

3.5 ELUKHANYWENI

3.5.1 Introduction

Elukhanyweni lies on a hillside in the beautiful Keiskammahoek valley. The area is fertile by local standards, but Elukhanyweni itself is dustland, not a tree, not a blade of green grass, a few withered mealie plants, a few shrivelled cabbages, and row upon row of wooden box houses, counterpoised by row upon row of corrugated iron toilets. A typical closer settlement.

In 1976 the first of 400 families from a number of small reserves near Humansdorp in the Lower Tsitsikama Forest arrived at Elukhanyweni. By all accounts life in the Tsitsikama was preferable. There was arable land for everyone and some local employment opportunities. The people lived in permanent houses. They had strong cultural links with the area and had been there for more than a century.

By contrast, at Elukhanyweni, 'the place of light', they have no land. Earning a living requires long-distance migration. Their homes are untempered, flimsy wooden boxes. They are culturally out of place. They are poorer. Some are starving.

They were resettled as a consequence of a policy of consolidating the bantustans. They resisted and argued, but eventually in the face of guns they capitulated and moved.

For these people resettlement has been a most savage process of proletarianisation. They have emerged, at the end of a brutal experience, as a rightless and landless migrant labour force.

The bitterness and frustration is immense. The depth of demoralization in the community is palpable. They want only one thing, to return.

3.5.2 Before the move

We had a better life.

In the Tsitsikama the people lived as people do in rural reserves. Some left their families to work in the towns, and from time to time returned to rest. Others stayed to farm the land, tried

to squeeze enough to eat from a few morgen .

Yet :

We had fields .

We had work .

We had food .

We had a better life .

HISTORY

The ties of the Tsitsikama people to the land at Humansdorp went back to the sixth frontier war of 1835 . During this conflict between Colonialist and Xhosa, groups of refugees from the wars generated by the expansion of the Zulu state , collectively known as the Mfengu , rose in spontaneous rebellion against the position of inferiority they had come to occupy in Xhosa society and sided with the British . In return they were granted land rights in parts of the Eastern Cape . Some of them , about 2 000 in all , were moved 200 miles westward into the Tsitsikama . There , on a thinly populated inaccessible strip of country between a mountain range and the sea , they settled .

