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MIGRANCY AND MALE SEXUALITY ON THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOLD MINES*

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In our time we typically perceive sex either as irreducibly biological release activity or as mere personal pleasure. Foucault, however, asserts that not only sex and gender roles but also modes of sexual activity are socially constructed. He thus challenges directly the psychoanalytic argument that sexuality is our biological destiny and that "homosexuality" is a characterological perversion.[1] Furthermore, Foucault insists that sexual activity is fundamentally implicated with the exercise of power. He refuses to define power in society monolithically but rather sees it as local *assertions of domination and subordination rooted in shifting and* cross-cutting arrangements of forces.[2] The exercise of power, whether in sexual activity or some other aspect of existence, is thus seldom consistent. Domination or subordination on one level, for instance, may turn into resignation or rebellion on another.

This paper seeks to describe the sexual experience of black men on the South African gold mines and to relate that experience to the process of proletarianization whose history goes back more than one hundred years in South Africa. The argument is that certain forms of sexual subordination have actually been appropriated as resources in the long-standing resistance by migrant miners to proletarianization. Proletarianization, however, as it has eventually come to the gold mines, has had sexual implications which now augment popular rejection of migrancy by proletarian black miners and their wives.

It seems only fair to the reader to begin with a caveat. In the first place this paper presupposes the existence of migrant labor. No effort has been made to spell out the structural pressures and preconditions that brought that system into being. In the second place, the ensuing description of black miners' sexual experience has been limited by the sensitive nature of discussion of the sex act itself and by the serendipitous manner in which the evidence was collected. This material was gathered in the course of an extensive study of resistance and proletarianization on the South African gold mines[3] and it was not until much of the evidence was in hand that I became fully aware of the singular importance of sexuality to my broader theme. Thus, while the account offered here conforms to the evidence available to me, it might be modified and amplified by further enquiry, especially by more extensive interviewing and particularly enquiries in Mozambique. Meanwhile I offer this paper as a tentative socio-historical analysis of a very delicate but often avoided aspect of the lives not only of black miners but of all men and women everywhere -- that is the relationship of sexual desire and social and personal power.

SEXUAL EXPERIENCE ON THE MINES

"Women of the Mine"

In August 1919, when a BaSotho youth named Moketi arrived at Brakpan Mines for his first contract, he was assigned by the Police Boy in charge of

the BaSotho section, one Albert Mama, the son of a chief from Mohalies Hoek, to his own room, number 41. Mama soon made his intentions clear. In a statement afterwards, Moketi said:[4]

> After I had been in the room about three or four days, native Mama, who had been speaking to me, commenced his actions on the fourth day. This native in his conversation asked me to be his wife. On the fourth day he came and slept with me under the same blanket. I allowed him to have carnal relations with me, because I was afraid of him, being a Chief, and may do me some harm. We slept face to face and he placed his penis between my legs and emitted semen. He only did this to me once during the night. I reported this occurrence the next morning to two friends of mine of the same tribe, who reside in room number 34... I did not shew them any marks of semen as I had wiped it off on my blanket... From this time I continued to sleep with Chief Mama and almost every night he assaulted me in the same manner. He always acted in the same way and never attempted to commit sodomy.

After about a month of such sexual activity Moketi would tolerate no more and left room 41, moving in with his friends in 34. A group of Mama's followers came to fetch him back. "I went with them," said Moketi, "because I was afraid as they beat me with sticks." Mama was not among his abductors, however, and, although Mama's gang returned to room 34 for Moketi's blanket, they did not sleep together again. Instead, the next day, Moketi and his incensed friends approached the Compound Manager himself. Mama was promptly dismissed from the mine with a month's salary in lieu of notice although, in the words of the Benoni Native Inspector, "the evidence [was] insufficient to warrant prosecution."

In a number of particulars, this rather pathetic little story is typical of many other more fragmentary or less specific accounts on "unnatural vice" scattered through the archival records and mentioned in interviews with mineworkers. Firstly, the sexual activity itself apparently seldom involves anal penetration but rather takes place externally through "the satisfaction of sexual passions by action between the thighs."[5] This is typical of a form of sexual play common amongst adolescent Nguni boys and girls called metsha among Xhosa-speakers and hlobonga by the Zulu. Secondly, "homosexual" activity on the mines seems to take place almost exclusively between senior men (men with power in the mine structure) and young boys. Thirdly, although this is little developed in Moketi's account, the youngsters are not merely sexual partners but are also "wives" in other ways, providing domestic services for their "husbands" in exchange for substantial pecuniary remuneration. There is in fact an entire set of rules, an mteto, governing these types of relationship, whose parameters are well-known and enforced by black mine authorities. We are not then dealing with promiscuous sexual behavior but well-regulated sexual conduct. Finally, as is indeed obvious from the story of Mama and Moketi, not all young men agreed to the advances of their seniors on the mine; nor did their peers expect them to do so. Senior men were wise not to press their advances upon recalcitrant youngsters. In what follows I shall expand on each of the four preceding observations in turn.

a) Metsha

Amongst the red-blanket Xhosa, the amagaba, metsha is the most common form of erotic activity prior to marriage. According to the Mayers,[6] it is fundamental to peer group socialization. Premarital sexual play is expected and indeed prescribed among young persons, but premarital pregnancy incurs disabilities in the adult world and "instant complete exclusion from the pleasures of the youth organization." The expectation is thus that traditional young unmarried Nguni couples will practice precisely that mode of external sexual activity that we found described by Moketi in his deposition in 1919. In 1907, H.M. Taberer, at that time in the Transvaal Native Affairs Department, investigated missionary charges of endemic "unnatural vice" on the compounds (in the wake of a furor about Chinese "catamites"). He reported that metsha sexual practices were very common among Mozambican mine workers but that "actual sodomy is very rare and is generally looked upon with disgust"[7] even by Mozambicans. In 1916 a Compound Manager told the Boksburg Native Inspector that he had recently seen heavily scented young Mozambicans at a dance "wearing imitation breasts." He noticed that they had greased themselves heavily in the crotch and asserted "that a good deal of what goes on is "Hlobongo" (Zulu for metsha) and not the other."[8] When in 1928 the Transkeian Territories General Council moved that a delegation of senior councillors be sent to the Witwatersrand compounds to lecture Xhosa mine workers on the evils of "immoral practices obtaining among labourers working on the mines,"[9] the delegation was informed by the Director of Native Labour, H.S. Cooke, that the immorality which did occur was in the form of ikotshane. He continued that "except that the subject was a male and not a female it took the form of what is known amongst Transkeian Natives as ukumetsha which, when girls were concerned, was to some extent condoned by Native Custom."[10]

At least until 1930, then, the actual practices associated with what management called "unnatural vice" on the compounds appear to have been variations on metsha play.[11] It is difficult to know whether this continues to be the normal pattern of sexual activity between men on the mines since metsha or hlobongo is now practised only in the most conservative segments of African society. Metsha itself was consistently condemned by Christian missionaries and amongst the African elite its extension to men was quite repugnant. For instance, when one of the commissioners on the Native Economic Commission asked A.W.G. Champion "whether this bad practice amounts to hlobongo between man and man," he was answered in the affirmative. However, when the questioner continued that it was thus not sodomy in the European sense, Champion was indignant, saying, "I do not know what is used among Europeans; all I know is that this thing is very low among the natives -- it is unspeakable."[12]

