

Conflict and Collective Violence: Scarce Resources, Social Relations and the State in the Umzinto and the Umbumbulu districts of southern Natal during the 1930s

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IN MEMORY OF OUR LATE

mother, brothers: Boniface, Themba, Christopher, the twins and sister, Ntombikayise.

CONTENTS

Page No.

Acknowledgements		i
List of Abbreviations and Note on the Terminology.		ii
List of Maps		iii
CHAPTER ONE	Introduction.	1
CHAPTER TWO	The economic, political and social conditions of the 1930s.	8
CHAPTER THREE	"The Spilling of Salt": the Dumisa chiefdom and patterns of violence in the Umzinto district during the 1930s.	18
CHAPTER FOUR	Chiefs, Commoners and the State: the Mkhize succession dispute in the Umbumbulu district during the 1930s.	38
CHAPTER FIVE	Conclusion	58
BIBLIOGRAPHY		63

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AG	Attorney General
CNC	Chief Native Commissioner
MNA	Minister for Native Affairs
NAD	Native Affairs Department
NC	Native Commissioner
SAP	South African Police
SNA	Secretary for Native Affairs

NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

During the period studied the terms 'Native' and 'kraal' were widely used. The term 'native' referred to the African section of the population. In this essay the term 'African' is used in its place as it seems to be the least objectionable; where appropriate the archaic term 'native' is retained. The term 'kraal' is problematic in that it does not distinguish between the human dwelling, **indlu**, and the enclosure for the livestock, **isibaya**. Although the term 'homestead' appears to be less problematic the Zulu term **umuzi/imizi** is used in this essay, as it seems to be the appropriate term. **Inxuluma** refers to chiefs' homesteads, **imizi yamakhosi**.

LIST OF MAPS

Page No.

Map 1. The Umzinto and the Umbumbulu districts c. 1989. (The boundaries are relatively the same as in the 1930s)	1a
Map 2. The 1914 NAD boundary between the Dumisa and the abaMbo chiefdoms.	22a
Map 3. The 1925 NAD land allocation to the Mabheleni and the Zembeni chiefdoms.	23a
Map 4. The 1930, 1931 and 1934 NAD territory allocations to Nkasa and Timuni.	42a

Chapter One

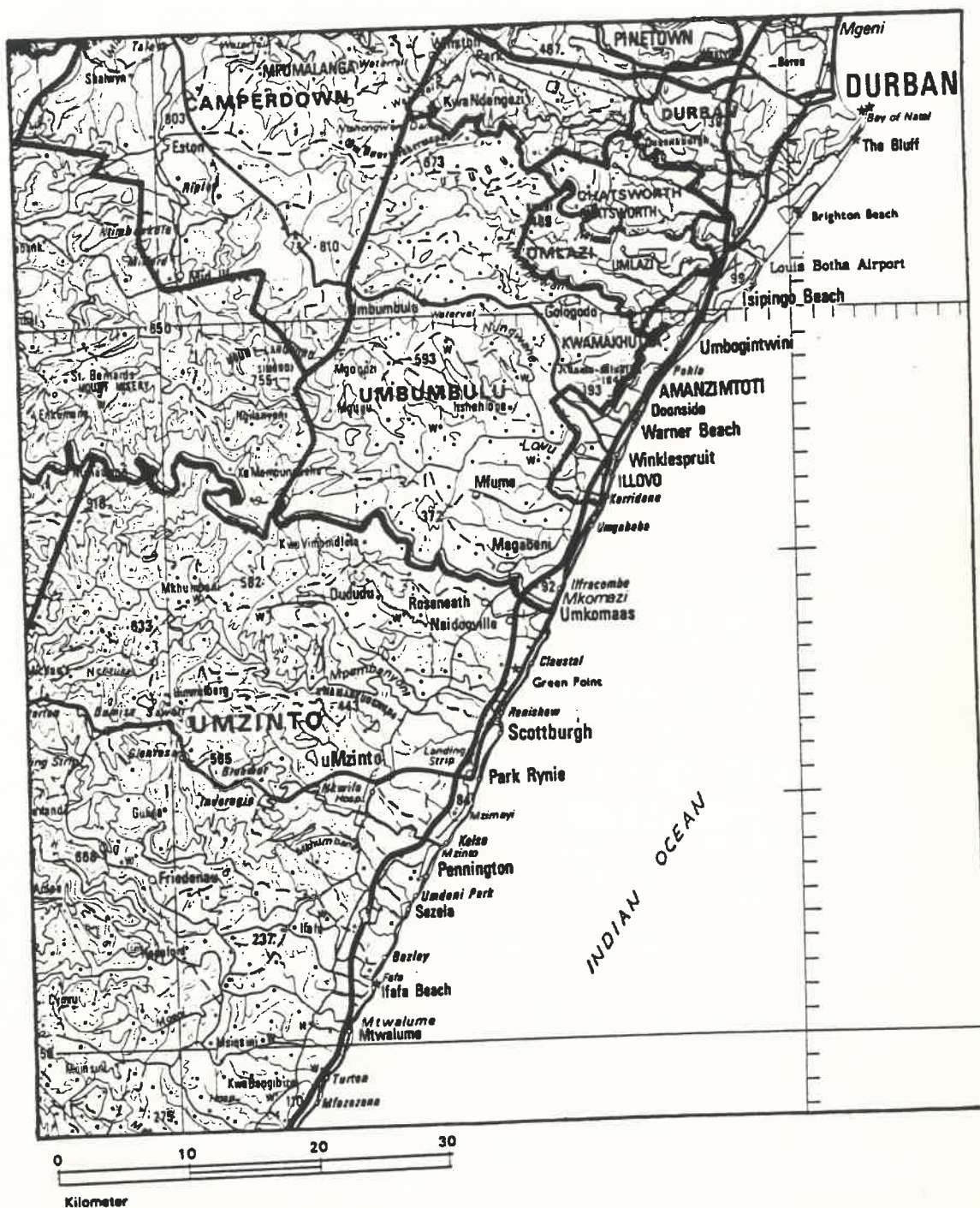
Introduction

A series of fights involving large groups of men broke out between and within the African chiefdoms in the Umzinto and the Umbumbulu districts of southern Natal during the 1930s. (See Map 1). Two case studies have been chosen to explore the nature of these conflicts. The Umzinto case study deals with a complex set of conflicts during the first half of the 1930s between the Dumisa chiefdom, on the one hand, and the chiefdoms of abaMbo, Mabheleni, Madungeni and eZembeni on the other.¹ Fighting in the Umzinto district reflected a wide variety of causes and contexts, although land disputes were a common thread. The Umbumbulu case study covers the period 1932 - 1939 and deals with the dispute over succession to the Mkhize chieftaincy within the abaMbo chiefdom.²

The aim of this study is to challenge the use of popular and entrenched notions such as 'faction fighting' and 'tribal disturbances' to explain conflict and violence amongst rural Africans. It seems clear that while most public violence stems from conflict, not all conflict results in violence. The study will, therefore, try to work out what exactly precipitated going beyond the peaceful resolution of conflict in the Umzinto and the Umbumbulu communities. It will be necessary to examine the specific material and political contexts in which conflicts

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1. Natal Archives (NA), Chief Native Commissioner (CNC), Volumes (Vols.), 74A, 78A, 83A, 89A, 90A, 91A, 95A, 107A, 133 and 315.
 2. NA, CNC, Vols. 77A, 89A, 90A, 91A, 92A and 104A; D.H. Reader, Zulu Tribe in Transition, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1966), pp. 24 - 27. The Mkhize chiefdoms in Natal and Zululand were known as the abaMbo - see E.H. Brookes and N.Hurwitz, Natal Native Reserves, (Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1957), pp. 18 - 21.

Map 1. The Umzinto and the Umbumbulu districts c. 1989. (The boundaries are relatively the same as in the 1930s)



originated and intensified. The major actors will be identified and attempts will be made to establish why they played certain roles in these conflicts.

The study is divided into the following components. The first chapter outlines the essential ideas of the notions of 'faction fighting' and 'tribalism', tracing their origins in the colonial period. The works which have been useful in dealing with this topic are discussed briefly. The second chapter is concerned with setting the broad social, political and economic context for the two case studies. The third and the fourth chapters examine the Umzinto and the Umbumbulu conflicts, respectively. In each case an attempt is made to explore the complex interaction between social, political and economic tensions; and the use of violence as a political strategy. The conclusion will include a brief comparative analysis of the conflicts in the two districts.

Going Beyond 'Faction Fighting'

The terms 'faction fighting' and 'tribalism' were colonial constructs which were popularised and legitimized by colonial anthropology in Africa.³ The term 'tribe' which began as a colonial designation was extensively used by the settler rulers to explain the reactions of the African people to adverse conditions which were created by colonial conquest and subjugation. The African people were described in derogatory terms such as 'savage' and 'primitive'. They were presented as people who had an innate love for fighting and public violence. The white settler rulers had an extra-ordinary capacity to invert causation for a

3. P. Ekeh, 'Social Anthropology and two contrasting uses of tribalism in Africa', Comparative Studies in Society and History, Volume 32, (1990), pp. 660-700.

whole range of social phenomena, including violence.

"The conquered, more particularly African societies, were presented as intrinsically violent and barbarous; the conquerors, who had of course usually been the original invaders - and introduced more destructive weaponry - were conjured as essentially peaceful" ⁴

This line of thinking was imbued in both the metropolitan and the settler audience in South Africa with considerable success. It remains a deep rooted colonial legacy even today. For instance, if there is conflict within the African population, no matter what form it takes, it is readily attributed to tribal hostilities or rivalries.

There are problems with the use of the notions of 'faction fighting' and 'tribal disturbances' to explain conflict and violence in African society. Such terms are not helpful in explaining the context in which conflict originated and intensified. They do not help us to understand the group identities which emerged in the conditions of conflict. They only tell us that people were embroiled in fierce fighting. Surely we need more nuanced and systematic explanations? We will draw on a range of literature which attempts to go beyond superficial terms like 'faction fighting'.

Phimister and van Onselen's study of ethnic conflict in Bulawayo in 1929 provides a starting point.⁵ Their study took into account the material and the social contexts in which conflict

4. W. Beinart, 'Violence and Masculinity in southern African Historiography', (Unpublished Paper to Conference on Violence in southern African Historiography, Oxford, 1991), p. 4.

5. I. Phimister and C. van Onselen, 'The Political Economy of Tribal Animosity', Journal of Southern African Studies, Vol.6, No.1, (October 1979), pp. 1-43.

originated. They conclude that the ethnic identities which emerged at Bulawayo were a means of expressing conflict over scarce resources. Clegg, in a study of conflict in Mpofana and Msinga locations in Natal, identified socialisation as the major phenomenon which shaped the nature of the territorially based group identities which emerged in those locations.⁶ He also noted that chiefs could not stop violence in their chiefdoms because it deteriorated into a feud and because their authority was reduced under the colonial system.

Minnaar's study on conflict and violence in Natal and Zululand concludes that the long history of conflict in the region gave rise to a mentality (ethos) of 'faction fighting' as an expression of violence.⁷ He suggests that this mentality was firmly ingrained in the African population of Natal.⁸ Beinart has suggested that the terms 'faction fighting' and 'tribalism' were colonial constructs which are inadequate for analysing rural conflict and violence.⁹ His work has been helpful in stressing that violence within the colonised African population should not be attributed only to forces outside these communities. He argues that while conflict in the African communities was "shaped and sometimes intensified by the impact of external forces such as colonial conquest and economic incorporation" into the capitalist economy, some forces internal to the rural African polities contributed to the origins of conflict and the outbreak of violence.¹⁰ He suggests that although the assimilation of the chiefs into the native administration reduced their authority and prevented the overt use of

6. J. Clegg, 'Ukubuyisa Isidumbu - "Bringing Back the Body"', in P. Bonner (ed.), Working Papers in Southern African Studies, (hereafter cited as W.P.S.A.S), Volume 2, (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1981) pp. 164-194.

7. A.de V. Minnaar, Conflict and Violence in Natal and Zululand: Historical Perspectives, (Pretoria, Human Sciences Research Council (hereafter cited as HSRC), 1990), p. 94.

8. Ibid. p.94.

9. W.Beinart, 'Violence and Masculinity in southern African Historiography', p. 1.

10. Ibid. p. 15.

violence as a political strategy, chiefs continued to explore other ways exercising limited authority, sometimes through the use of violence.

Crummey has argued that while people have the capacity for outrage and may resort to bloody violence, their outrage should be seen in the light of other kinds of protests and politics.¹¹ The real challenge, he suggests, is to see violence within its social setting; and to appreciate its roots in social conflict and understand how and why the people turn to it. Hobsbawm portrays social banditry as a form of protest that was common in times of rapid social change when "the jaws of the dynamic modern world seized the static communities in order to destroy and transform them".¹² This phenomenon was also endemic in times of abnormal hardships such as famine and war. He suggests that the development of social banditry reflected the differing conceptions of law, legitimate authority and acceptable collective behaviour between a colonising state and newly colonised people. Social banditry became a modest and a non-revolutionary form of social protest in which the conquered people challenged the power of the state, though not confronting it, but reaching for alternative forms of authority and power. In this process they shielded the bandits from the state's law.

Skalnik has portrayed 'tribalism' as the process whereby people use the 'tribal' idiom to mobilise group loyalties in situations of competition and rapid social change. He also argues that the history of southern African 'tribes' was one of rapid change in which smaller

11. D.Crummey (ed.), Banditry, Rebellion and Social Protest in Africa, (London, James Currey, 1986), pp.1 - 3.

12. E.J.Hobsbawm, Primitive Rebels, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1978), p. 24.

chiefdoms were assimilated into bigger polities through conquest and incorporation.¹³ The significant point in Skalnik's work is the emphasis on the dynamism and versatility of the African communities, as opposed to the rigidity implied in the term 'tribe'.

What insights can we draw from these works? This discussion has highlighted a number of common themes which will inform our approach in this study. The conditions in which conflict originated and intensified in the Umzinto and the Umbumbulu districts will be analyzed. We will examine the extent to which scarce resources pushed the long standing conflicts within these communities into violence.