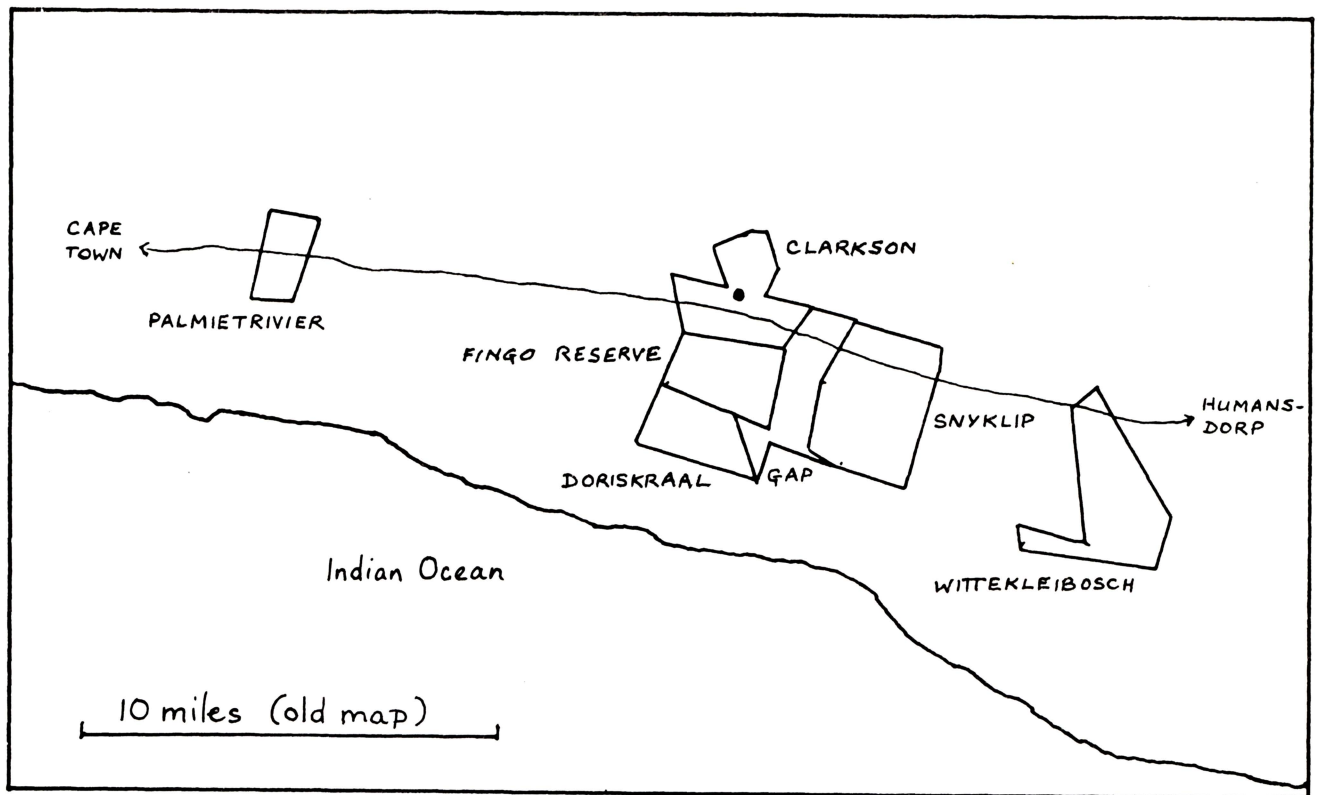
At the request of the Governor , the Moravian Brotherhood established the mission station of Clarkson in the area . The station itself was subsequently turned into a settlement for coloureds from the surrounding district . The Mfengu occupied other bits of mission land , some pieces of crown land and six tracts of land known as Fingo Reserve , Wittelkeibosch , Witelsbos , Snyklip , Doriskraal and Palmietrivier . The latter areas were given reserve status in 1958 . The deeds of registration stated that the land would be held in trust by the State for the descendants of the first settlers .

Under the Natives Land Act of 1913 the six reserves were scheduled for exclusive african occupation . The Act was designed to draw a sharp segregation between the land available for african occupation and the land available to whites . The mines wanted more labour and thus constraints on the land available for expansion to the independent african peasantry were imposed . At the same time they wanted migrants . This called for restrictions to white encroachment on african land so as to preserve the partial subsistence base of the worker in the reserve . The division of the land , while maintaining intact the ties of africans to the reserves , destroyed all hope of economic independence for these areas , and thereby ensured their status as labour reserves .

There was little opposition from local whites to the scheduling of the Tsitsikama reserves for blacks . The farmers 'found them well behaved people' . Furthermore it would seem they did not appropriate agricultural land that white farmers particularly desired . Moreover the reserves served as small generators of labour for the adjacent districts . A steady stream of people , more or less equivalent to the net increase in the population , left the reserves and settled on local white farms or elsewhere in the district as wage labourers . Of those who remained , a small number worked on public construction projects and on farms during peak times .

On the other hand , the inhabitants of the reserves were far from satisfied with the extent of the scheduled areas . Not only had there been pressure on the land from the very beginning , but in the years immediately preceding the Act they had experienced a steady encroachment upon the land at their disposal . In addition , the schedule to the Act ignored certain mission and crown land which was still available to them for grazing purposes . In response the Beaumont Commission , established to review the schedule to the Act , recommended that these lands be released to africans . The quality of the released land was extremely poor and of no use to white farmers .

Map 1 THE RESERVES AT HUMANSDORP



However, these Beaumont recommendations were not enacted until the Natives Trust and Land Act of 1936 was passed. As a result the total land legally available to the community increased 5 700 to 9 741 morgen. The total population was in the region of 1 500. This meant that the average family had 40 morgen of land at its disposal. Although most of this was grazing land, some families cultivated up to 8 morgen.

