

A VOICE IN THE BIG HOUSE: THE CAREER OF HEADMAN MAMBA

by

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Introduction

The actual amount of work done and the quality of life on the plantation was the result of a compromise between masters and slaves ... The role of the driver was to minimize the friction by mediating between the Big House and the quarters. On the one hand he was the master's man: he obeyed orders, inflicted punishments, and stood for authority and discipline. On the other hand, he could and did tell the master that the overseer was too harsh, too irregular ... The slaves generally knew just how much they had to put up with ... The driver was their voice in the Big House as well as the master's voice in the quarters.

(E. Genovese, In Red and Black)

Between about 1890 and 1910, the form and content of the Cape's colonial rule over the Transkei altered in a number of ways. With territorial consolidation came efforts at codification and uniformity. Zealous administrative routines were promulgated; a host of decrees touched on the control of diseases, on the eradication of pests and weeds, on the movement of persons and property, on access to forests and fields. Under the Glen Grey Act taxes were raised, a more elaborate local bureaucracy created, and the development of an infrastructure accelerated. Central to a pattern of expanding magisterial authority was the role of the headman. Headmen bore the brunt of substantial increases in police work, taxation, and court hearings, while the dramatic rise in labour recruitment owed much to the function of headmen as (official and unofficial) recruiters. Emphasis on the headmen as forming the "front-line echelons of the Transkeian administration" (1) should not obscure what was a profoundly contradictory relationship.

At the same time that headmen served the Cape colonial officials, they engaged in an intricate and manifold struggle with them over the distribution of local social and political power. As government servants, headmen had to enforce observance of new laws and to insist on levies of cash, produce, or labour-power. As leading men in their locations, headmen had also to be able to reward their followers, to respond to popular pressures, and to mediate between magistrate and commoner. This paper seeks to reconstruct the career of one headman. It is not argued that Enoch Mamba was a "typical" headman. He was more ambitious and more successful than all but a handful

of his peers, and by the time of Union had achieved some prominence as a member of the Cape's educated black political class. It is postulated that his career abundantly demonstrates the possibilities and contradictions with the post of headman.

(i) Mamba emergent

Compared with the three districts of "Fingoland proper" (Butterworth, Nqamakwe and Tsomo) which had predominantly Mfengu populations, the district of Idutywa was regarded by its magistrates as a more vexing consulship. As well as Mfengu immigrants, Idutywa received large numbers of Gcaleka and Ndlambe refugees after the 1856-7 Cattle Killing. By 1891, of a population of 27,000 in Idutywa, 37% were Mfengu and 60% Gcaleka and Ndlambe, divided roughly equally between these latter. Local administration was frequently conceived of in terms of "balancing the nationalities": successive magistrates all sought to control these potentially quarrelsome communities, but pursued this policy with very different divisions of force and favour.

For a quarter of a century, the pivotal individual in the district was undoubtedly the Gcaleka chief, Sigidi. One of the few Gcaleka leaders not to take part in the Cattle Killing, Sigidi accepted a portion of Idutywa Reserve in 1858, in exchange for his land (in what became Komgha district) granted to German legionaries. He and Smith Umhalla provided a volunteer police force that assisted the Frontier Armed and Mounted Police in driving Sarili across the Mbashe and patrolled the Idutywa Reserve for some years; But Sigidi's star waned somewhat after the 1877-8 Gcaleka War - although he denied then and ever afterwards that his fealty to Government had ever wavered. (2) He remained intermittently at odds with the Cape administration thereafter, squabbling about status, lands, salary, and his authority over headmen. His power stemmed from the loyalty he commanded amongst his followers, and the extent to which the headmen under him regarded him as their immediate superior.