All my evidence since the 1930's simply speaks of "homosexuality" or "men taking other men as wives" without further specification. According to the 1907 Taberer Report, however, the practice was brought to the mines by a certain legendary "Sokisi."[13] To this day miners refer to it as "mteto ka Sokisi" implying a certain continuity. Another current Nguni term for sexual relations between miners is qenggeleka, meaning "rolling up the slope" which description does not necessarily imply anal penetration. However, there is

the suggestion by some informants that white miners may also engage in sexual activity with black workers. If so, this would almost certainly imply anal intercourse. I have no explicit evidence on this point for contemporary compound life. More significant is that, except as a matter of curiosity, the nature of sexual practices are relatively unimportant. What does matter is the social context in which they take place.

b) "Men" and "boys"

Giving evidence before the Native Economic Commission, H.S. Cooke stated that the "evil" at the root of migrant labor was "the natural tendency of the male animal to give expression to his desires."[14] The problem here is not with the conclusion, that men in certain types of patriarchal society will seek sexual release and sexual domination, but with the assumption that this tendency is a natural and irresistable biological given[15] rather than a social construction and that all biological males are "men." That "men" are considered "men" in all sexual encounters entirely overlooks the incidence and organization of sexual relationships between black miners. These relationships are firmly implicated into the black power structure on the mine. They are and always have been very much a prerogative of those who initiate them rather than a random outcome of "natural necessity." Furthermore, young men at the height of their biological sexual power are the objects rather than the subjects of this sexual activity.

Once again the parallels with social formations at home are very striking. Bantu-speaking communities are not only patriarchal, they are also gerontocratic, organized on principles of seniority. Without respect for elders the entire fabric of red-blanket Xhosa society, for instance, would shred apart. In the words of the Mayers, "respect for seniority is essentially the same as respect for law as against mere force." This applies on sexual matters also. Thus, while amongst Xhosa "sexual gratification is valued positively at all ages," nonetheless, "intlomble members can 'take away' girls from the mtshotsho group, by virtue of their seniority."[16]

Typically in the past the principle of seniority on the mines coincided to a considerable extent with age and status in the home societies. And if the analogy with public schools could be applied to the mine compounds, it was so also in sexual matters, as is explicitly stated in the following extract from the Taberer report of 1907:[17]

> It appears to have become a well recognised custom among the mine natives recruited from the East Coast to select from the youths and younger men what are termed "amankotshane" or "izinkotshane." An "inkotshane" may be described as a fag and is utilized for satisfying the passions. Any objections on the part of a youth to becoming an "inkotshane" are apparently without very much difficulty overcome by lavishing money and presents upon him. In some cases force and bullying are doubtless resorted to, but such extreme measures would appear to be the privilege of Native guards whose positions enable them to impose upon the young recruits with a minimum of risk of being reported to any European authority.

Junod, in his Life of a South African Tribe, states that inkontshane is an Ngoni word meaning "girl-friend." It apparently corresponds to the Xhosa intombi, which is used for the passive partner in love affairs, whether biologically female, at home, or male, on the mines. Junod, too, writes[18] of how such affairs are implicated within the authority structure on the compound:

> When a gang of new workers arrives in a Compound, the Native induna, who has the supervision of the Compound, and the Native policemen, who have their rooms at the entrance of the yard, come and humutsha i.e., make proposals to the younger ones, not only to little boys (there are only a few of these) but also to boys up to the age of twenty or more. If these lads consent to become their bakhontshana, they will be treated with greater kindness than the others. Their husbands will give them 10/- to woo them (buta) and will choose for them easy occupations....

Furthermore, Junod suggests that, where the authority structure of the compounds stops, the indigenous seniority principle takes over, so that those who have not been propositioned by the mine police "will probably receive a similar proposal from their older companions in the mine" who will then aid them at work.

Indeed, in the underground situation the testimony is universal for all periods to the present that black Team Leaders (ironically called boss-"boys" in the past) would come down especially hard upon youngsters with whom they were "in love," letting up only when the "boys" succumbed to them. An old Mpondo described the situation in his youth as follows:[19]

> On the first week he nearly ran away. It was very difficult to layisha (shovel) and the boss boy was really pushing him and told him, "you will agree." First he didn't understand what he was talking about and he asked another old man why the boss boy was so cruel to him. The old man laughed at him. He told him that the boss boy was after him as he was young and fat.

Several Mpondo who were sexually active with boss-boys in their youth, themselves took boys when they became boss-boys themselves. If the dominant mores of white society decreed that all black men, even senior mine employees were "boys," black workers themselves graduated from being "boys" for their fellow workers to being "men" with their own "boys" as they gained mine experience. The passive partners were seldom, if ever, married men.

Although these relationships seldom extended beyond one contract and were never brought home -- "it was only friendship on the mines" -- and although men preferred to conceal these liaisons from their home fellows, everyone knew that such affairs existed and joked with each other about them. Young men en route to the mines in 1976, for instance, were told jokingly that they would become "girlfriends of the Shangaans." Old men, long since retired from the mines, sit around at beer drinks in Pondoland and talk of men who wanted to make love to them. They laugh because they know that

"among us there were those who practised it." On the mine, said Junod,[20] "the immense majority of the Natives themselves do not consider this sin as of any importance at all. They speak of it with laughter." At home in Pondoland, however, people do not admit openly to it, "because it was a disgrace." According to Philip Mayer, precisely the same ambivalence prevails among the red-blanket Xhosa about extra-marital affairs with married women at home. Everyone knows it goes on, but one is expected to be discreet about it.

One old Mpondo, whom we may call L., talkative after a beer drink, was unusually open with Vivienne Ndatshe about his affairs on the mines. His testimony provides a nice transition from the discussion of seniority in these relationships to the normative mteto ka Sokisi. I quote at length because the account is so revealing:

> There were boss boys who liked boys. I did that once myself. There were boys who looked like women -- fat and attractive. My 'girl-friend' was a Basuto young lad. I did not ill-treat him as other boss boys did. I was very nice to him.

He smiled while talking to Ms. Ndatshe about this matter and asked her not to tell others at his home. She promised not to and asked him why he got involved with the boy. He replied:

> First, miners were not allowed to go and visit women in the township. Also I felt very lonely for all the long period without meeting a woman. Because of boredom I needed someone to be with me. I was not doing that in public -- not in the room but in the old section underground where people no longer worked. I proposed love to him in the compound -- called on him in our spare time. I did promise to give him some of my pay, but not all of it as others did. Then he agreed. I warned him that everything was our secret because I did not want my home boys to know that I was doing that as they might tell people at home or girlfriends in the country. I loved that boy very much.

Ms. Ndatshe asked whether the Sotho youngster didn't have feelings himself when they slept together. The response was revealing about the expectations of seniors:

> He had quick feelings but he had to control himself as he was my girlfriend. I loved him because he was a very quiet person. Other miners didn't notice at all. They were proposing love to him during my presence. If they knew they would never do that because there would be trouble. We parted as we left for our homes. We didn't write to each other. It was only friendship on the mines.

c. Mine Marriage - Mteto ka Sokisi

Part of L's account refers back to the earlier discussion -- the stress on seniority, the need for discretion and self-control on the part of the

passive partner, and the complete dissociation of mine and home life. It also raises questions about the normative pattern of "mine marriages" and the extent they could be enforced -- the question of payment, for instance, and the love the older men bear towards their inkontshane. "Mine marriage" implied more than casual sex underground or in the rooms. These relationships are supposed to be exclusive so that the "men" might fight over attractive "boys." For instance, a certain Mpondo (who may be dubbed C) when he was senior enough, wanted to have his own "boy." This he did at Luipaardsvlei where he was a boss boy. "He had a young Xhosa boy from Ciskei. He was paying him, but not all his money, without knowing that he had another man. He was nearly stabbed by the man." Another Mpondo, S, was not able to get a woman in town "because my man was very jealous." Whenever sexual infidelity by "boys" took place, not the "boy" but the active partner would be blamed and often assaulted.