The major actors in the conflicts will be identified. It will be necessary to establish why the colonial officials were keen to use the notion of 'tribe', especially in the 1930s, and why there were a range of actors who were willing to operate within this political and cultural framework. We will attempt to work out why chiefs and izinduna found it easier to use violence as political strategy at certain times and not at other times. The study will examine the nature of resistance to state intervention in rural African politics; and work out if this resistance did assume any features of social banditry.

The study will explore the extent to which socialisation contributed to the formation of group identities and the symbols which were created to define the lines of conflict between these groups. It will also try to find the aspects of the past which were touched upon to invoke male prowess and aggression. Let us set the scene for two case studies which follow by

13. Peter Skalnik, "Tribe" as colonial category', in E. Boonzaier and J. Sharp (eds.), South African Keywords, (Cape Town, David Philip, 1988), pp. 74-75.

outlining the broad social, political and economic context of the 1930s.

Chapter Two

The Economic, Political and the Social conditions of the 1930s

Acute shortage of land led to the intensification of conflict in Natal's reserves during the 1930s. The economic potential of the reserves to support their population was further undermined by a sequence of natural disasters, such as drought, malaria epidemics and locusts, that hit them at a time when they were subject to increased disintegration. The deepening crisis was hastened by the Great Depression of 1929-1932. There was an influx into the reserves of retrenched workers from the urban centres and of evicted labour tenants from the commercializing farms. These developments gave rise to conditions of intense conflict and rivalry over diminishing resources.

The main concern of this chapter is to outline the broad context in which conflict and violence broke out during the 1930s between the Dumisa chiefdom and its neighbouring chiefdoms in the Umzinto district, and within the abaMbo chiefdom in the Umbumbulu district. Both these districts fell within reserve areas located south of Durban. The chapter seeks to conduct a brief analysis of reserve society in the context of industrialisation, urbanisation and migrant labour. It will also try to understand how the officials at the various levels of the native administration, the chiefs and the commoners responded to the increasing social pressures and the deepening crisis in the reserves.

Natal's Reserves in the Context of the Changing Political Economy

The Natal reserves were established in the middle of the 19th century as a feature of the colonial land and labour policy. They were based on the recommendations of the 1846/1847 Locations Commission which demarcated African reserve areas and locations.¹ They later became political and administrative control mechanisms for Natal. The African people were ruled through a hierarchy of command from the central government officials, through the resident magistrates and the native commissioners to the various levels of chiefs and izinduna. The hierarchy had the Governor General (the supreme chief) at the apex, and the chieftaincies were adapted to the needs of the colonial administration. Chiefs became petty judicial officers who performed their duties on behalf of the supreme chief and the government. They allocated land to their followers and served as the symbols of patriarchal authority based on the homesteads. Natal was well known for its success in establishing this reserve system.

By the 1930s the reserves were extensively incorporated into the regional economy, especially as suppliers of male migrant labour. The outbreak of the First World War stimulated the process of industrialisation and a high demand for wage labour in Natal's towns, especially Durban. Evidence of the growth rate in Durban could be seen in the increase in employment in the manufacturing industry. Between 1924 and 1940, although with a slight decline in 1929/30, the employment figures increased from 43 561 to 65 070.²

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1. D. Welsh, The Roots of Segregation, (Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 7-15; and R.H.Smith, 'The Labour Resources of Natal', (Unpublished M.Comm Thesis, University of Witwatersrand, 1945), pp. 119-130.
 2. C.Kelly, 'Durban's Industrialisation and the Life and Labour of the Black workers 1920 - 1950', (Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Natal, Durban, 1989), p. 12.

The Umzinto and the Umbumbulu districts, alongside other districts which lay within a radius of 40 kilometres from Durban, supplied a very high proportion of these workers.³ Even lesser centres such as Pietermaritzburg were in constant demand for labour.

The proximity of the two districts to urban centres such as Durban encouraged the phenomenon of migrant labour. The newly employed workers in Durban were kept as migrants through the compounds and hostels policies. Migrant labour had elements of choice and coercion during its early days in South Africa. Walker says 'the origins of migrant labour were rooted in the processes and relationships that were largely internal to the labour exporting societies'.⁴ Chiefs and elders encouraged young men to join the migrant labour system in the hope of obtaining guns, hoes and to save money which could be invested in bride wealth. Walker has argued that:

"by the beginning of the twentieth century the relative autonomy that had characterised African participation in migrant labour, previously, no longer operated; the balance of power had shifted decisively to capital and the new South African state."⁵

Her views have been challenged by Kelly. Writing about Durban's labour market in the first half of the twentieth century, he argues that migrant workers still had general access to the means of production in the rural areas. These means of production provided them with some capacity to resist total subordination to capitalist work processes; and enabled workers

3. Ibid. p. 21.

4. C. Walker, 'Gender and the development of the migrant labour system c.1850 - 1930: An Overview', in C. Walker (ed.), Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945, Cape Town, David Philip, 1990), p. 173.

5. Ibid. p. 175.

themselves to determine whether or not to participate in wage labour.⁶ Smith argues that by the 1920s the reserves close to Durban were experiencing particularly high levels of oscillating labour.⁷ In the light of these views it seems accurate to suggest that some reserve areas reached more intensive levels of crisis than others, with differential pressures on migrants. By the 1930s labour migrancy had become a dominant force in the social and economic life of the rural periphery in southern Africa.⁸

The reserve economies were crippled as growing numbers of energetic young men were drawn into wage labour. Although the absence of menfolk from the reserves was increasingly marked, the problem of overcrowding never subsided. This was largely because the boundaries of the reserves stayed the same as in the 19th century despite the rapid increase in population densities. For example, between 1916 and 1936 there was a 54% increase in Natal's reserve population.⁹ These economies had to contend with additional strains when there was an influx of evicted farm tenants from the commercializing farms in the 1920s and during the 1929/30 Great Depression.¹⁰ The official records suggest that the region's reserves were beginning to reach new crisis levels of landlessness, poverty and social tension by the 1930s.

Hastening the longer term impact of industrialisation and population growth were a series of

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6. C. Kelly, 'Durban's Industrialisation and the Life and Labour of the Black Workers, 1920 - 1950', p. 54.
 7. R.H. Smith, 'Labour Resources of Natal: Study of Population and Employment', chap. 7.
 8. C. Walker, 'Gender and the development of the migrant labour system c. 1850-1930', p.176.
 9. E.H. Brookes and N. Hurwitz, The Native Reserves of Natal, Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1957, p. 63.
 10. H. Bradford, A Taste of Freedom: The ICU in rural South Africa 1924 - 30, Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1988, chap. 2.

intense pressures in the form of drought, malaria epidemics and locusts. As we will be able to show in the case studies, alarming conditions of famine were reported almost simultaneously as the incidents of violence in the Umzinto district. Malaria epidemics were also reported during the 1930 - 1932 seasons in the same district.¹¹ The Umbumbulu district was stalked by locusts in the early 1930s and soil erosion was reported in both districts. The Native Affairs Department (hereafter cited as NAD) began to design plans to contain rural disintegration, and to avert the deepening social and economic crisis caused by industrialisation and the natural disasters. One of the NAD's responses was the retribalisation policy.

Natal's Retribalisation Policies as a response to urbanisation and the deepening crisis in the reserves.

Retribalisation, enshrined in the 1927 Native Administrative Act, was a national social and political initiative that was designed to shore up South Africa's 'tribal' order in the context of urbanisation and class based resistance politics. The clearest expression of the retribalisation initiatives was the formation of a tripartite alliance in the early 1930s by the Chief Native Commissioner (hereafter cited as CNC) H.C. Lugg, the region's most prominent kholwa (Christian convert) politician J.L. Dube, and the Zulu regent Mshiyeni.¹² Although this alliance was essentially an elitist project it carried many implications for the chiefs and the commoners in the local areas. It

11. J.B. Brain, 'But Only Black Men Die: The 1929 - 1933 Malaria Epidemics in Natal and Zululand,' (Unpublished Paper to Workshop on Natal during the Union period, University of Natal, October 1988), pp. 5-16.

12. T.A. Nuttall, 'Class, Race and Nation: African Politics in Durban, 1929-1949', (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Oxford, 1991), pp. 126-127 and 246.

was nonetheless contradictory and loose in that each party had different objectives.

The officials of native administration in Natal embraced these initiatives with alacrity, seeking to perpetuate the long established 'tribal' administration in the region. The underlying goal for this was to exert control over the African people in the reserves and also to contain the process of urbanisation. The officials did this by developing patronage relations with the different chiefs. Some chiefs had their authority strengthened while others were continually alienated by the NAD's decisions and policies. This form of state intervention usually intensified the level of conflict between the various chiefdoms.

The most significant development in these retribalisation initiatives was that Lugg was even willing to reverse the long standing official hostility in Natal to the Zulu royal family; and to move towards the recognition of the Zulu regent, Mshiyeni, as a paramount chief.¹³ This created new political openings for the intelligentsia and the chiefs clustered around Dube and Inkatha. As the case studies will show, the deepening crises of the reserve economies, and the policies of retribalisation, created a state of flux and uncertainty in which officials, chiefs and commoners played out a range of roles.

Officials, Chiefs and the Commoners at the local level in the 1930s

In the context of increasing social pressures caused by landlessness, poverty and migrancy, and of the politics of retribalisation and Zulu ethnicity, what was happening at the local level? There were numerous occasions of disagreement within the native administration over

13. T.A. Nuttall, 'Class, Race and Nation: African Politics in Durban, 1929 - 1949', pp. 126 - 127.

tactics to contain conflict and crisis in the reserves. Disagreements were common between the provincial officials of the Native Affairs Department and the local officials, and between the NAD officials and the South African Police. One example was the fate of the six Dumisa kraals which lay on the land that had been granted to the abaMbo chiefdom in the Umzinto district. While the local native commissioner was keen to explore a variety of methods to avert the ensuing conflict amicably, the Chief Native Commissioner then, N.W. Pringle, adopted a belligerent approach to the issue.¹⁴ In another case, Lugg regarded Chief Zembe as a trustworthy chief and Nkasa as a more reliable chief than Timuni, the police complained of Zembe's unsatisfactory conduct,¹⁵ and were impressed with Timuni's cooperative conduct during their investigations.¹⁶ These disagreements reflected the fluidity of political and social tensions, and shed some light on why chiefs made every effort to find favour with the officials of the native administration.

Chiefs were jostling for positions and identity in both the Umzinto and the Umbumbulu districts. Most tended to show absolute loyalty to the state in the hope of an increase in their authority and powers. Since the officials were aware of the increased dependency of chiefs on the state for their survival, they tended to limit the authority of the chiefs who were disloyal. The persistent clashes between the NAD and Chief Jack Duma could be explained as efforts by the state to strike some equilibrium in the Umzinto district, creating conditions for NAD hegemony to be firmly entrenched. Although some chiefs were alienated by the actions of the state they seldom defied the officials openly. Instead chiefs began to delegate,

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14. NA, CNC, Volume (hereafter cited as vol.) 133, File No. 1329 - A 491/13/16, NC Umzinto to CNC, 20 June 1931 and CNC to NC Umzinto, 15 July 1931.
 15. NA, CNC, Vol. 78A, File No. 57/269 N1/1/3(43), Lugg to Heaton (NC Umzinto), 9 December 1935.
 16. NA, CNC, Vol. 89A, File No.63/2/37 N1/9/2(x), Lugg to SNA, 17 October 1934.

secretly, the responsibility for the pursuit of violence as a political strategy to their trusted generals and izinduna. The pattern which developed was that fighting frequently broke out between the various chiefdoms while chiefs declared themselves innocent. It was a frustrating development for the NAD officials. For example, Lugg complained on a number of occasions that he could not find any incriminating evidence against Nkasa and Timuni, the two key protagonists in the Mkhize succession dispute in the Umbumbulu district.¹⁷ Through this, chiefs were exploring other alternatives of playing off their people's conventions against the laws of the state. The identities which chiefs jostled for cannot be discussed separately from the identities of the commoners.

Labour migrancy increased strains on the social relations within the homesteads. Walker describes migrant labour as a source of immense profits for a few and immense hardships for many.¹⁸ Migrant labour disrupted family life and undermined the institution of marriage within the African communities because some women began to apply for divorce and others gained new autonomy as de facto heads of the homesteads. The onerous responsibility for food production in the increasingly adverse conditions of the 1930s fell heavily on women. In these conditions of social dislocation and uncertainty men turned to chiefs for security. Chiefs were regarded as symbols of patriarchal authority in the reserves during the men's stay in the urban centres. They pledged their loyalty to them and even turned up in huge numbers when their chiefs convened meetings. This created more opportunities for the development of territorially based solidarity groups and ethnic identities

17. NA, CNC, Vol. 89A, File No. 63/2/37 N 1/9/2(x), Lugg to SNA, 3 September 1934.

18. C. Walker, 'Gender and the development of the migrant labour system c.1850 - 1930: An Overview', p. 168.

during the 1930s.¹⁹ These conditions created new possibilities for the mobilisation of men into combat groups when fighting broke out.

The group identities which emerged in these districts in the contexts of conflict were centred around chiefs. They seldom fed into the broader Zulu ethnic identity which was being fashioned at the provincial level in new ways during the 1930s. Local symbols and histories were more important than regional ones. While commoners were actively involved in the creation of these group identities, chiefs were also asserting themselves as the legitimate leaders of such groups. For example, in 1936-7 chief Timuni Mkhize of the Umbumbulu district and Chief Zembe of the Umzinto district claimed to be expressing condolences and loyalty on behalf of their subjects on the death of King George V and during the coronation of King George VI.²⁰ Dumisa ethnicity was also centred around the Dumisa chieftaincy. These ethnic identities intensified in the desperate conditions of the early 1930s.

Conclusion

This chapter has endeavoured to outline the broad context for the case studies which follow. It has been suggested that there were increasing possibilities for political and social conflict in Natal's reserves. Industrialisation, migrant labour and population growth intensified social dislocation and landlessness within the reserves. The sequence of natural disasters hastened the misery.