By the early 1890s, the loyalty of his followers and his control over the headmen were both subjected to strain. His support was dissipated as his sons jockeyed for position in the imminent succession dispute, and one of the responses of the ageing chief seems to have been the attempt to exercise tighter control over the headmen. Certainly, Charles Bell (magistrate of Idutywa 1887-1893) regarded him as too powerful. In one of several letters hostile to Sigidi, Bell complained in 1891 that the chief was holding secret meetings with his headmen, and called for "serious and prompt attention" to Sigidi's "evil influences". Ten years later, another official recalled that Sigidi had insisted that the headmen consult him before they saw the magistrate about anything, and that "his interference in the administration ... became so objectionable that Mr Charles Bell ... had to clip his wings considerably". (3)

In the circumstances, Bell's magistracy provided an excellent launching platform for the career of an ambitious and talented aide who could be counted on to oppose Sigidi. If such an individual already enjoyed the confidence of the magistrate, what horizons might not be open? Precisely this was the opportunity afforded Enoch Mamba. Born in Fort Beaufort to an unremarkable family of commoners, educated at Healdtown until the age of 16, he left the Wesleyan school with the highest teacher's qualification then offered by the institution. Tantalisingly, no details have yet surfaced of Mamba's subsequent private studies; we know merely that they were substantial. Mamba's family moved to Idutywa in about 1878, where the young man taught for three years. Then, aged 21 or 22, he was appointed in February 1883 as Interpreter and Assistant Clerk in the magistrate's office.

He served in this capacity for nearly ten years, and was reliable and hard-working. In one of several commendations penned by Bell, the magistrate praised his "zeal ... integrity and general good conduct". Mamba had "rendered efficient service in the collection of Hut Tax, Registration of Huts, in taking the Census, and in managing the Intelligence Department of the office in connection with the natives in

this District". (4) In effect, Mamba served a form of apprenticeship to the post of headman. As the reference to "managing the Intelligence Department" indicates, his duties included the provision of secret information to the magistrate. By late 1892, Mamba's desire for promotion and Bell's clash with Sigidi intersected. One of Bell's tactics in depriving Sigidi of patronage was to replace headmen loyal to the chief - on death or dismissal - with magisterial appointees. In August 1893, Sigidi complained about the appointment of headmen without his knowledge, and said they refused "to acknowledge me". (5) One of these unwelcome newcomers was Mamba.

The new headman addressed himself to his task with vigour. His first three years in office were notable for a series of achievements that could only have been accomplished by an active or interventionist version of headmanship. In August 1895 Mamba buttressed a claim for a pay rise with the argument that his location (Lota location) was the largest in Idutywa, and until recently had been one in which thieves and escaped prisoners used to hide.

Since my appointment, you will please perceive that there is less crime committed, the people being convinced that whenever an offence was committed, the accused parties would be promptly taken to the office to be dealt with by the magistrate. (6)

Moreover, his location was one in which all the Hut Tax had been paid, and "the first to pay the [Glen Grey] General Rate in a large batch". Mamba also started a school in the location and built a school house.

Another indication of the impact Mamba made was the role he played in the district's response to the Glen Grey Act (1894). In Idutywa, the initial response was one of apprehension and hostility; Sigidi, Zenzile, and other senior chiefs and headmen resisted it strongly. At a meeting on October 24 1894, Mamba made an artful speech, couching pointed criticism of the Act in the form of reluctant acquiescence. "We accept the law of Government but had it not already been made law we would have had certain things to say", he began, and proceeded with detailed criticisms of the labour tax and district rate. Nevertheless, he added, "some of us are pleased to have schools" and he called for greater governmental contributions to aid local education. When the assembled headmen - having finally accepted the Act - elected District Councillors, Mamba joined Sigidi, Zenzile, and Matambeko, and at subsequent District Council meetings he played a forceful role. (7)

A further feature of his headmanship in the years 1892-5 was Mamba's embroilment in a series of controversies. Among those that are documented, Mamba was variously at odds with a powerful commoner in his location, with a missionary, with a trader, and with the magistrate. In the first of these, one Gogushe lodged a complaint against the headman and a civil case was heard in the magistrate's court in January 1893. Bell, in a private letter to the Chief Magistrate (CMT), defended Mamba against charges of misdemeanour, and confided that

Gogushe is the wealthiest man in the location and is generally at variance with the Hdman. On this occasion the Headman is also wealthy and equal to Gogushe in intelligence; much inclined to require obedience from him, which has never been exacted by previous headmen, to this fact I attribute Gogushe's bitter feeling ... (8)

Mamba emerged victorious from the ensuing litigation, as he was also to do from clashes with the Rev. W. S. Davies and the trader D. Venables. He was obviously not only an energetic headman but also a determined protagonist. In his next engagement, against the most formidable opponent in the district, he overreached himself and suffered a defeat no less devastating for being his first.