The older men paid their "wives" generously for their services, which often went well beyond the merely sexual. According to Taberer's report:[21]

> An 'inkotshane's' duty appears to be to fetch water, cook food and do any odd work or run messages for his master and at night time to be available as a bedfellow. In return for these services the "inkotshane" is well fed and paid, presents and luxuries are lavished upon him, and he appears generally not to object to his lot.

Testimony is divided over the extent of public knowledge of these affairs. One of the reasons it is difficult to pin down exactly how much is known is because young men are expected to serve their elders anyway and may do so without sexual exchanges. Also, people choose not to interfere in such matters. In 1976 an induna explained:[22]

> What is public knowledge is that it goes on. Otherwise, the culprits keep it scrupulously discreet. One does notice unnatural closeness and attentiveness, for example one may walk into an otherwise empty room and discover a couple talking in undertones. I know this, myself. What I do is discreetly withdraw. It comes out into the open, as I said, when disaffection sets in. But we all know it takes place.

Turning a blind eye seemed the better part in deferring to such demeanor. In 1976 it seemed that certain rooms specialized in these relationships. One of the Sotho-speaking participant observers[23] found himself in such a room, where all but two of the inmates slept in pairs (one of the other two slept out), and they spoke of fellow miners as women. There was much talk of "marriage" in the room and when they got drunk men kissed each other openly. They were quite discreet outside the room, however.

There may have been changes over time with regard to openness, as well as differences between ethnic groups. By all accounts in the old days, especially among the Mozambican miners, "mine marriages" were overt and indeed public affairs. There was hardly a Native Inspector who did not reply to the 1916 circular from the Director of Native Labour that the Mozambicans openly practiced inkontshana although they disagreed about participation by other ethnic groups.[24] Junod and A.W. Baker, a missionary to the mines,

wrote of wedding ceremonies and lobola being paid to elder brothers on the mine. Taberer, at about the same time, considered this unlikely, but there was unanimous opinion for all periods that regular remittances were and are paid by mine husbands to their boy wives every month. Indeed, the indunas' courts enforce such agreements, yet observers in 1976[25] reported that "those who are engaged in this business know each other, give advice to each other and help each other pay the...boys in due time and accordingly." There is then a code of behavior with regard to "mine marriages" and despite different intensities of white management opposition to these relationships in different periods, the code and its enforcement seem to have been little changed.

The parallels between "mine marriages" and certain types of marriages at home, at least among some Nguni peoples, are too striking to leave unnoted. Philip Mayer[26] reports that among the red-blanket Xhosa the majority of marriages are thwala marriages. Without consulting the woman or her mother, her father and brothers arrange with the people of her prospective husband that she be forceably abducted, taken to his homestead, held without meeting him until lobola is paid, and then presented to him for sexual congress. These women have engaged in several years of metsha sex play with boyfriends, but they can hardly be expected to be in love with their husbands, no matter how much the latter may desire them. They ultimately submit as to "a fact of life." Mayer[27] reports:

> Even if she is practically raped by her husband, the "bride" gets up the next morning and prepares the tea for his father as a sign of acquiescence. Women say they have to accept the situation and learn to love their husbands. They do not always find it easy.

The new "wife" does have an alternative. If she is desperate enough she may return to her own home and try to persuade her father to call the whole thing off.

The similarities between thwala marriage and "mine marriage" are worth noting. Compare this account from the Germiston West Native Inspector in 1916[28] (although he presumes a measure of choice for "boys" that no other source will admit):

> When a young boy or a young looking man arrives at a Compound he is questioned as to whether he has worked on a Mine before and also told that he has to 'Komba-E-Kehle' which means that he has to choose a husband who will look after him and his interests. He does not perhaps then understand what is required of him but sooner or later he finds out. He is generally paid handsomely and anything he wants is generally supplied to him by the man he has chosen as his guardian or 'husband.' He has also in turn to act as a sort of 'servant' to the man he has selected.

Even as women who have been through thwala comfort themselves with the reflection that their husbands are good to them and send money regularly so that they can build up the homestead, so also the young men who agreed to be "girls of the mine" did so for the money, saying wryly "why should they worry

since they cannot get pregnant." One Mpondo man, whom we may call D, told Vivienne Ndatshe that when he started at Daggafontein mine in 1940, his "boss-boy who was a Xhosa, treated him very nicely because he was in love with him." This man offered him all of his wages. D agreed because "he was on business" at the mine. "He needed the money desperately as he wanted to buy cattle and pay lobola for his wife and build his umzi (homestead)." Some boys reportedly had two or three lovers "which was very dangerous because those men might kill each other." They took chances because "they only did that for money." So, men became "wives" on the mine in order to become husbands and therefore full "men" more rapidly at home.

Thus, even as in thwala marriages among the Xhosa, affection was necessarily on one side in the beginning, although in both cases mutuality might grow. Also in both cases the passive partner bore the indignity partly out of sheer physical necessity and partly out of interest in "building an umzi" -- the true goal to which every traditionalist Xhosa-speaker aspires.

d. Young men who refuse

Of course, unlike women, young men have not been socialized to passive and subordinate sexual relations. As a result many of them refuse to participate in "mine marriages." There seems to be several ways of avoiding even the most ardent boss-boys without being worked to a state of collapse. The first method is simply to fight back, the second, to request transfer to a different work section. Another of Vivienne Ndatshe's informants, whom we may call T, told a typical story:

> [I was working as a timber boy, he said] when the boss-boy sent me on the first day to madala side, the old part of the mine where nobody worked. Without noticing what he was after I went there, and as I entered he arrived and proposed love to me as a man does to a girl. I was very angry. I pushed him to the side and hit him. I left him there. He came back and tried to be rough. I hit him and knocked him down. The white staff asked what the matter was and I told them the whole story. But they just changed me to another section and left the boss-boy. I was very angry because I thought he deserved a punishment. Other miners told me that the whites knew about boss-boys proposing to boys and they didn't care at all.

Another way of refusing to be an inkontshane is to call in the aid of one's homeboys, as did Moketi when he wished to be rid of Mama. This is a risky procedure, especially when one's prospective lover is of a different ethnic group, because it can precipitate a faction fight[29] as was reported to have occurred on Deelkraal Mine in 1979.[30]

Town Women

At Luzupha location in Pondoland, Vivienne Ndatshe spoke to an old man (we may call him B) whose experiences with town women in the 1940's were typical of a number of the life-histories she collected. When he was working

his first contract in Johannesburg, he listened to the mteto (rules) of mine management and never visited the townships. He and his friends decided to stay in the compound, he said. But the beer in the compound was not tasty and the women in town were most attractive, so on his next contract, at Venterspost, he accepted the invitation of a Sotho induna to come with him to visit his ishweshwe (longer-term lover). When they arrived, there was another woman there. The thought crossed his mind that this had all been arranged for him:

> Luckily he had left his money at the compound and had little cash. His friend bought beer and his ishweshwe gave them more. He was afraid to propose love so he drank a lot to take the shyness away and within an hour he had a lover whom he visited on the weekends thereafter. But he didn't forget his wife at home. He did not give her much money as he had little enough himself -- he was saving his money at the mine office.
>
> He had heard about nongogos (prostitutes) but had never practiced that himself. He considered it unhealthy for a human being. Only dogs would so that, he said. However, there were miners who liked nongogos because one could go to them whenever he felt like it. If not he could just stay away.

