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HISTORY WORKSHOP

THE MAKING OF CLASS

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The past century of southern African history is dominated by the development of the mining industry and associated social changes such as the entrenchment of migrant labour in the mining economy. The particular patterns of capitalism in this part of the world have resulted in a peculiar combination of social characteristics. Incomplete proletarianisation combines with massive structural unemployment. Private property in land coexists with an elaborate state/racial allocation system in the countryside as well as the towns. The evolution of some aspects of these features has been subjected to relatively little scrutiny. In particular, the importance of control over land for the shaping of daily life and social relationships would bear much more intensive study. Although historians and others have investigated some of its components - at grand economic scale as well as more intimate studies of social movements' - the role of land as an ingredient in social relationships poses questions not yet addressed. Despite the centrality of land to the traditional field of historical geography, that discipline is poorly developed in South Africa and seldom examines issues relating to land.[2] In research on land ownership, control and access, one of the central questions which arises is the role of land in relation to analytical categories such as class. In some cases there is very substantial evidence of the modifying effects which 'land relations' have on social relations more generally. One group of examples from which such evidence readily emerges is what I like to call the 'peripheral mining centres' of South Africa.

These peripheral mining centres include a great diversity of places, some of which are no longer mining towns at all. The particular examples which I have explored include Pilgrims Rest (gold - now a 'historical tourist attraction'), Koegas (asbestos - a ghost town), and Indwe (coal - presently a tiny commercial centre). In each case the mining companies concerned enjoyed a variety of forms of control over usually very substantial areas of land, and social relations in their vicinity came to be more or less affected by that land control. At Koegas, and in the surrounding districts, Cape Asbestos employed its land as an ingredient in its widespread system of mining on tribute, creating an almost infinitely graded hierarchy of places in a complex social system. At Pilgrims Rest, Transvaal Gold Mining Estates used its land to establish a stable core for a labour force, by developing a rent-paying, mine-labour tenant system.[3] At Indwe on the other hand, the company concerned failed to use its land to such advantage. But that failure was not for want of trying. This paper is a brief examination of the conditions which prevailed at a place which was both a mining centre and a pivotal point in the travels of migrants from the Transkei to the Transvaal and elsewhere. It touches on incomplete proletarianisation, some of the meaning of private property in land, and forced removal: all questions in which social relations structured at least in part through land relations played, and play, a major role.

Indwe is a small town in the Cape Province about 70 kilometers north-east of Queenstown. It lies at the toe of a branch of the Drakensberg mountains, sandwiched between those ranges and the Transkei border. To the south-west stretches the old Tembu Location of the Queenstown division, better known as the Glen Grey district; to the south-east, Xalanga district, once part of Emigrant Tembuland. The town is half a kilometer west of the Indwe river, which between 1847 and 1883 formed the boundary between the Cape Colony and Emigrant Tembuland. Indwe lies on a railway line from Sterkstroom (on the East London-Free State line) to Maclear; nowadays, a major tarred road runs across the Cape from west to east which passes through Molteno, Dordrecht, Indwe, Elliot and Maclear. The part of the Cape in which Indwe lies might be considered remote by most people, and to reinforce the impression, the environment in the surrounding districts is mostly bleak and cold, though the scenery is beautiful and at times breathtaking.

In its obscurity, Indwe has some forgotten claims to fame. A roneoed municipal history, produced some decades ago, claims that the town was fourth in South Africa to be lit by electricity.[4] This peculiarity in so remote an area was rendered possible by the coal mines in the vicinity. Indeed, coal is the obvious reason for the existence of the town. Indwe was probably the first classic 'company town' in South Africa, owned, laid out and controlled by the company which possessed the mines. And the presence of the company explains the originally private railway line.

Two other facets of local history are extraordinary. Between 1880 and 1920 the land in the district surrounding the town was cleared of its occupants not merely once but three times. In an era before forced removal drew much comment this frequency was nonetheless more than a little unusual. And, to add another numerical curiosity, the railway station at this tiny settlement was, before but especially for some years after the turn of the century, one of the busiest passenger terminals in the Cape, ranking after the four largest towns in the number of passengers arriving and departing.[5] Behind these oddities lies the intricate story of a series of struggles fought in the area, and of its special connections with places far away. Control over land and control over labour were perhaps the two main prizes sought, but not necessarily won, in these struggles.

Indwe to 1895

In common with other areas of the eastern Cape, dramatic changes in the distribution of population took place around Indwe at the time of the cattle-killing in 1857. Prior to that time, 'Kreli' (Sandile), Gcaleka chief, had occupied some of the upper reaches of the Indwe river.[6] The disturbances of the late fifties meant that few people in the region could claim ancestral rights over land on which they ended up living. At the same time, there were powerful incentives in the Cape's increasingly commercial economy to establish rights to land. In the Stormberg area, quite apart from the value of agricultural land, coal deposits were beginning to develop a new significance along with expansion and structural change in the economy.

The existence of coal in the Stormberg region of the north-eastern Cape was widely known before the Indwe area became part of the Colony.[7] The first commercial mining operations were conducted south of Burghersdorp; the town, Molteno was laid out on the farm owned by George Vice, early coal owner, in 1874.[8] There was relatively little commercial interest, at least among whites, in the eastern extremities of the Albert district until after 1872, when the Wodehouse division was created in that vicinity in order to balance the number of eastern and western representatives to be elected to the Cape's first responsible parliament. But the area was hardly 'unoccupied' at the time, as Theal suggested: a variety of people lived there, including 'numerous bodies of Fingoes and other Natives', as well as white settlers who laid claim to extensive farms.[9] By the early 1870s the land in what became the Wodehouse division had largely been surveyed, and farms granted to claimants or sold.[10] Dordrecht, founded in 1856, grew rapidly with these developments, to the point at which the Standard Bank established a branch in 1874.[11] But the edges of the district along the Indwe river remained 'unsettled' and most of the land, though occupied by various people, remained legally in the hands of the government. It was in this area that some of the most promising coal seams in the Cape Colony appeared to lie, and with the expansion of coal consumption in railways - rapidly extending inland in the mid-seventies - there were strong incentives to mine the fuel. Thus mining operations were reported from the vicinity of the Indwe river in 1877.[12]

