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UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND
INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED SOCIAL RESEARCH

Seminar Paper
to be presented in RW 7003 SEMINAR ROOM
AT 4.00pm SEPTEMBER 1991

Title: **Beyond the Bovine Mystique: Entrepreneurship, Class and Identity in QwaQwa.**

by: **Leslie Bank**

No **303**

BEYOND THE BOVINE MYSTIQUE: ENTREPRENEURSHIP, CLASS AND IDENTITY IN QWAQWA

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September 1991

1. Introduction

The emergence of an African middle class in the South African bantustans has been the source of considerable debate during the 1980s. Few contributors to this debate dispute the fact that the bantustan programme has created opportunities for black 'embourgeoisement' in rural areas. What is contested, however, is the economic and political significance of this process. Some authors argue that the Apartheid state, as a representative of the interests of white capital, has been extremely reluctant to commit itself wholeheartedly to the project of black middle class formation and has focused on the narrower project of black political 'encadrement' (Noluntshungu 1982). The other position in this debate has been that black middle class development has gained considerable momentum during the bantustan era, and that this process has been an integral part of the state's programme of ethnic national development (Southall 1980; Saul and Gelb 1981; Sarakinsky 1989).

These differences in approach have generated conflicting interpretations of the political orientations of bantustan elites. According to the former analysts, the ambivalence of the Apartheid state towards black economic development has driven a wedge between rural elites and the white state, and has encouraged the latter constantly to seek alliances with the black working class with whom they share a common experience of racial oppression. The second group of analysts, by contrast, suggest that in view of the economic assistance afforded rural elites by state agencies, there has been an inevitable convergence of interests between the white state and bantustan elites. One recent study goes as far as to suggest that the liberation movements, such as the ANC, should not underestimate the counter-revolutionary potential of these rural 'collaborators' (Josana 1989).

But, despite the influence of these analyses, they have recently come under fire from various quarters. One line of criticism has been that these perspectives assume that rural middle class formation has been far too homogeneous. Ritchken (1989), for instance, argues that one cannot simply assume that diverse groups of elites, such as chiefs, landowners, traders, and bureaucrats, will share the same social identities and political interests. Mare and Nchune

(1989) follow a similar line of criticism by arguing that we need to sub-divide the rural petty bourgeoisie into its 'bureaucratic core' and 'other fringe elements'. Both studies suggest that the notion of an undifferentiated petty bourgeoisie provides few clues to the increasingly complex dynamics of rural politics. Another approach to the same problem is to see bantustan elites as submerged in a variety of cross-cutting political tendencies and loyalties which generate highly ambiguous relations of dependency to the white state (Charney 1988; Graaf 1990).

Although these new approaches are more sophisticated and eclectic than earlier structuralist analyses, they have not challenged the state-centred view of rural class formation, which stands at the core of the perspectives they seek to criticise. Upward social mobility is still conceived of as a political relationship negotiated through the conduit of the bantustan-central state structures. In Graaf's (1990) words: 'the state still provides the most important, if not the only lever, for economic advancement in rural areas'. In the final analysis, he suggests, access to wealth in rural areas is not determined as much by the 'relationships to the means of production' as by access to state position. And for this reason, he argues, people continue to aspire to government jobs in the bantustans (1990: 170). Now, while one need not dispute the last statement, it would be misleading to assume that class differentiation has occurred solely through state structures. To accept this proposition is, I believe, to deny the existence of alternative material and social bases for rural entrepreneurship.

My aim in this paper is to attempt to re-focus debate on rural entrepreneurship by drawing attention to the variety of forms of entrepreneurship evident in the Qwaqwa bantustan. I will suggest that, while access to state funds and position has been, and continues to be, an important launching pad for the accumulation of wealth in this area, it has by no means been the only, or even the dominant, form of entrepreneurial response in this area. In seeking out the alternative social and economic underpinning of entrepreneurial strategies I direct attention away from the state and associated patronage networks and focus on the role of indigenous resources and ideologies in propping up local market responses. My central argument is that the economic strategies of the vast majority of rural entrepreneurs in Qwaqwa have been shaped around *household*, rather than *state*, resources, and are better intepreted as forms of *resistance*, rather than *collaboration*.

In developing my analysis, I draw inspiration from the work of Szelenyi (1988) on rural Hungarian entrepreneurs under socialism. He argues that one cannot understand entrepreneurship in the Hungarian countryside without exploring its social and cultural underpinnings, or its status as a

peculiar form of resistance to the command economy. There are important insights in this analysis which provide the basis for a re-interpretation of 'embourgeoisement' in rural South Africa. The second body of literature I refer to deals with the micro-level circuits of domestic relations and household ideologies. The relevance of this literature for a study of class is that it draws attention to domestic units as social and cultural repositories, which are often able to adapt and respond to change on their own terms. In exploring the social and cultural underpinnings of entrepreneurship in this way, I hope, by the end of the paper, to have provided new insights into the thorny issues of class and identity in rural South Africa.

2. Relocation and Market Anarchy: the structural context

In setting out the structural limits of entrepreneurship in dependent economies, scholars devoted much attention to the International Labour Organisation's (1972) report on the 'informal sector' in Kenya. Many have argued that far from a panacea for unemployment and poverty, this sector should be seen as an exploited enclave in the wider capitalist economy. The gist of their argument is that in peripheral capitalist economies, small-scale business operators can never survive the dominating tendencies of large, established concerns. In this context it is postulated that the small-scale sector will increasingly, with the expansion of capitalism, be confined to economic involution and will serve little purpose other than to reproduce a labour force for the dominant economic order (Leys 1978; Sandbrook 1982).

The influence of these arguments has been powerfully felt in South Africa where capitalist relations are seen to be highly developed. Wilkinson and Webster (1982), for example, conclude on the basis of a survey of the informal sector in Soweto that these operators are destined to a life of poverty in the 'interstices of capitalism'. This perspective has been frequently rehearsed for bantustans. Sharp and De Waal (1988), for instance, argue that economic development in these areas will be much better served by raising urban wages than by stimulating the already involuted and under-capitalised informal sector. The function of this literature has been to reinforce prevailing notions of state-driven class formation in the bantustans. Most of these studies identify two sectors: the state-supported petty bourgeoisie and the involuted informal sector.

Without completely rejecting this analysis, it needs to be pointed out that this presentation of the small-scale sector in the bantustans is misleading because it over-estimates the power of the state/capital within these economies. In addressing economic developments in the bantustans, it is

worth repeating a point made by Long and Roberts (1984) in their study of rural entrepreneurs in Peru:

> ...the emphasis on the functionality of the informal sector for capital accumulation requires an important rider when applied to provincial centres...The small-scale sector is less likely to be controlled directly by its linkages with the large-scale sector, because these centres are not significant locations for productive investment and accumulation (1984: 144).