Four major themes emerge from B's account which are typical of fragmentary evidence suggested in other sources and for other periods from at least the turn of the century to the present. The first is the ambiguous fear of and yet attraction to town women as sexual beings that one finds in many miners' accounts. "Beware the breasts of the Tswana women" go the words of one Chopi song. The second theme is the almost invariable coincidence of town women and the consumption of alcohol. A third is the differentiation in mineworkers' minds between types of women. B's distinction between ishweshwe and nongogo assumes also the third category of wife at home.[31] For B, at any rate, an ishweshwe was a legitimate alternative to abstention while he was on the mines -- as indeed were "boys" -- but a nongogo was "unhealthy for a human being." Paying for sex, the sex act as mere act for its own sake seemed to him brutish -- "only dogs do that."

The fourth theme which recurs frequently is that miners were introduced into the mysteries of relations with town women by initiates, often Sotho-speaking. There is a fifth theme which recurs frequently in tales of town women but is not mentioned by B. This is that "town women" are to be found not only in the black townships but also on farms and smallholdings near the mines and in domestic servants' quarters of the white suburbs. In each of these alternative locales, alcohol and both nongogos and ishweshwe may be found today. In addition, the mines themselves have always set aside a limited number of married quarters for senior and favored black employees (clerks, P.A.'s and some experienced underground workers). Here too, the records and observational studies indicate, town women were and are to be found as surrogate wives or daughters of this black elite, or as their guests.

I shall delineate, with further examples, the first four of these themes in turn.

a. Ambivalence Regarding Town Women

L, the boss-boy whose account of his "mine marriage" is to be found in an earlier section, returned later to another mine, this time Robinson Deep, which was virtually in the city. This enabled him to find variety:

> I had an induna as my best friend who took me to the township. Again I had a boy and the induna had one too. In the township we both had girl-friends. We left the boys in the compound when we went to town, but we never spent the night in the township. We just spent a few hours with our girl-friends and then returned to our boys. We loved them better.

It is important to remember that L, when Vivienne Ndatshe interviewed him, was a happily married man living in an umzi in the country with his wife and family. Why did he earlier prefer boys in town? The answer, I believe, lies in a deep-seated fear of town women. Part of this is the simple and quite legitimate apprehension of being robbed. Several of the old men with lovers asserted that they dared not go to sleep lest their pockets be picked. Others feared venereal disease. Then there is also the oft-cited mteto of the mine. At their induction on the mines rural migrants were warned off town locations, no doubt because of the disruption to production of drunkeness and faction fighting. Several completely independent sources report that they were actually told at induction, "There are women (meaning 'boys') on the mine."

However, there is a deeper fear, I believe, than any of these. That is the fear of being seduced by the attractions of town women into forgetting one's home, absconding, becoming tshipa, or in Sotho lekholoa, "the one who stays a long time on the mines."[32] In the words of Ryna Dushu in Pondoland in 1984; remembering the 1950s:

> If a person goes tshipa he stops sending money home and simply changes from one mine to the next without ever going home. Nobody knows where he is. Often such people return home eventually very poor, often ill... Perhaps he gambles, chases women or drinks. His homeboys try to help but he rejects them, often violently, or he leaves the mine and goes to another... If a wife is left she will not go to town, she may find another man or go back to her own home. The uncles will care for the old umzi for her son. If the man now returns he has very little power because his son is the owner of the umzi. If he is lucky his wife will come back to him and they will be looked after by the young boy.

In 1976, across the mountains in Lesotho at St. Marks Mission, T.H. Thabane interviewed an old man.[33] He had been lekholoa in the 1950's and 60's:

> As a young man who grew up in the mountains of Lesotho, he found himself suddenly ushered into a different society with a different life style, values, activities. He suddenly

> found himself living in a society of "beautiful women who could use soap and water successfully," who used all sorts of cosmetics to make themselves beautiful and attractive, who could choose good clothes that made them look really smart. He suddenly found himself living in a society, that of people who could make entertainment and make life enjoyable to the full... He slowly sank and became overwhelmed by its life and various activity... He was in the midst of very pretty women, who he thought really loved him and really knew how to love... He says they could do their job in bed...

He spent his money on town women. "People from home bothered him about the misery of his wife... Letters from wife and parents bothered him." So at the end of his first contract he left the mine, telling no one where he was going. He signed on elsewhere, taking new lovers, fathering children by them, and then deserting them in their turn. Eventually he contracted TB and was laid off by the mines. His current linyatsi promptly threw him out and he returned home with minimal compensation from the mine. By now his baby son was fifteen and refused to accept him. His wife had four children by another man, but she took him in:

> His wife, who suffered for 15 years is the one who must have the burden of nursing him as a dying man. Those who enjoyed the fruits of his sweat are far from him. He breaks into tears and sobs. He tells me that while he was stronger he used to gather young men around him and tell them his experience. He advised them and evangelized them. He is now very weak; his voice is sometimes hardly audible...

In every country district there are old men such as this, returned tshipa living out their final days in humiliation and abject poverty. Small wonder that town women, for all their undoubted attractions, are such an ambivalent temptation. In a system where one's future lies in what can be built up for one at home by one's wife, there is little wonder that even those who take town lovers try to retain links with home. There is less risk in loving boys than in pawning one's future with faithless town women -- although boys too ask a price, using the ways of "tshipa of the mines" to build their own country places.

b. Sex and Shebeens

So obsessed were the Transvaal authorities with breaking up the liquor trade and preventing home brewing that there is material in the archives for an entire history on the subject. Town women were equally adamant in refusing to allow this profitable business to pass out of their hands. At least as early as 1902, the authorities were scheming to exert control over women brewing on the mine locations and from time to time "prostitution" was mentioned as endemic there also. In 1913, for instance, Theodora Williams of the Anglican Mine Native Mission, told Commissioner Buckle[34] that:

> Ninety percent of the boys [in the so-called married quarters] are not married. They bring in native women and

> these women being of low class bring in brandy. The decent class of boy complains because they have so often to live cheek by jowl with these bad lots.

For the mines at this period, the "married" quarters were a way of retaining competent workers, but at the same time, as A.M. Mostert, the recruiter, recognized, they led to inefficiency:

> At the Witwatersrand Mine, I had a location, and at the Glencairn Mine, and my efficiency was bad at both those places. The men were these big buck niggers and the women were in no sense their wives. The women make drink, and although these men were in your service, you never got anything out of them... The men simply lived on the women who were making beer. They get hold of your compound boys and that is where the question of the young boy comes in. They decoy him to these locations and they give him beer and he meets the women and he becomes bad too and inefficient at his work. He prefers to lie round the huts....