The boom of the early seventies was followed by a minor slump from 1875

onwards. Tension among people around the colonial frontier escalated into war after the failure of the harvest in large areas in 1877-78. The result of the war was defeat for the Gcaleka and their allies, and renewed mass removal of the African population of the eastern Cape and southern Transkei. The end of the war brought merchants in the border or frontier districts the prospect of 'an extension of ... trade hitherto altogether unprecedented'.[13] The reaction consequent on the removal of large colonial forces after the war rendered this prediction oversanguine, and local merchants acquired an incentive to diversify. In this context, a group of Dordrecht merchants and associates had begun to take a keen interest in the coal outcrops around the Indwe river. A group of them took out mineral leases on three areas near the Indwe river, each of which surrounded an area of exposed coal. Minimal development work took place, but there was a small output of coal, sufficient to attract the attention of local and central colonial officials.[14]

Before any more grandiose scheme of coal mining could be implemented, the area around Dordrecht and the Indwe river was shaken by renewed hostilities. This time the Thembu groups of Emigrant Tembuland and Tembuland Proper joined the 'rebellion' - a strange term, since the Thembu across the Indwe were not living in the Colony. By December 1880 Colonial forces had proved too much for the Thembu 'rebels' and had driven several thousand people out of the northern reaches of Tembuland (both Emigrant and Proper).[15]

Meanwhile, the establishment of numerous joint-stock companies altered the shape of the colonial economy. Many such ventures were formed at Kimberley in connection with diamond mining, but the phenomenon was also evident at the ports and in other areas to undertake a variety of activities. Late in 1881 and during 1882, a number of companies came into being to mine coal in various parts of South Africa - partly because of the greatly expanded market provided not only by renewed railway extension, but by the use of machinery in the Kimberley mines. Rhodes and Rudd were on the board of one - the Kimberley Coal Mining Company - formed in 1881 to mine near Winburg in the Orange Free State. Merchants and landowners in the border areas of the Eastern Cape displayed great activity in forming companies to mine coal in the north-eastern Cape. Among these were the Great Stormberg and Cyphergat, whose properties were in the vicinity of Molteno, and the Indwe Coal Mining Company - the last-named really a partnership set up by Dordrecht merchant-farmers, whose interests included land over a substantial area as well as leases over prospective coal areas.[16]

During and after the 1880 'rebellion', as noted above, a substantial strip of land south of the Drakensberg and east of the Indwe river was cleared of most of its occupants. Indeed, the Tembuland Commission of 1882-3 reported, to the subsequent approval of the government, that these northern parts of Tembuland should become an area of 'European' settlement, thus determining the general position of the Transkei border for a century and more to follow.[17] 'Rebels' would be resettled either in the southern reaches of Tembuland or in the adjacent (East Griqualand) districts of Qumbu and Tsolo. The dispersal of large groups of starving people into the Colony and further afield meant that there was relatively ample land for the remaining part of the population, but the decision nevertheless placed a large new area at the disposal of the Cape Lands department and surveyors. Many of the new farms were granted by the Commission to those whose claims to prior occupation, loyalty to the colony, whiteness and/or allocation by the previous chiefs were approved. Others were sold - much to the chagrin of the Afrikaner Bond which petitioned for smaller allotments - in lots too large for the majority of whites to buy. The wishes of some continuing occupants of the farms - loyal Africans who had not been resettled and whose claims were not heard by the Commission - were not entertained. In reality, the farms in the area, like the private and Crown land to the west of the Indwe river,

continued to be occupied by just such a population, as well as by returnees subsequent to the rebellion. Some of the land thus occupied was either owned or leased by the partners in the Indwe company.

The Indwe coal promoters had been denied indirect government support by the decision to extend the East London-Queenstown railway to the Orange River via Molteno and Burgersdorp, rather than Dordrecht. Mines in the Molteno area were enabled to supply coal directly into railway trucks and the eastern system of the Cape Government Railways (CGR) purchased fuel there, especially after completion of the railway in 1883.[18] The Indwe coal seams were thus placed more than 90 km from the nearest point on the railway, allowing for the terrain, which made the likely length of a rail connection much greater than the straight line distance. The Dordrecht merchants concerned, though the wealthiest local figures and politicians like J.L. Bradfield were among them, could not muster capital which would see to the necessary railway connection, and instead interested Kingwilliamstown merchants (particularly J. Weir and E.J. Byrne) in supporting their project. The latter formed the Imvani and Indwe Railway Company and the two groups employed their political connections to secure a different form of government support: the promise of a substantial land grant should the railway to the Indwe area be completed. The government would reserve 25 000 morgen of land in the vicinity of the coal mines, to be selected by the company, to be transferred on completion of the railway. On this basis the two companies - Indwe Coal and Imvani Rail - were merged under the name of the latter.[19]

Hardly had the ink dried on the documents concerning the privileges of the company than the process of forced removal, lately accomplished by war against the 'rebels', began again, this time to clear the farms 'reserved' for the company of their inhabitants. Removals began in the winter of 1882 and continued into 1883. By the middle of that year substantial opposition had been organised, and eventually, at a meeting in August, it was agreed that no further action would be taken for a time.[20] The central reason for loss of enthusiasm on the part of the government was not only organised opposition to the removals, for the motive of the exercise had faded. The promoters of the company were unable to secure sufficient capital to commence construction of the railway, without which there would be no need to transfer the land to the company. While the shareholders in the venture were able to enjoy the prospect of future capital gains from the rising value of farms which they had purchased in the vicinity of Indwe, not to mention those promised by government should they succeed, the company proved an immediate drain on their pockets. Expenditure on the mining operations exceeded any returns. A tiny workforce of ten or a dozen picked coal at the Indwe lease, with no hope of effective competition in the colonial market without a railway connection.[21] Presumably the gathering recession in the Cape economy discouraged potential investors. It was not until 1886 that the economy showed signs of recovery, and long before that, Cape investors - not to mention overseas capitalists - had shown a far greater interest in Transvaal gold shares (Pilgrims Rest, Barberton etc) than mining ventures in the 'old Colony'.[22]

The completion of various extension railways, especially that to Kimberley in 1885, changed the shape of the coal market in South Africa. The price of coal at Kimberley came down by a large percentage, and excluded South African coals from competition unless their transport costs could be much reduced. Within a year or two, exploitation of coal deposits in the Transvaal - at Boksburg in particular - excluded the Witwatersrand from the potential market for coal from the Cape and Natal for the immediate future. The lack of a connecting line between the eastern system and the midland lines cut off eastern Cape coal producers from the Kimberley market.[23] Only with such a railway connection (and other Cape) coals be competitive at Kimberley, and in the rapidly expanding railway market of the Cape as a whole.