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19. L. Vail (ed.), *The Creation of Tribalism in southern Africa*, London, James Currey, pp. 14 - 15; and S. Marks, 'Patriotism, Patriarchy and Purity: Natal and the Politics of Zulu Ethnic Consciousness', in L. Vail (ed.), *The Creation of Tribalism in southern Africa*, pp. 215-234.
20. NA, CNC, Vol.107A, File Nos. 90/34 N 1/11/2, NC: Pinetown to CNC, 1 April 1936 and 90/38 N 1/11/2, The Native celebrations of the coronation, 1937.

The chapter also showed that the retribalisation initiatives created new political openings for the different groups in the reserves, creating possibilities for conflict and rivalry to intensify. The social uncertainty caused by the migrant labour system made the position of chiefs more important to men. In turn this created opportunities for the development of ethnic identities which were used to express differences and to better group claims to land and authority during the 1930s. Despite all the adverse conditions which characterised reserve life it was not self evident that those social and political conflicts should assume a violent expression. The next two case studies will try to explore the complex interaction between social and political tensions; and to show how, within this, violence could be used as a political strategy.

Chapter Three

'The Spilling of Salt: the Dumisa Chiefdom and Patterns of Violence in the Umzinto District during the early 1930s'

Several fights broke out between the Dumisa chiefdom, on the one hand, and the chiefdoms of abaMbo, Mabheleni, Madungeni and Zembeni, on the other, during the first half of the 1930s. The state contributed a great deal to these conflicts by allocating the Dumisa lands to other chiefdoms and by supporting the chieftaincies that were involved in disputes with the Dumisa people. A strong defensive and aggressive ethnicity developed within the Dumisa chiefdom as a response to the adverse conditions which confronted its people.

This chapter will show that the contexts in which conflicts originated were complex. The long roots of conflict will be traced, and the role of the state in creating conditions for conflict will be outlined. The chapter will examine how the material crisis conditions of the early 1930s pushed the long standing conflict into violence. The use of violence as a political strategy by the chiefs and izinduna will be analyzed and the major actors in the incidents of violence will be identified. We will also try to understand how socialisation and the group identities which emerged in these communities helped to draw lines of conflict between groups; and why fighting appeared to have subsided after the death of Jack Duma in 1935.

Chronological Overview

The first arena of conflict was the fighting between the Dumisa and the abaMbo chiefdoms which broke out in December 1930. This fighting involved the Dumisa people who were residing in the territory that was ceded by the NAD to the Mkhize chieftaincy in 1914. One person was fatally wounded and several other men were critically injured in that fighting. In July 1931 the native commissioner for Umzinto district reported that the Dumisa people were threatening more violence.¹

The second arena of conflict was provided by the fights between the Dumisa and the Mabheleni chiefdoms in October 1932 and in July 1933. These incidents of collective violence took place on the Crown Lands farm, 'Mount McAndrew' and in the Mkunya and Bhewula locations. Six men died from assegai wounds, 65 others were injured, 19 imizi were set on fire, cattle were stabbed and property was destroyed during the first fighting in 1932.² In the second fight, which was precipitated by allegations of stock theft, many imizi were burned down and several men were injured. While land disputes provided the basis for this conflict, cattle raids characterised this violence. Chief Duma's subjects named Mcitshwa, Mpakama, Myenga and Samson precipitated this fighting when they attacked chief Mbhele's subject named Ntelezi on 14 of July 1933. Ntelezi and other Mabheleni men retaliated by setting Mcitshwa's hut on fire during the night of Saturday, 15 July 1933. They also raided the Zembeni section of Bhewula location; during this attack they confiscated 26

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1. NA, CNC, Vol.133, File No.1329/13 - A 491/13/16, Native commissioner (hereafter cited as NC) for Umzinto to CNC, 8 December 1930 and 15 July 1931; Dumisa was a collective name for the chiefdom and it was named after one of its late chiefs, Dumisa Duma. The chieftaincy is held by the Duma chiefs.
 2. NA, CNC, Vol. 89A, File No. 63/2 N1/9/2(x), South African Police (SAP), Idududu to N.C. for Umzinto, 3 November 1932.

head of cattle belonging to chief Zembe's subjects named Gemaso Mzobe and Makadeni Gumede.³ Only 13 head of cattle were discovered later.

The third arena of conflict was the fight between the Dumisa and the Madungeni chiefdoms in January 1933. This fierce fighting was started by chief Chiliza's son's act of aggression towards a Dumisa woman, which became a symbolic offence against the Dumisa people. Pitched battles were fought near the Hlokozi forest where two people were killed and many others were wounded. At Ngayi 40 huts were set alight. Two huts of the Madungeni people were destroyed on 25 January 1933. The next day the Dumisa warriors launched a decisive raid on the Madungeni territory. A total of 27 huts, including chief Chiliza's own inxuluma were razed to the ground. The Madungeni men were forced to flee in the direction of the Umtwalumi River late that afternoon.⁴

The final arena of conflict examined in this chapter was provided by the fighting between the Dumisa and the Zembeni chiefdoms in August 1935. This fighting broke out at the portion of the Crown Lands where the imizi of the Dumisa and the Zembeni people were mixed; and also on the Crown Lands farm 'Mount McAndrew' where a number of the Dumisa imizi were situated in the Zembeni portion of the Bhowula location.⁵ Trouble began on 13 August 1935 when chief Duma's subject named Mkibe Hlengwa was assaulted by the Zembeni men.

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3. NA, CNC, Vol. 74A, File Nos. 57/156 N1/9/2(43) 'Communal Responsibility' and 57/269 N1/1/3(43), SAP - Idududu to N.C. for Umzinto, 20 July 1933; CNC, Vol. 89A, File No. 63/2 N1/9/2(x), SAP - Idududu to N.C. for Umzinto, 15 November 1933. Mzobe and Gumede were some of the Dumisa commoners who were incorporated into the Zembeni chiefdom in 1925.
 4. NA, CNC, Vol. 89A, File No. 63/2A N1/9/2(x), NC for Umzinto to CNC, 31 January 1933; SAP - Sawoti to SAP Commandant - Ixopo, 1 February 1933; Natal Mercury, 30 January 1933; Rand Daily Mail, 30 and 31 January 1933. Madungeni, like Dumisa, was also a collective name for the chiefdom. Its chieftaincy was held by the Chiliza family.
 5. NA, CNC, Vol. 90A, File No. 63/8 N1/9/2(x), SAP - Idududu to District Commandant - Ixopo, 20 August 1935 and SAP - Umzinto to District Commandant - Ixopo, 23 August 1935.

During the night of 18 August 1935 two huts of the Zembeni people were attacked and burned down, presumably by the avenging Dumisa men.⁶ This set in motion a series of violent clashes between the two chiefdoms.

Women and children were forced to vacate their homes in the vicinity of the boundary between the Dumisa and the Zembeni chiefdoms. Men, especially young men, converged in heavily armed groups at the vantage points on the hill tops. From there they launched surprise attacks on each other's imizi. When there was a recrudescence of hut burning, in which more than 100 huts were gutted by fire, a gruesome attack was carried out on the Zembeni people. The Dumisa men descended on a hut in which 11 Zembeni men were asleep. Grass was thrown against the door and it was set alight. Ten men escaped unhurt and one victim was burned to death.⁷ This fighting was characterised by the indiscriminate destruction of property. For example, the Dumisa men killed three cattle of the Zembeni chiefdom on their way to chief Duma's funeral. On 28 August 1935 the police reported that about 50 fowls and ducks and one pig were killed in both the Dumisa and the Zembeni chiefdoms, apart from the burning of huts.⁸

This chronological overview illustrates that collective violence in the Umzinto district in the early 1930s assumed a wide range of patterns. These events were of a complex nature and an attempt to explain them has to grapple with the long roots of conflicts.

6. Ibid. SAP - Idududu to District Commandant - Ixopo, 14 August 1935.

7. Ibid. NC for Umzinto, F.S. Heaton, to CNC, H.C.Lugg, 2 September 1935; Heaton to Lugg, 14 September 1935.

8. NA, CNC, Vol.90A, File No.63/8 N1/9/2(x), SAP - Umzinto to District Commandant -Ixopo, 25 August 1935 and SAP - Idududu to District Commandant - Ixopo, 28 August 1935.

The Long Roots of Conflict and the Role of the State

The conflict between the Dumisa and the abaMbo chiefdoms had its roots in the 1914 land settlement. A dispute over land had broken out between the subjects of the Dumisa and the abaMbo chiefs in June 1913.⁹ It culminated in fighting during which a fatality was suffered. The magistrate who presided over the court trial after this fight recommended that clear boundaries be demarcated between these chiefdoms.

This boundary line was fixed in April 1914. (See Map 2). It stretched from where the Alexandra location fence divided the Alexandra and the Ixopo divisions.¹⁰ It then ran along the following streams: Mtelela, Mzililo, Gobodana, Putuputu and then to the boundary separating the Alexandra and Ixopo divisions.¹¹ Six imizi of the Dumisa people were placed within the territory that was ceded to the Mkhize chieftaincy through this settlement. The CNC gave the victims of this settlement a choice of either retaining their imizi where they were, and still being considered as chief Jack Duma's subjects, or of removing themselves to the Dumisa chiefdom.¹²

The victims of 1914 chose to stay on the abaMbo side of the border. Towards the end of the 1920s the abaMbo chief named Nxamalala accused the inhabitants of these imizi of treating him with contempt. He appealed to the native commissioner to remove them from

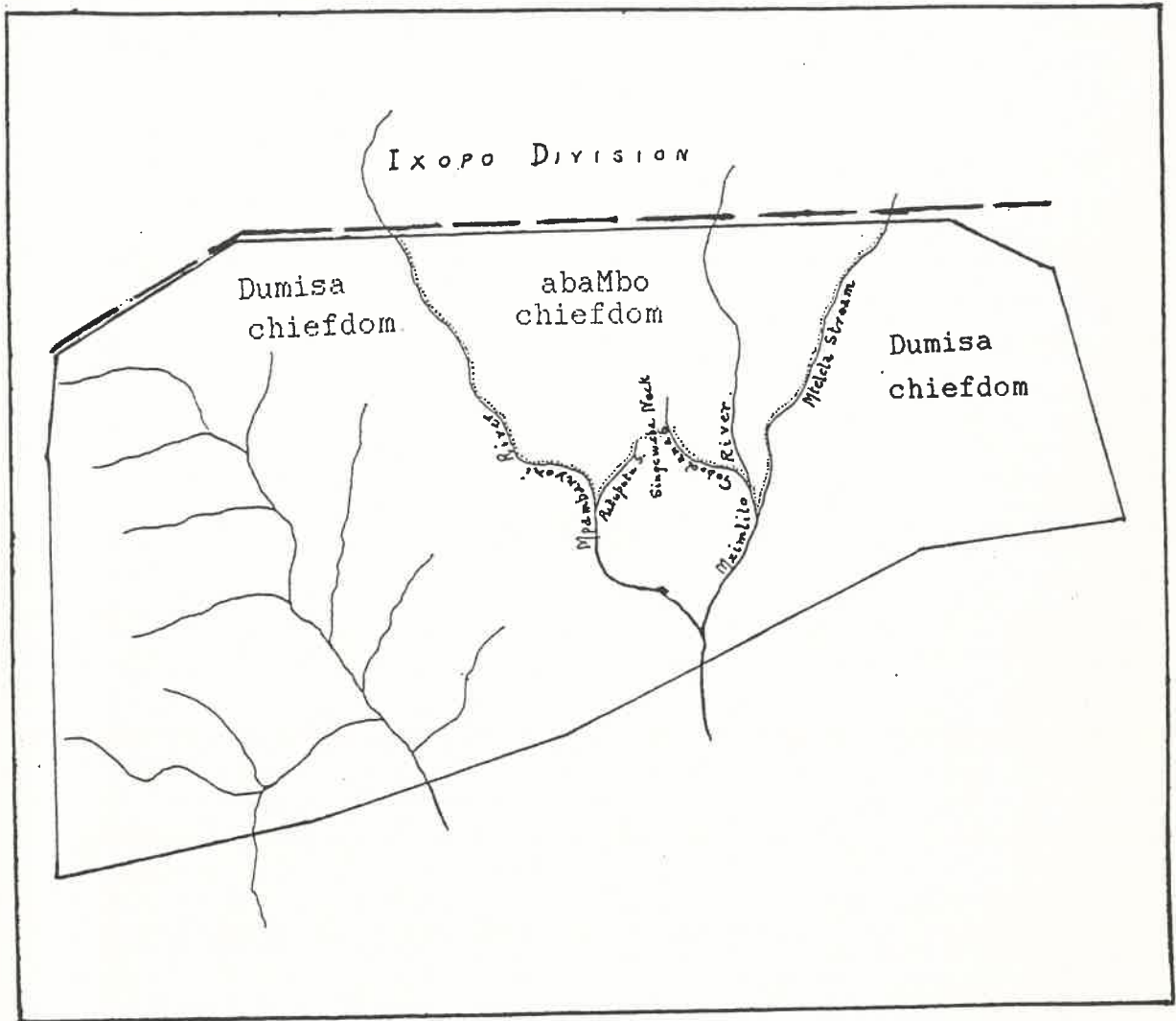
9. NA, CNC, Vol.133, File No.1329/13 - A 491/13/16, Ixopo Magistrate to CNC, 7 August 1913.

10. The Umzinto district was called Alexandra division location nos. 1-5 before it was renamed Umzinto district during the early twentieth century.

11. Ibid. CNC to Secretary for Native Affairs (SNA), 29 April 1914. Note Umzinto district was known as Alexandra Division before it was renamed Umzinto district during the first half of the twentieth century.

12. Ibid. CNC to SNA, 29 April 1914.

Map 2. The 1914 NAD boundary between the Dumisa and the abaMbo chiefdoms 22a



— — — Inter - Divisional Boundary

..... Boundary Laid Down By The Chief Native Commissioner

SOURCE: NA, CNC, Vol.133, File No.1329/13 - A 491/13/16

The boundary line fixed in 1914 by the NAD. Six imizi of the Dumisa people were cut off from their chiefdom; and this served as the source of the 1930 violence between the Dumisa and the abaMbo chiefdoms.

the abaMbo territory. The chief native commissioner supported Nxamalala on this issue. In November 1928 he ordered these people either to remove their imizi from the abaMbo lands or to accept incorporation into the abaMbo chiefdom.¹³ They rejected both options. On 8 December 1930 they launched an attack on the abaMbo people who were sharing the disputed territory with them. Eleven days later the chief native commissioner ruled that they were ipso facto subjects of Chief Nxamalala Mkhize.¹⁴ This aggravated the already tense conflict.

