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THE ROLE OF RITUAL IN RESISTING DOMINATION IN THE TRANSKEI IN THE 1970s

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Abstract

Ritual and the public oratory accompanying ritual have played a vital role in allowing some Xhosa people to construct and maintain a conservative world view. It is largely through such conservatism that many rural Xhosa have been able to develop a spirit of resistance to full incorporation into the wider political economy of which they are part. This was possible up to the early 1970s, after which Xhosa conservatism as a response to wider political and economic realities became less and less feasible. There are, of course, certain limitations and ambiguities in such a response to domination, and these are discussed. The paper also deals with the relationship between ritual change, on the one hand, and wider social and material changes, on the other. This serves to illustrate the dynamic nature of 'tradition' or culture, with ritual and oratory representing an example of the way in which cultural resources can be put to political uses.

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The starting point for this paper is the by now well recognised fact that religious symbols are 'cultural resources', part of people's cultural stock-in-trade, which they put to various uses, including the making of political statements and the taking of political action. In the case of Xhosa speakers in the Shixini Administrative Area of Willowvale district, Transkei,[1] various forms of ritual, together with the public oratory that invariably accompanies ritual, are used to perform political functions of various kinds. This chapter is an attempt to summarise and draw together this data, some of it published elsewhere, and to place it within an overall theoretical context.[2] The chapter aims to demonstrate the role of ritual in the construction and maintenance of a conservative world view among a section of the Transkei population, to show why such a world view persists, and to illustrate some of the pressures on it in recent years.

Resistance by subordinated peoples, using earlier cultural forms in new ways, or adapting them to suit changed conditions, has been widespread in Africa. For example, Lincoln (1987) has recently demonstrated how the Swazi ncwala changed from first fruits ceremony to 'ritual of rebellion' against the king, and then to a ritual that facilitated and expressed resistance to British domination. Lan (1985) has shown the importance of indigenous beliefs and rituals in the war of liberation in Zimbabwe, while Comaroff (1985) has argued that Tshidi Zionism is a form of resistance to domination which allows Tshidi to restrict the extent to which they are incorporated into the apartheid system.

These examples illustrate that what we refer to as 'culture', 'custom' or 'tradition' is not static and unchanging, but provides a resource which can be drawn on, manipulated and used to pursue goals, often of a political nature (Spiegel and Boonzaier 1989, 54). In some cases, as with the Swazi ncwala, old ritual forms are modified to meet changed circumstances. In others, as with Tshidi Zionism, a blend of indigenous and imported elements provides a new 'tradition' which assists people in responding to new social and political realities. So tradition can be 'invented' (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) as well as adapted or modified, or used for new purposes, in response to new circumstances.

In the Transkei the historical importance of cultural symbols in determining specific forms of rural conciousness and in organising resistance to colonial rule at the local level has been clearly shown by Beinart and Bundy. During the period 1890 to 1930, one of the major features of Transkeians' political responses was what Beinart and Bundy term 'defensive traditionalism' (1987, 12). Anthropologists working among Xhosa speakers have commonly made a distinction between 'red' traditionalists and 'school' (progressive) people. Philip and Iona Mayer, whose Townsmen or Tribesmen was largely responsible for the currency of these categories in anthropological writing, came to regard red and school as two sub-cultures, each associated with specific ideologies of resistance. Both ideologies, although strongly contrasting, were viewed as responses to the same problem, that of white domination. Both provided a sense of identity and expressed a "denial of the legitimacy of the dependency structures as well as their passive or active opposition to the status quo" (Mayer, 1980; 3).

Although this dichotomy between red and school (based largely on the division between Christians and Ancestor worshippers) has now disappeared,

both giving way to a secular, urban influence, communities of what are essentially 'red' people still (in 1989) survive in Transkei. Most of the people of Shixini can be described as such, although what remains of the red lifestyle is under ever-increasing threat from various quarters. This in turn has meant that the red response to domination, though still in evidence in Shixini (justifying the use of the ethnographic present in most of what follows) is slowly being eroded.