In 1931, A.J. Hoffman of the Johannesburg CID testified to the link between brewing and prostitution:[36]

> In allowing native women to brew beer, my experience has been this -- that where native women have not been allowed to brew liquor, they are continually doing it now. But where the native women are allowed to brew and where it is sold by them... to the men, there is always a certain amount of prostitution carried on. Those native women who sell beer become prostitutes....

The question then is what does prostitution mean in this context. A number of elite blacks denied vehemently to the Native Economic Commission[37] that prostitution as a straightfoward financial transaction existed at all amongst blacks. To understand this contradiction we need to distinguish different types of town women.

c. Types of Town Women

In addition to ishweshwe and nongogo, there is a third category of town women -- that of intombi or casual lover. One pays a fixed rate for a nongogo, gives gifts to an intombi, and actually maintains an ishweshwe (or linyatsi). Most personal testimony from miners describes experiences like those of B at the beginning of this section. The women at the shebeens (beer joints) may have engaged in sexual relations with customers, even several in one day, but the transaction was not merely a financial one, at least for the men. Whether the women were nongogos disguised as intombi or genuine intombi is not much to the point here. The point is that the men believed them to be intombi.

For some time I surmised that this belief must have been important to the men because they were seeking mutuality. Indeed, I have a 1982 account of a shebeen in Thabong township at Welkom where the older Sotho men gather

to create a "home" atmosphere, drink home-brewed Sotho beer and sing the songs of home. The difficulty with my initial supposition about the need for female companionship is that mutuality in this sort of situation is with each other, not with the women. There are women available, the men have sex with them and they appreciate that, but they regard them neither as nongogos nor as true companions. When then is the relationship? The attitude to women seems to be one of power rather than mutuality. Men appear to seek conquest, not company, from intombi. Conquest implies that one might fail and that means that the intombi, unlike the nongogo, does not sleep with everyone. I should guess that the reason nongogos were so despised is that they did nothing to affirm one's power as a man, they merely affirmed one's wealth -- in fact not even that, because the price was fixed. In such cases, there was no challenge. A statement from one of the participant observers on the mine in 1976[38] seems to confirm this tentative judgment:

> One Saturday morning at work underground I listened to miners relate fascinating stories about booze, women and sexual intercourse with them. When they get to Thabong Township on a drinking spree, they also have women in their programme. After relating previous weekend experiences in the township, they would start giving each other certain hints and tactics for winning women in the shebeens and convincing them to have sex with them -- "keeping buying her some drinks until she is tipsy and she will agree to any suggestion you make..." They go even further to discuss sexual intercourse in the township... Some of the miners listen with envy as they do not seem to be very successful with the women folk.

Primarily, then, to be an intombi, a woman must persuade the man that he is seducing her. Of course, if she is to become his ishweshwe, the relationship must become longer-term. At that point there may be greater mutuality, but my impression is that what is implied is a wider range of domestic services from the women and regular support from the men rather than fuller companionship.

d. The importance of being introduced

In most cases when Mpondo men spoke of going to town to find women in the 1940's and 50's, they mentioned a friend, usually BaSotho, who would accompany them and introduce them to their prospective sexual partners. Going to the bars and beerhalls near the townships was different. There men would go in groups and sometimes they would find women. But finding an intombe or establishing an ishweshwe seems to have required a personal introduction. This was partly, of course, because most women in the Transvaal townships were Sotho-speaking so language would be a problem for Mpondo.[39] However, as late as 1982, a small sample of mine shebeens in Thabong revealed that women running the shebeens invariably had a relative or boyfriend working on the mines. He would bring friends and casual contacts to drink at her home and she would lay on women as well as beer. Since these were essentially Sotho shebeens, the language problem did not exist. Perhaps the link with a male friend enabled miners to hold to their belief that the sexual relationship was more than merely financial; or

perhaps such introductions assuaged somewhat the fear of the seductive power of town women. In any case, although there must always have been nongogos around, even today their number seems to be relatively small. In Welkom in 1982, for instance, where the male mine population numbers many thousands, there were only 50-75 nongogos at work around the shopping centers. There were yet others on farms near town, and sex for a fixed sum does seem more sought after by contemporary mineworkers than in the 1930's.

Much more acceptable to men's self-esteem however is gift-giving as remuneration for sexual intercourse. They may be quite generous in this respect, and once a relationship becomes established with the assumption of exclusive rights to the woman (the ishweshwe/linyatsi pattern), the man expects to have to maintain the woman. In fact on paydays town women gather in substantial numbers at the mine gates, to ensure their share of "gifts" from their lovers.

Of course, this ought not to come as any great surprise. In traditional Bantu-speaking societies, male attitudes to sexuality stress male dominance which is characteristic of the entire society. Even in Schapera's extraordinary account of sexuality among the Kgatla,[40] a careful reading will show that most of the affection and tenderness is on the woman's side. Miners returning home on busses and trains in 1976 were quiet and spoke with warmth of their children and homesteads, but in respect to their wives they spoke mostly of fear of being cuckolded. It is possible that mutuality between young married couples is increasing as traditional structures erode, but the general stress on male control and domination in sexual relations can hardly be doubted even today. Nor is the difference more than a matter of degree from our own patriarchal society. The importance of power, of conquest and control, seems a fundamental aspect of male sexuality in our own social construction of the self even when, as often nowadays, it is exercised overtly in the interest of female sexual satisfaction.

MINE SEXUALITY AND HISTORY

Sexual activity reinforces people's understanding of themselves and each other in terms of gender and power. Indeed, sexual activity, which confirms our self-formation as "men" and "women," "active" and "passive," "powerful" and "weak," cuts across more general structures of power and interpretation sometimes affirming and sometimes disconfirming them. Thus sexual activity may be part of the topography of resistance and cooptation not only in domestic struggles but also in more general struggles against oppression. Furthermore, resistance at one point within a shifting structure of power may at the same time imply subordination at another point -- and vice versa. Consider changes in the incidence of "homosexuality" on the mines, for instance, or the battle for miners' earnings between town women and country wives.

The incidence of "homosexuality"

Early evidence on inkontshane marriages in the mines all attests that they were most common among Mozambicans. Junod suggested that the Thonga (Shangaans as they are known on the mines) had always preferred inkontshane

relationships because they feared venereal disease, but evidence of "undesirable Portuguese women" especially around the coal mines, which were entirely manned by Mozambicans, calls that assertion into question.[41] Patrick Harries' work[42] suggests that the process of rural impoverishment came quite early to Mozambicans so that inkontshane marriages may be indicative of dissolution of the homestead system. Indeed it seems that in the very early years the Mozambicans actually brought young boys (umfaans) with them to serve them on the mines (SNA 46, 1540/02; NLB 229, 583/15/145, Randfontein South report).

By 1916, several Native Inspectors reported that the practice had spread to members of other ethnic groups. Initially it would seem, "boys" from other tribes would agree to "mine marriages" with Mozambicans, many of whom were boss-boys or mine policemen, for the money. It is important to note that at this time young men went to the mines from the Transkei, Zululand and Basutoland to earn cattle in order to establish a homestead (umzi). The umzi formed the basis of the entire home social structure.[43] It undergirded the continued authority of the older men, the bridewealth system, the stability of marital relations despite long absences, and much of religious belief and ritual activity. Older men remained dominant as long as they controlled the distribution of land and exchange of women, for both are fundamental to the establishment of an umzi. Wives remained faithful to their husbands and husbands continued to remit money home because together they were "building an umzi." Again and again, by moral exhortation and ritual action, men were enjoined to avoid town women who might cause them to forget their umzi. Red-blanket marriages are partnerships centered on the umzi, rather than romantic, or even companionate, relationships. Perhaps for this very reason the seductive potential of the lover in town is the more to be feared -- especially by the men themselves.