A unique characteristic of the Cape Province at this stage was the coincidence of a variety of tenure arrangements, often in the same district. The bulk of the Tsitsikama reserve lands were held under tribal or perpetual quitrent tenure. By contrast, in the released areas Trust tenure applied since under the 1936 Act all crown lands in african areas were vested in the Trust. It would seem that hardly any families held their land in freehold.

In 1952 the area was subjected to some aspects of betterment planning. The betterment programme was initiated by the government in the late '30s in an attempt to reclaim and rehabilitate the agricultural land in the reserves. In the main, measures aimed at curbing soil erosion and exhaustion were introduced. Restrictions on the number of livestock and the quantity of cultivated land were imposed. In the Tsitsikama the total amount of arable land was reduced and subdivided into 3-4½ morgen fields. Most households received one field. Measures aimed at stock reduction were also introduced.

AGRICULTURE

On the eve of the move most households still had access to a piece of arable land of approximately 4 morgen. Just about everyone had grazing rights and the grazing area per household came close to 30 morgen. In all this does not amount to much, nevertheless it is considerably

more than the $\frac{3}{4}$ morgen of cultivable and $9\frac{1}{2}$ morgen of grazing land available to the average rural Ciskeian.

The quality of most of the land seems to have been fairly good. The carrying capacity was in the area of 6 hectares per large stock unit, which by average South African standards, and certainly Ciskeian standards, is quite respectable. In its attempts to sell the land recently, the government was asking between R200 and R300 per hectare, which again is indicative of reasonable quality agricultural land.

To this land the Tsitsikama people were intensely attached. In their memories the land, the fields, are permanent. They dwell on it, everyone, obsessively. In their recollections, a refrain of sorts, 'one had fields'. For them, 'without fields there is starvation'.

Even prior to their arrival in the Eastern Cape the Mfengu were enthusiastic cultivators of the land. For more than a century this tradition was maintained in the Tsitsikama:

We grew many things.

We used to get up early to plough our fields.

From the land they derived their food - according to many, enough to satisfy their needs. In part this may reflect a romanticising of the past. The crop yield per morgen in reserve agriculture is in the region of R70 per annum. About a further R30 per family is derived from livestock production. So even if the yield at Humansdorp was 50% higher and even if they cultivated all the available land, both of which are fairly unreasonable assumptions, then the average family in the Tsitsikama would only have derived the equivalent in food of about R600 per annum (R7 per person per month) from agriculture. This is not enough to provide a family of seven with a fully balanced diet, but it will suffice for an adequate supply of carbohydrates and vegetables.

More realistically, we may assume that the per capita return from agriculture was about R5 per month. Not much, but nevertheless a substantial proportion of a subsistence family's food requirements. And very significant to a people who are living in poverty. A sentiment that finds common endorsement:

Starvation, it happens when you don't have fields.

About every household (93%) produced a crop composition that provided the basis for a fairly balanced diet:

Where we came from we grew many things in our fields....

We had fields to grow what we liked and what we needed.

The crop mix typically included maize and potatoes to provide carbohydrates, beans to supply vegetable protein, and two or more of a variety of other vegetables such as cabbages, carrots, onions, tomatoes, peas, pumpkins, sweet potatoes, wheat and beetroot, some of which are rich in vitamins. Some even grew fruit trees.

The extent of the crop range is fairly wide in comparison to subsistence agriculture elsewhere. This suggests a very respectable level of cultivation.

Livestock was common, by reserve standards, even plentiful. The vast majority kept cattle, poultry and pigs. Just under half the families had goats and sheep. At least 25% of the households owned horses. Although the average number of animals owned by each household is not known, most families claim they had many. One family, for instance, owned 1 horse, 7 head of cattle, 20 sheep, pigs and poultry. Another had 20 head of cattle, 27 goats and 2 horses. From their livestock the community derived, albeit variably, supplies of meat, milk and eggs. Hides and wool were also produced.

The level of livestock production seems to have been high in comparative terms. This much can be gleaned from a comparison between the pattern of livestock ownership in the Tsitsikama

and that found by a recent socio-economic survey of the relatively well-off agricultural region of the Amatola Basin:

Table 1 PERCENTAGE OF STOCK-OWNING HOUSEHOLDS

Stock type	Amatola Basin	Tsitsikama reserves
Cattle	60	93
Sheep	14	35
Horses	8	26
Goats	26	41
Pigs	63	76
Poultry	84	85

It is clear from the above table that each kind of animal was owned by a larger proportion of households in the Tsitsikama area than in the Amatola Basin. Moreover, casual evidence suggests that each earning household had more stock in the Tsitsikama.

