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No. 291

THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC UNDERPINNINGS OF PATERNALISM AND VIOLENCE ON THE MAIZE FARMS OF THE SOUTH-WESTERN TRANSVAAL, 1900-1950

Introduction:

For the better part of five hundred years southern Africa has been witness to an epic struggle as a small invading minority of European origin, enjoying all the advantages of military might, literacy and access to superior technology, sought to conquer, dispossess, render subservient and then control members of the indigenous majority. This centuries-long struggle for mastery of the sub-continent has - as members of both the out-going and in-coming nationalists never cease to remind us - been marked by great hardship, endless blood-letting and countless corpses. And, as the white minority now silently laments its possible political eclipse by a black majority, it is perhaps an appropriate moment to reflect on how, during the course of this long and violent struggle, it failed to transform its physical strength into moral legitimacy. For, as Rousseau once observed in a different context but at a not dissimilar moment; 'The strongest is never strong enough to be always the master, unless he transforms strength into right, and obedience into duty'.[1]

Yet, despite its manifest failure to establish a morally just order within southern Africa, the white minority never once abandoned its attempts, either at home or abroad, to legitimise the hold which it exercised over the indigenous black majority. The long and complex ideological campaigns which these struggles entailed - whether fought in religious or secular idiom, through appeals to 'tradition' or 'modernity', by word of mouth or through the written word - shared at least one element; namely, the need and desire of the ruling class to limit, as far as was possible the social, political and economic costs of the conflict. The strong, it would seem, are never strong enough to rule through violence alone and protracted conflict saps the power and authority of the privileged just as surely as it oppresses the poor, the dispossessed and the weak.

It is under these circumstances - of the never-ending struggle to transform strength into right and obedience into duty - that the ideologies of the dominant classes endeavour to create, interpret, legitimise and maintain order in ways that remain broadly congruent with the beliefs, culture and values of the powerful. But the terrain over which these long-running confrontations for 'hearts and minds' are fought is not always

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1. As quoted in H.G. Gutman, The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925 (New York 1977), p.319.

determined by the ruling minority and a kaleidoscopic array of variables constantly presents the under-classes with new and imaginative ways of challenging, resisting and opposing the hegemonic order as it seeks to renew and reconstruct itself. Giuseppe di Lampedusa captured some of the resulting paradox when, in the course of The Leopard he noted that: 'If we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change'.[2]

In twentieth century South Africa much of this attempt by whites to induce change from the top in order to make certain that things stayed as they were below, has been set against the backdrop of the mines, factories and warehouses of an increasingly capitalist, industrial and urbanised society. Indeed, for those who have only recently come to terms with the complexities and contradictions of modern South Africa it is the cities, ghettos, squatter-camps and townships that have become synonymous with ideological struggle and violent conflict.

Yet, it has not always been so. Until fairly recently the vast majority of black and white South Africans lived on the land in a largely agrarian society where the ruling class's struggle to keep the racial order intact had to be contested in 'reserves' traditionally occupied by black peasants, or the more extensive farmlands set aside for the exclusive ownership of a white minority that was overwhelmingly Afrikaner in origin.[3] Seen from this perspective South Africa's industrial experience forms a short, albeit a crucially important chapter, in a much longer history where the largest parts of the country have been dominated by landlords and peasants whose culture and world-views were often shaped in the idiom of Afrikaans and the African vernacular of the region.

It is perhaps the same fact - the dominance of the modern industrial experience and its reliance on the use of the English language to help discipline and control an emerging urban proletariat - that explains why, until fairly recently, the study of South African agrarian history has remained a curiously neglected field. Over the past decade, however, historical research has branched out in new directions and scholars are now beginning to reap the benefit of a crop of more imaginative and

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2. As quoted in Eugene D. Genovese, The World the Slaveholders Made (Middletown 1988), p.195.

3. As recently as 1970 only 47.8% of South Africa's population lived in the towns and, even though over 60% of the black workforce was employed in the urban areas, political, economic and social mechanisms ensured that only 43% of that workforce was considered to be permanently resident in urban areas - see J. Natrass, The South African Economy: Its Growth and Change (Cape Town 1981), pp.13-14.

suggestive rural studies that cover fields ranging from 17th century slavery and the peasant economies of the late 19th century, through to the agricultural development of the 'reserves' and 20th century farming on the highveld.[4]

As might be expected then, the thin historical thread that links violence and paternalism to the land has had to be woven into the denser fabric of works that cover terrain stretching all the way from the closely cultivated estates of the Western Cape through to the settler farms of the Eastern Frontier and the sprawling maize and wheat farms of the Transvaal and Orange Free State. But, even in the most detailed of these new studies, researchers intent on testing more broadly-based propositions have seldom had the opportunity to undertake a detailed examination of the particular socio-historical webs in which violence and paternalism have become ensnared.

One consequence of this is that while there have been a growing number of references to violence and paternalism in the literature, the precise linkages at work remain extraordinarily difficult to determine and there is a danger of useful sociological tools being employed rather indiscriminately in what are, after all, vastly differing historical settings. Thus, in a recent study of 17th century slave society at the Cape it is noted that; '... the relationship between master and slave was more subtle than one of constant and overt coercion, although the essence of such paternalism was an underlying subordination of the slave to his or her owner'.[5]

In the course of an examination of the Eastern Frontier by a second contributor to the same volume, it is suggested that; 'The master-client relationship easily evolved into paternalism. This implied that the master had to provide for and dispense justice to his labourers and treat them humanely, while his labourers,

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4. Some excellent clues as to developing debates in these fields as well as an introduction to the expanding literature that they embrace can be gleaned from, amongst others: R. Elphick and H. Giliomee (Eds.), The Shaping of South African Society, 1652-1840 (Middletown 1989); W. Beinart and C. Bundy, Hidden Struggles in Rural South Africa: Politics and Popular Movements in the Transkei and Eastern Cape, 1890-1930 (Johannesburg 1987); T.J. Keegan, Rural Transformations in Industrializing South Africa: The Southern Highveld to 1914 (Johannesburg 1986) and W. Beinart, P. Delius and S. Trapido (Eds.), Putting a Plough to the Ground: Accumulation and Dispossession in Rural South Africa, 1850-1930 (Johannesburg 1986).

5. James C. Armstrong and Nigel Worden, 'The Slaves, 1652-1834' in R. Elphick and H. Giliomee (Eds.), The Shaping of South African Society, 1652-1840 (Middletown 1989), p.150.

who had slowly lost the freedom and status of clients, were bound by duty to work properly and obey their master's commands'. And, continues the same author; 'Paternalism could shade into the more extreme system of labour-repression in which extra-economical devices were employed to ensure an adequate and docile labour force'.[6]

In our context it is not particularly important whether these observations are 'right' or 'wrong', but simply to note that the explanatory load which 'paternalism' is asked to carry in each case varies significantly and that the implicit or explicit link to violence is often difficult to establish. Nor are these problems confined to works centred on the 17th and 18th centuries. In several excellent studies of the emergence of, and resistance to the development capitalist agriculture on the South African highveld during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, we can detect the same uneasy tension surrounding the twinned issue of violence and paternalism.

Violence was - and no doubt still is - an integral part of the relationship that developed between European landlords and African tenants in the Transvaal and Orange Free State countryside in the decades that followed the great mineral discoveries of the late 19th century.[7] In what is clearly our best account of organised black resistance to white domination on the highveld in recent times Helen Bradford observes that: 'fists, whips and guns were central in maintaining master-servant relationships on the farms', but is equally quick to point out that 'amongst wealthier farmers harsh racism was sometimes tempered by the adoption of some of the benevolence of familial figures of authority' and that; 'the very intimacy of the master-servant relationship itself, helped nurture a stunted approximation of the ethic of paternalism'. In so doing, she suggests, landlords 'clearly linked individual Africans to their families in ways which inhibited the development of tenant protest and independence.'[8]

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6. H. Giliomee, 'The Eastern Frontier, 1770-1812' in R. Elphick and H. Giliomee (Eds.), **The Shaping of South African Society, 1652-1840** (Middletown 1989), p.451.

7. For an excellent account of violence in the Transvaal in the late 19th century see P. Delius, 'Abel Erasmus: Power and Profit in the Eastern Transvaal' in W. Beinart, P. Delius and S. Trapido (Eds.) **Putting a Plough to the Ground: Accumulation and Dispossession in Rural South Africa, 1850-1930** (Johannesburg 1986), pp.176-217. For an impressionistic but suggestive contemporary study see L. Segal, 'A Brutal Harvest: The Roots and Legitimation of Violence on Farms in South Africa', Seminar paper No: 9, Project for the Study of Violence, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 26 Sept. 1990.

Bradford's formulation, like others noted above, raises several interesting questions but what is important to note here is the broad congruence that exists between the argument that she has put forward, and that advanced by T.J. Keegan in his account of the transformation of highveld society at the turn of the century. In what is clearly the most lucid and certainly the most explicit statement that we have linking violence to paternalism, Keegan suggests that:

> 'Violence and intimidation were tempered by the practice of paternalism, which was not a discrete phenomenon, but very often rested on an uneasy compromise in which violence was always present as a sanction. Paternalism as an ideology defined and shaped day-to-day interaction and conflict in the workplace, beyond the reaches of the law or the coercive state. It represented a compromise, a modus vivendi, which enabled masters and servants, landlords and tenants on the farms to sustain working relationships'.[9]

This pushes him towards the conclusion that; 'Paternalism mediated conflict, coercion and resistance, defusing and displacing the more destructive and explicit manifestations of struggle'.