Nevertheless, in the late eighties,so bouyant did the demand for colonial coal become, even without new railways, that extensive exploration proceeded. In the Glen Grey district, near present-day Indwe, at least one location headman marshalled local forces to develop a small mine. Thomas Zwedaba was asked by the Magistrate at Lady Frere (now Cacadu) to supply coal, but the difficulties of transport which he faced were practically insurmountable.[24]

It was in this context of growing demand that the proprietors of the Indwe Company negotiated with the Cape government during 1889 for the sale of their mining rights to the latter. The government's interest was complex. The demand for coal on the railways cannot alone explain the sudden determination to develop colonial mineral resources. I have suggested elsewhere that, in 1889, Sprigg's administration switched to a policy of internal economic development from its previous commitment to servicing the mining industry in territories to the north.[25] Whatever the precise reasons, for the first time there appeared to be the reasonable prospect of government investment in support of colonial coal mining; with this move came the possibility of substantial profits for the Indwe shareholders. But the government refused to offer more than £50 000, while the Indwe Company - initially demanding £100 000 for its coal interests - was not prepared to drop below £75 000. Negotiations were broken off at the end of 1889[26], and the Indwe promoters turned elsewhere for support or sale. Their hopes of direct government capital support were destroyed by the defeat of Sprigg's government in July 1890, and the accession to power of Rhodes's first ministry - which was clearly opposed to government investment in Cape mining development. The only aid, intriguingly, which Cape coal mining received was the government's agreement to build the long-awaited 'junction' line between Stormberg and Middelburg. The nett effect of this line would be to lower still further the price of coal at Kimberley, where there was only one major customer. Although the government also obtained parliamentary approval for the raising of funds to construct a line to Indwe, the latter did not materialise. At the same time, Merriman, Commissioner of Crown Lands and Public Works in the new cabinet, sought to terminate the Imvani and Indwe Company's hold on government land in the Indwe area - including farms in the Glen Grey district - which continued to exist, despite the failure of the proprietors even to start the construction of the Indwe railway. Threatened with a scant three months' notice of termination in 1891, the promoters finally moved rapidly - to stall any rash moves on the part of the state.[27]

A powerful card in the company's hands was the inaction on the part of government over the building of the Indwe railway. The government had devoted a large sum to the east-midland junction line, which might well not pay unless coal from Indwe were to be sent over it as well as the other fuels from inferior or at least much smaller collieries. Profitability seemed to require a branch line to Indwe. Seizing the initiative, the Indwe company's directors offered to build the railway via a new route - Sterkstroom to Indwe - in return for a cash grant, plus a new land grant deal under which the company would give up its rights to many of its Glen Grey district farms (more suited to its purposes had the Imvani-Indwe line ever been built) in return for the promise of the same total area of land, mainly to be selected around the coal mines. The government was also held at bay with new assurances that the Indwe Company was busily raising funds in Britain, to assist with which the former threw in an additional grant in the form of 2000 acres of coal-bearing land to be selected by the Company.[28]

Turning to private interests for aid as well as to government, it was, ironically, with Rhodes's own De Beers Consolidated that the Indwe Company found the interest which would transform the Indwe mines into a significant concern. Having established a near-monopoly of diamond

mining, De Beers was engaged in driving its production costs to lower levels. Fuel remained a substantial area of expense: local coal mining offered the prospect of savings over the imported article, if only the necessary railway lines could be provided. In pursuit of the most economical local fuel, De Beers conducted tests on coals from mines in the Cape, Natal, Free State and Transvaal during 1891, as a result of which the company had entirely switched to South African coal (and wood) for fuel by the middle of 1893.[29] From the Indwe point of view, what was most significant was that the results of De Beers' tests put Indwe coal second after Natal samples. It was, presumably, the prospect of Indwe coal contributing to reduced costs which finally induced De Beers to agree to the proposals of the Imvani and Indwe proprietors to establish a new company, in which De Beers would invest substantial capital, to build a railway to the mine, develop output capacity, and employ the the extensive land grant which it was (still) hoped to acquire from the government in connection with the proposed railway to profitable ends.

The disposition of De Beers to involve itself in this manner in the Indwe area may have derived in part from Rhodes's political situation. The cabinet crisis of 1893 placed several of the more prominent members of his first ministry on the opposition benches, and to continue in office Rhodes was forced to rely more heavily on the support of the Afrikaner Bond. Although the Prime Minister enjoyed substantial sway over that party by virtue of his financial dealings with some of its leaders, it was necessary to demonstrate at least some propensity to carry out its programme. That called for a greater degree of interest in the internal economic development of the Cape than the first Rhodes ministry had demonstrated. Although Rhodes and Sivewright, his minister of railways (Commissioner of Crown Lands and Public Works) would not agree to direct government involvement in railway building within the colony, they were prepared to offer incentives to private companies to undertake such works. The departure of Sivewright in scandalous circumstances during 1894 perhaps helped matters along, given his tendency to favour non-colonial mines such as those of Lewis and Marks at the Vaal River.[30] It was in this way that the Indwe Railway, Collieries and Land Company came to be formed in Kimberley in late 1894. The shares were divided between De Beers, the public and the promoters, only the public actually paying immediately for ther holdings. Starting the railway was a matter of some urgency, to avoid forfeiting the 25 000 morgen of land in the vicinity of the Indwe river.[31]

Before the company could turn its assets to account, three major elements were required. Efficient and inexpensive transport to the markets of the Cape was needed; to this end the railway - now proposed to run to Sterkstroom, some distance north of Queenstown rather than Imvani - had to be constructed. Its completion would bring title to the substantial area of land which the company was set to acquire. But in order to secure full possession of the land, more than title would be necessary. A second prerequisite was thus that the large number of people who appeared to be squatting on the farms had to go. The fact that the population of the district around Indwe would be very substantially reduced thereby did not seem important to the company, though a third necessity would prove to depend on keeping people in the area rather than pushing them out of it. That requirement was the existence of a labour force to work the mines, without which the coal deposits over which the company maintained its legal control would be worthless.

The new Indwe company set about achieving the preconditions for its success with great vigour. The railway was commenced almost immediately; the company sought ways of ridding its land of unwanted residents (some of whom were entirely legal tenants), and at the same time the managers brought in to run the greatly extended mining operations explored ways of securing a labour force.