(ii) Mamba defeated

It is not possible to pinpoint the moment at which Mamba and W. T. Brownlee (magistrate from early in 1893) first fell into conflict, but it seems that animosity of some intensity commenced early on in Brownlee's tenancy of the office. By 1893, Brownlee had been in the Cape civil service for 17 years. Upright, deeply moral, and occasionally self-righteous, he was something of a martinet, particularly with regard to "immorality" and liquor. His temperance views were obliquely referred to in a letter to the Umtata Herald, 13 May 1893, that was mainly concerned to make a more damaging complaint against the new magistrate. Addressed to "The Water Drinker" and signed by "Horned Owl", it charged that Brownlee was favouring Sigidi's faction in the district. (There was definitely an element of truth in this. Brownlee's successor noted in 1897 that he treated Sigidi with less consideration than Brownlee had; Brownlee appointed two of Sigidi's sons to positions in the police and goal.) In the course of a public hearing in 1896, authorship of two anti-Brownlee letters by the Horned Owl was formally attributed to Mamba.

One suspects that Mamba would have hesitated to wage as public a campaign against Brownlee as he did in the closing months of 1895 had not the magistrate's position already been made precarious by his feud with a sizeable faction of the colonists in the town. Passions ran high during the "great tennis club row" (which deserves a full Gilbert and Sullivan setting) - and a petition was circulated calling for Brownlee's removal. By 12 October 1895, the CMT wrote to the Under Secretary for Native Affairs (USNA) about the "very considerable friction" between "Mr Brownlee and the people of his district both white and native" and recommended his transfer to Kentani. (9) It was against this background that Mamba joined openly in the attempt to unseat Brownlee. He organized meetings throughout the district, and on 22 November invited (and secured) the attendance of the CMT at a large meeting.

Mamba acted as spokesman for the (predominantly Mfengu) headmen and commoners present, claiming to represent the views of more than half the headmen of the district. The main charge levelled against Brownlee was that his magistracy had been divisive: Ndlambe, Gcaleka and Mfengu had "split up, and we do not like each other ... We were formerly unanimous as Government told us to agree with each other". Secondly, Mamba listed a number of Brownlee's judicial procedures that had caused concern: arbitrary fines in adultery cases, failure to consult assessors (i.e. headmen) on points of customary law, and so on. Thirdly, a series of administrative objections was lodged, centring in particular on the magistrate's handling of the forest regulations and his relations with the District Council. Mamba followed up the meeting with a cable to Rhodes, the premier, claiming that administration in the district was at a point of breakdown because of Brownlee's deteriorating relations with the headman. (10)

Brownlee fought back against his removal to Kentani, and against Mamba, now clearly defined as his immediate enemy. In a long letter to the CMT, Brownlee requested a fair hearing in public: this (he reminded his superior) was a basic right of every British subject. Moreover, he argued, the meeting which the CMT had attended was a packed one, secretly arranged.

I can further show [continued Brownlee] that this whole matter is got up by Enoch Mamba, who has gone about the district cajoling and intimidating, and would be delighted to see me away from this, as I have been trying to curtail the almost unlimited power which he has until recently assumed to himself. (11)

Brownlee carried his case, and in February 1896 a public hearing was presided over by W. C. Scully, magistrate at Ngamakwe. His long report on the hearing is a curious blend of formal "judicial" impartiality with bias and animus. Although not close acquaintances, Brownlee and Scully were brother magistrates; they both held pronounced anti-liquor views; and they shared a distaste for "educated Natives".

Scully took evidence on no fewer than 20 complaints against Brownlee, including the Tennis Club issue. In summary, he found that Brownlee was innocent of causing dissension between the tribes; that the magistrate had been most injudicious in his dealings with the tennis club; that he had made at least one "serious mistake" and committed "certain irregularities" in administrative and judicial duties; on other judicial and administrative charges, Brownlee was exonerated. The magistrate's conduct (found Scully) had been placed under "a fierce and hostile light".

