Placing Kangwane in the New South Africa
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PLACING KANGWANE IN THE NEW SOUTH AFRICA*

BRIAN H. KING

ABSTRACT. The South African homelands were central to the apartheid ideology of racial segregation and separate development and as a result became the location for large segments of the African population. Apartheid-era theorizations of the homelands tended to emphasize their importance to the state, with less attention directed to the divergent and unique social formations that often existed within them. Recent geographical research has been intent on evaluating the spatial imprint of these geographies for resident populations, as well as the varied class, gendered, and institutional formations that accompanied the democratic transition. Using a case study from the former KaNgwane homeland, this article examines the diverse ways in which rural households access environmental and economic resources to produce livelihoods. It is argued that a focus on community variation is needed to interrogate the differential encounters of these places with the local politics and development processes that are emerging in the new South Africa. Keywords: apartheid, democratic transition, homelands, KaNgwane, South Africa, tribal authorities.

South Africa’s transition since the 1994 democratic elections continues to be shaped by its unique history. Colonialism and apartheid created social and spatial patterns of segregation that impact the economic, political, and cultural processes emerging in the rural areas. Of particular importance are the former homelands, or bantustans, which were specific areas demarcated by the apartheid government for the African population. The homelands were part of grand apartheid’s vision of racial segregation and separate development and as a result became the central location for many Africans. This article uses a case study from the former KaNgwane homeland to examine the impacts of colonialism and apartheid on rural livelihoods and local perceptions of cultural identity and development in the post-apartheid era. KaNgwane was adjacent to the Transvaal Province, both of which were incorporated into the Mpumalanga Province following the 1994 elections. The study area is located about 300 kilometers east of Pretoria in northeastern South Africa, close to Kruger National Park and the Mozambique and Swaziland borders (Figure 1).

The article first provides a brief history of segregation, with particular attention to the construction of the homelands during apartheid, as well as a review of geographical research on the homelands. Although these territories were effectively abolished prior to the democratic transition, the state’s empowerment of tribal au-

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Fig. 1—Southern Africa (top left), with the study area highlighted; the study area, showing the border of the former homeland of KaNgwane (top right); and the Mzinti community (bottom). Note the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) housing project on the eastern periphery of Mzinti. (Cartography by Manuel Peralvo, Maria Lane, and the author)

authorities, restriction of the majority of the population to a fraction of the landscape, and limitation of movement and production capabilities continues to impact society and space in the post-apartheid era. As recent publications suggest, these factors are largely responsible for the slow pace of land reform and development (Levin and Mkhabela 1997; Ntsebeza 2000; Cousins 2001; Davis 2001; Groenewald 2004; Merten 2004). Much research has concentrated on challenging apartheid-era representations of these spaces as uniform by critically examining
social differentiation from a class, gender, or institutional perspective (see, for example, Pickles and Woods 1992; Weiner, Levin, and Chimere-Dan 1997; Jones 1999; Bob 2001; Rangan and Gilmartin 2002). These studies demonstrate the importance of detailed research in these territories to understand both the lingering impacts of racial segregation and the emergence of new social processes that affect rural residents.

The focus of this article is a case study of the Mzinti community, which is employed to understand the degree of social variation that exists within the former KaNgwane homeland. In particular, two sections of the community have striking variations in livelihood systems, demographic patterns, and attachment to the Matsamo Tribal Authority. The case study demonstrates that historical systems of segregation continue to have symbolic and material meaning within the region, although these meanings are contested and differentially experienced within rural communities. Specifically, it is suggested that the former homelands contain places that are constantly being renegotiated by residents with diverse histories, varying livelihood-production systems, and localized politics. Focusing on local differentiation is therefore necessary to understand the divergent impacts of colonialism and apartheid on rural communities in the post-apartheid era.

