

A paper on the African "homelands" by Newell Stultz is more problematic. Notwithstanding some minor "errors" (publication again outstripped by events – Venda is now "independent", and a typographical error on p. 199: 70,000 for 700,000 Asians in South Africa) Stultz's paper fails to examine the thesis that the policy of Separate Development i.e. the creation of "independent" homelands, is the result of external political pressure. In addition, some discussion of the concept of the right to national self-determination as referred to in the U.N. charter may perhaps have shed light on the problem of non-recognition of the "homelands".

Schlemmer's second contribution to this volume is at once both fascinating as well as sobering. In dealing with the question of change in South Africa, he enquires, by means of attitude surveys what the "various powerful formations of public opinion" are, and concludes that "while Whites still have the time to secure the future and stability of their country . . . . . that is surely very limited." (p.280)

Papers by Kogila Moodley (on South African Indians), Colin Legum (on South Africa in the contemporary world) and Robert Price (on the problem of reform) complete this volume. The latter's paper is more than just a concluding overview of the debate: Price's distinction between apartheid as practice serving the survival of White supremacy and apartheid as doctrine serving the maintenance of Afrikaner identity is a useful one, especially in attempting to understand the apparently contradictory rhetoric surrounding government inspired "reform".

In terms of its stated purpose viz the illumination of the confrontation between Afrikaner and African nationalisms which, as the editors argue, undoubtedly does animate political and social conflict in contemporary South Africa, this volume succeeds. Unfortunately, with one or two exceptions (Bonner's paper) few attempts are made to explore the relationships between class tensions and antagonisms on the one hand and this racial confrontation on the other. In the absence of such an attempt it can be argued that this work does not deal comprehensively with the apartheid regime – but where then should ideology end and scepticism begin. . . . . ?

## ARMIES OF THE NIGHT

Philip Mayer (ed.): **Black Villagers in an Industrial Society**  
Oxford U.P. 1980, xiii + 369 pp. R14,50.

A Review by M. G. Whisson

If one assumes that the Xhosa-speaking people, whose ancient lands covered most of the region from East Griqualand to Port Elizabeth, can be considered as having an essential cultural unity, then **Black Villagers** can be seen as the fourth part of an on-going saga which began in 1931 when a young woman "then serious . . . but with great charm" (Richards 1985 : 3) went and sat in a Pondoland trading station to listen and learn about the ways of the Pondo

"the last tribe in the Cape Province to come under British administration; and (whose) chiefs were left more power than any other in the Cape Province". (Hunter 1961:8). **Reaction to Conquest**, the outcome of those observations, explored the traditional rural institutions; the impact of European culture in the development of "school" or "dressed" people (Ibid: 7); the form taken by the urban community of Xhosa-speakers in East London, and an account of the Xhosa-speakers of white owned farms. She noted that in the towns "there is a mixture of Pondo, Fingo, Xhosa and Thembu. There are, however, no great differences between tribes". (Ibid: 438). This long descriptive work set out the themes which the subsequent volumes have pursued, with variations of time, place and theoretical preoccupation indicating the processes of change, both among the people studied and among those who have studied them.

The second part of the saga was the multi-disciplinary and heavily statistical study, **Keiskammahoek Rural Survey** (Wilson et al : 1952), which described the social and economic conditions of a part of the Ciskei from which many of the pre-colonial Xhosa had been expelled in the middle of the 19th century. The area had then been colonised by Fingo who had fought on the British side in the frontier wars: by white settlers, many of German origin, and by the returning Xhosa who sought to recreate their society under radically changed political circumstances. The study dealt with the period 1948-50, before the full impact of National Party rule had been felt in the region.

The third part saw Philip and Iona Mayer replace Monica (Hunter) Wilson as the guiding genius and emerged as the **Xhosa in Town** trilogy, fieldwork having been carried out between 1956 and 1959. The first set of full length studies of a black urban community which retained a wide range of links with rural areas, the trilogy (Reader 1961; Mayer 1963; Pauw 1963) has become the most widely read and quoted anthropological work to emerge from South Africa since - 1950.

