

CLASS FORMATION, IDEOLOGY AND TRANSITION IN SWAZILAND

by

Richard M Levin

Class Formation in Swaziland

The appearance of class society in Swaziland has been traced to the pre-colonial period. (1) Here it is argued that the tributary relationship whereby aristocrats and chiefs were empowered to extract surplus labour time from their subjects through an "umemo" (the summoning by a chief of his subjects to a work party), along with their control over the allocation of land, gave rise to the formation of a class of aristocrats comprising the monarchy, senior princes and chiefs, on the one hand, and a class of commoners, on the other hand. Nevertheless, the arrival of concession seekers and the penetration of the capital relation in Swaziland following the gold rush on the Witwatersrand, transformed both the structure of Swazi society and the trajectory of the historical process in Swaziland. The land partition of 1907 and its subsequent implementation meant that vast numbers of Swazi found themselves alienated from the land and were hence forced to seek wage-labour on the Witwatersrand mines or on white farms, both in South Africa and in Swaziland. Increasingly, the capitalist revolution in South Africa initiated by the mineral discoveries came to rupture the reproductive cycle of pre-colonial society, and hence its capacity to sustain itself independently of the development of capitalism in the region.

During the early phases of capital penetration, the pre-capitalist ruling alliance therefore entered a period of crisis. Expropriation of Swazi land meant an erosion of their basis of power, and it is in this light that their early deputations and protestations to the British colonial authorities must be seen. Their position of dominance within the Swazi formation was further eroded by the establishment of a colonial state apparatus, first Boer and later British, which in the words of Sir Alfred Milner, the British High Commissioner to South Africa, intended to

... deal with Swaziland as nearly as possible on the same lines as an ordinary district of the Transvaal. (2)

But, as local settler capital and South African capital, under the aegis of the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association, started to compete for labour power, the chiefs and aristocracy began to assume a pivotal role in this process. Here, the indigenous ruling alliance stood between the unscrupulous labour recruiters and the labour market. Their acceptance of the finality of the land partition in the face of the failure of all peaceful means of protest was expressed by Prince Malunge in 1909:

The land has been divided. We have no power to stop the government or to say do not do this; but all I say now is that the partition is now finished, it is done. The government knew that we did not like this partition ... we have no power ... we wash our hand of the whole question. (3)

Henceforth, the Swazi aristocracy sought to restore their authority over the land within the framework of the land partition, that is through the acceptance, albeit unconscious, of the dominance of capitalist relations and their corresponding forms of ownership, by endeavouring to repurchase land lost to concessionaires and the crown. In its attempts to reconstitute itself as a hegemonic class within a transformed Swazi society, the Swazi aristocracy used its power as a withering pre-capitalist class in what can objectively be viewed as an attempt to foster a process of primitive accumulation. Accordingly, a £3-£5 levy per head was set on all migrants to the South African mines by the aristocracy, and Queen Labotsibeni entered the payroll of the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association and was given £30 per month for her role in labour recruitment. The aristocracy had already been involved in local "deals", so that in 1906 Swaziland Tin Limited entered into an agreement with Prince Malunge whereby the Prince supplied five hundred labourers to the company at 10 shillings per head. (4) Initial success led to the acquisition, through repurchase, of 40,000 acres of crown land in 1914, to which Resident Commissioner Coryndon acceded since

... it afforded the chiefs the satisfaction that they have accomplished some real good for their people without incurring the hostility of the administration. (5)

Interestingly enough, Coryndon had already refused to consider other Swazi applicants without "any standing beyond the ordinary [sic] native" and in 1914 he awarded the Swazi Nation a "gift" of 28,000 acres of crown land on condition that future land transactions were made with the approval of the colonial state. But these initial successes were short-lived, for in January 1915, Viscount Buxton, the new High Commissioner, began to regulate land transactions in a manner favouring European settler interests, a policy which persisted until the 1940s. Nevertheless, as indirect rulers of the colonial state, the aristocracy and chiefs were able to inaugurate the Swaziland National Fund (SNF), which drew in a share of certain taxes and, during the later stages of colonialism, the proceeds of all fees and fines in the Swazi courts. The SNF was subsequently transformed into the Swaziland National Treasury, which by the '60s boasted of a £70,000 annual revenue from which the King, Queen Mother and chiefs drew their wages. (6)