Although the construction of the railway was not achieved without some mishaps - the Indwe Company contracted with Pauling, a firm responsible for a number of disasters in Cape railway works - it proceeded smoothly by comparison with efforts to expel the farm population and to find an adequate work force. One problem was with legally established tenants of the government, who were living on and farming large segments of the Company's hoped-for lands. Some were white, others Africans, and there were those who fitted neither category clearly - typical of the social milieu of the time. The government sidestepped its responsibility to dispose of this petty landed group by transferring not only title but also existing leases to the Indwe company - thus reducing substantially the area of farmland which the company could let out to its greater profit (though substantial rentals continued to accrue to the company for twenty-four years thereafter). Although a large number of people had been expelled from the farms reserved for the original Indwe company (or, strictly, its successor in the shape of the Imvani and Indwe company) during the eighties, still more seemed to have entered the Indwe area and settled - no doubt mainly illegally - on the farms reserved; for many lessees 'permitted a large number of natives to reside upon such farms', in the words of the magistrate at Dordrecht. Worst of all, from the immediate point of view of the Indwe Company's directors, was the existence of a large squatter population on the site of the proposed town. In order to sell sites in the town, the land would have to be surveyed; the more quickly this could be achieved, the more rapid the realisation of handsome profits would be. With considerable irritation, F. Schermbrucker, the mercurial Cape politician and managing director of the Company, appealed to the responsible minister to ensure that the reserved farms were cleared of their population before the state handed them over to the Company.[33] As in so many far more recent cases, the farm residents fought a rearguard action which kept them on the land in question for a few more months. In this action they enlisted the support of James O'Brien, editor of the Frontier Guardian of Dordrecht; for a period, Rhodes himself stalled the removal of people from the future townsite. In some ways this limited success in the struggle over land merely ensured greater impoverishment, however, for having stayed beyond the commencement of the growing season, many lost their crops when forced to move before they could reap.[34]

Finding a place to dump the farm residents proved to be a difficult matter for the Cape government. In the early eighties, mass relocation had been possible because of the direct military defeat of substantial groups under their chiefs; their dispossession had allowed government to accomplish an elaborate series of checkerboard moves of large groups of people. But by the mid-nineties, the shortage of land in many areas of the 'native territories' had altered the situation. The native affairs department and its representatives in the Glen Grey district were engaged in the implementation of rather different strategies from those which had characterised earlier times; their reluctance to accommodate numbers of new arrivals was compounded by this shift in policy under Rhodes's government. Although some people were pushed into Glen Grey and some of the Transkeian districts, it fell to the Indwe Company to accommodate numbers of its inherited tenants and squatters on its own land.

Two strands of company practice ran through the resolution of this problem. One was marked by a continued insistence on use of devices made possible by past government policies: in this instance, the effective creation of a new rural location in the midst of the company's lands - not a private location, but a piece of government ground. The Company's success in achieving this solution was facilitated by the fact that the total area of land selected for its grant exceeded the extent permitted in the enabling Act; the forfeiture of one farm was required, and the directors conveniently selected one leased (originally from the government and subsequently from the company) by Charles Maqubela. On resumption by the government of this farm, it became the Guba Government Location, and

Maqubela was transformed from tenant to headman.[35]

There was a clear recognition in the Indwe Company that Maqubela's location would be a potential local labour reserve, and the possibility of extending the pattern onto the Indwe company's own land obviously existed. A portion of the company's ground was therefore earmarked for use as an area on which rent-paying mine labour tenants could be settled. The area set aside was rather small, however, and it appears that the company had in mind the idea that its private tenants would shelter subtenants who would provide in turn a reservoir of labour for the mines. In this approach they differed radically from some other areas of the country at the time: the clearest example, perhaps, comes from Pilgrims Rest, where Transvaal Gold Mining Estates used a major tract of its own land (which it had purchased) to establish and retain the services of rent paying mine labour tenants.[36] On the other hand, the various uses to which huge areas of company-owned land in the Transvaal were put must have included arrangements similar to those developed at Indwe at this time, albeit usually involving a greater distance between mines and residential farms.[37]

Social relations at Indwe

If not by the time the new Indwe Company began to operate its much-expanded coal mines in February 1895, then certainly shortly thereafter, a great complexity of relationships of domination, control and exploitation had been developed in the area surrounding the mines. In traditional analytic style, let us begin to examine them at the point of production. The mines at Indwe were of an intriguing type, for the coal seams cropped out at the base of a small plateau feature, and underlay most of that formation. The strata of the Karoo group of rocks in that area are almost horizontal, and the coal seams sloped a mere two degrees upwards from the outcrop. The upward slope had the added advantage that the coal and waste rock could be extracted from the mines by gravity. The formation was a far cry from deep coal pits in Natal or elsewhere; there was little gas, and ventilation could readily be supplied by vertical shafts of a few hundred feet, fairly easily sunk from the surface of the plateau above the mines. Despite these apparent advantages which arose from the natural features of Indwe coal, the work was considered to be harder than in most other mines in southern Africa. Among the reasons for this reputation were other natural elements, as well as some rather more socially determined features. The former included the thinness of the coal seams, which required the removal of an extremely large amount of waste if the working areas of the mine were to be high enough even to crouch in; additionally, there were features of the rock which made the manual tasks of mining especially difficult. These drawbacks were, of course, exacerbated by management practices which rendered working conditions excruciating for white miners, and still worse for black.

