from the account of 10 officers and sailors of the STAVENISSE, and is reproduced in Ibid., I:31. A slightly different version is given in a work of Theal; "3 or 4,000 kilos of millet, 500 kilos of meat, millet in the form of meal, 20 goats, 2 to 300 fowls, 150 pumpkins....."; Theal, History of South Africa, II:295. The ship sailed in February, which was probably not the optimum time of year in which to acquire grain, because the new harvest would still have been in the fields. Presumably the grain stocks had been accumulated over a period. The surplus was sold to the Company at the Cape, meat fetching 3 stivers a pound, and corn 6 guilders per muid; Bird, op.cit., I:32,35. In view of all this, it is difficult to understand the begrudging comment of the master of the STAVENISSE on the food stocks of the CENTAUR; Bird, op.cit., I:29.

There are indications that labour-power, as well as ivory and provisions, could be obtained for payment. Copper; rather than the smaller items of currency, iron-nails and beads; was demanded. The party of castaways which built the CENTAUR at 'Port Natal' in 1686, obtained casual labour in this way to help in the construction work.[90] In addition, it was reported that porters could be hired for a single copper ear-ring, who were prepared to carry loads of from 50 to 100 lbs. over journeys lasting three or four days.[91] The five sailors of the GOOD HOPE appear to have acquired a small number of followers on a more or less permanent basis.[92]

These indications of the high value placed on copper, are consistent with the general impression of earlier travellers that it was the best item for barter in the central zone, and possibly further south as well. Merchants fitting out ships in Britain for trade in this part of Africa, seem to have been careful to include substantial stocks of copper rings of various sizes in the trade goods loaded.[93]

The high value placed on copper by the people of the central zone of south-east Africa,reflected the fact tha it could be traded on over a wide area in exchange for a variety of goods and services of more direct use-value than the metal itself. As one party of castaways reported; in exchange for a

> "copper arm ring or a common neck ring of the thickness of a tobacco pipe, they sell a fat cow or ox of 600 lbs. weight, more or less: for a similar ring they give as much corn as will fill an ordinary meal-tub." 94

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[90] Bird, Annals, I:31.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Ibid., I:34.

[94] Ibid., I:32. For other examples of cattle changing hands at the same rate see Ibid., I:39. A copper arm-ring was worth one rix-dollar at the Cape at about this time; Ibid.

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Control of cattle, of course, gave access to other forms of wealth, not the least of which was the labour and reproductive power of womenfolk through the lobola system. Amongst the 'Magosse' or 'Xhosa' people to the south, copper could also feature directly in lobola payments.[95]

Brass was of a much higher value in the central zone than copper. Even slaves could be obtained by those who controlled quantities of it.[96] It is likely, however, that brass was only just beginning to enter into a general pattern of exchange relations in the area. Previously it had been so precious that it had hardly been traded at all, but rather confined to use as a symbol of wealth and authority worn by the most powerful political leaders. Even in the 1680s, there is a report of a powerholder refusing to exchange the metal ornament which he wore, and which was probably brass, for copper of greater weight.[97]

The value and role of iron in the exchange economy seems to have been rather different to either that of copper or brass. At one level it was similar to copper in being widely coveted;

> "One may travel 200 or 300 mijlen through the country, without any fear of danger from the men, provided you go naked and without any iron or copper, for these things give inducement to the murder of those who have them". 98

Yet the actual exchange value of iron seems to have varied from one community to another. In the central zone its exchange value was generally lower than was the case further to the south. Iron nails were useful in obtaining small provisions. By contrast, only half a century previously, but far to the south, no less than 219 cattle were bartered by one group of castaways

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[95] See above p.216, and Dampier, Voyages, pp.299-300.

[96] See above p.229.

[97] Bird, Annals, I:35.

[98] Ibid., I:46.

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for pieces of iron.[99] It seems that the major component of the 'price' of iron in a particular situation was its usefulness to the individual would-be purchaser, rather than the degree to which it could be traded on.

Beads were widely accepted in small transactions. In fact in the central zone they seem to have functioned as a unit of account for such transactions, in much the same way that copper ornaments of certain size and type acted as a unit of account for trade in larger and more valuable commodities. At 'Port Natal', a range of more or less established prices, measured in beads, existed in the 1680s for small provisions.[100] As a wider variety of types of beads entered into circulation, so a more complex price structure may have come to be built around them.[101]

From the various examples of exchange relations which have been described, it seems possible to assemble a tentative table of exchange equivalents, as they existed in the vicinity of 'Port Natal' in the 1680s. The units of account shown on the left of the table are in ascending order of exchange value, but it

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[99] See above p.173. The incident occurred in 1635.

[100] These were:

3 beads	:	1 hen
4 beads	:	3 pumpkins
5-7 beads	:	½lb. bread
6-7 beads	:	1 quart of milk
8-9 beads	:	6-7 pumpkins

See Bird, Annals, I:50; Theal, History and Ethnography, II:300; J.S. Christopher, Natal, Description, pp.18-19.

[101] For discussion of the various types of beads which came to be used in commercial relations, see W.G.N. Van Der Sleen, "Trade wind beads", Man (February 1956) pp.27-29; A Handbook on Beads (Liège: Musée du Verre, 1967). Evidence that the type of bead offered by European traders was an important variable in the pattern of commerce in the area, will be cited below.

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is difficult to determine a precise scale of relative orders of magnitude:[102]

Approx. 4-5 beads or a few iron nails	:	Subsistence needs of one man per day
1 copper ear-ring	:	Labour-power of one man for 3 or 4 days
1 thick copper arm-ring or thin copper neck-ring	:	One meal-tub of corn, or one ox or cow of good weight, or ivory of many times greater weight than a given copper ornament
Brass arm or neck rings:		A very great deal of goods and services, in so far as they were negotiable at all. Possibly some items, such as slaves, which could not be obtained in exchange for lesser units of account

From the reports of exchange relations, and from other evidence, a fairly clear picture can be built of the subsistence base operative in most parts of the central zone in the period between about 1680 and 1750. The picture is one of a flourishing and diversified agriculture and livestock-husbandry.[103] An annual 'notional' surplus was probably still being generated, and smoothly translated into a 'real' surplus which could be accumulated. The fact that a large number of direct producers seem to have dealt with castaways and visitors in exchange relations, suggests that the amount of surplus being extracted by a level of sovereignty above the homestead was still not considerable.

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[102] Only in the case of the copper-ivory ratio was a calculation necessary. All other relationships are mentioned directly at some point in the contemporary accounts, or can be readily deduced. The cost of ivory is based upon the reported experiences of the five sailors of the GOOD HOPE. The maximum amount of copper available to them would seem to have been 340 lbs. A little of this was used to employ labour, but most of the remainder was used in acquiring some 3 tons or 6,000 lbs. of ivory. This gives a maximum ratio of 1 lb. of copper to 17.6 lbs. of ivory. Even if the figures on which the calculation is based were relatively inaccurate, the margin for error would seem such as to allow the conclusion presented above.

[103] In addition to the materials presented in the chapter, see Drury, Madagascar, p.445; Dampier, Voyages, pp.297-300.

The accounts cast little light on the problem of technological innovation in the sphere of agricultural production, except to confirm the use of a form of grain storage which probably had an ancient origin in the area;

> "They preserve their corn in cavities under ground, where it keeps good and free from weavils for years". 104

Maize may have been part of the subsistence base, as it had become further to the south, though it was still too scarce and too precious to feature in the barter trade with European visitors.[105] It is not clear whether iron-hoes as well as iron-hatchets were now in general use.

The basic political as well as production unit was still the homestead, described variously as the 'village' or 'kraal', and dominated by its male proprietor;

> "They live together in small villages, and the oldest man governs the rest, for all that live together are of kin, and therefore they submit to his government". 106

The division of labour was still primarily sexual, within the homestead;

> "the men keeping to their employment and the women to theirs".107

One visitor thought that there were no specialist arts or trades beyond the homestead, though no detailed account exists of any major state in the central zone in the period.[108] The precise form taken by the sexual

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[104] Bird, Annals, I:46; Theal, History and Ethnography, II:304.

[105] Two kinds of grain are usually mentioned; millet and 'corn' or 'guinea corn'. The latter was used especially for bread; see especially Dampier, Voyages, pp.298-9. 'Guinea corn' is one of the many problematic grain terms which occur in the historical record of Africa. Jeffreys generally thought it to be a name for 'sorghum', and I have interpreted it in this way here, though he also cites an example where the term seems to have been used for 'maize'. Jeffreys adds to the conclusion by asserting, without any evidence, that the 'Zulus' had maize before 1450!; M.D.W. Jeffreys, "The origin of the Portuguese word 'Zaburro' as their name for maize", Bulletin de l'I.F.A.N., series B, XIX (1957) pp.113,116,134.

division of labour is not entirely clear. In at least part of the central zone, however, cows were milked by the womenfolk.[109] This is a division of labour which reflects either the underemployment of the womenfolk in other spheres, which seems highly unlikely in view of the flourishing agricultural production in which women were almost certainly involved; or that there were now substantial demands on the labour-time of the menfolk beyond the homestead.

Beyond the homestead was an intermediate level of political power, for the people were generally

> "submissive to a chief". 110

Not all the people who owed allegiance to such a chief, would have been members of the clan or kin-group which may have formed the nucleus of the membership of a chiefdom. It was very much a political community; a state rather than a simple grouping of kin.[111] Such powerholders were recognised by visitors in the period by the amount of wealth they displayed in the form of metal ornaments, by their bearing, and by the size of the retinue which escorted them.[112] One such man must have dealt with the Dutch Company in the 1689 transaction involving the 'purchase' of 'Port Natal'.[113] A later encounter with the son of this powerholder indicated that such chiefdoms now remained in the hands of the same ruling lineage from one generation to the next, unless the pattern was violently overthrown. It

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[106] Dampier, Voyages, p.300.

[107] Ibid., p.298.

[108] Ibid.

[109] Ibid. Elsewhere, possibly further south, men undertook milking; Bird, Annals, I:31.

[110] J.S. Christopher, Natal, Description, pp.16-17.

[111] Wilson, "Nguni", pp.116-118.

[112] For one such encounter, see above p.234.

[113] See above pp.227-8.

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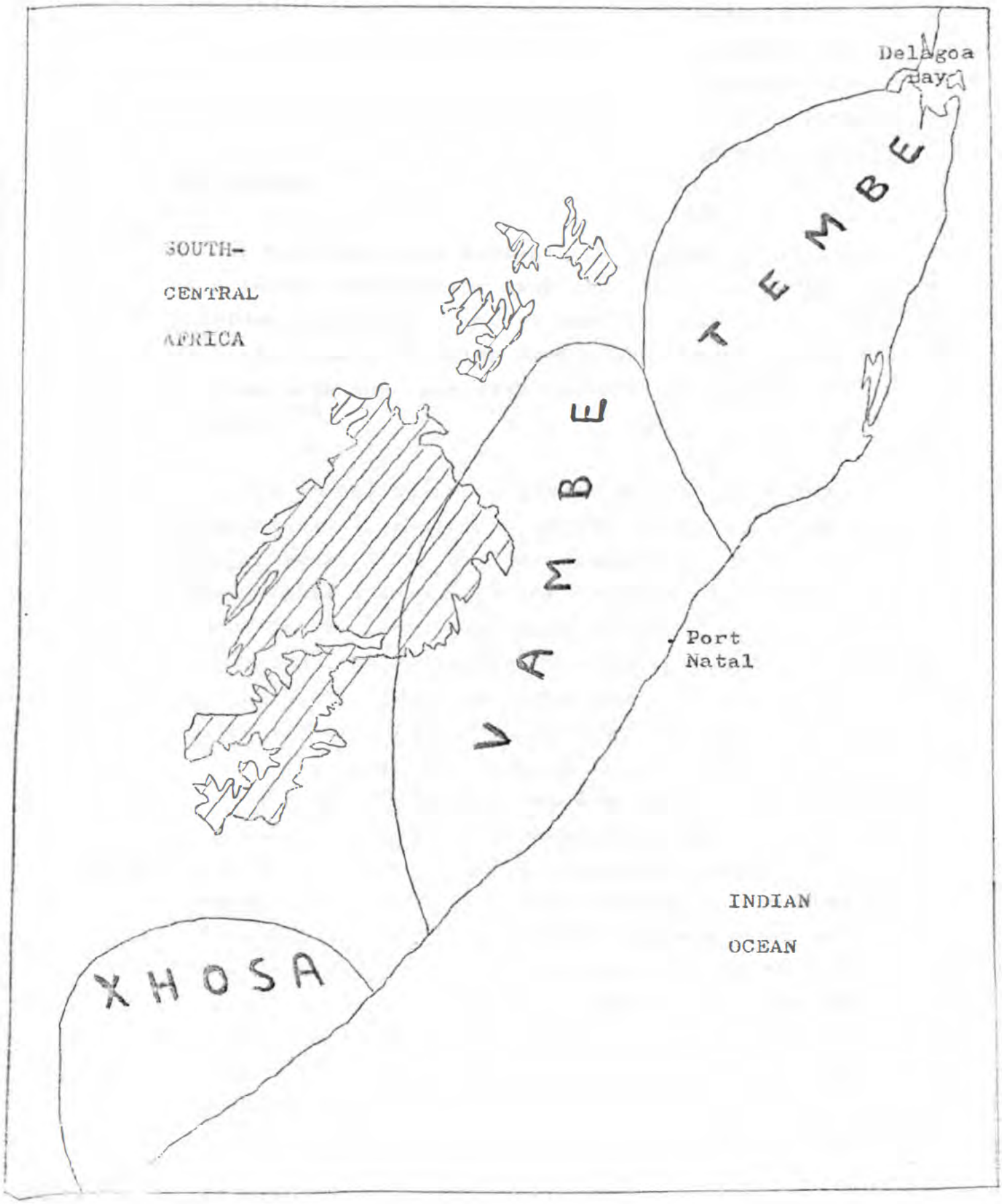

Fig.12 South-east Africa : Main Political Configuration c.1700

also indicated that the transaction had not involved a transfer of the total complex of property rights in land, but the acceptance by the powerholder of the Dutch Company as his personal vassal, together with the extension of the immunities and obligations that this entailed. The son repudiated the arrangement of his father.[114]

There are also indications of the persistence of a Feudal paramountcy over and above the individual chiefdoms in the period. It was the land of the 'Emboes' - of the 'Mbo',[115] which Bryant and Theal respectively equated with the late 16th century paramountcy of 'Vambe'.[116]

It is difficult to assess the level of the contradictions within the social formation of the central zone, which had been reached by 1750. A considerable increase in the incidence of commodity production and exchange seems to have taken place, relative to the situation prevailing in earlier periods. Yet there are signs that this had yet to place any substantial burden on the pattern of homestead food production, which was clearly in a flourishing state. There may have been some tension between the chiefdoms beneath the paramountcy, over the of the extraction of surplus from the commerce through their respective territories, though even is not mentioned directly in the contemporary The primary contradiction may not in fact have internal at all, but have existed between the paramountcy which dominated the central zone, and paramountcies which were competing for dominance o the northern zone. Reasons for this tension will

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[114] Bird, Annals, I:55,59.

[115] See above pp.208-9 and n.

[116] See above p.88, and Theal, History and Ethnography, I:55,353-9; II:302.

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discussed below. There is some evidence of it in the fears of some Delagoa people who featured in a curious incident at 'Port Natal' in 1719, involving an English slaving vessel;

> "Captain White put on shoar here six natives of Dillagoe, which he took with him the former voyage: They had two or three Kings' dominions to go through, before they came to their own country, and were in some fear they might be intercepted: The Captain gave them guns, ammunition, hatchets, and brass collars". 117

In the period 1680 to 1750, the commodity production and exchange components of the economy of the northern zone, beyond the Mfolozi, also increased in intensity and complexity. Both these developments were closely related to changes in the level and pattern of demand for south-east African commodities and markets amongst the merchant powers which controlled the principal Indian Ocean trading fleets.

Involvement in the commerce of eastern Africa, and especially in the ivory trade, was important to European merchant interests, because they found it extremely difficult to trade low quality European manufactures in exchange for cloth, pepper and other products of the Indian sub-continent. A costly transfer of bullion was sometimes the only way access could be gained to these important commodities.[118] The Portuguese had largely been able to avoid the difficulty by trading ivory from eastern Africa to India, where it was highly valued as a raw material for a number of luxury industries.[119] Now other European merchant interests sought to follow a similar pattern.

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[117] Drury, Madagascar, p.445.

[118] For most of the second half of the 16th century, for example, the Malabar pepper traders refused to accept payment in anything other than gold; Boxer, Portuguese Seaborne Empire, p.60. See also Brian Gardner, The East India Company (Rupert Hart-Davis, 1971) p.45.

[119] It was used in particular for the manufacture of Hindu marriage bracelets. African ivory was valued over and above the Asian variety, because it was softer and therefore easier to carve.

They were doing little more than trying to capture an existing Indian Ocean commerce from the Portuguese, in the same way that the Portuguese had captured it from the Arabs more than a century before. At various times before 1750, English, Dutch and French interests all came to be involved.'Pirates' were also active.

So far as south-east Africa was concerned, the main focus of attention was Delagoa Bay, where the Portuguese were known to have enjoyed a prosperous commerce since early in the 16th century. The interest shown in 'Port Natal', and which has already been described, was essentially a spillover from this. English vessels visited Delagoa Bay as early as 1597, and began to trade for ivory there from 1650.[120] They were especially active after 1680.[121] In the face of this competition, the Portuguese maintained their pattern of biennial trading visits to the Bay only with increasing difficulty; and in 1703, after the pangayo for the year 1692 had been destroyed in the Bay by a French privateer, they abandoned their seaward interest altogether.[122]

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[120] Smith, The Struggle for Control of Southern Mozambique, p.38; Theal, Records, V:296; Beginning, p.385.

[121] Dampier, Voyages, pp.296-7; Hamilton, East Indies, I:15-17; Robert Everard, "A relation of three years sufferings of Robert Everard upon the coast of Affada near Madagascar in a voyage to India in the year 1686", in Awnsham Churchill, ed., A Collection of Voyages and Travels, 6 vols. (London, 1704-32), VI:259-60; Bird, Annals, I:24-6,31,33; Theal, Beginning, pp.405-7,414; History and Ethnography, II:295; Smith, op.cit., esp. pp.38,43-4,58,61-2.

[122] Dampier, op.cit., pp.296-7; Theal, Records, V:295-7; Beginning, pp.406-7; History and Ethnography, II:299; Portuguese, p.272; Smith, op.cit., p.40.

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Subsequently the Portuguese concentrated on developing the northern port of Inhambane, and relied on an overland route to tap the trade between Delagoa Bay and points in the hinterland of south-east Africa.[123]

After a period in which Delagoa Bay was an 'open port', the Dutch East India Company finally followed up an early interest,[124] by establishing a permanent factory at the Bay in 1721.[125] This was abandoned in 1730, and Delagoa Bay once more reverted to the status of an 'open port' for the duration of the period under consideration in this chapter.

Alan Smith has already discussed these patterns in detail, and no attempt will be made to duplicate his work here.[126] The aim of the following discussion will rather be to try set the patterns of commodity exchange associated with these developments, beside other changes taking place in the social formation of the northern zone, and to examine the extent to which the contradictions implicit in the social formation were tending to produce a general feudal crisis.

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[123] Smith, The Struggle for Control of Southern Mozambique, pp.40,77-114. The Portuguese apparently continued to maintain an active interest in the internal and external politics of the Bay, and their diplomatic activity was influential in the prevention of the English East India Company from establishing a presence there; Theal, Beginning, p.414.

[124] As early as 1653, Jan Van Riebeeck, the Dutch East India Company's managing agent at the Cape, had suggested fitting out a ship to sail up the south-east coast of Africa, to search for the source of the gold, ivory, ebony and slaves which were thought to come from these parts; Andrew Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal : Documents Relating to the Early History of the Province, ed. P.R. Kirby (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 1955) pp.172-3. For later Dutch interest see Ibid., pp.158-9; and above p.226.

[125] For the history of the Dutch factory see Andrew Smith, op.cit., pp.159,174; Theal, Beginning, pp.414-5,419; History and Ethnography, II:461,467-8,471,479; Portuguese pp.272-3; Alan Smith, The Struggle for Control...., pp.49-111,154-5.

[126] Alan Smith, The Struggle for Control of Southern Mozambique; "Trade as a factor"; "Delagoa Bay and the trade of south-east Africa".

Unlike areas further to the south, the social formation of the northern zone came to be fraught with contradictions in the period between about 1680 and 1750. Four sets of contradictions can be identified which were associated in various ways with the commodity production and exchange components of the economy. First, a set associated with the relationship between the Delagoa middlemen and the emerging world Capitalist economy. The second set derived from the relationship between the Delagoa middlemen states, and powerholders located in the interior of south-east Africa. The third derived from the antagonistic interests of the European merchants and the interior ivory suppliers on the one hand, and the Delagoa middlemen on the other. The fourth and final set of commodity production and exchange contradictions, stemmed from the antagonistic element in the relationship between European merchants and Delagoa middlemen on the one hand, and those in the hinterland of south-east Africa engaged in manufacturing industry on the other.

The first set of contradictions included those which stemmed from the struggles being fought out amongst the various geo-political sectors of European merchant Capital. The confused picture of conflict and change involving Portuguese, English, Dutch and French interests at Delagoa Bay in the period, has already been described.[127]

Struggles being fought out within these geo-political sectors, between various groups of merchants, was also a factor which helped to generate this first set of contradictions.[128]

A further factor was change in the overall political economy of Imperialism, and in its specific national sectors. Change of this kind brought important structural changes in patterns of supply and demand at the Bay.

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[127] See above pp.241-2.

[128] Most of the English ships which visted the Bay were 'privateers' and therefore in competition. Even the Portuguese interest was divided; Theal, Records, VIII: 405-6,416; Smith, Struggle for Control of Southern Mozambique, pp.203-4.

A situation in which European merchants simply replaced Arab predecessors in undertaking bilateral trade between powerholders in Africa and India, gave way to a more complex pattern. The political economies of the Portuguese, Dutch,and English empires, came to include plantation agricultural components which required slave labour. Delagoa Bay was one of the ports from which a supply of slaves came to be demanded.[129] A demand was also instituted for a range of other commodities,on a more or less experimental basis, over and above the continuing demand for ivory and ambergris. This was especially the case during the era of the Dutch factory at the Bay.[130] There was also a shift in patterns of supply. Indian cloth and beads came to be augmented and eventually replaced by European manufactures; notably beads and copper and brass ornaments. The English appear to have played a leading part in altering the range of goods available for import through the Bay,[131] though the era of simple bilateral trading of European manufactures for raw materials produced in Africa was still some way off. A complex pattern of international commerce came into operation, which included south-east Africa as one leg of its network of relations.[132]

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[129] Smith, Struggle for Control of Southern Mozambique, p.68. It was not a major slaving port in the period.

[130] For ivory and ambergris see Everard, "Sufferings", p.259; Hamilton, East Indies, I:15-17; Smith, op.cit., pp.49-52, 61-2,72. Exports from Delagoa Bay in the Dutch period included ivory, ambergris, aloes (a plant species from which a purgative drug was extracted), gold, tin, copper, oil (which may have been from the sesame plant or from whales which are known to have been hunted later in the century), and slaves; Andrew Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal, p.174; Theal, Beginning, p.418; History and Ethnography, II:467-8,479; Alan Smith, Struggle for Control of Southern Mozambique, pp.49-52,61-2,72. When the Dutch withdrew, the market in most of these commodities,apart from ivory and ambergris, collapsed.

[131] By the early 18th century, for example, the Portuguese at Inhambane were offering Venetian beads; Alan Smith, Struggle for Control of Southern Mozambique, P.74. Brass appears to have been a speciality of the English; Ibid., pp.38,164. It is important not to anticipate the date when some European manufactures were important in the trade of south-east Africa. In the Dutch period, copper imported in European vessels to Delagoa Bay was

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Though these fluctuations in the pattern of supply and demand amongst the European merchant interests trading to Delagoa Bay, opened up a range of new opportunities for the Delagoa middlemen, it also meant that they were subjected to a range of new pressures. These emanated both from the fluctuations within the emerging world Capitalist economy, and from the struggles fought out amongst the various geo-political and economic segments within it. So far as the Delagoa states were concerned, unlike the long period of Portuguese dominance of the carrying function to and from the Bay, almost nothing could now be relied upon. It was difficult to know when ships would call, how many there would be, what they would require and have to offer, and what kind of pricing limits would prevail. An altogether different structure of commerce was involved in the period of the permanent Dutch factory, than in the periods when Delagoa was an 'open' port. No sooner were patterns of relations adjusted to deal with one situation, than a new one was brought into operation. The general contradiction of Imperialism, that between 'metropolis' and 'periphery', was imported into the south-east African context.

As Delagoa states manoeuvred in attempts to come to terms with these opportunites and pressures, tensions amongst them sometimes spilled over into conflict, and occasional confrontations with European merchant

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thought, by the Delagoa middlemen, to be inferior to that produced by their interior suppliers - though it may perhaps have been 'cheaper'; Alan Smith, Struggle for Control of Southern Mozambique, p.50. The cloth which commanded a high price at Delagoa Bay in 1718 was still 'coarse' Cambay (which is to say Indian) cloth; Hamilton, East Indies, I:17.

132 The network involved calls in the European metropolis, Africa/Madagascar, India/East Indies, West Indies/north America, and back to the metropolis. The pattern is discernible, together the commodities associated with the respective ports of call, in the voyages planned by some of the English ships of the period. The BAUDEN, out from England, called first at Delagoa Bay for ivory. This was to be sold in India, after which a call was to be made at Madagascar for 'blacks'. These were to be sold as slaves at Archin - a leading port on the island of Sumatra, and a staging point for the Dutch East Indian Empire. The ship was then to return to India, presumably for cloth or pepper to be sold in the metropolis;

interests are also recorded.[133]

The second set of contradictions associated with commodity exchange in the period, was generated by the relationship between the coastal middlemen, and states located in the hinterland of south-east Africa. These states sought to control and benefit from the flow of ivory to the Delagoa Bay middlemen. One group was located only a little way into the hinterland of the Bay, in positions

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Theal, Records, V:407. See also Boxer, Portuguese Seaborne Empire, pp.42-3; Dutch Seaborne Empire, pp. 154,198; Dampier, Voyages, pp.9,84-104. The CAPTAIN WYNNFORD, having loaded salted beef at 'Port Natal', sailed for "Mozambique, Madagascar or India"; Bird, Annals, I:34. The GOOD HOPE, after repairs due to its running aground on entering 'Port Natal', sailed from south-east Africa to trade on the east African coast some 300 miles beyond Mozambique. From here it was planned to proceed to Madagascar, where it was planned "to take in slaves". These were to be sold in the West Indies; Bird, op.cit., I:34. For other voyages which illuminate further the general pattern of English commerce in the period see Bird, op.cit., I:25-6; Secord, Robert Drury's Journal. For a fascinating record of slaving at Madagascar in the period see Drury, Madagascar. The Cape sometimes also featured as a port of call on voyages of this kind. With the permission of the local Council of the Dutch East India Company, for example, freemen at the Cape in the 1680s bought slaves who had been shipped from Madagascar in the English ship FRANCES; Bird, op.cit., I:26. Black slaves were also employed aboard ships of the Dutch East India Company at the time. The mate's boy of the STAVENISSE was one; Bird, op.cit., I:49.

[133] Smith, Struggle for Control of Southern Mozambique, pp.53-4,58,67-8,78,108.

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ideal for the interception of goods passing along the major trade routes to the Bay. Clashes between the Delagoa middlemen and powerholders of this kind sometimes occurred.[134]

Further inland were located numbers of chiefdoms which controlled territory through which passed major trade routes linking the Bay and points far in the interior. They extracted tolls and customs dues, insisted that their followers undertook for payment the carrying function through their respective territories, and otherwise sought to benefit from the passage of commerce. All these activities made inroads into the margins of profit accruing to the Delagoa middlemen. Since the trade routes from the southern side of the Bay seem to have reached almost to the Cape, and passed through a succession of such chiefdoms, the inroads must have amounted to a considerable total.[135]

At various points in the interior were located the principal trading partners of the respective Delagoa middlemen. These undertook the collection of ivory from the direct producers, and the organisation of its supply to the Bay, in return for the imported trade goods supplied by the middlemen. At the furthest point of complex trading networks, there was considerable scope for disagreement over pricing. These interior suppliers

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[134] For an example to the north-west of the Bay see Alan Smith, The Struggle for Control of Southern Mozambique, p.68.

[135] For some late 16th century examples of such inroads see above pp.143-5. For an 18th century example of tolls being collected along major river routes see Smith, op.cit., p.184. A number of pieces of evidence point to the existence of trade routes linking the Bay to points far to the south. For example, a 1688 report spoke of the Portuguese buying ivory at the Bay which had originated as far south as St. Lucia Bay; Theal, History and Ethnography, II:299. The 80 survivors of the English ship JOHANNA, wrecked on the coast near Delagoa Bay in 1683, were able to get a succession of porters and guides, in return for payment, who accompanied them on their chosen journey southwards. Some of these survivors eventually reached the Cape; Hamilton, East Indies, I:15; Bird, Annals, I:24-5.

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were constantly on the lookout for opportunities to free themselves from dependence upon the middlemen. To take an extreme example, they were no doubt willing partners in the opening up of a new trade route through 'Port Natal' in the period between about 1680 and 1730.

The general contradiction between the interests of the middlemen and those of interior powerholders, is clearly evident in the prevailing patterns of struggle and confrontation in the period. During the Dutch period, it was reported that the middlemen often went to war to prevent 'inlanders' trying to deal directly with Europeans.[136] The abrupt cessation of trading through 'Port Natal' may have been the result of just such a military operation. If so, it would have involved a thrust deep into the central zone, and thus deep into the territory of the chiefdoms of the Vambe paramountcy. In the 1750s, the people of Tembe would not attempt to penetrate the blockade mounted by interior powerholders.[137] By the same token, inland traders were not allowed through to trade directly with ships at the Bay.[138]

The third set of commodity exchange contradictions concerned the combined interest of European merchants and interior states, in outflanking and ultimately destroying the middlemen. The development of 'Port Natal' by English commercial interests was perhaps the most spectacular of the moves in this direction. During the Dutch period, an attempt was made in 1726 to survey the

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[136] Alan Smith, "Trade as a factor", p.182.

[137] Ibid.; Smith, Struggle for Control of Southern Mozambique, p.79.

[138] Smith, Struggle for Control, pp.83-4.

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Maputo River leading into the southern interior, but the Dutch were never allowed to open up an overland route with 'Natal'.[139]

Clashes sometimes occurred between the middlemen, and the crews of European merchant vessels which refused to accept the terms of trade at the Bay, and tried to turn them in their favour by the use of force. In 1687, for example, the captain of the English vessel BAUDEN found that his trade goods would only procure two tons of ivory from the middlemen. A sloop was launched from the ship to try to penetrate the middlemen's blockade of the rivers leading inland to the sources of the ivory supply which reached the Bay. When the sloop was driven back to the ship after rough treatment at the hands of the middlemen, the captain adopted a fresh strategy. Some 'captains' and their followers from a particular middleman chiefdom were lured aboard the BAUDEN, whereupon they were imprisoned in irons until more ivory was forthcoming.[140]

The fourth set of contradictions related to commodity exchange followed from the conflict of interest between manufacturing groups in the interior, and the combination of European merchants and Delagoa middlemen. It was a set of contradictions which to some extent overlapped with other sets and added a further degree of complexity to the overall situation. The import of European manufactures, notably copper ornaments, threatened the position of those powerholders in the interior who controlled the local production and distribution of such items. In so far as European imports were cheaper and more accessible to the Delagoa middlemen,

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[139] Alan Smith, Struggle for Control of Southern Mozambique, pp.88-9; Andrew Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal, p.160.

[140] Everard, "Sufferings", p.260. For hints of other examples of similar incidents see above p.240; and Alan Smith, op.cit., p.58.

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local industries in the interior were threatened with 'underdevelopment'.

These complex sets of contradictions within the commodity production and exchange components of the economy of the northern zone, could only be contained by a centralisation of political and economic sovereignty. A surrender of sovereignty to the level of the paramountcy was inevitable if the position of members of the various competing aristocracies were not to be swept aside by more fundamental pressures for change. By 1730, the need for this was clearly recognised by the commander of the Dutch factory at Delagoa Bay. A political and military programme which would lead to Dutch dominance of the region was proposed. His Dutch superiors had neither the resources nor the will to undertake such a task, and withdrew the Dutch presence altogether.[141] A transition to Absolutism under the hegemony of the Dutch East India Company was not to be.

A range of contradictions also flowed from the subsistence component of the economy of the northern zone. The subsistence base of the northern zone was still in a state of crisis. The BONAVENTURA found cattle too expensive to purchase at Delagoa Bay in 1686.[142] Provisions were said to be very expensive by the crew of a vessel which visited the Bay in 1688.[143] The Dutch found that local peasant production was insufficient to furnish the subsistence needs of their factory, and food had to be imported by ship.[144] The Dutch set about plantation agriculture themselves, seemingly relying

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[141] Smith, Struggle for Control of Southern Mozambique, pp.108-111.

[142] Bird, Annals, I:31,33; Theal, History and Ethnography, II:295.

[143] Smith, op.cit., p.45.

[144] Ibid., p.51. Even local people themselves were in dire straits.

on forced labour recruited and controlled by local powerholders. Up to 500 people, mainly women and children, were employed in the fields in any one day. Even so, the agricultural experiments of the Dutch seem to have enjoyed little success.[145]

The contradictions which flowed from the commodity exchange component of the economy, and those which stemmed from the subsistence component, interacted to produce a general contradiction in the social formation as a whole. The wretched subsistence base of parts of the northern zone, was incapable of supporting the complex superstructure needed by the commodity exchange component of the economy. The contradiction was exacerbated as an increasing proportion of the labour-time of the peasantry was directed by powerholders to be committed to military service, porterage, the carriage of messages, the loading and unloading of ships, commodity production, manufacturing, the operation and maintenance of the canoes which plied along the major rivers, and to labour on the Dutch plantations. It was a general contradiction which loose patterns of social relationships characteristic of the epoch of Feudalism could not contain. A major readjustment in the social formation was required if the respective aristocracies of the northern zone were not to be confronted with a popular social revolutionary movement. A partial sacrifice of sovereignty to the apex, which is to say a transition to Absolutism, proved to be the manner in which these structural contradictions were to be contained.

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[145] Smith, Struggle for Control of Southern Mozambique, pp.51-6,67-8,87. It is difficult to work out exactly the form of labour relationship involved. It seems that each day's labour force was recruited and supplied by a local chief. Not only he, but also a regional powerholder above him had the power to suspend the supply at any time, and there is no indication of the Dutch being able to recruit directly. Daily rations were provided, and wages paid in beads according to a scale which discriminated in favour of men. It is not clear whether these wages were paid direct to the labourers, or to those who supplied the labour. It is certain, however, that both the local and regional chiefs claimed at least some proportion of these payments.

PART THREE :

THE TRANSITION TO ABSOLUTISM

VIII

A NOTE ON THE CONCEPT OF ABSOLUTISM

Before discussing the origins of 'Absolutism' in south-east Africa, some introduction of the concept itself is probably necessary.

'Absolutism' is usually a term loosely applied to characterise a certain kind of political society presided over by a number of European monarchs at various points in time between the 16th and early 20th centuries. As such it has often been taken to be a generic term characterising an era if not a social epoch in the history of Europe - the 'Age of Absolutism'.

As Perry Anderson has recently reminded us so forcefully, however, the emergence of Absolutism at a particular stage of European history, and more locally at various points in time within it, was not accidental. Absolutism forms an important stage in social evolutions. As such it is capable of and indeed demands careful structural analysis in the manner of other important stages of social evolution.[1]

Absolutism originally interested Marx and Engels in so far as it appeared to form an important transitional stage in European history between the social epochs of Feudalism and Capitalism. Most Marxists would now agree with this, though there remains considerable disagreement not only about the precise nature of Absolutism, but also on its relative importance in the overall picture of this

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[1] Perry Anderson, Lineages of the Absolutist State (New Left Books, 1974) pp.9-23 esp.

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transition. In a recent collection of essays which purport to examine the question of the transition from Feudalism to Capitalism, essentially in Europe, the concept of Absolutism is not mentioned at all.[2]

A start in unravelling the confusion surrounding the employment of the term, and identifying its place in structural analysis of historical change, may be made by isolating some of the more superficial characteristics which appear to distinguish Absolutism from the social epoch of Feudalism. These appear to include the development of standing armies and a general escalation of war; the beginnings of 'national' taxation which is to say taxation of the populace levied directly by the apex; moves towards a unified commodity market; the erosion of vassal-clientage, which is to say the erosion of intermediate levels of sovereignty based upon personal dependence; the increasing range and scope of inter-state diplomacy; codification of the law; and the development of permanent bureaucracies attached to the state in various spheres of social life including administration, police, the church, the law and the military.[3]

In structural terms two fundamental readjustments of the pattern of social relations characteristic of Feudalism were involved. First, there took place a partial surrender of political sovereignty by the Feudal aristocracy to the monarchy, or, as it has been characterised here, to the paramountcy at the apex, There took place

> "a displacement of politico-legal coercion upwards towards a centralized, militarized summit - the Absolutist State. Diluted at village level, it became concentrated at 'national' level."[4]

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[2] Eugene Kamenka and R.S.Neale, ed., Feudalism, Capitalism and Beyond (Edward Arnold, 1975).

[3] Karl Marx, The Civil War in France, in Marx and Engels, Selected Works in One Volume, p.389; Anderson, Lineages of the Absolutist State pp.17, 29-39 and passim, Hindess and Hirst, Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production, pp.299-301,307.

[4] Anderson, op.cit., p.19.

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The second feature was a partial surrender of economic sovereignty to the apex. The notion of 'national' taxation and standing armies implied direct levies by the apex on the labour-time of the peasantry, rather than indirectly through various levels of intermediate sovereignty. The new-found politico-legal powers of the apex were underpinned by a greater capacity to extract economic surplus.

The important point is that this surrender of sovereignty to the apex was partial, especially in the economic sphere. The Feudal aristocracy retained a sufficient grasp on the state apparatus and on the modes of surplus extraction for it to be regarded as continuing as the dominant class in the social formation.[5]

This line of continuity has led writers to conclude that the changes taking place took the form of an important social readjustment, but not a social revolution. This is certainly an important qualification but need not lead to the conclusion that the changes involved were insufficient to warrant their being taken to represent an important stage in social development. Even though it may not be possible to regard Absolutism as a completely new mode of production, the change from a situation of loose feudal paramountcy to one of absolute monarchy, coupled with changes in the pattern of the beneficiaries of surplus expropriation, will be regarded here as forms appropriate to a new social epoch, and one which need not lead inexorably to Capitalism.

The question remains as to why this pattern of changes took place in Europe. The notion of social readjustment rather than of social revolution suggests that the changes represented an attempt to cope with an emerging pattern of contradictions within the social formation of Europe immediately prior to the 16th century. It was an attempt to resolve a crisis of Feudalism short of the total overthrow of the ruling class which benefitted from the feudal mode of production.

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[5] Anderson, Lineages of the Absolutist State, p.18

There would appear to be two main positions in the debate surrounding the question of the nature of the feudal crisis in Europe. One school of thought stresses the internal contradiction between the interests of the peasantry and those of the landed aristocracy. A peasant revival threatened the class position of the aristocracy which was obliged to resort to new methods, and to surrender a portion of sovereignty to the apex in order to contain it.[6]

The second position stresses an external contradiction. This was the interpenetration of Feudalism with commodity production and exchange. The new social forms were an attempt to contain this burgeoning contradiction. In an early formulation expressed in class terms, Absolutism was

> "an equilibrium between the landowning aristocracy and the bourgeoisie." 7

Arguing along the same lines, but without specifying the particular class characteristics of the contradiction, Althusser has argued in general terms that Absolutism represents an attempt to contain the various antagonisms inherent in the overall contradiction between patterns of social relations appropriate to Feudalism and patterns of social relations required by the expansion of commodity production and exchange. Thus

> "The political regime of the absolute monarchy is only the new political form needed for the maintenance of feudal domination and exploitation in the period of development of a commodity economy." 8

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[6] Anderson, Lineages of the Absolutist State, pp.18-19.

[7] Frederick Engels, Zur Wohnungsfrage, cited by Anderson, Lineages of the Absolutist State, p.16.
See also Engels, Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State, in Marx and Engels, Selected Works in One Volume, p.588, cited by Anderson, op.cit., p.15

[8] Louis Althusser, Montesquieu, Le Politique et l'Histoire (Paris, 1969) p.117, cited by Anderson, Lineages of the Absolutist State p.19.

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Broadly speaking, it is this formulation which will be applied to the south-east African situation.

Once an Absolute form of society has begun to be brought into existence, three lines of development would appear to be possible. First, a stabilisation of Absolutism may be achieved. In this case, as in many parts of Europe, the social climate is created for vast areas of cultural achievement and technological innovation, often under the direct patronage of the Absolutist State. At the same time the way is cleared for the gradual evolution of a bourgeois form of society.

The second possible line of development stems from one of the major contradictions inherent in the Absolute form itself. There is always a danger that the social readjustment needed to bring about the transition to Absolutism will proceed too far, and will spill over into social revolution, sweeping aside the feudal aristocracy and cementing an essentially despotic relationship between a subject populace and the ruler at the apex. A transition to Despotism is possible because, in attempting to contain the feudal crisis, the aristocracy is obliged to deliver into the hands of the state the tools which could be employed in its own destruction as a class.[9]

The third conceivable line of development could stem from the inability of Absolutism to control all the internal and external contradictions inherent in the particular social formation. In this case it is neither able to stabilise itself, nor achieve a satisfactory transition to Despotism. In such circumstances Absolutism would crumble into its constituent parts which would then be realigned in articulation with the dominant element in the overall pattern of contradictions. In the European instance,

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[9]Perhaps this is the place for 'Oriental Despotism' and the 'Asiatic Mode of Production' in the structural sequence of social epochs. As has recently been pointed out by a number of writers, both concepts as currently defined are little more than static residual categories. See especially Anderson, Lineages of the Absolutist State, pp.462-550; Hindess and Hirst, Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production, pp.178-220.

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this involved a realignment under the hegemony of Capitalism.[10] It is this line of development which appears particularly appropriate to an understanding of the south-east African situation, though there are clear indications of early attempts to guide the social formation along both of the alternative roads of development.

The general remarks outlined in chapters I and IV, on the question of applying social categories outside the specific context in relation to which they were first evolved, may be taken as the writer's justification for applying the concept of Absolutism to the African context.