If however, his brother magistrates (myself included) had had an Enoch Mamba with his notebook at their respective elbows for several years, and then their doing exposed to the same searching scrutiny, - I wonder 'who should 'scape whipping'.

An attack on Mamba was, indeed, one of the main features of the report. At various points, Mamba's evidence was held to be "inconsistent", "discrepant", "malicious", and "utterly idiotic". The headman was

an extreme type of a class of Native which forms one of the worst of the many questionable products generated through our methods of (so called) civilizing the Natives. He is a man who, by his own admission, leads an evil life; education has developed in him a degree of cunning ... and his official post gave him opportunities of exercising a most evil influence.

Mamba should be dismissed forthwith as headman: if "headmen be allowed, with impunity, to foment agitations against magistrates without adequate cause", the consequences would be "most disastrous". (12) On 7 April 1896, James Rose-Innes in the Native Affairs office pronounced Scully's findings "fair and reasonable" and ordered Mamba's dismissal.

Mamba wrote to the CMT and the USNA in June and September 1896, protesting against his dismissal. He pointed out - correctly - that he had not been on trial; and requested (just as Brownlee had six months before!) "to have my case tried, so that I may be able to bring my own witnesses to exculpate myself" and "defend myself like any other civil servant". (13)

(iii) Mamba resurgent

The last mentioned letters from Mamba came not from Idutywa but from Indwe. Mamba lived there until 1901 or 1902, and set himself up as a labour agent. To succeed as a licensed labour agent was one of the most lucrative ventures open to an educated Transkeian in the nineties. There was a mounting demand for men along the Witwatersrand and also (prior to 1904) a great hunger for unskilled hands at the ports and along the lines of rail. Labour agents enjoyed rich pickings as they shuttled their consignments of work-seekers to a variety of competing employers. While they sometimes received a retainer from contractors, essentially they earned by results, being paid an agreed sum per head for the workers they secured.

The indications are that Mamba did well financially out of his recruiting work. His profits were great enough to lead him to explore various means of investing them. After his return to Idutywa, Mamba applied for an agent's licence in that district. Presumably this was not renewed after it expired in December 1903, for by 1904 Mamba was describing himself as a farmer, and referring in the past tense to his labour business. He seems to have paid a good deal of attention to agriculture on his lands, and was a typically "improving" small farmer of the period. At his death, his estate included a wagon, a scotch cart, a buggy, three ploughs, two harrows and a planter. (14) He did not give up his labour recruiting activities entirely, serving as a runner for a number of years and - in 1912 - acting briefly as a salaried recruiter

with the WNLA.

Mamba's eight years of (enforced) absence from the headmanship also saw him enter politics on a broader stage than that provided by Lota location. In October 1901, Mamba informed the magistrate and CMT of the formation of a Natives' Vigilance Association (Iliso Lomsi) which intended "looking after the educational and local interest of the Transkeian natives generally". Government approval sought by the NVA was in fact undermined by Mamba's reputation, as well as by the CMT's suspicions of "native politics" more generally. Despite the skepticism and hostility of the colonial officials, Mamba and the NVA (of which he was chairman) continued their operations. In 1902-3, Mamba travelled through several districts, setting up branches in them; he lobbied the General Council, the CMT, and his MLA. He summed up the programme of the NVA as favouring the "general advancement of civilisation", parliamentary representation, and "gratifying voters". These aims, Mamba argued, could not be met by magistrates, missionaries, nor the Council system: Transkeian rate-payers were ignored in a way that amounted to "taxation without representation". In several communications, he criticized Transkeian headmen: drawn from the "red" or conservative element, they "troubled themselves mostly about the enlargement of their own locations and their importance". (15)

Mamba's exertions certainly kept him visible as a spokesman for educated Transkeians, and in 1903 and 1904 he was invited to give evidence to a Select Committee on the Glen Grey Act and to SANAC. He journeyed to Cape Town to address the SC on land tenure and title, labour tax, the election of Councils ("the Government take it that they represent the people, whereas they only represent the headmen"), and criticized the treatment of labourers on the mines. To the SC and SANAC, Mamba pressed the claims of his NVA as representing the most progressive African opinion in the Transkei. (16)

