

Abstract

According to recent influential scholars of labour studies, the relocation of capital to new sites of investment ultimately leads to the emergence of labour resistance in those new sites of investment. These labour movements together with other civil society formations organize themselves to contest the assaults by capital and in the process form themselves into a countermovement. Swaziland is one of the last bastions of royal despotism in Africa. The monarchy has been able to use its grip on power and its position as a custodian of Swazi culture and tradition to re-invent itself as a local bourgeoisie. The country's success in attracting investment, though relatively limited, has led to the emergence of a Swazi working class. Recent inflows of investment, mainly from Asia, in the textiles industry led to the creation of 40 000 new manufacturing jobs.

This is significant when one considers that Swaziland has a total population of 1 million. The political significance of this shift in the class structure of Swaziland has to be investigated, particularly when one takes into account that the working class as well as the middle class created by the need for a state bureaucracy, has historically been the loci of resistance to the more despotic elements of the traditionalist regime.

The argument in this study is that Swazi civil society, which includes the labour movement, has not been able to establish a serious countermovement that can challenge the tinkhundla regime and its capitalist allies. Instead the movement have been riddled with internal structural and organizational problems. On the other hand the royal regime has successfully used an elaborate tinkhundla structure and its monopoly over land, religion and culture to suppress such a movement. The implication is that counter-movements do not necessarily follow the relocation of capital. Other social formations are at play.