Another flashpoint in the Umzinto district was found in the fights between the Dumisa chiefdom, on the one hand, and the chiefdoms of Mabheleni and Zembeni, on the other. These fights were rooted in the disputed territories, Crown Lands farm 'Mount McAndrew' and the Mkunya and Bhewula locations. (See Map 3). These territories had been allocated to the Mabheleni and the Zembeni chieftaincies in March 1925.¹⁵ When these allocations were made, 76 Dumisa imizi were cut off from their chiefdom. Their inhabitants were given only two years to remove their imizi to the Dumisa territory. Those who failed to meet that deadline were forced to accept the rule of the Mabheleni and the Zembeni chieftaincies. Chief Njeza Duma was deposed for his attempts to stop this land settlement and his followers were threatened with deportation. This left an indelible mark of resentment among the Dumisa commoners.

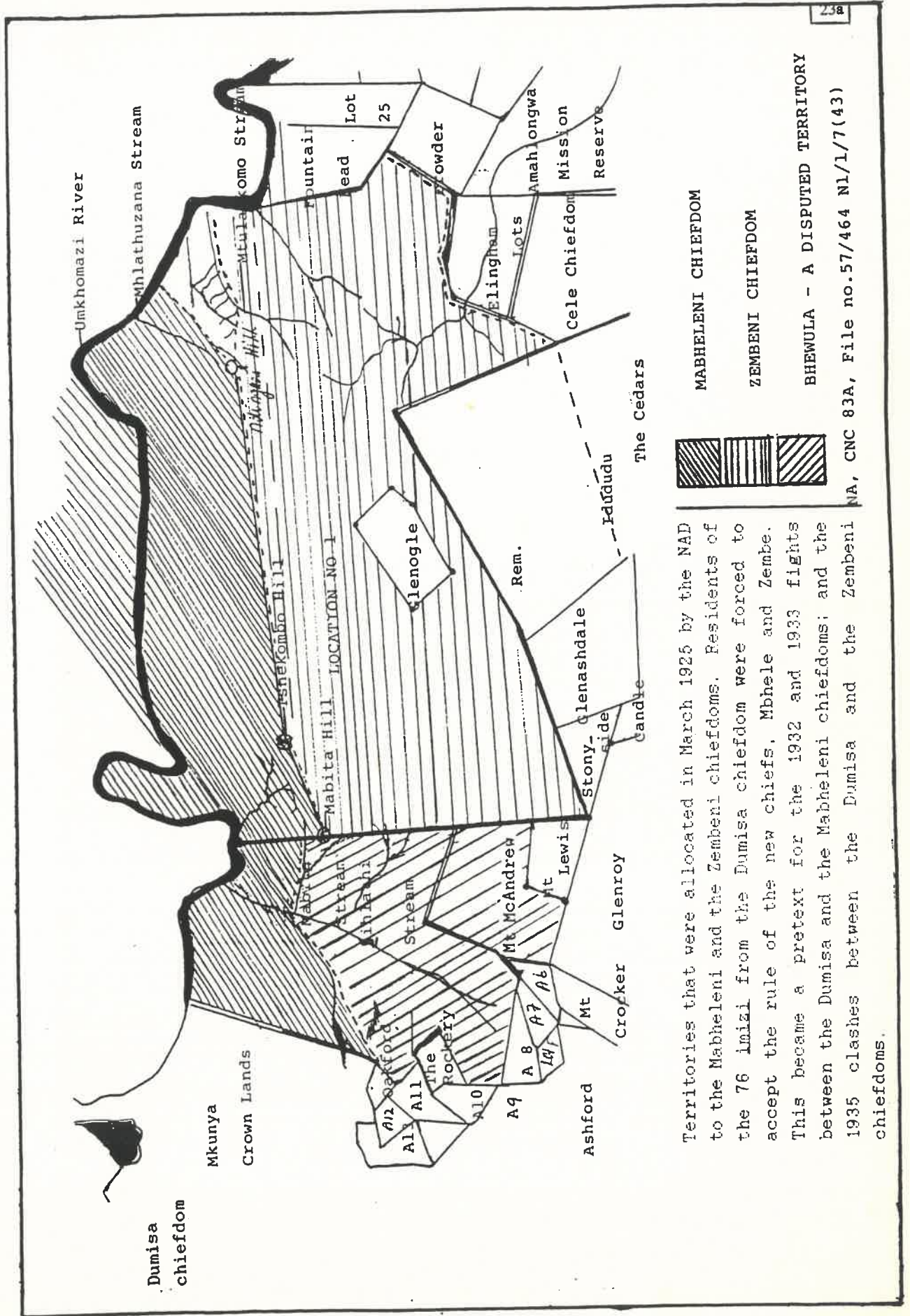
During a meeting which was convened in 1925 by the NAD to announce its decision to the people of Umzinto, the Dumisa delegates expressed doubts about the government's

13. NA, CNC, Vol.133, File No.1329/13 A 491/13/16, CNC to NC for Umzinto, 15 November 1928.

14. Ibid. CNC to NC for Umzinto, 19 December 1930.

15. NA, CNC, Vol.83A, File No. 57/464 N1/1/7(43), CNC to NC for Umzinto, 2 March 1925.

Map 3. The 1925 NAD land allocation to the Mabheleni and the Zembeni chiefdoms.



Territories that were allocated in March 1925 by the NAD to the Mabheleni and the Zembeni chiefdoms. Residents of the 76 imizi from the Dumisa chiefdom were forced to accept the rule of the new chiefs, Mbhele and Zembe. This became a pretext for the 1932 and 1933 fights between the Dumisa and the Mabheleni chiefdoms; and the 1935 clashes between the Dumisa and the Zembeni chiefdoms.

involvement in that settlement. They thought that it was a ploy by the local native commissioner which was aimed at subjecting the Dumisa people to the rule of the people they had always regarded as their vassals. A spokesperson for the delegation said:

"We do not accept this from you. I say this without any disrespect for you. We can only accept this decision if we get it from hulumeni in Pietermaritzburg - I mean the successor of Somsewu (Shepstone); and if we can't get satisfaction there we will go to Pretoria, even to Cape Town."¹⁶

They were shocked to learn that the native commissioner was carrying out orders of his superiors in the government. The Dumisa people even explored legal channels to stop the allocation of their lands to the abaMbo and the Mabheleni - Zembeni chiefdoms. Their efforts were frustrated by the NAD's determination to prevent the interference of legal practitioners in 'administrative matters'.¹⁷

Why was the NAD so keen to allocate the Dumisa lands to its neighbours? The primary objective of the NAD's native policy was to maintain absolute control over the rural African population. Conditions of relative stability were required for this to succeed. The power that the Dumisa chiefdom wielded in that district caused instability because the Dumisa chiefs regularly used violence for political purposes against their neighbours. As a result of this the chiefs of the two sections of the Dumisa chiefdom were perceived as the most disloyal chiefs in the Umzinto district. There was a long history of conflict, going back to the turn of the century, between the NAD and the Dumisa chieftaincy. For example, the Dumisa

16. NA, CNC, Vol. 83A, File No. 57/464 N1/1/7(43), Report of Umzinto meeting, 29 April 1925.

17. NA, CNC, Vol.133, File No.1329/13 - A 491/13/16, CNC to NC for Umzinto, 15 June 1931; and Vol.83A, File No.57/464 N1/1/7(43), Advocate Renaud to CNC, 25 April 1925; CNC to Advocate Renaud, 29 April 1925.

chiefdom was held responsible for violence that erupted between itself and the Zembeni chiefdom in 1903. It was accused of unwarranted aggression against the abaMbo and the Mabheleni chiefdoms in 1913 and 1918 respectively. After the 1918 fighting the stipends of both the Dumisa chiefs were suspended for a year.¹⁸ The decisions of the Native Affairs Department to demarcate boundaries, in a way that gave substantial lands of the Dumisa chiefdom to the abaMbo, Mabheleni and the Zembeni chiefdoms, should be understood as attempts to limit the authority of the Dumisa chieftaincy.

It can be concluded as well that violence was caused largely by the state's bid to impose its hegemony on the Umzinto population at the expense of the Dumisa people. This does not imply that the state departments were always in agreement in their handling of the native policy. There was evidence of disagreement between the officials, at the various levels of the administration, on the course which had to be followed sometimes.

Material Crisis Conditions of the early 1930s

The material crisis conditions of the early 1930s provided some of the pretexts for the outbreak of violence. Although tension was mounting in the different chiefdoms before the 1930s, fighting seldom broke out. It seems as if there was a link between the economic crisis of the early 1930s and the incidents of collective violence. Most of these incidents were reported almost simultaneously with the alarming conditions of famine. For example, the NC for Umzinto reported that more than 82 imizi in Chief Zembe's chiefdom were

18. NA, CNC, Vol. 315, File No. 516/18 - 421/10/1918, Umzinto magistrate to CNC, 12 December 1918; CNC to SNA, 17 December 1918 and SNA to CNC, 26 May 1919.

without food in 1933. The police reported acute conditions of poverty and unemployment in the chiefdoms of chiefs Duma and Mbhele. Unemployment was hastened by the closure of the Umtwalumi Valley Estates. In November 1933 the native commissioner for Umzinto, F.S. Heaton, informed the chief native commissioner that people were eating leaves to survive in most chiefdoms of Umzinto.¹⁹ The patterns of the 1933 fighting between the Dumisa and the Mabheleni people were those of cattle raids and stock theft; whereas in the 1932 and 1935 incidents it was reported that livestock was destroyed.²⁰ The destruction of livestock reflected the enmity which had developed between the chiefdoms and cattle raids were a means of alleviating widespread poverty.

Apart from drought the productivity of the Umzinto reserve lands was depleted by soil erosion. The agricultural officer for the Umzinto district blamed soil erosion on overgrazing, indiscriminate ploughing and overstocking. The Native Affairs Department initiated campaigns which were aimed at combating soil erosion. For example, during a meeting held by Lugg with the chiefs of the Umzinto district in 1933 he persuaded them to encourage their followers to sell their cattle. He said 'grazing land and water were scarce; and unless the cattle were thinned out, the grass would prove insufficient for them and they would die of starvation.'²¹ He pointed out that the death of their cattle would hasten famine. These desperate conditions were made worse by the outbreak of malaria epidemics.²² It was in this context that disputes which had been simmering for a number of years broke out into

19. NA, CNC, Vol.95A, File No. 68/1 N7/8/2(x), F.S.Heaton to Lugg, 21 November 1933.

20. NA, CNC, Vol.90A, File No.63/8 N1/9/2(x), SAP -Umzinto to District Commandant - Ixopo, 28 August 1935.

21. NA, CNC, Vol.89A, File No.63/2A N1/9/2(x), Minutes of the meeting at Umzinto, 25 July 1933.

22. J.B. Brain, 'But Only Black Men'Die: The 1929 - 1933 Malaria Epidemics in Natal and Zululand', (Unpublished Paper to Workshop, University of Natal, October 1988), pp. 5 - 16.

violence.

Violence as a Political Strategy

The existence of the relations of patronage between the state and the chiefs and between the chiefs and their followers sometimes served two different purposes. These relations sometimes served as deterrents against the use of violence as a political strategy, but they could also create opportunities for the use of this strategy. These situations were largely determined by the conflicting demands on chiefs from the state, on the one hand, and from their followers on the other. The ambiguous positions chiefs found themselves in influenced their behaviour in the event of an outbreak of violence. Most chiefs covertly supported the use of violence for political ends by their supporters, but publicly distanced themselves from such incidents. There were two major reasons for this pattern of behaviour. Firstly, the arbitrary powers to depose and to appoint chiefs which were exercised by the NAD dissuaded chiefs from indulging in acts which could damage their relationship with officials. Secondly, they had to maintain good relationships with both their subjects and the officials. Failure to do this could land them in an awkward political situation where they lost respect within their chiefdoms and were rejected by the NAD officials.

Chief Malahleka Mbhele's image was tarnished in the eyes of his supporters during their fights with the Dumisa chiefdom in 1932 and in 1933. He behaved like a coward during these fights. He went into hiding, claiming that chief Duma had ordered his fighters to capture him and bring him to the Dumisa inxuluma.²³ He repeated this claim in July

23. NA, CNC, Vol.89A, File No.63/2 N1/9/2(x), SAP - Idududu to NC for Umzinto, 3 November 1932.

1933.²⁴ After these incidents Malahleka lost control of his chiefdom. His followers disobeyed him and the NAD officials began not to like him at all.²⁵ The native commissioner for the Umzinto district, A.D.Graham, accused Malahleka of neglecting his duties.²⁶ Graham's successor, F.S.Heaton, called him a weakling who could not control his subjects. The police also expressed dissatisfaction with Malahleka. They even suggested that he should be deposed.²⁷ What this illustrated was that the failure of chiefs to maintain good relationship with their followers created problems for them, not only within their chiefdoms but also with the officials of the NAD.

Daring behaviour did not help either. Chief Chiliza was actively involved in his chiefdom's fights with the Dumisa people. He was accused of mobilising a Madungeni group which attacked the Dumisa delegation that had come to report the behaviour of his son to him. When full scale fighting broke out chief Chiliza remained with his followers on the battlefields. He once refused to heed the police order to have his men dispersed. One of his izinduna asked the police to let them fight for at least an hour.²⁸ The problem with this behaviour is that while supporters could develop trust and confidence in their chief, he could be severely punished by the NAD.