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[10] For discussion of this line of development at a theoretical level, see especially Hindess and Hirst, Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production, p.307.

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IX

ORIGINS OF THE TRANSITION TO ABSOLUTISM 1750 - 1810

Historians and others have long been concerned to describe and analyse the political changes which took place in south-east Africa in the later 18th and early 19th centuries. Valuable though their accounts are, all fall short of achieving a thorough understanding of the changes involved.

Two main problems have hampered the achievement of such an understanding. First, the focus of the questions asked has been blurred or misdirected. The general problem is not, as in most of these accounts, to explain the beginnings of state-formation in south-east Africa. In Marxist terms, the principle of the state had been present for some time since it forms but the active, conscious and official expression of the structure of a class society.[1] Even looked at from the point of view of non-Marxist sociology, state systems had long come into operation in the region. There were polities in which a body of persons had come to be equipped with the means to enforce rules binding on everyone who came under their jurisdiction, to settle disputes arising between them, to organise their defence against external enemies, and to impose fines, taxes or other economic contributions upon them.[2] As the discussion of Magamma's late 17th century 'Magosse' polity has indicated, the principle of the state

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[1] Karl Marx, Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy ed. and intro. T.B. Bottomore and M. Rubel, trans. T.B. Bottomore (Pelican, 1963), p.223.

[2] This is more or less the definition of the 'state' advanced in Lucy Mair, Primitive Government (Pelican, 1964), p.11.

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by 1750 was present in the social formation of the southern zone of south-east Africa, as well as in areas further to the north.

The key task for the historian is then to explain how and why certain changes began to take place in the nature of the state in south-east Africa in the later 18th century, and why these changes appear not to have moved beyond the northern and central zones in the period.

The second weakness of the majority of works which deal with the problem of political changes in south-east Africa in the later 18th and early 19th centuries, lies in the manner in which the whole question of socio-political change is understood. An empirical approach is used. No attempt is made to set the changes within a comparative-structural sequence of social epochs. Instead, particular forces are argued to have been the decisive causative factors in bringing about the pattern of changes. Amongst those which have been put forward are population pressure - linked by some to the introduction of maize, by others to pressure on agricultural or grazing land; the development of long-distance trade; the introduction of new weapons and new types of warfare; the personal intellectual capacity, psychology or experience of individual hero figures such as Dingiswayo and Shaka; the use of systematic terror as an instrument of state policy for the first time; and the diffusion of political and military models drawn from other parts of Africa and beyond.[3] It can only be a matter of time before the incidence of drought and the importance of iron technologies are added to the list.

Many, if not all these factors may be of significance. They are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Change in one sector of society can rarely take place without setting in motion a chain of forces which will produce change in other

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[3] For a brief review of the literature on this subject see Leonard Thompson, "The Zulu Kingdom and Natal", in Oxford History of South Africa, I:336-342.

sectors. A picture of the dynamic interdependence of these changes is therefore necessary. They need to be set within the overall context of crisis and change in a specific mode of production.

The essence of the Feudal mode of production, which dominated most of south-east Africa in the years immediately before 1750, is the parcellization of power amongst the various levels of the society such that the paramount, or the powerholder at the apex, is unable to control the labour-power of the peasantry directly, except in relation to his personal dependants. It was this situation which began to break down after 1750.

In addition to the old-style geographical expansion of control by powerholders at the various levels, attempts were also being made in this period to render it more absolute. An element may have been the attempt by intermediate powerholders to strengthen their hold over the peasantry, though this is almost impossible to document. More evident, and perhaps of more significance,were the attempts of paramounts to free themselves from the constraints imposed by the existence of relatively independent intermediate powerholders. A painful transition to the concentration of sovereignty at the apex was begun. Though never completed, and hardly stabilised to any degree, it was to reach its apogee in the shortlived Shakan state.

It is in the nature of the powerholder in all situations that he will seek to prevent the erosion of his position and, where possible, extend and render more absolute the nature of the power which he wields. Whether the powerholder in any situation is able to attain these goals, and the extent of his success or failure, depends upon the complex of other forces operating in the situation. Thus the important question in the south-east African situation is not really why powerholders at the apex took steps to render their power more absolute, but why some were successful and others not.

The key to an understanding of the contrasting outcome of such attempts in different parts of south-east Africa, lies in the uneven character of the social epoch of Feudalism in

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the region. By the second half of the 18th century, the social formation of south-east Africa had not been feudalised completely, or even everywhere to the same extent. Important variations still existed. As Marc Bloch would have anticipated from his studies of Feudalism in the European context, the picture must be

> "carefully shaded - by regions and by classes". [4]

The remainder of this chapter is concerned to show how this uneven pattern led to an uneven transition to the social epoch of Absolutism in south-east Africa. Each zone - northern, central, and southern - is considered in turn.

The politics of the northern zone in the later 18th century centred upon the Delagoa state of Tembe. For long an important trading state, the period saw Tembe achieve a position of hegemony over all its rivals along the southern littoral of the Bay;

> "Tembe commonly call'd the Great hath a large country of what extent not known is the powerfullest captain of any about Delagoa;.....Manice is the next to him in power". [5]

In some cases, long and costly wars had been necessary to subdue opposition. Several campaigns spread through the 18th century, for example, had been necessary before Machavane and its close associate Inhaca were forced to acknowledge Tembe hegemony.[6] Some of these states retained some semblance of an individual identity, but acknowledged their dependence either by a transfer of tribute, or more directly by accepting the rule of member of the Tembe royal family.[7]

Tembe expansion was not confined to the immediate shores of the Bay. A determined thrust was made into the southern interior. At some point its Empire came to comprise

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[4] Bloch, Feudal Society, I:71.

[5] "Mr Penwell's account of a visit to Delagoa Bay", in Theal, Records, II:461. Penwell's account is undated, but has been attributed by Theal to the late 18th century. Manice was a powerholder on the northern shore of the Bay.

[6] Alan Smith, "The struggle for control of southern Mozambique, pp.31-34,78,108,169,170-176,223.

[7] Ibid., p.170.

some 27 provinces and to extend 200 miles into the interior. It was said to have been in a position to put 300,000 fighting men into the field when all the military effectives from its various vassals were mobilised.[8] In addition, its trading and political embassies ranged even further into the hinterland of the Bay.

Tembe expansion permitted some degree of political stability and rationalisation of exchange patterns to be brought about. The lack of these two conditions, and their own incapacity to achieve them, had been one of the factors leading to the Dutch withdrawal.[9] Although it is difficult to document, one element in the rationalisation may have been a reduction in the number of local tariff barriers it was necessary for the trading caravans to cross, and thus an easing of pressure on the profit margins of those who remained to participate in these commercial relations. The possibility of division of labour between the various chiefdoms which now comprised the Tembe Empire is also evidenced . Maffooma, for example, seems to have been especially well known for its specialist "launce, hoe and collar makers".[10] The raw materials for these metal manufacturing industries were not produced or smelted at the Bay itself, for the craftsmen worked their metals "cold with a hammer upon a stone".[11] They were imported in their expensive refined state from places in the interior on the margins of the Tembe Empire;

> "They have no minerals at Delagoa but what they purchase from a people that live at eight days journey distance which is copper and iron". 12

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[8] Alan Smith, "Peoples of southern Mozambique", p.572; "Trade as a factor", p.181; "Penwell's account", in Theal, Records, II:461.

[9] Alan Smith, "The struggle for control of southern Mozambique" pp.109-111.

[10] "Penwell's account", op. cit., p.458. 'Launce' was one of the contemporary terms used by European visitors to refer to the assagai. 'Collar' refers to the metal neck rings worn by important people. 'Maffooma' is sometimes also rendered as 'Mfumo'.

[11] Ibid., p.461.

[12] Ibid., p.463. Copper was the raw material for collars, some of which weighed from 4 to 6 lbs apiece. Iron was used for the assagais and hoes.

A large proportion of these refined metals probably reached the Bay from the highveld to the west, where groups such as the Venda were renowned for their handling of metals in this period.[13]

The development of more favourable political and commercial conditions at the Bay soon attracted a revival of interest in the area on behalf of the major Indian Ocean merchant groups of the time. English and Indian-owned ships operating from Surat and Bombay paid frequent visits to the Bay after 1750. They established a semi-permanent factory, and stationed boats on the various rivers leading into the interior.[14] In 1776, William Bolts' Austrian Asiatic Company of Trieste built a permanent fort at the Bay and prosecuted a successful trade.[15] Finally, these commercial activities at Delagoa Bay undermined the price structure at Mozambique to such an extent that the Portuguese felt the need to intervene in order to counter the threat to their position in the international ivory trade. In 1781 Bolts' fort was destroyed by the Portuguese, who went on to complete the construction of their own replacement in 1787.[16] The Portuguese maintained a political and commercial presence at the Bay after this date, though they were not in a position to prevent independent merchantmen from breaching their trading monopoly.[17]

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[13] Alan Smith, "Delagoa Bay and the trade of south-east Africa", p.284; Theal, History and Ethnography, II:466-8; Fagan, Southern Africa p.157; Shula Marks and Richard Gray, "Southern Africa and Madagascar", in Richard Gray, ed., The Cambridge History of Africa Vol. IV (Cambridge UP, 1975) pp.408-9.

[14] Alan Smith, "Trade as a factor", p.173. For the general Anglo-Indian involvement in the ivory commerce of the Indian Ocean in this period see Alpers, Ivory and Slaves pp.xvii, 143.

[15] Alan Smith, "The struggle for control of southern Mozambique" pp.165-6; "Trade as a factor", p.174; Theal, Beginning, p.424; Portuguese, p.274.

[16] Theal, Portuguese, pp.274-5; Beginning, pp.424-5; Smith, "Struggle", op.cit., pp.203-4.

[17] Smith, "Struggle", op.cit., p.236; "Trade as a factor", pp.174-5; Theal, Beginning, pp.426; Portuguese, pp.275-6.

Underlying these changes was a more fundamental shift in the pattern of productive relations in south-east Africa. Technological innovation and specialisation of function was beginning to lead to the underdevelopment of local craft industries. People were becoming dependent upon a relatively few concentrations of manufacturing capacity for agricultural impliments, weapons and ornaments. Moreover, this manufacturing capacity was even in process of being relocated outside south-east Africa altogether. Imports into south-east Africa by sea had initially been confined to items such as beads and rare metals which functioned as specie in the lubrication of an independent south-east African economy.[18] Now these items were gradually being replaced by finished manufactures; initially from India and latterly from Europe. By the end of the 18th century, these items included cloth, replacing imports from areas to the north of the Bay and locally produced animal skins; guns, a new weapons system replacing the locally-produced assagai; finished copper and brass ornaments; and possibly imported iron hoes replacing those manufactured locally.[19] This general change was encouraged by the Delagoa middlemen, because it widened the margins of profit accruing to them by virtue of their undertaking the supply of manufactured goods to a large part of south-east Africa. They no longer had to bear the heavy costs of purchasing raw materials in the interior and transporting them by the use of human labour across various tariff barriers to the coast, where further costs of manufacturing had to be borne. Ivory, ambergris and a trickle of slaves were the principal commodities given in exchange for these items.[20]

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[18] It is difficult to decide how far the import of items which were locally regarded as specie can be taken to have laid the foundations of the process of underdevelopment. The gold imported from Africa by the Italian city states is sometimes, for example, taken to have been one of the factors stimulating the emergence of Capitalism in Europe. See Amin, "Underdevelopment and dependence in Black Africa".

[19] For the pattern of imports through Delagoa Bay in the period see "Penwell's account", in Theal, Records, II:461; Flynn, Diary, p.48; Smith, "Trade as a factor", p.173; Junod, Life of a South African Tribe, II:143.

[20] Theal, Beginning, p.432; Records, II:462, 468-9; Smith, "Trade as a factor", p.176.

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There was little indication that any fundamental breakthrough had been made by the end of the 18th century in the sphere of subsistence production. Visitors reported that food production was in a wretched condition. Three kinds of grain were known, but Penwell thought that in general the people produced "but very little corn".[21] By the same token, although

> "they use both hunting and fishing.....
> they do not live by them". 22

cattle, sheep, goats and poultry were reported, but livestock does not seem to have been abundant. Visiting ships found it very difficult to obtain sufficient food supplies from local producers.[23] In general, little in the way of a 'notional surplus' was being produced which could be stored against the possibility of drought,or human disruption of the regular production cycle. Subsistence production in the northern zone was poised on a knife edge. There were signs that the crisis in the sphere of subsistence production was only being contained by the intensification of the exploitation of the serf class of womenfolk which undertook almost all the tasks in the annual cycle of agricultural production. Once attached to a homestead by the contract between homestead proprietors which was marriage, the woman became

> "an entire slave to her husband, sowing corn, cutting wood etc..... they take as many wives as they are able to purchase". 24

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[21] "Penwell's account", in Theal, Records, II:457-9,463. One of these grains was small and known as 'maise'. Possibly this was the recently introduced maize, though the description of its size is a little puzzling and suggests an alternative.

[22] Ibid., p.459.

[23] Alan Smith, "The struggle for control of southern Mozambique", p.182.

[24] "Penwell's account", op.cit., p.460. Liberal anthropologists and others have been highly suspicious of early visitors' accounts of the social situation of womenfolk in Africa, and prefer to see the role of women in a more functional light. Modern scholarship is now questioning the whole functional model of the relationship between men and womenfolk in a wide range of places and time periods. It is high time that the reports of early visitors to Africa on this question were interpreted more literally.

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Tembe expansion saw its subordination of a number of chiefdoms which had formally been independent or which had fallen within the orbit of other paramountcies. By the late 18th century the zone of contention may have been thrust southwards across the Mfolozi, and westwards into the Lebombo Hills and onto the highveld. The chiefdoms of Qwabe, Mthethwa, Ngwane and Ndwandwe may have been in process of being reduced to vassals of the Tembe royal family. Since these changes were taking place at the very margin of the imperial system of Tembe, the new patterns of allegiance may have been sealed and demonstrated at this stage by loose mechanisms such as diplomatic marriage, the re-orientation of trade routes, the delivery of military effectives when required, and the giving up of tribute, rather than by formal annexation. So far as the thrust southwards into the central zone was concerned, it was the interests of the members of the loose Vambe paramountcy that were chiefly threatened by these developments, and notably that of Hlubi. Centred on the upper Mzinyati, it was now directly in the path of any further Tembe expansion.[25]

The opportunity for Hlubi to reverse these losses seems to have been provided by a collapse in the united front presented by Tembe in its foreign policy. This was the product of a major civil war which broke out in Tembe in 1794. The causes of the war are not entirely clear, but one account suggests that it was related to the question of access to the profitable trade passing through Delagoa Bay. During the 18th century, the Tembe paramount had simply been

> "the most eminent vendor of amber and ivory".[26]

He did not possess a complete monopoly of the trade. A number of other merchants had access to it. This situation came to

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[25] It is difficult to point to concrete evidence in support of the precise hypothesis formulated here. On the other hand, it would appear to follow from a number of pieces of circumstantial evidence. Space does not allow a full discussion of all of these. For clashes between the imprecisely defined Delagoa peoples and those of the interior in the period, see Alan Smith, "The struggle for control of southern Mozambique", p.246. For the relationship between Hlubi and Vambe see Bryant, Olden Times, PP.147,315. David Hedges is undertaking an important study of the whole question of the political relationships which came to exist between the Bay and the Tugela in this period.

[26] Smith, "Trade as a factor", p.178.

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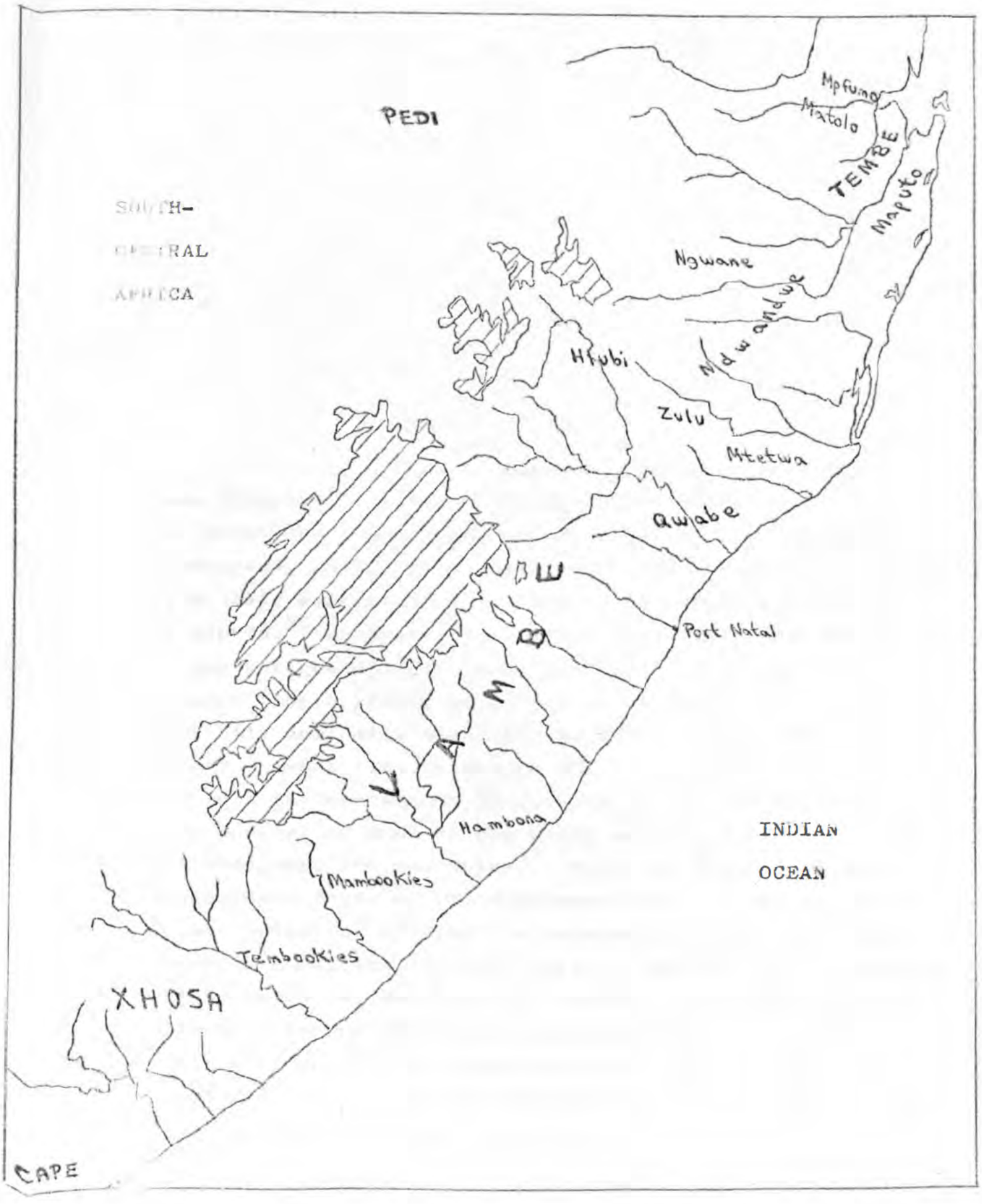

Fig.13 South-east Africa : Political Situation c.1800

be challenged in or a little before 1794. At this time the Tembe paramount, who was now known to outsiders by the term Capella,[27] made a bid for absolute power in a key sphere of the economic life of the Empire. The monarchy, possibly extended to include the immediate royal family, demanded a monopoly over the trade goods.[28] For the first time a direct attempt was being made by the immediate ruling group to undermine a key element on which was based the position of intermediate powerholders within the Tembe system. The ruling group was bidding not only for a change in the span of its command, but also for a fundamental change in its scope. Important intermediate powerholders resisted the move, and a bitter civil war broke out.[29]

The consequences of the civil war for the Tembe Empire were disastrous. First, Capella proved unable to contain the rebellion even though he had enlisted help from the Portuguese. An important section of the aristocracy, together with their dependants, was able to establish a rival state of Maputo.[30] Secondly, the united front presented at the Bay by the Delagoa middlemen was shattered, and the political balance tipped firmly in favour of whichever European power currently dominated the carrying trade. Fynn, Owen and others were soon to become the first Europeans to penetrate far into the hinterland of Delagoa Bay and to discover the true sources of much of the ivory which had been traded by the middlemen for centuries. With the removal of the once predominant power of the middlemen, the way was opened for direct relations between the European merchant interests represented at the Bay and those states far in the interior which controlled the supply of ivory. Eventually it would also provide one setting for the emergence of a general contradiction between these two interests. Thirdly, the opportunity was provided for European penetration of local

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[27] Junod, Life of a South African Tribe, II:141.

[28] Alan Smith, "Trade as a factor", p.183n.

[29] Ibid., p.181.

[30] Ibid. The civil war may have been protracted and therefore some years before Maputo was able to break completely free from Tembe dominance. As late as 1799 it was apparently still a tributary of that state; Smith, "The struggle for control of southern Mozambique", p.223.

politics. Tembe, for example, increasingly looked towards British or other European help in order to counter the threats which came to be mounted against it by Maputo and other 'Vatwahs' in the interior.[31]

The fourth fatal consequence of the civil war for Tembe fortunes was the opportunity it provided for major central zone states to regain the ground they had lost to the Tembe Empire. The return of Mthethwa to the sphere of influence of the Tembe paramountcy appears to have been one example of this process. Like so many other aspects of south-east African history in this period, it seems to have hinged on a succession dispute.

In polygamous societies, marriage could be used by a powerholder to cement diplomatic relations with various important families within and beyond the state. The record of such marriages in the oral history of south-east Africa testifies to their importance in the history of the region. The system also introduced, however, the possibility of succession disputes which could plunge a state into civil war at the death of a powerholder or even in anticipation of such an event. All the sons of a powerholder by his various wives could put forward certain claims to succeed to political office. Some ruling lineages in the region devised complex rules of succession, or took other more drastic steps to ensure that the succession was not disputed.[32] These were rarely foolproof, and more often than not rival candidates were put forward by rival power blocs within the state, with the outcome being determined by the balance of power between them. Under feudal conditions, where there was no great concentration of power at any one point in the political structure, succession disputes were all but endemic and the fragmentation of the state a frequent outcome.

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[31] Theal, Records, II:469

[32] See for example; Junod, Life of a South African Tribe, I:368.

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Succession disputes of this kind might also represent an opportunity for an outside powerholder to extend his power-base by backing a successful candidature. Sons of chiefs with a claim to the succession were accordingly often harboured, feted and ultimately backed in their quest for power by outside powerholders anxious to reduce a recalcitrant chiefdom to vassal status.

Sometime late in the 18th century, the mechanisms used in Mthethwa to ensure a smooth succession were challenged.[33] The rule of the current incumbent of the chiefship, Jobe, was not questioned, but rival factions began to mobilise behind different candidates for the succession. The Mawewe faction, which was probably the dominant lineage at the time, and may have been allied to Tembe, proved able to remove the immediate threat to its position. The rival faction acknowledged its subordinate status by withdrawing its candidate, Godongwana, who was later to become known as Dingiswayo. The precaution was taken, however, of assisting him into exile so that the possibility remained for a future challenge to the status quo. On the eventual death of Jobe, Mawewe succeeded to the chiefship.[34]

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[33] The precise date of the succession crisis in Mthethwa is unknown. Fynn, in one account, implies a date before 1740; Fynn, Diary p.1. As has already been pointed out by others, this is almost certainly wrong. Another version by Fynn implies a much later and more realistic date in suggesting that Dingiswayo's'carrer' began in 1780; Fynn, "1839 paper", in Bird, Annals, I:63. Krige thought, quite reasonably, that the date could have been between 1785 and 1795; Krige, Social System of the Zulus p.6.

[34] Fynn, "1839 paper", in Bird, Annals I:60-61. My interpretation of this tradition is that Mthethwa was once a vassal state of Hlubi. As such it had once been ruled by a lineage from Hlubi or closely linked to it. At some later stage this ruling lineage was overthrown and subordinated by a rival lineage backed or supplied by Tembe. Both Jobe and his supposed successor, Mawewe, were members of this new ruling lineage. To cement his position, Jobe had taken wives from some of the subordinated chiefly lineages. Dingiswayo was the son of such a marriage. He was pushed forward as the candidate of the rival Hlubi faction.

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Even assuming the above account of Dingiswayo's origins to be accurate,[35] there is still no consensus on the route followed by him into exile. Shepstone thought a long southward journey to the Cape to be the likely direction, a suggestion which seems singularly unlikely to me on a number of counts.[36] Much more plausible is Fynn's account which suggests that Dingiswayo travelled westwards into the interior. Had he done so, he would have immediately crossed the frontier of Tembe influence into the vassal chiefdoms of Hlubi. This would help to explain Fynn's report that, despite offers of reward made by the ruling lineage of Mthethwa if Dingiswayo were given up, he was shielded by the chiefs through whose territories he travelled on the way to the Hlubi heartland. Here he initially entered the service of an important homestead.[37]

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[35] The whole prevailing tendency in the analysis of traditions relating to political succession in Africa has recently been challenged. Noting that traditions from a wide variety of regions and time periods accord a twin significance to the role of 'exiles' and 'outsiders', Argyle has argued that the two figures should be seen as being one and the same person. The furthest point to which the 'exile' is said in the traditions to have travelled, is in fact his actual point of origin. This is certainly a very interesting argument In the south-east African situation, however, and following the argument of Shepstone rather than of Fynn or Bryant, it has led Argyle to conclude that Dingiswayo was a complete 'outsider' - a 'white', 'Khoi', 'escaped slave', 'Sotho', or whatever, who came from the south or west and then carried through a conquest of Mthethwa; John Argyle, "Who were Dingiswayo and Shaka? Individual origins and Political Transformations", unpublished seminar paper, University of London, Institute of Commonwealth Studies 19.2.76. Here I have tried to outline an alternative mode of explanation, which, whilst recognising the importance of the 'exile' and 'outsider', tries to take account also of the very detailed traditions which exist of Dingiswayo's family background and the various geographical locations of the kraals in which he grew up. For these see Daniel, "A geographical study of Pre-Shakan Zululand", p.25.

[36] Shepstone, "Early history of the Zulu-Kafir race", in Bird, Annals, I:163; Stuart, in Stuart Papers, quoted in Argyle, "Who were Dingiswayo and Shaka?", p.6; Russell, Natal, The Land and its Story, p.129. The main problem with this kind of explanation is the sheer distance of travel through unknown and perhaps hostile territory which would have been involved.

[37] Fynn, Diary pp.2-8; Fynn, "1839 paper", in Bird, Annals, I:61. The outline of the account was taken over by Bryant; Bryant, Olden Times p.95; Bryant, Dictionary, introduction.

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Once it had been brought to the attention of the Hlubi paramount, Pangane, that a prominent candidate for the Mthethwa chiefship had taken refuge within his dominions, Dingiswayo's fortunes turned for the better. He was conscripted into the ranks of Pangane's household retinue.[38] During this period, he may have participated in an expedition to Delagoa Bay,[39] a trading party to the Buffalo river,[40] and possibly a number of hunting expeditions.[41] In the traditions recorded by Fynn, his promotion by the paramount to the status of an intermediate powerholder within the feudal structure of the Hlubi state, by grant of territory and gift of cattle, is idealised as reward for a particular act of bravery.[42] It may also have been the reward for the loyalty of a man who might yet prove useful within a grander political strategy. In structural terms, Dingiswayo had become a minor vassal of the Hlubi paramount.

At this point the mysterious 'white' man riding a horse and armed with a gun, makes an appearance in the traditions and supposedly also in Hlubi.[43] He is certainly unlikely to have been Dr. Cowan,[44] and may not have been quite 'white', though it is quite plausible that a man bearing some resemblance to the picture painted by the traditions did exist. The most likely explanation is that he was one of a party of hunter-traders attempting to pioneer new country, and that the group had reached the area from the south rather than from Delagoa Bay

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[38] Fynn, "1839 account", in Bird, Annals, I:61.

[39] Bryant, Olden Times, pp.87-88.

[40] Cecil Cowley, Kwa Zulu (Cape Town,1966) p.46.

[41] The tradition outlined by Fynn speaks of his prowess on a particular hunting expedition as having been the factor which enabled his speedy promotion in Hlubi; Fynn, "1839 account", in Bird, I:61.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Fynn, Diary pp.1-7. See also Krige, Social System of the Zulus p.8; Morris, Washing of the Spears p.41; Omer-Cooper, Zulu Aftermath p.27; Brooke and Webb,A History of Natal pp.8,9

[44] This had been Fynn's suggestion; Fynn, Diary pp.1-7. But see Thompson, "Zulu Kingdom", in Oxford History of South Africa I:338; Marks, "The Nguni, the Natalians and their History".

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which would have necessitated travel through territory dominated by Tembe. In legend and even in some 'history' an individual hero figure is often taken to represent a wider grouping or a complex of historical forces. It is just possible that the 'white' man in the tradition represents a convenient shorthand for a group of men equipped with horses and firearms.

There is a good deal of circumstantial evidence in support of this proposition. Even before 1750 parties of elephant hunters from the Cape are known to have been operating across the Kei and almost as far as the Mzimvubu.[45] Unknown parties may have penetrated even further north. It seems quite conceivable that, 30 or 40 years later, the operations of 'Khoi' or white hunters extended to the Tugela valley and beyond. The prospect of hunting in such areas must have seemed an attractive one in the light of news brought from Delagoa Bay and 'Port Natal'. Certainly Fynn speaks of armed and mounted groups of 'Khoi' hunters operating near the Mzimkulu in the 1820s.[46] Alternatively, such a group could have reached Hlubi from the west. European travellers had reached the latitude of the Tugela, but in the interior across the Drakensberg, well before 1822.[47] Unknown 'Khoi' hunting bands may have reached the area even earlier. From the traditions which he had collected, Bryant in fact concluded that the mysterious 'whiteman' arrived in the area at the head of a hunting party, though at least part of their membership may have been Tswana-Sutu.[48]

The way the 'whiteman's party' of the traditions is said to have behaved is also consistent with the known behaviour of hunter-traders penetrating into new territory.

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[45] Monica Wilson, "Co-operation and conflict : the eastern Cape frontier", in Oxford History of South Africa, I:234-5.

[46] Argyle, "Who were Dingizwayo and Shaka?", p.7.

[47] Oxford History of South Africa, I:139 map 4.

[48] Bryant, Olden Times, p.88.

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Where hunter-traders encountered local concentrations of power, it was usual for them to apply for clearance before commencing operations in the area. The 'Port Natal' traders approached Shaka Zulu in this way in the 1820s. Practical demonstration by the hunter-traders of their acceptance of vassal status was often the price demanded by a powerholder before such permission could be granted. The supply of a military effective to support the forces of the powerholder on a raid or police action was the most frequent way in which vassal status was acknowledged. Precedents in the region dating back to the 16th century have already been mentioned. In addition, Shaka was to demand a military effective from the traders at the 'Port' on a number of occasions, and it was to be Dingane's first thought when confronted by an embassy from the Voortrekkers.

Levies of the Portuguese Company are unlikely to have been involved on this occasion. There is no evidence that the particular combination of horse and gun was in use at the Bay in this period, though it was of course already very common at the Cape.

If this interpretation of the 'white' man tradition is accepted, then later events recorded in the tradition become understandable. An arrangement was reached with the Hlubi paramount or, less likely, with Dingiswayo direct. The men with firearms were to join a military force under Dingiswayo in attempting to reconquer Mthethwa and Qwabe, chiefdoms which had, at some time in the past, become members of a rival commercial empire, possibly centred on the Tembe paramountcy. In return for assistance in this direction, the group was promised hunting and trading rights in the coastal hinterland, direct access to which had always been barred to hunter-traders by the wideranging power of Tembe.

The combined force travelled from the Hlubi heartland in the interior, in the general direction of the coast.[49]

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[49] Fynn, "1839 account", in Bird, Annals, I:62; Fynn, Diary pp. 7-8; Bryant, Olden Times p.89.

The date of this operation has been disputed.[50] If, however, Fynn's suggestion of 1795 is accepted, it would help to explain Tembe's inability to come to the assistance of its exposed vassals on the margin of its now divided empire. Maputo would prbably have looked with favour on any moves by Hlubi which would serve to weaken further its principal rival at the Bay.

Several clashes occurred before Dingiswayo, with support of certain sections within the state,[51] was installed in place of Mawewe as the chief of Mthethwa, and before Qwabe was finally forced to give up its support for the Mawewe cause. At some point the 'white' man was 'killed' in Qwabe, or perhaps withdrew from the operations to claim his reward in hunting and trade.[52]

Conscious of his relatively exposed position, Dingiswayo took steps which acknowledged the paramountcy of Hlubi. No attempt was made to occupy Qwabe or to claim allegiance from any of the chiefdoms in the Tugela and Mzinyati valleys to the south.[53] This was the corridor dominated by his Hlubi patron

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[50] Fynn, quite plausibly, dates the event to about 1795; Fynn, Diary p.8. Krige suggests 1806; Krige, Social Systems of the Zulus p.8.

[51] For evidence of a popular uprising of 'kinsmen' of Dingiswayo, and the reluctance of headmen, who may also have been kinsmen, to join the forces challenging the status quo, see Bryant, Olden Times p.90. Headmen of this kind were amongst those put to death in the ensuing events; Ibid. Argyle would seem to me wrong in seeing the behaviour of headmen in this respect as a simple question of morality - of loyalty to the properly constituted authorities rather than to the 'pretender' Dingiswayo. I would suggest that their behaviour can be better understood in terms of politics and self-interest. See Argyle, "Who were Dingiswayo and Shaka?", p.4. In general, his political model for the area is somewhat wooden and makes no allowance for social tensions within the society, hence the need for his analysis of change to stress the role of total outsiders.

[52] Fynn, "1839 account", in Bird, Annals, I:62.

[53] Smith, "Trade as a factor", pp.184-5. For the full list of the chiefdoms attacked see Bryant, Olden Times pp.98, 100-106; Fynn, "1839 account", in Bird, Annals, I:64.

The support of Maputo was also sought by sending to the Bay 100 oxen and a quantity of elephants' tusks. Maputo, itself anxious for allies in the interior, responded with a quantity of trading beads and blankets. A regular trade was instituted.[54] It was almost certainly not the first time Mthethwa had been involved in long-distance trade. Most of the chiefdoms of the area had probably participated in trade of this kind for many years. The elements of change lay in the orientation of the trade route, and the identity of the ruling lineages which were in a position to benefit from the commerce.

Dingiswayo's aggressive political and military operations were initially concerned to extend the acknowledgement of his paramountcy, from the Mthethwa chiefdom to neighbouring states situated along a corridor running from the mountains in the west to the coast in the east.[55] By 1818, some 30 chiefdoms had been obliged to accept a vassal status under the new ruling lineage of Mthethwa.[56] These were chiefdoms which both Hlubi and Maputo were happy to see reduced, and Dingiswayo may have received some further military assistance from one of these paramountcies in undertaking the task.[57] At one stage the Hlubi-Mthethwa-Maputo axis may also have combined in an

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[54] Fynn, Diary pp.10-11; Fynn, "1839 account", in Bird, Annals p.63; Charters, in Chase, Natal Papers p.20.

[55] Interestingly enough, Ndwandwe conquests were said to have been initially oriented in a parallel direction; Smith, "Trade as a factor", p.185.

[56] Rev. J.Shooter, The Kaffirs of Natal and the Zulu Country (London,1857), cited by Bryant, Olden Times, Chapter XVIII and Sluckman, "Rise", p.162. The proportionate 'span' of command within Zululand implied by this figure is not entirely clear. Daniel suggests that there were some 50 'clans' dotted about Zululand before the rise of 'state' systems; Daniel, "A geographical study of Pre-Shakan Zululand", p.23. Junod, on the other hand, suggests a figure of 94 before Shaka; Junod, The Life of a South African Tribe, I:359. In any case the arbitrary use of nomenclature and the failure to distinguish clearly between levels of political power makes statements such as these fairly pointless.

[57] Fynn implies that external assistance may have continued for some time after the initial reconquest of Mthethwa.

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attack on Tembe itself.[58]

In order to stabilise the position of the new Mthethwa ruling lineage, and to reduce its dependence upon outside powerholders, certain structural changes were attempted in relation to key institutions within the feudal structure. It is hard to estimate to what extent these were original and unique innovations, and to what extent they were based upon outside models or an aspect of more general changes taking place in the northern part of south-east Africa at about this time. In essence the changes involved the replacement of 'feudal' with more 'absolute' patterns of control from the centre.

One of the key sectors in which change was instituted was in military organisation. The principle of a peasant army, divided on a regional basis and owing allegiance to the paramount only through courtesy of intermediate powerholders, was finally abandoned. The system of household retinues, under which warriors were directly dependent upon the paramount, was extended into the system of a standing army.[59] Boys and men were recruited into age regiments focussed upon the office of the paramount.[60] This had the added effect of destroying loyalty to local intermediate powerholders, which had been one of the central features of the feudal system. The practice of male circumcision ceremonies, which had been conducted at the level of the local chiefdom and had therefore tended to focus

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[58] Tembe suffered a major attack from the interior soon after 1800; Smith, "Trade as a factor", p.185. Alternatively, the attack may have been mounted by a group in the Lebombo Hills north of the Pongola, which may also have been seeking to regain a position lost to Tembe at some earlier stage.

[59] This may be to anticipate a later development. According to Omer-Cooper, the regiments only assembled periodically; Omer-Cooper, Zulu Aftermath p.28

[60] Wilson, "Nguni", in Oxford History of South Africa, I:124; Omer-Cooper, Zulu Aftermath pp.27-8. The system was already operating in Pedi and Tswana.

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loyalties upon it, was also abandoned at about this time.[61]

Quite how Dingiswayo was able to achieve this farreaching shift towards absolutism is not clear. One factor may have been the famine which afflicted the area in about 1802,[62] and which may have forced the poor to seek out patrons. As the head of a standing army, Dingiswayo also accepted the responsibility for its subsistence needs. Moreover, his manner of courting the favour of the peasantry in his initial campaigns involving forces from outside Mthethwa, may also have been a factor. Cattle were taken from the rich homesteads which possessed them in quantity. The oxen were distributed amongst the warriors of the army, but the cows, which formed part of the subsistence base and held the capacity to reproduce wealth, were redistributed amongst the peasant homesteads of the conquered. This mode of military operation appears to have continued throughout Dingiswayo's reign.[63]

Under the household retinue system, dependants of a powerholder lived off the surplus produced at his various homesteads. Given the lack of a primary transport revolution in the interior of south-east Africa, this was consumed in situ. Dingiswayo adapted this system to cope with the situation of a substantial standing army. Periodically the regiments were sent out to consume the surplus of homesteads beyond the Mthethwa heartland, over all of which the paramount now claimed a degree of control. It was this which provided the dynamic for expansion, and which enabled a large number of men to be maintained under arms;

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[61] Fynn, "1839 account", in Bird, Annals, I:64. Omer-Cooper thought that the change was probably taking place in other states in the area besides Mthethwa at about this time; Omer-Cooper, Zulu Aftermath pp.27n, 28. In the area of modern-day Swaziland, where large-scale states possibly developed much earlier, the practice had already disappeared; Bryant, Olden Times p.99. In Mpondo, which did not see a successful transition to absolutism before the Mfecane period, it was only abandoned much later; Hunter, Reaction to Conquest p. 165. Further south still, where the feudal mode of production and feudal state organisation was especially firmly entrenched, it was not abandoned at all.

[62] Morris, Washing of the Spears p.45.

[63] Fynn, Diary pp.9-10; Fynn, "1839 account", op.cit., p.64.

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> "The great test of victory in his mind seemed to be the power of feeding his army on the grain stores of the conquered. 'Let the weak men sow, and the strong men reap', was his motto. It is said that he always halted his army until the enemy's corn was exhausted." 64

After the initial conquests, such visits may have become regularised on an annual cycle as a form of tribute collection.

This was not a system of predatory raiding. It was not a mode of destruction, but a new mode of surplus extraction focussed on the paramountcy. Great care was taken to preserve the productive base. Although men from subordinated chiefdoms might be drafted into the Mthethwa standing army, the destruction of women and children, or their separation from the land, was always forbidden.[65] By such means, the labour force required for food production and the day-to-day tending of livestock was preserved intact, together with the capacity for the reproduction and rearing of children who would eventually furnish thelabour power for working the land or for the maintenance of the regiments of warriors. As has already been pointed out, cows were not directly appropriated by the centre, but were left in the countryside so that they might continue to form part of the subsistence base and form the nucleus of new herds. In general, when the needs of the army had been met, it withdrew to the centre or another locality, after which the peasantry was able to re-occupy the homesteads. Dingiswayo

> "never destroyed or permanently dispersed any people with whom he went to war." 66

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[64] Fynn, "1839 account", in Bird, Annals I:64 p.63

[65] Ibid. This was, in essence, the continuation of an earlier 'feudal' mode of warfare, under which women and children had always been spared. See Bryant, Olden Times p.79.

[66] Fynn, "1839 account", in Bird, Annals, I:63. 'Chiefs' were spared if they accepted a dependent status in relation to the new incumbent of the paramountcy; Omer-Cooper, Zulu Aftermath p.29. See also note 50 above. With their economic and military base undercut by the new structures, they posed little threat. Zwide of Ndwandwe was reported to have been similarly lenient towards conquered populations; Smith, "Trade as a factor", pp.185-6.

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Control over a large standing army enabled a monopoly over exchange with external agencies, which had eluded most of the feudal paramounts in the area before, to be enforced. Here there was to be no compromise. Trade was carried on as an arm of the state, and no merchants were permitted to enter the Mthethwa dominions to deal directly with the producers of ivory or with intermediate powerholders who might once have been in a position to control it.[67] Transgressors within the state were to be put to death.[68] It was precisely this kind of farreaching change in the distribution of surplus between the paramount and the aristocracy which was prevented in the south by the strength of the feudal mode of production, and was only carried through in Tembe with the aid of a foreign army and at the expense of a civil war which, in effect, destroyed the state.

It is not clear whether the paramountcy attempted to move beyond this to control commodity production as well as exchange in relation to ivory. Certainly a kaross industry, and perhaps others, were set up under the control of the state.[69] Moreover, a standing army divided into regiments and focussed on the paramount would have been an ideal production unit in a systematically-organised ivory industry, and the commercial monopoly of the state its essential complement. Once the coastal chiefdoms had been reduced, Mthethwa would certainly have had access to ivory-producing areas. If, however, the food production sector of the economy is any guide, the changes which took place in Mthethwa at about this time were essentially concerned with a change in the orientation of the distribution of surplus, rather than with a thorough-going change in the organisation of production itself.