These authors go on to argue that conditions in the Peruvian highlands in the 1970s enabled small-scale entrepreneurs to achieve sustained success if they were able to manipulate household resources and kinship as a basis for economic diversification (1982: 144). This observation provides an useful starting point for our analysis of Qwaqwa, where the intrusion of 'outside' (white) capital in local markets has been surprising slow and uneven.

In the 1960s Qwaqwa, or Witsieshoek as it was known, was defined by its position as a supplier of migrant labour to the South African urban economy. As a rural backwater, Witsieshoek displayed the classic symptoms of an under-developed labour reserve. In the 1960s the bantustan had no industrial base, despite efforts by the apartheid state to create one. In the field of commerce and agriculture it also lagged far behind adjacent regions, and even many of the other bantustans. This was a result of the domineering tendencies of the Bantu Investment Corporation within the local economy. In Witsieshoek the BIC was distinguished by its obstructionist, rather than creative role, in stimulating class differentiation (Bank 1988). In fact, by 1970 there was no evidence of the rise of a stable middle class in Qwaqwa, and when this process did occur, it took place in a context of rapid social change and economic instability.

The major cause of this instability was mass population relocation, which took place in Qwaqwa at an astonishing pace from 1970 onwards. In the years 1970 to 1975 the local population quadrupled from 24 000 to over 100 000. A mere four years later it had doubled again and by 1980 stood in excess of 200 000. The major source of this influx was the white farms of the northern Orange Free State where rapid mechanisation and grinding poverty initiated the relocation of thousands of families. A smaller proportion of the resettled people came from urban areas, where they were the victims slum clearances and influx control measures. On arrival in Qwaqwa, these refugees were resettled in the new commuter town of Phuthaditjhaba (Sharp 1982; Niehaus 1989).

An inevitable consequences of this influx was that it threw the local administration into a state of complete anarchy. The tribal authorities, which were responsible for

managing farm refugees, were overwhelmed by the number of people flooding into the area. As early as 1972, chiefs were already calling on the state to halt relocation until plans for residential development had been finalised (QLA 1972). Under these condition it is perhaps not surprising that the state also lost control over the economy in Qwaqwa. In fact, by the early 1970s the BIC had come under scathing attack for it's inability to prepare the homeland for the tens of thousands of consumers arriving in the area. In the Qwaqwa Legislative Assembly (1975) the BIC was dubbed 'hawk in a sheepskin' which had come to the homeland with the sole purpose of exploiting the local population.

As market anarchy replaced state control, the demands for a new development corporation, which would 'serve the Basotho people' grew louder and in 1975 the defunct BIC was replaced with the Qwaqwa Development Corporation (QDC). This move was of little significance, as the QDC found it impossible to assert any control over the mushrooming second economy. The implication of these developments was that the escalating homeland consumer market was left in the hands of anyone who had the resources and the inclination to exploit it. In the early 1970s white traders and farmers were, of course, quick to take advantage of the chaotic situation, but they were not alone as scores of local people also set themselves up as hawkers, backyard grocers, taximen, wood and coal dealers, brickmakers, and shebeeners. What is significant about this upsurge in entrepreneurial activity is that it occurred *outside the parametres of state control*: it was an organically generated process which benefitted from the fact that very few outside entrepreneurs were aware or able to take advantage of the new market opportunities.

In tackling this situation the state employed two tactics. The first was to pass legislation which made the acquisition of business licenses easier for local entrepreneurs. Thus from 1976 business licenses were issued virtually on demand at the district magistrates offices. In the decade between 1976 and 1986 some 400 new licenses were granted in Qwaqwa. This democratization of licensing did very little to control the pace or form of commercial development in the area. It merely endorsed what had become an unmanageable *de facto* situation. As far I could detect, business licenses were issued, more or less, randomly from 1977 onwards. The only category of actors which enjoyed priviledged access to these resources were village chiefs.

The area where the state did intervene in the structuring the commercial sector was in the establishment of multi-million rand shopping complexes. To cope with persistent consumer demand for cheap retail outlets, the QDC claimed, that it was obliged to invite large white concerns into the homeland. In 1980 the Qwaqwa government unveiled the first of a series of these shopping centres, which were vehemently

opposed by local traders. Particular objections were raised to the participation of Frasers and several other white-owned enterprises in these ventures. The state took little notice of these demands, and by 1985, there were six large QDC shopping complexes in the bantustan, housing dozens of white retail concerns and a vareity black urban traders. This intervention, together with the unmonitored issue of licenses, imposed severe economic pressure on all small operators in the area.

From the above account it can be concluded that the state played little more than a shadow role in the creation of a commercial petty bourgeoisie in Qwaqwa. The vast majority of entreprenuers developed no formal linkages with the state, nor desired any, because of the unequivocal leaning of the state towards an alliance with white capital. Moreover, it might also be noted that the spread of white capital into the bantustans did not completely smother local intitative, as white concerns tended to focus only on certain segments of rural retail market (eg. general retail, furniture and clothing). The closure of opportunities in the 1980s did not necessarily mean that the formerly successful entreprenuers were forced into bankruptcy. Indeed, as I will demonstrate later, the response to these developments were quiet varied and depended largely the socio-cultural underpinnings of entrepreneurship in particular cases. This being the case, it is necessary to consider how an autonmous entrepreneurial class was intitially constituted in Qwaqwa. Who were these entrepreneurs? And on what basis did they set themselves up in commerce? It is towards answering these questions that I direct my attention in the following section of this paper.

3. Forms of Entrepreneurship: the socio-cultural context

Most anthropological work on the issue of entrepreneurship in African rural settings has tended to focus on the social and cultural barriers to economic innovation, rather than on the specific motivations of individuals and households for pursuing strategies of economic innovation and change. Many of the rural studies of the 1960s and early 1970s identified a basic dichotomy between the aspirations of 'progressive' individuals and the redistributive values of the communities in which they lived. They argued that economic development in these situations was only possible when individuals were able to shrug off their social and economic obligations to kin and neighbours (Long 1968), or were able to manipulate customary obligations for personal gain (Barth 1967; Parkin 1972). In many respects the art of entrepreneurship in rural Africa was the ability to walk the social tightrope between acceptance and rejection within one's own community. It was a process of establishing an identity which embodied both the privileges of being an 'insider', and the freedom of being an 'outsider' (cf. Kennedy 1988).