Red conservatism in Shixini is essentially an active attempt to maintain a particular style of rural life and a particular view of the world. As an ideology, it has long included an element of resistance, sometimes passive, sometimes active, but always explicit. The strategies that such people have adopted over the years are clearly attempts to protect themselves from the effects of white domination, to limit their involvement in the wider economy and in urban society, and to try and conserve their rural niche. In the nineteenth century, red people sold their surplus agricultural produce and livestock to minimize their involvement in migrant labour (Mayer, 1980;15). From 1930 to the 1950s reds in the Transkei were in the forefront of resistance to agricultural 'betterment' schemes and to the implementation of the Bantu Authorities Act. In their review of rural resistance in the Transkei from 1900 to 1965, Beinart and Bundy conclude that "from the 1930s onwards, the core of militant resistance in the Transkei appears to have been provided by traditionalist middle migrants" and that such action was symptomatic of the rejection by traditionalists of the dominant culture (1980;312). The resistance in Pondoland in 1960 and in Tembuland during 1960-1963 seems to have drawn largely on traditionally oriented people, concerned with threats to their rural resources (Beinart and Bundy, 1980; Lodge, 1983; Mafeje, 1975).

However, if the preservation of a red consciousness and lifestyle is to be seen as a form of resistance in itself, there is an immediate question - is this not precisely what those who created the reserves (and later the bantustans) hoped for? Spiegel and Boonzaier (1989) note that the idea of 'tradition' can be used by those in power to justify and facilitate domination, and this is precisely what has happened in South Africa; portraying Africans as 'traditional' is one of the ways in which apartheid is rationalized. At the same time, as already noted, Africans have at times used the notion of tradition as a means to resist domination.

What is not often realised, however, is that the two uses are linked. As Beinart and Bundy state, traditionalists in the Transkei "fended off the full demands being made by capital and the colonial state" but also "tended to ease the implementation of separate institutions and to fragment the rural struggle" (1987, 12). The reserves, it has been pointed out (e.g. Molteno, 1977) were initially created not only as a means of containing resistance and of securing control over the African population, but also to facilitate the extraction of labour. As such their creation both contributed to and limited the process of proletarianization. One of the cornerstones of apartheid was laid by creating reserves in terms of an ideology which saw them as the 'traditional' homes of Africans. But the retarding effect on proletarianization that this involved meant that some Africans were able to retain access to land and to maintain a homestead mode of production, albeit in modified form. Conservatism as an ideology of resistance was thus possible.

With the swing from migrant labour to contract labour, and with growing population pressure and landlessness in the reserves, the pressures making for fuller incorporation and greater proletarianization grew, but there remained areas which were able to maintain a conservative, rural consciousness and an ideology of rural independence. In Shixini this was facilitated by a relatively low degree of landlessness, the absence of 'betterment' schemes, and by migrants spending relatively long spells at home between work periods. Many Shixini men were able, as recently as the early 1970s, to spend up to a year or more at home between spells at work of roughly the same time length. They were able to resist, in other words, the pressures operating from the late 1950s onwards which tended to lead to greater proletarianization and to a decline in agrarian forms of consciousness.

The maintenance of a conservative lifestyle and world-view in Shixini has a material basis - it depends on access to at least some rural resources, primarily land and livestock. It also depends, however, on a particular social organization through which the exploitation of local resources is effected. This dependence receives frequent ritual expression and reinforcement, as shown below. Through a strong community organization which manifests itself in real economic endeavours, as well as in other aspects of social life, and which is continually recreated in ritual, the illusion of rural independence can be maintained and perpetuated, despite a heavy dependence on migrant labour and cash wages.