Labour in the Indwe mines consisted of holing by manually driving metal rods into the rock, crowbarring and picking the coal and waste rock using the purchase provided by holing, and shovelling and hauling the materials out of the mine. Ancillary tasks included stacking pit-props and occasional blasting, the former a relativly little used method given the practice of leaving pillars in the mines to support the roof, and the latter avoided because of the undue quantities of waste generated, not to mention the scrambling of coal and waste. Indeed, a major task outside the mines involved sorting the coal and waste; not only did the fuel have to be separated from the latter, but the coal had to be sized to suit different customers; poor mixtures of different sized lumps of coal would reduce the value of the product. The sorting screens were worked by small armies of women as well as men, almost all Africans, supervised by a few African and white men. Inside the mine, the division of labour was mainly between skilled and unskilled men, though finer gradations could be

discerned between older and newer hands and between mere miners and those in charge of work in different sections. Those in skilled positions were frequently imported from elsewhere; Cornish miners were the rule rather than the exception, while the few Africans deemed to be skilled were pushed from supervisory positions by combinations among the whites.[88]

From the beginning, much of the actual work - of development and of winning the coal - in the mines was farmed out to contractors. The latter were responsible for hiring workers, maintaining equipment and a myriad other tasks. They were supposed to work to the plan of the mining manager, but conflict frequently erupted between these levels in the hierarchy. There were usually company-hired teams at work, under the supervision of company employees, in some areas of the mine while contractors' teams would be at work elsewhere. Although the stucture of relationships at work differed between these two models, the same people frequently moved back and forth between them (though not across levels in the hierarchy). African workers might work for a time directly in the employ of the company, and then spend a spell doing much the same work under a contractor; among the supervisory/contracting group, the Hillhouse family were almost ubiquitous, at times contracting, and at other times again working on the Indwe Company's payroll. A fairly rigid hierarchy can thus be observed in the division of labour, with a degree of fluidity in the particular expression of relationships.

Moving beyond the immediate production of coal, the relationships between people in the Indwe district and the company become more complex. Most of those relationships were mediated through land, and most of the land was controlled in some way by the Indwe company.

The case of the supervisory/contracting 'class' reveals a wide disparity of relationships with the company, mostly involving the question of IRC&L land. Some of these men were deeply involved in attempts to accumulate, and their contracting to the Indwe Company represented one means which they would employ to achieve this end. At the same time as they would, then, seek the cheapest labour to accomplish contract work, they were often also involved in recruiting labour for mines (and perhaps other sectors) in other areas. During the 1890s at the latest some of the earlier generation of the Hillhouse family acted as labour agents, recruiting for the mines of the Witwatersrand and elsewhere simultaneously with contracting and mining for the Indwe Company. The two sets of activity had a tendency to contradict one another, even if the intensity with which particular individuals could carry them on at once was low.

Among Africans too there were many activities which could generate some accumulation in the little empire created by the Indwe Company with the help of De Beers. The various inducements offered to workers by the Indwe company provided an immediate set of trade goods: cattle, meat, beer, and land were commodities in great demand around Indwe, and the workers took full advantage of what was available. Not in all cases could the results have been described as accumulation, but merely, perhaps, as increasing leisure time and enhancing the quality of life.

In the town of Indwe itself the mining company provided the fledging environment for accumulative opportunities. Descendants of 1820 settlers who the directors of the museum at Grahamstown might not like to acknowledge, with names like Isaacs and Dawidslinger, performed building work, produced vegetables and carried out innumerable other tasks which made Indwe a livable environment. As a new town in the mid-nineties, Indwe lent new possibilities to people from the older towns of the Eastern Cape: that was why it attracted people from, say, Queenstown. Similarly, southern European traders found the towns of Thembuland profitable environments for their businesses: first Cala in the eighties, then Indwe in the nineties and after. Small business flourished, at least for a time:and in turn provided storekeepers with the opportunity to enter into

land dealing, at purchase as well as rental. Such a family was the Costellos, the head of which house was at Cala, with several members scatttered widely over the 'border' districts. Intermarriage between such families helped to boost the resources required for the most rapid accumulation device: control over land. Lease, or better yet purchase of a farm from the Indwe Company offered the possibility of immediate returns through rents collected from African tenants. Appreciation in value and subdivision and sale were prospects which landowners could contemplate with equanimity. The immediate stumbling block was the reluctance of the company to part with its land holdings, which had absorbed almost all the Crown land at all close to Indwe; the little other private land was not infrequently in the hands of the directors of the company themselves, particularly Bradfield, Byrne and Dugmore.

Although there were, then, private tenants of private landlords, most of the African farm residents of the Indwe area were either tenants of the company itself, or of its own lessees. On land in the direct control of the company, residents were obliged to pay rent, and gradually the practice developed of making labour service for the company a condition of continued residence. It was hard to extend this practice in any form to farms leased to private tenants, except by threatening the termination of leases; and that threat was indeed used. On company farms, in fact, it was difficult enough to enforce the labour regime, and at least in the first two or three years of mining the company did not rely on its own tenants for much of its labour supply. This situation suggests an extremely incomplete reduction to landlessmness of the population of the Indwe district, though not only did the company have formal title but also had the advantage, with respect to securing complete control, of the state's two-time expulsion of the population of the land concerned. Thus, although many of the residents of the farms did supply labour to the mines on an irregular basis, for many of those people it was labour performed to a considerable degree on their own terms. While within the labour process they were subjected to considerable control, their own effective determination of the frequency and even duration of work had profound effects on the work performed in the mines.

No doubt in consequence of its inability to secure effective control not only of its lands but of the potential workforce which lived thereon, the Indwe company was forced to rely on a substantial labour supply from further afield. The Glen Grey and Xalanga districts, and even others to which earlier Indwe residents had been moved such as Qumbu and Tsolo, supplied some of this labour. Coming from further away, workers from those districts followed a migrant pattern, and fell more completely under the control of the company while at Indwe. But their relations with the company were not particularly simple, and in the longer term the significance of their presence was the failure of the Indwe company to stabilise a labour supply on which production in the mines could satisfactorily be based.

Changes in power: Indwe 1896-1906

In the second half of the nineties the primary difficulties encountered by the IRC&L were confronted, and in part solved. While the costs of production had been 50% higher than the original estimates, there were improvements; the company was better able to supply coal at more competitive rates, and its production grew. Indwe coal supplied all De Beers' needs by mid-1896. Contracts with the CGR took up additional output. By 1899 the IRC&L mine produced well over 100 000 tons a year, which for a South African colliery at the turn of the century was a very substantial amount. About 60 whites and 1100 Africans were employed by the company and its contractors at Indwe; the township had been laid out and largely sold on quitrent terms; paying tenants on short leases occupied most of the farms; and all seemed set for a period of

uninterrupted profits. Indeed, the company had already assumed a regular practice of a 5% half-yearly dividend, thus gaining the distinction of being the only Cape coal mining venture which ever paid substantial returns.[40]

The prosperity of the Indwe company was made possible by the possession of its railway and land rights. The non-coal goods and passenger traffic paid for working the railway, while the revenue from town and farms paid for the cost of borrowed capital. It should thus have been relatively easy for the company to produce profits on its coal business, and in the years immediately prior to the outbreak of war it did succeed. Management, though costly, was improved by appointing G. Dugmore as resident General Manager at Indwe, instead of running the company from offices in Kimberley and Cape Town. Although the labour supply was never considered adequate, production proceeded uninterrupted.[41] This relatively satisfactory performance ended, however, during the war.