These two observations - no less than those focused on the 17th and 18th centuries - have a distinct ring of truth about them and, no doubt, meet the specific scholarly requirements that they were designed to meet. But, because they concentrate exclusively on the recessive potential inherent in paternalistic relationships - such as compromise, reciprocity, subordination or dependence - they have the collective effect of closing down rather than opening up new lines of enquiry. If paternalism is seen only as a facilitating ideology or social practice that enhances the chances of conciliation, mediation and the possibility of quiescence, then we forfeit the chance of posing questions about some of the more conflictual elements embedded deeply within the concept.[10] It is only once these underlying

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8. H. Bradford, A Taste of Freedom: The I.C.U. in Rural South Africa, 1924-1930 (London 1987), p.43 and p.55.

9. T.J. Keegan, Rural Transformations in Industrializing South Africa, The Southern Highveld to 1914 ((Johannesburg 1986), p.157.

10. Interestingly enough, it is this tendency to situate paternalism within a 'consensus' (non-Marxian) rather than a 'conflict' (Marxian) model that has given rise to what Orlando Patterson has chosen to refer to as 'the Genovese problem' in the study of slavery - see O. Patterson, 'Slavery', Annual Review of Sociology, 1977, Vol.3, p.426. This interpretation of

elements have been dredged up and exposed to critical examination that we can develop a fuller understanding of the often extraordinarily complex relationship that exists between paternalism and violence.

What follows then, are four such 'alternative' questions and a tentative attempt at answering them. First, what constitutes paternalism in a racially divided society? Second, under what historical circumstances are such paternalistic relationships most likely to take root? Third, how is paternalism produced and reproduced on a day-to-day basis in farm life? Fourth, under what structural conditions are paternalistic relationships most prone to erosion and from which of the partners is the push to change or terminate the relationship most likely to emanate?

But, since it is not possible to provide satisfactory answers to such abstract questions without resorting to at least some empirical examples and evidence this exercise will, of necessity, have to be situated within a specific set of productive relations at a particular historic moment: in this case, the sharecropping economy of maize farms in the Bloemhof - Schweizer-Reneke - Wolmaransstad triangle of the South-Western Transvaal in the period 1900-1950. Thus, before proceeding with the analysis let us pause to sketch the social, economic and political context from which our examples are drawn.[11]

1) <u>The Setting:</u>

The South-Western Transvaal, a wedge-shaped tract of land 'squeezed' between the junction of the Harts River to the north and the Vaal to the south, is located about mid-way between the Kimberley diamond fields which lie to its west and the Witwatersrand goldfields to the east. Situated in the dryer western half of the country, the Bloemhof - Schweizer-Reneke - Wolmaransstad districts straddle an important climatic divide in South Africa and the crucial twenty-inch isohyet passes through the very heart of the triangle. Areas to the west of this line

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Genovese's work is, of course, hotly disputed by, amongst others, Oakes, who sees Genovese as having discarded the 'popular equation of paternalism with benevolence in favour of a more complex understanding of the term' - see James Oakes, The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders (New York 1982), p.Xl.

11. This draws on the material presented in C. van Onselen, 'Race and Class in the South African Countryside: Cultural Osmosis and Social Relations in the Sharecropping Economy of the South-Western Transvaal, 1900-1950', The American Historical Review, Vol. 95, No.1, Feb. 1990, pp.102 -106.

of rainfall are considered marginal for crop farming, while those to the immediate east are only slightly better placed. In wet years the isohyet moves west but, in the dry years - which tend to outnumber the wet by nearly three to one - the lines moves east. In practice, this has meant that historically the triangle was best suited to 'mixed farming'.

Having been handed such an unpromising dowry by nature, the sand and gravel plains of the South-Western Transvaal have always found it difficult to attract suitors interested in longer-term relationships and, during the 18th and 19th centuries, it served as home to bands of nomadic and semi-nomadic San and Koranna. Once diamonds were discovered in the north-western Cape in the late 1860s and gold on the Witwatersrand in the mid 1880s, however, the area became more attractive to the burghers of the South African Republic who persuaded their government to allow them to carve out extensive land holdings within the triangle.

The object behind the burghers' initial request for land, however, was to search for speculative profits from mineral rights rather than to engage in agricultural production and, between 1910 and 1925, the region enjoyed the effects of a relatively sustained but unevenly spread boom as thousands of white diggers and their black labourers invaded the district to work the local alluvial diamond deposits. But once this robber-economy had lost its momentum and the centre of mineral production had shifted further north taking the population along with it, property owners in the triangle were forced into commercial agriculture still owning too much land and commanding too little labour to render it fully productive.

It was under these historical circumstances - but more especially so before and after the relatively brief interlude of alluvial diamond mining - that white landlords and black tenants entered into the sharecropping arrangements that tended to dominate the local economy between the two World Wars. Afrikaner landlords, anxious to attract black families with agricultural equipment, draught-oxen and labour to their sprawling properties, were only too willing to provide land and access to grazing in return for a half-share of the grain harvest produced by skilled tenants.

Black farmers with large families forced out of areas of traditional peasant farming and increasingly crowded reserves found sharecropping on white farms an attractive proposition. From the moment of the first significant mineral discoveries a growing number of African agriculturalists were drawn to the triangle and its surrounding districts from Basutoland, the northern Cape Colony, the eastern Free State and parts of the north-western Transkei. Others came from even farther north and east. By the turn of the century the area between the Vaal and

the Harts was already noted for the wide variety of languages spoken by its black inhabitants, including Afrikaans, SeSotho, Shangaan, SeTswana, SiXhosa and Zulu.

The hundreds of black families who established themselves in the region during the early period included amongst their number several outstandingly successful grain and livestock farmers. Their ranks were further augmented when, in 1913, the infamous Natives' Land Act undermined sharecropping as a legal institution in the Orange Free State and pushed a second wave of African farmers across the Vaal river and into the South-Western Transvaal. During the more 'successful' decades after W.W.1, such as the 1920s and the 1940s, the names of prominent sharecropping families such as the Maines, Marumos, Mashius, Seiphetlos, Tabus and Tjalempes assumed almost legendary proportions amongst farmers of all classes and colours in the triangle.[12]

White landlords with a history of political turbulence and strong Afrikaner nationalist sympathies were not, however, content to see their economic future hinging on sharecropping contracts with black tenants. The practice of sharing-on-the-halves not only inhibited the accumulation of capital but fostered notions of social equality amongst their better-off black tenants.[13] Thus, throughout the inter-war period white landlords made use of their racially privileged position at the ballot box to pressurise the government of the day to provide them with additional economic support through agricultural co-operatives, the Land Bank, the Marketing Act and other state-subsidised services while, at the same time, steadily escalating their demand for increased social segregation.

2) The Nature of Paternalism:

'Southerners', notes Eugene Genovese in The World the Slaveholders Made, 'generally referred to their slaves as their "people" or their "black family", and within limits they meant it. We need not deny the reality of the sense of responsibility

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12. The lives of these sharecropers, which have been systematically recorded since 1979, are preserved in the M.M. Molepo Oral History Collection, African Studies Institute, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. The evidence used in this essay is drawn almost exclusively from this source unless explicitly stated to the contrary.

13. This theme is explored at length in C. van Onselen, 'Race and Class in the South African Countryside: Cultural Osmosis and Social Relations in the Sharecropping Economy of the South-Western Transvaal, 1900-1950', The American Historical Review, Vol. 95, No:1, Feb. 1990, pp.99-123.

that expressed itself in this way'. 'That reality', he goes on to point out, 'cannot be taken literally; it was merely a distant approach to genuine family relationships'.[14] Although separated by several centuries in time and two oceans in breadth these observations nevertheless resonate powerfully with experiences on the Transvaal highveld during the course of the 19th and early 20th centuries where Afrikaner landlords in the triangle habitually referred to the black families living and labouring on their properties as 'ons volk', or 'ons mense' - 'our folk' or 'our people'.

But, of course, no matter how powerless or vulnerable they were, African labour tenants and sharecroppers were not slaves and Genovese is obviously correct to stress that the relationship should not be taken too literally. Even after the obvious class differences between the two situations has been discounted, however, there is still sufficient substance left in the comparison between the white masters and black servants on the two continents for it to be used as a platform on which to construct a working definition of paternalism. 'Paternalism', writes George Frederickson, 'can be defined in various ways, but presumably it must involve some sense of quasi-kinship transcending barriers of caste or race'.[15]

While this is a useful starting point it does not, however, go far enough and, should we wish to extend our understanding of the social dynamics of paternalism within the relatively self-encompassing worlds of the estate, farm or plantation, it will be necessary to draw out two additional unstated elements secreted away within this broad definition. The first of these relates to gender. The concept of paternalism is predicated on the notion of a male of legal standing who enjoys the right - without having to seek recourse to the law - of exercising traditionally sanctioned authority over minors within his 'family'; that is, over the 'women and children' on his property.

