

ECONOMIC CHANGE IN PONDOLAND IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

by

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In the course of my research on peasantization and stratification in Pondoland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a number of problems arose concerning the nature of the Mpondo economy in the earlier part of the nineteenth century. (1) By the turn of the century the people in Pondoland were deeply enmeshed in the wider South African economy. Technological innovations had led to greater concentration on crop, especially maize, production, which became the mainstay of local producers in the decades after the Rinderpest epidemic (1897) and East Coast Fever (1912/13). Settled white traders provided the channel for exports and for the importation of an increasing variety of manufactured goods. However, while some picture began to emerge of how production had changed during this period, it became increasingly difficult to characterize the "traditional" economy. Anthropological works on the Nguni have tended to lack a systematic chronological dimension to their analysis of change in pre-annexation economies in South Africa. (2) Herding and cultivating were, as these works show, the major bases of subsistence, with hunting and gathering supplementing the diet. Evidence from nineteenth century sources, however, suggests that the relative importance of these activities changed considerably, and that these changes had important implications for the organization of the Mpondo chiefdom. This paper is an initial attempt to come to terms with information gleaned from an incomplete and rather hasty reading of available nineteenth century material. (3) It will be divided into two parts: firstly, an analysis of economic change in Pondoland from the end of the Zulu raids (c.1830) to the 1880s, and an examination of the stages by which the Mpondo became incorporated into the colonial economy will be presented; secondly, some suggestions will be made about the changing control of economic resources during this period.

The second major Zulu raid to the south in 1828 left the Mpondo in a desperate position. Faku, the Mpondo paramount, when questioned by the first colonial official to visit the area ten days after the Zulu impis had left, bewailed the fact that "his people had lost all their cattle and had nothing to live upon or make clothes of". (4) Their huts and grain stores had been destroyed. Faku and his people had been driven from their position on the eastern side of the Mzimvubu river and forced to seek refuge in the deep river valleys to the west. The continued need for defence, not only against the threat of further Zulu raids but also against the newly arrived "Fetkanie" raiding chiefdoms, the Baca and the Qwabe, led to concentrated settlement around Faku's new kraal on the Great Mngazi, and to a lesser extent in the Little Mngazi and western Mzimvubu valleys. (5) Early missionary visitors expressed amazement on arrival in Pondoland.

From one hill near the Great Place ... [Shepstone, in 1830] counted a hundred kraals each of which contained from twenty to forty houses, which, after the usual manner of counting in this country, will give more than ten thousand

inhabitants; and the view from the hill only took in the population of one river, and the parts adjoining. (6)

The pattern of settlement remained the same for at least a decade. (7) The kraals were "larger" and "much more thickly scattered" than those of

the other races of Kaffers nearer the Colony, who being from their vicinage to the colonial boundary much more safe from predatory attacks, love to roam at large with their herds, over extensive tracts of country. (8)

The absence of cattle was crucial in enabling the Mpondo to maintain close settlement; they had no need for grazing lands. But high concentration and cattle losses created severe problems of subsistence. Although some initially survived by gathering roots and wild fruit, the Mpondo soon adapted to their condition by exploiting the resources of the well-watered valleys in which they had settled and becoming more assiduous cultivators. The majority were settled towards the coast from Faku's kraal (about 18 miles inland) in areas which were perhaps more suited to gardens than cattle because of the sourness of the veld. (9) They were fortunate in occupying what most observers considered one of the most fertile parts of South Africa:

The soil is rich, especially on the flats near the margins of the river, and along the hillsides, where the Caffers cultivate pumpkins, melons, a small species of millet called Caffer corn, and maize or Indian corn, which grows to an unusual height. (10)

Two crops of maize could be produced annually, and, in contrast to the chiefdoms to the south and south-west, the men participated in agriculture long before the introduction of the plough. (11) At this time, wooden digging spades were used in cultivation. The Mpondo certainly worked iron, and, according to tradition, also smelted ore. (12) However, they seem to have used their supplies almost exclusively for assegais. Hard woods, particularly sneezewood, were locally available and the alluvial soils were easily worked. The temporary replacement of cattle by grain for bridewealth must also have stimulated production.

Despite their adaptation to cattle losses, it seems to have been a major aim of the Mpondo to regain their herds. Trading their surplus was one of the alternatives open. The lack of institutionalized markets or trading caravans has led to a neglect, in academic work, of inter-chiefdom exchange among the "Cape Nguni", but numerous examples emerge from the 19th century sources. Surplus crops were probably a major item of exchange.

Faku's country may be considered the Granary of the eastern parts of Caffreland as they, the Amapondo, annually supply the inhabitants with great quantities of Maize and Caffrecorn for which they receive in return hides, beads and cattle. (13)

Raiding was at least as important in the reaccumulation of cattle. Although there was widespread inter-chiefdom raiding south of the Mzimkulu in the Mfecane period, the Mpondo were the only chiefdom to lose their cattle permanently to the Zulu. Thus cattle stocks to the south and south-west were still high. Although Faku did not adopt the Zulu style of army organization, he had one of the strongest armies in the area. The pattern of raiding and alliances during the 1830s was complex, but it appears that after defeating the Qwabe, Faku forged an alliance, albeit a troubled one, with his only remaining rival, Ncapayi (chief of the Baca), in 1832. (14) At that time, the Baca "never ploughed" and were dependent on cattle and their spoils from raiding for subsistence. (15) They used Mpondo territory as a base for operations, and Ncapayi became tributary to Faku, perhaps receiving grain from the Mpondo between raids. By the 1830s some observers identified the two chiefs as primarily raiders; they joined forces in a series of raids on the Thembu, Mpondomise and Bomvana. (16)

Hunting provided a major source of meat during the 1830s, as well as important articles for trade.