In African urban areas, where traditional social relations were seen to be less binding on individuals, more attention was given to the role of ethnicity as a basis for the transmission of entrepreneurial values. Here, it was argued that, in the striving for integration into the urban economic order, ethnic identities are manipulated to enhance access to social and economic resources (Cohen 1972). But, as important as these studies are, they provide few useful insights for the analysis of entrepreneurship in Qwaqwa. The main reasons for this is that the settlement in Qwaqwa in the 1970s was premised on the denial of 'community' and the eradication of 'ethnic' diversity. In this situation, the social fabric of entrepreneurship was not lodged in tensions between individuals and the values of their close-knit rural communities, nor in the mobilization of ethnic groups around scarce resources. The designation of Qwaqwa as a South Sotho homeland made this difficult but not impossible (as clan was often substituted for ethnicity in political struggles over scarce resources). These identities, however, had little impact on structuring entrepreneurial patterns.

The social context for entrepreneurship in Qwaqwa was the household, which depending on the collective experience and resources of its members, could emerge as a repository for entrepreneurial values. These values were lodged in well-trodden paths of resistance in a labour-repressive economy. This emphasis on entrepreneurship as resistance has recently been elaborated by Szelenyi (1988) in his study of market reform in rural Hungary. In this situation, he argues that one way of understanding the differential response of rural people to market opportunities is through an analysis of their individual and family histories. In his view the re-surgence of entrepreneurship in Hungary in the 1970s cannot be separated from the much longer-term survival strategies of rural families under the command economy. He argues that, with the onset of socialism in the 1950s, large numbers of 'middle peasant families' resisted socialist transformation by clinging onto their deep-rooted desires for autonomy and freedom to respond to market incentives. He suggests that, with the arrival of bureaucratic socialism, these families often consciously went into 'hiding' in the new society by acquiring jobs which offered them 'high-levels of autonomy' and 'freedom from state control' (1988: 77-106, 147-59).

In adopting these strategies, Szelenyi insists, these families aimed to avoid the stultifying effects of the two expected career destinations: cardrification or socialist proletarianisation. In assessing entrepreneurial responses in the Hungarian countryside in the 1980s, Szelenyi argues that it was precisely from within this *former middle peasant stratum* that the most coherent and successful responses to the market were formulated. This emphasis on 'hiding' and 'resistance' as the cultural bedrock of entrepreneurship in

labour-repressive economies is, I believe, worth pursuing in the case of Qwaqwa. It is significant because the majority of new entrepreneurs in this bantustan were descended from, either sharecropping families from white-owned farms, or middle peasant household in Witsieshoek. The connections between Szelenyi's evidence and my own seem to obvious too ignore. In the discussion below I will use Szelenyi's theory of 're-entry into embourgeoisement' as an analytical device for the analysis of entrepreneurship in Qwaqwa. But, I am also not entirely satisfied with his theory, since it pays little attention to the gender dynamics of entrepreneurial responses, on the one hand, and the instrumental role of household ideology in the formulation of these strategies, on the other.

(a) Peasant-migrant entrepreneurs

The significance of cattle as a special kind of commodity, or category of property, in African communities in southern Africa has recently been the focus of renewed attention. In attempting to explore the *meaning* of cattle among the Tshidi of Botswana, the Comaroff's (1990) argue that cattle need to thought of as a unique type of commodity, as a 'total social phenomenon', which acts at multiple levels as an indicator of wealth and a marker of status, of gender domains, fertility and seniority etc. They believe that cattle retain their value among the Tshidi because of their unique ability to 'bears the imprint of social relations' and to defy the corrosive effects of money in a rapidly changing world (1990: 213). For the Comaroffs the historic struggle of the Tshidi has, thus, been to 'prevent goodly beasts from becoming mere beastly goods'; to restrict the 'Midas touch of money', and to resist the 'implosive effects of commerce and commodities' in their world (1990: 211).

The notion of cattle as a culturally-charged commodity has also recently been addressed by Ferguson (1990) in his essay on the 'bovine mystique' in Lesotho. Unlike the Comaroff's, who are interested mainly in the iconography of cattle, he explores the contemporary social functions and significance of cattle in the Lesotho countryside. Ferguson argues that male migrants still invest in cattle in Lesotho chiefly for a reasons of social status and security. He says that male migrants see their cattle as an essential resource not only for its economic value, but also for its ability to 'forge the social relationships necessary for their survival in retirement'. Ferguson goes on to suggest that because cattle are so centrally important to the intersts of male migrants, they invoke a set of cultural rules which fortify cattle against deprivation from close kin, especially women. The most important of these cultural rules is that cattle cannot be exchanged for cash, except under conditions of extreme duress and economic hardship.

The patterns of rural investment identified in these case studies were, I believed, duplicated in other areas where peasant-migrants retained some residual access to livestock and agriculture. In the Witsieshoek, numerous commentators referred to the refusal of male migrant stock owners to part with their cattle. In Witsieshoek, the refusal of migrants to sell their cattle was a source of regular conflict with the white administration, and from the 1930s, special state incentives were introduced to encourage the upgrading and sale of livestock. The refusal of local stock owners to take adavantages of these incentives lead to heated arguments at the bi-annual meeting of the Witsieshoek Native Board. This resistance to stock selling was, for instance, reflected in the credit agreements set up by migrants at trading store in the area. In 1950 it was reported that:

> It has become recognised practise for a Native to hand over a beast in security against purchases or debts. With very few exceptions these animals are eventually redeemed, but the lapse of time is often considerable. Until they are redeemed these animals are considered to be the property of the trader, but with a difference. The traders is *morally bound not to sell the beast to recover his money - that's not cricket!* (Roberts 1950).

Mopeli-Paulus (1956: 160) also remarked that migrant men in the reserve were well-known for their 'natural aversion to selling their cattle'. This became a bone of contention when Mopeli-Paulus and other rebel leaders, opposed to the implementation of agricultural betterment in Witsieshoek, needed funds to institute legal action against the state. He said that they could simply not get local people to sell cattle to support their cause. The resistance to the sale of cattle in Witsieshoek were no different from those identified by Ferguson for Lesotho in the 1980s. In the 1950s, cattle were still central to the agricultural cycle and were widely used in ploughing. They remained the main currency in bridewealth transactions, and were the chief means through which local clientelistic relations were formed. It was cattle, rather than cash, that enabled men to acquire status and establish security in retirement.