The very idea of being a 'father' is therefore inextricably bound up with the idea of patriarchy[16] and, as James Oakes has noted, 'paternalism takes as its model the extended patriarchal

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14. Eugene D. Genovese, The World the Slaveholders Made: Two Essays in Interpretation (Middletown 1988), p.200.

15. This is drawn almost entirely from George M. Frederickson, The Arrogance of Race: Historical Perspectives on Slavery, Racism and Social Inequality (Middletown 1988), p.19.

16. By which is meant a set of gendered power relations set within the culture of a particular class or caste in which male dominance and female subordination is produced, reproduced and legally sanctioned through social practice, myth and belief.

household.'[17] Thus, while paternalism may in theory be concerned with 'quasi-kinship' on an ungendered basis, in practice much of the day-to-day power exercised in the relationship flows through the conduit of gender and is mediated through the actions of two patriarchs of differing power. In the South Africa, unlike in the American South where a slave may or may not have presided over a family of his own, this mediation of paternalism through patriarchal power assumes even greater significance since the black tenant was invariably the head of a household and expected to exercise an appropriate degree of authority over his wives and children.

The second unstated or hidden element within our working definition concerns age. The white patriarch presiding over the paternalistic regime of the estate, farm or plantation is, it is assumed, not only a man of legal standing, but one old enough to to command the respect and deference of his 'children'. On the South African maize farm, no less than on the southern plantation, age played a key role in mediating social relations and, as Oakes notes: '...the distinguishing characteristics of the patriarchal slave-holding family included a deep respect for the wisdom of the elders, an entrenched concern with the family's image, an extraordinary interest in posterity manifested in close attention to the rearing of children, particularly male children'. 'Paternalistic fathers', he suggests, 'encouraged the maintenance of deference towards elders, be they grandparents, parents or siblings'.[18] This reverence for seniority is, of course, no less a feature of Afrikaner or African society and is therefore an important additional cohesive force in the paternalistic relationship that bound together white landlord and black tenant.

Teasing out the additional 'hidden' elements within paternalism in this way may extend our understanding of the concept but still leaves it with distinct limitations because - to put a Ralf Darendorf observation on class to work in another context - Historians, are 'not guided by the question, "How does a given society in fact look at a given point in time"?, but by the question "How does the structure of a society change"'?[19]

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17. James Oakes, **The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders** (New York 1982), 'Introduction', p.Xl. See also, pp.202-203. Genovese too has pointed to this historical connection see, for example, **The World the Slaveholders Made: Two Essays in Interpretation** (Middletown 1988), p.96. For further comment on this see also Herbert G. Gutman, **The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925** (New York 1977), pp.309-310.

18. James Oakes, **The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders** (New York 1982), p.202.

Thus, while paternalism may well be concerned with 'quasi-kinship' relations, this remains a relatively static notion and may therefore be a less than useful idea for the historian until we add the rider; how do these relationships change over time?

It is in this latter context - when we attempt to discern the changing structure of a paternalistic relationship over time - that the discussion on gender and age assumes greater significance. For it is only when the changing nature of the relationship between white landlords and black tenants is traced through time, that we can detect at which points the 'hidden' tensions in a paternalistic regime assume a sufficiently contradictory potential for them to give rise to conflict and threaten the relationship. In a sharecropping economy, at least some of the moments at which these built-in weaknesses in paternalistic relations manifest themselves can be predicted with some accuracy.

Highveld sharecropping was based on the capacity of the black tenant to deliver different combinations of labour-power drawn from within his household to the joint venture with the white landlord in accordance with the progress of the agricultural cycle and the seasonal demands of the production process.[20] Seen from this perspective sharecropping was an essentially patriarchal mode of production, but one that was also beset by a contradiction - namely; that the moment when the patriarch had the greatest structural potential to produce (that is, when he had most mature physical labour at his disposal), was also the juncture at which his authority was most likely to be subjected to a challenge from below. In practice this meant that the tenant's greatest potential to produce did not necessarily lie at the point when there were most adults in the household, but when there were most adolescents - that is, when he had command over

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19. As quoted in O. Patterson, 'Slavery', Annual Review of Sociology, 1977, No:3, p.426. Put in caricature form; sociology is interested in snapshots while history seeks to make movies.

20. This, in itself, was capable of producing gendered 'domestic struggles' within the household which were - in part - predicated on traditional notions of what was considered to be the appropriate sexual division of labour. In this way, for example, there was a heightening of tension between the patriarch and his wives at the season's end when the women were called upon to help bring in the harvest - the proceeds of which, depending on the crop being produced, would not necessarily be distributed equitably. The notion of 'domestic struggle' is drawn from B. Bozzoli, 'Marxism, Feminism and South African Studies', Journal of Southern African Studies, Vol.9, No:2, pp.139-171.

the most bodies with the near-physical potential of adults but who lacked the full social and psychological power to question his authority as patriarch.[21]

However, structural stresses which are derived from the development cycle of the family tend not only to produce strains within the tenant household, but to have a knock-on effect which also places an additional burden on the relationship between white landlord and black sharecropper. This additional stress is particularly noticeable in, although by no means confined to, those instances where young black adolescent males are coming of age.

Located within the constraints of a farm dominated by a paternalistic ethos, the adolescent black male found himself in the particularly uncomfortable position of having both an 'ideological' and a biological father. This meant that just as the young man was approaching manhood, his skills as a workman maturing particularly rapidly and his services in greatest demand, he was subjected to not one but two chains of command. As a result, the paternalistic relationship was never 'devoid of conflict and ambiguity'[22] and 'the patriarchal ideal alone furnished a model of oppression capable of sustaining the rationalization of the most inhumane master'.[23]

The consequences of this socially structured ambiguity are predictable. Not surprisingly, an in-depth survey of one white landlord - black tenant relationship in the triangle between 1920 and 1948 reveals that the most frequent cause of a breakdown in tenancy agreements can be attributed to Afrikaner farmers inflicting physical punishment on adolescent African boys without first obtaining the sanction of the child's father. Interestingly enough, in the case of adolescent girls such conflict seldom involved outright physical violence and was invariably followed by the black patriarch seeking to mediate in the dispute rather than in his summarily terminating his agreement with the white landlord. From this it is clear that as the patriarchal system seeks to reproduce itself, both within the farmhouse and the sharecropper's shack, father-son relations enjoy priority over father-daughter relations.[24]

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21. This could, amongst other things, depend on changing customary practices, gender, patterns of socialisation, personality and sibling order.

22. George M. Frederickson, The Arrogance of Race: Historical Perspectives on Slavery, Racism and Social Inequality (Middletown 1988), p.19.

23. James Oakes, The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders (New York 1982), p.194.

But if gender and patriarchy were in some ways preordained to intersect in a manner likely to give rise to violence as the black sharecropping family moved through its development cycle on the white landlord's property[25], then the same potential for conflict was not necessarily evident in the second of the 'hidden' elements that we have been considering. In small-scale society, where great store was placed on seniority, age was always more likely to be used to help determine 'pecking orders' and reinforce 'traditional' patterns of social deference than as a catalyst for conflict.

Yet, precisely because the paternalistic relationship was founded on the assumption that the white landlord's status was - in terms of age - supposedly superior to that of the black tenant, the system sometimes came under intense pressure when the 'ideological age' of the Afrikaner patriarch failed to match the chronological realities of the situation. Put simply - albeit somewhat paradoxically - the social construction of a paternalistic relationship was threatened when the supposed black 'child' was manifestly older than its white 'father'. This helps account for the propensity of highveld landlords to provide their black labour tenants or labourers with names that make use of the diminutive form - a practice calculated to create or perpetuate the child-like status of the African male regardless of his age or changing socio-economic status.[26] The conflicts and some of the terminological compromises that this practice gave rise to during the course of the tenant's life-cycle will be examined in greater detail below.

3) The Historical Circumstances of Paternalism.

In the course of his illuminating History of American Slaveholders, James Oakes argues that paternalism - cast on the foundation of church, monarchy and aristocracy - was the 'reigning theory of human relations' from medieval times through to the age of the Tudors. In the late Stuart era, however, with the rise of Lockean philosophy 'and the emergence of capitalistic economic and democratic political structures, paternalism was rendered increasingly irrelevant'.[27]

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24. This is based on evidence drawn from C. van Onselen, A Chameleon Amongst the Boers: The Life of Kas Maine, 1894-1985, (forthcoming).

25. Obviously this was partly pre-determined by the age and gender composition of the sharecropper's family.

26. For example, Jantjie - 'Johnny'.

27. James Oakes, The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders (New York 1972), p.192.

Yet, for all its 'increasing irrelevance' to developments in Europe after the 17th and 18th centuries, ideologies of paternalism continued to exercise a considerable hold on a wide variety of social, political and economic structures in the wider world for at least two centuries thereafter. Indeed, not only did important elements of such thinking take root in the fertile sub-soils of slavery and the New World, but they were also successfully transplanted to large parts of the 'Dark Continent' during the 'Scramble for Africa' in the late 19th century.