When the King's power to appoint and dismiss chiefs was withdrawn in 1941, King Sobhuza, who had ascended the throne in 1922, sent a petition to King George VI in which complaints were made on the land question. The result was that a Colonial Development and Welfare Grant of £140,000 was advanced to buy 135,000 acres of land, while a further 216,000 acres of crown land were designated for Swazi use. Interesting to note is that this land, which came to form the Land Settlement Scheme, although officially classified as Swazi land under the control of the King-in-council, was allocated outside the indigenous pre-capitalist system of land allocation. These early attempts at the development of individual smallholder plots were not very successful, however, and in 1946 29,000 acres of the land was provided for the establishment of Peak Timbers. A new trend was set in motion, and in 1945 a large ranch was purchased, following a general cattle collection. (7) This led to the relaunching of a general levy in 1946 to buy land and the formal establishment of the Lifa Fund by the aristocracy and their allies through the £5 or one ox levied on every male adult. Under these efforts, Swazi Nation Land made advances and by 1960 had come to constitute 53.25 per cent of the total surface of the country, as against 35.75 per cent after the 1907 proclamation. (8) Maladministration and charges of abuse through corruption (9) led to the disintegration of the Lifa Fund project, although it was renewed afresh in the form of Tibiyo Takangwane in the post-Independence period.

These historical processes gave rise to the transformation of the class structure of Swazi society whereby the alliance of aristocrats and chiefs steadily attempted to locate themselves within the complex of capitalist relations. Current analysis has placed much emphasis on the "unique character" of the Swazi post-colonial state form and the dominance of the "Swazi rulers" as the class in command of the state apparatus. Thus Daniel, following Fransman, has asserted that at independence state power was assumed not by class forces within the capitalist mode but by the "traditional rulers" from the non-capitalist mode, who lacked, moreover, any material base in the "capitalist sector". (10)

It is necessary, however, to distinguish between the conceptualisation of class structure and the process of ideological practice. Classes are identifiable at a structural level through the insertion of individual subjects in the process of production. However, class practices are influenced by a complex combination of ideological connotations. Hence, while on the surface the dominant class in Swazi post-colonial society may appear to be the "Swazi ruling class", their class belonging must be traced to their location in the production process. Since the production and reproduction processes in Swaziland, and hence the social structure itself, during the colonial and post-colonial periods have been dominated by capitalism, the class structure of Swaziland must be conceptualised in relation to the capitalist mode of production. (11) During the twentieth century, the Swazi ruling alliance has had to transcend its class determination within pre-capitalist society and consolidate a material base within the capitalist production process. Winter has argued that higher productivity through the development of the forces of production on Swazi Nation Land partially offset the smaller amount of labour time which the Swazi aristocracy and chiefs could extract from their subjects. (12) Moreover, it can be argued that the tendency for capitalist relations to arise on Swazi Nation Land favoured the aristocracy and chiefs both through their control over land allocation as well as through the cash they received as tax collectors and indirect rulers of the colonial state.

Hence the colonial period witnessed the emergence through transition of the pre-capitalist ruling alliance (although this does not preclude the inclusion of commoners as well), a petty-bourgeoisie of owner-peasants whose surplus money and means of subsistence secured an annual supply over and above that which was needed for their own reproduction. Yet, as Mao Tse Tung has argued, this class constantly desires to transform itself into an independent bourgeoisie (13) - precisely because it is a transitional class. Noteworthy in the case of the erstwhile dominant class in pre-capitalist Swazi society is that certain comprador characteristics were revealed. Initially, these were repressed through the large-scale alienation of Swazi Nation Land, but in the post-World War II period, after the British had established a more conventional form of indirect rule (14), elements of the emergent petty-bourgeoisie increasingly became "vassals of the international bourgeoisie, depending upon imperialism for their existence and development" (15), marking their transition to a more overtly comprador role. This is not revealed exclusively in the transformation of the SNF into the Swazi National Treasury, but as capital penetration under the aegis of British and South African capital intensified a new trend which was set in the '60s proved to be none other than the precursor of the familiar pattern of the post-independence conjuncture. In 1962, for example, the Usutu Pulp Company bought up two small areas which the Commonwealth Development Corporation (CDC) had initially afforested for the "Swazi Nation", in return for which the latter acquired a £50,000 interest in the company. (16) For Taylor (17), this reveals a specific level of comprador accumulation whereby the material basis of this faction of capital is formed by a "joint investment with foreign capital in units producing for export".