A surprising number of families (67%) sold a part of their agricultural produce. Some of this was peddled locally to neighbours, some was sold on the market in Humansdorp. A family even claimed that 'we used to get orders for tomatoes from Jo'burg.'

LABOUR

Although agriculture was central to the lives of the people in the Tsitsikama, they could not, and never had, lived by it alone. Many, the percentages are unknown, had to find employment in the formal sector of the economy. Some held jobs, mainly in the service and construction sectors, at Humansdorp. Some laboured on the farms in the district. Some worked for the Department of Forestry on the plantations in the area. Others went to Port Elizabeth where they worked in manufacturing, construction and the services.

Although all these jobs involved some temporary migration, most people returned home on a weekly or monthly basis. Migration over long distances and demanding an absence from home for periods as long as a year or even a shorter time of three months occurred infrequently. Very few, for instance, worked on the mines.

There are no systematic data on the incidence of unemployment in the community at that stage. Casual interviews suggest that jobs were fairly readily available. This is moreover confirmed by a superficial comparison of population and available official employment statistics for the district in the aggregate.

INCOME, POVERTY, NUTRITION

Not much is known about incomes and poverty before the removal. No doubt most people were fairly poor. However, it is clear that on the basis of subsistence agriculture and formal sector employment most households were able to feed, clothe and house themselves adequately.

SERVICES

The houses in the Tsitsikama, though they varied substantially, were on average permanent and relatively high quality brick, soilbrick or wattle and daub structures. Some families owned spacious five to eight bedroomed dwellings, others had three or four rooms at their disposal. Most people, it would seem, were satisfied with housing conditions.

Educational facilities, however, were rather poor. For instance, there was no secondary school within easy commuting distance of the reserves.

We have no information on the quality of the other services to the community. Nevertheless we may safely assume, in view of the relatively developed state of the Humansdorp district, that these were superior to those currently supplied at Elukhanyweni.

CONCLUSION

One can only reiterate that the land, and the security and income it provided, the permanent homes and the familiarity with the local labour market, enabled the Tsitsikama people to lead a dignified, albeit harsh, existence. They had been in the area for generations. They were culturally and economically rooted, as firmly as can be, in the region.

3.5.3 During the move

The Black Administration Act of 1927 provides for the administration of black affairs. It marked a shift in government policy towards enforced retribalisation of the african reserves. Section 5 of the Act deals with the removal of blacks. It empowers the State President to order, subject to the approval of parliament in some cases, the removal of any black community and the excision of any black land from the scheduled or released areas.

On 21 April 1975 a parliamentary select committee on black affairs dealing with homeland consolidation recommended

in terms of the provisions of section 5 of the Bantu Administration Act, 1927 ... the withdrawal of the Bantu tribes, Bantu communities, and Bantu persons residing in the ... District of Humansdorp ... comprising the following properties: Doriskraal Location, Fingo Location, The Gap, Palmietrivier Location, Snyklip Location, Wittekleibosch Location and Witte Els Bosch. (SC 9-75)

On 14 May 1975 these recommendations were adopted by the House of Assembly. On this occasion the Minister of Bantu Administration and Development said:

... it is an historic day today, since today we have come to the last round of the Parliamentary work in connection with what is called the consolidation of the Bantu areas.... There are actually four aspects in connection with this work: In the first place, the definition of the areas within which released areas for the Bantu peoples may be declared; in the second place, the clearing of Bantu freehold land; in the third place, the excision of poorly situated Bantu reserves or parts thereof, and in the fourth place, the attempt to consolidate the scattered areas of the Bantu homelands, by the aforementioned three actions, into single units ... here we have proof of the will of the Government and the National Party to carry out this task of honour actively and to meet the difficult challenge. (Assembly Debates, 14.05.75, our emphasis)