Overall, the changes involved the beginnings of a transition from feudal sovereignty to absolute sovereignty of the paramountcy, which is to say of a highly centralised state. The struggle between the powerholder at the apex and the aristocracy was finally in process of being resolved in favour of the former. The paramountcy was moving towards a position

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[67] Fynn, "1839 account", in Bird, Annals I:63, p.63.

[68] Fynn, Diary p.7.

[69] Fynn, "1839 account", op.cit., p.63.

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where it could appropriate the labour-power of the peasantry and its products directly, without the intervention of intermediate levels of power. The royal standing army was the essential vehicle for the change.

The principle of the standing army could be introduced in the area, to whatever extent,[70] without the immediate collapse of the subsistence base. This was possible because there had never been a social unity of fighting and tilling in south-east Africa comparable to that which had existed in some parts of medieval Europe.[71] In most areas, and probably for some considerable time, there had been a sexual division of labour within the homestead between the bearers of arms and the tillers of the ground. There had also been an age and class division of labour between the herders of cattle and other males. In consequence, the increasing number of men enrolled into the army, and the increasing amount of their labour-time spent under arms, did not automatically drain from the subsistence base labour-power necessary for its continued maintenance. Moreover, Dingiswayo's careful husbandry of the productive resources of the state ensured that the army's operations also did not have this destructive effect. A farreaching production revolution was not immediately required.

What did perhaps take place was an intensification of the sexual division of labour - a further debasement of the position of the womenfolk within the homestead. This already seemed to be evident in the oppressed situation of their sisters in the northern zone.

One of the factors inhibiting the transition to absolutis at the Bay may in fact have been the relative poverty of the

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[70] There is no clear information as to what proportion of the menfolk, and what proportion of their labour-time, was committed to service in the army. Since, however, the traditions give the impression that it was a new development in Mthethwa, it is likely that the initial proportion of both was relatively low.

[71] In Europe at a comparable stage of development, it seems likely that men participated in agricultural work to a much greater extent than was the case in south-east Africa. See also Anderson, Transition from Antiquity to Feudalism p.140.

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environment, which had necessitated the enserfment of women even under feudal conditions. Once the sexual division of labour at the Bay had been pushed thus far, further development of the subsistence base could not proceed without a much more farreaching productive revolution than had been required further south.

The possibility of the development in part of the northern zone of a subsistence base utilising a smaller permanent labour-force than had hitherto been the case, may also have been facilitated by certain technological changes taking place in the area. In particular, the use of iron-hoes and the cultivation of a highly efficient cereal crop, maize, may have both become widespread in the second half of the 18th century.

Although extremely difficult to document, it seems likely that a similar farreaching pattern of changes was taking place in other parts of the northern zone at about this time, and notably in Ndwandwe, Ngwane and Hlubi.[72] The changes described in Mthethwa, and which the nature of the source material has made difficult to entirely separate from the agency of the hero-figure Dingiswayo, were probably representative of a general structural change underway in the area. The changes can best be understood if they are situated within the context of developments in the political economy of south-east Africa as a whole over a considerable period of time.

The energies of new or established ruling lineages in these states were initially concentrated upon extending both the 'span' and 'scope' of command within a restricted territorial framework.[73] Only when power was consolidated within these limits were steps taken to channel the dynamic

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[72] Marks, "The Nguni, the Natalians and their History", p.533.

[73] For the useful concepts of 'span' and 'scope' of command see Basil Sansom, "Traditional rulers and their realms", in W.D. Hammond-Tooke, ed., The Bantu-Speaking Peoples of Southern Africa (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974) p.247.

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implicit in the new organisational forms into lateral expansion beyond the previously tacitly agreed territorial boundaries between the major state systems. Dingiswayo, for example, appears to have been extremely reluctant to commit Mthethwa to lateral expansion at the expense of either his Hlubi or Ndwandwe neighbours.[74]

Lateral expansion would now automatically bring into conflict powerful state systems based around large standing armies. The repercusions would be farreaching, and demand the full implimentation of the kind of production revolution to which changes of the kind instituted in Mthethwa before 1818 were but the necessary introduction.

Although triggered by events and pressures in the northern zone, many of the processes which have been described overlapped into the central zone. Even in the southern zone however, there were also some indications of a weakening of the prevailing feudal complexion of the social formation. The principal evidence for this comes from the diaries of the survivors of the wreck of the GROSVENOR, and of members of the parties of would-be rescuers which set out from the Cape.[75] The ship ran aground on the south-east African coast between the Mzimvubu and the Mtamvuna in August 1782.[76]

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[74] Zwide, the Ndwandwe paramount, was supposedly captured on a number of occasions by the Mthethwa army, but always released by Dingiswayo even though he refused to acknowledge Mthethwa hegemony; Fynn, "1839 account", in Bird, Annals, I:64; Russell, Natal, The Land and its Story, p.130. This may be something of an exaggeration, but it does suggest that Mthethwa was extremely reluctant to confront Ndwandwe directly at this stage. For evidence of the care taken by Dingiswayo not to encroach on the Hlubi sphere of influence see above p.276.

[75] The most useful collection of documents concerning the wreck and the subsequent overland rescue attempts is P.R. Kirby, ed. and intro., Source Book on the Wreck of the Grosvenor East Indiaman (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 1953).

[76] Ibid., pp.3,50n, and map between pp.192 and 193.

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The survivors learned that their ship had been wrecked on the shores of the country of 'Hambona', occupied by the 'Abonyas' or 'Bomvana' people.[77] This seems not to have been an independent state, but like Mpondo, Mpondomisse, and certain other states to the north and south, to have been a member of the vast 'AbaMbo', 'Mbo', 'Vambe', 'Mambookie' or 'Mambooker' system.[78] More precisely, the people in the vicinity of the wreck professed allegiance to Ngqungqushe, whose capital was then at or near Lusikisiki and who was the father of the later Mpondo paramount Faku.[79] South of 'Hambona', and extending southwards as far as the Mbashe river was the country of the 'Mambookies' or 'Mambookers' proper.[80]

Throughout this part of south-east Africa, the survivors of the GROSVENOR and their would-be rescuers came across evidence of a social formation under pressure and in process of change. Disciplined forces of warriors armed with iron-tipped lances or assagais were encountered, seemingly often undertaking policing functions on behalf of the state.[81] Though villages were seen with cattle, none were available for barter. People were not even prepared to part with milk.[82] The travellers learned that people were not allowed to sell cattle without the headman's leave. Moreover, peasants could not apply to the headman for such permission. Peasants were not permitted to converse with the travellers directly. All negotiations were to be conducted through the agency of the headman or of his appointed agent.[83]

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[77] Kirby, Source Book on the Wreck of the Grosvenor, pp.30, 179.

[78] Ibid., pp.30,72n,179.

[79] Ibid., p.72n.

[80] Ibid., pp.30,31,49,51n.

[81] Ibid., pp.37,68,71,72,74,76,105.

[82] Ibid., pp.43-4,77-78,79,80-81,91,93-97.

[83] Ibid., p.77.

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There were signs that commodity exchange occupied an important place in the economy. Everywhere the travellers found copper in great demand, and the items made of this metal that they were carrying were frequently stolen or taken from them by force.[84] There is no evidence of copper-based technologies in use in the area, and it seems that copper functioned as a medium of exchange.

The fact that copper rather than Dutch currency from the Cape was still the primary medium of exchange, suggests that the primary economic links of the area were still orientated towards the north and the interior. Even a Dutch-speaking white youth, whom the travellers came across living in the area, was extremely reluctant to act as a guide on a journey towards the Cape, and showed no interest in the medium of exchange in use there;

> "They offered him any money if he would conduct them. He said he did not want money but copper". 85

Local people encountered by the survivors near the site of the wreck advised the castaways to head north-eastwards towards Delagoa Bay, suggesting that this route was better known to them than that southwards to the Cape.[86]

Not only copper but also iron and brass were in great demand. Even guns were valued for their metal content rather than for the new weapons technology which they represented.[87] In general the travellers found that

> "The natives minded nothing but metal".[88]

The travellers came across a number of outsiders who were established in the area and who seem to have been active in the trading network, including a Portuguese-speaking black, and a 'Malayam'.[89] It is difficult to identify

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[84] Kirby, Source Book on the Wreck of the Grosvenor, pp.33, 35-36, 38, 68, 71-74, 76, 79, 91, 93, 95.

[85] Ibid., p.36.

[86] Ibid., p.35.

[87] Ibid., pp.33, 35, 38, 63, 68-69, 74.

[88] Ibid., p.43.

[89] Ibid., pp.36, 43-44, 73, 96-97.

the commodities which were traded, but the products of the hunt may have been amongst them. Certainly the travellers saw elephants and sea cows, and came across evidence of hunting activity.[90]

There were indications of moves towards the concentration of power at the centre. The travellers noticed that the various states which occupied the southern zone were separated from each other by 'nomanslands' - tracts of uninhabited country.[91] In the case of the 'Mambookie' state, sufficient power and resources had been surrendered to the centre to permit the state to control the entry of travellers into 'Mambookie' country. The measure was presumably designed to prevent inroads by hunter-traders from outside, but it was equally effective against the would-be rescuers of the GROSVENOR survivors. Most if not all the rescuers were turned back by the officials and military forces of the 'Mambookie' state before reaching the site of the wreck. The state officials apparently asked of the travellers

> "if they thought them fools, to let them pass through their country". 92

The power of even the 'Mambookie' state was still, however, far from absolute. By contrast to the position in regard to cattle property, agricultural production appears to have remained largely in the hands of the peasantry. The products of the peasantry, now including sweet potatoes and 'Indian corn' or maize, were sometimes available for barter to strangers.[93] Agricultural labour appears to have been entirely the preserve of womenfolk.[94] It is impossible to

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[90] Kirby, Source Book on the Wreck of the Grosvenor, pp.44, 86,93.104,108.

[91] Ibid., pp.30,43-44,96-97,177,115.

[92] Ibid., p.31. See also p.49.

[93] Ibid., pp.37,38,73,74,79,81,95,108,112.

[94] Ibid., p.113

decide what, if any, proportion of peasant production was given up in the form of tribute or rent.

At the coast there were still communities for whom the collection of mussels from the seashore constituted an important source of subsistence.[95] In fact the concentrations of wealth and power clearly lay inland, in the hands of people whom the coastal communities feared. They sometimes went to the trouble of warning the travellers of the implications of following a route which led into this hinterland.[96]

The technological base of the 'Mambookie' state was perhaps still too primitive to permit a thorough transition to Absolutism to be effected at this stage. Though the military forces of the state were equipped with iron-tipped weapons, these were still extremely scarce and costly to replace. This scarcity led to the farcical situation whereby, not only the iron tips of their weapons were held back by warriors in any engagement, but

> "....afterwards the natives brought sweet potatoes to exchange for the lance-staffs and sticks they had thrown at our people". 97

It was a military system totally unsuited to the era of escalating warfare which was about to burst upon south-east Africa. Iron technology had also yet to be systematically applied to agricultural impliments, which still seem to have taken the form of wooden digging sticks.[98]

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[95] Kirby, Source Book on the Wreck of the Grosvenor, pp.43-44, 84,85,89,93,100,102,104.

[96] Ibid., pp.71,77-78,91.

[97] Ibid., pp.37,74.

[98] Wilson, "Nguni", in Oxford History, I:114.

South of the 'Mambookie' heartland, between the Kei and Mbashe rivers, was located the territory of the 'Tambookies', 'Tambookers' or 'Thembu' people.[99] State power seems to have been even less developed in this case than in that of 'Mambookie' to the north, and it may well have been a 'Mambookie' tributary. Even with protection from this source, however, its position seems not to have been secure. It possessed few cattle, and was at war with certain chiefs of the 'Caffer' or 'Xhosa' system who were encroaching upon its territory from the south, across the nomansland which had formerly defined its southern frontier.[100] In this area travellers came across numbers of empty huts, though it is not clear whether these had been permanently abandoned or had merely been temporarily vacated by people following a transhumance economy.[101]

In the 'Caffer' or 'Xhosa' country of the extreme south of south-east Africa, where the feudal system was especially firmly rooted, attempts made by paramounts to move towards a situation of absolute power were quickly forestalled. They foundered upon the temporarily united opposition of the feudal aristocracy and the peasantry. The high level of development of the subsistence base in the area, and the relatively lesser developed trading and manufacturing components of the feudal economy, meant that a powerholder at the apex was not able to build up a position of wealth sufficient to enable him to mobilise the resources required to enable him to overcome resistance organised at intermediate levels.

The failure of one of the 'Xhosa' paramounts, Ngqika, to overcome the constraints placed upon the absolutism of

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[99] Kirby, Source Book on the Wreck of the Grosvenor, pp.30,51n, 175-7,148.

[100] Ibid., pp.175-7.

[101] Ibid., pp.44,83-84.

his power, clearly reveals the resilience of the feudal mode of production in the south. Van der Kemp, the first missionary to visit the area, reported in 1800 that

> "he has his counsellors who inform him of the sentiments of his people, and his captains admonish him with great freedom and fidelity, when he abuses his authority to such a degree, that there is reason to fear that the nation will shew him their displeasure. This is done if he treats the admonition with contempt, not by way of insurrection, or taking up arms against him, but most effectually, by gradual emigration. Some kraals break up, and march towards the borders of the country, and there they stay, keeping themselves ready to emigrate to another country; they are successively followed by others, and this seldom fails to have the effect wished for; I have myself been a witness to these proceedings". 102

If this threat to the very basis of the state's continued existence was not sufficient, intermediate powerholders were prepared to lead a 'popular' insurrection. Van der Kemp knew of only one occasion in the history of the area on which this ultimate step had proved necessary.[103]

Attempts to escape from such constraints in order to reach a situation approaching absolute power, were accordingly rarely made in relation to an aspect of society which touched upon the interests of the aristocracy directly. A more gradual, piecemeal approach was used. Neither was the sequence followed everywhere the same. In consequence, the point of confrontation between paramount and aristocracy might be reached, if at all, in relation to different and sometimes seemingly unimportant aspects of the social formation. The stand was made by the aristocracy well before its essential interests were challenged.

It was sometimes the case that a compromise solution was reached, with the aristocracy defending its essential

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[102] J.T. Van der Kemp, "Report", in Transactions of the Missionary Society (London, 1804-1813), vol.1, p.436, cited by Wilson, "Nguni", in Oxford History of South Africa, I:123.

[103] Van der Kemp, op.cit.

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economic interests, whilst making concessions to the paramountcy in other less crucial spheres. Such a compromise is well illustrated in the differing outcome of two confrontations between Ngqika and the aristocracy which were witnessed by Van der Kemp. The situations of confrontation developed

> "one time when Geika (Ngqika) had made a law against private revenge, forbidding a man, who had detected his wife in infidelity to the marriage bed, taking away the life of the seducer; and the second, when he would have made the king heir to all his subjects who died without heirs in a direct line. He was required to retract both; that however related to private revenge was established, the other was set aside." 104

The feudal states of the 'Xhosa' confederacy were formidable structures in the late 18th and early 19th centuries but in no case does it seem that a powerholder at the apex of the political system had been able to render his power absolute. Hintsa, for example, was said to have been able to mobilise 10,000 followers, yet the control he exercised over them was not direct but mediated through eleven regional chiefs, who thus represented major powerholders at the intermediate level.[105]

Even the homesteads of relatively minor powerholders impressed visitors with their size. One was reported in 1779 to have comprised 50 huts occupied by some 300 inhabitants.[106] Even the homesteads of the rank-and-file of the population as yet showed little sign of systematic underdevelopment and the concentration of their wealth and labour at the centre. In 1797, for example, Barrow saw many homesteads in the area each comprising between 10 and 30 huts.[107]

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[104] H. Lichtenstein, Travels in Southern Africa in the Years 1803,1804,1805, transl. A Plumptre, 2 vols. (Cape Town: 1928-30), Vol.1, p.353.

[105] Wilson, "Nguni", p.113.

[106] W. Paterson, A Narrative of Four Journeys into the Country of the Hottentots and Caffraria (London, 1789) p.90.

[107] J. Barrow, An Account of Travels into the Interior of Southern Africa, 2 vols. (London, 1801), Vol.1, p.192.

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Neither was wealth concentrated at the apex. The paramount was almost by definition a wealthy man, but even intermediate powerholders might control "above a thousand" cattle.[108] It seems that, like the paramount, intermediate powerholders could gain dependants in return for the loan of cattle.[109]

In the early 19th century a contrast could not only be drawn between the situation prevailing in the southern zone and that coming into being further to the north, but also between the social formation of the southern zone and the societies of the highveld interior, already rigidly structured along class lines. As Thompson pointed out after a visit to the 'Xhosa' country in 1821, important chiefs such as Ngqika certainly existed, but

> "The despotism of the chiefs over the inferior ranks is much less oppressive, and more easily evaded than among the Bechuanas; and there is no class of them, like what are called the 'poor Bechuanas' in a state of absolute bondage. The power and influence of the chiefs depend so much on their popularity, and the transfer of allegiance from one chief to another is so readily effected, that the arbitrary power of the hereditary aristocracy is under tolerably efficient checks". 110

The states of the southern zone as a whole, with the partial exception of the 'Mambookie' complex which gave rise to Faku's Mpondo, were ill-prepared to resist the forces of the states of the north in which the structural changes associated with the transition to Absolutism were already well advanced. The rise of one of these states to a position of hegemony in south-east Africa as a whole forms the subject of the next chapter.

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[108] Van der Kemp, "Report", in Transactions of the Missionary Society, Vol.1, p.460.

[109] Ibid., I:436.

[110] Thompson, Travels and Adventures, I:167.

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X

THE ABSOLUTIST STATE AND IMPERIAL EXPANSION

The opportunity having been provided by the weakening of Tembe hegemony over the northern interior of south-east Africa after the Civil War of 1794, attempts were made by some of the major interior states to widen their 'span' of command. The new Bay state of Maputo may also have had similar ambitions.

There were three important short-term consequences of this expansion. First, certain of the states involved were able to develop direct relationships with some of the competing sections of International Capital whose representatives were based at various points on the coastal and southern margins of south-east Africa. This direct relationship, which had previously been prevented by the ability of Tembe to defend a 'middleman' role in the commercial patterns of the area, was initially seen to be of mutual benefit.[1]

Secondly, collision between the expanding state systems came to be increasingly frequent and intense; there was a general escalation of war in south-east Africa. Struggle no longer involved small-scale police operations designed to retain control over existing vassal chiefdoms within clearly defined parallel territories, but rather conflict between the major interior states themselves as well as between their respective vassals. Ndwandwe, Ngwane of Sobhuza, Hlubi, Mthethwa and possibly Ngwane of Matiwane were all involved.[2] Occasionally the Bay states were also drawn into the struggles.[3]

Thirdly, the increasing intensity and frequency of collision furnished the dynamic for a furthering of the changes already in process in the 'scope' of command of the major

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[1] This theme is explored more fully in Chapter XI below.

[2] Daniel, "Geographical study of Pre-Shakan Zululand", pp.23,29, 30; Morris, Washing of the Spears p.55. For the Ndwandwe-Mthethwa conflict see below.

[3] Smith, "Trade as a factor", in Thompson, African Societies in Southern Africa, pp.185-6.

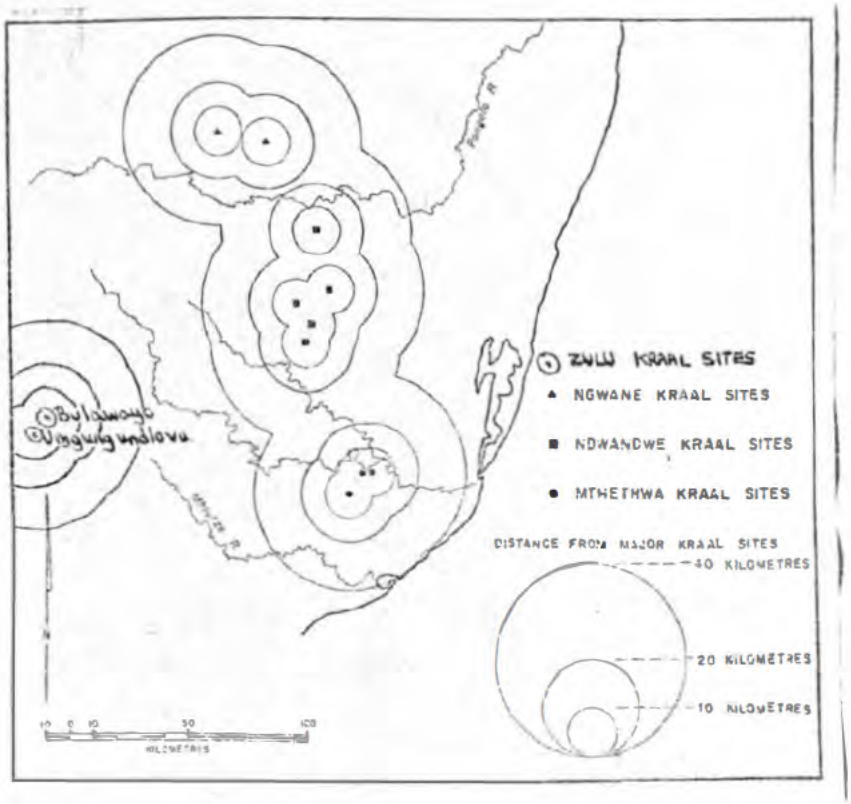

Fig. 14 Major Kraal Sites of Ngwane, Ndwandwe, Mthethwa and Zulu

After Daniel (1973) and Bryant (1929)

interior powerholders. The nature of the state and of the prevailing structure of relationships associated with it were reorganised on a war-footing around leadership figures appropriate to a time of military crisis. In the present limited state of our knowledge of these processes, attention must be concentrated on Mthethwa where the reorganisation is well known and appears to have been particularly thorough.

By 1818, Mthethwa forces appeared on the point of total defeat by the Ndwandwe Army of Zwide. Dingiswayo was apparently captured and put to death, though a portion of the Mthethwa Army remained intact.[4] The commander of this section of the Army was Shaka who had already built a reputation in the area as a skilled and ruthless military leader. The succession to the Kingship was seized by him as the candidate of the Army in what amounted to a swift and relatively bloodless coup. His immediate success in stemming the Ndwandwe advance,[5] ensured the breathing space required for the short-term consolidation of his position and that of his faction. More legitimate candidates for the Mthethwa succession were killed,[6] and Shaka established a new capital, Bulawayo, outside the Mthethwa heartland in territory potentially less hostile to the change of dynasty.[7] A trusted vassal was accorded the task of ruling the Mthethwa heartland itself.[8]

Shaka's origins and early life, like those of Dingiswayo before him, are shrouded in mystery. He appears to have been

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[4] Various slightly differing accounts of these events have been put forward. In some Ndwandwe features as the aggessor whilst it is Mthethwa in others. Some see Shaka as having rallied a defeated army, others hint that Dingiswayo had, in effect, been toppled from within by a Shakan refusal to commit to battle the section of the Army under his control. In Russell's account the Mthethwa population take shelter in Zulu country after their own had been overrun, whilst in others Shaka's control over Mthethwa appears to be imposed from without. See, for example, the discussion in the Oxford History which attempts to draw together what is known; Thompson, "The Zulu Kingdom and Natal", in Oxford History of South Africa, 1:342-5. See also Russell, Natal: The Land and its Story, p.131; Krige, Social System of the Zulus, pp.9-11; Smith, "Trade as a factor", in Thompson, African Societies in Southern Africa, p.185; Omer-Cooper, Zulu Aftermath, pp.29-33.

[5] Krige, Social System of the Zulus, p.11.

[6] Thompson, The Zulu Kingdom and Natal, in Oxford History of South Africa

[7] Ibid., p.342.

[8] Ibid., p.343.

born a subject of the small and obscure Zulu chiefdom located between the upper Mhlatuzi and the White Mfolozi west of the Mthethwa nuclear area.[9] The chiefdom may have had a certain economic importance which made its dominance attractive to outside powerholders.[10] There is some suggestion that Shaka was the son of the incumbent chief by a woman from a subordinate lineage.[11] As such he posed a distant threat to the succession of the candidate of the ruling lineage. He became an exile and at some point joined or was conscripted into the growing Mthethwa army. Sometime about 1816, following the death of the Zulu chief, Shaka was backed by Mthethwa forces in a successful attempt to overturn the succession of the candidate of the ruling lineage and to install himself as chief. Zulu had been drawn into the Mthethwa system and Shaka was to accept a vassal status until the death of his patron.[12] There are close parallels with Dingiswayo's own rise to prominence, and such careers may have been not unusual of the times.

Shaka may have taken a few tentative steps towards expanding the 'span' of his own command before the time of the key confrontation between Mthethwa and Ndwandwe.[13] What is more certain is that he presided over further changes in the 'scope' of command in Zulu, and later in the Zulu-Mthethwa state as a whole. These reorganisations permitted a further farreaching expansion of the 'span' of command. The Zulu-Mthethwa state gave way to a Zulu 'Empire' which dominated almost the entire land-area which we have subsumed under the title of south-east Africa, and one whose rise was to have repercusions over an even wider area still.

These changes have often been linked to an underlying current of population pressure. It is arguable, however, that

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[9] Thompson, "The Zulu Kingdom and Natal", in Oxford History of South Africa, I:342.

[10] According to one source, it had enjoyed a reputation as a community of pedlars; Theal, History of South Africa Since 1795, I:374.

[11] Thompson, op.cit.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Krige, Social System of the Zulus, p.11.

the precise nature of the crisis facing Zulu-Mthethwa in the era of Shaka was not one of population 'surplus' at all but of labour 'shortage'. Admittedly the notion of labour shortage is surrounded by almost as many conceptual problems as that of population pressure. Suffice to say here that the term denotes a political as much as an abstract economic imperative. To employ it is not to imply that the new rulers of Zulu-Mthethwa had any intrinsic right to the labour-power of the peasantry of the area, but only that the maintenance of their position depended upon their gaining direct access to it.

The evidence for this proposition is sketchy, but no more so than the more familiar population pressure thesis. First, the traditions suggest that the initial problem facing Shaka as a military commander was that his forces were substantially outnumbered by those of his enemies.[14] This is partly borne out by the manner in which the Zulu-Mthethwa remnant was able to survive the 1818 clash with Ndwandwe. Something akin to guerrilla tactics had been employed. The Army avoided battle and staged a tactical retreat, destroying the subsistence base as it went. The strength of the vast Ndwandwe army was sapped as it attempted to cross the tract of barren countryside, and it may then have been harassed by Zulu-Mthethwa raiding. Eventually the Ndwandwe army, though not decisively defeated, was obliged to retreat to its distant heartland.[15] At one level it represented a tribute to the tactical skills of Shaka, at another it suggests that Zulu-Mthethwa was obliged to adopt a mode of warfare appropriate to the numerical weakness of the forces who remained at its disposal.

Secondly, many of the subsequent changes made in Zulu-Mthethwa can be interpreted as measures to overcome a situation

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[14] Krige, Social System of the Zulus, p.11; Omer-Cooper, Zulu Aftermath, p.32.

[15] H.F. Fynn, The Diary of Henry Francis Fynn, 1803-1861, comp. and ed. J. Stuart and D. Mck. Malcolm, (Pietermaritzburg, 1950) p.17; Krige, Social System of the Zulus, p.11; Omer-Cooper, op.cit., pp.32-3.

of labour shortage, including the application of more efficient technology and especially the development of forced-labour systems, drawing not only on the peasant-homesteads of the immediate area of the state, but also captive-labour brought in from outside.

Thirdly, contemporary or near-contemporary observers did not consider the possibility of population pressure in their accounts. The hypothesis is entirely a product of retrospective interpretation and deductions from the wretched state of the Natal population after the early Zulu raids. The only visitor to record any direct comments on the matter at all was Farewell who visited the Zulu capital in 1824. Although he is not an entirely satisfactory witness,[16] his comments add further plausibility to the labour shortage notion

> "Chaka's country appears very thinly peopled. I fancy he assembled all his disposable force on the occasion of our visit, and probably fifty thousand souls, fourteen of which might be fighting men on a push, form the whole population of the large territory he is possessed of." 17

With the Ndwandwe threat contained but not removed, an immediate reorganisation of the patterns of relationships prevailing within Zulu-Mthethwa was undertaken, building on the earlier foundations of the general transition to absolutism in the area. A militarisation of society was pushed through, which had as its object the development of 'absolute' systems of control from the apex of all sectors of living. The Army, at once the institution of the state with which Shaka and his immediate associates were most familiar and the source of much of Shaka's popular support, was to be at the core of many of the changes and the vehicle for the implementation of others. The dramatic nature of the changes involved, provoked considerable opposition which could be contained only by the employment of terror and institutionalised modes of rebellion.

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[16] He was concerned to solicit direct British Imperial protection for the operations of white traders in south-east Africa operating from the Cape and 'Port Natal'. As such it may have been in his interest to minimise, in his accounts, the difficulties facing conquest.

[17] Farewell to Lord Somerset, Governor of the Cape, 6/9/1824 in Bird, Annals, I:192.

Three overall explanations of these changes would seem possible. The first, and still quite common hypothesis is that Shaka was a psychopath who, through sheer will, built a transitory system around him based upon a mode of 'predation' rather than one of 'production'. The system was nothing more than the institutionalised reflection of his irrational mind, which collapsed on his death immediately and totally because of its own internal contradictions and because it depended upon the ruthless will of its founder. This is not the place to enter into a detailed discussion of the role of the 'hero' or 'anti-hero' in shaping the course of history. Suffice to say that the main problem with this view is that many of the changes appear to have been in process for some considerable time and over a wide area, and some survived into the second half of the 19th century and beyond.

A second hypothesis is that the changes introduced a transient but thoroughly rational system; a pattern of relationships characteristic of a feudal system attempting to adjust to the exigencies of a total war situation. With a return to peacetime conditions came an automatic return to the looser pre-war forms. This is certainly a tempting hypothesis, but relaxation in time of peace seem not to have produced a complete return to pre-war forms. Certain key changes, which seem to have been in process over a long period, were institutionalised.

The third possibility is that the changes were associated with the painful transition to a new mode of production characteristic of a further epoch in the progressive separation of Man from Nature in south-east Africa. The cataclysmic nature of the change in the overall pattern of relationships which was involved meant that it was associated with considerable social strife. The dynamic which the new organisational forms released meant that it led also to external conflict on an equally formidable scale. It is the case for this third possibility which will be argued here.[18]

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[18] The three-way debate surrounding the interpretation of these events, and the role of Shaka in them, is perhaps reminiscent of those concerning the historical interpretation of the role of Robespierre, Hitler and Stalin in equally cataclysmic processes in Europe.

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A problem which hampers a structural analysis along these lines is in fact the expansion of the 'span' of command which the changes permitted. The Zulu-Mthethwa 'state' was progessively transformed into a Zulu 'empire'. But the change involved was not simply one of scale. It was also one of structure. Metropolis-periphery relationships developed alongside the patterns of relationships within the metropolis itself. Though they were interlinked, the modes of exploitation of labour differed.

As Saxon has suggested,[19] after Kwame Arhin's work on Ashanti,[20] three broadly concentric zones of Zulu power developed each characterised by different kinds of relationships to the apex. The Zulu 'heartland' was made up of a number of 'provinces' in which control from the apex was particularly absolute. Beyond this was a zone of 'protectorates' - peoples and territories which were incorporated into the Zulu system directed by the apex, but in a rather different fashion to the 'provinces' of the 'heartland'. Finally, on the outermost reaches of the imperial system, were a number of 'tributary' states whose mode of incorporation was still looser and more unstable.[21] In reality the simple model suggested may have been rather more complex with certain 'tributaries' existing in a geographically closer relationship to the metropolis than certain 'protectorates' and so on.

A further problem which makes structural analysis particularly difficult, and which neither Saxon nor Arhin really allow for in their model, is the fact that the Zulu polity represented a system in process rather than in stasis. Expansion or retreat of its boundaries was continually taking place. Accordingly, the concentric zones of Zulu power cannot be permanently and comfortably related to specific geographical areas. Their boundaries were constantly shifting.

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[19] Douglas E. Saxon, "The early Zulu state: Centre versus the Provinces", unpublished seminar paper, University of California, Santa Barbara, 1968.

[20] Kwame Arhin, "The structure of Greater Ashanti, 1700-1842", Journal of African History, VIII, 1 (1967).

[21] Saxon, op.cit., pp.1-14. In stressing the political dimension these categories are perhaps not ideal, though Saxon's general point that the Zulu state cannot be seen as a homogeneous entity is well taken and forms the basis for the analysis presented here.

A final problem concerns source material. The sources available in English are certainly much richer than for the 18th century. They include collections of traditions, and the accounts of traders, missionaries and other contemporary visitors to the area, many of whom ventured a considerable distance from 'Port Natal'. Yet few of these accounts contain much material on the general question of systems of production. Politics and the ivory trade are their major preoccupations.

Subject to the qualifications outlined above, an attempt will now be made to view the changes from the point of view of the mode of production hypothesis and employing Saxon's model of concentric zones. The changes which appear to have taken place in the Zulu 'heartland' will be considered first.

As Sansom has suggested,[22] the essential features of the changes were twofold. First, separated departments of social life were isolated and distinctions of rank and status created within them. Secondly, each department was centred on the monarchy, which is to say the apex of command. It is not quite true to say however, that "there was no private sphere",[23] that the power of the monarch was universally located, its scope absolute.[24] The direction of the changes was certainly oriented towards the emergence of thoroughly centralised and despotic states, and in the political department of a form of divine kingship. It is arguable, however, that the transition was still in process when the new system was decisively challenged from outside. A more judicious summary of the situation was offered by Gluckman in a pioneer work on the early Zulu state;

> "During the time of the Kings, the State bulked large in the people's lives". 25

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[22] Sansom, "Traditional rulers and their realms", in Hammond-Tooke, The Bantu-Speaking Peoples of Southern Africa, pp.279-280.

[23] E.V. Walter, Terror and Resistance, p.218.

[24] For this conclusion, and an introduction to the idea of 'location' of command, See Sansom, "Traditional rulers and their realms", in Hammond-Tooke, op.cit., p.279.

[25] Gluckman, "The kingdom of the Zulu", in Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, African Political Systems, p.46. See also, Ibid., "The rise of a Zulu Empire", in Scientific American, 202 (1960) pp.167-8.

Decisive steps were taken towards centralising the control of labour. Women as well as men were involved. The recruitment of menfolk into the labour-force directed by the state took the form of a forced conscription of all males of an economically active age residing in the heartland. The abolition of the circumcision rite[26] indicated the blurring of the distinction between men and boys which was taking place and was appropriate to a situation in which all available labour-power was being pressed into the service of the state. Men were taken at a relatively early age from the homesteads into which they had been born, and which had been responsible for their subsistence in early childhood, to join their age peers from throughout the heartland in one of the various labour-regiments of the state. Much if not all their labour-time and labour-power until the age of 35 or 40 was to be expended on behalf of the state.[27] In the context of the possible life-expectancy of the times, this must have been close to an economically-active lifetime.

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[26] Wilson, "Nguni", in Oxford History of South Africa, I:125

[27] The general point is well known, but it is not clear whether labour was released to individual homesteads at key times in the production cycle, such as harvesting and clearing new ground. Gluckman argues that it was; "The second important change in Zulu family life was caused by the younger men having to serve at the king's military barracks, which kept them from home most of the year"; Gluckman, "The kingdom of the Zulu" in Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, African Political Systems, p.28. Yet Gluckman attempts in this article to describe the Zulu state as it existed in the time of Mpande, and the subsequent changes which took place. He does not claim to be describing the state as it operated at its peak, a point which is sometimes forgotten. In most spheres of life, a certain retreat from the more despotic patterns of relationships is evident, beginning before Mpande's time and continuing through it. It seems reasonable to suppose then that Gluckman is describing a more relaxed pattern of labour recruitment and control than had once existed. Moreover, his analysis makes no mention of the 'captive' component of the state labour force which is freely conceded to have been a factor in the rise of the Zulu Empire. It seems ublikely that captives could have returned to their kraals at certain times of the year since they were usually destroyed at the moment of capture. See also below note 31.

The state exercised rigid control over the menfolk who made up the various labour-regiments. Each regiment was billetted at one of some 15 royal homesteads, which in effect became barrack towns.[28] Within the barracks extremely tight discipline was maintained which included a rigid sexual division.[29] Surplus sexual energy could be expended only in the frequently-held feasts and militarised marathon singing and dancing sessions.[30]

Steps were taken to stamp out the more overt manifestations of an individualist peasant mentality within the ranks of the regiments. There is no record of the rank and file having been permitted to retain an economic interest independent of the king's table. There is no record of private trading, of cultivation of plots around the barrack towns on an individual basis, or of regular individual visits to the former homesteads in the countryside. Marriage was totally forbidden during the long period of active service in the regiments,[31] so that there was, during this time, no opportunity for men to establish new peasant homesteads independent of the state and which might distract them from a total commitment to its service and a total dependence upon its bounty.

Whilst serving in the regiments, a substantial proportion of a man's time was spent in military activity. This included garrison duty at the Capital,[32] police operations against recalcitrants as well as full-scale operations against distant powerholders,[33] the protection of incoming and outgoing embassies

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[28] Thompson, "Zulu kingdom and Natal", in Oxford History of South Africa, I:344.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.; Russell, Natal: The Land and its Story, p.132.

[31] Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal, p.86. This is not to say, however, that all men who served in the regiments were in this position, but only that the major fighting untis were so restricted. There were also regiments of men who were married; Nathaniel Isaacs, "History of Chaka", in Bird, Annals I:181. It is possible that these were only drawn together from homesteads in the countryside at a time of major crisis.

[32] The organisation of the royal capital differed little from that of other military barracks in the state; Thompson, "Zulu kingdom and Natal", in Oxford History of South Africa, I:344.

[33] See below pp.323-4 and notes.

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and of other groups travelling on state business.[34] Much time was also spent in training and other activities concerned to improve the military effectiveness of the regiments.[35] The youngest male conscripts attended the regiments on active service as shield carriers, cattle-herders and baggage handlers.[36]

The labour-power of the womenfolk of the heartland was also harnessed to the service of the state. Visitors to the Zulu capital saw large and organised groups of women as well as men drawn up for inspection,[37] suggesting that women as well as men were conscripted into labour-regiments controlled by the state. The proportion of the womenfolk and of their labour-time committed to state service in this way is not clear, but it may always have been rather less than required of the menfolk.

Two other sources of labour-power appear to have been controlled directly by the Zulu state. Widows became property of the state,[38] and were seen at work by visitors to the

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[34] In 1827, for example, a party of Port Natal residents journeying to Delagoa Bay were accorded a military escort by the Zulu state; Fynn, Diary, p.131.

[35] Russell, Natal: The Land and its Story, p.132.

[36] Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal, p.78. Perhaps there is something of a knight-squire character about the relationship between the warrior and his young shield carrier.

[37] Fynn saw between 8,000 and 10,000 women drawn up for his inspection at Shaka's kraal in 1824; Fynn; Diary, p.71. The summary killing of a kraal of 60 people, seemingly composed only of women, which was carried out in Dingane's time, may be further somewhat circumstantial evidence of the existence of women's regiments; R.B. Hulley, "An account of the Rev. Owen's visit to Zululand in 1837 as related by R.B. Hulley", Natal Archives Manuscript Collection, mss.12, p.13. Hulley had accompanied Owen. He had been hired at Butterworth as an interpreter and artisan.

[38] The payment of bride-price to the King was said to have been a condition of their re-marriage; Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal, p.79.

capital.[39] There may also have existed a separate stratum of male servants or slaves of the King whose members assisted in the domestic work at the capital.[40]

The number of men and women conscripted from the Zulu heartland into the direct service of the state was continually increased, at least in the early years of the Shakan era, by young captives of both sexes brought back by the Army as a result of operations in the periphery.[41] It is difficult to estimate what proportion of the regiments derived from this source, and to what extent their conditions of state service differed from that of conscripts from the heartland.

Complementing thestate's control over the labour-power of men and women was a partial monopoly of technology. The monopoly was partial in the sense that it may have been confined to certain key instruments of war. Each Zulu warrior was equipped with a complex wardress,[42] a large war shield and a variety of weapons. On campaigns he was attended by a shield-carrier, and supplied with sufficient food for the outward march carried or herded by other levies.[43] Since at the peak of Zulu power

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[39] Killie Campbell, "Umgungundhlovu - Dingaan's Kraal, Information collected from Old Zulus", Natal Archives Manuscript Collection mss.61, p.13. It is not clear whether all widows in the state were conscripted as labour and as property by the state in this way.

[40] Ibid.; Isaacs, "History of Chaka", in Bird, Annals, I:182. In fact it was one of the King's domestic attendants who put Shaka to death in 1828.

[41] Theal, History of South Africa Since 1795, I:378.

[42] It included crane feathers, together with jackal, ox, civet and monkey skins; Fynn, Diary, p.14; Russell, Natal: The Land and its Story, pp.132-3.

[43] See above note 36. For discussion of other aspects of state investment in raiding see below p.314.

there may have been up to 100,000 men under arms,[44] the maintenance of the Army, and particularly its involvement in distant operations, involved the state in a massive investment of capital.

The capital invested in shields and weapons was guarded with particular jealousy. The war-shields, which were of cow hide and which could only be replaced by killing more cattle, were regarded as state property;

> "The shields are all the king's property and are delivered to each soldier on going to war". [45]

When the regiment returned from active duty, the shields were once more collected and stored in a special place under the direct control of the state official responsible for their custody, in this case the regimental commander.[46]

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[44] Russell, Natal: The Land and its Story, p.135. Armies sent out on specific campaigns would have been less, and the general accounts of them which we have would seem to make Russell's figure for the total size of the Army a reasonable one. Fynn, for example, estimated that the Zulu army which passed him on its return from an attack on the Mpondo in 1824 numbered 20,000; Fynn, Diary, p. 62. The 1826 expedition against Ndwandwe, the most powerful of the Zulu states' enemies, numbered about 50,000, though this figure also included boys and women; Ibid., p.123. The total military effective of the state was said to have been organised into three distinct armies; Isaacs, "History of Chaka", in Bird, Annals, I:181. Since the total included regiments of boys and of older married men, and the Army rarely undertook a major campaign without being augmented by detachments from vassals in the periphery, Fynn's estimate that the core of the Army amounted to some 50,000 men is also reasonable; Fynn, "History of Godongwana (Dingizwayo) and (in part) of Chaka", in Bird, Annals, I:66. This would tend to suggest that the 70,000 males drawn up at Shaka's kraal for Fynn's inspection in 1824 represented something close to the state's total military effective, excluding perhaps the regiments of older men dispersed in kraals about the countryside; Fynn, Diary, p.71.

[45] Rev. George Champion, "Journal", 18/1/1836, in Missionary Herald Vol.33, p.177, reproduced in Bird, Annals 1:203.