Game is abundant; and since the spoil of their flocks by their conquerors, has mainly supplied them [the Mpondo] with food and enabled them to collect fresh herds from their westerly neighbours by the sale of antelope skins, especially those of the blue buck, the antelope pygmea, a favourite and costly ornament, used for the head dress of the Caffer belles. (17)

The period up to the 1840s saw the height of the ivory trade in the area. Elephants were common in the forests of the river valleys, especially in the then very sparsely inhabited area to the east of the Mzimvubu, from which the Mpondo had retreated in the 1820s. (18) One (unreliable) source claims that the Mpondo had the reputation of being the greatest elephant hunters in south east Africa in the early nineteenth century. (19) Henry Fynn, one of the earliest ivory traders to visit the east coast, spent considerable time in Mpondo territory and set up a depot near the Mzimvubu; he seems to have regarded Pondoland as at least as fruitful a source of supply as Zululand. (20) Bain, in 1829, collected 2,500 lbs in three days from a small group settled near the Mzimvubu. (21) However, although it is clear that the Mpondo and their tributaries did hunt elephant, they also acted as middlemen for a number of "Bushmen" hunters. One such group was settled on the Mzimvubu.

They usually roam about between that river and Natal, shooting elephants, the flesh of which they eat, and exchange the ivory with Faku's people for corn and tobacco. (22)

This may have been the same group that Bain had seen a couple of years before, who "subsist entirely by hunting". (23) By the mid-1830s the Mpondo possibly traded ivory with the Hlangwini, under Fodo, who were settled to the east of the Mzimvubu, and were sometimes called "Bushmen" because they used poisoned arrows in their hunting. (24) Ivory was used for ornamental purposes by the Mpondo, but they appear to have traded much of their supply. Bain was asked for cattle in exchange for ivory (five cows for a tusk in 1829), but beads were accepted in their place. No doubt these could be exchanged for cattle from the better stocked chiefdoms. Ivory had probably been an item in trade, both to the north and towards the colony, for many years before, but the trade did not last beyond the 1840s. Faku still had tusks on tap to present to colonial officials in the 1850s, but by 1860 elephants had probably been exterminated. (25) The ivory trade provided the first contact with white traders and was responsible for introducing a few manufactured articles, and especially many beads, into the area. But the trade did not provide the basis for a lasting involvement with the colonial economy; the traders were all itinerant.

In 1838, Faku moved back to the Eastern Pondoland with a large number of his people. (26) He was immediately motivated by the desire to lay claim to his territory, which was threatened by trekker expansion from Natal and had been assigned by Dingane to the trekkers. The threat of raids from the north had passed. However, the desire to move was probably closely linked to the reacquisition of cattle. A gradual movement of sub-chiefs to the grazing land across the Mzimvubu appears to have already begun. The Mpondo settlement pattern slowly took on a more "typical" Nguni appearance, although kraals probably remained larger than those of the Xhosa. From the 1840s, grain exports are not mentioned. While this is by no means conclusive evidence in itself, the immediate incentive to produce large surpluses had probably passed. Annual surpluses were still likely; some safeguard against the possibility of drought or locust plagues was necessary, although the Mpondo were able to put even plagues to good use - according to Gardiner, they relished grilled locusts. (27) Inter-chiefdom exchange was unlikely to have ceased completely: droughts affected the Transkeian area unevenly, and throughout the nineteenth century it appears that the less affected areas in a particular year would supply grain to those badly hit.

Colonial officials, and historians, like to date the recovery of the Mpondo to the early 1840s, when the Cape agreed by treaty to protect Pondoland from encroachment by colonial subjects and guaranteed Faku's authority over an area far greater than he actually controlled. Brownlee's interpretation is typical.

Since our military expedition in 1842 passed up to Natal, the Pondos came out of their hiding places, and pasturage being good in the country they were thus enabled to occupy, the few cattle they had preserved from the Zulus multiplied and increased rapidly. (28)

In fact, the Mpondo recovery began well before this date and their growing herds resulted from their initiatives in trading and raiding rather than from mere natural increase. The fact that the colony was prepared to give so much responsibility to Faku in the treaty of 1844 testifies to his power by the time the Colony advanced its treaty making activities to the area. Brownlee did, however, add one important comment.

To the ordinary increase of their stock they added by the cultivation of tobacco, which they sold to the tribes which had not been spoiled by the Zulus for young cattle and goats. And Pondo tobacco became known and appreciated even to the borders of the Cape Colony. (29)

All the chiefdoms settled along the coast produced tobacco (and dagga) which they used themselves - the Mpondo snuffed and the Xhosa smoked - and traded. However, Brownlee's idea of the rise of Mpondo production may not be entirely anachronistic. Tobacco was produced largely on the site of old cattle kraals; dung provided an ideal fertilizer. Thus the reincorporation of cattle and the movement back to old grazing lands may well have signalled the renaissance of tobacco growing, particularly if the Mpondo had preferred to concentrate on subsistence crops during the period of close settlement. Brownlee is correct that the Mpondo were well known as tobacco growers throughout the nineteenth century. (30)

By 1861, a missionary complained that "from the pastoral life which these people lead, the population of the country is a good deal scattered". (31) The new great place was situated away from any major river, near the 600 metre contour, in open country, but conveniently placed for access to winter grazing along the coast. Ndamase, Faku's eldest son, soon returned to Western Pondoland; he acted with increasing independence, but remained subordinate to Faku and, initially, to Faku's successor in 1867, Mqikela. The Western Mpondo also spread out during the 1840s and 1850s, and though some differences in the responses of the two areas developed - partly owing to differing climatic and ecological patterns, partly to their geographical location - both sections of the chiefdom became primarily pastoralists.