By entering a "mine marriage" a man might not only avoid the temptations of town but he could double his wages. As one Mpondo ex-mineworker told Vivienne Ndatshe:

> After 9 months I had to go home. I had money and bought cattle. My father was a mine worker. He was surprised at the money I brought and said to me that no matter what I might say, he knew why I had the money.

Thus, those who agreed to "mine marriages," despite the passive and essentially feminine part they had to play, did so because they considered themselves at the mine "on business." Their "husbands'" pay would more rapidly enable them to pay bridewealth and begin to build an umzi. Thus, they agreed to play the part of a "woman" in sexual activity in order more rapidly to become "men" at home. Their sexual activity indirectly served to maintain the authority of the older men within the subsistence system at home. James Kulani,[44] speaking of Pondoland in the 1930's, expressed very clearly the social logic of migrancy from the point of view of the Mpondo elders:

> There were Xhosa women in the locations but never Mpondo women -- now there are, but not then. The Mpondo women knew that they were not allowed to go to town and besides they were looking after the umzis while their husbands were away.

> The men arranged it so that clan-brothers were not all away at one time. Before he left a young man arranged for help for his father and wife. Before they all went to the mines the lobola used to be paid by the clan-people who would get together and each contribute some animal, either give or lend. Now the young man does it all himself. The old men are thus happy about youngsters going off to the mines.

Inkontshane marriages, whatever their origins among the Mozambicans, fitted well into this system. There were, of course, mine "husbands" who were conscientious Mpondo even at this point. "L" was one of them. However, testimony on all sides is overwhelming that many such active partners were tshipa, men who had absconded from country responsibilities and became creatures of the mines and townships -- proletarians before their time as it were -- like the Transvaal blacks and the Mshangaans before them. Indeed, if the Mozambicans had not been so stringently required to return home, one may suggest that many of them would have settled happily amongst the new urban population on the Rand. Indeed, many of them did so in the early days on the Rand but the Portuguese government was adamant that such deserters be brought to book.

That sex of the "mine marriage" type served the interests of the industry, as Charles van Onselen would claim,[45] goes almost without saying. In 1916 a Native Inspector[46] who suggested measures to stamp out "unnatural vice," cautioned that Compound Managers would be reluctant to enforce them for fear of losing labor. Furthermore, he warned that the state could expect a rash of strikes. Small wonder his recommendations were ignored. No doubt the strikes would have been led by irate boss-boys and other seniors. In fact there is a record of one such strike in 1941.[47] "Mine marriages" were important to the self-esteem of black authority figures.

This mine "homosexuality" which so crudely reinforced the seniority system on the mines also served in more subtle ways to protect the seniority system back home. It was a mode of resistance to proletarianization. This seems to me to be the general trend of the evidence. As land became more scarce and the homestead system began to break down back home, South African workers were freed to leave the mines for industry and to settle in town (although much of the rush to the cities in the 1940's was from the farms). The mines were forced to extend their recruitment system farther and farther north. Pondoland and certain conservative parts of the Transkei remained substantial sources of supply, as did Lesotho and Mozambique for somewhat different reasons, but much of the labor force after 1950 was recruited in the far North. I have no evidence that tshipa policemen and boss-boys were able to talk youngsters from the North into "marriage" but my guess is that they probably did.

Town women and country wives

Since 1973 the large increase in South African based labour on the mines, clearly associated with the rise in wages, has meant that mineworkers are being drawn from different strata of black society than in the past. More and more black miners, especially Xhosa-speakers, are drawn from rural townships and resettlement areas. At the same time, the combined impact of

migrant labour, resettlement, agricultural development in the homelands, and increasing population, has meant that the umzi system, which is essentially based on occupation of land, has been eroded from within. In the Transkei, for instance, recruitment for the mines has spread rapidly to non-red areas while at the same time in several areas there is evidence that the number of red-blanket families are diminishing. The bonus re-engagement scheme, obliging almost immediate re-enlistment, puts further pressure on the families since men are now away from home for longer periods than ever before.

As long as a woman presided over an umzi in the absence of her husband, his obligation to remit to her was not merely moral but also in his own interest. Marriages of people without land may be more genuinely companionate. Indeed young people increasingly exercise a romantic "choice" to which they had no right before. But companionate marriage requires ongoing mutual communication if it is to survive. Migrants and their wives without umzis, however sincerely "in love," run serious risks of marital dissolution.

Changes in hiring practices and wage scales by the mines and within the family structure of the sending areas have thus tended to place greater strain on marriages. Furthermore, it is important to note that red-blanket Xhosa and Mpondo families have traditionally been some of the most stable under migrancy. The process of erosion of marriage had gone much farther in Lesotho and the Ciskei, and, as the mines begin to draw recruits from the locations of smaller country towns such as Grahamstown, marriages there have next to no defense against the ravages of migrancy. The effects of this gradual collapse of family life in the sending areas are twofold. Firstly, more men from the mines tend to seek out "town women" and are more likely to attempt to establish permanent relationships with them. Secondly, more country women, no longer having ties with the land that bind them to the umzi, attempt to come to town, either to keep alive their relationships with mineworker husbands or to set up as "town women" themselves.

Many of the houses in Thabong have additions constructed by the owners to take in lodgers. Often such lodgers are visiting wives or ishweshe (nyatsi) of miners, who pay their rent and maintain them there. It is highly likely that shebeen intombis are also recruited from the ranks of these miners' women, who wish to earn more money on the side. In her role as nyatsi, however, a woman is expected to play a conventional domestic role -- cooking, cleaning, washing and mending clothes, accompanying the man about the town and generally providing care besides the sexual services which she also renders.

In 1976, if a wife appeared at the gate of a Welkom mine, we were told that the husband might with impunity choose not to see her. However, by 1982, the mines apparently obliged men to support their wives, so that they welcomed them equably (rather to the woman's surprise) and found lodgings for them in town, or on the farms.

A wife who appears unannounced at the mine hostel is often seeking a husband who has stopped remitting to her; he may well be supporting a lenyatsi in town. The arrival of his wife complicates his life, and in 1982 we heard of many cases of country wives seeking out nyatsi and beating them

up. The wife is usually fighting not only her herself but often for her children at home as well. Interestingly enough, in the majority of such cases known to me, the man gives up his "town women," at least overtly, and moves in with his wife, who of course provides similar domestic services. The woman is well aware that she needs to stay with him if she wishes to retain his allegiance (and keep the all-important money going home). Hence the importance of Kwa-Pitinyana.

Kwa-Pitinyana (Little Piet's place) is the generic name given to a number of farms in the vicinity of Welkom which are apparently owned or rented by members of a single family. Piet and his son, Jan, and possibly other local farmers, provide housing for black women visiting and/or prostituting themselves to black miners. They may or may not be miners' wives or ex-wives.