By the 1960s the pivotal social significance of cattle waned with the introduction of tractor ploughing, which led to the collapse of cattle-based dependency relationship and of the *mafisa* (sharecropping) system (Mapena 1970: 285-315). As cattle became increasingly disentangled from the long-term survival strategies of migrants, there was a gradual shift away from investment in livestock. With the renewed threat of cattle culling in the reserve after 1950, local stock owners began to explore alternative investments. One option which became increasingly viable was investment in commerce. From 1950 existing restrictions on the issuing of trading licenses to Africans in Witsieshoek had come under

fire, which made it possible for some Africans to acquire trading licenses for the first time. This shift from cattle-keeping to commerce came very slowly, and was initiated by the working sons of older migrants. Reluctance of older men to break with earlier entrepreneurial patterns was a source of frustration to the BIC, but by the late 1960s there was an increasing tendency among local stock owners to sell off their cattle and re-invest in commerce.

This broad pattern was also duplicated in the case of farm families who entered Witsieshoek 'voluntarily' in the 1960s. Many of these families moved into Qwaqwa with the specific aim of trying to shore up their rural resources, which were rapidly being eroded by the collapse of tenancy arrangements on white owned farms. They were aware that white farmland had been incorporated into the bantustan in 1964, and that there was a possibility that they might be given land to plough and grazing for their cattle. Evidence of this influx was seen in the sharp rise in stock numbers in Qwaqwa in the late 1960s - 8 299 stock units in 1966 became 10 815 units in 1968 (Mapena 1970: 288). The escalation of this trend in 1969 forced the state to ban ex-tenants from transferring their cattle into the bantustans in 1970.

The dreams of ex-sharecroppers and tenants of returning to farming on a full-time basis were, however, dashed by stock theft and the reduction of grazing and arable land space due to relocation. Inevitably, they too, were forced to consider new entrepreneurial strategies to cope with the rapid change in the bantustan. And by the late 1960s and 1970s these ex-farm workers had joined other local stock owners in shifting their assets from cattle to commerce. In reformulating their entrepreneurial strategies, older men were again influenced by their working sons, who encouraged them to spread their investments into new spheres. In a case recorded in Makwane village, it was noted that a former stock owner, who entered Qwaqwa from the farms in the Clarens area with 20 head of cattle in 1964, used these resources to set up both a wood and coal business and a general dealer store in his village the early 1970s. In discussions with the sons of this entrepreneur, we discovered that he was initially very reluctant to sell his stock: 'he could not see why anyone would be so stupid as to sell cattle to buy wood'.

The success of ex-stock owners in making the transition to commerce depended critically on their willingness to give up their entire herds for new pursuits. In the case of Makwane village, mass relocation to this village in the early 1970s, made this decision unavoidable. As shacks sprung up all over the village, cattle-keeping became totally unmanageable. In other villages, such as Tseseng, new arrivals came in dribs and drabs, and as a result the pressure to sell stock was not as great. Holding onto livestock too long, as several cases from this village indicated, made the transition from

cattle to commerce much more difficult. The failure of older men to take advice from their working sons was a frequent cause of delayed response. Late minute attempts to sell off stock and domestic squabbles between male householders over the appropriate allocation of financial resources was always a recipe for failure. My argument here is, thus, that access to cattle at the time of relocation was an important, but not sufficient, resource for the reconstruction of older entreprenuerial strategies. What was of great significance, as will become evident below, was the existence of a shared domestic ideology structured around the objectives of the male household head.

By contrast the 'voluntary' relocations of the 1960s, the farm removals of the 1970s were characterised by increasing levels of coercion. Although some families continued to come to Qwaqwa of their own accord, many more arrived as victims of forced removal. These households were poverty-stricken on arrival and had lost access to most, if not all, of their residual rural resources. The sale of the few cattle these families had left by the 1970s barely covered the costs of relocation. In addition to the greater poverty of the later arrivals, it was also noted that these families usually came to Qwaqwa in smaller domestic groups. One of the reasons for this was that some farmers only evicted individual workers and their dependents, and not entire extended families. In other cases the segmentation of domestic groups occurred as a result of conflicts between older and younger men over the desirability of resettlement. The structural weakness of many of these relocated households, as Sharp and Spiegel (1985) have pointed out, made them extremely vulnerable to impoverishment after arrival.

But, despite the trauma of relocation for many, there were others who showed great resourcefulness and ingenuity under conditions of extreme adversity. And, by the late 1970s and early 1980s there were dozens of these late arrivals setting themselves up as licensed traders of one kind or another. It is my contention that to fully understand their achievement it is necessary, on the other hand, to grasp the strength of their desires to exit the labour repressive migrant economy and, on the other, to appreciate their long association with entrepreneurial households in the white countryside. To use Szelenyi's (1988: 67) terms they constituted people from the *right* family backgrounds with the *wrong* life history. By staying in the white countryside a decade too long they had missed the critical moment at which it was still possible to rebuild their entrepreneurial careers on the basis of rural resources. In Hungary, Szelenyi has argued that some middle peasant families were unable to respond to market reforms, because they had been too eager to trade in their entrepreneurial skills for those of the new socialist order.

In Qwaqwa the situation was different. Farm households had not traded in their desire for autonomy: they had lost the material resources needed to operationalize them. This was illustrated by the persistent attempts of male farmworkers to exit the command economy after arrival in Qwaqwa. In 1983 a senior TEBA official reported that Qwaqwa migrants had the poorest rate of contract completion of all their depots in South Africa. He said that the TEBA labour quota for the bantustan had been reduced for this reason. In the 1970s the failure of farmworkers to complete their contracts was also discussed at length in the QLA, where it was noted that workers seemed to leave their jobs without completing half of their contracts. To stop this 'targets working', it was suggested that education be introduced to help workers realise they could not break their contracts when it suited them (QLA 1978: 231).

In the vast majority of cases, worker strategies to exit the system proved totally disastrous, and within months they were back in labour queues. But some did succeed in breaking out of the migrant labour economy. The secret to success lay in a variety of factors: access to a stable, well-paid migrant job which was not abandoned prematurely; the existence of a low household dependency ratio, and the ability of the male household head to exert tight control over family labour. In Qwaqwa, where women were not easily able to find wage work, their labour could be diverted from the domestic sphere into more productive avenues. During fieldwork, I collected cases where women marketed consumer goods under strict instructions from their husbands. This practice of women trading for men was most unusual, since petty trading was defined as women's work and the income generated from it as their own. The ability of men to control these activities from a distance is a mark of the considerable power that men were able to command in the closer settlements during the 1970s (Bank 1990).