Not only were cattle stocks high enough to provide adequate subsistence, but a sufficient surplus was accumulated for the Mpondo to participate in the lucrative cattle trade with the Cape and Natal. By 1860 a missionary commented:

We have much to try us in consequence of the worldly money getting spirit, which is now beginning to prevail more extensively in this part of the country. Many have large stocks of cattle, some are now engaged in trading. (32)

Jenkins, Wesleyan missionary in the area from 1838 and perhaps the best informed observer of Mpondo affairs, commented to a visitor in 1866:

Twenty five years ago not a cow or even a goat could be purchased at any price in all Pondo-land. I knew a trader who came with a wagon-load of goods for trade, and after spending five or six months, he bought an inferior lot of calves to the value of £7/10/-, which the missionary had previously secured for his own family use. Now thousands of cattle are bought and sent out of the country annually ... (33)

Cattle were highly mobile, so the lack of roads in Pondoland did not greatly inhibit the growth of the trade. The cattle price seems to have remained reasonably high

and rose even higher at times of large demand in the early 1870s, when the diamond fields were opened, and in the late 1870s when large colonial armies were present in the Eastern Cape and Natal. The Mpondo cattle stocks benefited particularly from the Gcaleka and Mpondomise wars in the late 1870s, as both chiefdoms sent their stock into Pondoland for safe-keeping and found it difficult to regain. (34) Pondoland also became the refuge of cattle thieves and rustlers as the colonial boundary advanced to the north-east during the 1870s. (35) Cattle remained the key export until about 1883, when Redwater, a cattle disease which had moved slowly down from Natal, made its impact on Mpondo herds. (36) Losses were not high, and the willingness to trade was probably only temporarily affected. However, the Cape banned further imports from Pondoland in order to stem the spread of the disease. The Natal market remained open, but traders in Pondoland slowed up their export activities for fear of creating a glut. Prices in Pondoland dropped as demand fell. The trade may have recovered but Rinderpest finally killed it in 1897.

Aside from cattle, hides and horns were also important exports. Horns had little value on external markets - they fetched less than a penny each in the early 1860s - but hides were worth from four to five shillings in Natal. (37) Hides were used both for kaross and for shield-making by the Mpondo, and their availability depended both on the number of cattle slaughtered and the local clothing needs. Hide exports probably reached a height during the early 1860s when lungsickness, another cattle disease, caused "severe losses" in the herds. (38) The Mpondo were fully aware of the threat of the disease, which had affected herds in both the Cape and Natal during the 1850s. They organized guard posts on the wagon routes into Pondoland and refused entry to colonial cattle. (39) Nevertheless, the disease did penetrate, and a surplus of hides resulted. It is interesting to note that some Xhosa also responded quickly to the hide market when they lost their cattle in the cattle killing (1857).

The kafirs [brought] in the skins only of the slain cattle to the traders. Every day and hour they thronged the stores with the reeking hides, always in haste to return to further sacrifice.... We stood at the trader's store often regarding the pile of skins accumulating before the door, thrown down for a mere song, a bit of tobacco, or an ornament, with just feelings of wonder and sadness. (40)

Cattle diseases and cattle killings cannot, however, explain the sustained hide trade, nor does it appear that the Mpondo acted in so uncommercial a spirit. In the early 1860s the value of "a pair" of cotton blankets in Natal was from two to three shillings, and it may well be that the Mpondo found it profitable to change their clothing from karosses to blankets because of the favourable exchange they could obtain. (41) It is at this time that Jenkins reports the recent increase in the use of blankets by the Mpondo. How long the price relationship between blankets and hides remained favourable to the Mpondo is a question for further investigation, but, once blankets had become socially accepted, a reversion to karosses was unlikely. (42)

Hides were exported overland and, notably, by sea through Port St Johns, the only harbour on the Pondoland, and indeed the Transkeian, coast at which ships called regularly. Ships operated from Durban, but only vessels with a shallow draught could use the port because of the sand-bar at the Mzimvubu mouth. Access to the port from the interior was difficult because of inadequate wagon routes, but traders mention loading 3,500 lbs onto a wagon coming from the port. As hides were light in relation to their value, a substantial cargo could be collected. Hides remained an important export well into the twentieth century, and it was the hide and cattle trade that brought permanently settled traders into Pondoland. By the 1860s there were at least four European traders and their families settled near Fort St Johns, and by the 1870s perhaps fifty to sixty traders in the whole of Pondoland. (43)

The Mpondo were selective about the commodities they accepted in exchange for their hides and cattle. Beads, which had formerly been crucial in inter- and intra-chiefdom exchange, seem to have become less valuable by the 1860s, and although they were still important for decorative purposes they do not seem to have been the

major import. Aside from blankets, liquor, a few ornaments and articles of consumption such as sugar and salt, the major imports were firearms, metal goods (particularly agricultural implements) and horses. (44)

From the 1850s it became increasingly important for the Mpondo to arm themselves as the surrounding chiefdoms, particularly those closer to the Cape Colony, had already begun to use guns for offensive and defensive purposes. Initially, it was probably the chiefs who obtained arms, as the price was high. "For a gun which cost a trader from £5 to £6 [in 1861] he gets six large oxen [in Pondoland specifically] at the very least worth £40." (45) But, in view of the lucrative pickings to be made in the firearms trade, Cape and Natal traders stepped up activities both overland and through Port St Johns. They could afford to bribe the police employed to curtail the trade. In 1864 a Natal source estimated that one quarter of the Mpondo had firearms. (46) The figure, which would indicate about 5,000 guns in the area, is probably a settler exaggeration, but there is no doubt that the Mpondo were formidably armed. (47) By the late 1870s, the Mpondo had guns "much superior to any that they previously possessed", and "almost all the whole of the breach loading rifles formerly possessed by the Gcalekas, Tembus and Pondomise ... passed by exchange or barter into the hands of the Pundos" a few years later. (48) In 1884 Mhlangaso, adviser to Mqikela, was arranging a large import of Snider rifles from Germany, and, though the deal fell through, some Snider and Henry Martini rifles - the latter stolen from colonial magazines - probably found their way into Pondoland. (49) Gunpowder was locally manufactured from sulphur and saltpetre brought in by the traders, and runaway Europeans helped with repairs. (50)