The Dumisa chief, Jack Duma, took extra precautions when conflict intensified and when the

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24. NA, CNC, Vol.74A, File No.57/156 N1/9/2(43), SAP - Idududu to NC for Umzinto, 20 July 1933.
 25. Ibid and NA, CNC, Vol.89A, File No.63/2 N1/9/2(x), J. Mbhele's testimony before the assistant magistrate for Umzinto, 2 December 1932.
 26. Ibid. A.D.Graham to the Assistant NC for Umzinto, 2 December 1932.
 27. NA, CNC, Vol.74A, File No.57/156 N1/9/2(43), SAP - Idududu to NC for Umzinto, 20 July 1933; F.S.Heaton to Lugg, 4 October 1933.
 28. NA, CNC, Vol.89A, File No.63/2A N1/9/2(x), Umzinto Assistant Magistrate to CNC, 31 January 1933; SAP - Sawoti to District Commandant - Ixopo, 1 February 1933.

incidents of collective violence occurred. One feature of these precautions was that he created alibis if he knew that fighting was to occur. When he could not come up with an alibi in time, he showed up soon after the outbreak of violence and pretended to be assisting the police in suppressing it. The native commissioner for Umzinto and the police reported that he cooperated with them during the 1932 and the 1933 fighting between his chiefdom and that of Mabheleni.²⁹ He was subsequently exonerated from any guilt that was related to these fights. It was this type of behaviour which helped Jack to enjoy the confidence and support of his subjects and to succeed in securing his political interests sometimes through using violence as a strategy.

When chiefs could not create alibis or when other safe methods were not readily available to them the blame for violence was shouldered by izinduna. For example, chief Duma told the chief native commissioner that izinduna would know the participants in the Dumisa - Madungeni fighting.³⁰ While most chiefs avoided confrontation with the officials of the NAD at all costs, the majority of the izinduna risked conflicts with the state officials. These izinduna who acted as 'war generals' were stripped of formal recognition by the Native Affairs Department, but continued to enjoy respect and support in their territories. Chief Duma demoted three of his izinduna who were accused by the NAD officials of organising fighters for the Dumisa - Mabheleni clashes in 1933.³¹

Why were izinduna prepared to risk dismissals from their positions? Outstanding

29. NA, CNC, Vol.89A, File No. 63/2 N1/9/2(x), A.D.Graham to Assistant NC for Umzinto, 2 December 1933.

30. NA, CNC, Vol.89A, File No.63/2A N1/9/2(x), Minutes of the meeting with the CNC, 10 February 1933.

31. NA, CNC, Vol.47A, File No.57/156 N1/9/2(43), F.S.Heaton to CNC, 4 October 1933.

performance in battles could earn izinduna a great deal of respect from the young men. This respect could benefit them in two possible ways. Firstly, they could expect tributes from the people in the territories under their control. Secondly, they could challenge chiefs politically and militarily if they amassed enough support in their areas. It was precisely because of the willingness to prevent these threats that the chiefs were forced to maintain good patronage relations with their izinduna as well as their subjects. Chiefs like Duma acceded to violence as a political leverage because they maintained a close relationship with their izinduna.

Pretexts for Violence

Although land disputes and the mounting social and economic pressures of the early 1930s offer broad reasons for collective violence, the Madungeni fighting presented a unique set of causes. The act of aggression of chief Chiliza's son towards an unnamed Dumisa woman was enough to invoke the anger of the Dumisa men. He knocked a parcel from the head of this woman and then trampled on it. He then spilled salt on the ground. This action had symbolic importance. One of the late Dumisa chiefs was named Sawoti which means salt in English. The "spilling of salt on the ground" was viewed as a symbolic message from Chiliza's son that he would destroy the Duma chieftaincy.³² Although this action was demeaning to the Dumisa leaders they chose to use violence as a last resort. They despatched a delegation to report the conduct of Chiliza's son to his father. It was only after Chiliza had come out in support of his son and the delegation had narrowly escaped an attack

32. Rand Daily Mail, 31 January 1933.

that they resorted to war.³³ Although young men frequently provoked violence there were occasions when it was pursued after other means of solving conflicts had been explored. Once deployed it unleashed a momentum of its own. The puzzle at this point is why the young men were prepared to come out in huge numbers to defend symbols and to fight on behalf of their chiefdoms.

Socialisation, Ethnicity and a Different Kind of Law

While the state, through its Native Affairs Department, created conditions for conflict to originate and intensify, it was the young men from the various chiefdoms of the Umzinto district who served as the catalysts for the actual fighting. For example, young men from the Dumisa chiefdom attacked the abaMbo people who were sharing the disputed land with them in 1930. In less than three hours, the Dumisa leaders mobilised more than 2 000 men, of the total of 5 000 fighters who participated in the Dumisa - Madungeni clashes.³⁴ During the fight between the Dumisa and the Mabheleni chiefdoms in July 1933, in the 50 to 60 imizi that were visited by the police, only women and children were present because the men had gone across the Umkhomazi River to plan the conduct of war.³⁵ The huge numbers that participated in these fights suggest that young men had been socialised into the role of soldiers who were ready to be organised to fight for a range of objectives. Evidence for this is difficult to obtain, and this remains a subject for further research. At least in the

33. NA, CNC, Vol.89A, File No.63/2A N1/9/2(x), Umzinto Assistant Magistrate to CNC, 31 January 1933.

34. NA, CNC, Vol.89A, File No.63/2A N1/9/2(x), SAP - Sawoti to District Commandant - Ixopo, 1 February 1933.

35. NA, CNC, Vol.74A, File No.57/156 N1/9/2(43), SAP - Idududu to NC for Umzinto, 20 July 1933.

case of the Dumisa chiefdom, it is possible to suggest that one of the sources of mobilisation was a distinctive ethnic consciousness.

This defensive and aggressive ethnicity was centred around the Duma chieftaincy. Two previous chiefs, Dumisa and Sawoti, were used as the rallying symbols for the people. An exclusionist version of history was constructed, especially to press claims to land. It claimed a legitimate right over most land of the Umzinto district for the Dumisa people. They claimed to have arrived before all other groups of people in the Umzinto district. Other chiefs were regarded as the vassals of the Duma chiefs. This was expressed very well in the petition which they sent to the chief native commissioner in 1915.

"Some time after your petitioners' grandfathers had established themselves in this neighbourhood other natives begged permission to build their kraals within the ground allocated to Dumisa and they were allowed to live there; unfortunately precaution was not taken to make them abandon their late chief and come under the said Dumisa."³⁶

Such claims were intensified in the uncertain and desperate social and economic conditions of the early 1930s. The ethnicity which had been latent before began to assume a more defiant and resilient nature. For example, the Dumisa men defied the orders of the CNC to remove their imizi from the abaMbo land in 1930. Instead they vowed not to allow the abaMbo people to erect their imizi in the disputed piece of land; and they aggressively attacked them afterwards.

They also resisted forced incorporation into the Mabheleni and the Zembeni chiefdoms,

36. NA, CNC, Vol.133, File No.1329/13 - A 491/13/16, Advocate Renaud to CNC, 1915.

because this was seen as a form of banishment. Chief Hlomela Zembe explained to the police in July 1933 that his subjects at the Bhowula location still regarded themselves as the Dumisa people. He said:

"when aMabhele tribe have any trouble with Jack's people, that section of Bhowula, who were under ex chief Njeza, still regarded Jack's people as their "brothers" and sided with them against my people."³⁷

Their determination and resistance forced Heaton to acknowledge that Zembe's control of that territory was a source of tension.³⁸ Dumisa ethnicity was partly responsible for the easy mobilisation of young men into shock troops when fighting broke out.

The forms of resistance seem to suggest that there were differing conceptions of law, legitimate authority and acceptable collective behaviour between the officials of the native administration, on the one hand, and the people of the Dumisa, abaMbo, Mabheleni, Madungeni and the Zembeni chiefdoms, on the other. The police complained on a number of occasions about the lack of cooperation from the local population when they tried to arrest participants in the fights. Lieutenant L.J. Joubert of the Idududu police post said police work was made difficult because as soon as they were seen in the area 'the fact was broadcasted from one hill top to another.' This gave the potential convicts time to hide. During the 1935

37. NA, CNC, Vol.74A, File No.57/156 N1/9/2, SAP - Idududu to NC for Umzinto, 20 July 1933. Note the Dumisa chieftaincy also experienced a succession dispute after the death of Dumisa's successor, Sawoti, in 1903. As result of the conflict which arose from this dispute the chiefdom was divided into two sections. One was put under the rule of Njeza's predecessor named Mofi and the other to Jack Duma. This succession dispute did not leave scars of enmity among the Dumisa people. Despite this division, until the deposing of Njeza in the late 1920s, the commoners continued to regard themselves as one people. Some information can be found in Vol. 315, File No. 421/10/1918, CNC to SNA, 17 December 1918.

38. NA, CNC, Vol.90A, File No. 63/8 N1/9/2(x), NC for Umzinto to CNC, 2 December 1935.

fighting between the Dumisa and the Zembeni chiefdoms the police reported that chief 'Jack's armed men gathered mostly on the hill tops from where they could see a long distance off. When the police patrols approached them they disappeared into the bush and other inaccessible rugged country.'³⁹ The success of the protection of warriors by the local people could be measured by the small number of arrests which were made after the 1932 Dumisa - Mabheleni fighting. Only 39 men out of more than 200 who participated were arrested.⁴⁰

The native commissioners for Umzinto, A.D.Graham and F.S.Heaton, complained about the apparent conspiracy to suppress the names of those who participated in the incidents of collective violence in both the Dumisa and the Mabheleni chiefdoms in 1932 and 1933. The chief native commissioner, J.M.Young, threatened to depose chiefs Jack and Tshesi because they failed to produce participants after the Dumisa - Madungeni fighting.⁴¹ Many izinduna were demoted from their positions in the Dumisa, Mabheleni and the Madungeni chiefdoms, but most of these leaders continued to enjoy the respect and support within their areas. Ex chief Njeza Duma was one such example.⁴² What this reflected was that the local populations had their conventions which exonerated from guilt most of those people who were defined as culprits by the laws of the state.

Conclusion

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39. NA, CNC, Vol.90A, File No.63/8 N1/9/2(x), SAP - Umzinto to District Commandant - Ixopo, 23 August 1935.
 40. NA, CNC, Vol.74A, File No.57/156 N1/9/2(x), SAP - Idududu to NC for Umzinto, 20 July 1933.
 41. NA, CNC, Vol.89A, File No.63/2A N1/9/2(x), Minutes of the meeting at Umzinto, 10 February 1933.
 42. NA, CNC, Vol.90A, File No.63/8 N1/9/2(x), F.S.Heaton to CNC, 25 September 1935.

This chapter has attempted to show that the contexts in which conflicts originated were complex and cannot be explained by superficial terms like 'faction fighting'. The chronological overview revealed the varying patterns of collective violence in the four cases of conflict that we examined. While the fights between the Dumisa chiefdom and its neighbouring chiefdoms of abaMbo, Mabheleni and Zembeni were rooted in land disputes, the July 1933 fighting with the Mabheleni chiefdom was characterised by cattle raids and the looting of property. During the other three fights destruction of property was a common feature. The chapter has attempted to show that the reason for this was the material crisis which had reached alarming levels around 1933. Looting was a means of alleviating famine. The burning of huts was also a strategy designed to force the opponents out of the disputed territories permanently.

Tracing the long roots of conflict has illustrated how tensions brewed for long periods before they deteriorated into violence. The examples of land disputes dating as far back as 1914 and 1925 showed that most rural populations treated fighting as the last resort. The Dumisa people demonstrated on numerous occasions that they were willing to explore amicable methods of resolving conflicts. In the cases of land dispossession in 1914 and 1925 they used legal representation to present their cases to the NAD. During the conflict with the Madungeni chiefdom in 1933 they even despatched a delegation to engage in open dialogue with the Chiliza chieftaincy about the deteriorating relations between their chiefdoms. It was only after all the other avenues of solving conflicts had been frustrated that they resorted to war. This suggests that the fighting was politically motivated and was waged to achieve objectives that were seen as legitimate by the participants. Violence was another form of political struggle and it unleashed a momentum of its own once it was deployed.

The state was one of the major actors in the incidents of violence. It featured prominently in creating the conditions for conflict to originate and intensify. Young men from the various chiefdoms served as the main catalysts for the outbreak of violence. Through a process of socialisation they readily participated in territorially based group identities. Although precise evidence on socialisation is hard to come by, it was apparent in the case of the Dumisa chiefdom that ethnicity was one weapon of mobilising for political conflict. This ethnicity was defensive in that it sought to protect territory and individual members; and aggressive because the Dumisa 'soldiers' readily attacked political opponents to assert Dumisa political superiority.

Fighting was a preserve for men, especially young men. Women, like children, were treated as minors that needed protection. For example, the Umzinto magistrate endorsed this view when he exonerated the Zembeni men from any guilt associated with their armed assembly during the 1933 Dumisa - Mabheleni fighting.⁴³ He condoned their action on the grounds that they armed themselves on hearing the cries for help from their women. During the fighting between the Mabheleni and the Dumisa chiefdoms, women and children remained in their kraals because it was a convention not to interfere with them during the fights.

The chapter also attempted to show that fighting started in the early 1930s because this period was characterised by deepening social and material crises. The natural disasters such as drought and soil erosion rendered most lands in the chiefdoms unproductive. This in turn led to acute famine. This was accompanied by the malaria epidemics which added to the

43. NA, CNC, Vol.74A, File No.57/156 N1/9/2(43), NC for Umzinto to CNC, 4 October 1933.

level of distress within the chiefdoms. These conditions pushed the existing conflicts into violence; and all this occurred in the context of a migrant labour system. Migrancy was widespread because most participants could not be apprehended since they returned to urban areas soon after the fights, which commonly occurred over the weekends. There was difficulty in finding convincing evidence as to why the Dumisa fighting appears to have subsided from 1935. There may have been a connection with the death of Jack Duma.

The form of resistance which developed during the conflicts in the Umzinto district contained some features of social banditry.⁴⁴ It was a resistance which challenged the power of the state, not by confronting it, but by reaching for alternative forms of authority and power. It shielded the protagonists in conflict from the law of the state. Finally, this conflict and violence was political in nature. It was both defensive and aggressive and the participants had a firm belief that their actions were legitimate.