**The Homelands in Apartheid South Africa**

The victory of the National Party in the 1948 general elections resulted in the emergence of apartheid policies that reinforced colonial systems of spatial segregation, control of movement and production, and empowerment of traditional governance systems. The Population Registration Act was an early piece of legislation that enforced the classification of the population into four strict racial categories: White, Colored, Indian/Asiatic, and Native (later Bantu or African). As Anthony Butler notes, this classification provided the framework for the social and economic engineering of high apartheid that would follow in the 1960s (2004). The construction of the homelands was essential to this shift and involved the classification of the African population into various ethnic categories that enabled the state to forcibly relocate urban and rural residents. The apartheid government believed that the homelands, which largely comprised the native reserves established by the British, to be the ideal location for independent black development. These territories were based on racist views of African cultural systems and organization that divided the diversity of the African population into separate groups, each with its own distinguishing characteristics. As the South African State Department of Information explained, “the main Bantu–South African peoples constitute a distinctive society desirous of maintaining its separate identity as an established ethno-political unit. . . . The main Black nations exist as distinctly disparate ethnic groups, each with a traditional homeland that serves as the geo-political nucleus of the relevant group’s national development” (1974, 26).

Although the apartheid government asserted that the homelands were ideal for separate development, the geographical organization of these spaces revealed their
true intent: to remove blacks from white areas and to undermine the black population’s capacity for political and economic empowerment. The boundaries of the homelands were superficially constructed around existing settlements and were therefore fragmented and impossible to organize effectively. These territories constituted only 13.7 percent of the country but became central locations for large segments of the population. Roughly 3.5 million people were relocated during apartheid (Unterhalter 1987; Pickles and Woods 1992), and from 1960 to 1980 the proportion of the total black population living in the homelands rose from 39 to 53 percent (Platzky and Walker 1985).4

In order to administer the homelands, the apartheid government extended the British system of utilizing traditional structures to rule. Traditional chiefs were deemed to be the authentic leaders of the African people, and, beginning in the 1950s, steps were taken to establish tribal authority pyramids in the homelands. The initial impulse was to maintain strict control over the traditional authorities. Although they were placed in charge of local governments, they were directly linked to the central government through the Department of Native Affairs, which gave the minister of native affairs direct control. As Lungisile Ntsebeza explains, the minister had the power to depose any chief, cancel the appointment of any councilor, appoint any officer with whatever powers he deemed necessary, control the treasury and budgetary spending, and authorize taxation. As with colonial control, the Department of Native Affairs appointed new, loyal traditional authorities and recognized and created new lineages. The Bantu Laws Amendment Act of 1952 made chiefs and headmen salaried governmental officials, which fueled popular opinion that the tribal authorities were merely appendages of the apartheid government (Ntsebeza 2000).

In the late 1950s the apartheid government shifted its focus to “separate development” and emphasized that the homelands would eventually become independent from the South African state. The South African government report (1955) was particularly important in arguing that segregation was necessary for racial harmony and depended on full-scale development of Bantu areas. The intention was to devolve power from the Department of Native Affairs to the bantustan governments, although they remained funded and directed by the state. In addition to political and economic development, the homelands were predicated on perceptions of cultural identity created by national and local leaders. As Peris Jones argued, “white supremacy was bound up with conferring a semblance of viability upon these peripheral regions. This strategy was promoted on the basis of economic development and also, importantly, the construction of ethnic and political identities within the homelands” (1999, 583). Four homelands—Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda, and Ciskei—were eventually granted independence by the apartheid government, although this was not internationally recognized. The gradual failing of apartheid policy in the 1980s resulted in a lifting of some of its restrictions. In 1986, South African citizenship was restored to the citizens of the formerly independent homelands, which effectively ended the idea of separate development within the country.
The impact of racial segregation on rural communities and regions has been a central theme of scholarship on South Africa prior to, and immediately following, the democratic transition. Geographical research has examined the legacy of the homelands to understand their lingering impacts on rural areas (Pickles 1991; Weiner and Levin 1991; Weiner, Levin and Chimere-Dan 1997; Jones 1999; Bob 2001; Ramut-sindela 2001; Francis 2002; Rangan and Gilmartin 2002; Slater 2002a, 2002b; Twine and others 2003). One theme that has emerged from this research is an interest in countering apartheid-era representations of the homelands as uniform, designed to meet the objectives of the national government. In this view, the homelands were artificial, and their construction resulted solely from the state’s need for capital accumulation through a steady supply of labor (Desmond 1971; Wolpe 1972; Legassick 1974; Legassick and Wolpe 1976; Rogers 1976). John Pickles and Jeff Woods suggested that this perspective was designed to challenge the apartheid regime by attaching racial segregation to the political economy of underdevelopment (1992). The consequence was that the homelands were presented as uniform spaces that experienced change only in response to national processes. “The homelands were viewed as the artificial appendages of a dynamic capitalist core economy: static, undifferentiated, direct outcomes of decisions and actions in the core. Their population was seen as largely homogeneous and, with the exception of the security forces and limited bureaucracy of the puppet leaders, almost entirely opposed to the homeland system” (Pickles and Woods 1992, 631). Although attention was directed to institutional development, economic restructuring, and class formation in the homelands (Innes and O’Meara 1976; Legassick and Wolpe 1976), only a few case studies addressed these issues (Southall 1983; Martiny and Sharp 1984; Bank 1987). Pickles and Woods concluded shortly before the democratic transition that “little attention has been given to the emergence of the homelands as socially differentiated and economically structured geographies” (1992, 631). Similarly, John Pickles and Daniel Weiner argued that the transitional government directed little attention to theorizing rural class formation and contemporary forms of organization that would directly shape the trajectories of land reform and development in the post-apartheid era (1991).