Firearms hastened the extinction of game, but were more important for military purposes. Ironically, Mpondo raiding expeditions were far less successful after the introduction of arms. In a famous battle in 1866, the army panicked in the face of the numerically inferior Baca, and the Mpondo are reported to have lost 700 firearms and hundreds killed. (51) The incorporation of cattle seems to have been accompanied by a change in the nature of raiding activities. Land hunger replaced cattle hunger, and the Mpondo do seem to have had some limited success in driving back the Baca, Xesibe and Mpondomise, though they did not conquer them. In the 1870s the Colony extended its authority over most of the surrounding chiefdoms and fixed the Mpondo boundary. Border skirmishes continued, but the threat of colonial intervention checked major Mpondo expeditions. When they did threaten aggression in the early 1880s, the Colony rearmed the surrounding chiefdoms and brought its forces onto the border. The Mpondo would not risk a major confrontation, not least because the Baca and Xesibe were keen to have the opportunity of carrying off the Mpondo herds as spoil. Thus, while firearms were largely ineffective in raiding and expansion, they were important in the defence of Mpondo land and herds and were probably a major factor in the maintenance of Mpondo independence.

The incorporation of horses into Pondoland probably followed the same pattern as that of firearms; they were initially chiefly luxuries, but by the 1880s had become more general. By 1880 there were roughly 4,000 in the area. (52) Horses were used exclusively for fighting and personal transport. Sheep were also introduced, particularly in areas away from the coast, but wool production remained insignificant in the nineteenth century. Information on goats and pigs is sparse; the holdings in both probably increased.

The importation of agricultural implements seems to have taken place in two phases. In 1866 Jenkins maintained that

the wooden spade was formerly the only instrument used in tilling the ground; but now, within a very recent period, a single house in Natal sold twenty thousand hoes and picks to the Pundos, besides many ploughs and a few wagons. (53)

The introduction of ploughs was, initially, fairly gradual. In 1874 there was an

estimated one plough to every twenty homesteads (54), but in 1880 the British resident in Pondoland commented:

A very noticeable change is taking place in the Pondo system of agriculture. The pick, which some 20 years ago superseded the old wooden spade, is now rapidly being displaced by the plough. Upwards of 500 new ploughs were brought into use by the Pondos for this season's planting. (55)

By 1880 there were 1,100 ploughs in the area; but it was only after that date that plough imports really took off, the numbers reaching over 8000 by 1904.

There are some problems in explaining why the Mpondo adopted new technology firstly in the early 1860s and secondly in the early 1880s. Hoes and ploughs were used by chiefdoms to the south-west and west (including the Sotho) well before they were introduced into Pondoland, thus unavailability cannot explain the late date of innovation in Pondoland, nor availability the precise date of introduction. Innovation was not, initially, related to the availability of colonial markets. In 1865 Jenkins mentioned that "there is no sale for it [maize] save in our own family and it will not pay traders as land carriage is too far and expensive". (56) The value of maize that could be loaded on to a wagon - possibly around £5 - compared unfavourably with the value of a load of hides. There are few reports of grain exports until the late 1870s. Hoe purchase must thus be related to a desire to invest the surplus from the hide and cattle trade usefully, to maximize the products of labour in cultivation, and to increase local consumption. The purchase of ploughs in the early 1880s, on the other hand, is probably directly related to market opportunities as by that date transport problems had been solved and "grain was usually exported in large quantities". (57)

Both periods of innovation coincided with cattle diseases. After the Shakan raids and Rinderpest, the Mpondo were very quick to put more effort into cultivation in order to supply subsistence needs and to buy back cattle with the surplus. Similar responses may well have followed the outbreaks of Lungsickness and Redwater. In the latter case, cattle losses were not high, but the loss of cattle markets may have hastened the development of grain production in order to provide a saleable surplus to exchange for imported commodities which had become "necessary" items of consumption. The relationship between cattle diseases and cultivation was complex and became more so when the plough and ox-wagon (used for transport of goods) were introduced. Although it is possible to fix some dates for major epidemics, both Lungsickness and Redwater, and a number of other diseases, became endemic and minor epidemics recurred constantly. In the long run, markets and increased reliance on grain for subsistence were probably more important factors in stimulating innovation than any specific cattle disease.

Grain export implied a more thorough link with the colonial economy than did the cattle trade. Surplus cattle resulted from local breeding and natural increase, while imported technology was necessary for the production of surplus grain. Grain was also more difficult to transport, and export necessitated a greater investment in the infrastructure of trade. It is from the 1880s that the features of dependence become clearly recognizable in Pondoland: dependence on colonial markets to realize the capital which was necessary for further investment into cultivation on which continued surplus depended; and dependence on the colonial and metropolitan economies both for articles of consumption and capital goods. At this stage, few Mpondo migrated to colonial labour centres; thus innovation cannot be explained by a desire to offset the loss of male labour, nor by a desire to invest wages. It seems that the Mpondo were one of the last chiefdoms to be absorbed into labour migrancy. Some, perhaps, went to the diamond fields, but it should be remembered that firearms, a major attraction at Kimberley, were supplied by local traders and smugglers.