The tension between the use of the company's lands to contribute to short-term management needs such as covering the interest on borrowings and the potential longer-term value of the farms in establishing a stabe labour supply for the coal mines, was particular obvious at the end of the war (1901). The shortage of labour in the mines meant that strenuous efforts were made to increase the labour force through farm settlement, at exactly the same time as the floating of a number of proposals for a scheme of capitalised white-owned farming on the same land, sale of portions thereof to farmers, and longer leases over considerable areas for white and black lessees.[42] To add to its difficulties, the IRC&L found that not only had the war disrupted migration and labour supply patterns, but though a greater population than ever was living in districts close to Indwe, the 'high' wages offered by imperial forces kept workers away from the mines.

In consequence of its inability to determine the pattern of labour at Indwe, the company soon ran into great difficulties in keeping its production up to the required levels - required by the demands of contracts with both De Beers and the Cape Government Railways. The excuse offered by the IRC&L to De Beers was perenially that of labour shortage, and the response of De Beers - despite its interest in the profitability of the Indwe company - was to contract for coal supplies elsewhere. With De Beers, the Indwe company enjoyed some minimal leverage through the former's interest in the latter's dividends (and this may explain De Beers attempts to sell Indwe shares during June 1902); but from the CGR under a restored Sivewright regime, the Indwe company could expect no help. Thus, while De Beers policy at this stage does not seem to have been shaped by anything other than the most scrupulous attention to profitability (and cost cutting was an inevitable component of that), the CGR's fuel orders were subject to much more variable and political pressures. This difficulty was compounded by tarriff changes on the railways after the war, when low Central South African Railways rates made it more economic for De Beers to use Natal rather than Indwe coal. And, in any event, the Indwe mines struggled to maintain output due to their inability to keep a regular labour supply.

Faced with these constraints, Indwe management experimented with a variety of strategies. One was to contract out all areas of the Indwe mine to the Hillhouse family. In the short term the contractors were able to reduce costs and maintain labour supplies, but that situation could not continue indefinitely. Equipment and labour relations in the mines deteiorated uunder this regime, until the Indwe management resumed control and congratulated itself on disposal of the 'Hillhouse incubus'. But contractors had the advantage of being in close touch with the origins and direction of labour flows, on which the company had to rely; it was only a matter of time until local contractors would have to be brought back into the mines.

During this period, the Indwe company made strenuous but uneven efforts to utilise its potential 'labour reserve' by securing not only settlement but effective work output by Africans on some of its farms. The key to satisfactory performance was a means of ensuring that farm residents worked more regularly. Individuals paying rent on the farms were issued with thirty-day tickets which were supposed to be worked off as one of the conditions for remaining on the farms; but in practice, as indicated earlier, few farms residents actually worked at all regularly. Thus, in 1901, one Peter Peve, a resident of farm 19 block 3, worked only four days in two months, while Peter Matross, who had only worked 14 days in six months, owed in addition a substantial amount of rent. In 1902, Futshana Moss, typical of many others, took five months to complete one ticket. The strategy adopted was two-pronged. Farm residents were threatened with eviction (and some, like August Salman in September 1902, were evicted) for their failure to work in the mines. As a result, in 1902 and 1903 the mine-labour tenant system did work a little more effectively, and was extended to new areas of land with the non-renewal of certain leases - especially of some black tenants (such as Witbooi Makatese). The company arranged ploughing of lands to encourage more tenants to settle on the farms. And, as a second prong, IRC&L renewed its own direct recruiting, particularly focussing on labour from Basutoland. Officials and contractors were sent out widely to recruit, and agents were retained to secure Sotho workers from Aliwal North and other points of entry into the Cape."[3]

Recruiting further afield did not solve the Indwe company's problems. Instead, it brough strike action by migrant workers in its train. Over the 1902 Christmas period, several short strikes took place and bodies of Sotho workers abandanoned the mines."[4] Nevertheless, the result of the company's efforts was that during 1903 the labour supply position improved. For a period the Indwe mines succeeded in producing sufficient to satisfy railway contracts, though their Kimberley market was slipping away. Severe recession in 1904 reduced the demand for coal and increased the labour supply;"[5] but by the time this easier if less profitable period passed, competition for labour around Indwe had increased to unprecedented heights, and rendered the company's control still weaker than before.

Migrant labour and Indwe - 1906 - 1912

Mention has been made of the effects of competition for labour in the Indwe area from the armies of the Anglo-Boer War. From 1903 onwards, once the IRC&L had finally sold its railway to the CGR at a very substantial profit, the construction of the Indwe-Maclear extension line generated vexed conditions in the labour market from the point of view of the coal company. But neither of these sources of competition could compare with the impact of the Witwatersrand on the area around Indwe.

The flow of labour from the broad Transkeian territories to the Witwatersrand had accelerated at different phases from the early nineties. The construction of the original railway to Indwe facilitated the movement of labour to the Witwatersrand, making Indwe a major centre in the labour system of southern Africa and proving profitable to the IRC&L through the carriage of thousands of passengers at minimal cost to the company. By 1902 at least 200 Africans passed through Indwe every day en route to or from the mines, affording opportunities to all manner of operators, not only the company, to profit from their needs."[6] Even today, the Blue Crane (originally Royal) hotel, opposite the station, depends for its survival on the trade which booms with each train's arrival.