A second theme of geographical scholarship on South Africa has been to examine social differentiation within the former homelands. This arises from the concern that, immediately following the 1994 elections, understanding of social and economic variation within these territories remained limited. In spite of research evaluating the ongoing transformations in these territories (Pickles 1991; Weiner and Levin 1991), rural residents continued to be understood largely as “aspiring urbanites and as latent peasants” (Weiner, Levin and Chimere-Dan 1997, 47). As Daniel Weiner, Richard Levin, and Orijei Chimere-Dan suggested: “At the national scale, the bantustans were, of course, dumping grounds. Agricultural deskilling and off-farm wage dependence were and still are important. Rapid urbanization is also taking place, simultaneously with some smallholder agricultural intensification.
These processes, however, need to be fleshed out with real people and places. Broad generalizations about rural regions within the bantustans and assumptions pertaining to the socio-economic condition of bantustan people are being too loosely employed” (1997, 47).

The representation of the homelands as uniform, coupled with superficial generalizations of rural peoples, has generated interest in local case studies to appreciate the material realities experienced by rural people. As Jones argued, “In recent years such a portrayal of supposedly homogenized social formations of the bantustans has been replaced with a focus upon local variation, social differentiation and the politics of disjuncture and cleavage” (1999, 580). A growing body of research within the former homelands has begun to examine local diversification through livelihood production systems (Francis 2002; McCusker 2002; Slater 2002a, 2002b; Twine and others 2003; King 2004), governance structures (Ramutsindela 2001; King 2005), and gender (Bob 2001; Rangan and Gilmartin 2002). What these studies reveal is that the social processes unfolding in these areas remain uneven and contested. Rural livelihoods, for example, continue to depend on diverse sets of environmental resources and economic employment. Rachel Slater examines livelihood diversification in the former Qwaqwa homeland and shows that residents combine wage labor, pensions, and livestock arrangements to produce livelihoods (2002a). Other studies demonstrate the importance of gender in shaping opportunities for individuals. Urmilla Bob argues that black women in the former KwaZulu and Lebowa homelands experience class, power, and resource access patterns in fundamentally different ways that have implications for the effectiveness of rural development (2001). Research in the former KaNgwane homeland shows differential power dynamics experienced through local tribal authorities, because men are more successful than women in accessing communal space for commercial agriculture or pastoralism. In contrast, female-headed households depend on seasonal wage labor on commercial farms and petty extractive activities as primary sources of income (Rangan and Gilmartin 2002). Although they involve different rural areas, these cases suggest the need for continued examination of the dynamics shaping the former homelands in order to understand local differentiation and social change in the post-apartheid era.