[46] Captain Gardiner, "First interview with Dingaan, February 1835' in Bird, op.cit., I:288; Campbell, "Umgungundhlovu", p.17.

The recently-introduced short stabbing spear also appears to have been an item of technology which remained the property of the state. For a warrior to return without it from the battlefield was a state offence punishable by death.[47] Its value to the state lay in the investment in the iron content it incorporated. The new weapon in fact was not only more efficient in the strictly military sense as has often been pointed out. It was also vastly more efficient than the throwing assagai in an economic sense. This was true in two respects. First, it prevented the heavy losses of iron to the enemy which could result if the Army was forced to quit the battlefield.[48] Secondly, its introduction removed the possibility of the kind of anti-state behaviour which had characterised the peasant armies of the past and which continued to occur in the peasant armies of the feudal states to the south. The peasant soldier had been apt to pocket the metal head from his assagais, with a view to future personal use or trade, before using the shaft alone against the enemy.[49]

It is not clear whether the war uniform was also an item of state property, though Fynn's general impression was that most war equipment, if not all, was provided by the King, which is to say by the state.[50]

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[47] Fynn, Diary, pp.13-16; Omer-Cooper, Zulu Aftermath, pp.30-31. Though there is general agreement that technological innovation in the military sphere had much to do with the momentous political and social changes brought about in south-east Africa in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, there is less agreement on the precise timing of the innovations, and on the degree to which they were totally new rather than the functional adaptation of existing forms. For discussion of these questions see Omer-Cooper, Zulu Aftermath, pp.30-31; Ibid., "Political change in the 19th century Mfecane" in Thompson, African Societies in Southern Africa, pp.212-215; Thompson, "Zulu kingdom and Natal", in Oxford History of South Africa, I:342-3; Theal, History of South Africa Since 1795, I:375; Junod, Life of a South African Tribe, I:450.

[48] For an example of the loss which could be involved see above chapter VI pp.188-190.

[49] This was still the case in the feudal states to the south as late as 1782; see above p.287

[50] Fynn, Diary, p.284.

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Other forms of technology, including non war shields, appear to have been more freely available.[51] It is not, however, possible to draw a firm distinction between the mode of control over the instruments of war and over the instruments of production. In the Zulu system, war could also be a source of production. In some senses therefore, instruments of war must also be considered amongst instruments of production, especially as some weapons were also the tools of the hunter. The firearm, which was gradually being introduced into the area, and which was quickly added to the list of items of state property, is an obvious example.[52]

Within the heartland, all land, in the sense of all territory within the borders of the state, was under the direct control of the state. Access to it could not be gained without the acceptance of certain obligations to the state. Attempted individual separation from the land, which is to say attempted migration out of the territory controlled by the state, was an offence against the state,[53] There may also have been certain gardens or sections of the veld specifically set aside for the direct use of the state, though generally homestead sites could probably be chosen from broad tracts of the countryside within the territorial boundaries of Zulu.

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[51] "Those (shields) used in war are considered the property of the King; others of the people"; Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal, p.51. The right to bear non-war shields must thus be listed amongst the 'immunities' allowed to the private sector. It is not clear whether this can be extended to the general right to bear arms. It is not, in other words, clear whether the state actually possessed a monopoly of the instruments of production within its realms, or simply the greatest concentration of them.

[52] The Zulu state clearly possessed some firearms in the time of Dingane; Fynn, Diary, pp.195-6, 255-7; Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal, p.171; Rev. F. Owen, "Journal", 12/11/1837, in Church Missionary Record Vol.IX no.9, reproduced in Bird, Annals, I:335. For a detailed account of the history of firearms in the area see J.J.Guy, "Notes on firearms in the Zulu kingdom", unpublished seminar paper, University of London, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 1969. See also chpt.XI below

[53] The Zulu state appears to have looked with tolerance on a build-up of people at Port Natal providing they were drawn from devastated groups in the periphery. Those fleeing from the heartland itself were pursued, and the harbouring of such groups by the black community at the Port became one of the points of contention between the Zulu state and its vassal chiefs in the area - the white traders. See also below p.388

Vast herds of cattle were also under the direct control of the state, geographically distributed between the capital, other regimental barracks and, in the sense discussed below, various private homesteads in the countryside.[54] Cattle had a special economic significance in the system as a source of milk, meat and the raw material for war-shields, but also as a highly mobile and freely negotiable store of accumulative wealth.

In the vast resources of labour power, technology, territory and cattle-wealth under its immediate control, the state also controlled a substantial amount of capital, which is to say the accumulated capacity to bring about future production

The corollary of a substantial concentration of capital at the apex was the direct involvement of the state in production. The male regiments were essentially multi-functional organised labour gangs rather than regiments of professional soldiers, though there may also have been some degree of specialisation in this regard amongst the regiments, based upon considerations of age and other factors related to efficiency in certain spheres of work. The labour-time and labour-power of the male regiments was under the direct control of the state and could be expended as the latter saw fit. It is clear that neither was expended totally in the military sphere. A portion of the regiment's work involved productive activity. Some of this activity was directly related to their military functions, as in the manufacture of war shields from materials provided by the state and which would eventually become the property of the state.[55] The regiments could also be called out, however, to hunt on behalf of the state, though this never became the principal source of ivory in the area.[56] By the time of Dingane,

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[54] Thompson, "Zulu kingdom and Natal", in Oxford History of South Africa, I:344. For cattle at individual homesteads see below p.313.

[55] Champion, "Journal", 20/1/1836, in Bird, Annals, I:206; Gardiner, "First interview", in Ibid., pp.283-5; Isaacs, "History of Chaka", in Ibid., p.171; Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal, p.86.

[56] Champion to Anderson, 21/4/1837, in D.J. Kotze, ed., Letters of the American Missionaries 1835-1838 (Cape Town, Van Riebeeck Society no.31, 1950) p.159; Fynn, Diary pp.80,131, 142-3; Isaacs, op.cit., p.182. See also below p.310 and note

a wide variety of types of productive work outside these spheres was being performed by the male regiments;

> "The work of the soldiers at peace time was to build huts, make stock folds, plough (sic?), weed, reap and some other light work for the kraal". 57

The wide range of activities indicated in this report may reflect a decline in the amount of the labour-power of women available to the state in Dingane's time, as well as a reduction in the need for shields in a more relaxed period of international relations.

The primary function of the labour-regiments of women was to undertake the bulk of the work associated with the production of grain and other crops which the state required to feed the labour-regiments and others who ate at the 'King's table', to furnish the state with seed for the new season, and with a surplus for storage against unforeseen eventualities so as to prevent a drain on capital stocks.[58] Large granaries were seen by visitors to the capital and other major kraals.[59] The women's regiments may also have participated in light manufacturing activity, and less productive work associated with the day-to-day running of the capital and of the other barrack-towns.[60]

Mining also appears to have been a sphere of production in which the state was directly involved. There were ruthless punishments for those who attempted to undertake mining independently from the state,[61] though beyond this there is

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[57] Campbell, "Umgungundhlovu", p.17

[58] Theal, History of South Africa Since 1795, I:378.

[59] Campbell, op.cit., p.15.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Isaacs gives an account of an extremely interesting tradition relating to the history of metals in the area. Iron had originally been the mark of distinction in Natal-Zululand, but at some point was replaced with a new metal which appeared 'white' during the smelting process until worked into arm-bangles or rings. It became the mark of the powerholder, leaving iron, which was plentiful in the region, as the ornament of the commoner. The chiefdom which controlled the production of the 'white' metal was conquered and its rulers destroyed. The tradition goes on to suggest that all who attempted to mine the new metal were put to death. This may have been the case, perhaps designed to protect a monopoly of its production centred elsewhere, though I have interpreted this to mean that death may have been a more selective punishment reserved for those who attempted independent production. The tradition operates in 'legend' time, and the

no information on how precisely mining was organised or the source of the labour-power which was expended in this sphere of economic activity. The range of minerals produced in the heartland may have been confined to iron.[62]

Certain of the military operations of the regiments also brought income to the state in the form of cattle, grain, labour and reproductive power.[63] The state's direct involvement in 'production' was widened in this way to include the predation of the periphery.

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date of the changes is accordingly open to speculation. See Nathaniel Isaacs, Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa, ed. L. Herrman, 2 vols., (Cape Town, van Riebeeck Society nos. 16 and 17, 1936-37), reproduced in Bird, Annals I:186-7.

[62] Iron was said to have been plentiful in northern Natal-Zululand by this time; Ibid. One source was situated in the vicinity of the Amatikula River; Gardiner, "First interview", in Bird, Annals, I:305-6. Gardiner appears to have thought this the only mine in operation at the time. This may have been the case, though recent archaeological research has revealed the existence of at least one other iron mining and smelting centre within what became the Zulu heartland, though as yet the period covered by its operations is unknown The centre is in a small valley off the Tugela valley, 20 miles below the site of the present town of Colenso. An iron mine, comprising mostly surface workings but incorporating one vertical shaft not yet examined, has been found, together with a horizontal coal shaft. Some 80 furnaces have also been discovered. Two local black informants thought the complex had operated "before the whites came". The discoveries have been made by a team from the Natal Museum led by Tim Maggs. I am grateful to John Wright of the Department of History at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, for this information; Private communication 13/3/1976. The sources of copper and the raw or finished materials for brass are unclear, but may have been fairly distant. Both metals were amongst the items being imported from Delagoa Bay, not necessarily brought to the Bay by European ships, during the period when the Zulu state was at its height.

[63] There is abundant evidence of cattle-capture. See, for example, Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal, p.68; Fynn, Diary, pp.23,126-7, 147. For the question of grain see below f.333. The question of predation on the labour and reproductive power of the periphery is more problematic, and certainly did not occur on every occasion that an impi was sent out. In the 1824 attack on Ndwandwe, for example, the men were found absent and the women and children were apparently killed; Smith, op.cit., p.68.

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The cattle, which formed the most valuable part of the fines levied by agencies of the state upon citizens who offended against its will, also found their way to the centre. In this sense, as in the case of forced labour recruitment, the Zulu state was also involved in the predation of its heartland.

In those spheres where the state was not equipped or chose not to organise production directly, the state sometimes ensured its economic predominance by claiming and enforcing a monopoly over exchange. The most important of these involved ivory. The state maintained only a minor interest in its direct production, yet travellers noticed that

> "The ivory comes all to the King". 65

More precisely,

> "The Zoolahs kill but few elephants, yet Dingaan at times possesses considerable quantities of ivory, which he receives from tribes that are tributary to him". 66

With the immediate producers obliged to deal with the Zulu state acting in a middleman capacity rather than directly with European purchasers of the commodity, the bulk of the income received from exchange of the product fell to the Zulu state;

> "Ivory, since the first, has been the chief, indeed almost the only, article sought after by the colonists, and as that, according to the Zulu law, is regarded as the exclusive property of the king, he alone has been the principal dealer, and actually almost the only individual who has materially benefitted from the trade". 67

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65 Champion to Anderson, 21/4/1837, in Kotze, Letters of the American Missionaries, p.159. See also Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal, p.164; Ibid., "Historical precis by Dr. Andrew Smith, Cape Town 6/5/1834", in Bird, Annals, I:262.

66 Andrew Smith, "Journal of a visit to Dingaan, 1832", 28/3/1832, in Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal p.32.

67 Ibid., "Historical precis", in Bird, Annals, 1:262.

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The state monopoly over the exchange of this commodity was jealously preserved;

> "Chaka had an extreme aversion to anything like commercial traffic, and forbade it among his people. To the Europeans he always expressed himself decidedly opposed to any intercourse having for its object the establishment of a mercantile connection with his subjects." 68

Other reports make it quite clear that it was not commerce as such which was opposed by the Kings, but any attempt to trade directly with their subjects with a view to avoiding the state monopoly. In fact

> "Dingane liked the white men very much but not more than Shaka". 69

The ivory was exchanged for European trade goods;

> "With the teeth he (Dingane) obtains of the whites presents of beads, cloth, etc.,....." 70

The range of imports also included copper.[71] Cattle were exchanged with the traders in the same manner.[72] The hunter-traders at 'Port Natal' and the Portuguese at Delagoa Bay were both involved in this commerce with the Zulu state.[73]

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[68] Isaacs, "History of Chaka", in Bird, Annals, I:182. Isaacs proceeds to display a somewhat racist naivety in his interpretation of the motives behind the maintenance of this monopoly.

[69] Campbell, "Umgungundhlovu", pp.25-6. See also Isaacs, op,cit., p.183.

[70] Champion to Anderson, 21/4/1837, in Kotze, Letters of the American Missionaries, p.159. See also Smith, "Journal", 28/3/1832, in Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal, p.32; Campbell, op.cit., pp.25-6.

[71] Campbell, "Umgungundhlovu", p.26.

[72] Ibid., Fynn, Diary, pp.255-7.

[73] Campbell, "Umgungundhlovu", p.26.

The wealth accumulated by the state's involvement in these various spheres of economic activity gave it vast resources to distribute. To speak,however, of a 'redistributive economy with the King at its hub, is perhaps to suggest a rather more organic and idealistic relationship between the state and its subjects than appears to have existed in practice. It minimises the amount of power over redistribution exercised at the apex.[74]

The state exercised total control over the redistribution of the cattle which reached the centre through the various institutionalised channels. They became, in effect, state property. There were three possibilities; immediate consumption by the state and its dependants, redistribution on-the-hoof, or accumulation with a view to the future needs of the state and their value in exchange.

Immediate consumption took the form of the cattle being slaughtered to provide meat for the regiments and for others who were permitted to eat at the 'King's table'.[75] Though this probably took place in all barrack towns when the state was at the height of its power,[76] it was a routine practice at the capital itself. In Dingane's time, 6, 8, and sometimes 10 or 12 cattle were slaughtered daily for consumption in the capital.[77] The cattle hides which were isolated by this process

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[74] The notion of the 'redistributive economy' is now a device frequently used by historians and anthropologists in the analysis of African political systems.

[75] Fynn, Diary, pp.31; Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal, p.43; "Evidence of Henry Francis Fynn before the 1852 Native Commission", in Bird, Annals, I:110; Isaacs, "History of Chaka", in Bird, op.cit., I:171; Campbell, "Umgungundhlovu", p.15. Visitors were also entertained; Ibid., p.21.

[76] Gardiner, "First interview", in Bird, Annals, I:283-4.

[77] Gardiner, op.cit., p.286. See also Champion, "Journal", 22/1/1836, in Bird, op.cit., I:208; Campbell, "Umgungundhlovu p.16.

furnished the raw material for the manufacture of war-shields.[78]

Some cattle were redistributed on-the-hoof as a form of bounty;

> "Where cattle had been brought in by a commando or after killing any of the Zoolas, the King generally distributes a considerable proportion of them amongst the people". 79

The proportion of cattle-income distributed in this way probably varied with the fortunes of the state and of the economy. In time of political instability, for example, the number of cattle consumed directly or redistributed amongst dependants of the state may have been increased, as the state fought to maintain the allegiance of its subject population. Cattle were given in reward for particular loyalty or services rendered to the state. The recipients ranged from successful commanders to those whose craftmanship enhanced the prestige of the throne.[80]

There is some doubt, however, to what extent the state was actually abdicating its property rights in the cattle by means of such awards. The cattle kraaled at the various barrack towns, for example, remained the property of the state with the regiments having free access to them only for milking purposes. They were killed on the express instructions of the state.[81] Fynn noticed a similar situation in the countryside, where private kraals retained a large measure of control over their crops, but not over the cattle whose products they used in their diet, for these were the property of the state.[82]

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[78] Thus an attempt was made to concentrate all cattle of a certain colour at certain of the regimental barracks so that when killed, they would furnish hides which could be made into shields of the colour associated with the regiment.

[79] Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal, p.50; Isaacs, "History of Chaka", in Bird, Annals, I:171; Champion to Anderson, 21/4/1837, in Kotze, Letters of the American Missionaries, p.159; Campbell, "Umgungundhlovu", p.20.

[80] For an example of the latter see Campbell, op.cit.,

[81] Fynn, Diary, p.284; Gardiner, "First interview", in Bird, Annals, I:283-5.

[82] Fynn, op.cit., p.284.

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Cattle not consumed immediately or distributed in this way were added to the royal herds.[83] This store of wealth could then be put to a variety of uses ranging from commerce to 'investment' in a raiding party by furnishing its subsistence requirements for the march to the front.[84]

The state also controlled the distribution of large amounts of other kinds of foodstuffs, and principally grain. The role of meat in the diet of the regiments has in fact sometimes been exaggerated. Beer, pumpkins, porridge, sour milk and clotted blood were actually the basic subsistence foods for most people at the barrack towns and, to a lesser extent,

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[83] Champion to Anderson, 21/4/1837, in Kotze, Letters of the American Missionaries, p. 159.

[84] There is some confusion as to the amount of labour-power and foodstuffs which the state normally invested in such operations. According to Isaacs, for example, in Shaka's time it was "determined that when an army was sent to attack a distant tribe it should be supplied with barely a sufficient number of cattle to suffice for its support until its arrival at the place of action, observing 'that they must either conquer or perish';" Isaacs, "History of Chaka", in Bird, Annals, I:172. See also Ibid., p.179; Theal, History of South Africa since 1795, I:378. This would seem appropriate to the kind of ruthless, militarist state which Zulu by all accounts was. The baggage train would then have included cattle together with some boys to herd and to carry the warriors' shields. Yet a report of the operation in 1826 against mighty Ndwandwe speaks of women in the party; Fynn, Diary, p.123. On another occasion Fynn witnessed the passage of a Zulu army attended by women with beer, milk and corn; Fynn, Diary, p.189. See also Watt, Febana, p.189. This would have meant that the Zulu army, even in Shaka's time, operated in no more ruthless or efficient fashion than the pathetic and undisciplined horde which set out from the Port in 1838 with a view to carrying out a second raid into the Zulu heartland whilst the Zulu impis were preoccupied elsewhere; Hewetson, "Mr Hewetson's Journal", 11/3/1838, in Church Missionary Record, Vol.IX, 10 (Oct. 1838), also in Bird, Annals, I:354-5. It is just possible that the seeming contradiction between the accounts of Isaacs and Fynn hinges upon the point in time during an operation that the armies were observed. An army going to war might very well have herded only cattle. One returning from a campaign may have acquired foodstuffs and captive labour and reproductive power. Certainly armies are known to have scoured the countryside for food on its return passage from a campaign. This would also help to explain exactly how captives and tribute in the form of foodstuffs actually reached the capital, a point on which the contemporary sources are strangely silent.

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at the capital itself.[85] Visitors to the capital in Dingane's time reported that

> "At the King's kraal there is usually a great collection of corn for the regiments residing there". 86

So long as the state retained control over a sizeable slice of the total production of the heartland, the regiments remained entirely dependent upon the state for their day-to-day subsistence requirements;

> "In these military towns the whole food of the soldiers, consisting of 'utshwala' in the morning and beef in the evening, is provided at the king's cost, and partaken of in public". 87

> "They live, as it were, at the King's table, and not on the fruits of their own labour". 88

The food of the regiments, as well as their shields, was issued

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[85] Fynn, Diary, pp.25-6; Campbell, "Umgungundhlovu", pp.5,18-19, 21.

[86] Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal, p.51.

[87] Gardiner, "First interview", in Bird, Annals, I:288.

[88] Champion, "Journal", 20/1/1836, in Bird, op.cit., p.206. There is some dispute as to the commitment of the state to the regiments in the barracks outside the capital. Krige has argued that only the regiments at the capital were provided with food by the state, even when it was at its height; Krige Social System of the Zulus, pp.265-6. Gardiner, by contrast, states specifically that the regiments at all the barrack towns were fed by the state; A.F. Gardiner, Narrative of a Journey to the Zoolu Country .....Undertaken in 1835 (London 1836) p.54. As Saxon has suggested, the question of time may be crucial here. The commitment of the state to feed all its labour force is appropriate to absolutism in its ascendant phase. Krige's work, though here she is considering the Zulu state in the time of Shaka and Dingane, is generally concerned with the nature of the state during its long period of decline. The title of her work, together with the approach it incorporates, is quite misleading and suffers from the familiar inadequacies of the ahistoricism of the ethnographer-anthropologist which have been discussed in the introduction to this work. If taken in contrast to the work of Fynn, Isaac, Gardiner and the like, rather than as a supplement to it, Krige's book once more takes on the status of a work of great scholarship and value - a study in the retreat from absolutism or, if you prefer it, from past glories. See Saxon "The early Zulu state", p.14, and below p.411.

to them by their commanders,[89] symbolising their total dependence upon the state and its officeholders.

The imported goods which came into the hands of the state through trade with European agents were distributed amongst the more important Army 'captains', women, and other dependants of the state.[90]

Associated with this highly centralised mode of production focussed upon the apex was an attempt to reorganise political and social relationships within the heartland along similar lines. Each department of life was reorganised around pyramidal patterns of relationships focussed upon the apex. In the political system, there was no possibility for intermediate officeholders to accumulate sufficient wealth to build up local power bases independent of the state. Those who attempted to do so were denounced and their property eagerly confiscated by others who were allowed a small proportion of the proceeds for their trouble, though all cattle came to the state.[91] Power was no longer parcelled out amongst a number of great men as in feudal times, but was concentrated at the apex and only mediated through the various echelons of a growing bureaucracy. The highest echelons in this system were located for the first time on an almost permanent basis at the capital, and often made state decisions though they were presented as the will of the incumbent of the Kingship, and ultimately depended upon his ratification in the manner that the decisions of officials in the provinces ultimately depended upon ratification by higher echelons at the centre.[92] In making key decisions of state policy, the King was advised by men who headed the two most powerful of the bureaucracies of the state - the principal regimental commander and the principal regional chief

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[89] Gardiner, "First interview", in Bird, 1:288.

[90] Champion to Anderson, 21/4/1837, in Kotze, Letters of the American Missionaries, p.159; Smith, "Journal of a visit to Dingaan", 28/3/1832, in Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal, p.32.

[91] Isaacs, "History of Chaka", in Bird, Annals, 1:172.

[92] Thompson, "Zulu kingdom and Natal", in Oxford History of South Africa, 1:345. This appears to have remained the case to a large extent even in Mpande's time; Gluckman, "Kingdom of the Zulu", in Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, African Political Systems, pp.30, 32.

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representing the political bureaucracy of the state in the countryside.[93] Completing the change in the structure of political relationships from feudal times was a change in the nature of the office of the powerholder at the apex. No longer was it an office of 'paramount' chief amongst many cheifs, but of something approaching divine kingship.

Similar attempts to focus relationships upon the state were made in the social sphere. A number of long-standing practices were adapted to high-light the power of the King more clearly.[94] Steps were taken to remove intermediate centres of power between the state and its subjects in the social sphere as well. An independent group of rainmakers was destroyed by Shaka immediately upon his accession to power, and religious systems generally reorganised to focus upon the King at the apex whose power in the religious sphere came to be mediated

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[93] Gluckman, "Kingdom of the Zulu", in Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, African Political Systems, p.33. The observation dates from Mpande's time and is used to support Gluckman's general argument that, at this stage in its history, the state political system was characterised by overlapping powers and allegiances, involving a political department based upon a hierarchy of King, district chiefs and ward headmen, and a military department based upon a hierarchy of King, senior indunas and captains; Gluckman, op.cit., pp. 30-43. The problem is to decide to what extent this situation also prevailed when the state was at the height of its power. The consensus view appears to be that the political department in fact undertook the administration of the countryside and that, even in the heartland, the chiefs, some newly appointed others 'hereditary' incumbents, had not been reduced to cogs in a well-oiled bureaucratic machine, but were controlled from the centre only by a mixture of political manouevre and military coercion; Thompson, "Zulu kingdom and Natal", in Oxford History of South Africa, I:345; Gluckman, "Rise of a Zulu Empire", in Scientific American, p.167. See also Saxon, "The early Zulu state", pp.4-5; Marks, "The Nguni, the Natalians and their history", in Journal of African History, p.536. Though the general trend towards administration from the centre, through various separate departments each with their own bureaucracies, is clear, in the political as in other spheres the Zulu state even at its height did not achieve achieve a totality of absolutism. It was never, to employ a popular though imprecise term, a fully-fledged 'Oriental despotism'. See also the discussion which forms the conclusion to this chapter.

[94] The ceremony of the first fruits, for example; Max Gluckman, "Rituals of Rebellion in South-East Africa", in Max Gluckman, Order and Rebellion in Tribal Africa(London, Cohen and West, 1963) pp.116, 125, 132.

through a bureaucracy of priests.[95] As Dingane expressed the situation to a Christian missionary who spoke of an all-powerful God;

> "If that is your belief, you are of no use to me or to my people, we knew all that before you came to preach to us. I and my people believe that there is only one God - I am that God." 96

The monumental changes described amounted to the destruction of a feudal mode of production which had probably dominated the area for centuries before about 1750, and its replacement with a new 'absolute' mode of production and appropriate superstructural institutions. A change of this magnitude, seemingly spread over a relatively short period of time in the case of Zulu-Mthethwa, could not be accomplished without the exercise of a substantial amount of force. With a monopoly over the instruments of coercion, the state was in a position to institute a systematic reign of terror designed to quell all opposition as the transition to absolutism was forced through. In addition to reporting severe punishments related to what were clearly crimes against an absolute regime, visitors also thought they detected signs of arbitrary killing, ordered by the King or his officials as a tactic in their relentless struggle to remind the populace of the new situation of absolutism.[97] Not all these killings were, however, arbitrary as they sometimes appeared to contemporary observers. There is some evidence to suggest, for example, that Shaka killed his mother and that the mass killings he ordered after her death were necessary to forestall opposition from groups sympathetic

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[95] One of Shaka's first moves on his accession to power was to remove the independence of the rainmakers. Thereafter these and other 'doctors' became the King's assistants. 'Religion' and 'medicine' became departments of state; Gluckman, "Kingdom of the Zulu", in Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, African Political Systems, p.31.

[96] He apparently went on to expound an ingenious and highly 'political' theory of 'hell'; Hulley, "An account of the Rev. Owen's visit to Zululand in 1837 as related by R. B. Hulley", p.16. Hulley had probably been present at the time, though the precise wording is almost certainly his rather than Dingane's.

[97] The classic account of terror in the Zulu state at its height is Walter, Terror and Resistance. But see also Sansom, "Traditional rulers and their realms", in Hammond-Tooke, The Bantu-Speaking Peoples of Southern Africa, pp.280-1.

to her or to the candidate for the succession that she was reputed to have been nursing at the time.[98]

The reign of terror is a phenomenon appropriate to a situation in which a radical social transformation, though in process and even well under way, is not yet complete and far from being stabilised to the extent of popular resignation or acceptance of the new patterns of relationships. By 1820, the transition to absolutism in Zulu-Mthethwa was not yet complete . Certain immunities to the absolute power of the state were still conceded in various spheres of life. Even sources of opposition to the nature of the changes still remained to be crushed or won over.

The most important of these immunities in the heartland lay within the sphere of production. One of the most important feudal institutions which was never totally destroyed was that of the fundamental production unit - the peasant homestead. It survived, though in a much attenuated form, and was eventually to form the nucleus of a later feudal revival.

The peasant homestead survived because the new absolute mode of production, still in the process of being introduced, was not yet in a position to undertake responsibility and to develop systems for labour-reproduction and the subsistence of the very young, the infirm, the weak and the old. The continued existence of the homestead became an aspect of state policy. At the age of 35 or 40, men were released from the direct labour-service of the state in the regiments, and allowed to take wives from amongst the women recently released from similar obligations to the state.[99] They were permitted to establish new homesteads within the broad territorial area

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[98] Tom Fynn, "Reminiscences of Chief Tom Fynn", Natal Archives, Bird Papers; Vol.V. At the time of the interview in 1899, Fynn was a chief in Alfred County, Natal. He was the nephew of Henry Francis Fynn. This would seem to be by far the most plausible explanation of the killings which were carried out by agents of the state following her death. No such killings followed upon the death of Shaka's grandmother, and all kings Shaka included, were constantly on their guard against the emergence of 'heirs' who could become the excuse for a powerful faction to attempt to overthrow the ruling lineage or even the present incumbent of the throne; see Bryant, Olden Times, p.637; Thompson, "Zulu kingdom and Natal, in Oxford History of South Africa, 1:344; above chapter IX.

[99] Thompson, op.cit., pp.344-5.

over which the state claimed control.[100] They were permitted to farm, utilising the small amount of labour-power represented by themselves and their youngest children. Their principal continuing obligation to the state remained the rearing of fresh labour-power which was conscripted into the labour regiments of the state at a relatively early age. The loss of young male labour was not disastrous to the livestock-herding activities of the peasant-homesteads, because there were hardly any cattle to herd. They were concentrated in the control of the state, and only a handful remained under the control of the homestead production units. Even the homestead of a current or former 2nd captain of a regiment, which travellers visited near the Umvoti River, controlled only a handful of beasts.[101]

The homestead of the age of absolutism in the Zulu-Mthethwa heartland was very different from the larger and more dynamic homesteads of the pre-feudal and feudal epochs in the history of the region. It had lost the capacity to produce a regular surplus of foodstuffs, and therefore the capacity to accumulate capital, which was now the monopoly of the state. In this depressed state, the homesteads of the heartland seem not to have been subjected to any systematic collection of tribute from the centre, which would have destroyed their subsistence base completely, though there is some evidence to suggest that, in the rare event of a surplus at the end of the year, part was given to the agents of the state.[102] The homestead retained, however, the capacity to produce labour-

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[100] The Zulu heartland was constantly being expanded and there is sometimes an impression in the literature, no more than that, that newly demobilised men and women were encouraged to settle the 'frontier' lands. In the south, this meant the lands beyond the Tugela in the Natal interior.

[101] Andrew Smith, "Journal", in Smith , Andrew Smith and Natal p.40.

[102] "They bury their corn in the cattle kraal as in Cafferland... when very strong it is often sent as a present to the chiefs" Smith, op.cit., p.51. The reference to 'chiefs' here clearly adds a complication, however, and the extent of the tribute obligations to the centre in the sphere of agricultural production of the homesteads in the hearland remains problematic.

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power, and it was this 'surplus' which interested the state, and ensured the continued survival of the peasant-homestead as a tributary mode of production.[103]

Although the severing of captives from their former homesteads in the periphery was permanent, with their families, crops and huts often destroyed once and for all at the moment of capture,[104] there is no evidence to suggest that they were barred from the privilege to which their conscripted comrades from the heartland aspired - the opportunity to set up homesteads of their own on being discharged from the labour-service of the state. If manumission really was automatic, then neither the conscript or the captive portions of the labour force of the Zulu state were technically slaves, though they were both clearly a form of unfree labour closely akin to slaves. In this, perhaps as in other respects, the absolute mode of production was not quite a fully-fledged slave mode of production, though it is arguable that a change was in process towards such a situation.

When visitors reached the Zulu heartland, they commented upon the large number of homesteads dotted about the countryside. Speaking of the territory between the Tugela and Dingane's capital, one contemporary observer reported that;

> "This part of the country is mountainous, and what is remarkable, the mountains are the most fertile and thickly peopled. In fact the mountains are full of kraals; sometimes they stand on top of very high mountains where a wagon could not go". 105

These outlying settlements may have been composed of former regimental members and their wives.[106]

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[103] It has been suggested that labour was always the only surplus that the 'Bantu economy system' in south-east Africa was capable of producing; Morris, Washing of the Spears, p.66. I would argue that this is to generalise by projecting back into the past a picture of the homestead as it existed at a time of severe repression, and one which was of relatively recent origin.

[104] See below pp.326-330.

[105] Grout to Anderson , 12/2/1836, in Kotze, Letters of the American Missionaries, p.97.

[106] This would certainly be consistent with the practice of Mzilikazi, another more or less 'absolute' monarch of the period and one who had been familiar with organisational systems within Zulu. The wherewithal to establish new homestead production units, namely wives and cattle, were only given out to men who had performed satisfactory military-labour service in the regiments; Philip, May 1833, in Kotze, op.cit., p.32.

The immunities in the sphere of production in the heartland were not quite confined to the attenuated homestead. Groups of specialist craftsmen, including smiths, leather-workers and wood-carvers congregated at the Zulu capital.[107] Although some of their production, such as the manufacture of assagai heads, may have been controlled by the state, there is some suggestion in contemporary reports that craftsmen at the Court also enjoyed a measure of economic independence. Much of their work seems to have been individually commissioned by the king, leading captains and other important people, and paid for in cattle or beads, both highly negotiable items.[108]

Iron was worked into assagai heads, axes, hoes and blades of various descriptions,[109] and possibly ornaments for rank and file warriors.[110] Copper and especially brass were worked into ornaments for important men and women at the Court, ranging from members of the ruling dynasty, and prominent Army captains, to the female members of the Royal seraglio.[111]

Certain immunities were permitted in other economic spheres though carefully confined and regulated by the state. Thus exchange was permitted outside the state monopoly of ivory, and

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[107] Fynn, Diary, p.274; Campbell, "Umgungundhlovu", 20; Tom Fynn, "Reminiscenses".

[108] Fynn, Diary, pp.270, 274; Campbell, op.cit.,Visitors to south-east Africa now remarked that beads were the main circulating medium; Champion, in Kotze, Letters of the American Missionaries, p.55. As material in earlier chapters will indicate, they had only gradually come to oust copper rings of various sizes in performing this function. The change had been in process over several hundred years. In its turn copper had probably come to replace small pieces of iron as the main circulating medium. I would argue that the actual ownership of cattle did not change nearly as frequently as is sometimes suggested. They were essentially a capital reserve which could be loaned out, but which did not change in day-to-day small transactions to any great extent.

[109] Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal, p.79; Campbell, op.cit.,p.19; Gardiner, "First interview", in Bird, Annals, I:306. Iron was said to have been plentiful in Zulu at this time; Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, cited by Bird, op.cit.,p.186. By contrast, south of the Mtata River as late as 1832 it was still extremely scarce and in high demand; Smith, "Journal",19/1/1832, in Smith, op.cit. p.15.

[110] Smith, op.cit.,p.80.

[111] Fynn, Diary, p.270; Fynn,"Reminiscences"; Gardiner,"First interview", in Bird,Annals, I:306; Isaacs, Travels and Adventures, cited by Bird, op.cit., I:186-7, 189;Champion, "Journal", in Bird, op.cit., I:206-8.

in so far as any resources or surpluses remained under the control of individuals. For general small-scale commerce of this kind, traders found that they could employ only a range of trade-goods different from that used in their direct dealings with the state;

> "For the purchase of what the Zoolas have to dispose of, the beads mentioned are of no avail, as no subject is either permitted to receive or possess them, unless as gifts from the king. On that account the common red and white are the most useful for general trade". 112

One sector of small-scale trading which interested the European commercial agents was sea-cow's teeth, the source of the poor man's ivory. Its production was one of the spheres of immunity permitted by the state;

> "Dingaan exacts all the teeth of elephants killed by the Zolas; the sea-cow's teeth the people keep themselves". 113

A further cluster of immunities allowed small-scale rewards to those who loyally undertook difficult duties on behalf of the state. Those who carried out the execution of state enemies were permitted to keep their instruments of war, a small source of iron, though the cattle had to be driven to the capital.[114] A similar pattern may have been followed in relation to larger-scale military operations.

This network of immunities in the economic sphere allowed certain divisions of wealth and status to persist or re-emerge. The continued existence of a small private sector within the overall economy was reflected in the fact that property seems to have continued to change hands at the time of marriage.[115]

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[112] Smith, "Journal", 28/3/1832, in Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal p.32.

[113] Ibid., p.87. For the importance of sea-cow's teeth as a trading commodity at Delagoa Bay at the time of Fynn's visit, in the early 1820s see Fynn, Diary, p.41.

[114] Fynn, op.cit., p.289; Isaacs, "History of Chaka", in Bird, Annals, I:171-2, 179.

[115] Cattle and perhaps beads changed hands. In Dingane's time the amount differed greatly according to the rank of the women and men concerned; Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal, p.79; Gardiner, "First interview", in Bird, op.cit., p.302.

But this network of immunities was always closely regulated, and any attempt by men to move beyond the position of controllers of a little wealth and status to controllers of capital met with severe retribution from the state machinery. The men in the most favourable position to attempt this were regimental commanders undertaking campaigns in the periphery from which much booty was forthcoming. There are a number of instances reported in the contemporary accounts of their attempts to control a portion of such booty, and of the state's vigorous response to their disloyalty.[116] There was to be no permitted revival of a feudal aristocracy exercising certain powers independently of the apex, just as there was to be no freely allowed revival in the fortunes of the peasant homestead.

The mode of production which supported the Zulu state in its heartland and at the height of its power was neither a fully-fledged feudal system nor a fully-developed despotism with a slave labour force as its foundation. It was rather an intermediate form based upon a linkage of two modes of production. The dominant element was a mode of production characterised by a high degree of economic centralisation and severe labour repression, whilst the peasant-homestead, in a severely attenuated form, lay at the heart of a tributary mode of production whose elements were all that survived from the destruction of feudalism. The relationship, but for the level of the forces of production characteristic of the epoch and a rather different dominant mode of production, bears certain striking resemblances to a later, even a contemporary South African situation.[117]

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[116] A good example followed the Zulu attack on certain groups at Delagoa Bay in 1833; Antonio Jose Nobre, "A guerra dos reis Vatuas vizinhos de Lourenco Marques em 1833", n.d. (but probably written before 1839), pp.39,50,59-60, cited by Gerhard Liesegang, "Dingane's attack on Lourenco Marques in 1833", Journal of African History, X, 4(1969), p.574, and n.

[117] The peasant homestead survived, in ever more attenuated form, through the later 19th and early 20th centuries, on white-owned land, white farms and in the reserves. It is arguable that, in the present-day Bantustans, its further decline has been arrested and its continued existence in attenuated form incorporated into the economic strategy of the contemporary South African state, which is to say that of metropolitan and local 'capitalism'. Elsewhere, in the resettlement areas and on some of the plantation estates, its continued existence has been stabilised at an even more repressed level. The labour-power reproduced and reared in the homestead, by virtue of the exigencies of its attenuated form as a unit of production, is forced to devote almost an entire economically-active lifetime to the service of one of the sectors within the dominant capitalist mode of production. Whilst in

There are close parallels between the nature of the Zulu state during this particular phase of its history, and the case of the Abron kingdom of Gyaman in west Africa, and which has recently been analysed by Emmanuel Terray. He writes;

> "In the view of several present-day historians and economists,, including Samir Amin, Catherine Coquery, and Yves Person, the structure of pre-colonial African socio-economic formations may be described as the combination of peasant communities organising their labour without outside interference, and of warrior aristocracies basing their wealth and power on their control of long-distance trade. In my own view, this picture underestimates the economic and social role played in many formations by captives: in Gyaman and in Ashanti, it is essentially captives who produce the surplus from which the aristocracy's means of domination are drawn; and long-distance trade functions to allow the aristocracy to 'realise' the surplus product extracted from its captives' labour, not directly to obtain resources for itself in the form of rights or tolls. These social formations are therefore constituted by the conjunction of a kin-based tributary mode of production and a mode of production based on the exploitation of slave labour". 118

Perhaps, however, Terray attempts to generalise from his model too far;

> "In conclusion, I raise the question as to whether this kind of structure is not the foundation of most social formations of pre-colonial Africa, at least where states have been in existence". 119

On the contrary, Terray's analysis relates to a particular form in the progressive evolution in the nature of the state, a form different from the 'feudal' and pre-feudal 'dynastic' forms which generally preceded its appearance, and from forms appropriate to later more developed levels of the productive forces.

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service, a battery of regulations, which include a rigid sexual division, ensure the unfreedom of the labour units. The pattern of controls reaches its apogee in the compounds of the mining companies - the regimental labour barracks of contemporary South Africa.

118 Emmanuel Terray, "Long-distance exchange and the formation of the state: The case of the Abron Kingdom of Gyaman", in Economy and Society, Vol.III, 3 (August 1974), p.315.

119 Ibid.

Unlike in certain parts of Africa north of the Limpopo, and in many other parts of the world, no further development proved possible in the nature of the absolutist state in south-east Africa. The remnants of the contradiction between absolutism and feudalism was never totally resolved, and absolutism stabilised to the point where further development could take place, before a long-incipient contradiction between absolutism and capitalism came to a head, and which reduced absolutism itself to a tributary mode of the international capitalist system.

Before this decisive clash took place, however, the dynamic implicit in the new absolute mode of production permitted a far-reaching expansion of Zulu-Mthethwa beyond its immediate heartland. For a time, between about 1825 and 1835, Zulu-Mthethwa came to dominate a vast south-east African empire, reaching Delagoa Bay in the north, almost to the Cape 'frontier' in the south, and spilling over onto the highveld in the west. It is the southward extension across the Tugela which chiefly concerns us here.

In many respects the situation prevailing within the Zulu-Mthethwa heartland is more easily understood than the pattern of relationships between the Zulu-Mthethwa metropolis and its periphery. Arrival at a clear understanding of the situation between the Tugela and the Umzimvubu, in the area of what was to become known in colonial times as Natal, is particularly problematic

The classic settler view of the situation prevailing in this region during the period of Zulu imperialism has always been that;

> "When the Voortrekkers crossed the Orange River in 1836, they found a huge expanse of territory which had been almost entirely depopulated as the result of barbaric warfare among the Bantu tribes. The region eastward of the Drakensburg, now comprising the Province of Natal, had been swept almost clear of inhabitants, between the years of 1812 and 1828, by Chaka, the chief of the Zulus, who had pursued a policy of extermination of other Bantu tribes". 120

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120 M.H. De Kock, The Economic Development of South Africa (London, 1936), p.32.

Again;

> "By the close of the year 1823, Tshaka had swept the country virtually free of inhabitants as far south as the Umzimvubu. Some remnants found refuge in the foothills of the Drakensburg, others fled towards the Eastern Cape.... Neither kraals nor cattle remained. Natal in 1824 was almost completely depopulated". 121

Although many settler historians have chosen not to be aware of the former long history of black settlement in this area, and see in the emptiness of the countryside a certain justification for settler claims to it, the more careful amongst them draw a contrast with the recent past;

> "Before this time the lower terraces of the territory between the Tugela and Umzimvubu rivers were the most densely peopled districts of South Africa". 122

This picture of the Natal situation has formed the basis of a whole school of history which sought to emphasise the destructive aspects the 'Mfecane'. The picture is one of the local societies in violent and, above all, irrational turmoil prior to the fortuitous arrival of the white settlers.[123]

In the last decade this view has come to be seen as a threat to black and also to white English-speaking 'liberal' interests in the area. Two devices have been used to counter the threat. First, Omer-Cooper's work has been instrumental in crystallizing a view which, whilst conceding turmoil, prefers to concentrate attention upon the constructive 'state-building' processes which have been concealed.[124] Secondly, attempts are being made to play down the actual destruction itself, by focussing attention upon the remnant groups which were able to survive.