It remains to pose some questions and offer some very tentative suggestions about the effect of changing production and contact with colonial markets on social organization and the political structure of the chiefdom. The polity was based around

a core group of the Mpondo proper, who were distinguishable, at least in the first half of the nineteenth century, by their dress (particularly their head dress) and customs. (58) Within this unit, there were a number of sub-chiefdoms, usually under the authority of a member of the Mpondo royal lineage. In addition, after the 1820s, refugee groups, mainly from Natal, settled in Pondoland under the authority of the paramount. Incorporation involved both large groups, such as the Tshangase, Ngutyana, Zizi and Nci, with their own recognized leaders who became tributary to Faku, and individuals and smaller groups who were absorbed into the Mpondo proper. The degree of incorporation varied: the Baca became tributary to Faku in the 1830s but renounced the relationship in the 1840s; the Xesibe also asserted their independence after a tributary period. Mpondo boundaries were fluid till the time of colonial annexations and tribute relationships were a matter of continual dispute. Subordinate status was indicated by the payment of cattle to the paramount, recognition of his court, participation in his councils and feasts, and the willingness to serve in his army. Within each sub-chiefdom, there was also a hierarchy of authority. Expressed simplistically, the relationship between chiefs and people involved, on the economic level, extraction of goods and services on the part of the chiefs, who in turn controlled the distribution of land and were to some extent responsible for providing subsistence in times of need, holding feasts and distributing cattle.

There is no specific information on how agricultural production was organized during the time of close settlement. Male labour may have been incorporated at the level of the individual homestead, but it is possible that, as in Zululand, male regiments were used for agricultural tasks during the intervals between raids and hunts. Army organization was probably at its height during this period and the Mpondo were dependent for their economic regeneration on the success of their armies. Close settlement, originally a defensive response, probably facilitated the gathering and control of large armies for aggressive purposes. Military organization was, according to tradition, within the unit of the sub-chiefdom rather than the chiefdom as a whole, but close settlement must have placed severe constraints on individual action. Close settlement may well have provided the basis for developments in organization which resembled those of the "confederation" period in Zululand, but there is no evidence of military kraals. The Mpondo were the only "Cape Nguni" chiefdom to abolish circumcision, and although the reasons for abolition are unclear the decision may have indicated a tighter army organization than among the Xhosa, if the Zulu experience is used as an indicator. (59)

Despite the general poverty after the Zulu raids, Faku

appeared to be receiving contributions from some of his people, as [Dundas] observed several poor creatures bring to a heap of corn small baskets of that grain and silently throw it down. (60)

If regimental labour was used on the lands, Faku probably controlled the surplus, and it is possible that some of the immigrants became, initially, servants to the Mpondo chiefs. Agricultural production was highest on the lands of the chiefs, and their ability to levy tribute secured their privileged economic position. It is unlikely that the chiefs themselves worked on the lands. In 1831 Boyce, the first missionary, noted:

there is now plenty of food in the land, but the improvident natives are wasting immense quantities of corn, in the manufacture of beer, so that in a few months distress will again be experienced partially by all classes of society, and severely by the poor dependants of the great men who will be driven to seek a scanty subsistence by digging roots in the vacant country between the Umgazi and Umtata. The chiefs and influential men are foremost in every species of excess ... [His italics] (61)

The control of the spoils acquired in hunting and raiding, and the trade resulting from the former activity, is problematic. The army had to be doctored by

the paramount at the Great Place before expeditions, thus Faku certainly could instigate or prevent major army activities. It seems he was responsible for the distribution of cattle among the sub-chiefdoms after raids, and took a substantial share for himself, but there is nothing to indicate that he had a monopoly of incoming cattle. How the size of his share varied over time is unclear.

Small game was, according to traditions collected by Hunter, hunted by individuals or small groups of men who needed no chiefly doctoring and could keep the spoils themselves. (62) However, Hunter, whose field work was conducted in the early 1930s, probably reflected the knowledge of men who had been born well after the period of close settlement, and evidence suggests that there was some chiefly control over small game at that time.

Among the Amaponda where game is scarce, owing to the dense population, certain restrictions are enforced, and men of influential property claim the right of hunting in particular forests, allowing no intrusion without their permission being obtained. (63)

This statement referred to the area of close settlement itself. But over the Mzimvubu, where game was plentiful:

Laws of great severity have ... been enacted, and scrupulously administered, to protect this now important branch of trade [the blue buckskin trade]; and the various chiefs have respectively assumed a landed proprietorship over several districts, which they either hunt in themselves, or let out at high prices for determinate periods to parties of native adventurers, thus creating a novel and lucrative source of wealth to repair their previous losses. (64)

Chiefly control of small game hunting probably fell off in the later nineteenth century, when the buckskin trade collapsed.

Hunter reports that the hunting of big game was sometimes organized by the paramount. If so, the spoils were brought to the Great Place after the hunt. Apparently, however, the paramount had the right to all tusks. (65) Fynn, in his description of a Ntusi elephant hunt in the 1820s, mentioned that the tusks went to the thrower of the first assegai, and the hunt seems to have involved only one sub-chiefdom. (66) Bain's journal, referring to the year 1829, also suggests that hunting and trading of ivory in Pondoland took place without paramount control. (67) However, Fynn's evidence should not be used to prove that the southern Nguni paramounds did not control their ivory trade. Firstly, each Xhosa-speaking chiefdom should be differentiated as developments often varied. Secondly, both Fynn and Bain visited Pondoland at a time when the Mpondo polity had recently been shattered, and, although the Ntusi were "part of the Amapondo nation", they may have been able to hunt and trade independently in the 1820s. (68) Faku may well have had control over the ivory trade before the 1820s, or cornered control in the 1830s, although there is no evidence besides the tradition to support this view. Control over hunting lands probably indicates some chiefly stake in the ivory trade, and the "Bushman" ivory trade was possibly absorbed into a tribute relationship under the paramount. If the paramount did succeed in cornering the trade, the position may have been disturbed by the arrival of white hunters who, both in Zululand and Pondoland, appear to have had a free hand on payment of a small gift to the paramount.