Mzinti Places, Livelihoods, and Governance

The 1994 democratic elections erased the boundaries of the KaNgwane homeland by combining it with Transvaal Province to form Mpumalanga Province. The study area for this article comprises much of the eastern lowlands of Mpumalanga Province, extending south of Kruger National Park, west of Mozambique, and north of Swaziland. Urban and peri-urban areas include Nelspruit, the provincial capital about 60 kilometers west of Kruger, Malelane, and Komatipoort (see Figure 1). Malelane serves as an entry point to the southern end of Kruger; Komatipoort operates as the border gateway to Mozambique. The completion of the N4 highway, a paved toll road that connects Johannesburg to Maputo, Mozambique, has increased
commercial activity within the region and facilitated an expansion of tourism, which national and provincial governments consistently tout as a growth industry. The provincial government has pursued cultural tourism in the region and attempted to use wildlife conservation and other initiatives to stimulate both domestic and international tourism.

The African population is largely concentrated in the township of KaNyamazane near Nelspruit and in former KaNgwane territory along the Swaziland border (Rangan and Gilmartin 2002). A variety of agricultural activities are pursued within the region, including subsistence cultivation and capital-intensive cultivation of fruits, vegetables, and sugarcane. The government has promoted sugarcane growing as a viable activity for rural residents and facilitated it by developing irrigation and providing grants from the Department of Land Affairs and the Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Environment (King 2005). The Mzinti community contains a diversity of livelihood systems, for many households depend on a combination of environmental resources, pastoralism, permanent and temporary employment, pensions, and remittances as sources of income. Because of its proximity to urban areas such as Malelane, the Mzinti community has experienced a growth in population driven in part by migration from neighboring communities. This has placed additional pressure on the natural environment and the ability of local residents to access resources critical for livelihood production. Household livelihoods remain dynamic and change in response to seasonal fluctuations, demographic changes, and external political and economic pressures.

The case study from the former KaNgwane homeland is utilized here as an example of how the geographies of apartheid are being reworked in the post-apartheid era. In order to evaluate local diversification, research was conducted in the Mzinti community in 2001/2002 and June/July 2004. Quantitative and qualitative methods were combined to address household livelihood-production strategies, access to environmental resources, and the role of historical and contemporary governance systems. A structured survey of 478 randomly selected households from the entire community collected information on household demography, migration patterns, livelihood-production systems, and views of the multiple development agencies operating in the region. The survey was supplemented with qualitative data from fifty semistructured interviews with household heads from the Mzinti community that provided details on livelihood-production strategies and the role of diverse governance systems in shaping access to a variety of economic and environmental resources.

The Mzinti community contains two distinct places, whose construction remains rooted in the apartheid and post-apartheid eras. These two locations provided the framework used to examine how livelihood and governance systems are changing in the former KaNgwane homeland. One of the places is the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) housing project, completed in 2001 as part of the national drive to improve the state of housing as identified in the African National Congress (ANC) national election goals. The RDP, drafted by the ANC, the
South African Communist Party, and the Congress of South African Trade Unions, was the guiding policy framework for the democratic transition. In recent years it has been replaced by the Growth, Employment and Redistribution Act (GEAR), which is more neoliberal in its orientation. The RDP was important in articulating a national commitment to rural development and housing. Even though the national government has created housing projects throughout the country, only a few studies have examined the local effects within specific communities (see, for example, Jenkins 1999; Huchzermeyer 2001).

Roughly 1,000 RDP houses in the northeastern periphery of the Mzinti community were built with government subsidies and distributed to the poorest residents of the region (Figure 1). Because of its origin as a government-funded project, the RDP housing differs significantly in appearance from the rest of the Mzinti community. The RDP houses consist of three rooms made of concrete blocks with a metal roof (Figure 2). They have no electricity or sanitation, although there is a standing water pipe at each house.

In comparison to RDP housing, non-RDP housing plots are larger and contain buildings made of concrete blocks, mud and sticks, and grasses. Typically each plot comprises multiple buildings (Figure 3), including traditional-style houses that are circular with thatch-grass roofs and more modern-looking, Western-style houses. Families in this part of the community tend to be larger and multigenerational; hence the multiple structures. Many of these households have electricity, which is not available in the RDP housing section at the present time. Residents of non-RDP housing are more likely to have material amenities, such as cell phones and radios that are purchased with income derived from employment or remittances. They commonly have an enclosure for cattle, or a chicken pen, and a small agricultural plot for growing fruits and vegetables for sale or for domestic consumption.