What was happening meanwhile in Lota location? Mamba's dismissal in April 1896 did not solve the difficulties of Brownlee or his successors. Six months later a new magistrate (Fitz Bell) wrote that he had "had considerable difficulty" in finding a successor to Mamba. Mamba himself had attempted to intervene, proposing his father as headman. The eventual appointee soon died, and was succeeded by his son, who in turn was deposed by Bell (on grounds of youth and ill-health) after only seven months. In March 1898, an elderly, literate Mfengu was made headman in Lota: he was Stephen Mamba, Enoch's father. In his sixties, Stephen found running a large location an arduous task, and he increasingly relied for assistance upon his son. Cumming, who became magistrate in December 1903, gratefully acknowledged the great assistance in administering the location affairs rendered by Mamba files. In 1904, Mamba wrote a series of letters to Cumming, to the CMT, and to the Prime Minister (skillfully adjusting his tone and his argument in each case). He hoped that his earlier transgression had been sufficiently punished; he had never been convicted of any crime; and (the main burden of his appeal) he would be of great value to the Government. There was not a headman in the Transkei with his level of education; he commanded a large influence; and he would see that the full Glen Grey provisions were enacted in Idutywa. (17) In December 1904, Stephen was retired, and Enoch Mamba was once again placed on the Government pay-roll as headman.

(iv) Mamba dominant

For the next twelve years, Mamba exercised his authority as headman, and also established himself as a doughty participant in several broader political spheres. He served as a District Councillor, and from 1906 until his final illness in 1916 represented Idutywa in the General Council (Bunga). He also became one of the few Transkei politicians to attain any status in Cape - and later South African - political organizations in this period.

In the first of these arenas, Lota location, it is clear that Mamba was an active and even authoritarian figure; that its inhabitants tended to divide between

his supporters (mainly Mfengu and schooled) and those who perforce obeyed him even while they found his rule uncomfortable. He bore down more heavily than most headmen on certain "red" practices, while in the day to day administrative matters he could justly claim by 1912 that "the location I managed has been an example of what Government requires". (18) He had not been back long in his post before being involved in another fierce dispute. The central issue was the control of education, but the episode also revealed much about the actual powers wielded by a determined headman.

A. J. Lennard, missionary at Clarkebury, sought to have Mamba disciplined or dismissed after the headman had damaged the local Wesleyan mission effort in its most vulnerable area, its educational activities. Disapproving of the local Wesleyan teacher, Mamba had opened his own private school, and enrolment in the mission school sagged from 50 to only 18. Lennard claimed that Mamba had used intimidation and force to prevent attendance at the Wesleyan school. From the welter of complicated and contradictory testimonies, the CMT and magistrate found in favour of Mamba. The headman was able to remind the enquiry that he had himself opened the Wesleyan school a decade before; he effectively criticized the Wesleyan teacher for drunkenness; he suggested that a reason for the popularity of his school was that it offered cricket (and obliquely hinted at another drawcard, that he gave some lessons himself!); and concluded virtuously "I never, in any way, tried to get them to go to my private school". This last was a disingenuous claim.

Without entering the details of the hearing, one can extract from the depositions a number of examples of how Mamba induced and influenced parents to change schools. Land allocation was always a crucial weapon at the headman's disposal, and in at least two cases Mamba confiscated arable land belonging to Wesleyans (citing boundary transgressions as the reason). Another vital resource, wood - for fuel, buildings, and sledges - could be collected only with a headman's permit. One witness said he had sent his children to Mamba's school rather than be deprived "of bushes and justice". Another lever used by Mamba was the rule-book: non-performance by commoners of any obligations (the registration of deaths, attendance at meetings) could serve to justify punitive actions taken against the families concerned. The headman's role as intermediary between magistrate and people was also critical, and its withdrawal could be a potent pressure - some who had changed schools reported that Mamba had threatened not to support them in civil cases. (19)