State, Tibiyo and the Development of the Comprador Bourgeoisie

Control over the state apparatus by this embryonic faction of capital under the leadership of King Sobhuza II in the post-independence period considerably strengthened their hand. State-directed accumulation was thereby ensured not to run counter to, but rather to complement, comprador accumulation: indeed, the latter, through the establishment of Tibiyo Takangwane, soon came to eclipse the former. Initially established following the reinvestment of mineral rights with the King "in trust for the nation", enshrined in the independence constitution of 1968, the first Tibiyo committee appointed by the King and entrusted with the task of administering the fund soon realised that more finance was required than royalties and mineral fees could provide. Henceforth, the committee embarked on a policy of joint investment with foreign capital and the acquisition of shares in major companies. Strategies were formulated to obtain loan arrangements with potential foreign investment partners, and, following negotiations involving United Nations and Commonwealth-backed legal assistance, deals were clinched with Lonhro, Tarner and Newall, and Spa Holdings. (18) The cash flow that followed enabled Tibiyo to enter the field of land purchase and

development. Despite the fact that, at an ideological level, the land purchased is said to be "held in trust" for the nation, the relations of production and exchange prevalent on such land are those of capitalism. In 1976, the King decreed that royalty fees previously received by Tibiyo were henceforth to be transferred to a new organisation called Tisuka Takangwane. Thereafter, Tibiyo's activities were to be financed by its commercial and agricultural investments, through dividend payments from its shareholdings and other income generated through these projects. Tibiyo's funds have been spent on land purchases, share acquisitions and commercial and agricultural investments. The latter accounts for the largest expenditure, where millions are invested annually to secure revenue. The Tibiyo financial report of accumulated funds for 1981 revealed a total of E46,071 and reported income for 1978/9 was E9.4 million, of which E9.3 million accrued from dividends. (19) King Sobhuza has said that

Tibiyo is neither a competitor, nor the duplicate of government's activities and programmes, but a complementary organisation to fill some gaps [sic] left behind by colonial rule, and to give hand to the government in the great task of nation building. (20)

The recent appointment of Tibiyo's managing director, Dr Sishayi Nxumale, as Minister of Finance has led to attempts to bring development agency status to Tibiyo, a move which will no doubt enhance Tibiyo's capacity to secure loans and finance. Increasingly, the activities of Tibiyo are poised to achieve a partial break from their total dependence on foreign capital and thereby launch a more nationally directed, albeit dependent, process of capital accumulation. The development of the Third Sugar Mill, "Simunye", where for the first time Tibiyo and the state jointly held majority equity, has heralded a new era in capital accumulation in Swaziland. Indications are that an emergent indigenous bourgeoisie has now accumulated sufficient capital to employ labour productively and to launch further ventures as majority equity holders under the aegis of foreign multinational capital. This is substantiated by more recent developments, such as the establishment of the Tibiyo Strawberry Fruit plantation in Malkerns, which aims to supply Swaziland Fruit Processing Plant Corporation with 2,000 tonnes of fresh strawberries, the Langa National Brick Works, which has provided the base for an extended ceramics industry, and the operation of an Angora goat-breeding scheme for the development of a mohair industry.

The so-called land deal (21) with South Africa can also be viewed as an attempt by the comprador bourgeoisie to develop their autonomy as a national capitalist class. It is here that the contradictory nature of the path taken by comprador accumulation, as a transitional phase in the development of a national bourgeoisie, is revealed. It is likely that elements of the comprador have been frustrated by their incapacity to overcome their contradictory role of commitment to industrialisation with a concurrent restricted internal market and limited demand secured through the conservation of a highly unproductive system of land tenure to maintain low wages. Yet it is at the same time the reproduction of the latter which has been seminal in securing ideological legitimacy for the hegemony of the comprador. In order to burst through the restraints imposed by comprador accumulation, the emergent Swazi national bourgeoisie believe that the independent port of Kosi Bay (from South Africa) will enable them to unshackle themselves from the South African Customs Union and hence allow for their unfettered accumulation through the protection of local industries, the restriction of imported commodities, which, added to the control they exercise over any developments of capitalism in agriculture, would greatly strengthen their hands.

The foregoing developments have not, however, occurred unproblematically, but have unfolded in the midst of successive struggles and crises. The precise manner in which the unity of Swazi society has been secured and the crucial role of pre-capitalist political and ideological practices therein, forms the subject of the subsequent section of our exposition. But, before proceeding, it is necessary to stress that there is no instrumental transposition of class categories developed in our previous analysis: membership of the royal Dlamini or any chiefly clan does

not denote petty bourgeois or comprador class belonging; nor does bourgeois in any way suggest membership of a royal or chiefly clan.