One of the Thabong study research assistants visited the Xhosa women's settlement on Piet's own farm.[48] He has constructed about 30 four-roomed houses. In each room two or more women stay, usually with their husbands. Each room is able to accommodate two beds, constructed by placing a sheet of galvanized iron across four drums with mealie sacks for mattresses. Additional tenants arrange with occupants to sleep on the floor. Wherever she sleeps, each woman pays a rent of R12 a month. In addition, in winter on one day a week, each woman is required to work in the fields. For this labour they are paid in skim milk and mealie-meal. Apparently in busy seasons women may be required to work more than one day a week. Piet's van comes round on the morning of the work day to round them up and take them to work. If anyone fails to work, all her possessions are seized and locked up in Piet's home. She has to pay R20 to recover her belongings. Women with small children (under one year) and pregnant women are excused from work.

Piet's wife sells groceries to the women of the settlement. Her markup is several cents on each item. Residents are not obliged to buy from her, however. They may go to town to shop if they wish as long as it is not a work day. The trip to town involves a long walk through the mealie-fields and then a bus or taxi to town. The man make this trip daily to and from work -- some have bicycles.

The place is absolutely full, mostly with Xhosa-speakers. The researcher explained that she was looking for a place to stay. The women first made sure she was Xhosa-speaking and said that someone was indeed moving out during the next week. "But what is wrong with your husband?" she was asked. "Why does he not make these arrangements for you?" She was in fact told by an informant who had moved from Pitinyana into Anglo-American town housing that Piet takes only married women at his own place, although the informant, who lived there for four years, proceeded to say: "The place is quite wild and busy with life. Fun-lovers get lots of it down there. People seem to forget themselves and others lose themselves completely down there." She said, "I have seen many women who were maybe disappointed by their husbands or others who could never trace their husbands losing their sense of dignity and living the cheap life of prostituting. Such women -- you can never tell how they got the rooms they were occupying..."

It is important to realize how recent is the extreme overcrowding at Pitinyana's. The informant cited above implied that she and her husband had

a room to themselves when they stayed there. The tremendous increase in recruitment of Transkeians for the mines since 1975 and the spreading break-down of the umzi system in the home area has meant that there is a definite increase in Xhosa-speaking women in the area. Those Xhosas who fail to find accommodation at Piet's own place go with some reluctance to one of his son's places.

Piet's son is said to be hard and cruel. He beats people. He works them harder than Piet and for no pay at all. He refuses to exempt pregnant women from work. And five days after giving birth they are out in the fields again, the new-born baby on their backs. People are housed in tin shacks or in rows in huge barns.

One of his farms is known as Qwa-Qwa because there are many Sotho women there. It is said to be very wild and violent and most Xhosas fear the place. According to one Sotho theological student, women there engage in large-scale prostitution. The men line up in rows outside the tin shacks. Alcohol flows freely there. In Welkom, it is known as the place which never closes. Women who arrive there with children are loaned the return fare by others so that they may place the child with relatives before coming back to "learn the rules of the place." The men pay 50c for the women to strip "so that they can see their framework." Presumably this is a come-on to entice the men to spend the full R10.

Jan's other farm is called Rapapa by the people. Here Xhosa and Sotho live together and living conditions are said to be worse than at all the other places. Fights over women are reputed to have wider ramifications here because of different ethnicities. The farmer tends not to interfere in fights until the violence is widespread. One informant said that Piet's son actually brought in a truckload of Sotho "AmaRussia" when a Pondo whose wife had been "raped" returned to his hostel for reinforcements. The consensus seems to be that this particular white man actually enjoys violence.[49]

To conclude, I quote from the field worker's research notes:

> Apart from having nowhere else to go when coming to their husbands, these women together with their husbands prefer Pitinyana because they are somehow protected from police raids which are found in Thabong and in other town areas. Police never bother to check who is staying with who at Pitinyana, or who is here illegally or without a visiting permit...They can stay at Pitinyana for as long as they wish, as long as they pay their monthly rent in good time.

On the face of it, Pitinyana seems to be one of the most shocking revelations of this paper. However, the women go to those farms and stay in them "voluntarily." Piet's place is clearly not a choice they would make in the best of all possible worlds, but they do seem to consider it preferable to returning to the Transkei or Ciskei. Piet is without question a scoundrel and a profiteer, but he is not the first to have profited from migrant labour. South African heavy industry, including the mining industry, has long done so. Indeed the entire South African economy as at present constituted presupposes that migrant labour is fundamental to its continued

growth. It is too early to predict the implications of the addition of influx control.

The increase in black mine wages since 1973 means that the mining industry no longer requires migrant labour in the way it presumably did before 1970. It is conceivable that migrant labour might now gradually be phased out in gold mining. It is important to observe, indeed, that the status quo in the Southern African homelands is itself fast changing. The household economy (what I have called using the Xhosa term, the umzi system), despite pockets or resistance and even revival, and despite the tenacity with which people cling to accustomed ways, is inexorably breaking down. Serious efforts at agricultural development back home will probably speed up this process, as will the resettlement policy of the South African State. Squatter settlements around Welkom and in the Western Transvaal are growing apace and they may be expected to continue to proliferate.

I was told of a farm towards Allanridge near Welkom where the farmer's wife insisted that police drive off women who were squatting on her husband's land and paying rent to his own farm labourers. This is the typical pattern also on farms around the Western Transvaal mines. The police removed the women, fined them, and flattened their shacks. Within 48 hours, the shacks were going up again. Thus, even if the farmer wishes it, removal of squatters from farm land is very difficult.

Women are coming to the mines in greater and greater numbers. The "South Africanization" of the mine labour force has meant that a problem which has long been the concern of municipalities and Bantu Administration is increasingly becoming something the mines are having to face. Nor is this a reversible process. More and more miners' country wives are coming to town to stay. The longstanding separation between "town women" and wives is beginning to break down.

This process is a gradual one. In 1982, however, theological students who spoke to almost 100 Qumbu miners' wives in Transkei, reported that at least a quarter of the men had absconded. The process of erosion of family structures is even further advanced in Lesotho,[50] although the opportunity to come home on weekends has apparently slowed familial disintegration. BaSotho theological students in 1981 reported marriages in generally better shape than in 1976. The family is increasingly nucleated however and seniors are struggling more than ever despite higher mine wages. In-law conflicts, if anything, are worse than ever between consumer-conscious wives and more frugal parents. Families without migrant sons or husbands are in deep trouble.

Wives are more ready to go to town to seek out their lekholoa husbands. Without fields or with less productive fields and especially in bad years, they have to. BaSotho women have long been leaving for South Africa. These women are legendary as the "town women" of the 1930's, 40's and 50's. In 1963, the South African state declared BaSotho female migrants illegal. That they still come to work illegally or engage in prostitution is a measure of their desperation. The most striking change, however, is the increase in Xhosa-speaking women "squatting" around the mines.

Apparently with the gradual collapse of the umzi system at home and shifts in recruiting patterns more Xhosa miners seek women in town. As a result they become tshipa. Their wives come looking for them since the erosion of the home system no longer binds them to the land. If they are successful in coaxing their husbands back, they feel obliged to stay close to the mine -- hence the squatters on farms and in township lodgings. Historically such families became permanently urbanized and formed the nucleus of the urban black working class. With the rise in mine wages, however, the move from mining to the urban work-force is now less attractive. Thus these more proletarianized mine-families are beginning to threaten the entire system of migrant labor on the mines. Country wives defy the influx controls to be with their husbands because these men are no longer willing to invest in the old umzi social security system.