Of particular significance here is the network of economic relationships within which individual homesteads are embedded. Such relationships are based on the principles of kinship and of neighbourhood or territory, both of which are interpreted locally as principles of traditional social organization. The result is a high degree of economic interdependence between homesteads, based on relationships which are cast in the idiom of Xhosa custom. This in turn makes it possible for people to interpret their involvement in the wider economy in terms of red values and ideals.Thus, particularly when it was still possible for many men to spend as much time at home as they did at work, they were able to rationalise migrant labour, and to interpret it in terms of red values and a rural lifestyle.

The economic interdependence of Shixini people is illustrated, for example, in the control and allocation of land. Rights to residential, arable and grazing land involve a social procedure and are granted or refused on the basis of social criteria. Applications for residential sites are made to and considered by the community as a whole, represented by its senior men, who take into account such factors as the status of the applicant (e.g. a newcomer has a weaker claim than an old resident; a married man a better claim than an unmarried one) and the views and claims of those living near the proposed site. The use of grazing and arable land, too, is subjected to a degree of communal control. Neighbourhood groups (sub-ward sections) may close off areas of grazing to allow the grass to recover, or apply to the headman to have an area of land proclaimed as arable.

Paralleling the essentially social nature of the allocation and use of land is the cooperative or neighbourhood ethic and organization on which most local economic activity is based. For example, virtually every homestead belongs to a ploughing group in which oxen, implements and labour power are combined and the work coordinated. Like work parties in general, of which

extensive use is made, such groups are invariably composed of close neighbours, some of whom may also be kin. Neighbourly cooperation is a major feature of social life in Shixini and is based on a formal division of the ward into sub-wards, and of the sub-wards into sections and sub-sections, to provide a system of territorial or neighbourhood groups.

Incorporation of Shixini people into the wider southern African system occurs in a number of ways, the most important of which is oscillating labour migration, which takes men, and an increasing number of women, to the urban-industrial centres of Transkei and South Africa for long periods of time. The maintenance of a conservative ideology must, of course, be understood in terms of the nature of this incorporation. Black workers from areas such as the Transkei have for long been unable to escape the status of migrants, due to the legal and social institutionalization of the migrant labour system. Linked to this have been poor wages and working conditions, lack of bargaining rights, poor housing in cities, and other factors making urban areas most unattractive places in which to be. Being unable to identify with life in town, and legally prevented from doing so (e.g. prevented from domiciling in town with wife and children), it is understandable that migrants with rural assets and ties should have clung to alternative sources of security and fulfilment (cf. Mayer 1971).

Shixini people stress the value of the country home and community, and say that it is only here that one can be a 'proper Xhosa'. Migrant labour is interpreted accordingly, and has been ritualized and rationalized in terms of the need 'to build the homestead' (ukwakha umzi). 'Building' here has a range of meanings - material, social and religious. The homestead must be an accepted, responsible part of the community, and it must fulfil its obligations to the ancestors, in addition to being materially well off (in terms of livestock, etc) if it is to be considered 'successful'. While migrant labour is recognized as being essential for 'building' the home, it is at the same time a threat to the home. It removes people from their homes for long periods and exposes them to an urban-industrial lifestyle. It deprives the community of labour power and threatens the absentees' commitment to their country home. This ambiguous quality of migrant labour as being both necessary and threatening is recognized and partially resolved at the level of ritual and symbol.

When I first went to Shixini in 1976-1977, there were a number of ritual actions performed by and for migrant workers each time they left for work and again on their return (McAllister 1980). Although the extent to which these rituals are still practised has declined, for reasons which will be mentioned at the end of this paper, they are still in evidence today. The function of these rituals was and is, by and large, to ensure that the migrant interprets his experience 'correctly' - i.e. as a means designed to serve the rural home. They reinforce his identity as a red Xhosa and strengthen his commitment to a red lifestyle and values. Resistance to incorporation is thus expressed in terms of Xhosa tradition, affirming the moral paramountcy of a reality other than that of the workplace.