**Black Villagers**, for which the field work was carried out in the second half of the 1970's, brings the story up to date, and is the heir to a most distinguished tradition. Judged by any standards other than those, it is a fine piece of work, but it lacks both the theoretical and regional cohesion of its ancestors. As a result, it is less a book than a collection of individually interesting articles around the dominant theme of modern black social history - the impact of a modern industrial society upon the rural areas from which it draws a substantial proportion of its less-skilled labour.

The first article, by Mayer, is entitled "the origin and decline of two rural resistance ideologies", and endeavours to present the history of the "red" and "school" cleavage in those terms. Mayer soon impales himself on the horns of a dilemma from which he seems unable to extricate himself. He wants to apply a generally simplistic marxist analysis to a problem which is much too complex for such a model. Thus, the co-option of the Fingo by the British, the conversion of people who lived close to the mission stations, schools and trade routes to Christianity and western consumer values, and hence the development of a self-conscious group of évolués, is presented as an "ideology of resistance" (my emphasis). It is, from his own evidence, nothing of the sort, although from it have developed the modern urban resistance movements. Mayer compounds this felony by references to marxist gurus which are largely gratuitous and even downright misleading e.g. "What consent Black villagers gave to White domination was at best

'obtained under duress, passive acceptance, lukewarm adherence', but rarely from 'shared conviction' (Godelier, 1978 : 767 " (p.4). The context is "red" and "school" and one might imagine the summary of attitudes to reflect Godelier's view of the Xhosa — it does not, but is taken from a general analysis of domination through "violence and consent" which at that point links the four elements that Mayer lists in a single set. Similar examples of this are found in references to Althusser (pp.13, 44 twice) Poulantzas (p.29) and Marx (p.55). This pretension can impress only the most naive of readers and certainly not those who had radical objections to his **Townsmen or Tribesmen** (Magubane 1973). Beinart and Spiegel provide much more convincing samples of the radical genre, without allowing it to become a strait jacket.

What is a more interesting and challenging problem is why a substantial proportion of the Xhosa-speakers did not follow the path of the "school" people, but remained "red" for as long as material conditions permitted. History has played a part - those groups who converted or were co-opted during the wars were seen as traitors both to the policy and the culture, and refusal to be co-opted could be seen in part as a moral or ideologically inspired response, hence legitimately "resistance". Geography and accidents of location also played a part — the areas most remote from the motor roads, trading stations and missions have tended to be more conservative. Population density and the carrying capacity of the land have also played a major role, as one cannot "build the **umzi**" (develop the homestead and estate) if there is no land or grazing in which to invest earnings in the traditional way. Of no less importance, perhaps, was the observation made by some conservatives, that while being "school" might give a man a veneer of success, education tended to increase a person's desire for consumer goods more rapidly than it could provide him with the skills necessary to meet those needs. The school man might earn more in the cities than the red man on the mine, but at the end of a migrant career he had no more to show for it, but a hunger for western consumer goods. In short, it was not **obviously** advantageous to change one's lifestyle and to rebel against the wisdom of the traditionalists where there was good land enough to maintain traditions.

The squeeze on land as population densities grew, and the entry of educated blacks into the wider range of relatively pleasant occupations over the past twenty years or so, has accelerated the erosion of the red tradition. Today neither the school tradition of seeking to **earn** quality by adopting white ways, nor the red tradition of eschewing them, characterises many black villagers. Both traditions have proved unviable, and the new synthesis is mobilising labour power to **demand** equality, whilst affirming its pride in its Xhosa or black cultural roots. The synthesis is taking place at different rates in different areas, for much the same reasons as they varied in their responses to colonial rule in the first place. The evidence for this process is plentiful in the articles by Beinart, Manona, McAllister and O'Connell as well as in the many secondary sources and fieldnotes cited by Mayer.