44. E.J. Hobsbawm, Primitive Rebels, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1978).

Chapter Four

'Chiefs, commoners and the state: the Mkhize succession dispute in the Umbumbulu district during the 1930s'

The abaMbo people were embroiled in fighting which was rooted in a succession dispute for the Mkhize chieftaincy between March 1932 and June 1936.¹ The embryo of that dispute could be traced to intrigue within the house of Chief Ngunezi, the last chief of a united abaMbo chiefdom. After the death of Chief Ngunezi on 20 September 1894, his mother, being the eldest member of the ruling family, was called upon to help defuse the ensuing dispute over succession by pronouncing the legitimate successor.² She pronounced in favour of Sikukuku, Ngunezi's son from his 'right hand' wife, instead of Tilongo, his heir from his 'chief wife'.³ That pronouncement plunged the abaMbo ruling family deeper into dispute over succession. Conflict brewed for more than three decades before the indecisive policy of the Native Affairs Department helped it deteriorate into bloody violence during the 1930s.

The study will attempt to understand why the commoners readily participated in the fights which broke out in the abaMbo chiefdom in the 1930s. It will consider the extent to which scarce resources contributed to the outbreak of violence; and how group identities and

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1. The terms abaMbo and Mkhize will be used interchangeably in this chapter. AbaMbo is a collective name for the chiefdom, which includes even those people who ceded their loyalty, ukukhonza, to the Mkhize chieftaincy. Mkhize is a specific name of the ruling family in this chiefdom.
 2. NA, CNC, Vol.89A, File No. CNC 63/2/37 N1/9/2(x), CNC to SNA, 17 October 1934.
 3. Natal Mercury, 10 September 1934.

socialisation among the abaMbo people influenced their behaviour during the duration of the succession dispute. The study will also focus on the nature of relations which existed at the different political levels of the abaMbo community and how these relations created possibilities for the outbreak of violence. Before providing a chronological account of the fights during the 1930s, let us attempt briefly to outline the historical background to the abaMbo conflict and violence.

Historical background

According to a key Zulu Society official of the 1940s, the origins of the abaMbo people can be traced to the vicinity of the Thukela tributary named Amanyane near eQhudeneni in Zululand:

"The locality surrounding the AMANYANE drift, on the Zululand side was originally inhabited by the abaMbo tribe. Chief of the tribe, Zihlandlo, the grandson of Chief Mavovo was very loyal to Shaka, and was thus never invaded by the Zulu impi."⁴

The abaMbo were dislodged by Dingane from that locality in the 1830s when he succeeded Shaka. They fled across the Thukela River in a southward direction and, according to Reader, had reached the Umbumbulu area in southern Natal by 1838.⁵ By the 1890s abaMbo were scattered over the districts of Pinetown, Richmond, Camperdown and New Hanover. Many more were living on white owned farms in Eston, Camperdown and Richmond. To understand the succession dispute which erupted into violence in the

4. C.Mpanza, 'Amanyane (Jamieson Drift)', Native Teachers' Journal, April 1944, p.44.

5. D.H.Reader, Zulu Tribe In Transition, (Manchester, Manchester University press, 1966), p.25.

Umbumbulu district during the 1930s, we need to have a broad understanding of how succession operated in Natal.

The chief's inxuluma in Natal and Zululand was arranged around his wives. There were umdlunkulu (the house of the chief wife), ikhohlo (the house of the right hand wife) and the iqadi (the house of the left hand wife). The heir to chieftainship came from the house of the chief wife, but if she did not give birth to a son, the eldest son of the right hand wife was adopted and recognised as the future heir to the chieftaincy.⁶ It was alleged that Ngunezi had become a chief through the same procedure; an action which was strangely resented by his mother since it elevated her status in the chiefdom.⁷ It was alleged that it was this bitterness which made her pronounce Sikukuku as heir to the Mkhize chieftaincy after the death of her son Ngunezi in 1894. A dispute over succession developed and the two main contenders were Ngunezi's sons from the chief wife and the right hand wife, Tilongo and Sikukuku, respectively. The Natal government officials intervened in the dispute and in 1895 appointed both contenders to co-chieftainship of the abaMbo people.⁸ Since Sikukuku was still a minor one of the Mkhize family members named Bubula was appointed a regent in his place. Although no incidents of violence were reported between the adherents of Tilongo and Sikukuku until they were dismissed from their chiefly positions in 1906, their appointment to co-chieftainship sowed seeds for conflict which erupted into violence in the 1930s.

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6. It is difficult to find convincing evidence of whether this was always fixed and rigid but these are some of the views which have put forward by anthropologists. Inxuluma was a chief's umuzi.
 7. Natal Mercury, 10 September 1934.
 8. NA, CNC, Vol.89A, File No.63/2/37 N1/9/2(x), CNC to SNA, 17 October 1934.

During the Bhambatha rebellion of 1906 both chiefs fought on the side of the anti-colonial forces. When the rebellion was suppressed they were charged with high treason. Chief Tilongo was sentenced to ten years, while Sikukuku was imprisoned for life at St Helena prison. The Mkhize chieftaincy was further fragmented into five sections under state-appointed acting chiefs: Mguquka, Bhinananda, Ntiyantiya and Maguzu and fifthly, Bubula, who had already served as a regent for at least 11 years.⁹ His position as a chief was confirmed by the NAD officials because he demonstrated loyalty to the NAD by not joining the anti-colonial forces during the rebellion. The co-existence of the five chiefdoms remained relatively uncontentious until the early 1930s when the sons of deposed chiefs Tilongo and Sikukuku began a campaign to regain positions of chieftaincy.

Tilongo was released from gaol in 1917 as a commoner and Sikukuku died in prison. After the death of Tilongo during the early 1920s his supporters campaigned for the recognition of his heir, Nkasa, as a chief. The pressure which was exerted on the Native Affairs Department forced it to appoint an enquiry of three Magistrates in 1928, whose task was to consider the question of reuniting the abaMbo chiefdom and its chieftaincy.¹⁰ These magistrates recommended a return to the position prior to the deposing of Tilongo and Sikukuku in 1906. This meant that the heirs of the two late claimants to the Mkhize chieftaincy would be recognised as chiefs. The Chief Native Commissioner rejected this recommendation and appointed only Tilongo's heir, Nkasa, as a chief over the amalgamated sections of abaMbo chiefdom in the Camperdown and Pinetown districts on 23 April

9. NA, CNC, Vol. 89A, File No. 63/2/37 N 1/9/2(x), CNC to SNA, 17 October 1934; Natal Mercury, 10 September 1934.

10. NA, CNC, Vol. 89A, File No. CNC 63/2/37 N1/9/2(x) CNC to SNA, 17 October 1934.

1930.¹¹ This decision set the abaMbo people on a collision course which assumed a bloody character during the first part of the 1930s.

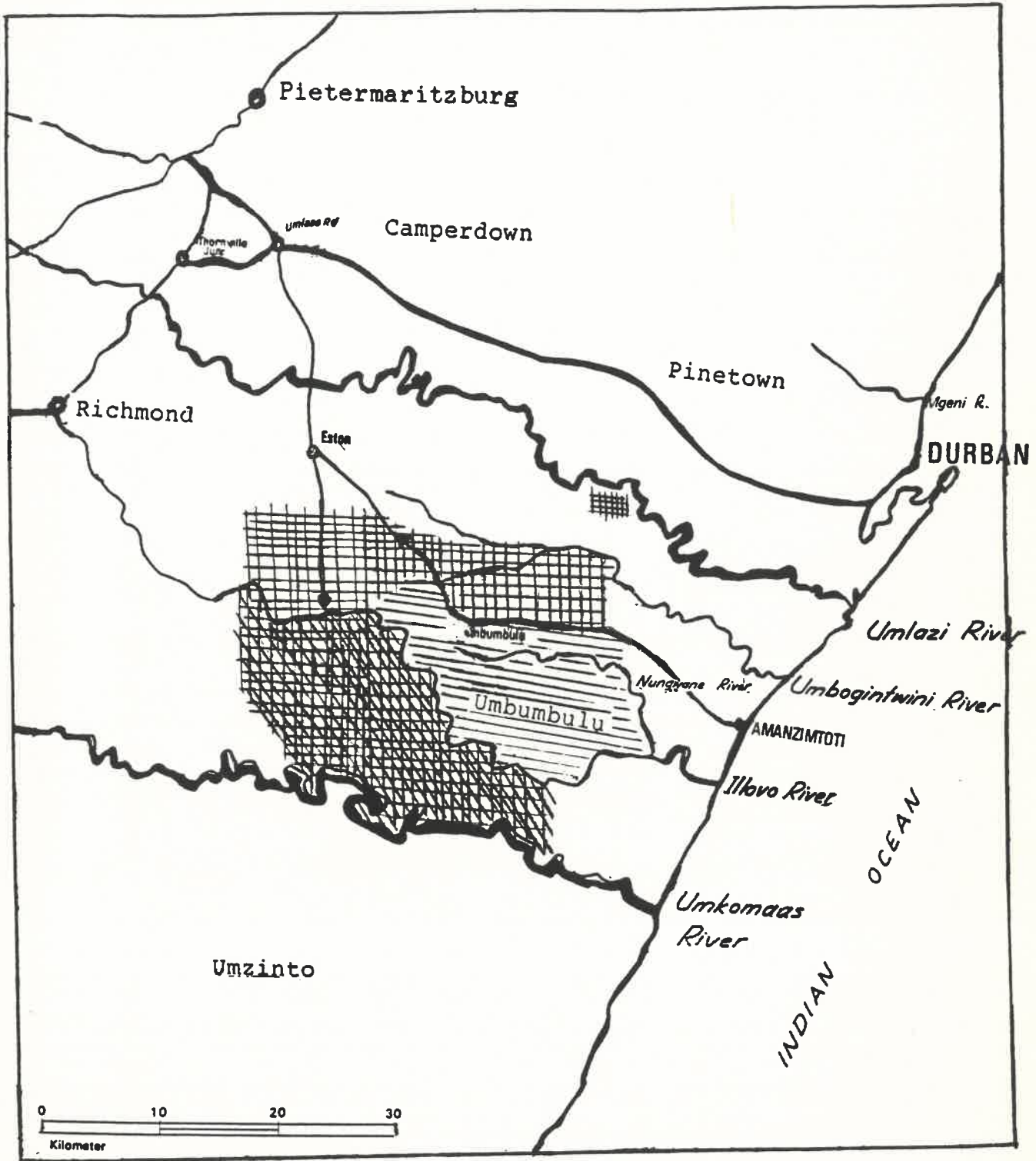
The appointment of Nkasa as a chief over a consolidated area led to resentment among those people who had earlier been under Sikukuku's authority. They applied for the recognition of Timuni, Sikukuku's son, as a chief over the sections which owed allegiance to his father. The NAD bowed to pressure and in October 1931 appointed Timuni as a chief over the portion of Umlazi location which lay between the Umkhomazi and Illovo Rivers.¹² (See Map 4). This intervention finally created ripe conditions for violence. In March 1932, violence broke out, marking the culmination of several years of tension over the issue of succession.

What happened to the state appointed chiefs when the Native Affairs Department decided to recognise Nkasa as the only chief of the abaMbo people? The NAD decided not to interfere with Bubula's position during his life time, as a gesture of gratitude for his long loyal service to it. The other four state-appointed chiefs were supposed to step down from their positions in favour of Nkasa. This never happened because by 1934 Mguquka was still a chief of the abaMbo people in the Camperdown district, and the other three chiefs still laid claim to territory.

Chronological Overview

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11. NA, CNC, Vol. 89A, File No 63/2 N1/9/2(x), Pinetown Magistrate to the Attorney General(AG), 23 November 1934.
 12. NA, CNC, Vol. 89A, File No.CNC 63/2 N1/9/2(x), Pinetown Magistrate to AG, 23 November 1923; Reader, Zulu Tribe in Transition, pp. 25-26.

Map 4. The 1930, 1931 and 1934 NAD territory allocations to Nkasa and Timuni.



Territories allocated by the NAD to Nkasa in 1930.



Nkasa's territory that was ceded to Timuni in October 1931.



Other lands which were formerly under the rule of Nkasa and were given to Timuni in 1934.

The appointment of both Nkasa and Timuni as chiefs of the abaMbo people in the 1930s translated the dispute over succession into a struggle over land. The recognition of Timuni as a chief in October 1931 gave rise to massive removals of imizi within the abaMbo chiefdom to the territories which had been allocated to the respective chiefs of the abaMbo people. This was resented by the supporters of Chief Nkasa, in particular. In 1932 that resentment was expressed violently when three people were injured in the first clash between the supporters of Nkasa and Timuni, in March; and when a further eight people were wounded in May.¹³ The Chief Native Commissioner convened a meeting with both chiefs and their supporters. He reaffirmed the Illovo river as the boundary between the two sections of the chiefdom and the people were allowed two years to remove their imizi to areas controlled by their respective chiefs.¹⁴ This decision was not well received by the supporters of Nkasa; this was evident in the outbreak of further violence in 1933. Police narrowly averted another fight in April 1933. The first fatalities of that year were suffered in December when the companion of Timuni's senior induna was brutally killed by Nkasa's supporters.¹⁵ In a retaliatory attack the supporters of Chief Timuni killed one of Nkasa's followers.

In the light of this conflict the Native Affairs Department appointed a second committee of three magistrates to review the boundary recommendations of the first committee. This committee, assisted by the superintendent of locations, confirmed the boundaries of the CNC and the first committee; and then went to recommend new boundaries which embraced each

13. Reader, Zulu Tribe in Transition, p.27.

14. *Ibid.* p.27.