The deployment of female labour in pursuit of male profits was, however, not confined to retailing. In the local brick manufacturing sector, rural men were also able to translate domestic power into profits. On the brickmaking sites which mushroomed along the banks of the Namhadi river in the early 1970s men set their families to work in a way reminiscent of the family work teams employed in the Lancaster coalpits of nineteenth century England (Seccombe 1985). The difference was that men did less of the physical work at the Qwaqwa brickyards. The division of labour was strictly along lines of age and gender with women and children doing the bulk of the digging, carting and moulding of clay into bricks. Men, to the extent that they were present at the production site at all, took responsibility for overseeing labour and for securing contracts for the supply of raw materials, such as the coal needed for baking. In the mid-1970s, when the state closed the brickyards, some of the most successful of these

entrepreneurs had worked themselves into a position where they could move into building contracting or retailing on a full-time basis.

By cobbling together savings in various ways some ex-farm workers maneouvered themselves into a position where they were eligible for business licenses. While men continued to work in the cities, women and children baked bricks and took charge of the building arrangements. This ability of former farm workers, who arrived in Qwaqwa with modest resources in the 1970s, to set themselves up in business derived in no small measure from their extraordinary control over family labour. Their ability to capitalize on the abundant opportunities for commerce in the closer settlements derived not only from their location within these settlements during the 1970s, but also from their ability to resuscitate older notions of the patriarchal family rooted in a bygone era of independence in the white countryside. The unique ability of ex-farm workers to combine household resource behind single-minded male objective enabled some men to achieve remarkable success in commerce during the 1970s.

In the above discussion I have identified the two dominant forms of entrepreneurship in Qwaqwa in the 1970s. Both, as I have tried to indicate, were structured around the cultural and material resources rural people brought with them at the time of relocation. In the first case I described how, under pressure from their migrant sons, older men with small herds of cattle reshaped their earlier entrepreneurial strategies to meet the changing conditions in Qwaqwa. In the second, I explained that, even without cattle, it was still possible for rural households to take hold of market opportunities in Qwaqwa in the 1970s because of the paucity of licensed traders in the villages and the ability of male household heads to exploit domestic labour. The considerable success of these operators in the 1970s was borne out by the fact they made up over 90% of all licensed traders in Qwaqwa in 1980.

(b) Worker entrepreneurs

If it can be concluded from the above discussion that peasant-migrant households were successful in capitalizing on market opportunities in Qwaqwa in the 1970s, it is also necessary to understand why urban households, relocated at the same time, were so under-represented is this new class. This is especially perplexing since urban households were usually much better off than their rural counterparts. Part of the reason, I believe, lies in the fact that relocated urban workers had travelled much further down the road of proletarianisation than their rural counterparts. They had set out on what Szelenyi (1988) would call 'proletarian trajectories'. In other words, they were more concerned with trying to improve their position from within the command

economy than outside it. This was demonstrated by the fact that the urban workers in Phuthaditjhaba often viewed forced relocation to Qwaqwa as a minor setback in their overall strategies to become fully urbanised workers. This observation is supported by Niehaus (1987), who shows that urban workers displayed great competence and dexterity in shifting around in the labour market.

To translate this observation into conceptual terms, it might be useful to view these urban relocations to Qwaqwa as early examples of 'displaced urbanisation' (Murray 1987). This concept is used specifically to refer to the process by which 'rural' workers, through unionization and state reform in the 1980s, were re-integrated into the urban economy. The vehicle for this integration, according to Murray, was easy access to metropolitan labour market through commuting. Now, although Qwaqwa is not close to major metropolitan areas, it is clear from our evidence that *male* urban workers did enjoy priviledged access to urban employment. There were two main reasons for this: firstly, they lived at the doorstep of the only functional labour bureaux in the bantustan; secondly, they were able to manipulate their prior social connections in urban areas to secure work. These factors elevated male urban workers to the status of a 'labour aristocracy' in the bantustan. As far as access to the urban labour market was concerned, these workers stood in a fundamentally different structural position to their counterparts in the villages.

The point which needs emphasis here is that urban workers, by contrast to rural migrants, were connected to urban areas through multiple social and economic bonds. The worlds they created for themselves, consequently, extended outwards from Phuthaditjhaba and not inwards to the centres of village life. In fact, few even acknowledged the existence of the vast mass of rural poor. By structuring their lives around exiting the bantustan, rather than the labour market, it is not at all surprising that they adopted a much more cautious attitude towards the market opportunities inside Qwaqwa. One of the problems with applying Murray's notion of 'displaced urbanization' to workers in Phuthaditjhaba is that it is insensitive to the gendered nature of the labour market. That urban men in Qwaqwa were able to retain access urban opportunities from behind the bantustan borders, does not mean that their wives or sisters in Phuthaditjhaba shared their experiences or aspirations.

The views of male workers in Phuthaditjhaba were seldom shared by their wives, who found it virtually impossible to acquire wage work in the 1970s. There were simply no jobs for them at the labour offices. The few opportunities open to them in the commuter sector were also unrewarding. Unlike their husbands, urban women were imprisoned by poverty and patriarchy. In coping with their subordination and boredom as discarded wives, many were inclined to view petty trading

as one way of restoring their self-respect and independence, lost through relocation. These desires were, however, always balanced against the threat of losing male remittances if they were seen to be behave in an 'unwifely' fashion.

The claim that gender relations in working class households were fraught with tensions, is born out by Niehaus' (1989) research in the Diapollo section of the town. By the early 1980s the divorce rates in this part of the town had soared to above 50% and domestic violence was endemic. The involvement of married women in trading activities was one source of dispute as women argued that they were being forced into commerce because their husbands were not fulfilling their role as breadwinners. Men, on the other hand, said that they could not tolerate their wives hanging around on the streets if they were away in the cities. This struggle over gender roles and anxieties of absent men over female sexuality, made it difficult for married women to succeed in commerce during the 1970s.

But there is one category of urban women which demands special attention: the single mothers, who were not beholden to male wages and domination. These estranged wives, widows, and unmarried mothers were core participants in the highly lucrative urban shebeen trade. In this sector there was no male involvement, and it was completely dominated by single mothers, many of whom had plied their trade for years prior to relocation. Some of these operators had brewed beer since they were teenagers and had learnt an impressive repertoire of recipes. The success of these Phuthaditjhaba shebeeners was aided in the 1970s by the South African Liquor Board's refusal to issue bottlestore licenses in Qwaqwa. The reversal of this restriction in 1980 had a devastating impact on the homebrew shebeens in the 1980s, since it democratized access to the to liquor trade.