Class Struggle and Ideology in Colonial and Post-Colonial Swaziland

The problem facing this analysis now is to demonstrate how the penetration and domination of capitalist relations in Swaziland have been predicated upon the evolution of new, as well as the conservation of existing, political, economic and ideological practices which contribute to the reproduction of the relations of class domination and subordination implicit in capitalist relations of production. While the dominant contradiction at the level of mode of production - the struggle between workers and capitalists at the point of production - constitutes the decisive and distinctive terrain of class struggle, struggles do manifest themselves in a variety of forms which are articulated in various ways with this overarching social contradiction. In his formulation of a theory of populism, Ernesto Laclau has developed the notion of the "relative continuity of popular traditions", which he contrasts with the "historical discontinuities which characterise class structures". (22) He has also argued that

... the process of social reproduction is not just the reproduction of the dominant mode of production but also of its conditions, one of which is ideology; and that the greater the importance in a social formation of those sectors which do not participate directly in dominant production relations, the greater will be the importance ... of ideological processes for social reproduction as a whole. (23)

The point at issue for imperialist Britain on the eve of decolonisation was how to effect a smooth transition to independence in Swaziland. Such a transition would best be effected by a class or faction thereof which would bring about ideological unity in the society by articulating its ideological practice outside the domain of antagonisms arising from the dominant relations of production. The popular ideology of the petty-bourgeoisie faction spearheaded by the King relied heavily on the concept of "tradition", which served to mystify the essential contradiction in the Swazi society posed at the level of mode of production by capitalist relations of exploitation. Hence, in the build-up to independence, the chief antagonism appeared to shift on to the political and ideological terrains, thus taking the form of a contradiction purely between the colonial state and the mass of the Swazi people. The popular democratic ideology of "tradition" through its appeal to the mass of the Swazi people, based on Swazi Nation Land, ensured that the essential antagonism of capital remained extraneous to the field of political and ideological struggle that now shifted its centre of gravity towards the resuscitation of popular traditions. These themselves

... are the residue of unique and irreducible historical experiences, and as such, constitute a more solid and durable structure of meanings than the social structure itself. (24)

In this way, the intrinsic quality of the conflict has been mystified, and indeed continues to be mystified. The maintenance of specific non-capitalist practices has ensured the continuity required by capital in general for sustained accumulation and expansion, in so far as the transitional bourgeois alliance of the King has thus far proved itself capable of diffusing class struggles through the reproduction of elements of pre-capitalist Swazi society. Particularly crucial here is the leverage which the King has exercised over the peasantry and semi-proletariat based on Swazi Nation Land - and the pre-colonial system of land tenure constitutes an important aspect of that influence - since, if they were to be drawn into an alliance with a proletariat that has shown itself capable of extra-legal strike action, the consequences could prove ominous for the role of capital.

Indeed, the build-up to independence witnessed a series of workers' struggles in the early 1960s. (25) The climax was reached in 1963, when a 2,500 strong strike of sugar plantation workers in the Big Bend area was followed by the biggest strike in Swazi history thus far, in May 1963, at the Turner and Newall controlled asbestos mine in Bulembu in the North-West region of the country. After Mbabane workers had registered their solidarity by engaging in a mass stay-away, the British Government decided to send in a contingent of the Gordon Highlanders stationed in Kenya to stem the tide of worker militancy. When the King sent a representative to Mbabane to urge striking men and women back to work, he was ignored, as were his pleas to workers in Bulembu: the crisis had revealed that both the "traditional authority" and the colonial state were incapable of diffusing the volatile situation without recourse to a huge show of force. It also demonstrated the ambiguous role of the King vis-à-vis the workers and the colonial state:

When the strike spread, the administration vainly asked the Ngwenyama to provide men from his royal 'regiments' to protect workers against intimidation. And when the British troops arrived, the workers appealed just as vainly to the Ngwenyama to intercede with the authorities on their behalf. (25)

But, nevertheless, certain sections of capital had been impressed by the King's hostile reaction to the workers, as were several colonial administrators. Ironically, it was under the influence of Van Wyk de Vries, a prominent South African Broederbond and lawyer, that the King was persuaded to form a political party which became known as the "Imbokodvo" National Movement. (27) "Imbokodvo", which means a hard, compact crushing stone, stood for the "continuance of the monarchy, Swazi customs, mineral and land rights, and the prerogative of the Ngwenyama". (28) In May 1964, in the build-up to the first "democratic" elections in Swaziland, a joint delegation from the Swazi Democratic Party, the Ngwane National Liberatory Congress and the Swaziland Progressive Party produced a memorandum for presentation to the Colonial Secretary, in which they expressed their grave fears in connection with the formulation of the new party:

The new party is in a position to use directly or indirectly the financial resources of the various organs of the tribal authority and to exert on our predominantly rural population various forms of pressure and intimidation stemming from the control of land allocation by the chiefs. (29)

Amidst further desperate unheeded charges of coercion and abuse of power by the chiefs from the opposition parties, the Imbokodvo Movement gained crushing victories in both the 1964 and the 1967 pre-independence elections. Yet, it was precisely the decisive influence which this faction of the petty-bourgeois politicians wielded over the overwhelming majority of the peasantry on Swazi Nation Land that rendered them indispensable to the needs of foreign and local settler capitalists, who were all too keen to throw the strength of their financial backing behind them. Prominent Afrikaner Nationalists like Dr Donges were invited in the mid-1960s by Carl Todd, a local settler with business interests in South Africa, to visit the King, and two influential ministers, including future Prime Minister John Voster, visited the King at his hunting lodge on the eve of the foundation of the Imbokodvo movement. While the actual contents of the discussions were never revealed, they were followed by repeated broadcasts over South Africa Radio by Todd, pleading for support for the Imbokodvo party and appeals for South African state support for the economic development of Swaziland. (30)

The only serious challenge to Imbokodvo hegemony came from the Ngwane National Liberatory Congress (NNLC), under the leadership of Dr Ambrose Zwane, who pursued a more "socialist" orientated populism coloured by an "Africanist" rhetoric, and whose appeal was extended to workers, peasants and radical sections of the petty bourgeoisie alike. Indeed, it was prominent members of this party like Prince Dumisa Dlamini who were instrumental in fostering the development of trade unionism and in facilitating the organisation that eventually saw the 1963 worker strikes spreading throughout the country. A press release by the NNLC on the eve of the independence elections claimed that:

The NNLC is a party that draws its authority and its authenticity from the masses of the people ... we are a party of dedicated freedom fighters determined to bring freedom and independence to the country ... [Mbokodvo] is a pawn of international imperialism, a real tool of white settlerism and an undemocratic organisation whose struggle is not indigenous [sic] and therefore inimical to the attainment of national independence.

Fransman (31) has demonstrated how the real standard of living of the majority of workers in the private sector declined during the post-independence period, so that more than 50 per cent of the total labour force employed in the private sector was faced with either constant or declining wages over and above a 6 per cent increase in the retail price index for unskilled workers. This would help to account for the ascent of Dr Zwane's NNLC which won the Mpumalanga constituency, giving it three seats in the House of Assembly in the 1972 General Election. Noteworthy is the fact that this constituency contained a high proportion of sugar plantation and estate workers from the Lubombo sugar belt. Shortly after the elections, however, Thomas Ngwenya, one of the victorious Congress MPs, was deported to South Africa as an "undesirable citizen", a move that was successfully reversed in the High Court. Nevertheless, Ngwenya was subsequently rearrested and restricted, and the Swazi parliament passed an amendment to the Immigration Act which established a Tribunal of five members elected by the Deputy Prime Minister to deal with "citizenship disputes". In March 1973, the Swaziland Court of appeal dissolved the Act as unconstitutional. As Dr Ambrose Zwane himself had stated in Parliament on 13 November 1972,

This House here has no power to make laws that are not subject to the jurisdiction of the Courts. That is according to the constitution. (32)

Nevertheless, on 12 April 1973 the King, an erstwhile constitutional monarch of the independence Westminster-type constitution, assumed power while suspending the constitution. Special detention powers were given to the King-in-Council, where the latter comprised five members of the cabinet.

Fransman has attributed these changes to the growing contradiction between capital and labour. Hence, shortly before the constitution was repealed, in early April, a strike broke out at Havelock as workers demanded a 30 per cent increase and cash in lieu of food rations. This strike took place shortly after Tibiyo had acquired 40 per cent of the mine's equity from Turner and Newall, thus aiding and abetting a specifically comprador type of accumulation. Indeed, as Fransman has argued, this strike took place against a background of sharp worker militancy in South Africa which saw roughly 100,000 workers involved in strikes originating in the Durban area in 1973. But, while accurately observing that the moves undertaken by the King and the comprador bourgeoisie, which included the banning of all political parties, could not in themselves remove the antagonisms implicit in the dominant social relations, Fransman's analysis does not go far enough in elucidating how the comprador bourgeoisie aimed to neutralise these antagonisms at the ideological level of Swazi society. Thus, while capitalist relations of exploitation underlay these major changes in the Swazi state, it is necessary to specify more rigorously their combination and articulation with political and ideological developments.