In the District Council, Mamba was without challenge as the dominant local politician: he initiated resolutions, scrutinized Bunga and government decisions, and swayed debates. His oratorical powers, his grasp of legislative and administrative minutiae, and his links with an external constituency also stood him in good stead in the Bunga. Here, too, he was a frequent and vigorous debater (so vigorous as once to have been described by another Councillor as "a member who when he was speaking sometimes threw verbal knobkerries at people"). In a number of major debates - over the draft Act of Union, over the difficulties caused by East Coast Fever, over the outbreak of war - Mamba made the major proposing speeches. His critique of the Act of Union was typically cogent and to the point:

The benefits were obvious so far as the European community is concerned. But in regard to the Natives, who are at present in possession of equal British rights with the white people, the men who met together to devise this draft Act have sought to tamper with those rights ... This Union Parliament ... would provide all legislation for the Territories and all taxes - it would be the source of every measure affecting the Native people. (20)

Another striking feature of Mamba's performances in District and General Councils was the strong populist strain that ran through his political efforts. This could take many forms. At one level, it simply meant championing local interests: Mamba's campaign to have the "Jubilee Hall" in Idutywa returned to the black community, his proposals for greater autonomy for districts vis-à-vis the Bunga, and for the

retention of local funds for local improvements, are examples. More radically, Mamba repeatedly took up the position of popular tribune, and defined his own position as a representative of the masses: when he called, in 1912, for the free dipping of cattle, he said that this was the wish of the people of his district, and that he "voiced the opinion of his country and his people". He contrasted the "easy times" and increasing salaries of Bunga officials with the mounting depression of the rate-payers. (21)

In 1903 Mamba had no links with wider Cape politics. Indeed, there was a frosty exchange between himself and the South African Native Congress. Its most prominent members in 1903 were Rubusana, Javabu and A. K. Soga, and its members (clergymen, teachers, farmers) were almost entirely from Kingwilliamstown and East London. Mamba complained that they could not understand or represent the grievances of the Transkei. But by 1906 the SANC was geographically more broadly based, with 25 branches throughout the Eastern Cape, including half a dozen Transkei districts. Mamba had already joined the SANC by April 1906, when its Queenstown conference elected a "standing committee" to speak for it in the prevailing "critical state of native affairs". The members of the committee were A. K. Soga, M. Pelem, Rubusana, Javabu, D. Dwanya, J. M. Mzimba, S. P. Sihlali - and Mamba. A ministerial minute noted that these were

natives who have attained to some prominence in their various spheres ... among their number are two newspaper editors, three native ministers, a law agent, a government headman, and a successful native trader and labour agent ... as fairly representative a body of advanced Cape Colony natives as could at present be found. (22)

Henceforth, Mamba was to be an active member of the (Cape) SANC and (after 1912) of the SANNC. He became a frequent delegate on committees and deputations. In 1909 he was one of half a dozen Africans nominated at the Bloemfontein conference to address the government on African fears about Union. He attended the 1912 Bloemfontein conference on an inter-state college; gave evidence in 1911 and 1914 to the SC on the Native Labour Bill and to the Beaumont Commission; in 1911 he was a member of a three-man commission on the Wilhelmstal shootings in German SWA. (23) Finally, Mamba was a member of the SANNC deputation that saw F. S. Malan in 1913 over the Natives Land Bill and other issues.

This involvement in politics outside the Transkei must have enhanced the standing he attained within the Territories. An indication of his drawing power as speaker and politician can be gained from an Imvo report (21 September 1909) of a great dinner held by the Nqamakwe Vigilance Association to hear Mamba. A large crowd assembled, having come on foot or on horseback, "everybody saying I must be present where Mamba is". Mamba was introduced as an expert on council matters who had the reputation of "safeguarding the rights of his [native] people" regardless of what the magistrates thought. In the course of his speech, Mamba criticized Pelem and Rubusana for reportedly having made speeches on "racial" (i.e. tribal) lines, and emphasized that "we are one - the Idutywa district is the same as this". His characteristic populism surfaced at several points: he criticized Council expenditure on "vainshows" rather than on education; he called for the replacement of whites "getting big salaries" in council employment by blacks. The admiring reporter concluded by reflecting that "It is a nice thing for a man to be educated, brave, and have natural wisdom ... Men like this one could govern people's affairs, given proper responsibility".