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[121] A.F. Hattersley, The British Settlement of Natal: A Study in Imperial Migration (Cambridge UP,1950), pp.12-13.

[122] Theal, History of South Africa Since 1795, I:387. See also Ibid., Historical Sketches, pp.264-5.

[123] Hattersley, The British Settlement of Natal, pp.12-13; Krige, Social System of the Zulus, p.13.

[124] Omer-Cooper, Zulu Aftermath; Ibid., "Political change in the 19th century Mfecane", in Thompson, African Societies in Southern Africa, pp.207-229; Ibid., chapter in J.C.Anene and G. Brown, Africa in the 19th and 20th Centuries.

These historians are primarily concerned with the 'ethnic' or 'nationalist' approach to the past, and their debate need not detain us here. But the analysis of destruction is also problematic to the structural historian attempting to analyse the past from the standpoint of a rather different set of assumptions. Destruction appears to have no place in a rationally-ordered mode of production which assumes that the husbandry of scarce resources forms the object of all economic activity rather than their destruction or even their predation. The notion of irrational destruction must be confronted and ultimately rejected if the psychopathic antihero view of change in the region is not to regain credence.

The notion of a partial destruction of population in the area seems impossible to refute. Near-contemporary reports mention evidence of it on a number of occasions.[126] Although the reports of sparse settlement and abandoned kraals along the coast cannot be taken as conclusive evidence,[127] since such areas had always been relatively sparsely populated,[128] evidence from the interior would seem beyond dispute. In 1825, for example, a small party of hunter-traders with Khoi and African followers travelled inland along the Umgeni River valley.

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[126] Drège, "Journal of a visit to Dingaan", 19/3/1832, in Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal, p.29. Drège accompanied Smith on his visit and kept a separate diary. See also Smith, "Journal", in Ibid., p.80.; "Inhabitants of the territory (now the Colony of Natal), during the time of Jobe, father of Dingizwayo, before the extermination of native tribes by Chaka", encl. no.1 in Lt. Gov. Scott's Despatch no.12, 26/2/1864, also in Bird, Annals, I:132, 138-9; Grout to Anderson, 12/2/1836, in Kotzé, Letters of the American Missionaries, p.97; Farewell, "Diary", cited by E.P. Watt, Febana: The True Story of Farewell (London,1962), p.87. I have described the reports as near-contemporary since all the authors arrived in the country a few years after the mair devastation had been carried out, though probably sufficiently close to the time of the events for them to acquire a reasonable picture of them from black witnesses.

[127] See, for example, Adams to Anderson, 11/4/1836, and Grout to Anderson, 16/6/1836, in Kotze, op.cit., pp.110,112.

[128] See above chapts.

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In the vicinity of what may have been the Hillcrest area, they found a rich country but with signs of recent devastation. There were the bones of thousands of people, "a great number appeared to have been burnt in their huts". 129

Even where there had been devastation on this scale, there were always some who escaped to survive in the hills. Even the 1825 travellers, who had visited the Hillcrest site of devastation, came across such a group, and there were clearly others.[130] They survived, however, in a wretched condition;

> "on my arrival in this country in March 1824, there were no inhabitants in the district south of the Itongati. There were neither huts, cattle, nor grain. There were, however, many natives scattered over the country, the remnants of tribes destroyed by Chaka, seeking sustenance from noxious as well as harmless roots; so that more were destroyed by this wretched fare than preserved. Seldom more than two natives were then seen together. This was occasioned not only by the great difficulty experienced in obtaining food, but from distrusting each other. Some of them from necessity became cannibals". 131

One rational explanation of this destruction which has been put forward stresses politico-military factors. The Zulu armies had been engaged in wars of extermination in order to create a 'cordon sanitaire' around the Zulu heartland, which would serve to hinder defections or would-be invaders.[132] This may well be part of the explanation, but economic factors were probably of at least equal significance. The raids were also wars of predation which yielded cattle, labour-power, reproductive-power and perhaps grain for a Zulu-Mthethwa state

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[129] Farewell, "Journal", in Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal, p.64.

[130] Ibid., p.65. See also Smith, op.cit., p.60; "Inhabitants of the territory (now the colony of Natal)", esp.p.125, 142; Watt, Febana, p.41.

[131] Fynn, "Evidence of Henry Francis Fynn before Native Commission,1852", in Bird, Annals, 1:123.

[132] Walter, Terror and Resistance, pp.132, 137; Sansom, "Traditional rulers and their realms", in Hammond-Tooke, Bantu-Speaking Peoples of Southern Africa, pp.279-80. The proposition is sometimes extended to make Zulu representative of a more general kind of state which surrounds itself with a depopulated 'ring'; Stevenson, Population and Political Systems in Tropical Africa, p.45.

suffering a shortage of all these resources in its struggles on the northern front. In these conditions additional dependant were not wanted and they were either put to death or permitted to escape into the bush. Chiefs and their followers who offered resistance or who were thought capable of rallying opposition to Zulu were put to death and their kraals destroyed.[133]

It is not in fact unusual for certain relatively early stages in the development of imperial systems, of patterns of relationships between metropolis and periphery, to take the form of direct expropriation of labour and capital, sometimes accompanied by bloody conflict. With time, however, predation usually gives way to more efficient systems of exploitation of the periphery by the metropolis. These systems are more efficient in the sense that, whilst a suitable surplus continued to reach the metropolis, the capacity of the peripher to continue to furnish it is not destroyed. This transition appears to have occurred in a number of imperial systems during the course of world history, and it took place in the Zulu empire as well.

Once the Zulu state had weathered its initial crisis, a more varied and efficient pattern of relationships with the periphery came into operation. Within the periphery, a distinction developed between an immediate 'protectorate' zone, and a 'tributary' zone which was more distant from the metropolis in bothageographical and political sense.

Various modes of survival of the remaining population, or of new additions to it, came to be legitimised by the Zulu state in the 'protectorate' zone which, at one point, included much of the territory of what was to become the colony of Natal, but which at this time was a colony of the Zulu state. One mode of survival appears to have been that of ivory hunting Organised communities were allowed to continue to exist, and others to regroup, on the condition that they devoted the bulk of their economic energies to the production of ivory for

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[133] In Shaka's time, chiefs were not simply reduced to vassals but might be killed together with their immediate followers; Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal, p.80.

supply to the metropolis. In return they may have received some payment in cattle, or merely permission to continue to herd;

> "Between the Umzimvooboo and Natal,
> at some little distance inland,
> reside several small hunting parties,
> formed out of the remains of conquered
> tribes, and the ivory they obtain
> they barter chiefly for cattle". 134

It was by controlling the surplus of such groups, rather than by direct involvement in production, that the Zulu state obtained the bulk of the ivory which it traded to European commercial agents.[135]

A second mode of survival was that of a commercial agent favoured by the state. South of the Tugela, this was an office which dated only from 1824 when certain European traders were permitted to establish themselves at 'Port Natal' in the 'protectorate' zone. They had been attracted to the area by the evident signs that the emergence of the Zulu empire had enabled the ivory in south-east Africa to be placed on a highly organised footing, centred on the Zulu metropolis. It was the value of the trade between the Zulu state and European commercial agents at Delagoa Bay, which encouraged rival European interests at the Cape, and to a lesser extent elsewhere to open a new direct link to the Zulu metropolis through 'Port Natal', so avoiding the intense competition at Delagoa Bay. The ivory trade came to fluctuate between these two outlets before 'Port Natal' was eventually able to oust its rival, at least in so far as ivory produced south of the Tugela was concerned.[136]

It is quite clear that, before a change in the situation took place in 1838, the traders had only been able to establish and maintain their position on the express permission of the Zulu state. Their first thought as they set foot on the shores

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[134] Smith, "Journal", 28/3/1832, in Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal p.32. From the context it would appear that Smith thought that these groups were dependants of the Zulu state.

[135] Ibid.

[136] These themes are discussed more fully in chapter XI below.

of what was to become known as Natal, was to seek out the King of Zulu so that this permission might be negotiated. Substantial gifts were offered by the traders as an indication of their submission to the laws of the Empire, and some received as a gesture of good faith on behalf of the state. The first arrivals, and the later additions to the European population of Natal before 1838, continued to accept, however reluctantly, their status as subjects of the Zulu protectorate zone.[138]

The commercial agency allowed to the traders extended only to direct exchange with the state, and in consequence they spent much of their time at the Zulu capital.[139] It did not permit free commercial exchange with subject peoples within the Zulu empire or with individuals within the heartland,[140] except in so far as its nature fell within the scope of the immunities already described, or the express

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[138] The situation is clearly revealed in Gardiner's evidence to an important British Imperial commission;

> Q. "Who is the sovereign chief of Natal?"
> A. "It belongs to the Zulus".
>
> Q. "Is it a dependency of the Zoolu country?"
> A. "Entirely".
>
> Q. "Have you any proof that the country in the neighbourhood of Natal was a dependency of the Zoolu country?"
> A. "Quite so; because he orders people up from Port Natal, if he chooses, and the white inhabitants have frequently sent up to him to request that certain things might be done".

See British Parliamentary Papers, 1836, VII (538), Report From Select Committee on Aborigines, Aug, 1836, I:463, evidence of Gardiner. See also Hulley, "Account of the Rev. Owen's visit to Zululand", p. 4; Rev. Owen, "Journal", 13/12/1837, in Bird, Annals, 1:339.

[139] Campbell, "Umgungundhlovu", pp.25-6.

permission of the state had been obtained.[141] It seems highly doubtful that the direct hunting of the elephant was amongst the immunities initially allowed to the 'traders', though the hunting of other game such as the sea-cow and buffalo was probably permitted.[142]

Certain other modes of survival in the 'protectorate' zone may also have been possible. There is some suggestion, for example, that some groups were allowed to survive on the condition that their grain surplus was regularly furnished to the Zulu state, though this form may have overlapped with the hunting mode of survival already described. In 1824, for example, Fynn came across a number of farming groups in the south of Natal who had been subjected to rigid 'corn laws' by the Zulu state. They were not allowed to reap the new crop until the annual impi from the metropolis called to collect tribute. In consequence Fynn's party were reduced almost to starvation before they crossed into the Mpondo territory.[143] In 1837 it was said of a group nearer to the Tugela that the Zulu king 'eats' the first green corn, and that certain other portions of the total agricultural production was also reserved for the consumption of the state.[144] It would seem that a

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[141] Fynn seems to have been allowed to trade directly on certain occasions in Mpondo country. But the character of the majority of the expeditions which he made in this direction suggests, however, that he was not actually trading with Mpondo but simply collecting tribute in ivory. In such cases the actual 'exchange' took place between the Zulu state, which received trade goods in return for ivory, and Cape merchants. Mpondo had simply organised production by Khoi hunters, receiving the bulk of the proceeds as tribute. This surplus was then expropriated by Zulu. Fynn operated as the commercial middleman. The relationship between Zulu, Fynn and Mpondo is suggested by the report that Fynn was provided with 60 carriers, seemingly by the Zulu state, in order to transport ivory from Faku. Three journeys are noted; Watt, Febana, p.135; Fynn, Diary, p.118; The relationship between Faku, which is to say the Mpondo state, and Khoi hunters is clearer; C.Brownlee, "The 'Nkumanda': An account of a British military expedition to Pondoland and Natal in 1841-42; What led up to it and what followed", Natal Archives, Mss.53, p.2.

[142] This was certainly amongst the immunities permitted to other imperial subjects; see above p.323. The attempt to add to the sphere of immunities regarding trade and hunting, particularly in relation to ivory, was to become one of the principal contradictions between Zulu and the various whites living in the Empire.

[143] Watt, Febana, p.96.

[144] Champion to Anderson, 21/4/1837, in Kotze, Letters of the American Missionaries, p.159.

number of the 'raids' of the Zulu impis into the periphery may in fact have been armed caravans for the collection of the year's surplus.[145]

Groups which were permitted to survive in the protectorate zone were allowed to rebuild production units, more or less based upon the homestead, which were capable of ensuring a steady production of the surplus required by the metropolis. The traders, for example, were allowed to recruit followers from amongst the groups of refugees who had not been otherwise accorded a legitimate mode of survival by the Zulu state. Their wretched condition ensured that many accepted this option voluntarily, but there is some evidence to suggest that others found themselves conscripted by force.[146] By the time of their return from a first visit into the hinterland of southern Natal, the traders had already acquired a number of such followers,[147] to augment the labour of the small number of Khoi and whites they had brought with them from the Cape.[148] They were immediately given seed and set to work producing the grain and other crops capable of meeting the subsistence requirements of the new community, and any demands which might in future be made by the Zulu state or by the crews of visiting ships.[149]

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[145] This may account for the regularity and seasonal timing of Zulu 'raids'. They were sent out each winter after harvest; Isaacs, "History of Chaka", in Bird, Annals, I:179-80. See also Fynn, Diary, pp.64, 304-6. See also note 84 above. A similar pattern of attack and withdrawal related to consumption requirements and harvest schedules has been suggested for the operations of rebel offshoots from Zulu in the Zambezi region in the 1830s; Allen F. Isaacman, Mozambique. The Africanization of a European Institution: The Zambezi Prazos, 1750-1902 (Madison, Wisconsin UP, 1972) p.122. It is not suggested that all Zulu 'raids' were of this character.

[146] Traders sometimes took women back in their wagons from the Zulu country; Report of Select Committee on Aborigines, 1836 I:463, evidence of Gardiner. See also below p.388 and note

[147] Fynn brought back 30 men and women from his first visit to Mpondo country; Farewell, "Journal", in Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal, p.62.

[148] Drege, "Journal", 6-13/4/1832, in Smith, op.cit., p.32; Kotze Letters of the American Missionaries, p.96.

[149] Farewell, "Journal", in Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal, p.62

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Initially no more than a handful, the number of refugees clustered in the vicinity of 'Port Natal' rapidly escalated. By about 1835 their number may have reached some 3,000 men, women and children.[150] Information regarding new arrivals was regularly conveyed to the Zulu capital, and so long as its general conditions of occupation of imperial territory were not broken, the Zulu state did not intervene.

Control of these various groups of survivors was exercised through chiefs.[152] In the case of the traders at least, these emerged from within the ranks of the local community, rather than an outside candidate being imposed. The Zulu state does seem to have reserved the righ however, to influence the choice of the community.[153]

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[150] Fynn, Diary, 22, 116-7, 130-1 and n.256; Smith, Andrew Smit and Natal, p.170; Grout to Anderson, 12/2/1836, in Kotzé, Letters of the American Missionaries, p.97. It is not clear if this approximate figure includes all the homesteads which, by the mid 1830s, existed in loose dependant relationships with the trading community at Port Natal. Some were certainly far from the Port itself, on the Illovo Umlazi, Umkomanzi, at Umzinto and Umgeni. Although most were close to the coast, some, which may have been independent of the Port, had survived the Shakan holocaust inland. Futu's group were, for example, located near the headwaters of the Umkomanzi. Fynn had large kraals as far south as the Umzimkulu; Drège, "Journal", 22/3/1832, in Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal, pp.30-31; Grout to Anderson, op.cit., p.99; Ibid., 16/6/1836, p.112; Smith, op.cit., p.62; Theal, Historical Sketches, p.265; Watt, Febana, p. 245, 146; Hulley, "Account of the Rev. Owen's visit to Dingaan", p.2; Bird, Annals, I:150; Kotzé, op.cit., pp.200, 202. By 1837 there was a community of 1000 around the mouth of the Illovo alone, suggesting in fact the visitors' estimates of the population relates to the immediate hinterland of the Port only. It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between dependants of the Port community and groups engaged in other modes of survival.

[152] See also Tom Fynn, "Reminiscences".

[153] "Most of the white men have under them Zoolahs and control them as chiefs"; Grout to Anderson, 12/2/1836, p.97. Their life-style was appropriate to their political status Each presided over anumber of homesteads and "all live with several Kaffer women"; Drège, "Journal", 6-13/4/1832, in Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal, p.32.

In addition to the particular obligations appropriate to their individual modes of survival, groups shared general obligations to the Zulu state. The most important of these comprised a military effective. The relationship of vassallage, which had been transcended within the Zulu heartland itself, persisted in the periphery. The 'protectorates' under their various chiefs were in fact also vassal states of the Zulu metropolis. The intensity of the obligation varied according to the need of Zulu at a particular point in time and the general nature of the relationship it enjoyed with the particular protectorate group concerned. It might involve the provision of baggage handlers,[154] of rank-and-file soldiers,[155] of shields,[156] and occasionally of the chiefs themselves.[157] All protectorates were expected to furnish any additional subsistence needs which the regiments required during their passage through the periphery.

As enemies of the Zulu state came to develop modes of

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[154] According to Isaacs, who was probably not correct on this occasion, this was the sole military obligation of all vassals; Isaacs, Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa, I:139-40.

[155] Fynn, Diary, pp.130, 143, 249-50; Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal, p.65; Watt, Febana, pp.121, 208; Morris, Washing of the Spears, pp.93, 100-101, 136.

[156] These had been demanded from Jobe in Dingane's time as part of the tribute due from that chief; Campbell, "Umgungundhlovu" p.14. For it to be met, the surrender of capital or the carrying out of a raid would have been necessary. By contrast begging for shields at the capital was an indication of dependent status. See the case of the chief or regimental captain Geogo; Gardiner "First interview" in Bird, Annals, I:283-5.

[157] King, one of the traders, was accorded the status of regimental commander; Fynn, Diary, p.141. In 1830 30 whites and 40 blacks from Port Natal, all equipped with firearms and under the command of 'chief' John Cane, assisted the Zulu army against Sobhuza in the Pongola Mts.; William Wood, Statements Respecting Dingaan, King of the Zulus (Cape Town,1840) cited by Bird, Annals, I:377. Wood claimed to have been an interpreter to Dingane.

[158] One way in which Fynn acknowledged his own dependent status was by 'allowing' Zulu impis to call at his kraals to commandeer supplies; Fynn, opcit., p.142. See also Ibid., p.64; Watt, Febana, p.96; Smith,Andrew Smith and Natal,p.78.

defence capable of withstanding Zulu attacks, the military effective which could be furnished by the traders came to be increasingly decisive to the outcome of any operation of the Army. To the frustration of the Zulu state, they alone could supply well-equipped and well-trained musketmen. The community at the 'Port' came to include a large and ever-increasing number of such men, and the Zulu state came to demand that a proportion of their labour-time be committed to military operations with its Army.[159] A similar military effective also seems to have been supplied by the Portuguese at Delagoa Bay.[160]

In view of the various modes of survival which appear to have been possible in the 'protectorate' zone of the Zulu empire, it is difficult to take at face value Bird's unsubstantiated assertion that,

> "The Zulu tribe grew into a nation within the limits of Zululand; but to all, except the herdsmen of the royal cattle, it was forbidden to dwell in any part of the country between the Tugela and the Umzimvubu". 161

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159 The substantial military effective demanded of the Port community in 1830 resulted from the fact that Sobhuza had retreated into mountainous country where the use of firearms was needed to flush him out; Wood, Statements Respecting Dingaan, in Bird, Annals, I:377. See also Fynn, "Death of Mr. King", in Bird, op.cit., I:95.

160 Fynn, Diary, p.198; Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal, p.72.

161 John Bird, "Introductory Notes", in Bird, Annals, I:6.

In a sense, however, the legitimate retention of cattle to herd was the badge which came to be worn by most of the protectorate homesteads. Since this right could always be removed by the Zulu state, and was never extended into a licence to accumulate capital in the form of substantial herds under conditions of personal ownership, all those who were permitted to remain in Natal were "the herdsmen of the royal Cattle".[165]

Individual survival in the Natal protectorates depended upon adherence to the general laws laid down by the Zulu state for the administration of this zone of the periphery, such as the delivery to the centre of a suitable military effective when required. It also depended upon adherence to the particular laws appropriate to the specific mode of survival concerned. Traders were to respect the state monopoly over ivory and perhaps cattle exchange, hunters to respect the need to deliver their product to the centre, and farmers the need to desist from immediate consumption before tribute had been collected. Anti-state behaviour, defined as the attempt to add to the list of immunities or to widen existing ones, brought swift retribution from the state. Military operations of this kind were highly selective. On some occasions, whole protectorates were punished. On other occasions, as in the case of the 1831 raid on the John Cane establishment at the 'Port', the target was even more precisely defined.[166] These were raids of punishment and should perhaps be distinguished from the raids of predation, conquest and the tribute-collecting sorties already discussed.

Not only subjects of the protectorates, but also outsiders were expected to adhere to the law of the empire. The fundamental requirement, as the would-be traders who arrived at 'Port Natal' had realised, was to approach the state for admission into a mode of survival. Kat River Khoi, operating on hunting parties for the elephant overland as far as the Umzimkulu and beyond, seem to have sought to avoid this

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165 This general interest of the Zulu state in the cattle resources being herded in different parts of its Empire would help to explain why cattle theft appears to have been a serious crime against the state; Fynn, "History of Godongwana (Dingizwayo) and (in part) of Chaka", in Bird, Annals, I:71. See also Fynn, Diary, p.24.

166 Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal, pp.70-71. One of the Fynns had actually been forewarned of the attack by the Zulu state Fynn, Diary, pp.118-9.

requirement and the limits on their operations it would undoubtedly have brought. In 1833 one such party was destroyed by a Zulu impi as a salutary warning to the remainder.[167]

Beyond the zone of 'protectorates' was a further zone of 'tributaries'. These were usually major states in their own right. the Zulu state, however, expected a pledge of recognition of the furthermost boundaries of the protectorate zone of its empire, and various other assurances.[168] Sometimes diplomatic activity was unable to maintain this position of hegemony, and the Army was despatched to redress the status quo.[169] A relatively small-scale payment of tribute may also have been demanded as a token of recognition of the nature of the roles of dominance and subordination.[170]

The geo-political boundaries between the Zulu heartland, the protectorate zone, and the tributary zone, were in a continual state of flux in the same way that their overall complexion was undergoing change. The boundary between the heartland and the protectorate zone, for example, is often taken to have been fixed at the Tugela throughout the Shaka-Dingane period.[171] Yet in 1832, the homestead of the 2nd captain of a Zulu regiment was encountered a little to the south of the Umvoti River, seemingly one of many homesteads in the area.[172]

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[167] Fynn, Diary, p.222.

[168] Saxon, "Early Zulu state", pp.11-13.

[169] Liesegang, "Dingane's attack on Lourenco Marques"; Fynn, Diary, pp.64, 231; Smith. Andrew Smith and Natal, p.99.

[170] After the Delagoa Bay raid, for example, Portuguese levies were seen at the court of Dingane with presents to appease the King; Fynn, op.cit., p.231; Grahamstown Journal 7/8/1834.

[171] The Pongola is usually taken as having marked the northern boundary of the heartland. Alternatively, the distinctions between metropolis and periphery, or between heartland, protectorate and tributary zones are blurred completely. It must be said, however, that the Zulu state did sometimes appear as a homogeneous entity to the contemporary observer; "The country occupied by Dingaan,(which) stretches from the neighbourhood of Delagoa Bay to Port Natal,..... "; Kotze, Letters of the American Missionaries, p.32.

[172] Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal, pp.40-1 and n.

In 1838, whilst the attention of the Zulu Army was engaged elsewhere, it was possible for a highly profitable raid to be carried out by the 'Port Natal' refugees into "that part of Zululand on the Tugela beyond Greytown".[173] Another account makes it clear that the commando did not in fact have to cross the Tugela at all in order to achieve its object of exacting retribution for the destruction which had been suffered during Shaka's initial wars of predation.[174] It seems likely then that the Zulu heartland was gradually being extended to incorporate the inner margins of the protectorate zone, a process which was encouraged as each regiment was demobilised and its former members sought out fresh sites on which to establish their homesteads. Nearer the coast, the Tugela may have remained as the boundary.[175]

The protectorate zone seems to have included Qwabe, 'Port Natal' and the vast majority of all groups who remained in occupation of territory between the heartland and the Umzimvubu.[176]

Groups over which the Zulu state claimed, but was not always able to maintain, a metropolis-tributary relationship included Mpondo and Sekonyela's people in the south, together

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[173] The force comprised 30 whites and 2,500 blacks, and captured 3,000 cattle together with some 500 women and children; Joseph Kirkman, "Life of Mr. Joseph Kirkman in Zululand 1836-40", in The State, December (1910), typescript copy in Natal Archives, Mss.no.36, p.8. See also Lindley to Adams, 3/4/1838 in Kotzé, Letters of the American Missionaries, p.242.

[174] Lindley to Adams, op.cit., The Zulu kraals were empty of fighting men.

[175] When the party of the Rev.Owen left Dingane's kraal for Port Natal, arrangements were made that they should be provided with food by the state only as far as the Tugela River; Hulley, "Account of Rev. Owen's visit to Dingaan", p.13.

[176] Saxon, "Early Zulu state", pp.6-10. Fynn witnessed the arrival at the capital of emissaries from Qwabe who were given beads by the King, suggesting that the chiefdom retained a degree of independence commensurate with protectorate status; Fynn, Diary, pp.16,93. The history of Qwabe in fact clearly indicates the degree to which the geo-political structure of Zulu was constantly undergoing change. Its original territory was drawn into the heartland and, rather than suffer total destruction, the remnant of the ruling lineage led an exodus to the south, to the very margins of the Empire.

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with Sobhuza's Ngwane, the Bay states, and the remnant Ndwandwe in the north, and Mzilikazi's people in the west.[177]

The vast changes which took place within the heartland as the transition to absolutism was pushed through, and the equally vast changes which took place in peripheral regions as they were forcibly incorporated into the Zulu imperial system, both produced widespread and intense distress amongst the social groups whose modes of existence were totally reorganised The changes undermined the positions of former feudal power-holders at various levels as much as the remainign independence of peasant households. Even the labour-regiments, whose members ate at the King's table, were in fact made up of near-slaves who had every motive to cut off the hand that fed them. The state struggled, through ruthless punishment of the disloyal, through an institutionalised reign of terror, and through various "rituals of rebellion",[178] to contain potential opposition from within metropolis and periphery.

Yet the opposition was never totally contained. Various modes of resistance and rebellion are apparent in the historica record. A common form of resistance to the spread of absolutism or colonialism which was adopted by major former feudal powerholders, took the form of an organised migration of their peasantry into new territories outside the Zulu span of command and often into defensible locations.[179] Groups whose political unity had been shattered sought protection from distant and les oppressive powerholders capable of ensuring their survival,[180] or fled into the hills to form bands of outlawed 'bushmen' whic preyed on the subsistence base of the empire.

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[177] Saxon, "Early Zulu state", pp.12-13.

[178] For a somewhat 'functionalist' interpretation of these see Gluckman, "Rituals of rebellion in south-east Africa", in Gluckman, Order and Rebellion in Tribal Africa.

[179] The fullest description of these is Omer-Cooper, Zulu Aftermath.

[180] Ibid., especially chapter 11; Fynn, Diary, pp.21-2, 60-1.

Fig.15 Main Movements of the Mfecane

Source: Omer-Cooper, Zulu Aftermath (1966) p.6.

There were two main modes of rebellion, the one individual the other collective. The individual mode consisted in attempts to escape from the heartland, perhaps from the regimental barracks, to disappear into the periphery. The loyal sections of the Army initially probably had little difficulty in containing this particular form of rebellion, but by Dingane's time some began to successfully reach the 'Port Natal' community, much to the frustration of the Zulu state and the embarassment of the traders.[182]

The collective mode of rebellion took the form of military commanders leading disgruntled sections of the Army out of the Zulu span of command, failure to accomplish a state objctive and fear of resulting punishment serving to cement together a regimental unity capable of transcending disparate regional origins and considerations of rank and status.[183]

On one occasion, in September 1828, disgruntlement within a section of the Army and the ambition of a particular section of the ruling dynasty coalesced to permit the overthrow of the Shakan regime.[184] It was essentially a palace coup rather than a successful rebellion or popular insurrection and, in the long-term, no revolutionary structural changes appear to have resulted from it.

Somewhat ironically, a number of the more organised rebel groups who had succeeded in escaping from the Zulu span of command, became predators on the productive base of weaker populations beyond the borders of south-east Africa. Both the the Soshangane and Mzilikazi rebel groups, for example, adopted this strategy for survival.[185] In so far as they were able to stabilise their positions of dominance, they were also

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[182] The refugees at the Port were originally recruited from amongst remnant Natal groups but, it has been suggested, after about 1827 their number came to include also refugees from the Zulu country; Hattersley, The British Settlement of Natal, p.13.

[183] The exodus which took place under Mzilikazi is probably the best known example. Ndwandwe had suffered very similar losses to Soshangane and Zwangendaba; Omer-Cooper, Zulu Aftermath, chapters 4, 5, 9.

[184] Ibid., pp.41-2.

[185] Isaacman, Mozambique. The Africanization of a European Institution, pp.122-3; Joint letter of the missionaries in Mzilikazi's country to Anderson, 18/8/1836, in Kotzé, Letters

instrumental in bringing about a further extension of the absolute mode of production into parts of southern Africa where its development had either not yet begun or where the transitior towards it was less advanced.

The maintenance of the systems of relationships which comprised the Zulu state and its vast empire required firm and constant direction from the centre, not only by the power-holder at the apex, but also by a group of courtiers and a numerous bureaucracy. A geographical distribution of power centres was not appropriate tothe new situation. A change began to take place in the locus of power. Though the King still made occasional visits to minor centres of power in the country-side,[186] he spent an increasing amount of time presiding over the affairs of state from one particular royal homestead. Zulu now had a capital. In the time of Shaka, Bulawayo had been chosen as the site, but in the time of Dingane its location was shifted to Mgungundlovu.[187]

The size and pattern of life at Mgungundlovu indicated its function as the hub of the state and of a vast empire. Some 1500 huts were counted.[188] The presence of a large military garrison, of labour-regiments of men and women, and of vast capital reserves in the form of the cattle in its vast kraal made it the dominant centre of wealth and might. In addition, numbers of servants and craftsmen were seen at work. Senior members of the bureaucracies which ran the various departments of state, and especially the leading military commanders, spent much of their time at the capital. From time to time the regiments were called there for for revue, and the Army was always given its final preparation for war at the capital. A council of state met from time to time to decide major affairs of state, and lesser groups presided over other decision-making in relation to the affairs of particular departments. Major

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[186] Gardiner, "First interview", in Bird, Annals, 1:293-4.

[187] Thompson, "Zulu kingdom and Natal", in Oxford History of South Africa, 1:342, 352.

[188] Campbell, "Umgungundhlovu", p.5. For drawings and plans of the capital see Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal, p.53; Gardiner Narrative of a Journey to the Zulu country, opp. p.28; Ritter, Shaka Zulu, opp. p.209; Fynn, Diary, opp.p.326; Gluckman, "Rise of a Zulu Empire", in Scientific American, p.157.

trials and punishments took place at the capital or were ordered from there. The imperial dimension was represented by the periodic arrival of vassal chiefs, of embassies from distant tributaries, of traders, and of outsiders seeking permission to join an established mode of survival in the periphery or to institute a new one. Seemingly unlike the situation which prevailed in the earlier time of feudal paramountcies, all such visitors to the capital could expect to be fed at the King's table rather than barter food from individual producers. Presiding over the whole was the person of the King, his prestige within the community at the capital enhanced by a variety of distancing devices.[189]

One of these distancing devices was the King's residing in the seraglio, the home of a particular stratum of women.[190] It is difficult to arrive at a clear understanding of the place of these women within the social structure. It would seem that they were not rank-and-file women of the labour regiments. The nature of their personal adornment, which included four brass neck rings, is suggestive of an aristocratic status.[191] This is consistent with other aspects of their life at the capital.[192]

However aristocratic, the women of the seraglio were not exactly ladies of leisure. According to one source, it was the duty of Dingane's seraglio to cultivate his personal crops.[193] This is consistent with a hint contained in another report that these were not the property of the state, but of the King personally, though it must be said that the line between the private and state aspects of the life of an absolute monarch

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[189] See for example, Champion, "Journal", in Bird, Annals, I:203-6

[190] Fynn, Diary, pp.25-6.

[191] Watt, Febana, p.60; Champion, "Journal", in Bird, Annals, I:202, 204. Large amounts of beads were also worn.

[192] The specially-imported red and green blankets, for example, appear to have been for their use; Campbell, "Umgungundhlovu" p.13.

[193] Gardiner, "First interview", in Bird, Annals, 1:280. It is just possible that Gardiner failed to distinguish between the women of the seraglio and other strata of women at the capital. Champion, for example, distinguished between female servants working in the seraglio and its more aristocratic regular inhabitants; Champion, "Journal", in Bird, op.cit., 1:204.

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is somewhat hard to draw and perhaps not particularly revealing. The report suggests that women were given to the King by vassal chiefs and other important men within the empire who were anxious to remain on good terms with him.[194]

Having established that the women of the seraglio probably comprised the personal property and the labour force of the King, which would help to account for the juxtaposition of a labouring role and aristocratic personal adornment, a further problem remains. The nature of the personal relation is not exactly clear. The women of the seraglio are usually seen as the wives or concubines of the King, and there seems little reason to doubt that sexual relations took place.[195] There is some suggestion, however, that women could be given out by the King as wives for important men in return for bride-price,[196] a useful way also of cementing political ties. In this sense the women of the seraglio were not in structural terms the 'wives' of the King but his 'daughters', 'sisters', or 'wards'.[197] A plausible explanation is that the seraglio included both kinds of relationships, either by means of the existence of separate stratum within it, or by an individual fulfilling different roles in different circumstances.

Within the capital and elsewhere in Zulu, the massive complexity of the division of labour, rank, status, department and wealth which comprised the fibre of the empire, was codified and subsequently publicly exhibited in the form of an equal

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[194] Campbell, "Umgungundhlovu", p.14.

[195] It has been argued that Shaka, for example, was impotent: Morris, Washing of the Spears, p.54. Gluckman suggests that he may have been a latent homosexual; Gluckman, "Rise of a Zulu Empire", in Scientific American, p.168. These arguments are usually based upon interpretations of his reluctance to marry, to permit others to marry or have full sexual relations, and his refusal to acknowledge an heir. As Shaka himself told visitors, however, all these aspects of his public life were motivated by political considerations and are certainly completely understandable from that perspectiv

[196] Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal, p.80.

[197] The women themselves described their status as that of 'sisters' of the King; Champion, "Journal", in Bird, Annals, I:202.

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variety of uniform, ornamentation, badges and insignia.[198]

There is some evidence to suggest that, even before the disastrous confrontation of 1838, the Zulu state was finding it increasingly difficult to contain the contradiction between absolutism and feudalism within the heartland, and between metropolis and a vast periphery. To cement the position of the new regime following the 1828 palace coup, certain concessions to popular opinion within the army and within the countryside had been thought necessary.[199] The tributary feudal mode of production was allowed to reassert itself.

In the production sphere, the capital and the regimental towns retreated from a situation of self-sufficiency based upon an absolute mode of production. No ground was said to have been cultivated in the vicinity of the capital in 1836.[200] Instead, women from homesteads in the countryside now brought small quantities of food to support individual kin relatives serving in the regiments.[201] The amount of labour-time of the peasantry committed to state service underwent decline;

> "People went to work for the king
> for a couple of months and then others
> of their people took their place". 202

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[198] Regiments were distinguished by different coloured war shields, itself a reflection of a division of labour within the ranks of men based upon age and indicative of specialised function. Distinguished rank and file warriors wore iron neck rings, their captains and other men of high rank in the bureaucratic systems of the state, wore brass. Older men, perhaps of distinction but who did not fit within this category, appear to have worn 'headrings'; Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal, p.80; Campbell, "Umgungundhlovu", p.16, 19. There was a similar pattern of rank amongst women. The aristocracy of the seraglio was distinguished by the wearing of brass. A further distinction, perhaps based upon age or marriage status, existed between those who wore striped beads and thos who wore white; see above p.44; Campbell, op.cit., p.13.

[199] Fynn, Diary, p.162.

[200] Champion, "Journal", in Bird, Annals, I:206-8.

[201] Campbell, "Umgungundhlovu", p.12.

[202] Ibid., p.22.

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The state was obliged to permit the depletion of capital stocks concentrated at the centre, in order to maintain the loyalty of followers by means of gifts of cattle on-the-hoof or for immediate consumption.[203] Even so, refugees began to succeed in their attempts to escape from the heartland,[204] and powerholders in the periphery to throw off their protectorate or tributary status, in some cases launching attacks on the state itself.[205] State monopolies began to crumble.[206] Everywhere the network of immunities was being extended by anti-state action from below.

The state was unable to contain these various threats because it had lost its technological advantage in relation to the instruments of coercion. Its tributaries and rivals had been able to build up armies modelled upon that of Zulu, and to evolve an efficient mode of defence comprising retreat into rocky country where the regimental system was largely ineffective. The Zulu Army began to return from campaigns badly mauled,[207] so that its commanders would not risk sending it forth again without ensuring its reinforcement with a substantial military effective from loyal vassals. A relaxation of discipline in the barracks, especially in relation to sexual relationships,[208] may have postponed mutiny but can hardly have increased efficiency, serving as it did to permit a further revival of individualistic peasant loyalties.

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[203] Fynn, Diary, p.298; Campbell, "Umgungundhlovu" pp.16,24; Cowley, Kwa-Zulu, p.61; Omer-Cooper, Zulu Aftermath, p.36.

[204] Brookes and Webb, History of Natal, p.21.

[205] In 1837, for example, Sekonyela's 'Mantatis' of Tlokwa, who were equipped with firearms and horses by this time, succeeded in taking off 300 cattle from within the Empire; General letter of the missionaries, in Bird, Annals, I:211-2. The Qwabe of Nqeto were one of the most important groups to succeed in breaking away during this period; see Omer-Cooper, Zulu Aftermath, p.159.

[206] This point is discussed in the following chapter.

[207] Fynn, Diary, p.227; Morris, Washing of the Spears, pp.106-7.

[208] Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal, p.86; Campbell, "Umgungundhlovu", p.24.

By the time of their decisive confrontation with a new set of outsiders in 1838, it is arguable that absolutism and the empire to which it had given rise, were both already in decline in south-east Africa.

The extent of the decline by this stage ought not to be exaggerated. The Zulu state, like its northern neighbours between the Tugela and Delagoa Bay, had never become a thoroughgoing 'despotism' in which all subjects of the state had been reduced to something like the same level of degradation beneath the King. It had always presided over a class society in which certain strata enjoyed higher status and greater access to wealth than others. As a result of external crisis, the aristocracy had been obliged to concede to an upward displacement of politico-legal coercion. Though such a displacement was arguably in the long-term interests of the aristocracy as a class, it furnished the state with the instruments which could be used, and were often used, to break or discipline individuals and groups within the nobility itself. The institutionalisation of these instruments, however, and their permanent use against the aristocracy as a class had never been intended. When, as under Shaka in Zulu-Mthethwa, it appeared that this might become the case, a powerful alliance of aristocratic groups moved to overthrow the powerholder at the centre and to replace him with a figure who would permit a return to systems which placed less pressure on certain groups within the aristocracy An inevitable corollary of this was a reduction in the demands placed upon the labour-power of the homestead by the centre, which in turn reduced the capacity of the state to control rebellion in the Empire. It is arguably this stage which had been reached in Zulu by 1838. A retreat from the more extreme forms of absolutism had taken place, but certain essential changes from a feudal epoch remained intact. These included an escalation of war, bureaucratization of office, intensification of taxation by the centre to include a direct labour demand upon the peasantry, the erosion of vassal-clientage, wideranging diplomatic networks, and mercantilist powers over commodity exchange. It is precisely this complex of changes, rather than more extreme and less permanent additions, which have been taken to comprise the essence

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of the change from Feudalism to Absolutism in Europe.

The crisis which had faced the feudal aristocracy in the northern part of south-east Africa, and which had eventually set in motion the transition to Absolutism, lay in the field of its changing but increasingly important relationships with the local representatives of a distant capitalist mode of production. As the brief flowering of Port Natal in the early 18th century indicated, attempts were being made by these representatives to reach ivory suppliers in the hinterland. In order to contain this pressure, it was necessary for Tembe to expand inland to institute tighter controls over commodity production in the hinterland. This constituted a threat to the interests of major interior powerholders. Farreaching structural changes took place in these interior states, designed to permit successful resistance to this encroachment from Tembe. Central to these changes was the undermining of the position of intermediate powerholders, and the attempt to pin down a semi-servile peasantry into new and more intense forms of dependence and exploitation. In the event the transition to Absolutism was aborted before the Zulu Empire was ever in a position to match the political, technical and cultural record of absolutist states in other parts of Africa and elsewhere. An analysis of this disruption of the development of Absolutism in south-east Africa forms the subject of the next chapter.

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PART FOUR :

THE TRANSITION TO CAPITALISM

XI

ORIGINS OF THE TRANSITION TO CAPITALISM 1820-1838

The formal incorporation of 'Natal' into the British Empire through the annexation of the territory to the Cape in 1843, is usually seen in terms of the logical extension of British concern to protect the sea route to India, or in terms of a humanitarian concern to protect the population of south-east Africa from Zulu or Voortrekker depredations. This chapter argues that the origins of annexation are more direct and more deep-seated than either of these explanations allow. It was the natural consequence of the gradual capitalist penetration of the social formation of south-east Africa over a period of several centuries. During the third and fourth decades of the 19th century this gradual penetration quickened considerably, culminating in the arrival of the Voortrekker settlers in the heartland of the Zulu Empire at the end of 1837. It was this event which finally brought the incipient contradiction between Zulu Absolutism and Cape-British Capitalism to a head.

The chapter first describes the establishment of Capitalism at the Cape in the characteristic colonial form in which capitalist relations are dominant but far from universal. Secondly, various ideological and social forces are shown to have been competing for dominance within this broad framework in the early history of Capitalism at the Cape. Different groups held different views as to the form capitalist development should take in southern Africa. Thirdly, the chapter tries to show how both the Port Natal hunter-traders and the Voortrekkers were both products of capitalist expansion at the Cape. Neither enterprise could have been mounted without the support of Cape Capital. Fourthly, it points out the degree to which the various contradictions between fractions of Capital were temporarily set aside, in the interest of resolving the primary contradiction which had developed between Capitalism and Absolutism in south-east Africa.

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The development of capitalist patterns of relationships had long been in process at the Cape. The process received further encouragement in 1815 when a south African political as well as economic foothold for British Capital was at last stabilised at the Cape.[1] Additional networks of relationships came to radiate from Cape Town, and above all from the burgeoning merchant houses of that city, to link distant groups in the hinterland with the British metropolis and its various other overseas interests.