Beinart contributes an analytical historian's piece on "labour migration and rural production: c 1900-50" a carefully documented and valuable adjunct to processes not adequately analysed in **Reaction to Conquest**. He stresses "that the process of capitalist penetration, the responses of rural producers, and the patterns of migrancy varied considerably from area to area", (p.81) and proceeds to illustrate the distinctive characteristics of the process in Pondoland

which, after a late start, was subjected to mine recruitment and gruesome sugar plantation recruitment in the wake of the 1897 rinderpest epidemic (in terms of its economic impact Pondoland's equivalent of the Xhosa cattle killing half a century previously). From then onwards, individual strategies aimed at economic growth (or mere survival) increasingly came to be subordinated to structural constraints. As the capacity of the land to meet the needs of the expanding black population declined, so white controls over black mobility increased. Conservatism which led men to remit home a very high proportion of their earnings to "build the **umzi**" retarded the process of increasing dependence on migrant labour, but it could not reverse it.

McAllister complements the historical perspectives of Mayer and Beinart with an elegant anthropological interpretation of Gcaleka (Xhosa) rituals associated with the migrant labour process. The area in which he worked is isolated and "red". Migrant labour is viewed as a regrettable necessity to sustain life and to build up the **umzi**, hence the ancestral shades are concerned. Ritual identifies and transcends the moral ambiguity of the regrettable necessity, justifying the migrants' trips and minimising the disruption they cause the community. Departing migrants are reminded of their obligations before they leave home and, through the ritual and oratory of beer drinks, the whole community (the dead and the living) is brought together. The migrant, fortified, goes to work, much as an initiate goes into seclusion, a warrior into battle, a hunter into the forest. He goes to achieve his one purpose and to return. When he does get back, the beer drinks, speeches and mandatory gift-giving serve to restore him to his place in the community and to give social recognition to his achievement in helping his people. The presentation is generally very clear, although there are some lapses in style e.g. "The failure of the millennium in 1858, however, decimated Xhosa country . . ." (p.206).

The contrast between McAllister's Gcaleka parish and Manona's Keiskammahoek village could scarcely be greater, as Manona shows in his "Marriage, family life and migrancy in a Ciskei village". Once the great place of the Rharhabe chief, Burnshill was cleared of Xhosa during the frontier wars and settled with Fingo converts around a Church of Scotland mission station. The village is close to the main road linking Alice to King William's Town, and an agricultural college was built on its outskirts. This is "school" country, with freehold and quitrent land tenure. Manona compares the village as it was during the Keiskammahoek Rural Survey, with its present condition, expanded by an influx of Xhosa immigrants mainly from white-owned farming areas. Those who own land generally have education and skills too, so their menfolk at least work almost permanently in the urban areas, and perceive their property as an insurance rather than as a productive resource. The landless immigrants to Burnshill are forced to seek contract jobs in the mines or construction industry. For nearly all, the traditional loyalties of lineage and locality are long lost. The small matrifocal family is replacing the patriarchal homestead as the basic unit, and marriage bonds are weakening.

The implication of Manona's material is that the people of Burnshill, and presumably many other similar areas, have not been able to choose between one ideology and another in their response to white hegemony, but that they have made individual adaptations to the narrowing range of options in order to survive in, or make the most of, the particular environment and set of opportunities confronting them.

O'Connell's material on the Xesibe takes us closer to the Pondo end of the Xhosa-speaking spectrum, far from the missionised Ciskei villages. He describes a community in which there is a minority of "reds" (18%) and "gentlemen" or "school" (21%) and a majority of "rascals" (61%) who fall between those traditional categories. In the urban literature the "rascals" are described as "semi-urbanised" (Wilson & Mafeje 1963 : 21) or "semi-Red" (Pauw 1963 : 42). While these categories have their own Xhosa terms to describe them, their relevance appears to be decreasing as the common experiences of all rural Xhosa-speakers become more significant than the attachment of their parents to the mission school or to the ancestors. The material is most interesting where it describes the bases of the groups who engage in faction fights – youth organisations recruited on the basis of generally "rascal" and territorial affiliations. There has also been some hostility between the three groupings, which can be interpreted in terms of sub-cultural clashes, but the trend is towards a community in which socio-economic class differentiation rather than cultural values will be the basis for cleavages and conflict.