Firstly, we should note that, while popular democratic ideologies do not necessarily have a discourse of their own, and can exist only in articulation with the ideological realms of the fundamental contradiction arising out of the dominant production relations, i.e. within bourgeois or working-class discourses, they can be articulated by intermediate classes - at least in so far as peripheral societies like Swaziland are concerned. (33) What the petty-bourgeois radicalism of Dr Zwane's Congress Party and the King's Imbokodvo National Movement had in common was their appeal to nationalism and national sentiment, which have no class connections when considered in isolation. Thus, whereas the latter limited nationalism to the

retention of a hierarchical, authoritarian, hereditary, pre-capitalist power structure, the former established this link through a vocally more anti-European, Africanist, socialist type of rhetoric which enabled it to mobilise worker support in various parts of the country. What King Sobhuza and his advisers were able to do was to develop the state/people antagonism through a popular ideology that blocked its orientation and development in any revolutionary direction. The legitimising basis for the King's drastic actions was provided by the ideological raw materials of pre-capitalist Swazi society, so that the constitution was deemed unfit for the "Swazi way" of life. This ideological distortion facilitated a restructuring of the state form to allow for what was in effect becoming a highly repressive form of populism through which an appeal was made to the people to abandon elements of what had become the dominant ideology - bourgeois ideology. Hence the King noted that

... the constitution has permitted the imposition into our country of highly undesirable political practices, alien and incompatible with the way of life of our society, and designed to disrupt and destroy our own peaceful and constructive and essentially democratic method of political activity: increasingly this element engenders hostility, bitterness and unrest in our peaceful society. (34)

This did not imply a wholesale abandonment of bourgeois ideology, but rather involved an attempt by the King to combine a disparity of perceptions of the world in a way that would serve to neutralise potential antagonisms. This became concretised in his well known conception of the idea that the Swazis should adopt the best of both European and Swazi worlds and culture. This, of course, in practice merely served to maintain the settler/multinational alliance with the compradors in the light of the generalised social crisis which revealed the post-colonial state's limitations in abrogating the frustrations of the dominated classes. The dominant alliance required a greater flexibility in dealing with such crises, and the structures of the Westminster-type state proved to be too rigid to secure the conditions of existence of capitalist relations, which in peripheral capitalist societies such as Swaziland require a high mass and rate of surplus value extraction and that have characteristically resulted in the emergence of the state as a highly antagonistic force with respect to the mass of the population. In Parliament, Prime Minister Prince Makhosini Dlamini said that

Many unwarranted restrictions are placed on the executive powers of ministers and of the King-in-council resulting in the incapacity of the executive to govern the country properly and without continuously encountering irksome and completely unjustified obstacles. (35)

It was, furthermore, of little surprise when the Minister of Finance, R P Stevens, gave countenance to the King's actions, claiming that:

Swaziland was on the brink of severe industrial strife as a result of the activities of politicians, political parties and outside influences which had contacts financially and otherwise with countries such as Russia and Tanzania. The position was becoming unbearable and the King acted quickly effectively and timeously. (36)

Henceforth, the King ruled by decree - all legislative, executive and political power was invested in his name and was exercised by a council of ministers. The task of drawing up a new constitution "more suited to and compatible with the Swazi way of life" was entrusted to a Royal Constitutional Commission. Their problems were compounded by the fact that the pre-capitalist Swazi state on whose "model" the new constitution was to be based had arisen and articulated a tributary relation, whereas the state of the 1970s, no matter what form it took, was irretractably saddled with the imperatives of the capital relation in its complex articulation with the totality of Swazi society. Thus, when the "Establishment of the Parliament of Swaziland" was announced under the King's Order in Council No 28 of 1978, much of the institutional apparatus of the state remained unchanged and

continued to function unimpeded. The aims of the reformed state were to ensure that the domination of the comprador bourgeoisie remained unchallenged even if this entailed the deployment of the administrative state apparatuses against their own class allies. Executive power was vested in the King, who appointed the Prime Minister from amongst the elected or appointed members of the House of Assembly along with the remaining cabinet members. The compradors further ensured their dominance through a reformed electoral procedure whereby the country was divided on the basis of regional committees or "Tinkhundla", originally established by the colonial authorities after World War II as a local government initiative. Elections have since 1978 amounted to the selection of an 80-member (two from each "inkhundla", who were themselves nominees announced on the morning of "elections" - allegedly to prevent political campaigning) electoral college, which is then summoned to the Royal cattle byre to elect 20 members to the House of Assembly by "secret ballot", while a further 10 are nominated by the monarch. The Senate comprises 20 members, 10 of whom are nominated by the King or the Queen Mother, with the remainder being appointed by the House of Assembly.