The opening of a new channel of credit direct to the metropolis permitted capitalism at the Cape to gradually extend its hegemony over existing modes of production in the region.[2] So far as the metropolis was concerned, the most important of these were the large farming enterprises based upon various forms of unfree labour, notably the great sheep farms of the eastern Cape and the vineyards and wheat farms of the western Cape; the family production units of the peasant homestead, capable of producing a substantial surplus of foodstuffs; and the various productive systems capable of supplying ivory and cattle products which flourished in the far interior of the Colony and beyond its borders. Merchant houses were the vehicles for the extension of capitalist hegemony over each of these modes of production. By means of direct land-purchase, renting operations, mortgaging of various descriptions, and normal extension of

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[1] During the course of the Napoleonic Wars, the Netherlands were conquered by France, and Britain occupied some Dutch possessions, including the Cape in 1795. The occupation continued until 1803, when there was a three year period of Netherlands authority under the Batavian Republic which had succeeded the monarchy in the Netherlands. In 1806 the Cape was re-occupied by Britain on the outbreak of further war in Europe, and in 1815 the Cape became a permanent British possession.

[2] It seems that some at least of the new merchant houses at the Cape were closely linked to mercantile and financial houses in the metropolis. There would seem to be a need for research into the network of 'metropolitan' and 'local' Capital prevailing at the Cape in the early years of British domination. Richard Moorsom's work on Port Elizabeth may make a useful contribution in this direction.

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commercial credit, the larger merchant houses at Cape Town,[3] and to a lesser extent those which were beginning to mushroom at inland centres such as Grahamstown and later Port Elizabeth in the eastern Cape, came to be involved in a variety of productive activities.[4] By the 1820s, chains of capitalist relationships, ultimately linked to the metropolis itself, already permeated the political economy of the Cape and were in the process of determining its overall complexion.

Though capitalism was establishing itself as dominant in the political economy of the Cape region, it was not yet clear to what extent capitalism might replace existing modes of production, rather than simply being content to expropriate a portion of the surplus which they produced. Three main visions appear to have been advanced. First, was the vision of a 'pure' capitalism, in which there would be no subordinate modes of production. Capitalism itself would undertake the full range of economic processes at the Cape as it had come to do in the metropolis. A second vision involved the combination of a dominant capitalism with a subordinate mode of production based upon some form of unfree labour. The third vision involved the combination of a dominant capitalism with a subordinate mode of production based upon the peasant homestead. A further possible combination, involving a dominant capitalism coupled with a variety of of subordinate forms furnishing a surplus in ivory and cattle

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[3] According to one source, the three leading merchant houses at Cape Town in the immediate post-Napoleonic era were Collison & Co., Ebden and Easton, and Hamilton Ross; A.F.Hattersley, An Illustrated Social History of South Africa (Cape Town: Balkema, 1969) p.98.

[4] At the Cape, prior to the systematic development of joint-stock banking after about 1830, merchant houses undertook a number of banking functions, notably the extension of credit often secured by mortgages on land or other property. Slaves were mortgaged to capitalists, for example, in order to raise working capital; H. Cloete, Five Lectures on the Emigration of the Dutch farmers from the Cape and their Settlement in Natal, until their formal submission to Her Majesty's authority in 1843 (Cape Town, 1856), reprint ed. The History of the Great Boer Trek and the origin of the South African Republics to 1843, ed. and intro. W. Brodrick-Cloete (London, 1899), p.48. Merchant houses took on similar banking functions in their early years of activity in Natal.

products, though of considerable importance in the short term, was never seriously considered as a strategy upon which the long-term economic exploitation of the region and its colonised populations could be founded.

Each of the major visions had its ideologists and publicists at the Cape as well as in the metropolis itself, notably in certain newspapers and amongst certain groups of missionaries. From time to time they also had their political spokesmen, and even their legislators in the local and central corridors of power.

Since the Cape was incorporated into the British Empire as a colony, rather than as the private fief of a monopolistic chartered company, the continued existence and further diversification of local centres of Capital was possible, together with the involvement in the periphery of a range of sectors of metropolitan Capital. Each of the major visions of the political economy of the future became associated with a particular concentration of local or metropolitan Capital, and there was also the potential for complex patterns of alliance and conflict involving a number of such concentrations. Often these patterns transcended the stereotyped dichotomy between local and metropolitan capital.

The struggle between these visions was important because it would ultimately be difficult for them to co-exist satisfactorily. Each mode of colonial exploitation needed the state to furnish a particular pattern of institutionalised relationships if it was to flourish. To express the dilemma in the parlance of the time, and in relation to a particularly important sector of colonial policy, the reduction of the indigenous population to the status of peasants, proletarians, or slaves each had different and farreaching implications for the question of the nature of the 'Native Policy' to be employed by the Empire in its Cape possession.

By the same token, the debate between the various major visions of the future was not outlawed by the Empire, because it was functional to it. The predominance of the capitalist mode of production, and of Imperial hegemony, were both taken as the starting points of much, though perhaps not all, of the debate. The point at issue concerned the precise form that

the expropriation of surplus-labour would take. In more abstract terms it involved the theoretical as well as practical identification of the most efficient form of colonial exploitation, given the prevailing level of the forces of production at the Cape, in the metropolis, and in the British Empire as a whole.

The crucial importance of this debate, and of the struggle between the systems of relationships of which each vision was but the philosophical reflection, has been largely ignored by almost all the competing historiographies of the area. It was this struggle, and to some extent still is this struggle, which came to play a major part in determining the subsequent history of southern Africa. To some extent it is also the key to an understanding of the evolution of the political economy of European Imperialism as a whole.[5]

It would not be long before each vision established a bridgehead in Natal and then eventually came to compete for dominance within that geo-political region. Initially, however, the debate and the associated less abstract forms of struggle for supremacy were conducted at the Cape and with regard to its own future as a colony of the British metropolis.

In the early years of British rule at the Cape, the 'pure' capitalist vision enjoyed considerable support in the Imperial corridors of power and in the burgeoning merchant houses of Cape Town. Amongst the clearest local articulators of the vision was George Thompson, who had arrived at the Cape

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[5] By 1820 there were already a number of modes of colonial exploitation operative in the Empire and which might be taken as models for the future exploitation of southern Africa. Over much of the Americas, and during the Dutch period at the Cape, slavery had been employed, almost entirely based upon the import of labour from outside. In India the land revenue settlements at this stage were largely geared to encourage local powerholders to undertake production of the kind required by the metropolis. In the new settlements of Australasia, white convicts were beginning to be imported with a view to supplying the labour force required for the development of capitalist patterns of production. In west Africa the first steps were being taken to institute a peasant mode of colonial exploitation.

soon after its formal annexation, and who had established one of the leading Cape merchant houses.[6] He campaigned for the implementation of the 'Pure' capitalist vision of a society hierarchically ordered along class lines. He looked forward to seeing a general polarisation which would leave a powerful but numerically small class of large capitalists at the top, with a vast mass of proletarian 'free' labour below. He had nothing but contempt for those, like many of the Dutch farming families, who allowed a system of inheritance unsuited to capitalism to break-up large capital accumulations, leaving them apportioned amongst numerous sons. They were each left to eke out a living, burdened at the outset by non-productive debt, as neither fully-fledged capitalists nor true proletarians. Their wretched small-scale hunting and grazing pursuits, their use of impoverished unfree labour, and their small-scale expropriation of agricultural produce from the peasantry, brought little long-term benefit to the Imperial metropolis, or for that matter to its local agents, men such as Thompson himself.[7]

Thompson was not a racialist. His contempt for the poorer Dutch who retained some control over the means of production was matched only by his admiration for the richer capitalistic Dutch farmers.[8] Neither did he side with those,

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[6] See G. Thompson, Travels and Adventures in Southern Africa (London, 1827); repr. ed., and intro. Vernon S. Forbes, 2 vols. "Introduction", 1:vii-xxi. Thompson had been one of the original members of the Cape Town Commercial Exchange on its formation in 1822; R.F.M. Immelman. Men of Good Hope: The Cape Town Chamber of Commerce 1804-1954 (Cape Town: Chamber of Commerce, 1955), appendix B p.314.

[7] Thompson, op.cit., II:323-4. There is a striking similarity to the views of Gibbon Wakefield and to the analysis of Marx in all of this. For an introduction to the general debate on the question of 'systematic colonization' which was beginning in the metropolis at this time see A.G.L. Shaw, ed. and intro., Great Britain and the Colonies 1815-1865 (London: Methuen, 1970), especially the chapters by Pappe, Ghosh, Winch, Semmel, and Kittrell.

[8] Thompson, Travels and Adventures in Southern Africa, II:328-31

like Gibbon-Wakefield, who were generally opposed to pastoral activity.[9] Pastoralism was quite acceptable, providing it was undertaken on large-scale and thoroughly capitalist lines, and providing it furnished an export commodity directly of use within a rapidly industrialising metropolis. At the Cape it was the eastern Cape sheep farmers with their export of wool through the Cape Town merchant houses, rather than the small-scale cattle farmers, who enjoyed his support.[10]

The 'pure' capitalist vision was reflected in decision-making in the early colonial period at the Cape. It was apparent, for example, in the sphere of immigration policy. A deliberate decision was made to implement the vision of a polarisation of social classes, even within the white population at the Cape. The Albany settlement in the eastern Cape was largely recruited from English labourers thrown out of work in the metropolis by the structural changes in the economy which followed the Napoleonic Wars. Only a handful of large-capitalists were in theory to be permitted to emigrate alongside the members of the proletariat. The class polarisation within the ranks of the emigrants was intensified by the fact that many of the labourers were formally indentured before leaving the metropolis as servants of the capitalists with whom they travelled.[11]

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[9] A work which brings out clearly the hostility to pastoralism amongst certain political economists in the metropolis is A. J. Christopher, "Natal: A Study in Colonial Land Settlement", unpublished Phd. thesis, Durban, University of Natal, 1969, pp.1-10.

[10] Thompson, Travels and Adventures in Southern Africa, II:328-31. Systematic sheep farming began in the Albany area of the Eastern Cape in 1827. By 1830, 4,500 lbs. of wool valued at £222 were exported. In 1841 these figures had risen to 61,778 lbs. and £27,848. Three-quarters of the wool exported from the Cape came from these areas; Eric A. Walker, The Cambridge History of the British Empire, Vol.VIII: South Africa, Rhodesia and the Protectorates (Cambridge UP, 1936) pp.242, 771.

[11] A.F.Hattersley, The Natal Settlers, 1849-1851 (Pietermaritzburg, 1949),p.35. Hattersley argues that the class polarisation was less intense in the case of the 1849-51 Natal immigration. The Albany settlers were not allowed to own slaves; Ibid., Illustrated Social History of South Africa, p.104.

The vision was just as clearly implemented in the often overlapping spheres of colonial 'Labour' and 'native' policies. The more extreme forms of unfree labour were progressively outlawed, notably with the formal abolition of slavery in 1833.[12] The result was generally to throw a vast number of thoroughly proletarianised, poverty-stricken and near-rightless labourers at the mercy of capitalist employers who were freed from both the obligation to tie up capital in their labour force, and to some extent the need to undertake the production of the foodstuffs required by their work-force.[13] This fundamental adjustment in the political economy of the region had been permitted only by a combination of the importation and reproduction of slaves, and the incorporation into the colony of near-destitute refugees from the Mfecane. The foundation had at last been laid for a transition to a 'free' labour force.

In fact neither aspect of the 'pure' capitalist vision ever came to fruition. Most of the poorer immigrants brought from Britain to the Cape to furnish the backbone of the labouring and artisan component of a capitalist class hierarchy, particularly in the field of agriculture, found life much easier and more profitable as hunters, transport-riders and intermediaries in the still highly lucrative ivory and cattle trades in the interior.[14] It was as yet much too easy for 'free' labour to escape from the class position allotted for it in the 'pure' capitalist vision of the political economy of the Cape. Whilst some argued for the tighter indenturing of white labourers, others became reconciled to the fact that the level of the forces of production at the Cape was not yet appropriate to the implementation of the 'pure' form of capitalism which Thompson and others had desired.

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[12] Monica Wilson, "Co-operation and conflict: The Eastern Cape frontier", in Oxford History of South Africa, I:300-311

[13] For conditions which faced Khoi and 'free blacks' immediately after emancipation see, for example, Philip to J.B. Purney, May 1833, Missionary Herald (Oct. 1833) pp.414-420, reproduced in Kotze, ed., Letters of the American Missionaries, p.34.

[14] The case of William Gradwell, for example; Hattersley, The British Settlement of Natal, p.3. Some of these men became pioneers in the hunting, trading and transport-riding activities which came to link Natal with the Cape.

A similar setback to the vision was suffered in the related spheres of 'labour' and 'native' policy. The material conditions for the existence of a 'free' black labouring proletariat did not exist, in the same way that they did not for a 'free' white labouring proletariat, with the possible exception of Cape Town itself.[15] The same variety of non-proletarian frontier opportunities was available to them as to their white equivalent, and in many respects they were better equipped to take advantage of them.[16]

The same problems were encountered as the Colony expanded to incorporate the peasant homesteads of the interior which were in process of rebuilding following the ravages of the Mfecane. Having retained or regained a substantial measure of control over the means of production, the occupants of such homesteads were not interested in the prospect of a life spent as proletarian labourers in white employment. 'Labour shortage' remained the almost unanimous complaint of white employers at the Cape. As a leading capitalist employer at the Cape argued, the structural conditions were not such as to permit the abandonment of slavery or a related form of forced and unfree labour;

> "free labourers cannot supply their place in this country as they may leave their work when most wanted."[17]

Historians who interpret the economic history of southern Africa from a 'liberal' standpoint have tended to see the question of 'labour shortgage', and its supportive notion of the backward-sloping supply curve of labour, as the result of an inexplicable reluctance of 'Dutch' employers to pay sufficient wages in the case of the former, and as a figment of the imagination in the case of the latter. In effect such historians take as their starting point the assumption that all men who are not capitalists are necessarily proletarians dependent upon employment with capitalists for their very means

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[15] Cloete, History of the Great Boer Trek, p.50

[16] Martin Legassick, "The Frontier Tradition in South African Historiography", unpublished seminar paper, University of Sussex and Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 1970.

[17] A.van Breda, quoted in G.M. Theal, ed., Records of the Cape Colony, 36 vols., (London, 1897-1905), XXXIV:306, cited by Hattersley, Illustrated Social History of South Africa, p.103. Even slaves had been difficult to retain.

of subsistence. In southern Africa in the early part of the 19th century the conditions for this class polarisation between Capital and Labour did not exist. The 'labour shortage' of capitalists was quite real, as was the 'target worker' and the backward-sloping supply curve. There was a labour-shortage almost regardless of the wages which were offered.[18]

Actually there was nothing unusual in all of this. The same problem was being encountered wherever the capitalist mode of production sought to expand into new peripheral areas in its pure form. It was the case, for example, in the non-slaveowning regions of North America and in Australasia. The fate of the individual capitalist employer in Western Australia was almost identical to that of members of his class who had emigrated to Albany in the Cape. A Mr. Peel who went to Western Australia with a capital of £50,000 and 300 persons of the working class, was "left without a servant to make his bed or fetch him water from the river", as his labourers disperse to take up land as independent owners.[19] As Wakefied pointed out,

> "Where land is very cheap and all men are free, where everyone who so pleases can easily obtain a piece of land for himself, not only is labour very dear, as respects the labourers' share of the produce, but the difficulty is to obtain combined labour at any price" 20

Under such conditions, hired workers soon

> "would have ceased to be labourers for hire; they would have become independent landowners, if not competitors with their former masters in the market of labour". 21

The problem facing the expansion of capitalism in its

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[18] The usual rate for 'free' black labour on the 'frontier' in the 1840s was 5/- to 7/- a month plus rations; Hattersly, Illustrated Social History of South Africa, p.104

[19] E. Gibbon Wakefield, England and America, 2 vols., (London, 1833), II:33.

[20] Ibid., I:247.

[21] Ibid., II:5.

pure form as an integrated mode of production was well understood by Marx. The process of Primitive Accumulation, that is the appropriation of the means of production by a minority, producing a simple polarisation between Capital and Labour, was more or less completed in the metropolis;

> "It is otherwise in the colonies. There the capitalist regime encounters on all hands the resistance of producers who own the means of production with which they work and who can gain wealth for themselves by their own labour instead of working to enrich a capitalist". 22

Fresh emigrants sent out from the metropolis merely adapted their mode of life to the prevailing imperatives of the structural conditions in the colonies. The opportunities for upward class mobility were numerous, and not confined to the land-ownership element emphasised in the writings of the contemporary political economists. Not only was further large-scale capital accumulation impossible under such conditions,[23] existing capital accumulations were also being dissipated.

It was becoming clear that at the Cape, as elsewhere, the pure capitalist vision could not be implemented overnight. It was becoming clear that the capitalist mode of production required more than capital, as it had been understood up to this time, as a stock of goods at a given moment.[24] 'Capital' was a social relation between persons,[25] just as was 'labour'. The material conditions at the Cape at this time were appropriate to the natural existence or evolution of neither. They could be created, but only by the massive deployment of state power, a deployment which the embryonic colonial state did not have the resources to carry out.

In these circumstances greater credence began to be given to the major alternative visions of the political economy of the future, visions which appeared to enjoy firmer roots

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[22] Karl Marx, Capital, Everyman ed., II:848.

[23] H.O. Pappé, "Wakefield and Marx", in Shaw, Great Britain and the Colonies, p.200.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Marx, Capital, II:849.

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in the structural conditions of the time. Both were visions of a capitalism adapted into a 'colonial' form. A fully-fledged capitalist mode of production would not be introduced. Instead, capitalism would content itself with appropriating a portion of the surplus produced by a subordinate mode of production which was not in itself capitalist.

The 'pure' capitalist vision gradually retreated ever farther into the future. As supporters of alternative visions sought the assistance of state power to create the institutional conditions necessary for their efficient operation, even the status of 'pure' capitalism as an eventual goal came to be challenged. Although the vision occasionally reappeared in the ideas of individuals, the programmes of interest groups, and the policies of administrators, the goal of a non-racial class society polarised along classic capitalist lines, remained for much of the 19th and early 20th centuries a minority position within Capital. Arguably, only now is it beginning to re-emerge within certain sections of Capital as a formidable alternative to the past and the contemporary ordering of the political economy of southern Africa.

By the 1830s at the Cape it was becoming apparent that the principal short-term struggle lay between the peasant homestead, and various production units based upon forced labour, as alternative subordinate modes of production under the pervasive umbrella of a predominant capitalism.

The peasant homestead vision had long been upheld at the Cape in the work and writings of the representatives of the London Missionary Society. The Rev. Philip is perhaps its best known publicist,[26] but there were many

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[26] Many of Philip's contemporaries, who were hostile to his vision, seemed to see him as having singlehandedly 'misled' the Imperial policymakers, at the Cape and in the metropolis, into carrying out policies which were hostile to the employer interest. His critics could not actually face the possibility that the Imperial policymakers were themselves hostile to the employers and therefore 'guilty' of the betrayal of their interests. This seems to have been the position of Chase, for example. See his editorial comments in Chase, ed., The Natal Papers, esp. pp.61-4, 47. The missionary's vision is set out in John Philip, Researches in South Africa, 2 vols., (London, 1828).

others.[27] The position of the LMS missionary in the metropolitan and Cape social structure strengthened his general hostility to the processes of proletarianisation.[28] But the LMS missionaries, like others who expounded the peasant homestead

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[27] Van der Kemp, for example, the LMS founder of Bethelsdorp. Chris Saunders has recently drawn attention to the career of the LMS missionary James Read, who also operated within this tradition. Read sometimes seemed to sail dangerously close to the wind, but he never gave up his basic belief in the role he was destined to play in Imperial strategy even though he had taken a black wife and lived a very simple life. His view of the new Kat River Settlement, for example, was worthy of any prophet of the peasant-homestead vision of capitalism in the region. He welcomed the settlement because "their wants will increase and this will give a stimulus to industry" Read to Stockenstrom, 16/6/1829, Cape Archives, L.G.5., cited by Christopher Saunders, "James Read: Towards a Reassessment"; unpublished seminar paper, University of London, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 22/1/1976, p.7. The Cape Town Commercial Advertiser, under the editorship of John Fairburn, appears to have been the newspaper of the period which came closest to espousing the peasant-homestead vision, and served to spread its message amongst a wider merchant and official audience. There were strong links between the Advertiser, leading LMS figures, and others sympathetic to the peasant-homestead vision, not the least of which was Philip's position as Fairburn's father-in-law. See W.M. Macmillan, "Political development, 1822-1834", in Cambridge History of the British Empire, VIII: South Africa, pp.248-260. For an example of the editor's clash with employers' opinion over the question of hottentot wages see Ibid., p.259. For another employer's attack on the Advertiser's policies see Chase, ed., The Natal Papers, appendix pp.297, 302. The vision and its adherents find their sympathetic historian in W.M. Macmillan. See his The Cape Colour Question (London, 1927); Bantu, Boer and Briton (London, 1929; 2nd. ed., Oxford, 1964); The Road to Self-Rule (London, 1959); and his notes on the Philip Papers in Rhodes House, Oxford.

[28] In the eyes of the leading employers, the LMS missionaries were not 'respectable'. They came from poor families and fraternised with blacks; Cloete, Five Lectures (1856 ed.) p.32. Cloete had been a leading lawyer and political figure at the Cape and an 'employer' to the extent of having owned slaves. The class tension was clearly rooted in the objective conditions of the missionaries' backgrounds. Philip had begun his working life as a millhand in the metropolis, Moffat had been a gardener, Read was initially employed at Bethelsdorp as an artisan, Ashton had been a house painter, Edwards a carpenter, and Livingstone himself a millhand; J.A.I. Agar-Hamilton, The Native Policy of the Voortrekkers 1836-58 (Cape Town: Miller, 1928) pp.94, 98; Saunders, "James Read", p.4.

vision, were not opposed to the expansion of capitalism and of the Empire as such.[29] They were concerned to offer a mode of incorporation of the colonised into these systems which was alternative to proletarianised or unfree labour. They were concerned to offer a means of avoiding the evils with which they had been all too familiar in the metropolis. The colonised had to become 'civilised', which is to say they had to enter into patterns of relationships which would meet the basic requirements of Capital and the metropolis. They had at once to become 'industrious', that is they had to engage in 'work' of some kind from which a suitable surplus product could be furnished to Capital. But they had also to accept the obligation which capitalism imposes on its servants, the obligation to consume the manufactures of the metropolis. Certain changes in way of life were also demanded which would permit a smoother integration of the homestead into a political economy in which capitalism rather than absolutism or feudalism was predominant.[30]

As early as the 1820s, the peasant-homestead vision of the political economy of the future in southern Africa had become reality on some of the LMS stations in the Cape. As a homesteader at Bethelsdorp reported in 1823;

> "When the missionaries came among us we had no clothing but the filthy sheepskin kaross; now we are clothed in British manufactures. We were without letters; now we can read our bibles or hear them read to us. We were without any religion: now we worship God in our families. We were without morals: now every man has his own wife. We were given up to licentiousness and drunkenness; now we have among us industry and sobriety. We were without property;

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[29] For the Christian-expansionist or Christian-imperialist theme in Philip, for example, see Kotzé, Letters of the American Missionaries, p.37. Missionaries were often very active in advancing the frontiers of Empire. In order to try to free themselves from interference by those who did not accept their vision, they tried to work in more and more advanced positions.

[30] As Philip wrote, "The civilization of the people among whom we labour in Africa is not our highest object; but that object can never be secured and rendered permanent among them without their civilization. Civilization is to the Christian religion what the body is to the soul..."; quoted in Kotzé, op.cit., pp.37-8.

> now the Hottentots of Bethelsdorp
> are in possession of fifty wagons and
> a corresponding number of cattle." 31

The peasant-homestead vision also came to enjoy a good deal of support in the corridors of power and amongst important sections of merchant capital. In the conditions of the time, the peasant-homestead production unit, whether on the mission stations or in still more developed form outside them, alone seemed to be capable of furnishing a surplus of foodstuffs sufficient to meet the subsistence requirements of the non-farming sectors of the economy and for export.[32] Its efficiency as an agricultural production unit also led to attempts being made to diversify its interests away from a concentration solely upon foodstuffs to include the growing of crops which could furnish the commodities which were needed by the metropolis as raw materials for its expanding industrial base.[33]

The alternative vision of production units based upon various forms of unfree labour was not destroyed by the formal abolition of slavery. Employers found that they could not recruit and stabilise a labour-force in the face of black resistance without resorting to various forms of coercion. Labour, some of it forcefully recruited from the periphery of the

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[31] Jantjes Spielman, "Statement", c.1823, in Kotzé, Letters of of the American Missionaries, p.34.

[32] The great incidence of peasant production for the 'market' in the Cape and elsewhere in southern Africa has recently been brought out clearly in a number of works. For the Cape see especially Monica Wilson, "The growth of peasant communities", in Oxford History of South Africa, II:49-68, See also I:263; Colin Bundy, "The emergence and decline of a South African peasantry", African Affairs 71, 285 (1972) pp.369-388; Tony Kirk, "Progress and decline in the Kat River Settlement, 1829-54", Journal of African History XIV, 3 (1973); Ibid.,"The Cape Eastern Frontier in the early 19th century", unpublished seminar paper, University of London, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 14/10/1971.

[33] Wool was one such commodity at the Cape, see Kirk, op.cit., (1971). I have elsewhere begun to show how steps were taken to encourage or force the growing of cotton by peasant-homesteads in Natal in the early years following the British annexation in 1843. See Slater, "Land, labour and capital", p.264 and n.

Colony,[34] was kept rigidly controlled, euphemistically described as existing under conditions of 'apprenticeship'.[35]

As the potential for a 'pure' form of capitalism receded from view, the vision of a capitalism based upon a tributary mode of production centred on the exploitation of unfree black labour came to find unexpected allies. Much of the Wesleyan missionary effort at the Cape appears to have been orientated in this direction. The Reverend Archbell for example, was prominent in the defence of 'apprenticeship' and other aspects of this particular vision of the political economy of the

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[34] Even in the area of slavery, in the Eastern Cape slaves had been used almost entirely for domestic purposes with herding functions being performed by 'hottentot' or 'bushmen' labourers, who received food and an occasional blanket in return for their services. 'Bushmen' and their families were hunted down in order that their women and children could be forced into service; Hattersley, Illustrated Social History of South Africa p.104; Erasmus Smit, The Diary of Erasmus Smit, ed. H.F. Schoon, trans. W.G.A. Mears, (Cape Town: Struik, 1972), editor's addendum p.170. A trickle of forced labour may also have been reaching the Cape from Natal and beyond by this time. See below p.368 and n.

[35] T.R.H. Davenport, "The consolidation of a new society: The Cape Colony", in Oxford History of South Africa, II:280,309.

future.[36] He, like many other missionaries of the period, but in clear contrast to the men of the LMS, took up the position

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[36] Archbell's career is extremely interesting, and illustrates the changing nature of the interests of Capital in southern Africa, and the shifting allegiance of certain missionaries to accommodate its needs. He arrived at the Cape as a Wesleyan missionary in 1818, and by the 1830s was working in the interior with Moroka's people. I have not been able to come across details of the nature of his work at Moroka's, but an indication may be gained from the fact that he wrote to the Grahamstown Journal in this period in defence of apprenticeship. By 1841 he had followed the Voortrekkers into Natal and was one of the few missionaries who were highly regarded by them. He finally ceased to be recognised as a Wesleyan missionary in about 1850 by which time he had built up a battery of economic interests which were more pressing on his time. He was a large landowner in Natal and used his ownership of an early newspaper, the Natal Independent, to espouse his particular views on political economy. As a landowner, who stood to benefit from the annexation of Natal to the Empire, he had actively assisted in the moves towards colonisation which took place in the early 1840s. In his evidence to the 1852 Natal Native Affairs Commission, he espoused the classic employer vision which demanded moves to create, by the more or less subtle application of force, an indigenous and tightly controlled labour force. But, like so many other land speculators in Natal, his farms remained unsold and undeveloped; in the parlance of the time, for want of labour and capital. He seems to have tried to extricate himself from this situation by off-loading some land in the floating of the Natal Land and Colonisation Company in 1860. He was also renting land to white tenants and, I suspect but cannot prove, to Africans. In his later years he was closely involved in municipal and colonial politics. For an introduction to his career and views see Hattersly, British Settlement of Natal p.89; Natal, Proceedings and Report of the Commission to enquire into the past and Present state of the Kafirs in the District of Natal..... (Pietermaritzburg, 1853), part I p.17, part II pp.3,41-56, part III pp.3-12. For his interest in the Natal Land and Colonisation Company see Companies House (London), 2066/1, list of shareholders on 10/5/1862 and on 31/7/1866. For his interest in another speculative venture, the Natal Cotton Company, see PRO BT31/600/2508, memorandum of association.

of a capitalist.[37] Missionaries of this persuasion supported the notion of a capitalist economy rooted in unfree labour systems because it was in their class interest to do so.

In the 1830s, however, the institutional structures thought necessary for the maintenance of this vision at the Cape and its further extension into the periphery were being undermined by support for the 'pure' capitalist and peasant-homestead visions. Small-scale production in the interior based upon unfree labour had yet to reach a modus vivendi with the Empire and with the Cape merchant houses. It had proved to be neither 'industrious' in the sense of furnishing commodities, and above all agricultural commodities, for export to the metropolis; nor had it developed into a large-scale market for metropolitan manufactures. Though the representatives of the Empire at the Cape sought to reconcile the various alternative visions, support at this stage for the combination between capitalism and unfree labour, particularly in relation to the use of state power to destroy the institutional structures necessary for the continued maintenance of alternative modes, was not yet as strong as interested parties would have wished.

With unity between institutional forms and structural realities not yet achieved at the Cape, a bitter struggle continued to be waged, in words and on the ground, between the protagonists of the two major visions. The principal contradiction was, not surprisingly, between the LMS missionaries and

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[37] As Bishop Robert Gray reported in 1848, "I find that in this colony missionaries are in little better odour than Bishops. Many of them are mere traffickers, and books and reports are not to be believed. Moravians, Independents, and Wesleyans, all grow rich by dealing in tea and coffee, guns and gunpowder, horses and hides, blankets and ivory"; C. Gray, ed., Life of Robert Gray, bishop of Cape Town, 2 vols (London, 1876), I:189. Later in his career Gray took on much more of the mentality of a member of the employer class and this, though yet to be brought out clearly in any work, was at the root of his well known struggle with Bishop Colenso in Natal, who was rather more sympathetic to polygamy and other aspects of the peasant-homestead vision. The whole question of the missionary role in shaping the political economy of the Cape and elsewhere is complicated by the fact that not every missionary remained loyal to the mainstream position taken up by the mission which he represented. In Natal in the 1840s, for example, the Rev. James Allison, though a Wesleyan, attempted to implement the peasant-homestead vision on his stations. He fought a running verbal and practical battle with the Wesleyan hierarchy, which was closely wedded to the white employers' vision of the futu and his connexion with the Wesleyans was finally broken altogether in 1851. I am not aware of a work which does justice to the career of this interesting man.

the white small-scale farmers. In the countryside

> "The settlements of Hottentots under the direction of the London Missionary Society within the boundaries of the Colony suffered continual interference from the colonists and the Government who both regarded them as reservoirs of labour that could be exploited for their own convenience".38

In 1816, for example a clash had taken place between the resident missionary at the Tooverberg station, who was trying to stabilise a group of 'bushmen' as peasant farmers, and some white farmers who seized some children from the station for 'apprencticeship'.[39] On this occasion the state appears to

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[38] For examples of attacks on the LMS stations, and reference to others, see Smit, Diary, p.169; Cloete, Five Lectures, pp.30-38; Theal, Records of the Cape Colony, IX:74; Agar-Hamilton, Native Policy of the Voortrekkers, pp.9-12,92; J. Green, The Kat River Settlement in 1851 (Grahamstown,1853). The Moravian mission stations were, by contrast and because of their 'industrial' training programmes, much more popular amongst the employer class; Agar-Hamilton, op.cit., pp.92-3. The work of the Moravians was praised by the Anglican establishment figure, Bishop Gray, though he took the familia employer position in general towards mission stations; ".... these institutions ought to be and will be broken up. They keep the coloured and white population too widely apart, and the capital and land of the country are deprived of the labour essential to the prosperity of the Colony"; Gray, Life of Robert Gray, 1:195

[39] Smit, Diary, editor's addendum p.170. Smit had been the LMS missionary in question. His is a fascinating career, beset with contradictions. His work, training,and poverty-stricken lifestyle was typical of LMS missionaries in general. He was, however, a Dutchman of the Frontier rather than an artisan of the metropolis, and was related to one of the leading Voortrekkers. Perhaps because of this connexion he joined the Gerrit Maritz party of Voortrekkers which left the Cape for Natal. The final irony was that, because no other churchmen could be induced to make the journey, he was called upon by the trekkers to undertake religious duties - an LMS missionary as predikant to the Voortrekkers. Many had been opposed to this, and had even hoped an 'Englishman', James Archbell, could have been persuaded to accept the office, as a man more sympathetic to the employer vision and altogether more 'respectable' in character. When the trekkers eventually arrived in Natal they chose a rather different man to be their principal religious leader.

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have intervened in support of the farmers,[40] though this was not always the case.

Whilst this bitter struggle was still in process with with a view to the long-term development of the political economy of the Cape, something approaching a consensus could be reached in relation to the short-term interest of Capital in ivory and cattle products from the interior. The desire to tap new sources of these commodities furnished the essential dynamic for the geographical expansion of capitalism beyond the immediate borders of the Colony. In the early 1820s, south-east Africa became a prime target for such expansion.

As has already been demonstrated, south-east Africa had long occupied a position on the periphery of a variety of commercial networks radiating from different geo-political sectors of European Absolutism,[41] and later of European and North American capitalism. Sometimes these connexions were mediated through a local sub-metropolis, as in the case of the Portuguese at Mozambique, the Dutch at the Cape, and the English in India. By the 18th century bases were thought useful on the very margins of south-east Africa itself, where both the Portuguese and the Dutch had, at one time or another, establish a permanent presence. By 1820 the Portuguese were still firmly entrenched at Delagoa Bay. Other interests, however, notably the fast-rising forces of British and American Capital, had not developed such organised systems for the prosecution of their trade with the region. A relatively inefficient operation

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[40] Andries Stockenstrom ordered Smit to remove from Tooverberg in 1818; Smit, Diary, editor's addendum p.171. In 1820 he was appointed by the same man to manage the mission station at Nookfontein near Beaufort West, with the task of stabilising and routinising 'Bushmen' for farm work; Ibid., p.172. I am not exactly sure what this involved and find it difficult to say for sure whether this represented a retreat from Stockenstrom's former policies, or simply an attempt to implement them in a politically less sensitive region. Stockenstrom is a difficult figure to situate clearly in one or other of the camps of political economic visionaries, perhaps because of his primary role as a servant of the state rather than as an independent policymaker or capitalist. Judging by the general hostility to him amongst many of the leading employers' representatives of the period, however, hi basic sympathies may well have lain elsewhere. A careful stud of his autobiography may resolve this problem; Sir Andries Stockenstrom, Autobiography of Sir Andries Stockenstrom, ed. C.W. Hutton, 2 vols., (Cape Town, 1887).

[41] Since the Portuguese connexion with south-east Africa dates from the 16th century, the term 'absolutism' would seem more appropriate than 'capitalism' here. See Anderson, Lineages of the Absolutist State.

involving a number of private merchantmen competing with each other and with rivals for the attention of a number of coastal middlemen, was still relied upon.

Although Port Natal had occasionally been brought into the network of commercial relations,[42] a combination of geographical[43] and local political[44] factors had effectively served to channel the bulk of the commercial traffic through Delagoa Bay.

By the early 1820s, Cape merchant houses were amongst those participating in the trade through Delagoa Bay. In 1822, for example, the important merchant house of Henry Nourse and Co.[45] had sent a vessel to the Bay which returned to Cape Town with a substantial cargo of ivory, wax and other commodities.[46] Men such as Henry Francis Fynn, Henry Maynard and Nathaniel Isaacs were establishing reputations at the Cape as supercargoes on the ships which were involved in the Delagoa trade.[47]

In 1822 members of the leading merchant houses of Cape Town joined together to form the Cape Town Commercial Exchange,[48] an instrument for the prosecution of their collective interest

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[42] See Anderson, Lineages of the Absolutist State, chapter V and chapter VII pp.1-3

[43] The existence of the 'bar' at the entrance to Port Natal was a hazard to navigation which had been well known to mariners for well over a century.

[44] Delagoa middlemen had fought, over a long period and with a high degree of success, to prevent European commercial agents from penetrating their exchange monopoly to deal with interior suppliers.directly.

[45] Henry Nourse had been one of the original members of the Cape Town Commercial Exchange; Immelman, Men of Good Hope, appendix B p.314.

[46] Hattersley, British Settlement of Natal, p.3.

[47] Ibid.; Watt, Febana p.21. Fynn had been supercargo on a Nourse ship which visited the Bay in 1823; Fynn, Diary pp.36,45n,52.

[48] The first official meeting of the new body took place in March 1822, though a 7-member committee, which seems to have been a forerunner of the Exchange proper, was in existence as early as 1819. Two men who were to be prominent in the 'Natal lobby', and the subsequent history of Natal colony, A. Chiappini and J. Collison, had been amongst the members of the committee and probably had therefore played prominent roles in the formation of the Exchange; Immelman, Men of Good Hope, pp.314, 322.

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as a class. From the outset the members of the Exchange, both jointly and as individuals, interested themselves in the furtherance of the commercial possibilities of south-east Africa The subject frequently appeared on the agenda of meetings of the Exchange and of its inner committees.[49] Particular interest was shown in Natal. For some members of the Exchange this was to become a deep and lasting interest, the powerful Nourse, Chiappini, Thompson, Ebden and Collison families amongst them.[50] The precise nature of the interest fluctuated as changes took place in the overall complexion of capitalism in the area. At one point, for example, commerce gave way to land speculation as the principal capitalistic link between such families and Natal.[51]

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[49] Immelman, Men of Good Hope, pp.129-131

[50] All these were Cape Town merchant families in the period. For Nourse see above p. . The Chiappini family ran a firm of merchants and shipping agents, which had initially built its fortune in these areas, but which branched out into banking and into agency operations for metropolitan assurance and insurance companies. A. Chiappini was the brother-in-law of the first Baron Newborough, and arrived at the Cape after the Napoleonic Wars. He was chairman of the Exchange in both 1829 and 1837. E. Chiappini was the chairman in 1853-4. For G. Thompson see note 6. For Ebden see note 3. Like the Chiappinis by 1840 he had diversified his merchant activities to include an agency for the metropolitan Eagle Insurance Company. For the importance of the Collison family at this time see note 3. Francis Collison had arrived at the Cape towards the end of the Napoleonic Wars, and was a wine merchant amongst other things by 1840. For the contribution of these men to the ' 'Natal lobby' see below. For their later economic interests in Natal see note 51.

[51] The Collison, Nourse and Chiappini families were deeply involved; Slater, "Land, labour and capital", pp.259-263. From his vantage point in the Cape legislature, Ebden took an active interest in the Natal cotton schemes of the 1840s. The house of Chiappini, linked to the firm of Jung and Co., was similarly involved, but by the 1850s it had switched its interest to sugar, and was also taking an active interest in resolving the Natal 'labour question'. It had furnished the capital to build the Durban (Port Natal) customs house in 184[illegible] which was then leased to the embryonic colonial state, and financed the Pietermaritzburg-Durban telegraph in 1864. Collison was an active campaigner for white immigration to Natal from the metropolis, financed the first immigrant ship to Natal in 1849, and, through his involvement in the Byrne scheme, managed to off-load some of the firm's speculative landholdings in Natal through this means. Nourse, Thompson, and Chiappini seem to have played minor roles in the floating of the Natal Land and Colonisation Co., and/or of the Cotton Plantation Co. It is difficult to trace the activities of the capital concentrations which these families controlled after about 1860.

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The embryonic colonial state, by calling upon the resources of the Empire as a whole, did its best to create favourable conditions for the furtherance of commercial relations between the Cape and south-east Africa. In the decade following the assumption of British sovereignty at the Cape, a careful survey of the south-east African coast was undertaken under Capt. W.F.W.Owen.[52] He took the trouble to penetrate a considerable distance inland from Delagoa Bay in 1823, and to report on alternative harbours along the coast.[53] His findings were widely publicised, and a direct exchange of information with merchant shipping sometimes took place.[54]

Armed with information collected from these various sources it became possible for merchants at the Cape to contemplate a means of resolving the two principal contradictions which dogged their commercial relations with south-east Africa. The first of these was their need to compete for trade with other geo-political concentrations of Capital. The second was their need to deal with coastal middlemen rather than with direct producers or, at least, with major interior suppliers. Both contradictions pushed up the price which Cape merchant houses had to pay for commodities and reduced the profit which finally accrued from metropolitan sales.

The decisive step in this direction was taken by one Francis George Farewell. An English East India merchant,[55] he had already developed close links with Cape merchant houses,[56]

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[52] Hattersley, British Settlement of Natal p.3

[53] W.F. Owen, Narrative of Voyages in the 'Leven' and 'Barracouta', 2 vols., (London, 1833), I:212-225. Fynn had also penetrated inland of the Bay in 1823; Fynn, Diary, pp.45, 52.

[54] Watt, Febana, p.21.

[55] Originally from Devon, he served for a period in the Royal Navy. This experience, as for so many others of his class and generation, gave him a valuable insight into the scope and commercial possibilities of the Empire. He became an East India Merchant, and in the period between 1815 and 1822 traded continuously between India, the Cape and South America. The term 'merchant', though valuable in general analysis, sometimes serves to obscure important variations in the relationships to Capital. Farewell was clearly far from being a 'grand' merchant, sitting in his metropolitan counting house yet he also seems to have been rather more than a 'supercargo See Watt, Febana pp.9-10; Fynn, Diary p.51; Hattersley, British Settlement of Natal p.4

[56] Watt, op.cit., p.14.

and with the Imperial authorities there.[57] Unlike most of his merchant colleagues, however, he had actually visited Delagoa Bay for himself. There he had seen large stocks of commodities collected for export, but he had also learned that

> "The whole of the ivory and the gold dust obtained by the Portuguese at Delagoa Bay was derived from this powerful chief's (Shaka's) territory".58

He began to contemplate a direct trading link between the Cape and this major interior supplier of ivory and other goods.

The prospect of a direct link through Delagoa Bay seemed unlikely. The Portuguese, with the advantage of a permanent fort at the Bay, were already undertaking the difficult and sometimes costly process of removing the independent middleman element with a view to obtaining a Portuguese monopoly of the trade through the Bay.[59] It would take a powerful force to dislodge their position and then to continue the assault on the middlemen which the Portuguese had begun. A simpler strategy was preferred by Farewell - the opening up of a new port.