In South Africa the flag-bearers of this new wave of European expansionism unpacked conceptual baggage that contained, amongst other things, notions drawn from the Darwinian theory of natural selection.[28] Older racial constructs, derived from the culture and experiences of rural society in the late 17th and 18th societies, merged with new ideas to provide paternalism with the gloss of modernity and sufficient ideological vitality to make its contribution to 19th century Cape liberalism and, from there, to make the even more demanding transition to the highveld where it had to be re-worked yet again to meet the needs of Afrikaner farmers in the Boer Republics. But, after the mineral discoveries of the 1860s and 1880s, it too became 'increasingly irrelevant' to the needs of an emerging industrial order which steadily eroded the social bonds between the classes in the countryside.[29]

The ideology of paternalism which manifested itself in the South-Western Transvaal after the turn of the century, while continuing to rely on christian inspiration from above and to stress deference and duty from below, was therefore no longer simply that of the slave estate in the agricultural economy of the 18th century, nor even that of the 19th century commercial Cape. It was, in Bradford's evocative phrase, 'a stunted approximation of the ethic of paternalism' precisely because it was struggling to root itself successfully in a society already

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28. For the broader context of this and the way in which these ideas lingered to inform the 20th century dispensation, see S. Dubow, Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid, 1919-1936 (London 1989), pp.29-31.

29. The setting for these important developments in 19th century Cape politics are well laid out in two imaginative and suggestive works by Stanley Trapido: 'The Emergence of Liberalism and the making of "Hottentot" Nationalism', paper presented to the Seminar on Southern African Societies at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London, 23 Feb. 1990; and 'From Paternalism to Liberalism: Cape Colony, 1800-1834' International History Review, Vol.12, No.1, Feb. 1990, pp.76-104.

experiencing the first brutal transformations of a developing capitalist economy rather than in a relatively stable and hierarchical quasi-feudal order.[30]

If these broadly-based observations reflect the situation in the South-Western Transvaal with any degree of accuracy, then they also hold true for the triangle which, as we have seen, experienced its own episodic lurch towards a more industrial order with the development of the alluvial diamond diggings between 1910 and 1925. The emergence of the mining industry helped to create a market for white farmers who, for the first time, had the opportunity of selling large quantities of beef, mutton, milk, maize and sorghum to the thousands of diggers and labourers who had established themselves at various points along the Vaal River.

But, given that market economies erode paternalistic relationships, we may ask how even this 'stunted approximation' of an 'ethic of paternalism' managed to survive in the South-Western Transvaal until at least the 1950s? Part of the answer lies in not exaggerating the impact that either alluvial diamonds or the wider mining revolution in South Africa had on this comparatively isolated part of the country.

While it is true that the discovery of alluvial diamonds did help to create a market for triangle produce, the effects of its development were extremely localised in an area poorly served by regional transport networks, and the entire river-digging industry survived for only two decades. Moreover, for much of the twenties and thirties the region between the Vaal and the Harts was ravaged by the alternating natural disasters of drought and locusts. It was only really after the mid-thirties that local agriculture showed signs of sustained expansion as landlords started to invest in the first paraffin-driven tractors and to benefit from state assistance to white agriculture.[31]

This comparatively late development meant that for most of the inter-war period and more especially so during the early twenties and the Great Depression, much of rural life and the agricultural

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30. 'Paternalism', suggest Oakes, 'is the ideological legacy of a feudal political system with no fully developed market economy'. James Oakes, The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders (New York 1982), p.X11.

31. See Suid-Westlike Transvaalse Landboukooperasie Beperk, 'N Halfeeu van Kooperasie, 1909-1959 (Leeudoringstad 1960). See also, M. De Klerk, 'Seasons that will Never Return: The Impact of Farm Mechanisation on Employment, Incomes and Population Distribution in the Western Transvaal' Journal of Southern African Studies, Vol.11, No.1 (1985), pp.84-105.

economy remained imperfectly monetised. Not only were unskilled labour-tenants and wage labourers often paid in kind, but even skilled rural craft-workers such as stone-masons, thatchers and wool-shearers were often remunerated in beer, cattle, meat or sheep rather than in cash.[32] Nor were such transactions confined to the relatively enclosed universe of the farm. Right up to the Second World War Asian traders such as the Kathradas and Patels continued to do a significant amount of their business by bartering goods for the eggs, chickens, hides, skins and wool produced by the triangle's black sharecroppers and labour tenants.[33] Such non-monetised transactions, combined with the timely exercise of the 'gift' for purposes of social control, did much to ensure the survival of paternalistic relationships into an era characterised by increasing black proletarianisation.

At least as important as the slow appearance of cash wages, however, was the relatively uncomplicated nature of the labour process on farms increasingly devoted to the production of maize. While the use of oxen and heavy equipment for ploughing and planting continued to ensure the presence of the sharecropper and his sons, hand-hoeing and harvesting tended to make greater use of female labour. But, regardless of the particular gender combinations at work in different seasons, the production process remained comparatively poorly mechanised right into the fifties and heavily dependent on the ability of the black patriarch to 'bring out' his family's labour.[34] A fairly simple labour process, mono-crop production, the prevalence of family labour and the consequent reinforcement of patriarchal structures all interacted in such a way as to allow paternalistic relationships to linger into the dawn of the capitalist era in the South-Western Transvaal.

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32. Interview with Mr. A.C.G. Nieman, formerly of the farm 'Kommissierust', by C. van Onselen at Bloemhof, 16 July 1985. More generally see B.A. Neethling, An Economic Investigation of Farms in the Maize Districts of the Orange Free State, 1927-8, Dept. of Agriculture, Economic Series, 12, (Pretoria 1930); and U.G. 22-1932, Report of the Native Economic Commission, 1930-32, p.52.

33. See, for example, Interview by C. van Onselen with Mrs. Z. Isane and A. Nanabhay in Fordsburg, Johannesburg, 11 Nov. 1987.

34. On mechanisation of maize farms see M. De Klerk, 'Seasons that will Never Return: The Impact of Farm Mechanisation on Employment, Incomes and Population Distribution in the Western Transvaal', Journal of Southern African Studies, Vol.11, No. 1, (1985), pp.84-105.

4) The Production and Reproduction of Paternalistic Social Relations:

'Paternalist beliefs', writes Herbert Gutman in his seminal study of the Black Family, 'were widespread among plantation owners on the eve of the Civil War and affected the behavior of many planters'. 'But no one including Genovese', he reminds us, 'has studied how such beliefs and practices developed'.[35] The essence of this cautionary observation is equally applicable to the historiography of Southern Africa. Although elements of paternalism can be traced throughout the history of the sub-continent, in regimes ranging from the relatively benign to the most unashamedly brutal, the manner in which these beliefs were acted upon and made to inform everyday social practice remains poorly documented.[36]

Somewhat paradoxically, one may suggest that in the case of the Transvaal the practice of paternalism remained largely unrecorded precisely because it was so easily recognised and widely resorted to. The commonplace, the familiar and the self-evident were often the last features to be commented on by insiders and amongst the first to be forgotten by outsiders. What follows then, is an examination of a few of the more obvious practices that have tended to perpetuate the paternalistic ethos. And, if the practice of paternalism revolves around the creation of quasi-kinship relationships that seek to transcend the barriers of class and race, then any enquiry about the production and reproduction of such relationships has to begin by addressing the question of primary socialisation. Here there are two major issues that need to be explored.[37]

First, it should perhaps be noted that in the triangle - as elsewhere in the countryside - it was not at all uncommon for children of pre-school age of both sexes and all races to spend a

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35. Herbert G. Gutman, The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925 (New York 1977), p.310.

36. Although we do have some valuable clues as to how, on occasion, these practices were received and partially internalised by members of the under-classes. See, for example, Leroy Vail and Landeg White, Capitalism and Colonialism in Mozambique; A Study of the Quelimane District (London 1980).

37. In the absence of sufficient primary evidence - a fact which may or may not be of some significance in itself - I am excluding any discussion of the classic debate around the nursing of white babies (and more especially boys) by black nurses. My impression is, however, that this is an issue that may be of less importance in the case of the South-Western Transvaal than it might have been on the plantations of the Deep South.

considerable amount of their childhood playing together. This inter-racial play, which could occur in the home of the white master but was more frequently to be found in and around the huts of the black tenants, involved not only a considerable amount of peer-group bonding but also allowed for the development of a good deal of bilingualism. Indeed, even today it is noticeable how the farther west one travels and the more isolated the farming community becomes, the more likely one is to come across Africans with a superior command of Afrikaans, and Afrikaners who are capable of conversing in fluent SeTswana.[38]

During these formative pre-school years it was possible for the landlord's children, and more especially his sons to become exposed to several important elements of black culture. Indeed, the tired old theme of having 'grown up with the natives' or 'knowing them', often contributed to the adult Afrikaner farmer's willingness to underwrite apartheid policies while at the same time strongly rejecting the possibility of racial animosity as a motive for his support of segregationist politics. Power on the farm flowed through the micro-circuitry of patriarchy and paternalism before being fed into the national grid of political life. What is more interesting in the context of our particular argument, however, is the manner in which this primary cross-cultural socialisation of young Afrikaner boys sometimes also nudged their fathers into giving them apparently bizarre nicknames such as 'Boesman' ('Bushman') or 'Kaffertjie' ('little kaffir'); terms which, although perhaps accurately reflecting their early immersion in black culture and used affectionately within the confines of the white household, also lent themselves to more adverserial, contemptuous or dismissive use when employed in the wider context of farm, district or country. It is perhaps also important to note that it is within this same broad context - that of primary socialisation in a rural setting - that the one black name to have been genuinely incorporated into Afrikaner male naming practices evolved. Long before radical chic saw middle-class English-speaking whites in urban areas rushing to name their daughters 'Zinzi' (Mandela), Afrikaner farmers were naming their sons Thabo ('joy' in SeTswana or SeSotho).[39]

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38. In this context see Margo and Martin Russell's imaginative study of Afrikaners of the Kalahari; White Minority in a Black State (Cambridge 1979).