What is significant about the shebeen trade in the 1970s was that, like the rural retail sector, it flourished on the basis of household rather than state resources. In fact, the sale of liquor from home remained strictly illegal in Qwaqwa until 1989. The difference between the two sectors lay only in the fact that urban shebeeners relied on a 'matriarchal' domestic ideology, rather than a patriarchal one. The main problem for shebeeners was, however, that they had access to only the labour of their children, who were often too young to take on responsibility for dealing with clients and managing money. Moreover, brewing gallon drums of beer daily was much more labour intensive than retailing, and could not be left in the hands of children. It was for this reason that these women found it difficult to survive without additional assistance. Their first port of call was close kinswomen, but if this did not work out, shebeeners recruited schoolgirls as apprentices. It was easy to recruit these young women because of the shortage of hostel accommodation

in the bantustan. These girls, who came from a variety of destinations outside Qwaqwa, were not paid for their labour, but were always given free food and accommodation.

By the mid-1970s this practice was causing hysteria in the Qwaqwa Legislative Assembly, where constant reference was made to the way 'liberated landladies' corrupted young girls living in Qwaqwa without parental guidance. One speaker demanded that the Qwaqwa government take immediate action to prevent 'live-in' relationships. He stated that these girls:

> ...stay at the place where a widowed landlady brews home-made beer. In the end they turn into drunkards and help the landlady brew the beer. When you ask them when they are going to school, they will say that they have "homework" to do and it must be done where they are... But, when you look at them closely, you will find that their eyes are red, and they are drunk (QLA 1975: 252).

This speaker's point was to acknowledge the power of domestic ideology and values in the organization of this sector. The girls he was referring to had, after all, been so subverted by their 'landladys' that they did not even go to school.

In the above discussion I have tried to argue that there were two main reason why market responses were so stunted in Phuthaditjhaba in the 1970s. Firstly, I have contended that urban workers were much less inclined to try and 'exit' the labour market than their rural counterparts because of their superior access to urban resources and their aspirations to eventually return to these areas. Secondly, I have suggested that, while men clung tenaciously to these ideals, urban women tended to have their own agendas. This resulted in exceptionally high-levels of gender conflict in these households and inhibited the latter's ability to make significant progress in commerce. The major exception to this trend was single women, who by force of necessity and compulsion, took hold of urban market opportunities with both hands.

(c) Bureaucrat entrepreneurs

In his study of Hungary, Szelenyi (1988) argues that rapid bureaucratization in this society since the 1950s has placed severe limitation on entrepreneurship. The major reason for this, he contends, is that in the process of 'cadrefication' bureaucrats and party officials were stripped of their prior cultural orientations towards autonomy. The new skills they had acquired under socialism were those of 'social domination'(1998: 71). For Szelenyi's, the rural cadre in Hungary is not interested in investing his time and money in market pursuits. He is more concerned with improving his position and status within the party machinery by devoting his energies to bureaucratic duties and by ensuring that he

possesses the material trappings incumbent on his position. In seeking this status, cadres took great pride in their homes and material possessions. They were, for instance, seen to devote their productive land to carefully manicured lawns, while their entrepreneurial neighbours would use this space for market gardening. Szelenyi (1988) central argument is that in their quest for security and status cadres were always willing 'to exchange autonomy for authority' (1986: 263).

Szelenyi (1988) is, of course, not alone in pointing out the deadening effects of bureaucratization on entrepreneurship. But is his perspective useful for our understanding of the bantustans? Graaf (1990) would suggest not, since he is of the opinion that state positions in the bantustans are constantly abused for private accumulation of wealth. It is, he postulates, precisely because 'social classes are so poorly developed in these areas' that state functionaries use their positions as a vehicle for private profiteering (1990: 170). This process, he insists, has been encouraged by the lack of interest shown in the bantustans by the urban black bourgeoisie. Thus, 'the crystallization of bourgeois classes has, contrary to the apparent intention of official policy, been extruded from the bantustans' (1990: 170).

On the basis of extensive interaction with bureaucrats and teachers in Qwaqwa during the 1980s, I believe that neither position offers an accurate depiction of the aspirations and economic strategies of civil servants in Qwaqwa. In relation to Szelenyi's observations it need only be pointed out that civil servants in the bantustan, unlike those in Hungary or other former socialist countries, were not required to undergo intensive politically and ideological instruction before they could take up state positions. They were accepted into the state machinery immediately after school, or college, and were not political re-educated after taking up their positions. This caused concern within the ruling Dikwankwetla party, and in 1982 the Chief Minister was so enraged by the lack of support received from civil servants that he threatened to 'appoint supporters of the government into the civil service, even if they are inefficient' (QLA 1982: 453).

Entry into the state structure was thus driven by factors other than political commitment. The majority of bureaucrats, as I encountered them, were either covertly or more outpokenly opposed to the system that they worked for. Many said they had entered government service in the homeland because they found it difficult to acquire white collar jobs in common South Africa. To cope with the contradictions of working within the system, bureaucrats and teachers tended to separate their public and their private personae. At public occasions they would pay due tribute to senior party officials, while in private they would chastise and ridicule

party members and mock the inefficiency and wastefulness of the Mopeli government.

But, despite the considerable pride taken by bureaucrats in their ability to play this two-faced game, they were often more wrapped up in the system than they were prepared to acknowledge. The recurring themes in conversations with civil servants were revealing. The two main issues that received almost obsessive attention were those of nepotism and inefficiency. The fact that a chief without a university degree or teaching diploma could be elevated to the post of Minister of Education was a common point of departure for attacks on the Qwaqwa government. 'Mopeli', it was so often said, 'should know better than this, he used to be a school inspector himself'. These discussions seemed to suggest that the Qwaqwa government was illegitimate, not because it propped up an indefensible political system, but because it was responsible for squandering resources and did not accept 'rational' bureaucratic procedures.

But, if Graaf (1990) is right, why should bureaucrats care whether the system works efficiently or not? Would a corrupt system not serve them better than an efficient one? It would seem to me that one of the reasons civil servants expressed such concerns was precisely because these corrupt practices presented an affront their sense of self-identity. Austin (1984) in her study of middle class households in Kingston, Jamaica, was struck by the extent to which civil servants propagated what she calls an 'ideology of education'. The hallmark of this ideology was an 'appeal to superiority through education and qualification' (1984: 214). Austin (1984) says that the hegemony of this ideology in Jamaica was a product of the extent to which it had been absorbed by working-class people as well. The reason for the pervasiveness of this set of beliefs, she believes, was that entrepreneurship remained such a poor alternative to education as a source of upward mobility. Most of the opportunities for accumulation in the Jamaican economy were controlled by foreigners. Entrepreneurship was accordingly, she suggests, a career option pursued 'when one failed to achieve at school' (1984: 219).

