



Overlying and muddled power: the Ciskei Bantustan's disputed rural governance in the twilight decade of apartheid, c.1985–95

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ABSTRACT

The paucity of writing on the rapid collapse of local administration within several South African bantustans gripped by the upsurge of civic mobilisation in the late 1980s remains one of the lacunae of the country's late twentieth-century historiography. Land and governance within such enclaves had become a central issue as apartheid stirred up spatial and demographic calamity in its traumatic displacement and relocation of African households. The turning tide against the local administration of these reassembled human settlements during the 1980s disabled the vital cog of the state-appointed 'tribal authorities'. Ciskei, which in the late 1970s was swiftly and arbitrarily consolidated under tribal authorities, was one of the bantustans caught up in the rising civic movement from the 1980s onwards. The overlying yet jumbled powers of such besieged tribal authorities, interfacing with the exuberant civic organisations throughout the 1990s, contributed to the advance of Lungisile Ntsebeza's scholarship around land and rural governance in South Africa. He investigated simple, yet germane, questions such as who governs in the bantustans and how essential land and allied resources were to such disputed control. In honouring Ntsebeza's scholarship, this article sketches out the history behind the overlying and muddled powers of these governing traditional authorities. It also explicates the myriad socio-political forces that underpinned the disputed nature of rural governance within the Ciskei Bantustan during the dying years of apartheid.

KEYWORDS

Ciskei; apartheid; bantustans; tribal authorities; civic movement; rural governance

Introduction: bantustans under pressure in the 1980s

The 1980s, which saw widening resistance to the notorious South African apartheid system, characterised much of the crisis of the then 10 bantustans. That apartheid scheme was product of the Afrikaner National Party (NP) government. Engineered by that regime from 1948, it and related bantustans had roots in the equally infamous Land Act of 1913 – a legal framework for territorial segregation, or the creation of African

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Accepted: 3 May 2024; published online: 17 July 2024

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reserves in twentieth-century South Africa. Consequently, apartheid and its bantustan policy shaped the governance of relations between the mainstream black and white minority groups for much of the latter part of the twentieth century. That territorial segregation also safeguarded residential rights and ownership for white minority groups over four South African provinces created from 1910: the Cape, Transvaal, Orange Free State and Natal. In espousing racial segregation, the NP government created bantustans through its Bantu Authorities Act of 1951. All 10 bantustans were premised on ethnic enclaves of a segregated African population. The NP government officially referred to them as ‘homelands’ from the 1970s (Southall 1983; Peires 1992; Phillips 2017; Evans 2018).

From the 1970s, enduring into the early 1980s, the NP government and apartheid planners elevated bantustans to homelands, while concomitantly presenting them as mirages of self-ruling states. Between 1976 and 1981, the NP government led by B. J. Vorster and P. W. Botha created four such homelands: Transkei, Bophutatswana, Venda and the Ciskei (TBVC). The same government also aspired spreading ‘self-governing’ status to the ethnic enclaves of Gazankulu, KwaZulu, KaNgwane, Lebowa and Qwaqwa. It was still pushing bogus independence to KwaNdebele as late as 1987, with the resultant purpose of also transmuting all those enclaves into homelands (Peires 1992). In the early to mid 1980s, the NP government also proposed resettling all African areas deemed inaptly situated outside demarcated homelands. Essentially facing relocation, these African communities, officially labelled ‘black spots’ for being within safeguarded white areas, already shared an analogous rural administration format as those within designated homelands. They all were under the lowest tier of the 1951 Bantu Authorities System – a base-level governance which sanctioned a tribalised power system for bantustans. These tribal authorities had the unenviable edict of carrying out local governance within such rezoned African enclaves. They interlaced with bantustan townships and town managers that partly provided administrative hubs, from where district-by-district government services and even industrial sites were often accessible.