15. *Ibid.* p. 27; NA, CNC, Vol. 89A, File No. CNC 63/2 N1/9/2(x), Pinetown Magistrate to AG, 23 November 1934.

of the two chief's followers. While the CNC had allocated land between the Umkhomazi and Illovo rivers to Timuni earlier on, this committee recommended that the supporters of Nkasa be removed not only from the land between these rivers, but also between the Illovo and the Nungwane rivers and between the Nungwane and the main road from Amanzimtoti through Umbumbulu to Pietermaritzburg.¹⁶

These boundary delimitations infuriated the supporters of Chief Nkasa who then intensified fighting. Several incidents of violence were reported in 1934 by the police in the Mhlangamvulu Hill area and on both sides of the main Umbumbulu road to Amanzimtoti and Pietermaritzburg.¹⁷ Three people were killed in that encounter.¹⁸ Between the 5th and the 7th of August six other people were killed. The estimated number of fatalities in that week alone was 11, with more than 600 huts gutted by fire.¹⁹ Widespread incidents of violence were also reported in the Zwelibomvu area on 28 August 1934.²⁰

The commoners began to react differently to the boundary delimitations. While most supporters of Timuni who were residing outside his territory were prepared to move over to their chief, the followers of Nkasa in Timuni's area adopted an attitude of passive resistance.²¹ This was evident in the resolution which was presented by Nkasa to a meeting at Umbumbulu in September 1934.

16. NA, CNC, Vol.89A, File No. 63/2 N1/9/2(x), Pinetown magistrate to AG, 10 November 1934.

17. NA, CNC, Vol. 89A, File No. CNC 63/2 N1/9/2(x), Pinetown Magistrate to AG, 23 November 1934.

18. While in the Umzinto case study women were left out of the fights in the Umbumbulu conflict they were involved.

19. Natal Mercury, 14 August 1934.

20. NA, CNC, Vol. 89A, File No. CNC 63/2 N 1/9/2(x), Pinetown magistrate to AG, 23 November 1934.

21. Ibid.

"We, the Embo people, refuse to accept any boundaries. Who has ever heard of boundaries being fixed in this way? The person responsible for the setting up of this boundary should settle the trouble. The people in the Richmond and the Camperdown districts refuse to recognise boundaries."²²

Although the Native Commissioner finally forced Nkasa to order his people out of Timuni's area, the issue of boundaries remained unresolved until 1936.

When the land between the Nungwane river and the main Umbumbulu road to Pietermaritzburg was granted to Timuni in 1934, Nkasa's subjects vowed not to rest until it was returned to their chief.²³ Several incidents of violence were subsequently reported by the police and the Native Affairs officials in the same vicinity in 1935. The adherents of Chiefs Nkasa and Timuni were also involved in fierce battles in Chief Bubula's chiefdom in April 1935.²⁴ The fighting, which began as a clash over grazing land among herd boys from the Nungwane River area, culminated in an attack on one of Timuni's subjects on 15 September 1935.²⁵ His attackers told him to remove his umuzi from the land he occupied. Although violence subsided during November and December 1935 and during the first part of 1936, it erupted again on 15 June 1936. The police attributed that outbreak of violence to the refusal by Chief Nkasa's subjects to remove their imizi from the Umkhomazi portion of the Umbumbulu district.²⁶

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22. NA, CNC, Vol. 89A, File No. CNC 63/2/37 N1/9/2(x), Minutes of meeting, Umbumbulu, 19 September 1934.
 23. NA, CNC, Vol.89A, File No. CNC 63/2/37 N 1/9/2(x), South African Police (SAP), Isipingo to District Commandant, Durban, 9 October 1935.
 24. NA, CNC, Vol.89A, File No. CNC 63/2B N 1/9/2(x), Telephonic conversation, CNC and SNA, 10 April 1935.
 25. NA, CNC, Vol. 89A, File No.CNC 63/2B N1/9/2(x), South African Police at Isipingo to the District Commandant in Durban, 9 October 1935.
 26. NA, CNC, Vol. 77A, File No. 57/209 N 1/9/2(37), District Commandant, Durban, to Deputy Commissioner of Police, 8 July 1936.

Further research is necessary to establish why fighting among the abaMbo appears to have stopped in about 1936. The incidents of violence which were reported by the police and the NAD officials after 1936 at the Umbumbulu district were between Chief Timuni and the neighbouring chiefdoms of Makhanya and Thoyana;²⁷ and an internal conflict within Nkasa's section of the abaMbo in 1938. Analysis of these later incidents is beyond the scope of this chapter, but they are mentioned here because they offer one or two points of reference with the fighting of the early 1930s.

What we have tried to do through this brief account is to show that the conflict between Chiefs Nkasa and Timuni was too complex for the simplistic generalisations which would dismiss it as mindless 'tribal' rivalry. The struggle over succession deteriorated into struggle over diminishing land resources, especially because of the state's intervention in the conflict. The commoners were major players in the abaMbo conflict, not because they loved fighting but because of some of the reasons we shall explore below.

Scarce resources, socialisation and the commoners in the Mkhize succession dispute

What were the possible reasons for the enthusiasm which was shown by the commoners when they participated in the fights? As we have already indicated above, the struggle for succession to the Mkhize chieftaincy was translated into a struggle for land during the 1930s. This began when the commoners were ordered to move their *imizi* to territories which had been allocated to their respective chiefs. That decision of the native administration officials generated a lot of resentment among most commoners because no material assistance to

27. Reader, Zulu Tribe in Transition, p.27.

rebuild the imizi was forthcoming; and they lost a great deal in houses, orchards and ploughing fields. It should be borne in mind that rural homesteads depended largely on land for their subsistence. The struggle over land which developed as a result of the orders to remove imizi gave rise to strategies of hut burning to force people out of specific areas.

Although the sources which were used for this chapter never provided substantial evidence, there were reports of widespread drought in most parts of southern Natal at about the same time as these removals. The loss of land would have offended people, but the idea of having to move from lands which had relatively fertile fields in times of drought and economic crisis could have caused more resentment. The problem with placing emphasis on scarce resources as the only source of conflict is that it does not explain why people responded differently to these removals. Most of Timuni's followers who were residing in Nkasa's areas were enthusiastic about the idea of moving to the territories which were allocated to their chief, whereas the supporters of Nkasa were reluctant to move. This indicated that there were other reasons for participating in the fights.

Since the abaMbo conflict had been simmering for more than three decades by the 1930s, it is possible that one major phenomenon which influenced people's behaviour during these fights was socialisation. This view is based on the evidence of strong group identities within the abaMbo people by the 1930s. The two main identities, which clearly had deep historical roots, were those which defined people as adherents of either Nkasa or Timuni. Under conditions of stress, these identities could be used in struggle over resources or prestige. The appointment of Nkasa to a consolidated chieftainship, and the subsequent back-tracking in the appointment of Timuni, created conditions in which identity formation thrived.

The group identities which prevailed within the abaMbo people were centred around chiefs. Chiefs commonly spoke on behalf of their people.²⁸ These group identities were territorially based and they defied kinship ties at certain times, but showed signs of fluidity when conditions changed. For example, when fighting broke out in July 1939 between Timuni's supporters and the neighbouring Maphepheta and the Makhanya chiefdoms the supporters of Nkasa came to the assistance of their fellow abaMbo people.²⁹ By assisting fellow abaMbo against the neighbouring chiefdoms their identity assumed an all embracing abaMbo identity. A significant point is that these group identities could not have developed to what they were unless there were conscious efforts to socialise the commoners into identifying with strong solidarity groups.

Since violence was used as a political strategy by the chiefs and izinduna, the socialisation of young men into solidarity groups made it possible for them to be used in the event of an outbreak of fighting. For this political strategy to work it was necessary to secure the support and loyalty of young men who could be called upon to serve as shock troops when the need arose. This linking of young men to the local leaders does not imply that they were passive players who were merely used by the leaders. They were actively involved in conflict as a way of expressing their masculinity. In the abaMbo conflict there were several references to violence which was caused by young men or in which they were actively involved.

28. NA, CNC, Vol.107A, File No. 90/34 N1/11/2, Pinetown NC to CNC, 1 April 1936.

29. NA, CNC, Vol.92A, File No. 63/14 N1/9/2(42), Interview:Nkasa and the NC: Umbumbulu, 21 July 1939.

Fighting over grazing land which broke out in the Nungwane river area in 1935 was started by young boys.³⁰ This minor clash later developed into a full blown fight between the supporters of Timuni and Nkasa. When in October 1935 the police averted a fight between the supporters of Nkasa and Timuni in the vicinity of the Nungwane river and the main Umbumbulu road, young men pleaded with the Native Commissioner to let them fight so that the victor could dictate terms to the loser.³¹

The commoners were not passive onlookers in the abaMbo conflict. The things which affected them directly such as the threat over their land and property and the importance of group solidarities persuaded them to participate actively in the fights. What should be emphasised, however, was that these actions were not reflecting any mindlessness or innate love for war. They were expressions of political differences and frustration which they encountered when the native affairs officials tried to solve the abaMbo conflict. We can conclude that scarce land resources and socialisation into distinctive group identities help to explain why commoners were enthusiastic participants in the fighting during the abaMbo dispute. Now let us try to understand why it was important for izinduna and chiefs to use violence as a political strategy.

Violence as a political strategy

The chiefly system was based on political and economic patronage. This patronage served as a link between the chiefs and izinduna, between the local authorities and the commoners

30. Ibid. Isipingo SAP to District Commandant: Durban, 9 October 1935.

31. NA, CNC, Vol. 89A, File No. 63/2/37 N1/9/2(x), NC: Camperdown to CNC, 23 October 1935.

and between the state the local authorities. It is important to work out how this patronage system created opportunities for violence to be used as a political strategy. Participants in the fights were mobilised and drawn from the areas under the jurisdiction of the izinduna. It was important for the izinduna to support the claims of their chiefs because that could also strengthen their positions as servants of the chiefs. The izinduna could receive favours from the chiefs in gratitude for the support they rendered. They could also receive material benefits from fines which were collected from people who were found guilty of minor offenses in the courts that were run by the chiefs and izinduna. Lastly, the izinduna could also be eligible for the state stipends. Mainly because of these benefits the izinduna often appeared to be the keen organisers of conflict and violence on behalf of their chiefs. But the relations between the chiefs and izinduna were not always harmonious.

The system of patronage could also be used by the izinduna to mobilise enough support from people in their own areas. If that support grew to a point where the izinduna felt confident to defy or challenge the authority of the chief, tension arose. Let us take the example of the relationship between Nkasa and his senior induna named Nkantolo to illustrate this point. Nkantolo was an ardent supporter of Chief Nkasa's claims to the chieftainship of abaMbo. That loyal support earned him the position of the senior induna. Nkantolo became a militant opponent of Timuni. When, in 1934, Nkasa was forced by the Native Commissioner for the Pinetown district to comply with the boundaries which were fixed between the two sections of the abaMbo, Nkantolo rejected the order.³² He refused to accept the people who were removed from Timuni's area onto the land which was under his jurisdiction. These people

32. NA, CNC, Vol.89A, File No.36/2/37 N1/9/2(x), Minutes of the Umbumbulu meeting, 19 September 1934.

were subsequently accommodated in another area. This squabble served as the foundation on which future tensions between Nkantolo and Nkasa were to develop.

Although throughout 1935 the relationship between Nkasa and Nkantolo appeared to be normal it went sour during 1936. During the peak of violence of that year, Nkantolo went away on a private visit to Swaziland, an action which was resented by Nkasa. Differences finally came into the open when fighting broke out between Nkantolo's supporters and those of another induna, Bhozo, in 1938.³³ Nkasa accused Nkantolo of disloyalty and aggression against Bhozo. He felt that he was disloyal because Nkantolo had stopped bringing civil cases to him from 1937 onwards. Nkantolo began to preside over these cases himself and then pocketed the fines. In 1938 Nkasa pleaded with the native affairs officials to dismiss Nkantolo from his position as induna and to deport him to a distant land to prevent future trouble. The Native Affairs Department dismissed Nkasa's allegations that Nkantolo was the cause of trouble since they had established that the supporters of Bhozo were aggressors in the 1938 fighting. Nkantolo could not be dismissed by the NAD because of the loyal service he had rendered to both Nkasa and the NAD.³⁴

Two things came out clearly here. Firstly, the patronage relations between the chiefs and izinduna were not always harmonious. In certain circumstances the izinduna, who were traditionally meant to be assistants to their chiefs, could develop interests which ran contrary to those of the chief. Secondly, the state usually had the final power of arbitration in case of such disputes. It is necessary to examine in more detail the role which was played by the

33. NA, CNC, Vol.92A, File No.63/14 N1/9/2(42), SAP: Umbumbulu to District Commandant: Durban, 1 January 1938.

34. NA, CNC, Vol.92A, File No. 63/14 N1/9/2(42), Umbumbulu NC to CNC, 30 March 1939.

state in the abaMbo conflict.

The state's role in the abaMbo conflict

The state helped to create conditions which were conducive to the eruption of violence. This was done in two ways. The state's support for certain chiefs and not others served to polarise the abaMbo community. It also embarked on several indecisive actions which compounded conflict instead of providing any solutions. In an effort to correct these mistakes it made decisions which exacerbated conflict. For example, the support for Bubula aggravated the wider conflict between Nkasa and Timuni.

Although the succession dispute was seen as a conflict between Nkasa and Timuni, it was also a dispute involving chief Bubula Mkhize. Bubula first ascended to the position of chief as a regent because Timuni's father, Sikukuku, was still a minor. By 1906 the Natal government had noticed that he was loyal, and appointed him as one of the five acting chiefs. When the native affairs administration decided to unite the Mkhize chieftaincy in the 1930s it decided not to interfere with his position during his life time.³⁵ The native affairs officials also adorned Bubula with a medal as a sign of the state's gratitude for the loyal service he had rendered to it.³⁶ While to the state Bubula remained an ideal chief, to the people he was seen as usurper, especially among the supporters of Timuni.