One of the rituals associated with labour migrancy is a beer drink called umsindleko ('a provision'). At this beer drink a newly returned migrant is incorporated back into the community, praised for his efforts on behalf of his homestead, and exhorted to continue to work successfully and to use the fruits of his labour for his rural home. Umsindleko is also a thanksgiving

to the migrant's ancestors for having looked after him at work, and a plea to them to bless his future workspells also. The oratory makes explicit the moral code by which the red migrant ought to live. He is told not to waste money at work on Western consumer items or 'town women', but to save his money to invest in livestock and other things which will benefit and build his home and ensure that his family is well cared for (McAllister 1981).

Umsindleko is thus more than just an expression of conservatism. It is an attempt by senior men, representing the authority of the community, to ensure that migrant labour is interpreted in a particular way. The oratory is thus a form of social control (Bloch, 1975). Its aim is socialization and resocialization into a particular view of the relationship between migrant labour and country home. It is thus an important tool used to resist incorporation into the wider social and economic arena. Umsindleko enables the migrant, and the community at large, to interpret migrancy in terms of red values and to make it meaningful in these terms. At the same time, the brewing of beer for people is an acting out of the important principle of good neighbourliness and generosity. People in Shixini say that a man's homestead is 'not his alone' and that this is illustrated by the brewing of beer 'for people'. Conversely, the umsindleko beer drink will attain its objectives only if people attend to drink the beer and 'to give forth words' because it is through this that the attention of the ancestors is attracted and their blessings ensured. For continued success at work, then, the migrant is dependent not only on kin and ancestors, but also on the members of the community at large.

As documented elsewhere (McAllister 1985) the umsindleko ritual is regarded by Shixini people as 'traditional' but it is of relatively recent origin. It evolved from an earlier ritual called umhlinzeko, which was a small, family affair, involving the killing of a goat or an ox to mark the migrant's safe return. This ritual was itself an adaptation of the principle that the ancestors should be thanked when a man returned safely from a dangerous situation such as war or a long journey (Wilson et al 1952, 197; Hunter 1936, 251). The switch from the killing (umhlinzeko) to the beer drink (umsindleko) co-incided with changes in the relations of production in rural areas. These changes included an increasing reliance on labour migrancy, the growing economic independence of young men, the decline of the extended family household and the growing importance of neighbourly co-operation in the local economy (McAllister 1985)). Substituting a beer drink for a killing (a communal ritual for a family one) served to recognise these changes, reassert the authority of the elders over juniors, and dramatize the economic importance of neighbours.

There are also a variety of other situations in which ritual and its accompanying oratory is used actively to maintain, reinforce and recreate conservative attitudes, beliefs and values. Rural Xhosa values such as the importance of 'building the home' are frequently verbalized at rites of passage, for example. These are typically occasions involving change and uncertainty (like the departure and return of migrants) and the person undergoing the change is addressed with iziyalo (admonitions or instructions). The iziyalo define the change, outline the attitudes and behaviour patterns expected of the new role, and attempt to ensure that the person being admonished will behave in accordance with this. Boys are admonished by senior men on the occasion of their initiation into adulthood

and entry into the seclusion hut and again on the day of their 'coming out'. They are told to respect their seniors, to be responsible adults by going out to work in order to build their homesteads, and to avoid certain undesirable behaviour patterns such as wasting money or becoming an absconder in town.

Similar themes crop up in other rites of passage. At the admonitions spoken to a widow at the beer drink held to release her from the restrictions of mourning and to enable her 'to go among people' again, speakers stress the point that it is in everybody's interest for the homestead to remain a strong one, one that can use its assets to the benefit of the community and which will in turn be recognised and helped by the community (McAllister 1986). Every homestead that dies out is a threat to the community as a whole.

These examples have both a local as well as a wider political aim. In trying to ensure that the the boy being circumcised will behave as a man ought the community (and particularly his close kin) are trying to ensure that he accepts its authority and control. The oratory addressed to a widow being released is partly an attempt by her late husband's agnatic kin to retain control over her and her children. In the process, however, a particular world view is being dramatised and reinforced, and an attempt being made to retain a particular kind of relationship between the community at home and the world outside.