Based on a variety of historical, demographic, and livelihood factors, the RDP section can be interpreted as a location distinct from the rest of the community. One element that contributes to the construction of the RDP as a separate place is the novelty of the housing project. This contrasts with the rest of the community, which contains many households that have been in Mzinti for decades. The RDP is on the outskirts of the Mzinti community, removed from the center, and its relative proximity to the neighboring community of Tonga helps contribute to its perceived isolation by non-RDP residents. Additionally, the Mzinti RDP is part of a larger project that includes roughly 600 houses in Tonga, only a few kilometers away. The construction of the RDP houses has also significantly contributed to migration into Mzinti. Within the RDP, 80 percent of household heads reported moving to Mzinti from another village, compared with 48 percent in the rest of the community. A large percentage of residents, however, were living only temporarily in their units. It appears that RDP owners are either working in other places and returning to the RDP weekly or monthly or do not possess enough capital to move into the residence permanently. Some RDP residents explained that, although their housing was subsi-
Fig. 2—Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) houses in Mzinti, South Africa. (Photograph by the author, June 2004)

Fig. 3—Traditional houses in Mzinti, South Africa. (Photograph by the author, May 2002)
dized by the government, the costs of purchasing furniture and other household items restricted their ability to move into the unit. Residents of the RDP have migrated from more than twenty villages within the study area. Some have come from locations closer to the Swaziland border, where fewer services and employment opportunities are available than is the case around Mzinti.

In addition to differences in household history and migration patterns, demographic variations exist between the RDP and non-RDP community sections. Household heads in the RDP are generally younger and have received more formal education than those in the rest of the community (Figure 4). Only 12 percent have no formal education, and 43 percent have the equivalent of a U.S. high school diploma. In the rest of the community, 35 percent have no formal education, and only 21 percent have a high school diploma. A number of reasons for these differences in educational training exist. One of the most important factors is the availability of schools for residents: Although Mzinti has several elementary and secondary schools, interviews with older residents revealed that these had not been available when they were children, indicating a close relationship between age and access to education in rural areas. The average respondent age in the RDP is thirty-one, compared with forty-six for the rest of the community, and the average household size is three, reflecting the fact that many of these households are young families. This contrasts with the rest of the community, where the average household size is six, with individuals from multiple generations.
Diverse factors influence the expansion of the community into the RDP houses, which subsequently shapes the social geography of Mzinti. Because of the influx of new residents into the RDP, many individuals in the rest of the community described them as “outsiders” who were drawn to the community for a number of reasons. Specifically, Mzinti’s proximity to more urban locations such as Malelane and Komatipoort has been a pull factor for people from other rural villages. There are seasonal labor opportunities on nearby commercial farms and manufacturing opportunities in Malelane, which is accessible by public transportation. Because Malelane is roughly 40 kilometers from Mzinti, some residents commute daily or weekly for employment. As a lifelong resident of Mzinti explained: “As I am old, I see some changes, like we have people from different places now staying here at Mzinti. The other thing is that the old people of this place are now dead and the dominating people are from outside. . . . Maybe they think they will get a job at Mzinti, and others want to be near the town [Malelane].”

Migration into the RDP from neighboring areas is in direct contrast to the rest of the community: Most people in the non-RDP section have lived in the community all of their life. This contributes to the feeling that this section of the community comprises lifelong Mzinti residents who have personally observed the changes to the community. Older residents have different memories of apartheid and the role of traditional systems in administering the homeland system than do younger community members. Several of these residents indicated that they were forcibly relocated to the Mzinti community prior to, and during, apartheid. As one respondent explained: “I was born on Sibhojwane farm, which is near Malelane. After the death of my father we were chased away by the owner of the farm because he said he wanted only young people who would work on his farm, and specifically only strong people. I was very young at that time, only fourteen years old. Then my family came to Mzinti in 1945.”