Bubula felt threatened by Timuni's challenge to Nkasa. The Native Commissioner for

35. NA, CNC, Vol. 89A, File No. 63/2/37 N1/9/2(x), CNC to SNA, 17 October 1934.

36. NA, CNC, Vol.104A, File No. 78/4 N1/1/2(x), Points for the SNA's speech, Pinetown, 1935.

Richmond reported that Timuni had visited Bubula's kraal on several occasions to demand that Bubula should relinquish his position in his favour.³⁷ Timuni was also accused of dividing Bubula's people. These tensions led to the purging of Bubula's council of those people who were seen as supporters of Timuni. Mkawupete Gumede was dismissed from the position of chief witness for Bubula because of his association with Timuni.³⁸

The state also wanted its will to prevail in both Nkasa's and Timuni's areas. Since the conflict among the abaMbo was very complex, the NAD decided to handle its relations with the chiefs with extra care. Yet it was clear that the NAD wanted to win Nkasa over to its side and to threaten Timuni with severe punishment if he resisted such a decision. Recognising Nkasa as a hereditary head of the abaMbo people was one of Lugg's strategies of coopting Nkasa and simultaneously limiting the authority of Timuni. Timuni could be forced, through such a strategy, to be more loyal. Such an approach bore dividends when Timuni, after the death of King George V, pledged the loyalty of his people to the English crown.³⁹ This was nonetheless achieved after several incidents of violence between 1934 and 1936. Such violence was due in part to the differential way in which the NAD had treated the three chiefs, Nkasa, Timuni and Bubula.

By contrast with the Umzinto case study of the previous chapter, state intervention in the abaMbo conflict lacked firmness, determination and finality. This indecisiveness was one of the contributions to violence within the abaMbo people. There were several mistakes which were placed at the doorstep of the NAD. It was blamed for appointing only Tilongo's

37. NA, CNC, Vol.89A, File No.63/2/37 N1/9/2(x), W.H.Atlee to CNC, 12 October 1934.

38. NA, CNC, Vol.77A, File No. 57/195 N1/1/3(39), Dismissal of Gumede.

39. NA, CNC, Vol.107A, File No. 90/34 N1/11/2, NC:Pinetown to CNC, 1 April 1936.

son to the chieftainship of abaMbo people without considering the claims of Sikukuku's son. The Native Commissioner for the Camperdown district said that 'there was nothing to indicate to the native mind that the son of the former would be preferred to the exclusion of his cousin Timuni.'⁴⁰ After making this mistake the native affairs officials demonstrated lack of organisation and planning when they reached decisions and then reversed them. The Native Commissioner for Richmond correctly blamed the laxity of the department in the abaMbo conflict as a reason for the spate of bloody clashes which began in March 1932.

After August 1934 the native affairs officials began to prevent 'outsiders' from interfering in the NAD's administrative matters. Chief Timuni's legal representative, Advocate Thrash, was the first person to experience such exclusion when Lugg told him to stay out of administrative matters. Advocate Thrash had made attempts to challenge the NAD's pending decision to recognise Nkasa as the hereditary head of abaMbo chiefdom.⁴¹ This attitude of the NAD could be seen as a form of political expediency which was aimed at amending the departmental blunders of the past. The department had just been blamed by local native commissioners for the lack of finality and firmness.⁴² When an anonymous writer published an article entitled 'The Tribal Civil War in Natal: Has an Indecisive Native Policy Been the Cause of Trouble?', Lugg ordered the local officials to voice their views on the handling of the abaMbo conflict.⁴³ Almost all the local officials he contacted supported the view that the NAD contributed to the conflict by its lack of firmness. Lugg was possibly making attempts to dissipate any ideas that his administration was inefficient. The

40. NA, CNC, Vol.91A, File No. 63/6 N1/9/2(x), Camperdown NC to CNC 21 September 1934.

41. NA, CNC, Vol.89A, File No. CNC 63/2/37 N1/9/2(X), CNC to SNA, 17 October 1934.

42. NA, CNC, Vol 91A, File No. 63/6 N1/9/2(x), Native Commissioners of Camperdown, Richmond, Weenen and Msinga to CNC, September to October 1934.

43. Natal Mercury, 10 September 1934.

shortsightedness of that approach was that it temporarily allayed the conflict without addressing the root causes.

The Native Affairs Department also involved the two prominent regional leaders, Dube and Mshiyeni, in the abaMbo succession dispute. In almost all the meetings which were held by the NAD officials to address the problems arising from this dispute, Dube and Mshiyeni were invited to mediate between Nkasa and Timuni. In a meeting held at Umbumbulu store in 1934 they both addressed the abaMbo people. Dube urged the abaMbo people and their leaders to obey the laws of the Native Affairs officials.⁴⁴ In a meeting convened by the NAD during the visit of the Secretary for Native Affairs in 1935, Dube and Mshiyeni shared the platform with the officials. Dube commended the abaMbo people for accepting the need to voice their grievances to the NAD authorities. He was adorned with a medal at that meeting.⁴⁵ All these actions were part of Lugg's strategy of encouraging a provincial identity that would not be hostile to the NAD's policies in Natal; and would perpetuate the long established 'tribal' administration in this province. His efforts were not entirely successful because the identities which developed during the times of intense conflict in the Umbumbulu were centred around local chiefs.

Conclusion

This chapter has traced the origins of the abaMbo conflict to the end of the 19th century,

44. NA, CNC, Vol.89A, File No.63/2B N1/9/2(x), Record of the public meeting at Umbumbulu store, 16 October 1934.

45. NA, CNC, Vol.91A, File No.63/6 N1/9/2(x), Minutes of the meeting at Adam's Mission Station, 17 June 1935.

with the aim of illustrating that tension developed over a lengthy period before it tripped into violence in the 1930s. While the source of conflict was internal to the abaMbo chieftaincy it was an external force, the state, which created conditions for violence to break out. This was an unintentional product of NAD's efforts to exert and maintain its control over the abaMbo chiefdom.

Commoners were not passive players in the fighting which erupted in the eMbo territories. They decided to fight because of political reasons such as the threatened loss of property and land. Hut burning was one strategy which they adopted to force opponents out of the area by destroying their property. Socialisation of young men created conditions for easy mobilisation of fighters into armies. These armies were territorially based and their existence encouraged the development of chief-centred group identities. These armies reflected the emphasis on masculinity in these fights. The young men, the izinduna and the chiefs served as agents of violence.

The existence of patronage relations at various political levels of the abaMbo chiefdom created opportunities for violence as a strategy to work. Young men were socialised into solidarity groups and then used as shock troops by political leaders and war generals when they decided that fighting was the appropriate strategy for achieving their political interests.

As in the Dumisa conflict in the Umzinto district, the interplay between the pre-colonial social relations and the developing modern relations created a contest of laws and conventions. The police complained on a number of occasions that they received no cooperation from the people when they attempted to effect arrests. In the Umzinto district

the police reported in 1935 that the adherents of chiefs Mbhele and Duma avoided arrests by hiding in the inaccessible and rugged areas across the Umkhomazi river. The police complained that the followers of Nkasa and Timuni also took to the mountains to escape the police patrols. Even the communities shielded the protagonists in the wars, thus making it difficult for the police to apprehend and bring them before the state law. This reflected the existence of the differing conceptions of law, legitimate authority and acceptable collective behaviour between the state officials and its agencies, on the one hand, and the people of both the Umzinto and the Umbumbulu districts.

There were clear political reasons for the various people's participation in the fights which erupted between the two sections of the abaMbo chiefdom during the 1930s. To the chiefs, the izinduna and the war generals, who had a stake in the chiefly structure, claims to chieftainship were of great importance for their survival; and violence was then used more readily to defend both their material possessions and political positions. The commoners could not afford to lose land resources because their livelihood depended on them. When they were faced with social and political problems they used violence as a strategy to defend what they had and to drive opponents out of specific territories permanently through hut burnings. The patterns seem to suggest that the chiefs, the izinduna and the commoners initiated acts of violence for political ends. Meanwhile the state committed one blunder after another in its bid to contain violence and impose its political hegemony on these communities. While such violence cannot be condoned, generalisations which do not take into account the contexts and variations which existed in the different communities are not appropriate to analyze and understand the complex dynamics of rural conflict and violence.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

The aim of this study has been to challenge the use of popular and entrenched notions like 'faction fighting' to explain rural conflicts and violence. Two opportunities for evaluating the contention that these conflicts reflect the African people's innate love for fighting were provided through the case studies of the Umzinto and the Umbumbulu districts. It was shown that the notion of 'faction fighting' was inadequate as an explanation of the complex dynamics of the rural conflicts. These conflicts could not be understood without analysing the specific social, political and economic conditions in which they originated and intensified. By tracing the roots of conflicts to events which occurred in the distant past we able to conclude that the fights were not sporadic and mindless.

The problem with using 'faction fighting' to explain conflicts is the tendency to generalise conflicts and ignore the context in which they originated. Generalisations which do not take into account the variations which existed in the different communities are not appropriate to analyze and understand the complex dynamics of rural conflict and violence. Through analysing the specific contexts of the 1930s we were able to grapple with why the notions of 'faction fighting' and 'tribe' were important to the NAD officials in the 1930s; and why there were many actors who were willing to work within the political and cultural framework provided by the Native Affairs Department.

The officials, on the one hand, were confronted with the problem of rural disintegration due to urbanisation, meanwhile chiefs were experiencing gradual marginalisation from the political processes as a result of rapid social and political change. The NAD officials responded to these circumstances by shoring up the patriarchal 'tribal' order through a retribalisation project. Most chiefs readily seized the opportunity created by the officials when they traded limited authority in exchange for loyalty. They were drawn into the system of native administration through a highly institutionalised patronage system. By the 1930s the notion of 'tribe' carried much significance to the NAD officials and the chiefs alike. It is only through grasping the actual context that we can begin to appreciate how and why the chiefs, the izinduna and the commoners used violence as a political strategy.

By identifying the major actors we were able to appreciate how violence was successfully utilised as a political strategy. The state was identified as one of the major actors. Others were the chiefs, the izinduna and the commoners, especially young men. The state created conducive conditions for violence through extending its support to some chiefs and not to others. For example, in the Umzinto district the NAD officials were seen by the Dumisa people as ostracizing their chieftaincy by supporting almost all the chiefdoms that were at war with them. In the abaMbo conflict Lugg treated the three key chiefs, Nkasa, Timuni and Bubula differentially. Tension between the different chiefdoms was due in part to the differential treatment by the Native Affairs Department officials.

The chiefs, the izinduna and the commoners were the actual agents of violence. Although the chiefs seldom defied the state officials openly, they secretly pursued violence as a political strategy. They did this by exploiting the system of patronage between themselves

and their subordinates. The success of this strategy rested on maintaining good relationships with their followers. Under the conditions of social stress and uncertainty in the 1930s chiefs became more important to men as symbols of patriarchal order in the reserves. Chiefs were also forced to keep healthy relations with their izinduna to prevent possible uprising against their rule. Although evidence of socialisation was difficult to find, the huge number of young men who were enthusiastic participants in the fights suggests that they had been socialised into the roles of soldiers who were ready to fight for a range of objectives.

The commoners' participation in the fights did not imply that they had an innate love for fighting. Instead they were responding to adverse social and political conditions, which were aggravated by the pressures of the natural disasters in the early 1930s. These conditions had a profound impact on their lives and sharpened the struggles over scarce land resources. The state's land policies added economic stress on their lives, in particular the allocation of the Dumisa lands to the abaMbo, Mabheleni and Zembeni in 1914 and 1925; and, in the Umbumbulu district, the order for the commoners to move their kraals to the territories which were allocated to their respective chiefs. Tensions and the struggles over scarce resources hastened the creation of group identities which were used to advance group claims to specific territories and to prestige.

These identities were centred around chiefs and were territorially based. Chiefs frequently spoke on behalf of their people. In the case of the Dumisa chiefdom one weapon of mobilising the commoners into armies were through a distinctive ethnicity. In the abaMbo succession dispute the identities which had deep historical roots were those which referred

to people as adherents of either Nkasa or Timuni. The identities were fluid and situational; and the changing identities within the abaMbo communities during their fights with the Maphepheta and the Makhanya chiefdoms in July 1939, was good example of this fluidity. Despite the efforts by Lugg, Dube and Mshiyeni to develop a provincial identity through the retribalisation project; and although the white press referred to the Umzinto and the Umbumbulu people as Zulus, there was little evidence of whether the people in these communities regarded themselves as amaZulu or not.¹

The long roots of conflict showed that the fights were not irrational actions. There was a lengthy period between the time when tension originated and intensified and the time when it deteriorated into violence. The 1930s provided a complex, dynamic and unpredictable atmosphere where one could not assume that because there was tension violence would erupt. Most violence resulted from a combination of particular state policy, social tensions, economic pressures and the type of actors that were involved in specific conflicts. Peaceful methods of solving problems were sometimes explored before turning to warfare. These methods included soliciting legal representation and despatching delegations to conduct open talks with opponents. Although young men were frequently noted for their provocative behaviour, it was often after the participants thought that they had exhausted peaceful methods of solving problems that they turned to violence. It was regarded as a last resort which when deployed, unleashed a momentum of its own.

The fights which broke out in the two districts reflected the social and political frustrations

1. Natal Mercury, 30 January 1933; Rand Daily Mail, 30 and 31 January 1933 and The Times of London, 19 October 1934.

that were experienced by the chiefs, the izinduna and the commoners in the transitional period from the pre-colonial to the modern political economy. The type of resistance to state authority bore features of social banditry. It was resistance which challenged the power of the state, not by confronting it, but by reaching for alternative forms of authority and power. It created conditions of dual authority, albeit unequal, in most areas. By protecting the protagonists in the acts of violence, the people demonstrated that there were differing conceptions of law, legitimate authority and acceptable collective behaviour between themselves, on the one hand, and the police and the officials of the native administration, on the other. As a result of this the number of people who stood trial were incredibly low when compared to the huge number of participants in the fights.

The conflicts in both the districts of Umzinto and Umbumbulu were of a political nature. The relatively small number of human deaths suggests that the violence which arose from these tensions were primarily concerned with forcing the opponents out of specific territories through a strategy of hut burnings and the destruction of property. The large numbers which were mobilised served more as a show of force than an intent to exterminate human beings. It seems as if there were social rules for fighting which guided the conflicts. It appears as though the officials and the police were not necessarily worried about human deaths, but about the lack control over certain areas. It was logical for them to be disturbed by the frequent disappearance of fighters into the thickets and mountains when there had been fighting; and by their failure to obtain incriminating evidence against chiefs who were implicated in violence. Without suggesting that the descriptive term 'collective violence' is a substitute of 'faction fighting', using it in this study was helpful in that its open-ended nature allowed for a wide variety of causes and consequences.

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