Conclusion

This paper has concentrated on knitting together stray strands of biographical data so as to provide a coherent account of the political career of Enoch Mamba. Yet even a paper so firmly focussed on the life of one man may not be wholly devoid of wider significance. This is not an apology for a biographical approach: rather, let the first conclusion to be drawn from these pages be an assertion that there

is room in South African historical writing for biographical investigations. The underdeveloped state of South African historiography is such that amongst a wealth of sources entire episodes, areas, and individual lives - as well as processes and structures - await discovery, description and analysis. The appeal is not for biography for its own sake. The recovery of individual lives from "the enormous condescension of posterity" (24) ought not to be an end in itself for the historian. The merit of the exercise lies in the explanatory value yielded up by it: in the extent to which the individual's aspirations and activities, conflicts or alliances with others, illuminate the social structure in which he or she moved, and how that structure promoted or inhibited his or her movements.

Between roughly 1890 and 1914, the forces brought to bear on African communities in South Africa intensified and altered. In very general terms, the demand for labour rose rapidly; access by black peasants to land was made more difficult and more costly; taxes were raised and more efficiently collected; and a great deal of attention was paid to the policing and regulating of black communities in towns, on farms, and in the "reserves". After the South African War, the close links between these tendencies were formally expressed in the search for a common "native policy". This thrust towards a more centralized and more elaborate social control saw the property-owning ruling classes relying increasingly upon state action to underpin their interests. If the assault was launched upon a number of salients and by various methods, so too was the resistance to it and the forms it took. Consciousness of these pressures was indicated by collective actions ranging from rural uprisings to constitutional appeals to an imperial conscience. In particular, these years saw an increasingly active political role by members of an educated African petty bourgeoisie, the emergence of a number of "pan-tribal" or nationalist political associations, and - through the ideology of Ethiopianism - attempts to wrest educational, cultural and religious control from colonial hands.

It is within this nexus of social developments and conflicts that headman Mamba's career must be interpreted. Walshe has characterized the increasing political role of the African petty bourgeoisie ("the new elite") in the Cape as a "broadening of political loyalties and ideology" (25), and Mamba's career illustrates this very precisely. His political activities were initially extremely parochial and circumscribed; his early years as headman were firmly in the mould of Idutywa's "three communities" politics. Mamba's first public commitment to a community wider than the Idutywa Mfengu was in his opposition to Brownlee's (allegedly) divisive politics. From this adventitious or opportunist start, Mamba moved very rapidly to more substantial and more considered exercises in supra-tribal politics. His conception of Iliso Lomsi was clearly that of a movement open to all Africans in the Transkei, and between 1902 and 1904 he attempted to put this into practice, trying to broaden his political base beyond Idutywa and beyond the Mfengu. In 1903 he rejected the protonationalist SANC as unsuited to the needs of the Transkei, but by 1906 had moved to participation and leadership in the movement. Mamba arrived at political maturity in terms of African unity, and in his final active decade did not deviate from the vision of full African participation in a broader polity.

He resembled other Cape African leaders of his day, but was in certain respects distinctive. Unlike them, he did not have an urban base, and hence his political tactics were likely to be different. It was not merely that he remained closely involved in the concerns and problems of the rural Transkei, but his rhetoric and political style were decisively not those of Jabavu, Rubusana, or Pelem. When Sen. W. E. Stanford toured his constituency in 1909 (to gauge reactions to Union) he met Mamba in Engcobo and penned this unfavourable reaction in his diary:

... met Enoch Mamba here in the morning. He favours the Native Congress at Bloemfontein and an appeal to the Imperial Government. He is rather of the aggressive type of educated native whose attitude is not likely to help his people. Better for them I think that they should have their white friends to fight this 'battle'. (26)