Another older member of the community also detailed how his family migrated to Mzinti: “I was born at One Tree Hill and came here in 1932. We were expelled by the white people who were putting their farms where we were staying. They brought many cattle and put them there and chased us away. . . . We first stayed at Vlakbult and they also chased us. Finally, we decided to come and stay here at Mzinti.” Differentiation in household histories and demographic patterns within the Mzinti community help shape the livelihood and development processes unfolding within the former KaNgwane homeland. Residents of the RDP and non-RDP sections of Mzinti pursue varied livelihood strategies that are linked to the political and economic changes that accompanied the democratic transition.

**LIVELIHOODS AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCE USE**

Recent research in rural South Africa demonstrates the continued reliance on environmental resources for livelihood production (Shackleton and Shackleton 2000; Shackleton, Shackleton and Cousins 2000; Francis 2002; Twine and others 2003). These studies document the various resources utilized and their contribution to
household income but focus less on the degree of livelihood variation in specific communities. Using the RDP and non-RDP sections as a framework, Table I documents community variations in the use of environmental resources.

Of the two sections, RDP households are less dependent on environmental resources for livelihood production, for only 31 percent reported collecting wood for fuel and only 15 percent use wood as their primary cooking fuel. This contrasts with the non-RDP section, where nearly two-thirds of the households depend on wood as their primary cooking fuel. Only 7 percent of RDP households grow fruit and vegetables in household gardens, and no households collect medicinal plants, graze livestock, or gather thatch grass. In comparison, households in the non-RDP section of Mzinti are more likely to own cattle, utilize traditional medicine, and grow fruits and vegetables in gardens adjacent to the house. Older residents collect grasses and wood at higher rates than do residents of the RDP, and these resources are often purchased by younger individuals for construction purposes. These differences are largely the result of a disinvestment in environmental resource use for livelihood production and the realities of living within the RDP residential area, where immediate access to land and other resources are more constrained than in the non-RDP section of the community.

Younger residents, particularly those with a high school diploma, commented that they prefer full- or part-time employment, when available, to livestock or agricultural production. As a result, the RDP section of the community has become the site for shifts in community livelihood systems as many of these households express an interest in engaging in formal and informal economic activities. The most common occupations are the selling of fruits and vegetables locally and in nearby markets, tailoring, and security work. Because of the limited number of formal employment opportunities in Mzinti, many residents travel to Malelane and other towns for these jobs. The RDP and non-RDP sections differ measurably in the level of engagement in formal and informal economic activities (Table II). RDP households are more dependent on part-time employment and remittances and are less likely to have access to full-time employment and pension support. This reinforces the selection process of the RDP housing project, for owners were identified by the provincial government as being more economically vulnerable. Although little about the selection of RDP owners is known, given the younger age and higher degree of formal education of those who were selected, the process appears to have been designed to target a specific type of individual for the houses.

In addition to demographic and livelihood variations between the RDP and the rest of the community, generational tension exists between traditional and modern representations of Swazi culture, which plays out specifically in the realm of nature and production. Cattle ownership retains its cultural and material importance to residents, but it is generally the older community members, and only the residents of the non-RDP areas, who keep livestock. This is often due to the expense of obtaining cattle and to younger community members’ uncertainty about the feasibility of investing in livestock. The shift for some of these residents into informal and
Table I—Use of Environmental Resources in RDP and Non-RDP Households in Mzinti, South Africa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESOURCE USE</th>
<th>RDP HOUSEHOLDS (n = 128)</th>
<th>NON-RDP HOUSEHOLDS (n = 350)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cooking fuel</td>
<td>81 (paraffin)</td>
<td>63 (wood)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collecting wood for fuel</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collecting wood for building</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchasing wood</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchasing sand</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collecting thatch grass</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchasing grass</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household gardening</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grazing cattle</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grazing goats</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeding chickens</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collecting medicinal plants</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visiting traditional healers</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table II—Household Income in RDP and Non-RDP Households in Mzinti, South Africa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOURCE OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME (%)</th>
<th>RDP HOUSEHOLDS (n = 128)</th>
<th>NON-RDP HOUSEHOLDS (n = 350)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time job</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time job</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal job</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pension</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remittances</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Formal economic activities translates into a disinvestment in traditional forms of livelihood production. Cattle retain their cultural importance because the bride-price custom is still practiced in the region, although the bride price is increasingly exchanged as currency rather than as livestock. Younger community members are also more likely to speak of livestock in material, rather than cultural, terms. As one resident explained: “This is too African. We can’t separate our culture from the cow even if we want to Westernize. But the thing lives in us most because we want to have functions related to our ancestors. I don’t do that as I have mentioned because I am Christian. Additionally, sometimes when you are in a bad financial situation they can bring a lot of money.” As this resident indicates, the interplay between traditional and modern understandings of cultural and religious identity has implications for the livelihood strategies being pursued in the community. These intracommunity variations impact the governance and development processes emerging within the former KaNgwane homeland, specifically, the role of the traditional authorities and municipalities in shaping access to environmental resources and changing development discourses within the region.
DISCOURSES OF DEVELOPMENT AND GOVERNANCE