The period of close settlement, raiding and hunting saw the development of a polity more geographically and politically centralized than that of the more southerly Xhosa-speaking groups. Faku "governed a people composed of fragments of many different tribes ... held together and harmonized in a surprising manner by his influence". (69) He was more "despotic" than the chiefdoms to the south. (70)

In many respects Faku differs from the Caffer chiefs. His authority is less limited, and he decides on matters of business chiefly on his own responsibility. (71)

The Mpondo experience in the earlier half of the nineteenth century seems to have been remarkably similar to that of the other states on the periphery of the Zulu empire.

The reincorporation of cattle into the economy did not necessarily result in an immediate weakening of paramount authority, for cattle were a crucial element in binding the chiefdom together through tributes and loans. However, unless the Mpondo paramount developed a monopoly over incoming cattle, which is unlikely, reincorporation and the spreading out of the population probably initiated the period of political decentralization. Theal argues that the colonial grant of £75 a year given to Faku in the 1844 treaty "enabled him in the course of a few years to become the owner of enormous herds of cattle". (72) But £75 would not have gone very far when the numbers involved were in the 1000s or 10,000s.

The paramount does seem initially to have developed some control over the activities of traders coming into Pondoland. A levy of £15 or £20 was exacted from ships calling at Port St Johns (73), and settled traders had to pay £5 to the paramount and probably a consideration to the local chief. (74) However, traders themselves were responsible for export activities, and, after paying tribute to the paramount, seem to have had a free hand in purchase. The chiefs, as the largest owners of cattle, undoubtedly derived the greatest benefit from the cattle and hide trade, but there is no evidence to suggest that they alone participated.

In 1861, the Colonial authorities were of the opinion that, despite the increasing independence of Ndamase, the Mpondo army could act as a coherent unit. (At that date the army was estimated at 20,000, and the Mpondo probably rivalled the Sotho and Pedi as the second largest chiefdom in South Africa. The Thembu army numbered about 5,000, and the recently weakened Gcaleka 3,000.) (75) But by 1880 the colony had recognized Nqwiliso, Ndamase's successor, as an independent paramount in Western Pondoland, and reports suggest that Mqikela could not count on the support of a few of his important sub-chiefs. (76) Within a decade, civil war had broken out in both Eastern and Western Pondoland. The collapse of the paramountcy, and the political cohesion of the chiefdom, was a complex process not unrelated to Mqikela's personal incapacity and his predilection for "the vilest compounds imaginable that [found] their way into Pondoland under the name of Cape Brandy". (77) Colonial machinations, the widespread acquisition of firearms, and conflict over how to deal with the colonial threat, no doubt also played a part. However, in conclusion, an attempt will be made to relate political disintegration to the paramount's economic position.

By the 1880s, the paramount had probably lost control of outgoing and incoming trade. Control of outgoing trade, as Terray has pointed out, must be related to control of surplus. (78) In reference to the 1870s and 1880s, Monica Wilson's general suggestion "that among the Sotho a chief controlled relatively more of the stock than among the Nguni where ownership was more widely distributed" is probably supportable, although the statement may not reflect the position of Pondoland in the first half of the nineteenth century accurately. (79) The renewed importance of grain as an export commodity weakened paramount control of surplus further. Production at the paramount's homestead was probably highest, and there was probably some form of communal labour on the paramount's fields. He and the other chiefs were likely to have been the first purchasers of ploughs, and as early as 1856 a colonial settlement in cattle with the Mpondo "included at the request of two of Faku's sons [two sets] of trained wagon oxen ... as they were about to get wagons". (80) However, grain production was localized within each homestead, tribute in grain was difficult to levy in large quantities, and each producer entered into a separate relationship with European traders, who by the 1880s were spread throughout the area and probably took much of the surplus. Local chiefs rather than the paramounts were likely to have benefited from the increase in grain production.

With the extermination of big game and the limitations on raiding, the army ceased to be used as an instrument of acquisition. Traders were responsible for bringing in the new imports over the manufacture of which the paramount had no control.

There is evidence that Mqikela did try to control imports of liquor and to limit the activities of traders in Pondoland, by giving a monopoly to one firm. (81) But his efforts seem to have met with failure, as did his attempts to levy a tax on wagons passing through Pondoland (1885) and to open a new port on the Pondoland coast (Port Grosvenor) when the Cape finally annexed Port St Johns in 1884. (82) Port Grosvenor flourished for a couple of years and took some of the trade away from Port St Johns, but the Cape, partly to retrieve customs revenue and partly to forestall the attempt to import German guns, declared its authority over the whole Pondoland coast in 1885, and Port Grosvenor closed down soon afterwards. (83) The paramount's personal income was assured through various colonial grants, and, in addition to dues from the traders, he received income from some small land and mineral concessions. However, there is evidence that his ability to levy tribute declined in the 1880s, when there was a general reluctance on the part of the chiefs to contribute to levies for a deputation to England and for the purchase of German guns. The reluctance may have been associated with the losses caused by Redwater and political opposition to those specific projects which were initiated by Mhlangaso and his white advisers rather than Mqikela himself. But there is no doubt that "Mqikela's hold over his people [was] weak and ever decreasing" and that "more power [had] fallen into the hands of subordinate tribal chiefs than is usual in Native tribes". (84) Some important sub-chiefs stayed away from his councils and would not even participate in his feasts. (85)

Lastly, changes in the nature of local production probably also affected the relationship between chiefs and people. Economic dependence and the increasing importance of cultivation suggest that productive activities were atomized to the level of the homestead and that even the local chiefs were displaced in some of their crucial economic activities by the traders. An attempt to chart this process chronologically is impossible at present, and there are many variables which would affect such an argument; the changing organization, for example, of communal work parties, which, Hunter noted, were more active in "more conservative districts", is of vital importance. (86) The process is likely to have become more rapid in the twentieth century, although the chiefs, through using their position in the colonial administrative structure, seem to have been able to offset such developments to some extent.