A striking feature of Mamba's career - which seems to reflect both his political base in the Transkei and his preferred tactical approach - is the absence of any attempt to fight his political battles through alliances with "white friends". Far more than his contemporaries in the SANC and the Cape ANC, Mamba adhered to a political line which presupposed the ability of Africans to make their own case - as well as the justice of that case. Indeed, in several speeches over a number of years, there can be discerned what one may anachronistically but conveniently label an "Africanist" theme in Mamba's political utterances. His (1904) sympathy with Ethiopianism, his reiterated demands that Africans should replace various white employees in the Transkei, his pointed rejection of existing authorities (magistrates, missionaries and the Council system) as unable to serve African advancement or development, are components of this theme. Closely linked with it is a perennial insistence upon the value of education, the need for more and qualitatively better education. It is perhaps in his accents as a "populist moderniser" that Mamba may strike present-day students as most interesting, as most distinct from his contemporaries, and as a resonant "voice in the Big House".

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Notes

- (1) W. D. Hammond-Tooke, Command or Consensus: the Development of Transkeian Local Government (Cape Town, 1975), p. 108.
- (2) Cape Archives (CA), Chief Magistrate of Transkei (CMT) series 3, vol. 98 (3/98). In August 1893 Sigidi made a lengthy statement of his grievances, including a detailed account of his personal history since 1856. Enclosed in Resident Magistrate (RM) Idutywa to CMT, 30.5.94.
- (3) CA, CMT, 2/26, RM Idut. to CMT, 5.5.1891. And CMT, 3/101, RM Idut. to CMT, 22.2.1902.
- (4) Testimonial by Mr Charles Bell (n.d., but written on occasion of Bell's departure from Idutywa, Feb? 1893) appears several times in documents as enclosure, e.g. CMT 3/99, C194/96, RM Idut. to CMT, 31.7.1896.
- (5) CA, CMT 3/98, encl. in RM Idut to CMT, 30.5.94.
- (6) CA, CMT 3/99, Mamba to RM Idut. 26.8.1895, encl. in RM Idut. to CMT, 30.5.94.
- (7) CA, CMT, 3/99, RM Idut. to CMT, 31.10.1894.
- (8) CA, CMT, 3/98, RM Idut. to CMT, 21.12.1892.
- (9) CA, Native Affairs (NA), 449, CMT to USNA, 12.10.1895.
- (10) CA, NA 449, 457/95.
- (11) CA, NA 449.
- (12) Scully's report and much accompanying documentation can be found together at CA, NA 449.
- (13) CMT, 3/192, Mamba to CMT, 29.6.1896; Mamba to USNA, 14.9.96.
- (14) Archives of Office of Supreme Court, Cape Town, File 160.542, for Mamba's will and accompanying documents.
- (15) CA, NA 527/A510.
- (16) See Cape Printed Papers, Al.-1903, "Report of the Select Committee on the Glen Grey Act", pp. 11-36; SANAC, Vol. II, pp. 1032-1048.
- (17) CA, CMT, 3/102, Mamba to RM Idut., 4.12.1903; CA, NA 675 file B2552.
- (18) CA, Series 1/IDW (Corr. of RM Idut.), vol. 11, E. Mamba to USNA, 5.7.1912; RM Idut. to CMT, 24.7.1912, confirmed Mamba's claim: "Mamba has certainly made a

good headman, and kept his ward in excellent order."

- (19) The entire documentation of this case is in CA, CMT 3/579.
- (20) Transkeian Territories General Council, Report ... of Proceedings for 1909 Session, p. xix.
- (21) TTGC, Report ... of Proceedings for 1912 Session, p. 52.
- (22) CA, Government House (GH), 35/85, minute encl. in Walter Hely-Hutcheson to Earl of Elgin, 5.6.1906.
- (23) I am indebted for this last detail to William Beinart. For the Wilhelmstal incident, see his "Cape Workers in German South-West Africa, 1904-1912", above.
- (24) E. P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (Harmondsworth, 1968), p. 13.
- (25) P. Walshe, The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa (Berkeley, 1971), p. 4.
- (26) Jagger library, University of Cape Town, Stanford Papers, Diary, vol. 39, 8.3.1909. (I am grateful to André Odendaal for directing me to this entry. My discussion of the [Cape] SANC also benefited from his research on this and other organizations.)