Variations between the RDP and non-RDP sections are contributing to the processes shaping cultural identity and development discourses for rural households. The democratic transition is having significant impacts on the micropolitics within the former KaNgwane homeland, as a number of apartheid and post-apartheid organizations are renegotiating patterns of access to environmental resources. Unlike the homelands that declared independence during apartheid, KaNgwane remained an artificial appendage of the white government but was in the vanguard in advocating for the democratic transition (Niekerk 1990). KaNgwane is now part of the Nkomazi Municipality, one of the four that constitute the Ehlanzeni District Municipality. Each local municipality has a municipal mayor who is appointed by the executive council, and a mayor who is elected. The division of KaNgwane into wards, finalized in 2000, attempts to link the councilors with village and land trusts and with the tribal authorities. In recent years the emergence of municipal ward structures has come into direct conflict with the traditional rule by the Matsamo Tribal Authority, which has jurisdiction over the Mzinti community.

Although representatives of the tribal authority serve at the ward level within the municipality, the expansion of democratically elected structures has challenged their position and forced some community members to view them as irrelevant. The general consensus is that they have declined in power in many rural areas since 1994, and their future role is unclear. As the former induna (headman) for Mzinti explained: “During the time of apartheid, most of the oppressors were respecting the tribal authority. . . . The indunas were respected as leaders by the apartheid government but the problem was the community at large was treated badly. . . . What I see now is that people are putting the tribal authority down, as if they don’t play an important role in development.” In continuing to describe the changes since 1994, the induna explained that the ANC was weakening the tribal authority by not giving it the appropriate respect.

The changing role of the tribal authority is linked to local understandings about which structures are appropriate for pursuing development in the rural areas. The traditional role of the tribal authority was to manage communal lands by granting title and access to resources, as well as to settle disputes between residents. The KaNgwane government was designed to oversee the apparatus of development in the homeland but was linked to the chieftaincy. The democratic elections, however, have created new structures and opportunities for development through government that is impacting the ongoing role of the tribal authorities. Members of the community, particularly younger people and residents of the RDP, complained about the decision-making procedures utilized by the tribal authority in executing development projects. One resident complained about the process of land demarcation when the location of his future dress shop was given away:

You know that area is a business area so there was no one occupying any space there. I went to the chief with the induna, then after coming that time he never showed me
The significant communities challenged and resisted apartheid in the Mzinti region, Tribal and other residents believed that the national government and municipal ward system has the greatest potential for effecting change. These views are complex; however, they are shaped by younger residents who identify with the ANC’s role in resisting the apartheid government and moving the country toward democracy. As one younger respondent explained: “I don’t like to stay in a place where it is governed by the induna or kings because you have to pay for almost everything. Like say you want a stand, a place to bring your loved one and many things in fact. I want it to be a civilized area. . . . Recently, one of my brothers passed away and it was difficult for them to show us a place to dig a grave.” This resident was clearly frustrated with the tribal authority and concluded that its influence would have to end because people were not happy with their procedures. In his view, the tribal authority is an impediment to the effectiveness of local government in meeting the needs of the community. Other younger community members spoke of the tribal authority with respect but believed that the national and provincial governments were the preferable systems for managing political and economic change in the rural areas. The migration into the RDP section from other communities contributes to the community divisions about the role of the tribal authority. The high rates of migration to Mzinti from other areas mean that residents of the RDP have less attachment to the Matsamo Tribal Authority and appear more willing to engage with the provincial governing structures. The implications of these changes could be significant throughout the region, as shifting demographic and livelihood patterns in rural communities like Mzinti contribute in reworking governance and development processes in the post-apartheid era.