This process occurs, in fact, at every ancestor ritual and at every beer drink, whatever the specific purpose of the event. All rituals and beer drinks, of which there is a large variety in Shixini, are in large part dramatisations of the people's ideology, lifestyle and the social arrangements on which the success of local economic activity depends. What is dramatised is social practice - the interdependence of homesteads, the divisions into territorial and kin groups, the role that these play in everyday life, the division of labour between old and young and between men and women, and so on. These things are acted out in general terms, as the organisational principles on which social and economic realities are based, and represented objectively in the symbolic structure of the ritual or beer drink.

At beer drinks there are three main symbols through which this is achieved - the amount of beer given out, the sequence in which it is allocated, and the seating places assigned to various local groups and individuals. These three symbols, reinforced by oratory, are manipulated to create metaphors of social and economic life in general. The distribution of beer and seats reveals links of kinship and association, the nature of the relationships between groups and individuals, the composition of groups that work together, political and status hierarchies, and so on. The beer drink thus represents and objectifies everyday social experience by giving it a dramatic form, providing a model of social reality, and at the same time a model for the future (Geertz 1973).[3]

Beer drinks also dramatise the social norms and values on which social organization is based - respect for the elders, the importance of good neighbourliness, obligations towards kin, etc., and they relate these values to social practice. In this way, by placing social practice in its normative cultural context, they make meaningful the reality of things such

as everyday co-operation and the division of labour between men and women. They provide a 'frame' within which members of society are able to portray their socio-cultural system, to reflect upon it and reaffirm it. So beer drinks are a kind of meta-experience, an experience of experience, a realistic portrayal of reality. They make the principles that operate in everyday life tangible and salient, and invest them with value, thereby reinforcing and perpetuating them. The practices and values concerned are thus imbued with the value of 'tradition', as the right and proper way of doing things, for what is implied is that this is the way they have always been done, that this is 'proper Xhosa'. This in turn helps to perpetuate the ideal of a rural agricultural lifestyle and to resist further incorporation and exploitation.

This does not mean that cultural principles and values such as 'community' and 'neighbourliness', so important in the red scheme of things, are timeless and unchanging. As mentioned above, the present day emphasis on neighbourliness and territoriality can be traced to a variety of socio-structural and economic changes, such as those in the size and composition of rural homesteads, the relationship between homesteads and in homestead production, which led to an increase in the emphasis on neighbourliness and a change in kinship relations (especially the relationship between father and son). The institution of beer drinking is partly a reflection of that change and there is evidence that beer drinks have become far more common among Xhosa speakers than they were in the previous century (McAllister 1985).

Beer drinks are also much more than just instruments for the creation and perpetuation of conservative values. Some involve status change, some are thanksgivings to the ancestors for good harvests, some involve the sale of the beer to raise cash for the homestead. In all cases however, it is possible to interpret a beer drink, whatever its manifest purpose, as a means of achieving social cohesion and, more than this, as a dramatisation of the social and economic arrangements through which Shixini people are able to work towards and perpetuate, ideologically and in practice, the notion of rural independence and community.

As we have noted, public oratory plays a prominent role at events such as beer drinks and ancestor rituals and senior men frequently vie with each other in trying to make forceful, effective or amusing speeches. In speaking on such occasions, men emphasise the importance of what they designate as 'correct' custom, and praise the host or holder of the event, encouraging him or her to continue to do such things. Speakers frequently express the opinion that the host is following Xhosa custom and point out that what is being done was done in the past by those now dead. The procedures followed at public events, such as the manner of distributing beer and meat, are also discussed and justified by reference to tradition. To highlight such claims and to provide them with legitimacy, speakers use phrases such as 'It is the law of the Gcaleka', 'It is an old custom of Hintsa's', and so on.[4] In praising the host, speakers refer to his position within the kin group, his debt to 'those who are not present' (ancestors) and, when appropriate, to his dependence on neighbours or the value of good neighbourliness.