Notes

WMMS - Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society Archives
BPP - British Parliamentary Papers
BBNA - Cape Blue Book on Native Affairs

- (1) W. Beinart, "Rural Production and Stratification in South Africa: Pondoland c.1894-1930", African History Seminar, ICS, October 1975.
- (2) M. Hunter, Reaction to Conquest (OUP, 1936, 1964), is the major and only anthropological study of the Mpondo. It has been an important source for this paper and some of the changes analysed below are mentioned. However, there is no systematic chronological framework in Hunter's concept of change in this work.
- (3) D. G. I. Cragg, "The Relations of the Amampondo and the Colonial Authorities (1830-1886) with special reference to the Role of Wesleyan Missionaries", unpublished DPhil, University of Oxford (1959), is the only detailed history of the Mpondo in the nineteenth century. Cragg concentrated almost exclusively on external diplomatic relations and, in so far as he mentions the internal economy and polity at all, he seems to consider it as a fairly static entity. The work has been very useful in pinpointing important source material for this paper. Grateful acknowledgement to his thoroughness is given.
- (4) CO 48/125, Report by Dundas of his visit to Faku, 15/8/1828.
- (5) A. Steedman, Wanderings and Adventures in the Interior of Southern Africa, Vol II (London, 1835), p. 268, quoting Boyce's Journal 29/11/1830.
- (6) Ibid.
- (7) Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society archives (WMMS), Shaw to Secretaries, 25/7/1837.
- (8) Ibid., and WMMS, Boyce to Secs. 11/5/1830.
- (9) W. Shaw, The Story of My Mission in South Eastern Africa (London, 1860), p. 403. Shaw mentions that if coastal areas were heavily stocked, the grazing was suitable for cattle.
- (10) Steedman, op. cit., Vol I, p. 252. See also ibid., p. 281; W. Shaw, op. cit., p. 402; D. Hammond-Tooke (ed), The Journal of William Shaw (Cape Town, 1972), p. 167; S. Kay, Travels and Researches in Caffraria (London, 1833), p. 371.
- (11) Steedman, op. cit., Vol I, pp. 261-2.
- (12) Hunter, op. cit., p. 100. The Mpondo also mined the copper deposits in the north-west of Pondoland (see WMMS, Jenkins to Secs., 24/6/67). It is possible that the Mpondo received some iron supplies from the north and that this trade was disturbed by the rise of the Zulu. If so, they may have used iron more widely prior to the nineteenth century. Hunter, p. 74, suggests that there may have been a few home produced hoes.
- (13) M. Lister (ed), Journal of Andrew Geddes Bain (Cape Town, 1949), p. 104, note 54.
- (14) WMMS, Boyce to Secs., 2/7/1832.
- (15) Ibid.
- (16) e.g. WMMS, Cameron to Secs., 27/9/1836, 25/10/1736.
- (17) Steedman, op. cit., Vol II, p. 205, quoting J. Chase.
- (18) Steedman, op. cit., Vol I, pp. 253, 280; CO 48/125, Dundas report, 15/8/1828; A. Gardiner, Narrative of a Journey to the Zoolu Country (London, 1836), pp. 348ff.

- (19) E. P. Watt, Febana (London, 1962).
- (20) J. Stuart and D. Malcolm, The Diary of Henry Francis Fynn (Pietermaritzburg, 1969), pp. 116-117.
- (21) Lister, op. cit., p. 120.
- (22) Steedman, op. cit., Vol II, p. 280, quoting Boyce, 11/6/1831.
- (23) Lister, op. cit., p. 118. See also L. Thompson and M. Wilson, Oxford History of South Africa, Vol I. (Oxford, 1969), p. 106.
- (24) J. B. Wright, Bushman Raiders of the Drakensberg (Pietermaritzburg, 1971), p. 34; Gardiner, op. cit., p. 312.
- (25) WMMS, Jenkins papers, Maclean to Jenkins, 9/5/1859; B. Holt, Place Names in the Transkeian Territories (Johannesburg, n.d.), p. 1.
- (26) WMMS, Boyce to Secs., 10/11/1838.
- (27) Gardiner, op. cit., p. 370.
- (28) C. Brownlee to Cape Secretary of Native Affairs, 13/11/1878, in F. Brownlee, The Transkeian Native Territories: Historical Records (Lovedale, 1923), p. 97.
- (29) Ibid.
- (30) W. Fehr (ed. and translator), Ludwig Albert's Account of the Tribal Life and Customs of the Xhosa in 1807 (Cape Town, 1968), p. 11; Steedman, op. cit., Vol I, p. 252; S. van der Horst, Native Labour in South Africa (London, 1942, 1971), p. 105; B. Holt, They Came Our Way (London, 1974), p. 140.
- (31) WMMS, Mason to Secs., 29/1/1861.
- (32) WMMS, Mason to Secs., 29/9/1860.
- (33) W. Taylor, Christian Adventures in South Africa (London, 1867), p. 446.
- (34) Cape of Good Hope, Blue Book on Native Affairs (BBNA), G 33-1882, pp. 69, 71.
- (35) Cape of Good Hope, Parliamentary Papers, A37-1871, p. 8; BBNA, G 6-1888, p. 47.
- (36) BBNA, G 3-1884, p. 149.
- (37) Prices calculated from Table in CO 179/68, Scott to Newcastle, 21/11/1863.
- (38) WMMS, Mason to Secs., 30/3/1863.
- (39) WMMS, Impey to Secs., 7/6/1858; Mason to Secs., 30/3/1860; CO 48/380, Maclean to Liddle, 15/6/1856 in Grey to Laboucher 11/2/1857.
- (40) D. B. Hook, With Sword and Statute (Cape Town, 1906), pp. 67-8.
- (41) See note 37 above.
- (42) Such a reversion did take place during the great depression. See Hunter, op. cit., p. 101.
- (43) WMMS, Jenkins papers, Jenkins to Shaw, 21/8/1854; WMMS, Mason to Secs., 21/6/1861; CO 48/408, Currie's report, March 1861; W. Campbell, "The South African Frontier, 1865-1885", Archives Year Book for South African History, 1960, Vol I, p. 35.
- (44) Brandy made its appearance in the 1870s. "During the 'sixties the wine farmers of the Western Province found the English market closed to them by tariff arrangements ... favouring the lighter wines of France and Spain. Cape farmers turned to the manufacture of cheap brandy, the so-called "Cape Smoke" which ever since has been a major item of illicit trade with South African Natives." (W. Campbell, op. cit., p. 38.) See BBNA, G 21-1875, p. 88; G 33-1882, p. 65.
- (45) CO 48/407, Currie to Grey, 18/3/1861, in Grey to Newcastle 13/4/1861.
- (46) B. le Cordeur, "Natal and the Transkei to 1879" in C. Saunders and R. Derricourt, Beyond the Cape Frontier (London, 1974), p. 169.