**Placing the Homelands in the New South Africa**

Colonial and apartheid systems of racial categorization and exclusion have had a significant impact on the geographies of South Africa. Although these systems are changing in the post-apartheid era, they continue to shape the livelihood strategies and governance systems that developed within the former apartheid homelands. The tendency to represent the homelands as uniform geographical spaces has been challenged by various studies that reveal significant social differentiation within rural communities and regions. Rural residents are seeking out emerging political and economic opportunities; however, their effectiveness remains conditioned by the political economy of the homelands as well as the sociocultural systems established
during apartheid. As the Mzinti case study demonstrates, households with different histories, livelihood-production patterns, and access to environmental resources are creating distinct places in the community. The RDP and non-RDP sections are only two community locations, but their divergence reveals an ongoing social transformation within the former KaNgwane homeland.

In addition to the economic and political realities for rural populations, the construction of the homelands resulted in specific governance systems in these locations. The apartheid government extended the British practice of indirect rule and utilized the tribal authorities to manage homeland landscapes and peoples. With the empowerment, and in certain cases creation, of tribal authorities, the homelands reflected and reproduced a specific spatial order that mediated the access and use of environmental resources for resident populations in ways that continue to have symbolic and material meaning for rural households. But apartheid was not uniformly experienced throughout the country. Tribal authorities and homeland leaders engaged with the apartheid state in a myriad of ways that left lasting frameworks that are currently being reworked by a variety of institutions and actors. This suggests that, although colonial and apartheid systems of segregation had similar trajectories across space, the homelands should not be represented as uniform geographical spaces. As the case study demonstrates, residents of the RDP and non-RDP sections have different views on the tribal authority and other processes shaping the region that result in locally specific understandings about the benefits of development within the former places of apartheid.

**Notes**

1. The apartheid era is generally cited as beginning with the 1948 elections, which brought the National Party into power, and ending with the first fully representative elections of 1994. One of the mechanisms utilized by the apartheid state for controlling the homelands was the empowerment of tribal authorities, which tended to be comprised of the chief and his headmen, councilors, and a tribal secretary. The Matsamo Tribal Authority continues to have jurisdiction over several communities in the region and plays a role in shaping land-tenure systems and access to environmental resources in Mzinti.

2. It is difficult to discuss race within South Africa without resorting to the categories utilized prior to, and during, apartheid. The Boers, the descendants of the Dutch settlers of the seventeenth century, broke off into their own cultural grouping. Also known as “Afrikaners,” these settlers migrated east of Cape Town in order to avoid Dutch and British persecution and are distinct from the white Europeans of British origin. Whites were believed to be “pure” descendants of European settlers and were separated from the native or African populations in the country. Even in the new South Africa, whites do not generally refer to themselves as Africans. I use the terms “black” and “African” interchangeably throughout this article. Because of centuries of racial mixing, the colored population represents those of mixed ancestry who are generally descendants of Dutch colonists and slaves from the Western Cape area. Other racial categories, whether Indian or Chinese, were separated from these groups during apartheid and often given more preferential treatment than Africans were, a point that still sparks resentment in the post-apartheid era.

3. William Beinart suggests that Afrikaner views of cultural groupings and the legitimacy of the chieflyancy fit neatly with their unproblematically simple views of their own racial purity (2001).

4. Population estimates during this time are often unreliable because the government willfully downplayed the size of the African population to minimize the perceived negative effects of apartheid. Many scholars agree that the first reliable census was not completed until 2001, the results of which are only gradually becoming available.
5. Although the RDP has been replaced by GEAR, this article refers to the housing project as the “RDP” because that is the term used by community residents.

References