39. These insights are derived from personal observations of white children in the Western Transvaal during the 1950s. It is, of course, very likely that such names were first given to the white landlord's children by black nursemaids. In this way, for example, the use of the name Palesa (SeSotho, 'Flower') as the name for a daughter has also been drawn to my attention.

As already noted, these quasi-kinship naming practices within the household of individual Afrikaner landlords were largely confined to male children precisely because they were linked to the reproduction of patriarchal power structures on the farm. But, because the paternalistic ethos was also being reproduced within the wider context of the rural community; it influenced - in a rather more general way - the manner in which Afrikaner youths of both sexes addressed white folk who were not kin. Thus, in the triangle - as elsewhere in South Africa - all white men and women of indeterminate status were addressed respectfully as either 'Oom' ('Uncle') or 'Tannie' ('Auntie'). In a society where whites were sometimes a little thin on the ground, these fictive relationships gave added ideological cohesion to the paternalistic ethos that struggled to maintain its grip on highveld society.

The second feature about primary socialisation in the South African countryside, and one that is equally well known and therefore need not detain us unnecessarily, is the manner in which such early cross-cultural exposure tended to give way to increasingly segregated experiences once the landlord's children were removed from the farm setting and sent to town for schooling. Thus, while some inter-racial friendships and especially those amongst boys were capable of persisting into the white child's high school years, they made way for more socially distant life-styles with the onset of puberty and sexual maturity. Quasi-kinship relationships amongst children - which in their earliest years involved a measure of equality across the racial divide - seldom survived the transition into adulthood as the values associated with the secondary and tertiary structures of the dominant group slowly penetrated the otherwise enclosed universe of the farm.

But, since the production and reproduction of paternalistic relationships were ultimately dependent on the shaping of a structured inequality between white landlord and black tenant, we cannot confine our examination to the manner in which such values emerged within the dominant group. Indeed, in many ways it is more important to establish how the white patriarch sought to impose and reinforce the ideologically inferior status upon the black tenants themselves. It is to this process of imposition that we therefore now turn our attention - once again commencing our enquiry by undertaking a brief examination of naming practices.

In our earlier discussion of patriarchy and age it was noted how, under a paternalistic regime, there was a built-in propensity for the white landlord or 'father' to perpetuate the child-like status of black tenants by conferring on them 'christian' names which made use of the diminutive form such as Jantjie or Gertjie.[40] But Afrikaners, like Africans, tended to defer to age and seniority and, whereas it might have been appropriate for an

elderly white landlord to refer to a young black man as 'Johnny', such nomenclature became increasingly inappropriate with the passage of time and the need to apply it to an elderly tenant. In short, the life-cycle of the tenant himself tended to undermine the 'childishness' of the name that he had been accorded and there was therefore a need for a linguistic device that could cope with built-in obsolescence, reconcile the need to defer to age, and - at the same time - refrain from undermining the fundamentally paternalistic nature of the relationship.

It is within this very specific context - the need to defer to age while seeking simultaneously to protect a paternalistic ethos - that one has to understand the apparently contradictory practice of a landlord attaching an honorific prefix to the diminutive form of the name accorded a black tenant. Thus, the youthful Jantjie gives way to the respected or elderly 'Outa Jantjie' - with the Outa being constituted/reconstituted from 'Ou' (Afrikaans/Dutch, 'Old') and 'ta' (Dutch, 'father' and/or SeTswana, Ntate, 'father').[41] Interestingly enough, while this terminology again falls well within the orbit of maleness, patriarchy and domestic power, in this case there is a female equivalent when a particularly respected or elderly black housemaid would be referred to as Ousie - this time from 'Ou' (Afrikaans/Dutch 'Old') and 'sus' (Afrikaans/Dutch, suster, sister).[42]

But the impositions and concessions of language - even when fought out on terrain that had been largely determined by white landlords was not, in itself, sufficient to guarantee the survival of paternalistic relationships. When all else failed highveld landlords, like Southern slave-owners before them, did not hesitate to resort to violence to ensure that their wishes prevailed over those of the tenants. 'Whipping of recalcitrant

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40. See, for example, U.W., A.S.I., M.M. Molepo Oral History Collection, Tape No: 160 A/B, Interview with M. Jameson by M.T. Nkadimeng at Kroonstad, 26 Feb. 1980, p.11 - in which the interviewee recalled his landlord referring to him as a 'Vluksekaffertjie'; 'Capable little kaffir'. In English-speaking urban areas, this helped give rise to the term 'boy' or 'girl' being applied to an African man or woman - an offensive practice that clings to the paternalist ethos that surrounds the employment of domestic servants.

41. See, for example, S.P.E. Boshoff and G.S. Nienaber, Afrikaaanse Etimologie (Pretoria 1967), p.631.

42. See, D.B Bosman, I.W. van der Merwe and L.W.Hiemstra, Tweetalige Woordeboek (Cape Town 1984), p.390.

distance, remain physically unobtrusive and show an appropriate degree of restraint - were nevertheless accorded a distinctive role in proceedings that were otherwise dominated by the inner core of the landlord's family and friends. Any failure by the landlord to accommodate the reasonable expectations of his black 'family' in such matters was considered by the tenants not only to be deeply-wounding, but to constitute a serious breach of etiquette. In much the same way landlords were expected to provide their labourers or sharecroppers with a sheep to celebrate the birth of a black child, or to attend the funeral of long-serving black house servants or tenants.[48]

These concessions, flowing from a shared commitment to christian values by landlord and tenant, contrasted with other - more earthy - celebrations which, despite an attempt to provide them with a christian gloss, had more complex origins and were always more tightly contested. Thus the occasions that marked the bringing in of the harvest or the formal sharing of the crop, were both presided over by the landlord who, by offering a prayer, would insert himself into his customary mediating role between God and the peasants. Then, assuming a more modest role, he would provide a beast for slaughtering and formally authorise the celebratory beer-drinking that followed. But such patriarchal endorsement as there was for drinking, was undertaken from a position of weakness rather than of strength since the practice of consuming sorghum beer after the harvest was likely to proceed with or without his approval. At the end of the day, however, it was the patriarch who would have insinuated himself between God, the elements and the bounty of the earth and, by so doing, would have helped to reinforce the paternalistic ethos that enveloped the farm.[49]

But members of the black 'family' were not always sufficiently well placed to extract concessions from their landlord, or to have favours granted them by the patriarch. Living in a harsh and unforgiving environment plagued by droughts, dust-storms, locusts and a variety of livestock diseases, and having to work in an imperfectly monetised economy which struggled to extricate itself from a series of unpredictable booms and slumps meant that poorer tenants were frequently looking for an outright gift from their 'father' rather than a mere concession.

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48. See for example, U.W., A.S.I., M.M. Molepo Oral History Collection, Interview No: 336, N. Makume interviewed by T.T. Flatela at Viljoensdrift, 10 Aug. 1982, p.38.

49. For examples of such occasions see. C. van Onselen, 'Race and Class in the South African Countryside: Cultural Osmosis and Social Relations in the Sharecropping Economy of the South-Western Transvaal, 1900-1950', The American Historical Review, Vol.95, No.1, Feb. 1990, pp.109-110.

Even in relatively homogenous cultures, however, the exchange of gifts amongst equals can be a exercise fraught with social, political and psychological ambiguities.[50] Under a colonial regime, characterised by the permanent and legally-entrenched structural vulnerability of the indigenous under-classes, relatively affluent white landlords could - if they so desired - make use of the gift to entrench notions of dependency amongst black tenants and thereby reinforce the prevailing paternalistic ethos. It is against this backdrop that we have to assess the testimony of Kas Maine - the sharecropping son of a 'second wave' MoSotho immigrant who had established himself in the Schweizer-Reneke district at the turn of the century. As a young man Maine had witnessed the political eclipse of some of the poorer Afrikaner farmers by a few pockets of relatively better-off English landlords in the period after the South African War of 1899-1902:

> 'Under Afrikaner landlords we used to be given sour milk, fresh milk and good food; but the English stopped it. Instead, they gave us a few cups of milk per day. They counted how many cups they gave you. If you worked on a [English] farm, your ration consisted of three cups of sour milk per day. Fresh milk was not given to us, we were supposed to buy it.
>
> Afrikaners did not sell things. They gave us trousers, shoes and everything; but the English sold their clothing. They would never give us a pair of trousers free of charge'![51]

This rich oral testimony provides us with a graphic description of the links that existed between capitalism, culture, the gift, and the maintenance of paternalistic relations in much of the South-Western Transvaal during the early part of the 20th century.