What has changed, therefore, is not so much the form of the state but the mode of representation. Here political forces representing interests which are rooted both in the division of labour as well as in the complex of civil society have established institutionalised channels of access to the state apparatuses which are recognised as legitimate by certain relevant branches of the state and sectors of Swazi society. Hence, in June 1982, on the eve of his death, the King established a new, powerful policy-making body which was called the Supreme Council of State, comprising several of his appointees. In effect, this served to formalise the "liqoqo", which was to replace the council of ministers through which the King had hitherto exercised power. Significantly, no mention was made of the "libandla" which had played an extremely significant role as a pre-capitalist form of democratic expression. Indeed, the "libandla" was a crucial moment of the pre-capitalist identification between the state and civil society, since it included any Swazi adult male, an identification which had permanently been ruptured by the penetration and subsequent dominance of capitalism in Swaziland. "Traditional" authority, in effect along with pre-capitalist ideological practice, has in this way become progressively estranged from the mass of the people in whose name it is enforced. As early as 1965, Jack Halpern could write:

... today ... Sobhuza is probably out of touch with the problems of the rural Swazi, for in the forty-three years of his reign the broad popular base of national participation in the 'libandla' has withered away. (37)

It has been under the guise of popular tradition that the King has spearheaded an emergent bourgeoisie who have consolidated their material basis and political power through a modified state form designed both to facilitate their further accumulation and to secure the interests of significant sections of their class allies. The latter, in turn, have come to believe that their own conditions of existence and accumulation have been safeguarded through the ideological distortions which facilitated the King's seizure of absolute power and subsequent manoeuvres of his own and his indigenous class elites, inasmuch as these served to guarantee both the conditions of existence and the reproduction of the capital relation.

Conclusion

The foregoing analysis has attempted to show how the transformation of ideology has been achieved as an effect of ideological struggles as opposed simply to the efforts of different classes to articulate their interests to the mass of the Swazi people. It has been an intermediate class in the process of its own formation, the King and his petty-bourgeois followers who, during the build up to independence and beyond, were increasingly able to articulate national popular interests and hence secure their own legitimacy within Swazi society. At the same time, developments at the

economic level saw the material transformation of this petty bourgeoisie into the embryo of a national bourgeoisie via a route of comprador accumulation. In this way, popular ideology became both the subject and the object of the emergent bourgeoisie: it was both inscribed within and autonomous from their process of transformation in so far as it has arisen both within the specific field of class struggle emanating directly from the dominant relations of pre-colonial Swaziland and been produced as an effect of struggles for hegemony arising out of the people/state antagonism in the build up to independence and the post-colonial period.

An article of this length has obviously been able to delineate only an extremely limited number of issues and complex problems relating to the complexity of the structure and transformation of Swazi society, as well as to the concrete development of the historical process in Swaziland. Many loose stones have been left unturned and only the first steps have been taken towards a more rigorous formulation of the concept of class and the notion of ideology in Swaziland, and their specificity. Notable in its absence is a comprehensive discussion of the development of the Swazi capital/labour relation and its articulation with politics and ideology. Much emphasis has been given to the manner in which the emergent Swazi bourgeoisie have maintained a "traditional" appearance through their recourse to pre-capitalist ideology in the interests of their own hegemony and accumulation. But Swazi workers themselves have already scraped away the "muck of ages" surrounding the mysterious aura of the emergent bourgeoisie. In June 1982, 400 workers at the strife-torn Luphohlo project in the Ezulwini Valley, undertaken by Wimpey International to develop a hydro-electric dam, went on strike demanding the reinstatement of their representative, Zabulon Tsabede, who had been fired following an earlier dispute. When confronted by the Labour Commissioner, the District Commissioner for Hhohho, and a senior police superintendent who ordered them to return to work, leave everything to the works committee (36) and cease behaving in an "unSwazi manner", the workers replied:

Is it Swazi to intimidate workers and treat a committee member like this? ... What have the white men given you up there in those offices? ... you can't force us to work ... why can't you people negotiate with us? Why do you have to rely on threats all the time? Is that the Swazi way you are telling us about? (39)

Eventually the workers were defeated and Wimpey resumed normal operations, but in the heat of the reality of the exploitative relation and the political forms of state interventions, along with the various interpellations used to overcome the strike, the workers' statements reveal that the ideological veils used to secure these ends have begun to wear thin.