In summary, the rural and conservative consciousness of Shixini people survives partly because it is constantly being created and recreated, acted

out, expressed, discussed, debated, reformulated and inculcated and re-inculcated in both young and old. Basic values and beliefs and the values of kinship and neighbourly cooperation are frequently dramatized, verbalized and reinforced in a great variety of formal, public situations. Ritual is not only a reflection of conservative attitudes but also a tool used to recreate and maintain them. The Xhosa consciousness of Shixini people has both a cultural and a material basis; it emerges, as van Binsbergen (1985) puts it, out of "the dialectic of political incorporation", and it serves to enable a particular interpretation of labour migration and to resist fuller incorporation. Its particular characteristics are drawn from both the local context and developments within that, and from the interaction between local and wider contexts. As an ideology, Xhosa conservatism does not reflect a 'traditional mentality' in the conventional and negative sense of that term, but an innovative use of available cultural resources to make rational adaptations to a situation of domination and oppression. As in other parts of South Africa, it is "the only viable means of expressing opposition to white domination." (Spiegel and Boonzaaier 1989, 52).

A number of developments affecting Shixini people in recent years has placed their particular mode of adaptation in serious jeapordy, and today the red ideology and way of life is fast disappearing. One of the most important of these developments is the partial implementation of an agricultural 'betterment' scheme, which was started in 1980. These schemes were first instituted in South Africa in the late 1930s and implemented intermittently though widely from then onwards, usually with dire consequences for rural subsistence activities. Nowadays called 'soil conservation' or 'planning and reclamation' in the Transkei, betterment involves transforming the pattern of land use by dividing rural locations or wards into arable, grazing and residential units, fencing grazing camps and fields, and grouping homesteads together into village-like settlements (also fenced). In theory the aim of such schemes is soil conservation and agricultural development. In practice, these aims have seldom been actively pursued after the initial implementation and betterment has almost invariably left people worse off and more dependent on migrant labour than before (de Wet and McAllister, 1983).

This in itself would provide enough reason for red people, concerned with the conservation of their rural assets, to resist betterment. Shixini people are aware of the fact that the scheme being implemented there is likely to reduce their crop yields, and fearful of the effects that it will have on their livestock. But betterment does more than just threaten rural subsistence, it also disrupts and destroys the social organizational principles on which access to, and the management and effective utilization of, local resources depends, with concomitant effects on the red lifestyle and ideology.

For example, betterment removes the responsibility for land use and allocation from the community, depriving it of its autonomy in this regard, and substituting a bureaucratic process for a social one. Furthermore, betterment pays no regard to local community organ- ization. The relocation of people in village-type settlements has the effect of breaking up established neighbourhood groups and of destroying the political units (the sub-wards and sub-ward sections mentioned above) on which local organization and economic co-operation are based. In all respects -

economically, ecologically and socially - betterment leaves people worse off than before (McAllister 1989), and this process has already started in Shixini.[5]

There are also other factors contributing to the breakdown of the adaptive strategy described above. The boy's youth organization (umsthotsho) has been prohibited from operating by the local chief, due to the occasional injuries (sometimes quite severe) resulting from the stick play and more serious fights that are part and parcel of its meetings. At the same time, local authorities have made attempts to enforce attendance at the government schools, by substantially raising the fine for non-attendance. Although they continue to operate in other parts of Willowvale, the youth organizations have ceased to exist in Shixini. The distinction between boys and young men, which was of crucial significance among reds, has become blurred. For example, both now play as members of the same teams in the football league that has taken the place of umtshotsho and intlombe.

The youth organisations were aptly described by the Mayers as designed for 'socialisation by peers', and functioned as the 'schools of red people' (Mayer and Mayer, 1970). It was at meetings of these groups that Xhosa youth received a good deal of their socialisation into the red way of life. At intlombe especially, great emphasis was placed on the 'law' (umthetho) and much time was spent discussing and debating the right and proper way of doing things.