- (47) In 1861, the Mpondo army was estimated at 20,000. CO 48/407, Currie to Grey 8/4/1861, in Grey to Newcastle 27/4/1861.
- (48) WMS, Jenkins papers, Memo. by Sir B. Frere, 1878; BBNA, G 37-1882, p. 69.
- (49) BPP, C 4590, Oxland to Cape Under Sec. for Native Affairs, 29/3/1884, pp. 7-10; BBNA, G 8-1883, p. 205.
- (50) BBNA, G 13-1880, p. 164.
- (51) W. Taylor, op. cit., pp. 385-387.
- (52) BBNA, G 13-1880, p. 167.
- (53) W. Taylor, op. cit., p. 446.
- (54) BBNA, G 21-1875, p. 87.
- (55) BBNA, G 13-1880, p. 162.
- (56) WMS, Jenkins to Secs., 26/7/1865.
- (57) BBNA, G 13-1880, p. 162.
- (58) Lister, op. cit., p. 103; Steedman, op. cit., Vol I, p. 260.
- (59) Faku was circumcised, but his son, Mqikela was not. Hunter quotes a tradition that Faku prevented Mqikela's circumcision because the latter suffered "a physical infirmity". She dates the abolition to the time of the Zulu raids (Hunter, op. cit., p. 165). However, if Mqikela was the first chief not to be circumcised, the actual abolition may have been later as Mqikela was only born in 1831 (Steedman, Vol II, p. 288, quoting Boyce, 15/10/1831). Walter Stanford attributes the abolition to pressure by Jenkins on Faku "when Mqikela was a young man". This interpretation would be less anachronistic, but may merely indicate colonial wishful thinking (BBNA, G 9-1894, p. 75). Orpen thought that Mqikela remained uncircumcised because of his failure to have a man of a certain branch of the royal family killed. Custom apparently demanded that medicine should be made from this man's body (BBNA, G 27-1874). Thus the abolition of circumcision may or may not be significant to army organization.
- (60) CO 48/125, Dundas report, 15/8/1828.
- (61) WMS, Boyce to Secs., 21/4/1831.
- (62) Hunter, op. cit., p. 95.
- (63) Steedman, op. cit., Vol I, p. 258.
- (64) Steedman, op. cit., Vol II, p. 205.
- (65) Hunter, op. cit., p. 95.
- (66) Stuart and Malcolm, op. cit., p.104.
- (67) Lister, op. cit., pp. 115-120.
- (68) Stuart and Malcolm, op. cit., p. 104.
- (69) WMS, Cameron to Secs., 24/5/1836.
- (70) J. Backhouse, Narrative of a Visit to the Mauritius and South Africa (London, 1844), p. 260.
- (71) Steedman, op. cit., Vol II, p. 270, quoting Boyce.
- (72) F. Brownlee, op. cit., p. 73.
- (73) e.g. CO 48/485, Blyth to Littleton, 10/12/1877, in Frere to Hicks Beach, 22/5/1878.
- (74) e.g. BBNA, G 21-1875, p. 65.
- (75) CO 48/407, Currie to Grey, 8/4/1861, in Grey to Newcastle 29/4/1861.
- (76) e.g. CO 48/485, Enclosure in Frere to Hicks Beach, 22/5/1878.

- (77) BBNA, G 6-1880, p. 61.
- (78) E. Terray, "Long-distance exchange and the Formation of the State", Economy and Society, Vol 3, No. 3 (August 1974).
- (79) M. Wilson, "Changes in Social Structure in Southern Africa", in L. Thompson, African Societies in Southern Africa (London, 1969), p. 82. Wilson does not attach this generalization to any specific date.
- (80) CO 48/380, Maclean to Liddle, 15/6/1856, in Grey to Laboucher, 11/2/1857.
- (81) BBNA, G 33-1882, pp. 65, 218; G 21-1875, p. 89.
- (82) See Cragg, op. cit., chapter XIII, *passim*.
- (83) Ibid.; E. Rosenthal in Cape Times 11/5/1935 (in WMS, Jenkins papers); B. Holt, They Came Our Way, p. 118 ff; BPP, C 5022, p. 18.
- (84) BPP, C 5022, Stanford to Sec. of Native Affairs, 22/1/1886; BBNA, G 8-1883, Oxland's report 3/1/1883.
- (85) e.g. BPP, C 4590, p. 2.
- (86) Hunter, op. cit., p. 90.