In addition to the occasional gift of old clothing or tobacco, however, triangle landlords and their tenants were also locked into the ritual of Christmas but, in a setting of structured inequality, such celebrations as there were could hardly provide for the exchange of gifts in time-honoured christian fashion.

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50. See, for example, M. Mauss, The Gift (London 1954) or, M. Sahlins, 'The Sociology of Primitive Exchange' in M. Banton (Ed.), The Relevance of Models for Social Anthropology (London 1965).

51. U.W., A.S.I., M.M. Molepo Oral History Collection, Interview No: 234, Interview with K. Maine by M.M. Molepo at Ledig, 17 Sept. 1980, pp.18-19. [Author's emphasis.]

Instead, the advent of the festive season provided the white landlord with yet one more opportunity to demonstrate his benevolence and generosity by allowing him to authorise the slaughtering of a beast to provide his black 'children' with a feast - an act that not only re-emphasised his importance as patriarch, but served to strengthen the bonds of paternalism.[52]

5) The Structural Erosion of Paternalistic Relationships:

If, as has been suggested, paternalistic relationships on Southern African farms took hold most readily in colonial situations where pre-capitalist social relations and mono-crop culture combined to allow for the use of the labour of the black family in a relatively undifferentiated production process, then the conditions under which such relations are eroded becomes fairly predictable. Paternalism - as the dominant ethos in the countryside - starts to wane wherever the structural inequalities of colonialism are either challenged or destroyed, where there is a marked acceleration in the development of capitalist relations of production, a fairly sudden diversification in the range of crops being farmed and/ or there is a significant increase in the rate at which agricultural production is being mechanised.

The collective impact of these inter-linked processes: a) tends to undermine the white landlord's belief that he is responsible for the welfare of his black quasi-kin, thereby placing the organic unity of the farm under increasing stress; b) allows the regularity of the wage relation to weaken the underlying functions of gifts and concessions with a resulting loss of deference and gratitude on the part of the tenants; and c) fragments the labour process in such a way as to diminish the utility of the black family as an easily identifiable unit of production.[53]

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52. For examples of such Christmas feasts see U.W., A.S.I., M.M. Molepo Oral History Collection, Interview No: 336, N. Makume interviewed by T.T. Flatela at Viljoensdrift, 10 Aug. 1982, p.41; or Interview No: 403, M.T. Lerefudi interviewed by T.T. Flatela at Lichtenburg, 26 Aug. 1982, p.19.

53. For a few scatterd and fragmentary comments on these processes in the South and the New South see Charles L. Flynn, White Land, Black Labor: Caste and Class in the Late Nineteenth-Century Georgia (Baton Rouge 1983), p.20; Eugene D. Genovese, The World the Slaveholders Made: Two Essays in Interpretation (Middleton 1988), p.126 and James Oakes, The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders (New York 1982), p.4.

Merely identifying these corrosive forces, however, does not allow us to take our analysis of the decline of paternalism and the rise of the contractually-bound sale of wage labour far enough. Precisely because the paternalistic relationship binds not one, but two parties together, we also need to know from where the impetus to dissolve the relationship comes - i.e. from the landlord above, or the tenant below? The question then is not only under what historical circumstances we witness a retreat from paternalism, but at whose instigation the relationship is re-examined, re-negotiated or ruptured?

Part of the answer to these questions lies in appreciating that not all the forces that we have identified need to be operating simultaneously or contributing in equal measure to the erosion of paternalism. Thus, at no stage during the period 1900-1950 was white control in the South African countryside ever shaken off although there can be no doubt that, at various moments, it was challenged from below by movements such as the quasi-nationalist Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (I.C.U.). Likewise, in the South-Western Transvaal it was only after the passage of the Marketing Act of 1937 with its benefits for large-scale producers that Afrikaner farmers started to concentrate more fully on the production of maize, and it was only after the Second World War that ploughing with oxen was fully eclipsed by the petrol-driven tractor. Similarly, in the triangle it was the introduction of the mechanical harvester in the 1960s that effectively destroyed what remaining logic there was in the utilization of black family labour and which heralded another decisive lurch towards employing more atomised and depersonalized wage-labour. While these forces might therefore have combined occasionally, their impact was never evenly felt and, in order to understand the specific manner in which they helped to undermine the paternalistic ethos in the triangle, it will be necessary to isolate their inter-action at two precise historic moments.

a) A Challenge from Below, 1925 - 1929.

The production of alluvial diamonds in the Bloemhof - Schweizer-Reneke - Wolmaransstad triangle peaked at 81,000 carats in 1913 after which, in the decade that followed, it went through a gradual but uneven decline with production ranging between 75,000 and 31,000 carats per annum. By 1925 there were about 5,000 active diggers left in the Bloemhof district but this number slumped to only five hundred in 1927, when a new and richer deposit was discovered at Lichtenburg. The large-scale exodus of white diggers and black labourers that followed - men who had formed the core of the local market for agricultural produce - brought the first effects of economic recession to the triangle well before the Great Depression settled in over the country as a whole some two years later.[54]

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54. These figures on local diamond production are derived from

Long before the opening of the Lichtenburg diamond fields, however, white farmers in the triangle had been responding to the local market as well as those further afield by expanding their production of beef, mutton, wool and - more especially - maize. This response, which came after the sudden collapse of commodity prices during the 1921-22 seasons, was further consolidated by the relatively stable prices that agricultural products fetched during the period 1923-27. The extent of the expansion in maize production is evident from the table 1 below.[55]

TABLE 1

Number of Bags of Grain handled by the South-Western Agricultural Co-Operative, 1922 -1932.

Season	Bags
1922/23	15,000
1926/27	29,000
1928/29	24,000
1929/30	161,000
1930/31	162,000
1931/32	300,000

This expansion in the production of grain, partly designed to off-set the decline in income from alluvial diamonds was not, however, achieved under the most propitious climatic

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the Standard Bank Archives, Johannesburg, Annual Inspection Reports of the Bloemhof Branch covering the period 1912 - 1929.

55. From Suid-Westlike Transvaalse Landboukooperasie Beperk, 'N Halfeeu van Kooperasie, 1909-1959 (Leeudoringstad 1959), p.66.

circumstances. From 1926 until 1934 large parts of the South-Western Transvaal languished in a prolonged drought as South Africa entered one of its periodic 'dry cycles'.[56] In order to increase grain production amidst reduced precipitation necessitated a substantial expansion in the acreage devoted to maize farming. This, in turn, called for the large-scale employment of animal-drawn machinery which included mechanical planters and heavier ploughs such as the Canadian Wonder which came to replace the lighter Little Chief and Canadian Chief.[57]

Labour tenants and sharecroppers had little reason to welcome the introduction of equipment which drew their adolescent male labour away from animal husbandry and were positively unhappy when the opening up of new and more extensive fields were achieved at the cost of reducing the amount of land available for the grazing of their draught-oxen and cattle. This dissatisfaction, barely tolerable while maize prices remained more or less stable between 1924 and 1928, gave rise to more open discontent once grain prices slumped in the 1929-30 season. Drought, a reduction in the amount of grazing available for black tenants' livestock, changing work patterns and dramatically reduced income all combined to provide the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union with a perfect entree to peasant households in the South-Western Transvaal.

Throughout 1928, but more especially in 1929, leading figures in the previously urban-bound I.C.U. such as Jason Jingoes, Clements Kadalie, Keable 'Moate and Doyle Modiakgotla addressed scores of meetings attended by hundreds of tenants and sharecroppers and preached the gospel of racial-pride and the need for outright resistance to what were seen as the increasingly unreasonable practices of white landlords. Quasi-millenarian prophecies about the political eclipse of the the colonial order brought about by a new generation of African nationalists mixed uneasily with more practical advice about the need for better wages, boycotts, strikes and demands for written contracts to protect black farm workers from exploitative landlords.[58]

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56. For an elegant summary of the climatological evidence in this regard see P.D. Tyson, 'The Great Drought', Leadership S.A., Vol. 2, No.3, Spring 1983, pp.49-57. For the extended argument see P.D. Tyson, Climatic Change and Variability in Southern Africa (Cape Town 1986).

57. Some of these technical innovations during the late 1920s are recounted in Chapter Five of C. van Onselen's, A Chameleon Amongst the Boers: The Life of Kas Maine, 1894-1985 (forthcoming)

58. For the broader context see H. Bradford, A Taste of Freedom: The I.C.U. in the Rural South Africa, 1924-1930 (London 1987).

This explicitly ideological onslaught on the dominant paternalistic ethos as well as a significant shortfall in the amount of cheap, pliant and subservient labour available to bring in the harvest during 1929, produced an angry and often violent back-lash from municipal authorities, the police and white farmers. With the established racial order in the countryside being challenged by smart-talking city-folk from the outside, and time-honoured social practices on the farms being questioned by previously loyal quasi-kin from the inside, white anger was fueled almost as much by a sense of treachery and betrayal as it was by feelings of insecurity and vulnerability. It was precisely because the roots of paternalism were so deeply embedded in the social soil of the triangle that the potential for inter-racial violence was so great.