Matters in the labour field deteriorated still further from 1906 onwards

as the intensity of recruiting efforts for the Witwatersrand stepped up rapidly in districts neighbouring Indwe, and even in the town itself. The phenomenon of recruiting in a wide variety of forms was reported from Lady Frere, Cala and Indwe. In 1905 the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association opened a branch in Indwe, and in that year over 10 000 African workers travelled through the town on their way to Johannesburg. Within a year the WNLA system had collapsed within South Africa, but in the Indwe area it was speedily replaced by private recruiting systems involving touts, runners, canteen and store keepers, as well as agents and contractors in the towns. Advances were frequently paid in cash (not cattle) to recruits in the Indwe area. Whatever techniques were used, they were undoubtedly effective, for the number of recruits passing through Indwe increased very rapidly indeed. Part of the reason for this increase lies not only in the exertions of recruiters, stressed by Jeeves, but also in the deterioration of conditions in the 'native' districts of Glen Grey and Xalanga. For example, the impact of racist constriction of credit facilities in the period after the Anglo-Boer war at centres like Cala merits much further investigation; while the competition and conflict between recruiters, while obviously a significant phenomenon, may have reduced rather than increased the effectiveness of recruiting. Whatever the multi-levelled explanation, the numbers of recruits did increase, and the difficulties experienced by the Indwe Company did not abate, from 1906 onwards.[47]

To add to the difficulties of the company, the Cape Government Railways increased their purchasing of coal from other areas. There was almost continuous conflict between the company and the railways over the quantity and quality of coal supplied. In 1909 the company had to reduce its white workforce substantially as a result of the decline in the contract offered it by the government. The reduced demands on the mine meant less demand for labour, but also the prospect of declining and ul;timately vanishing profits for the company. Although these difficulties were compoounded by the creation of the still-less sympathetic South African Railways in 1910, sales of coal in other markets were more successful, and the Indwe company continued to face the difficulties of finding sufficiently reliable labour to be able to produce at a profit the coal it could sell. Meanwhile the price of coal in South Africa generally was declining, and by 1912 the Indwe company could no longer be certain of any level of profit on the coal for which it could obtain government contracts. At this point it was decided provisionally to liquidate the company, pending the results of a year's operations, and in a last attempt to establish its position in the district the company tried one more strategy for the stabilisation of its labour force.[48]

Liquidation, white settlement and forced removals again

The only option remaining to the management of the Indwe company as long as both the coal mines and the lands were to be retained was to try to improve the efficiency of the farms as producers of labour power. Recognising that the privaely leased farms had never served well in this connection, it was decided to lease greater areas of land to African tenants. Those lessees were expected to accommodate increasing numbers of people on the farms, who would soon begin to provide a more reliable workforce. Meanwhile, the company would have to hope for improving prices for coal, though the prospects, as the price offered by the SA Railways dropped to 11s/6d per ton, seemed gloomy.

It appears that some of the farms were re-leased in the manner suggested during 1912 and 1913. By 1915, only 9 of the 21 main farms were leased to 'European tenants', only three constituted the company's 'private native location', and 7 had 'native tenants' as well as fairly large populations of 'squatters'. But whether the new labour system would prove effective was never really tested, for by December 1913 the administration of the

railways had made it abundantly clear that no more coal would be purchased from Indwe after the end of 1916. The stage was thus set for the liquidation of the company. Having failed to bring the farm population under adequate control during the life of coal mining, management and directors, as well as the major shareholder - De Beers - were in no frame of mind to attempt to bring them under tighter control for new purposes. With the commencement of liquidation arrangements in 1917, therefore, it was proposed to sell all the land owned by the IRC&L at auction, and preparations for that event went ahead. In order to simplify matters the liquidators proposed the block sale of all the farms to the government as an addition to the Glen Grey district - from which most of the land had originally been taken. The Indwe area had been proposed by the Beaumont commission as an area of African settlement, and the liquidators had in view the occupation of the land by African people (which was in reality the case). But, at the eleventh hour, the Department of Lands in Pretoria determined to purchase the whole area. The intention of that department was to settle returning soldiers on allotments carved from the defunct company's farms, in line with policies favouring state investment in white land settlement in places as varied as Indwe and Ofcalaco."[49]

Once the state had again resumed the Indwe lands, the company and its history were easily forgotten. But in order to settle some hundreds of white families on the farms, the existing population, largely (though not exclusively) black, had to to move. Four of the least attractive farms were transferred to Glen Grey district to overcome the difficulties of finding space for more people there; most of the settled population was forced, after some resistance led by Diniweyo Mhlebi and Philgat Mzazi, to move; the wealthy individual African tenants, like W.B. Rubusana, tried to fight individually for their 'rights', and were reduced to landlessness along with the rest. So the story of the Indwe company ended, as it had begun, in a forced removal; and once more, a forced removal which failed to guarantee the success of a new venture, for the settlers on the allotments almost all gave up within a matter of fifteen years.[50]

Possession of land seems to mean the right to possession of any produce, rent or other form of income which can be generated from that land. The Indwe Company's acquisition of land from the state gave them the right to a potentially enormous rent, in the broadest sense, from the land - recognised in the state's eventual purchase of the company's holdings at a price far greater than the company's shareholders had ever invested. This exchange occurred despite the fact that the railway built by the Indwe Company, in return for which the land was granted, was purchased by the Cape government (the original granters of the land) at a very large profit to the company in 1902. By the completion of the liquidation of the Indwe Company, a holder of a single £1 share purchased in 1894 should have received, through dividends and liquidation, many times that amount. But the Company was not the only site of accumulation. Inability on the part of the IRC&L to realise the potential of its lands meant that lessees were able to enjoy varying, and sometimes substantial, accruals of profit from the use of that land. Some lessees were able, through such accumulation, eventually to become the owners of considerable tracts of land in the Indwe area. One of the reasons for ineffectual opposition to removal from the Indwe farms on the part of Africans, when the end came in 1920, was the division between those who had accumulated substantial fortunes from their use of IRC&L land and those who for whatever reason had not done so. One of the lessons to be drawn from the Indwe experience is that the combination of private property in land with reasonably free commodity and monetary exchange can, despite the presence of strong forces working for the domination of labour by capital, result in the most generalised struggle to accumulate through the manipulation of exchange relations and the possession of land. In short, the tenant/migrant/working class is replete with its own attempts at accumulation, and not only or (in some cases) even at all with the ideology and practice of a struggle against the domination (attempted or accomplished) of capital (and the state).

Conclusion

What happened around Indwe was shaped by many things. Locality, struggles to establish (and profit from) domination over others, control over land (that most peculiar means of production), a mixture of ways of understanding what was 'proper' in these things ... all contributed to conditioning the peculiar story which has in part been revealed in this paper. Much more remains to be done if the lives of people who lived in and passed through the Indwe area are ever to be more fully recorded. Still more immense is the task of detailing the particularities and generalities of life in the many areas of South Africa which yet remain untouched by historical investigation. In all of those areas, the specificities of the land question stand out as among the most important of the questions requiring attention.