All these rural and urban administration entities faced major challenges from the mid 1980s onwards from a wider insurrectional movement that strove to undo the apartheid project (Wotshela 2022). By the mid 1980s, homegrown residents’ associations had emerged within ‘black spots’ contesting relocations and challenging tribal authorities, while also taking up roles of local authorities in adjudicating communities’ affairs. Such roles were evident within the white farming districts that connected East London on the Indian Ocean coastline to Queenstown (now renamed Komani) in the northern interior of those Border districts. The Ciskei Bantustan adjacent to those districts was a black hinterland on the western flank of that white corridor, comprising several ‘black spots’ that mounted popular anti-removal campaigns to a Ciskei homeland during the 1980s. Ciskei had fallen under a fictitious fiefdom of Lennox Sebe in 1973, but it was remapped as a consolidated territory from the mid 1970s. By 1981, the NP government had granted it homeland status and spurious independence. As he accepted delicacies from the NP government, Sebe had led a Ciskeian government that facilitated forced removals, and thus his Ciskei received more displaced families despite resisting ‘black spots’. Having created his self-styled Ciskei National Independence Party (CNIP) while using it to widen his support base, Ciskei became a divided homeland. On the one hand were loyalists to Sebe’s regime, who benefited from resources such as land and attached services that were dispensed by his local authorities; on the other were marginalised dissident groups who

were alienated from such benefits. By the late 1980s, the influence of residents' associations that had rejected removals from 'black spots' had extended to mainland Ciskei, nullifying the homeland's tribal authorities. That authority system also fractured in other northern bantustans such as KaNgwane, Lebowa, Gazankulu and KwaNdebele. Some split in those areas to align with liberation movements, mainly ones in exile, but also operated clandestinely and inside operating groups of hitherto banned political parties (Peires 1992; Wotshela 2019).

This dislodgement of bantustans' rural local administration during the 1980s was a significant shift from the 1970s, when bantustan politics strove to construct typical ethnic entities, aligned to artificially delineated, then formally equipped but also subjectively tribalized, spaces. During their planning up to the 1970s, bantustans had become homes of displaced families. Their role during the 1970s entailed initially being homes for rural migrants engaged in South Africa's formal economic sector, thus expediting social control over them. Related to this latter point was their added role of offering space to the 'surplus people' (Wolpe 1972; Greenberg and Giliomee 1985). Yet, the roles of bantustans continued to change. As in the case of Ciskei, resources reinforced by departmental services became benefaction-creation tools. In such cases, the NP government had hoped beneficiaries of homeland resources would stall the impetus of the wider liberation. Ciskei went a different, yet capricious route. Crucially, its rapid and random mapping from the mid 1970s had also yielded open borders, which made it easy to interact with politically volatile townships from nearby white towns, that disputed their own administration structures in the same period. Moreover, Ciskei and these adjacent areas housed a range of people from the African middle-class and unionised working class who did not necessarily rely on the Ciskei government. All these anomalies had already brought Ciskei to melting point by the mid 1980s and made Sebe and the NP government's control of this homeland during the dying years of apartheid tricky.

This article looks at the critical 10-year period (1985–1995) of the Ciskei homeland, whereby its local government that depended on resisted tribal authorities, townships and town managers faced desolation under unremitting waves of insurrection. How multifaceted were the forces that drove that insurrection and the constituencies that shaped it? The article recounts the interfacing local and national socio-political factors driving the collapse of this homeland, and those like it, during that crucial epoch of political change in South Africa. It also explicates the severity of the interface of the Ciskei with other urban areas in the adjacent white farming districts, and reciprocally the impact of political forces from that adjacent zone on those of this homeland. This article also uncovers other forms of politics and authority formation that emerged with the insurgence that dissolved the Ciskei homeland in the last years of apartheid. Importantly, as the paper shows, patronage-building methods linked to chiefly politics did not simply vanish. As tribal authorities wriggled to retain control and some remobilised under the liberation movement, the resultant residents' associations or civic organisations continued to take insurgent populist positions. Some groups affirmed themselves as agents of rural constituencies and the different last rulers of the Ciskei would accentuate these. Crucially, Lungisile Ntsebeza's apt observation and key question of who governed in these rural areas of this bantustan resonated with the state of local authority during the early 1990s. Such a question, which shows the state of overlying and muddled local authority, also requires this article to outline the status quo of the Ciskei homeland during the twilight years of apartheid.