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[57] He had been the 'merchant' whose agency had been used by Lord Somerset, then Governor of the Cape, to import wheat from Bengal to initially feed the new British immigrants to the Albany settlement in 1820; Watt, Febana p.17.

[58] Ibid., p.12. See also Fynn, Diary pp.51-2, 56. Fynn had acquired similar information; Ibid., p.42. Farewell had visited the Bay whilst travelling on a merchant vessel inward bound from India.

[59] This seems to me the essence of the processes described in Gerhard Liesegang, "Dingaan's attack on Lourenco Marques in 1833", Journal of African History, X, 4 (1969) pp.565-79. The complexity of the situation described by Liesegang may be explained by the fact that Zulu absolutism was also expanding from the interior with a view to monopolising the exchange as well as the interior supply function in the pattern of commerce through the Bay. It is quite clear, however, that although the struggle between Portuguese capitalism and Zulu absolutism had not been resolved by this time, the former independent and dominant position of the Delagoa middlemen had been eroded by 1833. In the 1820s the erosion would still have been in process.

Possibly having secured capital backing from the metropolis,[60] and certainly from the Cape,[61] Farewell chartered a vessel under Capt. James Saunders King to search for an alternative harbour on the south-east African coast. St. Lucia Bay was not found suitable, but a successful landing was made at Port Natal.[62]

Receiving news of this success, Farewell set about mounting a larger expedition with a view to opening direct dealings with Shaka and to establishing a permanent trading presence at the Port. He seems to have relied upon additional capital backing from the Cape rather than from the metropolis itself. At least one major Cape Town merchant house became involved.[63] Additional skilled labour was recruited, including Fynn as supercargo,[64] and a number of men experienced in the techniques of hunting and trading beyond the borders of the Colony[65] Two ships were chartered and loaded with, in addition to a large quantity of trading goods, a number of horses which had the effect of making the expedition much more mobile than

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[60] Farewell seems to have continued his voyage from India to the metropolis before returning to the Cape to commence his Natal activities. There is, however, no clear evidence that he raised capital for the enterprise during this visit.

[61] Major Cape merchant houses do not seem to have been involved at this stage, but see note 62.

[62] Watt, Febana p.20; Fynn, Diary p.56n; Hattersley, British Settlement of Natal p.4; Farewell to Somerset, 1/5/1824, Annals, 1:71-2. Another account, whilst agreeing with the details of the voyage, suggests it had been financed by a number of Cape merchants from the first, with Farewell, seemingly, playing no particular role; Fynn, in Bird, op.cit., I:73-4.

[63] Watt, presumably following Farewell's papers, gives the name as J.R.Thompson; Watt, Febana pp.29-31. In Hattersley's account the name is expanded to John Thompson, and he adds the important information that he was the head of a Cape merchant house, though he does not indicate whether the firm actually bore the same name; Hattersley, British Settlement of Natal p.4. This was presumably the same J.R. Thompson who had been the Cape 'trader' met by Owen at Delagoa Bay in 1822; Morris, Washing of the Spears p.72. Information from Fynn suggests that Thompson was associated with the firm of Alexander Thompson and Co., which he refers to as Farewell's principal backer; Fynn, Diary pp.52, 56.

[64] Watt, Febana pp.21, 30; Hattersley, op.cit. p.4.

[65] Watt, op.cit., p.22; Hattersley, op.cit., p.4. Morris, Washing of the Spears p.175

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many of its predecessors which had made landings at the Port.[66] Finally the backing of Governor Lord Charles Somerset was sought and eventually received by Farewell.[67]

Fynn and Ogle were amongst the men who travelled to Natal in April 1824 on the first ship of the expedition whilst Farewell remained behind.[68] The point is that the arrival of these men at the Port did not represent the arrival of a single, independent adventurer or even group of adventurers. The voyage, like others to the Port before it which are sometimes forgotten, required considerable expertise, organisation and, above all, capital. Without the backing of Cape merchant capital, the landing would not have taken place.[69] Voyages of exploration in the period were rarely romantic adventures, they were more often the instruments of a capitalist class bent on extending the span of its interests.

Representatives of the party immediately visited Shaka's capital to negotiate its entry into a mode of survival acceptable to the Zulu state. The mode took the form of a direct trading agency with the state, and the Farewell trading settlement was accorded the rights and obligations appropriate to protectorate status within the Zulu Empire.

It was not long before other merchant interests sought to establish a rival presence at the Port. Saunders King, who had again captained one of Farewell's ships, was so impressed

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[66] Watt, Febana p.29; Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal

[67] The letter of support was dated May 1824, that is after Farewell's first ship had arrived at Port Natal, but possibly before Farewell himself had left Cape Town; Brink to Farewell 5/5/1824, in Bird, Annals, 1:72-3. Watt argues that Farewell had acutallybeen accorded official ambassador status by Somerset; Watt, Febana p.38. See also Fynn in Bird, op.cit., 1:73-4; Hattersley, English Settlement of Natal p.4; Russell, Natal: The Land and its Story p.139

[68] Fynn in Bird, op.cit., I:73-4; Watt, Febana p.31; Morris, Washing of the Spears p.77. The potential 'settlers' in the party declined to remain, and only the trading group took up occupation.

[69] Farewell is said to have accumulated 'debts' to the tune of £2,000 in order to get the expedition off the ground; Watt, Febana p.178.

by the commercial potential of the area that he sought to organise a rival merchant consortium, capable of challenging the Farewell monopoly, and even perhaps of purchasing his entire establishment at the Port.[70] A firmer capital base was secured for the venture by linking it directly to the metropolis as well as to Cape interests. A company was formed in London headed by Lord James Townsend.[71] An experienced supercargo, Nathaniel Isaacs, was recruited to furnish the necessary trading expertise,[72] A separate concession was obtained from the Zulu state, and a separate base established at the Port.[73]

At some point Fynn also separated from the Farewell enterprise, possibly to operate on behalf of the King consortium,[74] or possibly as a rival to it. The separate villages which the agents of each consortium established, the personal hostility between them, and their intense commercial rivalry reflected the intensity of the commercial rivalry between the distant Capital concentrations with which they were associated.[75] It was rarely, if ever, that these men came to operate as a community or an ethnically-determined interest group.

Capital concentrations in the eastern Cape were not far behind those of Cape Town itself in interesting themselves

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[70] Watt, Febana p.178. King was apparently aware of Farewell's outstanding debts. The over-extension of credit is also perhaps indicated by the fact that Farewell had yet to replenish his store of trade goods; Ibid., p.222.

[71] Ibid., pp.121-3.

[72] Ibid., pp.123, 205.

[73] Ibid., p.205.

[74] Ibid., pp.205,222,225,227; Morris, Washing of the Spears p.143. The switch would have been quite easy because it seems that supercargoes were not usually in direct wage-employment. Fynn had been working for "a speculative reward".

[75] Fynn certainly seems on occasion to have operated with a great deal of independence, though this may have been consistent with the role of supercargo to a merchant consortium.

in the commercial potential of south-east Africa.[76] Within five years of the date of the first Farewell Trading Co. ivory shipment from Port Natal,[77] an overland link between the Port and the principal centres of the eastern Cape came into operation.[78] Grahamstown was the most important of these, but other centres came to be involved indirectly. Ivory was the principal motivation.[79]

The first regular link between Grahamstown and Port Natal seems to have been established in 1831.[80] In this year, James Collis, a partner in the firm of Maynard of Grahamstown,[81] together with one Biddulph, an ivory trader from Graff Reinet,[82]

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[76] This is not to say that merchant houses in the eastern Cape were entirely independent. Many, if not all, would probably at this stage have been branches of the Cape Town houses, and through them linked to the metropolis. I am not aware of a study which has unravelled the intricacies of the early local network of Capital at the Cape.

[77] Watt is contradictory on the actual date of the first shipment. It may have been September 6th 1824, but elsewhere he gives December 1st, and points out that the vessel sank before reaching the Cape, which can't have done Farewell's cash-flow problems any good at all; Watt, Febana pp.87, 102.

[78] Wagons were beginning to reach Port Natal overland from the Cape as early as 1829; Ibid., p.294.

[79] Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal p.163

[80] Ibid.

[81] Some years earlier a Henry Maynard had been a supercargo or trader operating on ships trading from the Cape to Delagoa Bay. It seems reasonable to assume a connexion with the Grahamstown firm. He was amongst the Cape merchants and others who were pressing for the formal annexation of Natal to the Cape in 1839;
A firm of Maynard and Co. owned land in Natal, seemingly as absentees, in 1890; Natal, European Immigration to Natal. The Experience of Practical Farmers (Pietermaritzburg,1890) p.20. evidence of John Bainbridge, Ladysmith.

[82] Smit, Diary, editor's addendum, p.179; Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal pp.6;
It is difficult to decide to what extent towns like Graff Reinet can be taken as independent centres rather than satellites.

made the journey. In the following January, the Cawood brothers arrived at Port Natal from Grahamstown with no less than six wagons of merchandise. They too

> "had come with the object of establishing a system of commerce" 83

In February, Smith and Drege, who may have been undertaking a semi-official investigation of the commercial potential of south-east Africa[84] met a further party at the Umtamvuna, this time en route from the Port to the Cape.[85] There were rumours that more arrivals of trading parties financed from Grahamstown were imminent.[86]

Considerable profit accrued from the overland trade to the Grahmastown merchant houses. By May 1834 it was possible for Andrew Smith to record that

> "Several of the individuals of the original party, who yet reside in the vicinity of the bay (of Natal), as well as a number of other persons who have lately directed their attention to trade in that quarter, have within the last two years traversed the country between Graham's Town and the Zulu territory in all directions, and have on several occasions conveyed to the colony considerable quantities of ivory etc., without the slightest interruption".87

The involvement of eastern Cape capitalists in the trade of south-east Africa was not confined to the overland route. The growing coastal commercial centre of Port Elizabeth

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[83] Fynn, Diary pp.216-7.

[84] One writer has argued that Smith had been sent by the Imperial authorities and that he was the first to be offered the Lt. Governorship of Natal in 1842; Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal, editor's introduction, pp.6-7. On the other hand, Smith clearly had close links with the Cape merchant community. He addressed meetings of the Commercial Exchange on Natal, and it was his account of the Natal visit which was used by the merchant community as documentary evidence in support of its campaign for annexation of the territory.

[85] Drège, "Diary", in Ibid., p.26

[86] Fynn, Diary pp.216-7.

[87] Smith, "Historical précis", in Bird, Annals, I:261.

at Algoa Bay was also becoming involved;

> "There have been two modes of carrying on the trading intercourse with the adjacent countries; in times of tranqulity it is frequently carried on over land by means of wagons; but of late years a vessel has also been employed between Algoa Bay and Port Natal, a mercantile agent being resident at Port Natal for the purpose of regulating the trade".[88]

It is clear that by the mid 1830s a dynamic merchant capitalism based at the Cape had thrust deep into the Natal colonial periphery of a Zulu absolutism. Absolutism and capitalism, once separated by the buffer agency of Delagoa Bay middlesmen, now confronted each other directly in south-east Africa.

The incipient contradiction between these two modes of production competing for predominance in south-east Africa was initially overlain by a more immediate contradiction within capitalism itself, that between rival geo-political centres of Capital. Whilst Cape-British capital was thrusting into the periphery of the Zulu Empire in the south, Portuguese and other capitalist interests were equally active in the north, ensuring that a proportion of the total commerce was lost by the Cape and that prices were inflated to a level favourable to Zulu.[89]

Moreover, the most aggressive of the rival sectors of metropolitan Capital, that based in North America, was not only active at Delagoa Bay,[90] but had also begun to make its presence felt at Port Natal itself. In 1830, for example, and American ship called at the Port to unload the trading goods which the Zulu state now coveted most, and for which it was prepared to pay enormous prices - modern firearms and powder.[91] The shifting fortunes of the various sectors of Capital active in the area can be seen reflected in the shifting allegiances of the supercargoes. Nathaniel Isaacs,

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[88] Select Committee on Aborigines (1836), p.469, evidence of Gardiner.

[89] Smith, "Trade as a factor", in Thompson, African Societies in Southern Africa, pp.186-9.

[90] Botzé, Letters of the American Missionaries, editor's introduction, p.8; Morris, Washing of the Spears p.122.

[91] Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal p.171; Bird, Annals, I:195-6. Elephant guns were fetching up to 30 or 40 cattle; Flynn,

once associated with King's Cape-British consortium, was now the supercargo of the American vessel. The shift of Cape-British interest to Port Natal had successfully resolved or avoided one contradiction, the Delagoa Bay middleman factor; but the contradiction with other geo-political sectors of Capital remained.[92]

Cape merchant Capital, and the local representatives of the Empire of which the Cape was but a segment, were both well-appraised of the situation. As early as November 1830, for example, John Cane and Thomas Holstead had arrived in Grahamstown leading a deputation from the Zulu state bearing a gift of peace and a request for mutually-profitable trade. The traders also took the opportunity to report the activities of the American ship, the glut of cheap beads with which the area had already been flooded by the rival traders operating through Delagoa Bay, and the overall scarcity of ivory for Cape-British trading interests which resulted.[93] The position of Cape-British merchant interests in south-east Africa was clearly under threat.

Alongside this problem, Zulu absolutism was also becoming increasingly inimicable to the efficient prosecution of Cape-British merchant interests. Capitalism and absolutism had not always been antagonistic forces in south-east Africa. In the relatively early stages of its interest in trade with

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[92] It is sometimes suggested that the traders at Port Natal refused to supply guns to the Zulu state and that this was a source of friction with Dingane. It is quite clear, however, that the gun trade was reaching large-scale proportions in the 1830s. The Americans worried the traders in the same way that the continued activities of the Portuguese at Delagoa Bay worried them. Rivalry amongst suppliers threatened the price structure and indeed their whole pattern of commerce. On the gun trade see note 91; Fynn, Diary pp.255-7; Bird, Annals, I:314. See also above p.18. Collis accidentally killed himself in 1835 when 1,500 lbs. of gunpowder exploded in his store; Morris, Washing of the Spears p.135.

[93] Fynn, op.cit., p.230; Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal p.171; Morris, op.cit., p.122. The news was duly passed to the local centre of state power; Campbell to Bell, 26/11/1830, in Bird, Annals, I:195-7.

south-east Africa, metropolitan capitalism, like metropolitan absolutism before it, had been content to accept the status of a minor tributary mode of production within a local political economy in which an indigenous feudalism was in process of giving way to absolutism as the predominant mode of production. It could not have done otherwise. With its tiny ships and individual traders operating at the very end of what was still a relatively weak network of capitalist relations, metropolitan capitalism was simply not in the position to furnish the capital needed to organise and undertake commodity production directly. It was even too weak to undertake the coercion required to extract a commodity surplus from the direct producers, or to organise the carriage of such goods to the coast. These functions could only be undertaken by local powerholders who alone possessed sufficient on-the-spot capital resources.

It was the agency of local powerholders which pushed through the transition from production for use to production of goods for exchange, which is to say the transition to commodity production. The transition had probably already taken place in relation to metal at least, long before any direct European contact with the area. Now it also took place in relation to the hunting of the elephant. Once principally a source of food for immediate consumption by the direct producers, it was now made into a source of ivory - an exchange commodity.

In the earliest phase of the transition to commodity production in relation to ivory, the size of capital concentrations was still relatively low and distributed amongst a number of powerholders across the countryside in accordance with the prevailing feudal patterns of relationships. In these circumstances parallel commercial networks developed linking the direct producers to the representatives of the European merchant firms. Within these networks, the capital required to undertake various functions was initially supplied by different feudal powerholders. No local powerholders undertook production itself. This was undertaken by a subordinate primitive-communal mode of production. The first level of the involvement of local centres of capital was that of the expropriation of the ivory surplus. Capital was employed to organise and equip warrior retinues capable

of enforcing such systems of surplus extraction from the direct producers. Other powerholders nearer the coast organised the overland carriage of the commodity and of the imported items, and a third group undertook the functions of storage and exchange at Delagoa Bay. Fairly rigid boundaries existed between the territories of powerholders within each of these three groupings, possibly with tolls exacted on goods which crossed them.

Gradually, however, capital began to be concentrated in fewer hands and in larger amounts. A transition to absolutism became possible. At one end of the commercial network, Tembe came to all but monopolise the exchange function at the Bay, and then to expand into the interior to dominate the function of overland carriage and even perhaps to begin to enter into direct relationships with the producers themselves. In the interior a number of capital concentrations involved in the commercial network resisted this encroachment, and sought instead to reverse its direction. Zulu absolutism was the most successful and succeeded in virtually incorporating the exchange function at Delagoa Bay within its imperial system. In the north by the 1830s the principal threat to its monopoly of control over the entire ivory industry came from the external component of the exchange function - the Portuguese. In its heartland Zulu appears to have begun to undertake ivory production directly, though the bulk certainly still came through the expropriation of the product of others in the periphery, and expropriation which was beginning to be threatened by the 1830s by the expansion of the capitalist mode of production.

The key change which had brought about the incipient contradiction between absolutism and capitalism was the strengthening of the metropolitan base of capitalism, and particularly of its British geo-political sector. No longer were its ships and men operating on the very margins of an embryonic imperial system. A firm base had now been established at Port Natal which was itself a mere 12 days' voyage or a slightly longer wagon journey away from an even stronger sub-metropolis at the Cape. Reserves of capital had been available to engineer a successful outflanking of the Delagoa middleman exchange function, and were sufficient to undertake

the remaining functions of the industry, including direct production itself. Absolutism was no longer essential to the continued survival of metropolitan Capital's interests in south-east Africa. In fact it was coming to represent an obstacle to the ascendancy of capitalism to a position of dominance.

Zulu absolutism in the time of Dingane was at once too weak and too strong to maintain a pattern of relationships of mutual benefit. It was too weak to meet the needs of a dynamic capitalism in that its resources were so far stretched in trying to contain internal and external threats to its hegemony that it could not offer ivory in sufficient quantities and at sufficiently favourable prices to meet the demands of the Cape traders.[94] At the same time it was too weak to ensure the security of traders operating within its Empire, as the death of Farewell in 1829 at the hands of rebels testified only too vividly.[95]

Yet Zulu absolutism in the 1830s was too strong to permit the untramelled operation of Cape-British capitalism in its periphery. From time to time it moved against individual trading interests, as in the case of the raid on the property and followers of John Cane.[96] It was strong enough to direct some trade to Delagoa Bay and to the Americans who visited Port Natal, thus leading to higher prices and more intermittent

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[94] Fynn, Diary pp.195-6. Hides appear to have become almost as important as ivory itself, but their price too was becoming uneconomic; Ibid., pp.215-6, 220. For earlier examples of commercial transactions between the traders and the Zulu state see, for example, Ibid., pp.103,110,111,117, 143; Morris, Washing of The Spears pp.91, 116; Watt, Febana pp.74, 146; Felix Okoye, "Dingaan and the British traders", unpublished seminar paper, University of California, 1965,p.5

[95] He was probably killed by Nqueto Nkondlo's followers near the Mpondo country in September 1829. He seems to have been bringing a consignment of guns overland from the Cape at the time; Watt, Febana p.305, 26; Fynn, op.cit., pp.160-70. Ncapai's rebel group was also operating between Faku's and Grahamstown in 1832, Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal p.34.

[96] See above chapter X . Fear of further raids had been enough to cause a temporary mass exodus in 1832, a further example of the degree to which Zulu absolutism's hegemony could frustrate the efficient prosecution of commerce. See Fynn, Diary pp.202-3

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patterns of supply than the traders were prepared to accept. The Cape traders resented the power which the Zulu state exercised over them by virtue of the commercial monopoly it demanded. Dingane was, for example, a very difficult customer for beads;

> "In April, 1832, he prefered blood-red and rose-coloured ones, but in the absence of such, he would accept the white tembos, when not too small, and also the dark blue. Red and green baize, together with blankets, he also occasionally requires".97

None of these kinds of beads could then be used in small-scale general trade, which was not a state monopoly. From time to time he demonstrated that he possessed the power to shut off trade with the Zulu heartland altogether.[98] Zulu still insisted that the traders acknowledge their status as vassals of the state by delivering substantial military effectives from time to time, though this relationship seems to have been in the process of giving way to a more equal one with soldiers being rewarded for their services with substantial numbers of cattle, as in the manner of the members of settler commandoes.[99]

From the viewpoint of Zulu absolutism, it was frustrating that the Empire could neither fully meet the requirements of a dynamic capitalism nor mobilise sufficient power to contain its ascendancy to a position of predominance in the periphery. it watched as the once-narrow confines of the immunities allowed to the traders were burst asunder. They began to enter into

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97 Smith, "Diary", in Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal p.32.

98 Bird, Annals, I:322-3; Chase, Natal Papers p.86.

99 Fynn, Diary pp.249-50; Bird, op.cit., I:320.

direct trading relationships with direct producers of ivory.

Determination of the timing and nature of this important change is problematic. According to one source this change took place almost immediately the traders established a presence at the Port in 1824. Certainly Fynn appears to have commissioned southern Natal and Mpondo groups to hunt for ivory in that year. There is some suggestion, however, that in doing this Fynn and the other traders were acting with the reluctant and probably temporary agreement of the Zulu state. Shaka's current military campaign prevented his impis undertaking their own usual collection of ivory tribute from peripheral tribes. There is certainly some evidence to suggest that Fynn enjoyed very good relations with the Zulu state and was even rendered assistance by it for his activities in the south.[100]

In periods when the Zulu armies were not preoccupied with containing internal or external threats to the state, they may have undertaken the function of collecting ivory tribute and bringing it to the centre. Accounts suggest that traders such as Fynn and Isaacs spent much of their time at the Zulu capital, presumably negotiating for ivory collected by the state.[101]

The supply of ivory reaching the centre was disrupted again in the confused immediate aftermath of the Dingane coup, and the immunities allowed to the traders may have again been temporarily widened on this occasion.[102] There may have been an alternation or uneasy co-existence between the two modes.

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[100] Watt, Tebana pp.85-86,89,94,101,105; Morris, Washing of the Spears pp.85,92,96,118.

[101] Watt, op.cit., p.222; Okoye, "Dingane and the traders", p.5.

[102] Okoye, op.cit., p.5.

The next stage was for Europeans to organise ivory production itself, without reference to the Zulu state. Thus when the first missionaries arrived at Port Natal late in 1835 or early in 1836, they reported that "the white people are either traders or hunters".[103] Hunting took place for buffalo and hippo, but also for elephant, "all of which are numerous not far from Natal".[104] There are contemporary references to hunting parties which included local blacks as well as white 'hunter-traders', and Fynn also had 'coloured servants' in his employ.[105] Hunting seems to have been freely undertaken by new arrivals in the 1830s without any prior consultation with the Zulu state. Andrew Smith's party began hunting in 1832 as soon as it reached the Mzimkulu from the Cape, and the 1834 'Kommissie trek' seems to have followed suit.[106] Heavily armed hunting parties were also beginning to operate in the Zulu heartland itself. The younger Biggar led such a hunting party into Zululand in June 1836.[107]

Three modes of hunting are perhaps apparent from this period. First a mode in which white professional hunters employed local labour in menial tasks such as gun-carrying, porterage, and bush-beating. Secondly, one in which white and black professional hunters seem to have shared the principal hunting activity, though whether relationships of dominance and subordination were involved is not clear. Thirdly a mode in which white hunter-trader entrepreneurs, through their links to capital concentrations at the Cape, furnished local hunters with the specialist elephant guns and ammunition

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[103] Kotzé, Letters of the American Missionaries p.96.

[104] Ibid.

[105] Fynn, Diary pp.119,129-30,198,213; Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal p.72. See also Morris, Washing of the Spears pp.99, 121,134.

[106] Smith, op.cit., ; Fynn, op.cit., p.230.

[107] Morris, op.cit., p.136.

necessary for hunting, in return for a substantial proportion of the product obtained. The remaining product seems to have been exchanged through the agency of the entrepreneurs for cattle. As the elephant gun became a more powerful and accurate hunting technology, and large concentrations of manpower perhaps thus became less necessary, this seems to have become the dominant mode, its hegemony lasting well into the second half of the 19th century.[108]

The Zulu state suffered further embarrassment from its inability to restrict the loss of labour and reproductive power to the traders. In addition to the steady exodus of 'refugees' to the communities established in the vicinity of the trading settlement at 'Port Natal', traders returning from Zulu country sometimes took women back in their wagons, seemingly as far as the Cape.[109]

In general, by 1835 the hunter-traders at the Port were venturing to treat with the Zulu state as equals. They were by this time often giving the Zulu state cause to take offence.[110] The Zulu state was in process of losing its hard-won monopoly of the interior supply and coastal exchange functions in the international pattern of commercial relations prevailing in the region.

Zulu absolutism looked on as these dangerous developments were taking place, because it was also struggling with its own internal contradictions which had led to individual and collective rebellion. It looked on because it still lacked

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[108] For discussion of the patterns of hunting organisation see, for example; John Moreland, "Notes furnished by Toohey", pp.1-6, in Moreland Papers, Natal Archives mss. collection. Toohey had begun systematic hunting operations in Natal early in 1835; Bird, Annals, I:550.

[109] Select Committee on Aborigines (1836), I:463, evidence of Gardiner; S. Bannister to Sec. of State, 12/5/1829, in Chase, Natal Papers, pp.24-9.

[110] Select Committee, op.cit., 1:469, evidence of Gardiner

the guns and horses which were the hallmarks of an adcendant capitalism in the region. Instead it sought to treat with King George, the absolute ruler whose subjects were giving so much trouble.[111] It sought guns and horses and, from the missionaries in its midst, the technological expertise which appeared to furnish the dynamic of the new mode of production whose agents it now confronted. It sought to make men such as Fynn, and Gardiner rulers of Natal with an allegiance to the Zulu state rather than to the Cape.[112]

The expansion of capitalism could not, however, be checked. In April 1834, for example,

> "about 30 persons left Graham's Town with the intention of forming a permanent establishment in the vicinity of the Port, and it is understood that in this project they are supported by some of the most respectable merchants of Graham's Town". 113

For Fynn, however, the competitive pressures of Natal trading in the face of Delagoa, American and eastern Cape competition and the deteriorating relationship with Zulu Absolutism had finally grown too much and he retired to the Cape in September 1834.[114]

With the twin and interrelated contradictions with rival geo-political sectors of Capital and with Zulu absolutism as yet unresolved satisfactorily in favour of Cape-British interests, the latter began to call upon state power to supply the institutional conditions which would allow the stabilisation of their predominance in south-east Africa. There was a demand for the formal annexation of the region to the Empire.

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111 At one point, for example, Shaka directed that 86 ivory tusks be sent to King George as a token of his wish for good relations; Fynn, Diary p.141.

112 Dingane made at least one treaty with the missionary Gardiner over the refugee question, in which he was to be held responsible for returning refugees to the Zulu state when this was demanded; Select Committee on Aborigines (1836), I:463, evidence of Gardiner, See also Fynn, Diary pp.239-40.

113 Smith, "Précis", in Bird, Annals, I:261. See also Fynn, op.cit., p.230. Could this have been the famous 'Kommissie trek'? See below p.401.

114 Fynn, Diary pp.216-7,236; Morris, Washing of the Spears p.122.

The goal was a limited one at this stage. The demand was not for the complete colonisation of south-east Africa, which would have involved a full-scale frontal assault on Portuguese and other interests at Delagoa Bay. Neither did the demand extend to a colonisation of Zululand. Capitalism as a system of relations in southern Africa was as yet insufficiently developed to either require or to risk attempting the total destruction of Zulu absolutism in its heartland. That confrontation was still half a century away.[115] Instead the demand was for a colonisation of Natal, that is the replacement of Zulu absolutism with Cape-British capitalism as the predominant mode of production in the region.

Sometimes these campaigns were launched amongst the samll trading community at Port Natal itself.[116] They rejected any half-measures which appeared simply to fetter their commercial freedom, demanding a colonial regime in their own image.[117]

More often they were launched at the Cape itself, with occasional echoes in the metropolis. Sometimes an individual would speak out through a letter to an official or a newspaper or through a well-publicised speech, more often the collective instrument of the class most directly affected was employed - the Cape Town Commercial Exchange.

Whilst the relatively short-term interests of merchant capital in the ivory, cattle and gun trades was the immediate point at issue, the idea that Natal, once colonised would ever revert to foreign control once its ivory and cattle stocks had been exhausted, was never considered. In fact the demands gradually brought into focus fundamental issues related to the political economy of a future colonial Natal. The debate and struggle which

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[115] It came to a head eventually in the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879, when British Imperial troops added their weight to local colonial forces in finally crushing the power of the Zulu state. For an introduction to this clash see Morris, Washing of the Spears. p.122

[116] Lynn, Diary pp.243,256; Bird, Annals, I:311-12.

[117] They were hostile to the efforts of Gardiner, and certain amongs the officials at the Cape, to control the gun trade and the influx of refugees; Bird, op.cit., 1:320-1; Chase, Natal Papers, pp.86,96-8; Champion to Cane, 29/5/1839, in Kotze, Letters of the American Missionaries pp.177-8.

still dominated colonial politics at the Cape was in the process of being carried over into Natal itself.

Within months of his arrival in Natal, Farewell had been looking to the Imperial authorities for the grant of something approaching chartered status for his Company.

> "I took possession of the country.....and hoisted the English colours and fired a salute in presence of several of Chaka's chiefs, which proceedings, I trust, will meet with your Lordship's approbation and sanction, as well as that of the English Government. Your Lordship is already informed that commercial pursuits and a wish to obtain a knowledge of this country was my object in coming here, and the benefit to be derived from my present grant of land with the power of preserving some branches of the trade in my own hands, I look to as the means of reimbursing the great expense I have been at". 118

His demand was not successful, not least perhaps because there were already Cape-British rivals for the trade over which he was claiming a monopoly. It is interesting, however, that already private property in Natal land was already being put forward as part of the colonial vision.[119]

In 1829, prompted by a letter from Farewell, the Cape Town Commercial Exchange appears to have directly taken up the question for the first time. The Exchange directed that a letter be sent to Government

> "expressing the opinion of this Committee that an establishment on the coast of Natal under the sanction and protection of His Majesty's Government for the introduction of British manufactures would tend much to promote the commercial interests of this Colony" 120

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[118] Farewell to Somerset, 6/9/1824, in Bird, Annals, I:192.

[119] Farewell also hinted at the possibility of white immigration; Ibid., 191-3. His activities in Natal were later to form the basis for the submission of a block claim to almost the whole of colonial Natal in the 1840s by the merchant firm which had been his principal backer. In 1835 the white community at the Port had formed the semblance of a government amongst its member for the first time "mainly for the purpose of granting and distributing land in freehold among themselves"; G.W. Eybers, Select Constitutional Documents Illustrating South African History, 1795-1910 (London, 1918), p.xliv.

[120] Immelman, Men of Good Hope p.129.

The idea was defended by the steering committee of the Exchange before the annual general meeting of the body in April 1829.[121]

In the following month Saxe Bannister, a prominent Cape and Imperial figure,[122] wrote to the Secretary of State outlining a similar proposal and enclosing a separate annexure from the "mercantile body at Cape Town", presumably the Exchange, which added further arguments in favour of colonisation.[123] The proposal was dominated by the question of short-term trading interests, but here and there that of the long-term colonial future of Natal is also touched upon. The two major visions are mentioned, with the peasant-homestead as the more immediate hope. Trade would not only be lucrative but will also "improve the natives" "when our productions are brought under their daily notice". In time they will be brought to produce what is wanted and to consume metropolitan manufactures.[124] On the other hand, the immigration of white settlers, though not planned in the short-term, might remain as a future possibility.[125] The proposed colonisation was eventually rejected in London rather than by the Cape authorities.[126]

The question was again considered by the Exchange in 1833 when a meeting was attended by J.C.Chase, who "stated some facts relative to the trade of Port Natal".[127] At a subsequent meeting Chase and Dr. Andrew Smith

> "communicated to the committee a variety of information on the subject of Port Natal, with a view to the proposed formation and protection of a British

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121 Immelman, Men of Good Hope p.129

122 Living by this time in Cape Town, he was a former Attorney General of New South Wales, and a financial backer of the Farewell trading company; S. Bannister to Sec. of State, 12/5/1829, in Chase, Natal Papers pp.24-9.

123 Ibid. It is not clear whether this was an official communication from the Exchange or was a private initiative on Bannister's part. Saxe Bannister became one of the most prominent figures in the 'Natal lobby'. It was British Imperial annexation by the Cape which interested him, and his campaign did not stop with the voortrekker takeover in 1838; Volksraad to Jervis, 31/7/1839 in Bird, Annals, I:533.

124 S. Bannister to Sec. of State, 12/5/1829, in Chase, Natal Papers, pp.24-9

125 Ibid.

126 Sec. of State to Bannister in Chase, op.cit., p.29.

127 Immelman, Men of Good Hope p.129

settlement in that neighbourhood".128

Eventually, after a further public meeting a petition was drawn up by "merchants and others, inhabitants of the Cape of Good Hope". It demanded the annexation of Natal, was signed by 190 people including many of the leading Cape merchants, and was conveyed to the British Government via the Governor at the Cape in April 1834.[129] Henry Cloete senr., and Michael Van Breda had been particularly prominent in the campaign on this occasion.[130]

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[128] Minutes of the Exchange, quoted by Immelman, Men of Good Hope. Alexander Thomson, amongst others with a known special interest in Natal, had been invited, but did not attend.

[129] Ibid., p.130; Bird, Annals, I:253-5,268; Fynn, Diary pp.216,243, 256; Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal pp.6,151,155-7,176. A readily available but partial list of signatories is given in Ibid., pp.155-7. It includes H. Cloete Senr., A. Chiappini, Alex. Chiappini, E. Chiappini, J.B.Ebden, D.G.Van Breda, N.Van Breda senr., George Thompson and Andrew Smith. We have already had cause to mention the class identity of the members of this group, and their consistent eceonomic interest in Natal annexation and the subsequent colonial exploitation of the territory after 1843. Amongst the other easily distinguishable signatures were those of John Borradaile, J.C. Chase, P.A. Zeederberg, and F.G. Watermeyer. Borradaile, like Saxe Bannister, was one of those who continued the campaign for the Cape annexation of Natal after the Voortrekker occupation in 1838. The merchant firm of Borradailes (sic?), Thompson and Pillans was later to become important in another Imperial sector. It acted as agents for insurance companies and for the Imperial Commissioners for South Australia or Van Diemans Land as it was often known in the period; Chase, who had once been the American consul in Cape Town, was a consistent advocate of Natal annexation. His great treatise, the Natal Papers, published in 1843, is shot through with capitalist ideology of the employer persuasion. The Zeederbergs were still a prominent Cape Town merchant family in 1840. P.Zeederberg was the fifth largest Natal land speculator in 1860 with 56,487 acres; Slater, "Land, labour and capital", p.263n. I know very little about the class position of F.G. Watermeyer, except in so far as it is indicated by a minor interest in the Cotton Plantation Company in the 1860s, one of the handful of front organisations for Cape and Natal land speculators. In the share register he is described as a 'Cape gentleman'; PRO BT31/735/215c, list of shareholders on 27/3/186[illegible] Carl Watermeyer was a much more prominent capitalist in the period, though I cannot at the moment prove the connexion.

[130] Smith, op.cit., pp.146,148,149,150; Immelman, Men of Good Hope p.129

Farewell's original scheme, and Bannister's reiteration of it in 1829, had aimed at furthering the interests of a single company, a small group of capitalists. It could not gain the mass support of the merchant class as a whole. Although, for example, the Graham's Town Journal had been sympathetic to the general idea of Natal colonisation, it had initially felt unable to support proposals for it because of their implied commercial monopoly for Farewell's group.[131] Now the proposal had been couched in more general terms, the merchant class as a whole could lend their support to it and the Journal added its own voice to the campaign.[132] The Natal lobby, if one can call it that, was all but complete.

Cape officials added their voices to this,[133] as to the earlier campaign.[134] With bourgeois society at the Cape still a small and relatively close-knit group, though including Dutch as well as English and other European members,[135] merchants were accustomed to rubbing shoulders with leading local Imperial officials. It is therefore not surprising that the Natal lobby often enjoyed the support of the Governor and his immediate staff.

In the event, a strong colonial voice but with relatively little echo in the metropolis itself, did not succeed. Natal was still not seen as part of the total Imperial design and its colonisation was rejected on the grounds of its financial cost.[136]

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[131] Grahamstown Journal 3/8/1832, quoted in Chase, Natal Papers pp.30-33.

[132] Its major concern was the threat of a foreign intervention, the essential ingredient for the unification of the Cape capitalistic interests, and took the arrival of American missionaries in Natal to be the vanguard of it; Kotzé, Letters of the American Missionaries pp.116-7 and note.

[133] D'Urban to Stanley, 17/6/1834, in Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal p.152.

[134] For example, Sir Lawry Cole to R.W. Hay, 11/1/1831, in Bird, Annals, I:195-6.

[135] A glance at the names of some of the leading merchants, lawyers and farmers of the period would seem to be enough to reveal this ethnic diversity.

[136] Chase, Natal Papers pp.37-8; Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal p.176; Immelman, Men of Good Hope p.131.

Though not yet backed by formal isntitutional structures the practical colonisation of Natal was not checked. Indeed, both the two major visions of of the colonial future of the Cape were already being projected, in reality, into its Natal periphery.

The peasant homestead had been allowed, by Zulu absolutism, to revive in certain parts of its Natal periphery in order to underpin the modes of survival which it permitted in these areas. Trading and hunting had been amongst these modes of survival, and their members received their subsistence requirements from the homesteads associated with each. The peasant homestead was already providing the essential subsistence base upon which capitalist networks of relations could be built. As the missionary Gardiner observed in 1835;

> "In this heterogeneous community, a singular transposition of the natural order has taken place. The natives, although barely raised above the lowest scale of civilizarion, subsist by agriculture, while the Europeans, with but few exceptions, live entirely by hunting". 137

The loss of cattle, expropriated by the Zulu state and by groups fleeing from its wrath, had led to a general intensificatio of the agricultural component of the homestead economy.[138] The results could sometimes be impressive;

> "I wandered this day through the delightful gardens of an unconquered tribe; who, unable to defend cattle, betook themselves to tillage, and now have five miles in a good state of cultivation. They have Indian-corn ten fee high: with plots of amadoombi, a root not unlike potatoes, the leaf resembling the parsley; and izingeloobo, an agreeable sort of pulse.

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137 Quoted in Bird, Annals, I:297-8

138 Fynn in Bird, op.cit., I:71. The shortage of cattle for barter was noticeable all the way to the Cape in the early 1830s, though it is interesting that they could sometimes be obtained from traders, possibly en route from Natal and Pondoland to the Cape. Milk, corn and other foodstuffs were more readily available in exchange for iron, brass, other metals, cloth, bead and new manufactures entering into the pattern of trade - knive and tinder boxes; Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal pp.11-15 Kotze, Letters of the American Missionaries

> All this immense tract was cultivated by the females, with a spade in the form of a scraper used in English houses". 139

A similar picture was reported by a number of other visitors to different parts of the region.[140]

Particularly impressive to visitors was the intensive cropping of maize with which they were not familiar and the overall surplus which resulted;

> "Matatan's people last year had three crops of mealies, being sufficient for ten time their number for twelve months". 141

Triple cropping may have been an exception, but two crops a year of maize was relatively normal in the area. People sowed according to the rains, which could mean as early as June or as late as September. The crop took four months to ripen. A proportion of the crop was apparently used as seed which was immediately replanted giving a second crop in March.[142]

Though maize, or Indian corn as it was also known, was clearly very important, it was but one of a full range of crops;

> "The principal productions of this place are Indian corn, Kaffir corn, and poko.....species of millet,....

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139 Newetson, "Diary", 17/4/1858 (sic), quoted in the "South-east Africa mission", Church Missionary Record IX,1 (November,1838) p.273.

140 General letter to Anderson, 22/8/1837, in Kotzé, Letters of of the American Missionaries p.202; Lindley to Anderson, 21/8/1837, in Ibid., p.200 and n.; Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal p.91; Chase, Natal Papers pp.30-33. See also Kotzé, op.cit., p.112.

141 Smith, op.cit., p.63.

142 Ibid., pp.77, 169. At least between Port Natal and Dingane's capital, corn was generally planted on the tops and slopes of low ridges; Ibid., p.42. The intensive cultivation of grain in this period may have been confined to particularly favourable environmental zones. On the other hand it may have been a more general phenomenon roote in shifts over time in the structure of the political economy rather than shifts over space in the natural environment. One observer suggested, for example, that before the Mpondo lost cattle in the Mfecane, they had crops of 'Caffer' and Indian corn which "produced well' but apparently only once a year; Ibid., p.103

> ....pumpkins, calabashes, sweet potatoes, beans etc. These are all very abundant, and the soil is supposed to be adapted to the cultivation of most kinds of fruit". 143

Tobacco and imfe were also grown.[144] Cattle stocks were gradually being rebuilt but were still very low.[145]

The productive capacity of the homestead in the later 1830s presented a striking contrast with its condition in the relatively recent past.[146] The contrast had been brought about partly by technological change. New arrivals at Port Natal used wooden spades for cultivation, but more established homesteads had been able to obtain metal impliments.[147] Of much greater significance, however, was the fact that the homestead had regained control over its household labour force, which had often been decimated by the Zulu state on a permanent or long-term basis. The highly efficient division of labour between men, women and children, which had characterised the homestead production unit in the days of its feudal and pre-feudal vitality, was now again in operation;

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143 Kotzé, Letters of the American Missionaries p.176.

144 Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal pp.77,94

145 Kotzé, Letters of the American Missionaries p.96. A sympathetic missionary at Port Natal thought that the black community there suffered from dysentry because their diet was "vegetable altogether"; Ibid., p.111.

146 Fynn, who apparently left Natal in 1834, had painted a rather gloomy picture of the surplus-producing capacity of the 'Kafir trbes', especially those near the Cape, but it is not really clear who or what period he is talking about; Fynn in Bird, Annals, 1:71. In the early 1830s some privation at the end of the season was still known, but hardly to the extent implied by the Fynn account, which I take to refer, in view of the optimistic missionary accounts of the time, to rather an earlier period, when the homestead as a production unit was still disrupted and heavily exploited by the Zulu state; Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal p.63

147 Smith, op.cit., p.63. Even the 'wooden spade', which would probably today be called a 'hoe', may have been a more efficient agricultural technology than the 'digging sticks' which had one time been the principal impliments in use in the region, and were still in use in parts of the south.