In Qwaqwa I encountered a similar 'ideology of education'. Bureaucrats and teachers constantly referred to education as the factor which distinguished them from the unsophisticated 'farm people' of the villages, as well as from elements of the urban working class in Qwaqwa. They firmly believed that education was the only reliable route to long-term success. In the 1980s there was not a single teacher or civil servant that I got to know well that was not registered for a degree or diploma. But education was more than a window to economic success, it was the manner in which civil servants expressed their urban identity and connected themselves with the urban middle class outside the bantustan. One manifestation of

this was the eagerness of middle-ranking bureaucrats to buy property in common South Africa after 1984. Civil servants were seen to spend large parts of their monthly salaries on keeping these contacts alive.

If civil servants in Qwaqwa embraced a ideology similar to that ofas their Jamaican counterparts, they did not attach any stigma to the pursuit of private profit. In the 1970s their access to the market limited by a Qwaqwa government decree which prohibited civil servants from owning businesses. This did not prevent civil servants from trying to earn money by illegal means. But it was only after 1980, when this ruling was overlooked, that civil servants began to play a more active role in commerce. One popular strategy was for a bureaucrat to apply for business in his wife's name and to allow her to run and manage the concern while he was away at work. Another was to put down a deposit on a kombi taxi and to employ a driver to run the taxi. The preference of civil servants was, however, for home-based activities such aa spaza shops or shebeens which were easily combined with a working life-style. One striking feature about these concerns which separated them from those in the closer settlements was the high-level of co-operation between men and women in both formulating business strategies and bringing them to fruition. Men invariably held the reigns of domestic power, but gave their wives a freehand in managing and even controlling the business finances.

The striking point about the involvement of bureaucrats in commerce was that entrepreneurship was so seldom considered as an viable alternative career option. Indeed, very few civil servants contemplated giving up their government jobs to go into business on a full-time basis. The desirability of commerce in these cases lay in its ability to increase the household consumption, and to enhance the status, of civil servants among their peers. This orientation was seen in the limited extent to which teachers and bureaucrats re-invested their profits in expanding their businesses. Profits were more often directed towards consumption items such as luxury cars, better houses and improved education for their children. In the bureaucracy, entrepreneurship was not seen as a realistic alternative to government employment, it was essentially a form of *wage subsidy* employed to enhance the purchasing power of state salaries.

This point is illustrated in the following case study: TM, a skilled technician with the Department of Works had earned extra income drawing plans for renovations to state houses in Phuthaditjhaba since his arrival in Qwaqwa in 1975. His technical competence in this field won him a reputation as the 'best amateur architect' in the town, and by the early 1980s he bragged that 'the way things were going now, my government salary will be nothing more than pocket money'.

By the mid-1980s, opportunities in TM's field of expertise improved further with the issuing of state housing subsidies to black civil servants. He now had more than enough clients to take on a full-time career as an architect and building contractor. But in 1985, when TM was poised for take-off, he decided to return to university to improve his education. He clearly felt achieving an additional qualification was more valuable than the income he could earn in business over the same period.

In conclusion, I would like to make a few brief remarks about Graaf's (1990) reference to the apparent reluctance of the black urban bourgeoisie to open businesses in the bantustans. In Qwaqwa, this was simply not the case as there was sustained interest in the area by urban entrepreneurs from the early 1980s. This was evident in the transport trade, where urban taxi associations did their uttermost to corner the rural market, but there was also much interest in the retail sector, where general dealer stores were increasingly being bought up by city traders. These operators also tried to capitalize on QDC offers for premises and loans. Perhaps predictably, the urban black bourgeoisie increasingly joined large white companies, such as Spar and Frasers, as the main beneficiaries of massive state investment in the bantustan's commercial sector. This influx of highly capitalised entrepreneurs into the retail market in Qwaqwa in the 1980s put tremendous strain on peasant-migrant entreprenuers who had made their mark in this sector in the 1970s. In the final part of this paper, I will consider some responses from the latter owners to the changes of the 1980s.

4. New Problems, Old Idioms: restructuring in the rural sector

The pressures imposed by external competition had a devastating effect on the rural retail sector. In the 1980s it is estimated that a third of the general dealers' stores in the villages were pushed out of business. This collapse was caused, on the one hand, by the growth of QDC shopping complexes, and on the other, by uneconomic licensing procedures which caused chronic overtrading. The rate at which rural profits fell varied according to the size of the store, its location in relation to new stores, and its distance from Phuthaditjhaba. Whatever the combina-tion of factors, general retailers were faced with the stark choice of adapting their operators to suit new conditions, or to face bankruptcy. In this section of the paper, I will not dwell on the latter outcome. The dominant trend among smaller owners was towards increasing self-exploitation in an effort to stave off re-entry into the labour market. This response to the economic pressures showed quite remarkable similarities to the way in which sharecroppers had responded to change on the white farms several decades earlier.

Keegan (1988) notes that when sharecroppers were forced to enter labour tenancy agreements by white farmers, they sent their sons out to work first and withheld their own labour for as long as possible. Many older, illiterate storekeepers employed precisely this tactic by using household dependants as a barrier to their own (re)proletarianization. The road back into the proletariat was consequently not a rapid one, and it often took years to complete. This was brought home to me on a recent fieldtrip, where I was amazed to discover how many of the rural traders who had declared themselves bankrupt in 1985 were still in business. These owners were poor and demoralised, but they were determined not to have to return to the labour market. In the emotive words of one storekeeper: 'I would rather die than have to work for the white man again. You can see I have little left, so I will not live long'.

But, if many fell victim to the pressures of overtrading, there were others who were successfully adapting to the new conditions. In coping with escalting competition, they were reworking older practices to achieve new objectives. One of the most common ways of dealing with overtrading was through diversification (or risk spreading). This occasionally took the form of branching out into more specialised markets, but more often it meant hiring out a second general store from a struggling owners and simply shifting stock from location to another.

Long and Roberts (1984) have noted the centrality of risk-speading to the entrepreneurial strategies of Peruvian peasant-migrants. They suggest that one of the ways in which these entrepreneurs survive changes in the highland economy is by linking their households together through kinship into 'confederations' which span from Lima into remote corners of the agrarian highlands. By constructing commercial chains of this kind, peasant-migrants were able to retain a firm hold on the rural consumer market. In Qwaqwa, diversification always occurred within managable geographical limits. There was no attempt to develop for elaborate alliances between kin, such as characterised the Peruvian case, and as far as possible storekeepers tried to limit diversification to within the framework of existing household relations. Their strategies were clearly structured around a defence of the patriarchal family firm.