Spiegel's article takes us out of Xhosa-speaking country into two villages on the western plain of Lesotho. Having given some space to establishing his credentials with his neo-marxist co-ideologues, which only devotees will appreciate, he presents an admirably clear account of the rise and fall of the domestic economy of families dependent on migrant labour as they pass through various stages of their domestic developmental cycle. One is struck by the remarkable "fit" between the migrant labour system and the operation of Lesotho's land tenure system, so that the men have virtually no choice other than to seek work as migrants, whilst in their later years they can eke out a bare living on the fields which they have retained as a form of insurance against their retirement. The households which do not follow the normal pattern – those with women heads, those without land, and those which gain an income from state employment and trade, for the most part also depend, indirectly, on the flow of remittances for their subsistence or success. One is left with the impression of a society on a treadmill. The losers are those who can never obtain full control over any means of production other than their own labour, be it utilised in the mines or on the fields that revert to the chief if they are left fallow too long or when the occupant dies. The winners are the chiefs who control access to the land, and the mining companies which need make little contribution to the costs of reproducing their labour supply.

The final chapter, by McNamara, takes us to the other end of the oscillating migrant's chain, exploring some aspects of what is called "social life" in a gold mine hostel. This is a topic which really demands a volume on its own, for just as there are dramatic differences between life in school villages like Burnshill and in red parishes like the Shixini parish that McAllister describes, so there is much more to be said about life in dock workers compounds, construction company barracks, the mining hostels and the other places in which the migrants live between their working hours.

McNamara sets out to explain why faction fights break out in hostels where 3,000 or more men, of different language groups and nationalities, live in close proximity to each other with little to do in their spare time apart from sleeping and drinking. The evidence that he presents suggests an interesting dilemma. A century of migrant labour on the mines has not yet produced a strong class consciousness, as the oscillating system ensures that the migrants maintain

their primary ties to their rural homes, and their strong orientation to their homeboys and co-ethnics in their spare time. Worker solidarity, which conflicts with the goal of "building the **umzi**" at least in the short run, is present mainly in those who spend long periods at each mine, or who come from the better educated regions such as Zimbabwe or Ciskei. The strong ethnic orientation is consistent with the maintenance of the cheap labour system, the use of long-staying and better education migrants consistent with higher productivity. The co-residence of those with growing worker consciousness and those with well sustained homeland priorities is an explosive mix. If this analysis is correct, then the mines will soon have to make some difficult decisions with ramifications for all their labour catchment areas. For a century they have flourished on the cultural capital of the societies from which they have drawn their labour, as the traditional values of home-building have dove-tailed well with the demand for oscillating, rurally orientated workers. But the capital is exhausted in some areas and diminishing in all, at the same time as the demands of secondary industry for black labour are growing more sophisticated. As the biggest employer, the mining industry will be at the centre of the process of transforming migrants into true proletarians, settled with their dependents within easy reach of their work. If it fails to achieve this peacefully, the alternative is going to make the past decade of faction fights and confrontations seem like scraps in the nursery.

**Black Villagers** is, with a few lapses, a remarkably readable book for one pitched at the serious academic level. For anyone who cares about the future of southern Africa, and the evolving relationships between the mining core and the rural peripheries, it must be required reading. For most whites, the black migrants are the silent army of the night, passing unseen between their rural homes and the urban or mining compounds, where they stoke the boilers of the South African economic miracle. Mayer and his co-workers have pierced that night with a few penetrating shafts of light, prefiguring an awful dawn.

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