> "At our kraal the men are now busy weaving baskets, as the time of harvesting the corn approaches.... The business of planting, hoeing, and harvesting devolves on the women. The men clear the ground, construct the baskets and the corn receptacles, and watch at night in the gardens to keep away the wild hogs and other animals". 148
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> "During the rainy season, while the women are engaged in planting, many of the older children are required to take care of the younger, or to assist in the gardens". 149

Young children probably spent a good deal of their time during the growing season in the fields scaring away birds which might feed on the crop.[150] With relatively few, if any, livestock to be tended, there was probably also a surplus of male labour within the homestead at this point in its history as a mode of production in Natal.

Freed from the more oppressive aspects of the pressure from Zulu absolutism, the homestead had not yet fallen victim to the structural changes which would eventually be demanded of it by new colonising forces. Key social practices such as polygamy were not challenged by the hunter-traders but rather were adopted by them. A surplus crop could be traded when available, rather than as a necessity to meet tax and rent demands. The homestead was not yet required to furnish a surplus in a non-food raw material demanded by the metropolis, which would place it at the mercy of the vagaries of an international capitalist pricing system, and without subsistence reserves capable of withstanding lean drought years. Labour could be released for profitable employment when surplus to requirements, rather than when determined by the application of coercion by forces outside the homestead. By means

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148 Champion, "Diary", in Bird, Annals, I:208. See also Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal p.90.

149 Kotzé, Letters of the American Missionaries p.175.

150 This certainly seems to have been the normal practice amongst grain producers over a wide range of geographical areas and time-periods in south-east Africa. Junod spoke of it as having been the usual practice amongst the 'Tsonga' in the 19th century Junod, Life of a South African Tribe, II:22,24. In 19th century colonial Natal it was one of the labour impositions levied by white farmers on their black peasant 'tenantry'.

of the exchange of produce, and the employment of surplus labour for 'wages', capital reserves in the form of livestock could again be accumulated, as well as luxury items obtained for immediate consumption.

As early as the late 1830s, the vitality of the homestead mode of production in Natal was in the process of persuading some that it might be capable of forming the basis for the long-term capitalist exploitation of the territory. Certain of the men of the American Board Mission appear to have been coming to this conclusion. Like all Christian missionaries to Africa, they were concerned to "teach the Africans to be industrious and help them to improve their social conditions".[151] which is to say that they were concerned that the indigenous inhabitants enter into satisfactory relationships with Capital. Beyond this, however, their spiritual links appear tohave been with the LMS vision of the political economy of the future rather than with, say, that of the Wesleyans, the Moravians or the Dutch Reformed Church. The Mission had written to Phulip enquiring as to a suitable sphere of operations, and had in fact been directed by him to Natal;

> "The country occupied by Dingaan, which stretches from the neighbourhood of Delagoa Bay to Port Natal, presents a noble field for missionary labour, and in many respects deserving the preference to any other field of labour connected with the southern portion of the African continent. From the fertility of the land, and the contiguity of Port Natal and De La Goa Bay, the labours of efficient missionaries in that country might in course of time give rise to a civilized community, which might be of the greatest importance to the eastern shores of the continent". 152

Philip's advice was followed, and the first missionaries reached south-east Africa in 1836.[153] Philip had taken the trouble to

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[151] Kotzé, Letters of the American Missionaries p.7.

[152] Philip to the American Board Mission, May 1833, in Kotzé, op.cit. p.33. See also Ibid., p.10.

[153] The first party actually landed at Port Natal on 20/12/1835, but the mission stations were not established until erly into the new year; Bird, Annals, I:198-200. Newton Adams was station at Umlazi, George Champion and Aldin Grout across the Tugela in the Umsinduzi part of the Zulu heartland, Daniel Lindley on the Ilovo, with Henry Venable and Alexander E. Wilson also initially in Zululand. Lindley, Venable and Wilson were from the southern states of the U.S.A., though Lindley had been born in Pennsylvania. The others were from the north; Kotzé, Letters of the American Missionaries pp.10-16.

meet them on their arrival in Cape Town.[154]

The strongest metropolitan support for the Mission came from New England, which is to say from that part of North America where trade and the cotton textile industry were the predominant interests of Capital.[155] It is not therefore surprising to find that, as early as December 1837, a member of the Mission in south-east Africa was contemplating harnessing the potential of the homestead mode of production to the production of a commodity of use to these sections of Capital. Venable had already written to America for some cotton seed for distribution amongst the homesteads clustered around his station.[156]

Before, however, the peasant-homestead vision of an essentially capitalist colonial economy could take firm root in Natal, the vanguard of its main rival was already establishing itself in the territory. As early as 1832, William Berg, supposedly the first man from the Cape to arrive in Natal with a view to farming, had begun the struggle to set up an alternative mode of production, an alternative mode of expropriating surplus labour from the indigenous black population.[157] Andrew Smith, after his exhaustive examination of the territory, reported that it had lands "suitable for the object of the agriculturist or the grazier", and came out firmly for the vision of Natal as a colony of white farmers.[158] Encouraged by Smith's remarks,[159] at least one of the number of 'Kommissie treks

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[154] Kotzé, Letters of the American Missionaries p.13.

[155] Ibid., pp.4-5. The Mission had been founded in September 1810 and had its headquarters in Boston.

[156] Venable to Anderson, 5/12/1837, in Kotzé, op.cit., p.219. Mission policy was for its stations to become completely self-supporting; Ibid., p.7. The local missionaries' commitment to the peasant-homestead vision should not perhaps be over-estimated. Venable seems to have been hiring labour as well as buying milk from around his station in 1837, though it is not clear to what purpose this was put; Ibid., p.217. The support for Lindley amongst the Dutch immigrant community to Natal is unlikely to have been founded on any love for the peasant-homestead vision. This point needs to be researched further before the role of the American missionaries in shaping the early colonial political economy of Natal can be fully understood.

[157] Lynn, Diary pp.216-7.

[158] Smith, Andrew Smith and Natal pp.168-172

[159] Cloete, History of the Great Boer Trek p.72.

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which were examining the country beyond the frontiers of the Cape in the mid 1830s,[160] turned its attention to Natal. Composed of solid Dutch citizens,[161] it had been equipped by the inhabitants of the eastern Cape centres of Uitenhage and Grahamstown, and commissioned to look for a fresh country across the frontier which might be opened up for settlement.[162] It reported favourably on its experiences.[163]

The involvement of Uitenhage and Grahamstown in the trek suggests that there were some in the urban centres of the Cape who were prepared to back what became, in effect, the Voortrekker vision of a colonial Natal.

When the Voortrekker parties of emigrant settlers eventually left the Colony, the vast bulk of their number drawn from the eastern Cape,[164] it was with a view to developing in the interior the kind of forced labour mode of production centred upon pastoralism which black resistance and Imperial policy had

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[160] Morris, Washing of the Spears p.122.

[161] There is not complete agreement on the identity of the more important members of the party; compare the lists of names given in the Grahamstown Journal 5/6/1834; J.J.Uijs, letter in Natal Afrikaner 16/4/1897, copy in Natal Archives, Bird Papers XI; Cloete, History of the Great Boer Trek pp.62,72; Bird, Annals, I:231. According to one source there were 21 men and 1 woman in 14 wagons; Morris, Washing of the Spears p.122. See also Fynn, Diary p.230

[162] Uijs, "Letter", op.cit.; Cloete, op.cit., p.72. See also above p.25 and note 103. The party left uitenhage early in 1834 and would presumably have passed through Grahamstown en route to Natal. See also Russell, Natal: The Land and its Story p.154; Mackeurtan, Cradle Days of Natal p.169; Gardiner, Narrative of a Journey to the Zulu country p.89.

[163] Cloete, History of the Great Boer Trek p.72. In addition to visiting Port Natal, the party apparently visited the Zulu capital and was favourably received there; Uijs, "Letter", op.ci

[164] Agar-Hamilton, Native Policy of the Voortrekkers p.114; Cloete, op.cit., p.88. By the end of July 1837 the pattern was already apparent. It was reported that 230 men had left the Eastern district and 44 were about to leave. By contrast only 8 men had left the Western district and 35 were about to leave. The low figures suggests that these have been statistics for heads of families only; PRO CO 48/193, "General return of persons reporte to have left or to be preparing to leave", enclosure in D'Urban to Glenelg, 29/7/1837.

inadvertently combined to make increasingly difficult within the Cape itself.[165] The trekkers took with them not only livestock, but also their slave or near-slave labour force,[166] though their ability to retain control over it continued to be tempered by state interference,[167] and above all by the resistance of the labourers themselves. As the diary of one of the trekkers recorded on one occasion

> "I learned that about 30 of the men servants and maidservants of the emigrants have run away in the night with thefts of tobacco, meat, sausage, horses, firearms, powder and lead from their masters". 168

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[165] A great debate has of course developed around the question of the motivations of the Voortrekkers. Positions in the debate range from the notion of a general need to implement an embryonic 'Afrikaner' nationalist conscience, to the structural explanations which usually place a very heavy emphasis on the 'labour question'. In fact the contemporary documents reveal a whole range of motivations and differentiated class interests, some defensive in nature, but others clearly expansionist. They interlocked, however, around a single collective issue - the pressures and opportunities produced by the steady expansion of Cape merchant capitalism ever deeper into the periphery, and its reduction to tributary status of pre-existing modes of production. An aspect of this steady encroachment, the desire to replace easy-going cattle pastoralism with capitalistic shee-farming, may be an element in the structural situation of the Eastern Cape which has yet to be fully brought out.

[166] Agar-Hamilton, Native Policy of the Voortrekkers pp.114-5.

[167] A field cornet had been sent up to the camps in October 1838 to check that no labour was being held by force and to bring back any that was. He returned to the Cape with 40 'apprentices including women and children, but reported that at least 100 more had indicated a desire to stay. The exercise cannot be taken too seriously. Joubert, the field cornet, was not known for hostility to the trekkers, and in fact on this occasion carried capital up to the camps from their supporters in the Cape; Chase, Natal Papers II:40, 43; Bird, Annals, I:415-7. If the translation of Smit's diary can be relied upon, blacks in the camps were still referred to as 'slaves'; Smit, Diary pp.145-6, 148.

[168] Smit, op.cit., p.93, entry for 5/3/1838.

The trekking parties did not constitute socially homogeneous communities. There were men of vast wealth amongst them,[169] but there were also many who were very poor and who had been obliged to mortgage or sell the remaining lands they had controlled at the Cape to speculators in order to raise the capital necessary to obtain the powder, provisions and trade goods necessary to sustain them on their journey.[170] The gulf between

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[169] The leader of the trek party with which Rev. Smit had travelled, lost no less than 5,000 sheep, 300 cattle and 100 draught oxen in the clash with Mzilikazi; Smit, Diary p.3, entry of 20/11"1836. W.J.Pretorius was another very wealthy man; Bird, Annals, I:230-33. Cloete pointed out that the departure of the Retief, Uys, Maritz, Potgieter, Landman, Duplessis, Zietsman, Boshof and Otto families hit the economy of the Eastern Cape hard. Cloete, who was something of a lawyer to the Cape establishment at this time, described them as some of his "oldest and best clients"; Cloete, Five Lectures, p.2. Actually some of those with the greatest interest in the outcome of the Trek risked some of their capital but not their lives. They did not participate in it but watched its progress from afar. Once the position became stabilised they moved in to dominate the Volksraad, and were amongst those instrumental in bringing about a capitulation to the moves for annexation by the Cape in 1843. They went on to become leading members of the Natal establishment, prominent in land speculation, rack-renting to Africans, sheep farming, and other more or less capitalistic operations. Space does not permit a development of these themes here. Suffice to say that the careers of Paul Zietsman, J.N. and J.C. Boshof, and P.A.R. Otto are instructive. A lot of romantic rubbish has been written about the 'Great Trek', and its sequel, the gallant resistance of poor Dutch settlers to British annexation of the Republic of Natalia. Resistance and romance there certainly was, but it can only be properly understood if set within a class analysis, which is to say alongside the less romantic and less resistant machinations of Cape-Dutch capitalists.

[170] All in all, a great deal of capital was invested in the Trek, not only by participants but also by outsiders; Russell, Natal: The Land and its Story p.156. For the speculative accumulation of land which attended the exodus, and through which many of the trekkers had been furnished with working capital forthe journey, see Cloete, History of the Great Boer Trek p.87. In a sense it was the relatively recent development of the credit link to the metropolis which furnished the structural conditions necessary to finance a large-scale emigration through which capitalist relations could be extended into new territory.

rich and poor continued to widen during the trek and in its immediate aftermath.[171]

Links with the Cape, including those with sections of Capital, were never totally severed. Traders travelled with or joined the parties from time to time.[172] Powerful interested individuals rode out from the Cape from time to time to assess the progress which had been made, and received news in other forms from the major figures in the parties.[173] Retief had no wish to be cut off from commerce and deliberately steered his party towards the hinterland of Port Natal.[174] Long before the

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[171] During the journey, groups which had exhausted their store of trade goods to be used in exchanging food from peasant-homesteads, were obliged to buy trade goods from those better-off; "My brother-in-law G. Maritz today sold much of his store of trade-goods to the people in his own and in Potgieter's camp"; Smit, Diary p.3, entry of 21/11/1836. The numerous deaths which were the result of clashes with Zulu Absolutism, left many widows virtually destitute, and incapable of supporting their children without outside help; Chase, Natal Papers II:31-5; Bird, Annals I:464. Much help was, of course, freely given, but the land claims of the widows also found their way, often in exchange for a pittance into the hands of richer trekkers and eventually into those of the leading land speculators. This process can be clearly seen in Henry Cloete's analysis of individual land claims, undertaken for the Imperial authorities in 1843; See PRO CO/48/247.

[172] Smit, Diary p.83, entry for 23/11/1838, p.162, entry for 15/1/1839; Bird, op.cit., I:594.

[173] J.N.Boshof was one such visitor to the Bushmans River camps in 1838; Chase, Natal Papers pp.21,31-5; Bird, Annals, I:10 and n See also note 169 above.

[174] Bird, Annals, I:367. He had generally no wish to upset the Cape authorities beyond what was absolutely necessary. To the consternation of the poorer and more militant of his followers, he insisted that trade with English merchants should be allowed in the trek economy, but that the taking of apprentices should not; Chase, Natal Papers p.117. Retief's membership of the farming interest was a relatively recent development. He had been a resident of Grahams Town, and a prominent businessman in the Albany district who made his living partly from fulfilling contracts placed by the Imperia authorities. An unexplained financial failure forced him to become the lessee of a corn farm in the Winterberg district. In this capacity he clashed, like many others, with the vision of the future which Stockenström's policies were serving to underpin in the Eastern Cape. It is tempting to speculate on the role he would have taken in the Volksraad and in regard to the subsequent British annexation, had he survived the clash with Zulu power. For biographical details see Chase, Natal Papers pp.54-60; Cloete, History of the Great Boer Trek p.92.

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decisive confrontation with Dingane in 1838, some of the trekking parties were already engaged in commercial relations with Port Natal traders, which is to say with the Natal representatives of Cape merchant capital.[175]

In some cases involvement with interested parties at the Cape, including if not solely consisting of merchant capitalists, was more direct. In addition to small donations from, for example, the inhabitants of Colesberg after the initial Dingane raid,[176] a Benevolent Committee was formed at the Cape to ensure the survival of the trekking enterprise. In 1838 a shipload of provisions arrived at Port Natal supplied by this Committee.[177] The principal manager of the fund was also the principal merchant dealing in gunpowder in Cape Town, and he was already busy trying to supply the needs of his new-found market.[178] It was this kind of relationship which provoked an imperial official into remarking some years later that

> "This emigration was entirely aided by subscriptions raised in the Colony and nothing could be done to check it". 179

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[175] Smit, Diary p.78, entry of 3/1/1838; Bird, Annals, I:235. For later example of commercial relationships of this kind see PRO CO 48/191, "Memorial of Landman", enclosure in Napier to Glenelg 16/10/1838; Smit, op.cit., p.122 entry of 21/7/1838, p.146 entry of 7/11/1838; Maj. Charters to Napier, 12/12/1838, in Bird, op.cit., I:431.

[176] The field cornet G. Joubert presented the Maritz party with 330 rix-dollars from this source; Chase, Natal Papers p.23.

[177] Smit, Diary p.137, entry of 18/9/1838.

[178] PRO CO 48/193, Bell to Glenelg, 3/9/1838. The identity of this man is not clear. A John Owen Smith was involved in the operation, but it is not clear whether he was the merchan in question or merely his agent at Port Elizabeth (Algoa Bay). Smith had asked John Vanderplank at Port Elizabeth to take a consignment of stores for the trekkers by sea to Port Natal, which he did; A.r. Hattersley, Portrait of a City (rietermaritzburg: Shuter & Shuter, 1951) p.15.

[179] PRO CO 537/150, "Memorandum", 1846, pp.7-8.

As the Imperial official had pointed out, the local representatives of the Empire made no direct attempts to prevent the trek, which is to say the great movement for the colonisation of Natal.[180] Too many interests had a stake in its eventual success. Although some of the trekkers perhaps did not initially realise the nature of their situation, they were essentially men and women caught up within an expanding network of capitalist relations.

Despite their hunting and livestock-herding activities,[181] the trekking parties whilst on the move did not constitute self-sufficient production units. They experienced a steady depletion of their capital stocks in the form of small trade goods and livestock which were exchanged for milk, grain and other foodstuffs with the African homesteads which were encountered en route.[182] Their very survival was already coming to depend as much on the homestead mode of production as upon the capitalism of the Cape, especially as their capital stocks had been further depleted by clashes with strong powerholders in the interior.[183]

In this weakened state, the trekking parties crossed the Drakensberg Mountains into Natal late in 1837 and established

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[180] No armed force had been sent in pursuit of the trekkers, and no attempt made to arrest its leaders. The lone field cornet Joubert had only been sent up to investigate the labour question in 1838. The token military force landed at Port Natal in December 1838 seems to have been sent with a view to protecting the trading community at the Port in the event of a major conflict developing between the Voortrekkers and the Zulu state, or some other eventuality. It intervened to negotiate a modus vivendi between the trekkers and the Zulu state, and then, once the situation had been stabilised, the force was recalled to the Cape. The trekkers fired a salute in gratitude as it retired. For an introduction to this question see Brookes and Webb, History of Natal p.35.

[181] Smit, Diary p.61 entries of 27 and 30/10/1837, p.73 entry of 12/12/1837.

[182] Chase, Natal Papers pp.89-91,111; Smit, op.cit., pp.3,13, 50,59,66,73,79,85.

[182] Wilson to Anderson, 17/4/1837 in Kotze, Letters of the American Missionaries pp.153-4; Smit, op.cit., cit., editor's addendum p.180.

a number of camps on the Tugela tributaries,[184] whilst negotiations were conducted with the Zulu state, in whose territory the laagers were now located.[185] It is just possible that the Zulu state was considering the grant of protectorate status to the new immigrants. Certainly Retief, the leader of the trekkers' embassy to Dingane's capital,[186] had been given a task by means of which to demonstrate the willingness of his people and himself to accept the status of loyal vassals of Zulu. He was called upon to subdue the recalcitrant tributary Sekonyela.[187]

It quickly became apparent to Dingane and his advisors, however, that the trekkers had no intention of behaving as loyal subjects of a Zulu protectorate. The raid on Sekonyela had been carried out successfully,[188] but the product was not given up to the state. Instead it was consumed by the trekkers themselves,[189] a classic and all-too familiar mode of resistance to the power of Zulu absolutism.[190]

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[184] By December 1837 the camps of Maritz and Retief were located on the Natal side of the Drakensberg in the Bushman's River valley; Theal, Historical Sketches p.289. See also Smit, Diary p.79, entry of 5/1/1838. By the time of the Zulu raids early in 1838, the precise locations of the laagers were as follows: Retief's at Doornkop, another at Blaukrans, a third at Moordspruit, and that of Maritz near Estcourt; Kotze, Letters of the American Missionaries p.234n.

[185] They may well have been within the Zulu heartland itself, as opposed to merely within its imperial periphery.

[186] The embassy approached the Zulu capital via Port Natal, probably in November 1837. See Bird, Annals, I:331.

[187] Hulley, "Account of Rev. Owen's visit to Zululand in 1837", Natal Archives, mss. 12, p.7.

[188] A booty of 700 cattle, 83 horses and 11 guns was realised; Smit, Diary p.79, entry of 11/1/1838. For a slightly different set of figures giving a larger number of guns, see Bird, Annals, I:369. A Zulu deputation, accompanied by Holstead, interpreter to the King, had witnessed the proceedings; Smit, op.cit., p.76.

[189] The guns, for example, were auctioned in the camps; Smit, op.cit., p.82, entry for 22/1/1838.

[190] See above p.324.

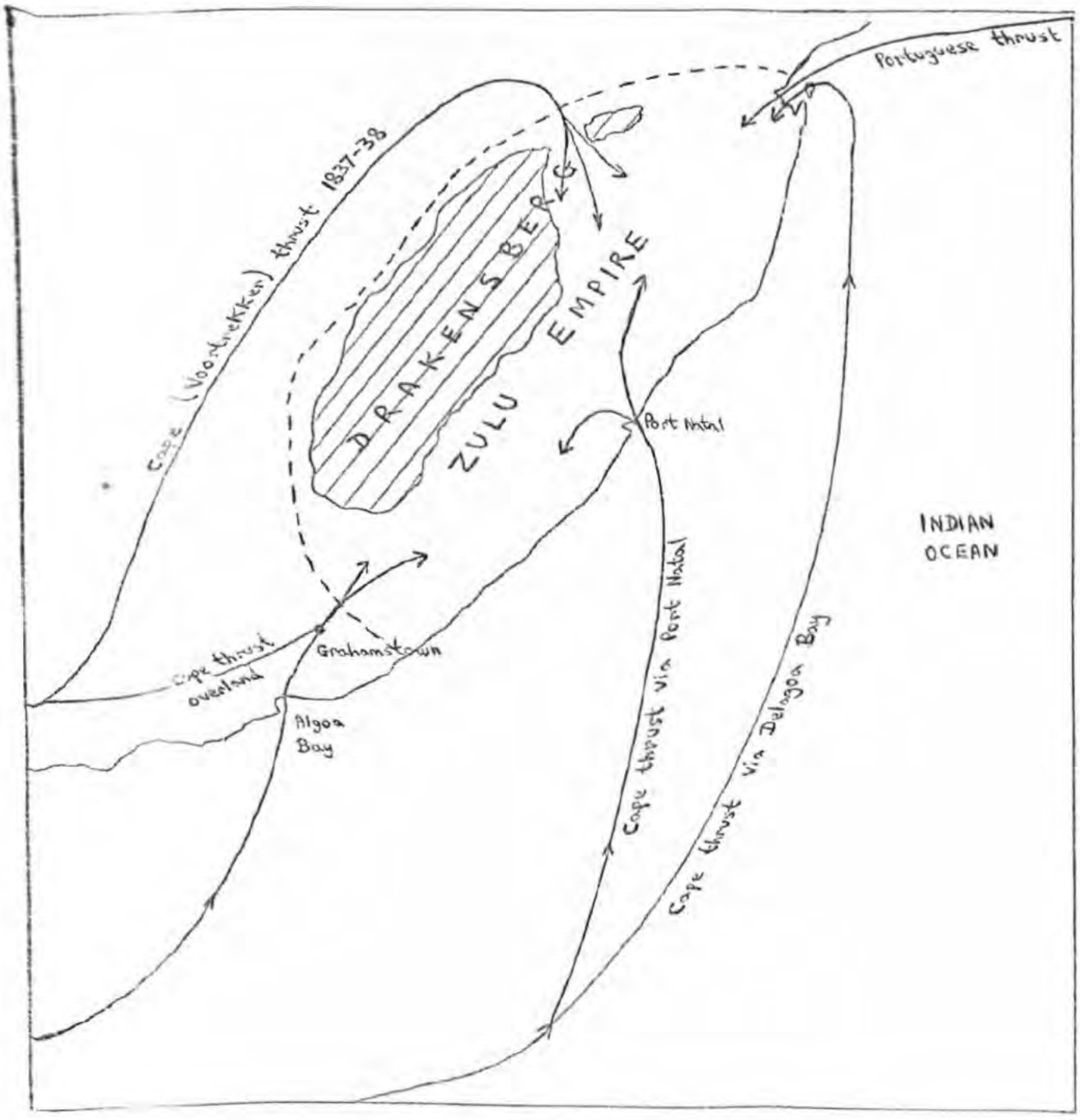

Fig.16 Diagrammatic Representation of Capitalist Penetration of the Zulu Empire 1820-1838

Even more serious, however, was the trekkers' direct expropriation of the grain product of the homesteads in the vicinity of their camps. No attempt seems to have been made even to distinguish between surplus, subsistence requirements and seed. Enormous quantities were taken, the ox-wagon representing a much more efficient technology for the systematic expropriation of the homestead than Zulu absolutism had ever had at its disposal;

> "from these deserted Kaffir villages more than 80 heavy wagon loads (10,12 and up to 14 3-bushel bags on one wagon) have been brought into their camps, so that through God's guidance we harvest and eat what others have planted". 191

The timing of the beginnings of this expropriation is crucial. It began even before Retief's second embassy to the Zulu capital had been completed.[192] The trekkers were already actively usurping a function which was fundamental to the pattern of relationships which existed between the Zulu state and the peasant-homesteads which had been allowed to survive in the heartland and in its Natal periphery.[193] They were

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[191] Smit, Diary p.86, entry for 30/1/1838. Retief's second embassy to the Zulu state only reached Umgungundhlovu on 3/2/1838; Brookes and Webb, History of Natal p.31. This would have allowed sufficient time for news of the voortrekkers' expropriations of grain to reach the capital before the sentence of death was finally imposed. The decision may, of course, have been taken before this process began, but it represents further evidence of the fundamental incompatibility between the interests of Zulu Absolutism and the new settlers.

[192] See note 191.

[193] In the days, weeks and months to come, the trekkers' expropriation of grain reached enormous proportions; Smit, Diary pp.97-8,101,118,120-21,123. The relative dispersal of the 'villages' from which the grain was taken suggests that the production units being expropriated were those of the peasant-homestead type. The absence of people would have been the usual phenomenon associated with the arrival of a foreign military force in the area. The men may have been called back to the Zulu Army in case of a confrontation with the aliens, and the women and children would have fled into the bush to await the voortrekkers' removal to a new country, or to avoid any violent conflict which might develop. A little earlier they had encountered a substantial 'Tlokwa' grouping of agriculturists, and then, near the sources of the Tugela, people dressed in the 'Zulu' fashion, who were herding large numbers of cattle and sheep. Space does not permit a full discussion of the patterns of relationships involved, but it would seem that all of these groups were Zulu protectorates, and some may even have been under direct Zulu control. See Champion to Anderson, 10/8/1837, in Kotze, Letters of the American missionaries pp.192-194. See also Smit, op.cit., p.118.

striking at the very economic foundations of the Zulu state itself. In the event it was the emigrant representatives of the forced labour mode of capitalist production, rather than those associated with the short-term trading vision, or the long-term peasant-homestead mode of capitalist production, who had brought the incipient contradiction between capitalism and absolutism to a head.

Further provoked by a public display of the effectiveness of the horse and firearm, a technological combination which the Zulu state did not yet possess, Zulu absolutism moved swiftly to avert the threat to its control over Natal. The numerous Retief embassy was destroyed,[194] and the Zulu impis swept down on the trekkers' encampments. The unprepared were destroyed,[195] but the force of Zulu militarism ultimately foundered upon an aspect of the immigrant military technology with which it was not familiar and for which it had no immediate answer, the defensive laager.[196]

Once the general contradiction between capitalism and absolutism had been brought to a head by the Voortrekkers' behaviour in Natal, it temporarily overlaid the contradictions within Capital. Various groups interested in one or other aspect of the general Natal colonisation movement rallied to their assistance. Merchants were prominent in arranging material support.[197] Military reinforcements arrived at the encampments under the command of A.W.J. Pretorius.[198] The Port Natal

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[194] It included some 70 trekkers and 30 black or 'coloured' servants; Chase, Natal Papers, 11:2; Bird, Annals, 1:9 puts the number of servants at 40. Another account reports 67 men, 4 boys and 30 servants; Kotze, Letters of the American Missionaries p.223n. It was a cooly-taken decision of state policy. As Dingane explained, the were killed because "they are a fighting force"; remark attributed to Dingane and quoted in Campbell, "Umgungundhlovu", p.27. He had tried and failed to do away with two other men who had ceased to deliver what Zulu Absolutism required of them, Cane and Gardiner; Hulley, "Account of Rev. Owen's visit to Zululand in 1837", Natal Archives, mss.12, pp.7-9.

[195] Smit, Diary p.88, entry of 18/2/1838. 250 'coloured people' were amongst those who died.

[196] Dingane has apparently not been informed that there was more than one camp of trekkers; Hulley, op.cit., pp.9-10. By June 1838 the trekkers were concentrated into two main laagers with a combined strength of some 640 white men, 3,200 women and children and over 1,200 black servants; Morris, Washing of the Spears p.144. One of these laagers was even successfully raided for cattle.

[197] See above p.405.

[198] Brookes and Webb, History of Natal pp.34-5.

representatives of Cape merchant capital, who had initially welcomed the trekkers as a bulwark against Zulu absolutism,[199] now entered the military struggle alongside them,[200] finally renouncing once and for all their status as vassal protectorates of the Zulu state. Their black dependants, and the peasant-homesteads that had regrouped in Natal in general, had their own scores to settle with Zulu absolutism and added their weight to the struggle.[201] The missionaries in the Zulu

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[199] Theal, History of South Africa Since 1795, II:354. See also Chase, Natal Papers pp.86,123,125; Bird, Annals I:370,326.

[200] Theal, op.cit., II:373-4; Chase, op.cit., II:9; Bird, op.cit., I:235,354-6; Smit, Diary pp.97, 103. Their contribution was almost totally disorganised. A vast booty of cattle, women and children was rounded up so long as the Zulu Army was preoccupied elsewhere. In the first military confrontation, however, the ragbag army from Port Natal was totally destroyed and a Zulu impi swept down to devastate the kraals and trading establishments at the Port itself. The traders were rather more fortunate than their black allies in being able to take shelter on board a ship in the harbour. The Port community in fact came to rely on the trekkers for some kind of protection. Zulu Absolutism had come within an ace of ridding the immediate threat from the pincer movement of the twin forces of Capitalism. See Chase, Natal Papers II:16; Kotze, Letters of the American Missionaries pp.229n,242-3; "South-east Africa mission", in Church Missionary Record IX, 1 (November 1838), p.270; Bird, Annals, I:383-6,126; Joseph Kirkman, "Life of Mr. Joseph Kirkman in Zululand 1836-40", The State (December 1910), copy in Natal Archives, mss.36, pp.8-9; Fynn, Diary p.315; Hulley, "Account of Rev. Owen's visit to Zululand", p.13.

[201] Bird, Annals, I:220; Kotze, Letters of the American Missionaries p.14. A contradiction had always existed between the activities of the missionaries and the interests of Zulu Absolutism. They offered a mediating agency with the spirit world outside the religious system of the state, focussed on the person of the King. Dingane, as we have pointed out, was always well aware of this contradiction and saw to it that the activities of the missionaries were closely watched and regulated, and they rarely if ever had an opportunity of preaching to the menfolk; Kotze, op.cit., p.236; Hulley, op.cit., pp.4,6; Bird, op.cit., I:296; above chapter X , p.318. Their presence was tolerated because they occasionally proved useful in teaching of, and sometimes even producing, the technological systems of an expanding Capitalism, including the gun and the wagon; Campbell, "Umgungundhlovu", p.26; Hulley, op.cit., pp.6-7. It is clear, however, that Dingane was on the point of realising that mission teachers and white interpreters, like the traders, were a luxury the state could not afford; Hulley, op.cit., p.11.

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heartland indicated where their true allegiance lay by abandoning Zulu to its fate. Even the Imperial authorities declined to prevent its subjects from disputing control over the Natal periphery with the Zulu state.

As the tide turned against the Zulu state, (the decisive battle was fought at 'Blood River' in December 1838), the contradictions within Zulu Absolutism itself were brought more sharply into focus. Powerful groups broke away to offer their services to the invaders, and were accepted by them as military vassals in the struggle against the forces which remained loyal to the Zulu state. The most important split took place in September 1839 when Mpande led perhaps as many as 17,000 people across the Tugela into Natal, bringing with him 25,000 cattle. Other major powerholders — including Jobe, Matuan and 'Sapusa', offered the military services of their followers in the struggle against the remnant forces of the Zulu state under Dingane, in return for acceptance of their right to land in Natal. It was the combined military might of these groups, the trekkers, the Pretorius reinforcements, and the remains of the Port Natal community, which finally pushed back the main Zulu power and expropriated much of its resources.[202]

By the end of 1839 the control which the Zulu state had exerted over its Natal periphery had finally been shattered. A decisive blow had been dealt to the power of Zulu Absolutism as a whole. Loyal remnants under Dingane were forced to retreat far into its former heartland where the contradictions with Capitalism were less intense. The Mpande faction and other groups which had sided with the invaders sought out a new modus vivendi with the representative of Cape-British Capitalism which would permit certain features of the Zulu social structure to be preserved. The main function of these groups in the early colonial political economy of Natal was to act as a reservoir of 'refugee' labour, which could be forced into 'apprenticeship' or labour-tenancy relationships. In the event neither solution was to prove permanent. The Dingane faction was swiftly destroyed by the people it had once oppressed, and the successors of Mpande were thrust into a still more subservient position in relation to Cape and metropolitan Capital as a result of the 1879 war.

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[202] Bird, Annals, I:553,578,591.

CONCLUSION

As the smoke from the confrontation with Zulu Absolutism began to clear, the leading protagonists in the struggle for predominance in the future political economy of Natal could be seen establishing their positions.

Many of the trekkers continued to raid isolated power-holders and homesteads in order to further augment the stocks of the immediate means of subsistence, and of the instruments of production, which they had acquired by virtue of their part in the victories over the forces of Zulu Absolutism. Vast quantities of millet, maize, cattle, sheep, immediate and reproductive labour-power (children and women) were taken.[1] With the aid of these resources acquired by means of direct expropriation, a slow beginning could be made in the direction of developing a mode of production founded on pastoralism and forced-labour, a mode of production which the trekkers had found increasingly difficult to maintain at the Cape. With this aim in view, coupled with a desire to move away from an area where further clashes with a remnant Zulu power seemed possible, many of the trekking groups left the Bushman's River valley early in 1839, to establish a network of smaller settlements in the vicinity of the future site of Pietermaritzburg, and nearer to the coast.[2] A few men of substance began to move up from the Cape to add further credence to the vision.[3]

Peasant-homesteads in the vicinity of the trek-laagers and Port Natal meanwhile busied themselves building up their

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[1] Smit, Diary, pp.136, 151, 159-60; Bird, Annals, I:438-52, 236, 243, 249; Morris, Washing of the Spears, p. 149.

[2] Eybers, Select Constitutional Documents pp.153-8; Bird, op.cit. I:236-7; "Reminiscences of Chief Tom Fynn", Bird Papers V.

[3] See above p. 403 n 169.

resources by means of supplying foodstuffs and small quantities of essentially short-term, 'free' labour to the new settlers and to the token Imperial military force at Port Natal.[4] Vast numbers of refugees from the Zulu heartland began to flood into Natal with a view to re-establishing the homestead as the dominant mode of production throughout Natal, many groups probably returning to the lands from which they had originally been driven by the power of Zulu Absolutism.[5]

Within a matter of months of the severing of the Zulu hold over Natal, there were signs that the structural conditions did not favour the immediate implementation of the voortrekker or employer vision. The forced-labour which was essential to the employers' vision, and which had been brought from the Cape or more recently pressed into service, began to take advantage of the relative weakness and now widespread dispersal of the voortrekker forces of coercion, to escape into one of the variety of economic opportunities which characterise a 'frontier' situation.[6] At the same time, some of the poorer trekkers abandoned the vision to concentrate on the same type of more-immediately lucrative economic activities, notably hunting, trading and transport-riding.[7] The Port Natal community also quickly resumed these activities on behalf of the merchant interests at the Cape.[8]

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[4] Charters to Napier 12/12/1838, in Bird, Annals, I:431; Jervis to Napier 30/3/1839, in Ibid., pp. 518-9; "Memorial of emigrants to Napier", in Eybers, Select Constitutional Documents pp.153-8; "Reminiscences of Chief Tom Fynn", Natal Archives, Bird Papers, VI:21.

[5] Brookes and Webb, History of Natal, p.37.

[6] See, for example, Smit, Diary pp.121-2, entry of 16/7/1838.

[7] Bird, Annals, I:553; "Reminiscences of H. J. Dafel", Natal Archives, Bird Papers, V.

[8] Daniel Toohey, for example.

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The collapse of the employer vision of the political economy of Natal was at once evidenced and further encouraged by the concentration of voortrekker land claims in fewer and fewer hands as the creditors of the poorer trekkers began to demand payment.[9] Many of this poorer group were in effect driven into the interior as the unconscious vanguard of a further extension of the network of capitalist relations in southern Africa.[10]

Neither did the increasing concentration of land claims lead to the immediate emergence of systematic large-scale farming. Many of the leading trekkers, sensing the hopelessness of their vision, retired to the Cape, holding their substantial land claims as absentee speculators. Others sold them on to the major Cape merchant houses.[11]

For the settlers who remained in Natal, the vision was fast becoming a nightmare. At first the influx of near-destitute refugees seemed like a God-sent source of easily controlled labour. Some certainly entered into labour relationships with white employers;[12] but others, like the small groupings that

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[9] In the course of the first two years of the Republic of Natalia, 2.5 million acres of claims were formally registered in favour of 254 persons. Only 49 of these claims were personally occupied; Hattersley, British Settlement of Natal, pp.46-7. 110 land sales were registered with the Volksraad between June 1841 and July 1844 at prices averaging between £20 and £50 a farm. Some of these had already changed hands on one or two occasions previously. The fate of individual claims can be traced through Henry Cloete's detailed report on the land situation up to 1843; in PRO CO 48/247. For discussion of some of the larger claimants see Slater, "Land, labour and capital". p.259, n.21.

[10] At the end of 1843 it was estimated that only some 365 trekker families remained in Natal; Bird, Annals, II:355-6.

[11] Francis Collison, J.C. Zeederberg and Edward Chiappini were three of these; see Slater, "Land, labour and capital", p.259, n.20.

[12] Eyre, Dick King pp.47, 53.

had managed to retain a hold on their lands despite the Mfecane,[14] were bent on re-establishing their homesteads independent of outside demands, whether made by Zulu Absolutism or a section of Capital. They were often successful in resisting the more oppressive labour demands of the would-be farmers, and the latter were obliged to settle for a token recognition of their landlord status in the form of cash or produce, or even none at all. Resistance sometimes cost the 'farmers' dearly.[15]

In these conditions, very little productive farming was actually undertaken by the trekkers, and they increasingly took on the character of a landlord class over non-subject peasantry. Even this status was in danger of being swept away as more and more refugees continued to re-establish themselves in Natal. The Volksraad began to contemplate ever more fantastic solutions to the problems faced by its citizenry. As the diehards spoke of the total removal of all but a handful of homesteads from the Natal scene,[17] the wealthier members of the community began to ally with the traders in thinking in terms of strengthening state power by means of the annexation of Natal to the Cape. The traders were, however, more concerned with the tricky problem of customs dues than with the fate of a white farming class.[18] The capacity of the

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[14] For an example of such a group on the Umpanza River, which now found its land claimed by white landlords, see Bird, Annals, 1:135.

[15] For full references to this range of situations, see Slater, "Land, labour and capital", p. 257.

[17] David Welsh, The Roots of Segregation: Native Policy in Natal 1845-1910 (Cape Town: Oxford UP, 1971) p.8.

[18] As an independent republic, Natal levied duties on goods imported from the Cape, and exports to the Cape were equally liable to duty on arrival. It was a form of 'double jeopardy' so far as the merchant community was concerned, since their imports to the Cape from the metropolis were already liable to duty levied by the Cape authorities.

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homestead to produce an agricultural surplus may already have been interesting the traders at Port Natal, and it was not long before grain from this source began to enter into the export statistics of the Port.[20]

Meanwhile the Natal lobby at the Cape, now with a speculative interest in land to add to that of trade, had at last begun to organise determinedly in the metropolitan corridors of British Imperial power. As early as March and June 1839, their agents in the British parliament had placed before the House of Commons two petitions to demand the annexation of Natal to the Cape.[21] With their proposals that Capital should generally employ black labour recruited locally, they held out a vision not unlike that of many of the trekker farmer-employers. On the other hand, however, with the proposal that the Empire should actually sell off land to new and more wealthy immigrants according to the procedures already employed in South Australia, they were really putting forward a vision more sympathetic to the interests of the would-be land-speculator than to those of the struggling colonial employer.[22] Deputations from the 'Natal Association', the new organisational form of the 'Natal lobby', met Imperial officials to press the case for annexation.[23]

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[20] The first clear example of this which I have so far located dates from 1846, when it was said that the small export trade in maize which had been developed with the Cape was dependent upon African producers; Natal Witness 4/9/1846.

[21] Chase, Natal Papers pp.93-6.

[22] Ibid.

[23] A delegation to see the Colonial Secretary, Lord Normanby, comprised Anderson, Borradaile, Maynard, Moreing and Steedman. In addition, Messrs. Anderson, Borradaile and Saxe Bannister saw Labouchere to try to get the question of Natal annexation looked into by a select committee; Chase, Natal Papers pp. 99-100. Borradaile, Maynard and Bannister were already well known for their interest in Natal.

Powerful metropolitan forces were also beginning to lend their voice to the campaign. In the same year, for example, the Earl of Ripon petitioned the House of Lords on behalf of Liverpool merchants.[24]

Even this concerted attack did not achieve an immediate victory, but it is clear that the Natal annexation movement was gaining formidable metropolitan as well as Cape and local momentum. In point of fact, victory for the Natal lobby was less than three years away.[25]

When the flag of the voortrekker Republic of Natalia was raised for the first time, in the last few days of 1839 or the first few of 1840,[26] it did not signal the total and immediate victory of the employers' vision of the political economy of Natal. It was not an empty gesture, but it effectively represented the opening salvo in what was to prove to be a new and much longer struggle. The initiative had been taken by the representatives of the employers' vision of the capitalist development of Natal. At the same time however, in Natal, at the Cape and in the metropolis, other groups which were to play a part in shaping the future political economy of Natal were already assembling their forces.

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[24] Chase, Natal Papers, pp.99-100.

[25] The decision to annex was taken in December 1842; Brookes and Webb, A History of Natal p.42.

[26] Ibid., p.35.

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