The significance of this response was that it set out to accommodate new management priorities within the context of an older ideological forms. This emphasis on the integrity of the kin group was clearly shown in the lengths to which traders were prepared to go to avoid employing non-kin in their business. Traders always justified this choice of kin on the grounds that kin were more reliable, trustworthy and obedient than non-kin. And, when storekeepers were unable to acquire kin to work for them, they frequently attempted to

construct quasi-kin relationships, despite the fact that the cost of building up these relations far exceded the expense of employing wage labour labour from the villages. Owners justified these decisions on the grounds that in the long-run, quasi-kin would prove more valuable and reliable than waged labour.

These views were, however, sometimes contradicted in the life experiences of traders. The case of GN, shopkeeper and soccer club owner in Tseki village, demonstrates this point rather well. Like many other general dealers, GN experienced a sharp fall in profits in his store after 1980 and, when he heard that the QDC was planning a shopping complex less than a mile away, he decided to look for premises elsewhere. In 1983, he moved half of his stock over to a hired store in a neighbouring village. He instructed his wife to take charge of his Tseki business and to allow a 16 year old boy, whom they had 'taken in', to help her out. GN said that he viewed this boy as 'if he was my own son and trusted him fully'. In 1984 the trust and responsiblity bestowed on this boy back-fired when he let a youth gang in to ransack the store late one night. When I interviewed GN in 1985 he was mortified by this betrayal. In 1991 I returned to Nyembe's store and found him in a similar frame of mind. He explained that after the tragic events of 1984, he had decided to take in another young boy and his sister and had again 'treated them like family', but they too had conspired against him and, in 1990, had robbed him of R2500.

This tendency of family-based enterprises to resist the *commoditization of 'relations <u>in</u> production'* (Buroway 1985) has recently generated lively debate in the field of peasant studies. Much of this debate centres on whether family farms can retain their 'non-capitalist' (subsistence) character in the presence of wage contracts. Goodman and Redclift (1985) believe that family enterprises are irreversibly transformed as soon as wage labour makes an appearance. They suggest that the 'logic' of production must change once 'household relations' become 'class relations'. Friedman (1986), on the other hand, has argued that family farms only become 'fully commoditized' when the wage form assumes a dominant position within the enterprise. She says that wage and non-wage forms can easily *co-exist* in family enterprises, without affecting their character. This literature raises important questions about the 'capitalist' character of rural stores which cannot be addressed here.

The important point, for the purposes of our discussion, is that the defence of the patriarchal family enterprise in the closer settlements greatly limited the options open to rural retailers in their responses to changing market conditions. By operating in the confines of a restrictive kin ideology, these entrepreneurs resisted adaptations to their enterprise that would have made them more competitive. In

1980, T. K. Mopeli launched into a scathing attack on the rural retail sector on precisely these grounds:

> It is customary for us blacks to be very proud of owning a small cafe. He will say, 'Yes, I am the owner of this cafe because it belongs to me, I am the owner', but will not attempt to expand this business...I feel that with the passage of time our people will realise the necessity of large businesses (QLA 1980: 247)

He accused village traders of following a 'philosophy of one man, one shop' and said they that were shooting themselves in the foot by obstinately refusing to set up partnerships. What Mopeli failed to realise was that the kind of expansion and growth he recommended was not possible as long as entreprenuership in the closer settlements remained locked in a patriarchal, family-based form. In terms of the prevailing ideology, it was considered anathema for rural traders to set up business partnerships with strangers. It was also extremely difficult to build up 'large businesses', when the size and efficiency of the labour force was determined by its relationship to the household head.

To survive the onslaught of white supermarkets and urban black entrepreneurs, peasant migrant entrepreneurs in the closer settlements had instead of devising new business techniques had turned back to their older tactics of risk spreading and self-exploitation which are acknowledged as basic peasant responses to social change and economic crisis (Scott 1977). But by turning back to older idioms, these entrepreneurs also made some wise decisions. One of these decisions was to force their stores to 'bear the imprint of social relations' (in much the same was as their cattle had done prior to relocation) by using credit as a strategy for survival. By recasting market relationships in the social fabric of clientelism, some rural traders were able to rescue themselves from certain failure. The economic risks of personalising business transactions were immense, since few rural households had access to the secure wage earnings needed to serve credit agreements. Howvere, if credit was properly managed by storekeepers, it could yield impressive results. Some of the most successful rural retailers, I interviewed in the 1980s, saw credit as a key mechanism to hold onto clients which would ordinarily have spent their earnings at the new cheap supermarket outlets.

Conclusion

The major aim of this paper has been to demonstrate the pitfalls of assuming that processes of class differentiation in the bantustans are best explained through an analysis of state programmes and policies. I have challenged this view by focussing on the role of household resources, ideologies and experiences in shaping rural entrepreneurship in Qwaqwa during the 1970s and 1980s. In developing this argument, I have drawn inspiration from the detailed work of Szelenyi (1988) on entreprenuership in socialist Hungary, and have made a claim for the comparative value of his research for our understanding of rural South Africa. In concluding, I would like to return to my introduction and ask what this analysis tells us about social class in the bantustans?

Ferguson (1990), in a recent attack on the objectification of "economic classes" as significant social and political categories in rural South Africa, has argued that a more useful way of tackling the question of rural differentiation is by attempting to identify 'categories of interest'. In his ethnography, Ferguson uses this concept to signpost and analyse cross-cutting power relations and property domains in rural households. He also sets out to identify some of the struggles that emerge around the protection of these domains. His analysis of the 'bovine mystique' derives from this approach.

In his more theoretical writing, Ferguson (1988) argues that, if one is to engage in the 'recovery of dead gods', it is to Weber that we might look for inspiration. The silence on Abner Cohen (1974; 1980) here is surprising since it is he more than any other recent anthropologist who has made constant use the notion of 'interest groups' in his various ethnographic studies of elite groups in West Africa. Cohen (1974: 17) as also unashamedly opposed to class analysis as this well-known passage indicates:

> Classes are a figment of the imagination of sociologists. What actually exists are large numbers of interest groups of different scales and political significance, which can range on one continuum, from the most formally organised to the most informally organised, with most interest groups falling in between..

Although unacknowledged, this emphasis on interest groups, rather than classes has increasingly crept into studies of rural politics in the South African bantustans. Ritchken (1989), for instance, tells us that the notion of a rural petty bourgeoisie in South Africa cannot be sustained since groups of elites (defined by occupation) have their own set of 'interests' and are likely to structure their political

responses and alliances around these interests. Ferguson's (1990) reference to 'interests' is, of course, different in that he makes no *a priori* claim that people who share similar interests will necessarily form groups. His point is rather that there are various categories of interests which can sharpen social and political identities. My argument follows similar lines. I have suggested that entrepreneurs in Qwaqwa can be categorised in terms a common set of life experiences, interests and aspirations, but do not make any claim that the categories of interest identified above will necessarily form the basis for collective political action.

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