In previous generations reds did not value formal education very highly (see Mayer 1971), but this too has started to change as more and more semi-skilled and skilled work opportunities have become available to black migrants. At the same time, there have been important changes in the structure of labour migration in southern Africa over the past ten to twenty years. Due to mechanisation on the mines and to the growth of secondary and tertiary industry, contracts have been getting longer and periods at home shorter, as the mining houses and other employers have tried to gain tighter control over their workers and to regulate the length of time that migrants spend both at work and at home. For example, in the mid-1970s 75% of South African workers on the mines were on six month contracts (Crush 1987). Today this type of contract has been phased out and most mining migrants spend at least a year at work, with strict leave regulations allowing them only a few weeks at home if they want to keep their jobs. In Shixini there was considerable resistance to this and there are, as a result, very few mineworkers there. Other forms of employment are in great demand, such as in the west coast fishing industry, and in the large agribusinesses of the Western Cape where there is still a demand for unskilled labour, and which are prepared to tolerate fairly long home absences. But such jobs are scarce, and the number of men able to secure this type of contract has been steadily diminishing.

Overall, the effect of this has been that it is no longer possible for most men to spend long periods at home in between work spells. Employers demand that their migrant employees, especially those doing more skilled work, should be more or less permanently on the job, taking no more than the stipulated annual leave. The high rate of black unemployment that has been a feature of southern African economy over the past decade has meant that migrants are loathe to give up a job (in order to spend some time at home) once one has been secured, because of the difficulty of finding work again.

Finally, the Transkei's 'independence' in 1976 has had the effect of futher impoverishing certain rural areas (Segar 1989). One example of this is the poor planning that goes into betterment schemes, mentioned above. Another has been the failure to maintain agricultural extension services. For example, for a period of approximately six weeks in 1987 the Transkei was without any supply of cattle dip, due to inadequate budgeting. Dip for small stock is no longer available and the result has been severe stock losses in places like Shixini. Factors such as this have led to greater and greater impoverishment in rural areas, and the red way of life, which depends on a degree of agricultural self-sufficiency, is becoming less and less viable. Alternative strategies will have to be sought by people like those in Shixini in the immediate future.

What, one might ask, is the ritualised response to these changes? It is really too early to tell, but a few impressions might point to the kinds of changes that could occur. The rituals associated with labour migration, especially umsindleko, appear to be performed less frequently. This could be because it is difficult to incorporate someone back into the community if he or she is likely to be back for only a short period. There seems to be an increase, on the other hand, in rituals associated with misfortune and illness. Intonjane, in particular, has become more common, but as a ritual of affliction usually performed for adult women, rather than as a puberty rite, which was its earlier role. If the betterment scheme goes ahead, one would expect the ritual stress on neighbourhood to decrease, due to the break up of neighbourhood groups and the greater reliance on other means of getting things done. It is noticeable that in those parts of Shixini where substantial relocation has taken place as a result of the betterment scheme, people rely on tractor hire in order to cultivate, rather than on work parties as in the past. If people find that they have to fall back on kinship as a resource then one would expect this to be reflected in ritual also, but up till now there is little evidence for such a trend.

Notes

1. Fieldwork was conducted in 1976-77, and for short periods annually after that.

2. See McAllister (1980, 1981, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1989).

3. The cultural meaning of a beerdrink thus derives largely from the relationship between the symbols involved in beer drinking and social practice. This does not mean that other characteristics of the symbols (e.g. their polysemic character, their relation to each other, etc.) or other characteristics of beer drinking (e.g. its liminal and anti-structural phases) are not important for an understanding of the whole (see McAllister 1987).

4. The people of Shixini and adjoining areas are historically members of the Gcaleka chiefdom. Hintsa was a famous Gcaleka chief.

5. At present the scheme has only been partly implemented, and its implementation has been suspended pending the consideration of an alternative.

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