CONCLUSION

There has been a turnabout in the relevance of male sexuality for the proletarianization of black miners in South Africa. If the 'wives of the mine' were in the past a facet of general resistance to proletarianization, the contemporary turn to 'town women' represents accomodation to the exigencies of stable wage-earning. Male sexuality, far from retarding the proletarianization of both men and women, now has become one important reason for country wives to move to town. Where 'homosexuality' on the mines had been both a source of rural resistance to the wage economy and also an accomodation to the migrant system, so now 'heterosexuality' challenges the migrant system as rural society breaks down and the old patriarchality seems implicitly threatened.

Both Foucault's main themes seem to be substantiated by the data on male migrant miners' sexuality in South Africa. On the question of power, while overt "male" sexual domination can hardly be doubted, the implications of that power for sexual activity have shifted radically. Indeed, the very nature of sexual activity, while remaining an expression of social and personal power, has changed within the past 15 years.

The generally acknowledged drop-off in the incidence of 'homosexuality' on the mines is popularly attributed to management's determination to enforce its abolition and their appointment of social workers with therapeutic training as counselors on the mines. Such a conclusion presumes that same-sex sexual congress is a sign of personality disorder - or at least severe social deprivation. While there may be an element of the latter in the incidence of mine "homosexuality," I hope that the foregoing account will call to question such simplistic and a-historical assumptions. Sexuality too has a social history. Sexual activity and sexual preferences among African miners in South Africa are more social constructions than individual choices. 'Homosexuality' as an individual 'personality type' is as much an outcome of 'the triumph of the therapeutic' in our own society, as a universal and inevitable category.

ENDNOTES

1. Michel Foucault, The Uses of Pleasure, New York, Pantheon, 1986; also Foucault interview in Salmagundi 58-59 (Fall 1982-Winter 1983). For a brilliant exposition of this argument see John Boswell, "Towards the Long View" in Salmagundi, ibid. An equally brilliant empirical demonstration is George Chauncey, "Christian Brotherhood or Sexual Perversion?" in Journal of Social History, Winter 1985.

2. Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, Vol. I, New York, Vintage, 1980, pp. 92-102.

3. This paper is in fact based on five different types of evidence. First, archival records; second, a remarkable series of life-histories collected by Vivienne Ndatshe from retired Mpondo miners in August, 1982; third, a 1976 participant observation study I directed under the auspices of the Anglo-American Corporation on a mine in Welkom; fourth, the journals of theological students doing vacation work on the mines under the auspices of the Agency for Industrial Mission between 1976 and 1982; and fifth, the results of a study of women in Thabong Township conducted by two participant observers under my direction, and funded by the Anglo-American Chairman's Fund.

4. NLB 229, 583/15/145.

5. Chamber of Mines, 1899-1910, N series, N35 (I am indebted to Charles van Onselen for this reference).

6. Philip and Iona Mayer, "Socialization by Peers: The Youth Organization of the Red Xhosa," in Philip Mayer (ed.) Socialization, Tavistock, London, 1970.

7. Chamber of Mines, op cit, p. 3.

8. NLB 229, 583/15/145, 16/2/16, Replies to Circular from DNL on Unnatural Vice.

9. NLB 374, 110/28/110, TTGC 1928 Session, 4/5/28.

10. NTS 2091, 213/280, 30/11/28.

11. In the 1916 correspondence on the subject one letter mentioned an elaboration supposedly introduced by BaSotho from Premier diamond mine with its closed compounds. This consisted of "using such viscera as sheeps lungs, wind pipes, hearts and liver of beasts which when half cooked and still warm are placed between the thighs of a complacent friend, etc... The consequence is that the demand for such viscera has considerably increased and has enhanced their mercantile value (NLB op cit., 16/2/16, Addendum from Lauthé).

12. NEC Evidence (K26), Vol. 8, p. 8241.

13. cf. Charles van Onselen, Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand: 2 New Nineveh, Longman, London, 1982, pp. 179-189.

14. K26, vol. 8, p. 7229.

15. Several Mpondo men interviewed by Vivienne Ndatshe stated that being on the mines was like going herding or to faction fights. One simply abstained while away from one's girlfriend or wife, implying that sexual activity was "natural" in certain situations and abstention was "natural" in others.

16. Mayers, op cit.

17. Chamber of Mines, op cit, p. 2.

18. H.A. Junod, The Life of an African Tribe, pp. 492-493.

19. The notes from Vivienne Ndatshe's interviews on this subject with Mpondo men must obviously remain confidential. However, copies are on file at the African Studies Center, University of the Witwatersrand, and may be seen on request by researchers.

20. Junod, op cit, p. 494.

21. Chamber of Mines, op cit, p. 2.

22. 1976 Welkom mine study, Induna interview, 28/7/76; copies of this material are in my possession -- originals are held by Anglo-American Corporation.

23. 1976 Welkom mine study, Tsebe statement, 6/7/76.

24. NLB 229, 503/15/145.

25. AIM, 1976 Theologians Group Report; Mines No. 1 (AIM student journals are housed with SALDRU at the University of Cape Town).

26. Philip Mayer, Wives of Migrant Workers (Vol. III of Migrant Labour: Some Perspectives from Anthropology), Rhodes University, Grahamstown, 1978, pp. 27-31.

27. Mayer, op cit, p. 28.

28. NLB 229, 583/15/145, 16/2/16.

29. AIM 1982, Noyakaso.

30. AIM 1982, Mashwana.

31. Indeed, for Xhosa there are additional categories at home, e.g. intombi (girlfriend) used for she with whom one engages in metsha play and inkazana, a woman who has given birth out of wedlock and thus becomes sexually available to the senior men at home.

32. Vivienne Ndatshe and I interviewed Ryna Dushu in Pondoland in November 1984. A tape of the interview (no. 6) is on file at the African Studies Institute, University of the Witwatersrand.

33. AIM 1976, Thabane.

34. Native Grievances Inquiry, evidence (K358), 15/10/13, p. 10.

35. Ibid., 27/4/14, p. 43.

36. K26, Vol. 8, p. 7652.

37. Ibid., Vol. 8, pp. 7445, 7929, 8346-7.

38. 1976 Welkom mine study, Mbatha, personal statement, 13/7/76.

39. 1982 Thabong Township Study.

40. Isaac Shapera, Married Life in an African Tribe, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1971.

41. Junod, op cit, p. 493; NLB 261, 263; JUS 421, 3/1220/26.

42. Patrick Harries, "Kinship, Ideology and the Nature of Pre-Colonial Labour Migration" in Shula Marks and Richard Rathbone (eds.), Industrialization and Social Change in South Africa, Longman, London, 1982.

43. I rely heavily here on Mayer's work on red-blanket Xhosa.

44. 1984 Mpondo Interview (no. 1).

45. Charles van Onselen, Chibaro, Ravan Press, 1980, pp. 174-182.

46. NLB 229, 583/15/145, 16/2/16.

47. NTS 7675, 102/332, 20/10/41.

48. For a journalistic account of the same settlement, see Scope.

49. It is important to stress that although the evidence dealing with all farms other than Piet's own place is hearsay, it is based on interviews with eight different blacks in Welkom and several informants in the Transkei.

50. cf. Alan Murray, Divided Families, Cambridge University Press, London, 1981, and Spiegel in Philip Mayer (ed.), Black Villagers in an Industrial Society, Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1980.

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