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Notes

- (1) See, for example, P Bonner, "Classes, Production and State in Pre-Colonial Swaziland", in S Marks and A Atmore (eds), Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa (Longmans: London, 1980); M Fransman, The State and Development in Swaziland, 1960-77, DPhil thesis, University of Sussex, 1978. For an expansion of the arguments in this article, including a discussion of class in pre-capitalist Swaziland, see R M Levi, "Traditional Rulers or Bourgeoisie? Class and Ideology in Swaziland", Liverpool Papers in Politics, 1984.
- (2) Swaziland National Archives, J62/04.
- (3) Quoted by C P Youe, "Imperial Land Policy in Swaziland and the Swazi Response", Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History 7 (1), 1978.

- (4) A Booth, "The Development of the Swazi Labour Market 1900-68", South African Labour Bulletin, Volume 6, No 7, 1982, p 41.
- (5) Youe, loc. cit., p 64.
- (6) J Halpern, South Africa's Hostages (Penguin Books: London, 1965), p 337.
- (7) Ibid., p 338.
- (8) D Jones, Aid and Development in Southern Africa (Croom Helm: London, 1977), p 252.
- (9) Halpern, op. cit., p 337.
- (10) J Daniel, "The Political Economy of Colonial and Post-Colonial Swaziland", South African Labour Bulletin, Volume 6, No 7, 1982, p 91.
- (11) We must of necessity distinguish between general transhistorical categories and those contingent on specific historical conditions of existence. The conceptualisation of the "Swazi Rulers" as a class representing the aristocrat-chief alliance is acceptable, providing that it is thus construed within the discourse of the Swazi pre-capitalist mode of production. Colonial and post-colonial Swazi society has been characterised by an articulation of the capitalist mode of production and elements or moments of the pre-capitalist mode. This has created a fresh discourse, since the laws of motion and reproduction of the resultant social formation or society are predicated upon the laws of motion and reproductive requirements of capitalism.
- (12) I Winter, "The Soviet State", Review of the African Political Economy, No 9, 1978. Presumably she argues this in terms of technological and labour-saving innovations which shortened necessary labour time and hence raised productivity levels, although no quantitative evidence is given. This is a vital area for future research.
- (13) Mao Tse Tung, Selected Works, Volume I (Lawrence and Wishart: London, 1954), p 15.
- (14) C P Potholm, Swaziland: the dynamics of political modernization (University of California Press: Los Angeles, 1972), p 14.
- (15) Mao Tse Tung, op. cit., p 13.
- (16) Halpern, op. cit., p 391.
- (17) J Taylor, From Modernization to Modes of Production (Macmillan: London, 1979), p 249.
- (18) Swazi Observer, 27.8.1983.
- (19) Barclays Bank of Swaziland Limited, 1981 Annual Review, p 34.
- (20) Swazi Observer, 27.8.1983.
- (21) For several years now, the South African and Swazi governments have secretly been negotiating border adjustments. The land area under discussion has included the Kangwane Bantustan and the Ingwavuma district of Northern Natal.
- (22) E Laclau, Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory (New Left Books: London, 1977).
- (23) Ibid., p 135.
- (24) Ibid., p 167.
- (25) We do not aim to record these in any detail. They have been excellently documented by Martin Fransman, "Labour Capital and the State in Swaziland", South African Labour Bulletin, Volume 6, No 7, 1982.
- (26) Halpern, op. cit., p 377.
- (27) D Kowet, "Land, Labour Migration and Politics in Southern Africa: Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland" (Scandinavian Institute of African Studies: Uppsala, 1978), pp 174-5.
- (28) Halpern, op. cit., p 357.
- (29) Ibid., p 363.
- (30) Kowet, op. cit., pp 174-5.
- (31) "Labour Capital and the State in Swaziland", op. cit., p 81.

- (32) Official Reports of the Debates of the House of Assembly. First Meeting of the Fourth Session of the Third Parliament of the Kingdom of Swaziland, 17th February 1982 to 30th April 1982. Swaziland National Archives G328.35683.
- (33) This contrasts with Laclau's assertion that popular democratic ideologies can be articulated only by a fundamental class. Laclau, op. cit., p 160.
- (34) Proclamation by His Majesty King Sobhuza II, 12th April 1973.
- (35) Times of Swaziland, 20.4.1973.
- (36) Ibid.
- (37) Halpern, op. cit., p 368.
- (38) In 1972, as part of an onslaught on the working class, trade unions were actively discouraged and works councils confined to each separate production unit were implemented, to encourage fragmentation of the working class.
- (39) Times of Swaziland, 24.6.1982.