Footnotes

1. The work of Morris and Bradford are obvious examples. One looks forward to the forthcoming biography of Kas Maine with eager anticipation in the expectation of elaboration of analysis on the questions posed here.
2. Thus, although the most prolific historical geographer of South Africa, AJ Christopher, has produced a reasonably useful volume on The Crown Lands of British South Africa (Kingston, 1984), analytical questions of the kind raised here are completely ignored.
3. Some of this research is reported in an African Studies Institute seminar paper of June 1985, 'Labour tenancy and the land clearances at Pilgrims Rest'; a later version is in a paper of the same title presented to the SARP seminar at Yale in January 1986, and part will appear in a forthcoming issue of the Journal of Southern African Studies (JSAS). Until access to the Pilgrims Rest Museum Archive is restored the research cannot be completed. Other parts of the research are in preparation under the titles 'The history of a failure: the Indwe Railway, Collieries and Land Company', and 'Life and death in the northern Cape: paying "tribute" to Cape Asbestos'.
4. 'Oorsig van die geskiedenis van die dorp en die distrik van Indwe', deur JAE Hillhouse, LS van der Walt en JH Coetzink, 1952.
5. cf. Reports of General Manager of Railways in the Annexures to the Votes and Proceedings of Parliament, Cape of Good Hope (hereafter Cape V&P, Ann.).
6. Evidence of WD Fynn to Native Laws and Customs Commission, Cape V&P, Ann., G.4-'83, #4987.
7. See, e.g., Cape Blue Book for 1859.
8. J Meintjes, Dorp van Draee - Molteno 1874-1974 (Municipality of Molteno, 1974).
9. GM Theal, Compendium of South African History and Geography, 1878 (3rd edition) Pt 2 pp. 69-70.; SW Silver & Co's Handbook for South Africa ... (London, 1875) p. 432; H Aucamp (ed) Op die Stoneberge (Cape Town, 1971).
10. Christopher, op. cit., pp. 19-20.
11. Standard Bank Archive (hereafter SBA), Branch Index.
12. SBA, Inspection Report (IR) Dordrecht 1/1/43 10.10.1877 p97.
13. East London Museum, Acc. 1243, East London Chamber of Commerce, Annual report presented to the Meeting held on 7.8.1878.
14. SBA, 1/1/43, IR Dordrecht.
15. C. Saunders, The annexation of the Transkeian territories, AYB 1976, pp. 91-97.
16. Prospectus of the Kimberley Coal Mining Company, 1881; Cape Archives (hereafter CA), LC 16, 28; SBA, 1/1/43, IR Dordrecht.
17. Report of the Tembuland Commission, Cape V&P Ann., G.66-'83. Among

the members of the Commission was J.L. Bradfield, one of the promoters of the Indwe company.

18.

19. SBA, 1/1/43, IR Dordrecht.

20. CA, LND 1/226, L17, correspondence concerning the 'removal of natives *from Indwe* farms for mining purposes'. See also correspondence form the resident magistrate at Lady Frere in NA 185 and 189.

21. SBA, 1/1/43, IR Dordrecht.

22. A Mabin, The making of colonial capitalism ... (unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1984), chapter 6.

23. The papers laid before parliament during the eighties are replete with proposals for the construction of a junction or connecting line between the midland and eastern systems, but none succeeded at the time.

24. Cape V&P Ann., G.52-'81.

25. Mabin, Colonial Capitalism.

26. Cape V&P Ann., G.33-'89?.

27. CA, LND 1/226, L17, minute by JX Merriman dated 21.8.1891.

28. SBA, 1/1/43, IR Dordrecht, 25.4.92; Debates of the House of Assembly (Hansard), 25.8.1892 pp. 383-4, and 4 and 14.8 and 7.9.1893, pp. 248, 263, 388-90; also 31.7.1894, pp. 394-396.

29. De Beers Archive, Kimberley (hereafter DBA), Annual Report of De Beers Consolidated Mines Ltd. at 30.6.93.

30. cf. Merriman in Hansard 6.6.1895, p. 250.

31. There was much speculation at the time that Sivewright was financially interested in his particular favourites.

32. CA, LC 212, C402.

33. CA, LND 1/389 L17, especially correspondence between F Schermbrucker and various government officials.

34. ibid., correspondence between local officials, O'Brien and central government.

35. A report by the Civil Commissioner of Dordrecht in LND 1/389 L17 outlines a proposed strategy for the removal, which was approved by Native Affairs on 10.3.96.

36. Mabin, Labour tenancy and land clearances ....

37. Transvaal Industrial Enquiry Commission.

38. CA, LND 1/389 L17, F. Schermbrucker to J. Sivewright, 25.8.1896; Currey to FS, 25.8.1896.

39. Interviews with Barend Dawidslinger and Petrus Isaacs, Indwe, 17.4.1985.

40. The sources for this summary are DBA, De Beers Annual Reports; SBA, Indwe Inspection Reports; DBA, Indwe Railway, Collieries and Land Company (IRC&L) Annual Reports, Copies of Minutes of Directors Meetings 1897-1909, and Boxes of correspondence received by De Beers from IRC&L.

41. DBA, Box 'Indwe 1894-1901', RW Gordon, Secretary IRC&L to Secretary, De Beers, 3.5.1898.

42. DBA, IRC&L Bd Min 21.10.01, 14.11.01 etc.

43. DBA, IRC&L Board Minutes, 14.11.01, 19.5.02, 18.9.02, etc.

44. DBA, IRC&L Bd Minutes, 31.12.02.

45. SBA IR Indwe 28.9.04, 31.5.05.

46. SBA IR Indwe 27.9.02.

47. SBA, IR Cala 1904-1911; IR Indwe 1904-1911; CA, NA, letters received from RM Lady Frere, and NA 709 Letters received from Assistant RM Indwe; Transvaal Archives (TA), GML8 188, 1246/14; A. Jeeves, Migrant Labour in South Africa's Mining Economy (Johannesburg, 1985), pp. 119-120; and cf. W. Beinart, 'Joyini Inkomo: cattle advances and the origins of migrancy from Pondoland', JSAS 5 (1979) 199-219.

48. DBA, IRC&L Annual Reports, Minutes and *Correspondence Received* at De Beers.

49. This summary is largely based on correspondence in DBA, box 'Indwe 1912-1919'.

50. Papers concerning the Indwe settlement are in CA, 1/LDF 8/1/8, 2/1/3; and State Archives, Pretoria, LDE 408A, 11166/187 and LDE 4430, 14094.