Between them white farmers, local government officials and members of the police force contrived to harass, threaten, intimidate, assault - and so it was rumoured - murder I.C.U. supporters and organisers. When Doyle Modiakgotla visited Schweizer-Reneke in March 1929 he described the district as being embroiled in a 'war' and, not surprisingly, many black workers, some labour tenants and even a few sharecroppers took to arming themselves with sticks and spears to ward off possible attacks from hostile landlords and marauding police patrols.[59]

But, of course, not all farm dwellers were either interested in, or willing to become members of a movement that threatened the very fabric of the social contract that had bound white landlord to black tenant together for a half a century or more. For many the wrench from a familial past was too much, the contractual future too uncertain. Kas Maine, for one, was particularly wary of becoming involved in a political organisation that threatened to invade the physical and psychological space of the farm. In a statement couched in the very idiom of paternalism that Kadalie and his lieutenants were questioning, he explicitly rejected their call for a strike saying:

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59. These events are recounted in some detail in Chapter Five of C. van Onselen's, A Chameleon Amongst the Boers: The Life of Kas Maine, 1894-1985 (fothcoming). The triangle was neither unique or exceptional in the degree of violence manifested during this period. See also H. Bradford, 'Lynch Law and Labourers: The I.C.U. in Umvoti, 1927-28' in W. Beinart, P. Delius and S. Trapido (Eds.), Putting a Plough to the Ground: Accumulation and Dispossession in Rural South Africa, 1850-1930 (Johannesburg 1986), pp.420-449.

> 'No. It was a farm. How could they [the organisers] call for a strike in a place where they had no social standing? How can you have a strike in another man's home? You can't do a thing like that!'[60]

Maine was not alone in his condemnation of such 'anti-social' behaviour. The strike never did take place and, for reasons that need not detain us here, the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union soon ran out of steam in the South-Western Transvaal in much the same way as it had done elsewhere on the highveld. Corruption, disorganisation, failed promises and outright lies protruded almost as readily from the movements of the poor in the countryside as they lay hidden in the organisations of the privileged in the city. Political lice could feed off the backs of peasants or proletarians with equal relish.

Yet, despite this collapse in popular support for the organisation, there can be little doubt that during the twenty-four months that it was active in the triangle, the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union did succeed in dealing deference, paternalism and racial subservience a hefty blow. This assessment is endorsed by the testimony of black moderates and radicals alike. Thus Kas Maine recalled how; 'They [the "Boers"] said that we blacks had adopted a superior attitude ever since we started following Kadalie' and his sister-in-law, Motlagomang Maine, an ardent I.C.U. supporter and member of the South African Communist Party could later reflect on fifty years of triangle history and suggest that; 'Today I can see that those were the people who began to liberate this part of the world; before them the Boers treated blacks very badly'.[61]

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60. U.W., A.S.I., M.M. Molepo Oral History Collection, Interview No: 264, K. Maine interviewed by C. van Onselen at Ledig, 24 Feb. 1981, p.6. [Author's emphasis]

61. These quotes are taken from U.W., A.S.I., M.M. Molepo Oral History Collection: Interview No: 204, Interview with K. Maine by M.T. Nkadimeng, T.J. Couzens and G. Relly at Ledig, 2 July 1980, p. 34; and Interview No: 555, Interview with Mrs. M.A. Maine by M.T. Nkadimeng at Rooipoort, Hertzogville, 23 Oct. 1986, p.7. These changed attitudes towards paternalism - even on the part of social conservatives like Maine - are traced in detail in Chapter Five of C. van Onselen, A Chameleon Amongst the Boers: The Life of Kas Maine, 1894 -1985 (forthcoming).

b) A Challenge from Above, 1939 - 1948;

South African agriculture was painfully slow to recover from the series of body-blows that it had been dealt in the early thirties. The effects of the Great Depression, prolonged drought and widespread indebtedness left triangle landlords distinctly short of economic breath and uncomfortably reliant on their black sharecropping partners and it was only in the mid-thirties that they started to recover their composure and breathe more easily.

In 1935 the rains returned to the highveld and the country started to soak up the badly-needed moisture of one of its periodic 'wet cycles' which, in the case of the triangle, thoughtfully lingered on into the summer of 1944-45. This process of natural recovery was further facilitated by the continued availability of reasonably priced loans for agricultural development from the Land Bank and, in the Transvaal, the number of petrol- driven tractors rose from a paltry 838 in 1930, to 1,181 in 1937 and then leapt fourfold to stand at a total of 5,702 by 1946.[62] In 1937 the Marketing Act ushered in an era of increased security against the vagaries of supply and demand and, no sooner was this mechanism in place, than the outbreak of war provided maize farmers with a greatly expanded market for their products.[63] The collective stimulus provided by these factors precipitated what was probably the most prolonged boom in the history of triangle agriculture and the resulting explosion in grain production is evident from Table 2 below.[64]

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62. See Department of Agricutural Economics and Marketing, Handbook of Agricultural Statistics, 1904-1950 (Pretoria 1961), Table 8, 'Agricultural Machinery and Implements', p.13.

63. The advent of the 'wet cycle' is discussed in P.D. Tyson, Climatic Change and Variability in Southern Africa (Cape Town 1986); while the effect of W.W.11 on South African Agriculture is most readily traced in J.M. Tinley, South African Food and Agricuture in World War 11 (Stanford 1954).

64. From Suid-Westlike Transvaalse Landboukooperasie Beperk, 'N Halfeeu van Kooperasie, 1909-1959 (Leeudooringstad 1959), p.66.

TABLE 2

NUMBER OF BAGS OF GRAIN HANDLED BY THE SOUTH-WESTERN TRANSVAAL AGRICULTURAL CO-OPERATIVE, 1939 - 1949.

Season	Bags
1938/39	137,000
1939/40	431,000
1940/41	435,000
1941/42	332,000
1942/43	278,500
1943/44	856,000
1944/45	1,450,033
1945/46	800,070
1946/47	551,747
1947/48	394,280
1948/49	1,982,000

Unlike in the mid-twenties, however, this rapid expansion in production was not followed by a resulting slump in the price of grain with supply outstripping demand. Indeed, not only did the price of maize rise steadily throughout this period but so too did that of at least two other commodities produced in sizeable quantities in the triangle - beef and wool. Here again, the increases can best be demonstrated in tabular form.[65]

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65. Source: Department of Agriculture, Handbook of Agricultural Statistics, 1904-1950 (Pretoria 1961), Table 6, p.11.

TABLE 3.

PRICE INDEX OF SELECTED AGRICULTURAL AND LIVESTOCK PRODUCTS,

1939 - 1944

YEAR	BEEF (per 110 lbs.)	MAIZE (per 200 lbs.)	WOOL (per lb.)
1939	132	119	84
1940	131	118	119
1941	138	144	102
1942	170	147	104
1943	197	200	129
1944	226	213	131

Expanded production, increased commodity prices and favourable interest rates allowed triangle landlords to accumulate capital and liquidate their debts to the Land and commercial banks at a rate that accelerated particularly rapidly between the outbreak of war and the advent of the Nationalist government in 1948. One index of the real economic gains made throughout the ten years between 1939 and - 1949 was the rate at which the Land Bank succeeded in recovering the capital that it had risked investing in agriculture and the fall in the percentage of arrears owed to it by white farmers.[66]

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66. U.G. 17/1951, Report of the Board of the Land and Agricultural Bank of South Africa for the Year ended 31st December, 1950 (Government Printer, Pretoria 1951), p.4, para. 72.

TABLE 4

LAND BANK, PERCENTAGE OF ARREARS AGAINST CAPITAL INVESTED, 1939-48

YEAR	INTEREST	CAPITAL	TOTAL
1939	1.188	.799	1.967
1940	1.133	.814	1.947
1941	.928	.855	1.783
1942	.675	.725	1.400
1943	.578	.495	1.073
1944	.497	.360	.857
1945	.487	.355	.842
1946	.461	.357	.818
1947	.404	.340	.744
1948	.330	.273	.603

The agricultural 'revolution' of 1939-1949 thus enabled those triangle landlords who had been most notoriously under-capitalised throughout the first half of the twentieth century - the Afrikaners - to put on financial muscle at an unprecedented rate, and the change that this transformation wrought in their economic metabolism started to manifest itself in an increasingly aggressive political stance. Poorly-educated farmers who for most of their working lives had been dependent on, or subservient to the whims of distant mining companies, slick property speculators, 'foreign' grain traders, 'English' banks or the credit supplied by local Asian and Jewish storekeepers, suddenly found themselves able to transcend the constraints of populist politics and in a position to embrace a new and far more ambitious vision of Afrikaner nationalism which, while still reasonably vague, espoused the goals of 'apartheid'.[67]

As early as 1937 leading members of the Ossewabrandwag, the Greyshirts and other neo-fascist groupings around Wolmaransstad started to direct their hostility at the town's Jewish traders and storekeepers in the surrounding countryside.[68] In 1940,

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67. On the local populist tradition see C. van Onselen, 'Race and Class in the South African Countryside: Cultural Osmosis and Social Relations in the Sharecropping Economy of the South-Western Transvaal, 1900-1950 The American Historical Review, Vol.95, No:1, February 1990, pp. 104-105.

these and other loosely-connected nationalist traditions became more sharply focused with the establishment of the Herenigde Nasionale Party which, in the 1943 election, demonstrated its ability to bring considerable numbers of Afrikaner farmers back into the fold of ethnic politics.[69] Four years later, in 1947, some of the outstanding debts in populist politics were settled when Afrikaner nationalists organised a boycott of Asian trading stores in the triangle and, twelve months later, the Herenigde Nasionale Party won the 1948 general election with the help of its socially elevating slogan; 'Die kaffer op sy plek en die Koelie uit die land' - the 'nigger' in his place and the 'coolie' out of the country.[70]

Amidst all this aggression and xenophobia directed at the foreign devils and economic adversaries lurking beyond the boundaries of the farm, triangle landlords somehow also found the time to pay attention to the enemy within - the black sharecroppers with whom they had enjoyed such a long-standing love-hate relationship. Indeed, well before D.F. Malan and his party assumed office in 1948 they had commenced strenuous efforts of their own to help keep 'the kaffir in his place'. Not surprisingly, much of this attempt to redefine their relationship with black tenants was motivated by the desire to reap maximum advantage from the progressive mechanisation of agricultural production and was therefore couched in straight-forward economic terms.

Throughout the decade 1939 - 1949 those landlords who had invested most heavily in tractors and trucks put wealthy tenants under growing pressure to get rid of draught-oxen and reduce their holdings in livestock as they sought to devote ever-increasing quantities of grazing-land to maize farming. In addition to this unpleasant struggle - which pitted white farmers against black sharecroppers - landlords also sought to re-negotiate tenancy agreements which gave the black patriarch's male offspring limited access to grazing rights in return for more contractually-bound wage labour. As a means of producing

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68. Interview conducted with Mrs. I. Gordon by C. van Onselen at Rosebank, Johannesburg, 5 March 1987.

69. See especially D. 'O Meara, Volkskapitalisme; Class, Capital and Ideology in the development of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1934-1948 (Cambridge 1983).

70. See, for example, D.J. Millar, 'To Save the 'Volk'! The 1947 Consumer Boycott of Indian Retail Traders in the Transvaal', unpublished B.A. (Hons.) Seminar Paper, Department of Geography, University of the Witwatersrand, 1988.

social stress within an enclosed world this latter manoeuvre proved to be almost as destructive as the former since it tended to pit fathers against sons.[71]

But the old paternalistic order in which ethics were weighed against economics, communal responsibilities against contracts and the lives of men against machines, hardly constituted an appropriate ethos in which to conduct such delicate and potentially explosive negotiations. Thus, throughout the decade Afrikaner landlords were called upon to make the difficult, embarrassing, painful and at times downright treacherous transition from paternalism and the social intimacy of its quasi-kinship relationships to the emerging discourse of apartheid with its deeply alienating emphasis on racial distance. The confusion and sense of betrayal which this aggressive new posture occasioned amongst black tenants is perhaps best illustrated from the life of someone who was deeply committed to the ancien regime and its more nuanced values.

From 1943-46 Kas Maine was a sharecropper on the farm Vaalrand in the Bloemhof district. The landlord - P.G. ('Piet') Labuschagne - came from a family steeped in the Afrikaner republican tradition and had worked and farmed in the triangle for more than two decades when Maine first met him in the late thirties. A powerfully patriarchal figure with a particular dislike of 'Jew and Coolie' middlemen, Labuschagne had been one of the founding members of the local 'Eeendrag' branch of the Herenigde Nasionale Party and served on its executive for many years. An excellent wool farmer with considerable land at his disposal, Labuschagne became interested in grain farming when the price of maize started its steep war-time climb and, in order to profit from this development, entered into a number of partnerships with black sharecroppers.[72]

Despite his antipathy to 'foreign traders', Piet Labuschange was a remarkably generous and popular landlord who enjoyed a particularly warm and close relationship with his black tenants. A convinced paternalist who proved to be generous in sharing his possessions, resources, skills and time with sharecroppers, Labuschagne soon earned the confidence, respect and trust of his black partners. In the case of Maine who, but for his black skin could at first meeting be taken for a poor but respectable

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71. Numerous examples of these pressures and practices with the triangle are cited in Chapters 9-11 of C. van Onselen, A Chameleon Amongst the Boers: The Life of Kas Maine, 1894 -1985 (forthcoming).

72. Labuschagne's background is derived from Chapter Nine of C. van Onselen's, A Chameleon Amongst the Boers: The Life of Kas Maine, 1894-1985 (forthcoming).

Afrikaner farmer, this relationship developed into a friendship which expressed itself in shared meals, beer-drinking in the privacy of the sharecropper's home and - on a least one occasion - in the companionship that derived from an excursion to a boxing match in Bloemhof.[73]

After the war, however, mounting commercial success and growing political self-confidence made Afrikaner landlords more ambivalent about the social and cultural proximity of their better-off black partners. Farmers experienced great difficulty in reconciling more familiar paternalistic practices with the need for wage labour in the apartheid order which they desired and advocated. It was these cross-cutting pressures that eventually succeeded in rupturing the membranes of paternalism at Vaalrand.

One morning in the spring of 1946 Kas's six-year old daughter became seriously ill and the Maines hoped to make use of the Labuschagne's cart to transport the child to the District Surgeon's rooms in Bloemhof. As Maine later recalled; 'I used to borrow the cart and drive it'. But on this particular occasion the rules appeared to have changed. 'Do you know what he said to me'? 'He said that his cart could not be used by "kaffirs"'! 'I kept quiet because my child was ill'.[74]

Angry, betrayed and frustrated, Maine dashed to a nearby white farmer - Piet Goosen - and offered to pay him a fee of twelve shillings to drive his sick daughter into town. This Goosen did, the child was successfully treated and after the car had pulled back into Vaalrand to drop off the passengers, Kas overheard Labuschagne explaining to his slightly puzzled neighbour that; while he was perfectly willing to allow a black man to make use of the cart for business errands, he could not sanction the use of the vehicle by a "kaffir" for purely social purposes. That merely added insult to injury.

For several days thereafter the tension between landlord and tenant remained palpable and then, according to Maine:

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73. See also C. van Onselen, 'Race and Class in the South African Countryside: Cultural Osmosis and Social Relations in the Sharecropping Economy of the South-Western Transvaal', The American Historical Review, Vol. 95, No: 1, Feb. 1990, p.111.

74. See U.W., A.S.I., M.M. Molepo Oral History Collection, Interview No: 231, K. Maine interviewed by M.T. Nkadimeng at Ledig, 27 July 1980.

'One day he told me to inspan the cart and fetch some salt for his sheep. I told him that he would have to drive the cart himself because it could not be used by a "kaffir".

He [Labuschagne] kept quiet and shook his head. Then he asked me whether I was still on about the same old thing.

I refused to do the job and told him to give me my trekpas; I told him to sign me off because I was not willing to be treated in that way.[75]'

A few days later the Maine family left Vaalrand to take up a position on a neighbouring property.

But the change in agricultural production techniques, the drive to devote every inch of available farmland to the God maize and the advent of an Afrikaner nationalist government committed to the pursuit of territorial segregation meant that the day of the independent black sharecropper was numbered. In the winter of 1949, Maine and 'all the rich "kaffirs" who owned spans of oxen' were summoned to attend a meeting at Sewefontein that was to be addressed by a state official from Bloemhof. 'They announced that farming-on-the-halves was no longer to be practiced. Agricultural methods had changed and tractors had been introduced. Those who had spans of oxen would have to sell them'. Sharecroppers who wished to remain in the triangle would have to sell their livestock and their sons would be given work as truck or tractor drivers but those who could not or would not comply, would have to trek to the 'native reserves'. For 'rich kaffirs' the old order had suddenly given way, for those who remained behind what little there was left of paternalism served only to grease the slippery slope of proletarianisation.[76]

Conclusion

As a set of social practices predicated on quasi-kinship relationships that are powerfully informed by notions of patriarchy, paternalism takes root most easily - although not exclusively - in the world of the pre-capitalist countryside. In the politically, physically and psychologically enscribed domain of the colonial estate, farm or plantation, white patriarchs

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75. Ibid.

76. Para. based on material drawn from Chapter Ten of C. van Onselen's, A Chameleon Amongst the Boers: The Life of Kas Maine, 1894-1985 (forthcoming).

tend to make use of language, naming practices, ritual, religion, gifts and concessions to inculcate and reinforce notions of obedience, deference and subservience amongst black dependents. These devices, and the parasites of gratitude and guilt which they host, can sometimes inhibit the onset of psychic manhood in black dependents and drain farm dwellers of their capacity to resist.

But, while paternalism often lays its heavy and deadening hand on the ability of those being patronised to challenge, question and resist, it would be a mistake to see it as being inherently incapable of generating violence at either the individual or the collective level. Indeed, what has been suggested here is that in the course of the tenant's life-cycle there are certain predetermined and chronologically weighted moments when the black dependent will be predisposed to question the social reach of the white patriarch. Likewise, it is suggested that in broad terms we can delineate certain moments in the development of agrarian capitalism during which we are more likely to witness the erosion of the paternalistic ethos than at others, and that the challenge to the old order could emanate from either above or below. It is at these moments, when paternalistic relationships are being rapidly eroded or restructured, that the potential for individual or collective violence is at its most pronounced. To their bitter cost South Africans of all colours know only too well that it is within the family itself that the most violent of all conflicts erupt. Paternalism has fallen on hard times.

C. van Onselen.
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