The incongruity of the Ciskei locality, and its political cauldron leading to the mid 1980s

In the eastern parts of the Cape Province, the Transkei and the Ciskei became leading vehicles of the NP government's bantustan policy. Nevertheless, both moved into the mainstream of the 1980s' popular struggles against apartheid, but on different footings. The Transkei, most of whose chieftaincies survived conquest even during the brutal nineteenth century, received self-governance from Hendrick Verwoerd's NP government in 1963. It fell under an ambitious Kaiser Matanzima, who had by then already formed his Transkei National Independence Party (TNIP), and thus there was a seamless consolidation for the very first 'independent homeland' in 1976. By 1976, Matanzima's Transkei was a geographically contiguous territory of about 4.4 million hectares, with a population of nearly 3.5 million people, administratively divided into 26 magisterial districts, most of which emerged from the conquest of the previous century.¹ The Transkei was home to many migrants and was not attached to specific South African cities, except the bordering South African towns. The main two were Kokstad in the east and Queenstown (now renamed Komani), in the far west (Wotshela 2019). Conservative, but still influential, chiefs controlled much of the Transkei's administration. Many of its educated elite worked as either government civil servants, bureaucrats, or moguls of licensed businesses. The latter group had acquired enterprises in the process of buying out previous white traders during Transkei's move to 'independence' (Southall 1983; Peires 1992).

Ciskei's African territories in the west were by distinction very scattered by the mid 1970s, with concentrations around King William's Town (now renamed Qonce), neighbouring Keiskammahoek, Middledrift, Peddie in the south, and Hewu in the northern reaches (see **Figure 1**). The NP government had constructed the upper tier of bantustan administration – a Ciskei Territorial Authority (CTA) in 1961 – which developed amid countrywide repression of the black liberation movement, as did Matanzima's TNIP. The CTA coordinated 35 tribal and nine regional authorities by 1970. The Ciskeian African areas located within white farming Border districts and in the further northern areas of Glen Grey and Herschel were far-flung and detached from the main concentrations. These discrete areas were not ideal for apartheid planners who looked to a merged Transkei and Matanzima's self-rule as a classic example. Ciskei territorial contiguity thus became major priority for the NP government during the mid 1970s (Peires 1992; Ntsebeza 2006; Wotshela 2009).

Significantly, the tribal authority system that replaced the previously vanquished chieftaincy after the nineteenth century conquest also became central to the idea of bantustan consolidation. The reinstatement of Ciskei's chieftaincy became the creature of the apartheid canon, in as much as that homeland territory's land was the tool of retribalisation, being the receptacle for the many relocated families. Essentially, each of the instituted tribal authorities had certified chiefs, their own tribunals, and roving elected and sometimes appointed headmen. The latter were already the conduit of local administration, liaising with resident district magistrates or commissioners via the earlier 1927 Administration Act (Groenewald 1980). The NP government abridged that arrangement after 1951 by dividing up local administration and its personnel between tribal authority formations. In that scheme of things, headmen operated within and were accountable to their own tribal authorities to reinforce the Bantu self-governance strategy. Vorster's NP government had set up the process in the early 1970s, as it in turn enacted the Bantu homeland Citizenship



Figure 2. Consolidated Ciskei magisterial districts and 'black spots' in the Border corridor white districts in the early 1980s.

Source: Adapted from SPP 1983.

districts. These, some of which today have new names, included Hewu in the further north and Peddie and Mdantsane along the Indian Ocean coastline. In the midlands, they also included the magisterial districts of Victoria East, Middledrift, Keiskammahoek and Zwelitsha (Switzer 1993; Peires 1995; Wotshela 2004; see also [Figure 2](#)).

The redrawing of the Ciskei and such large-scale territorial manipulations caused massive relocations from the districts ceded to Matanzima's Transkei. Many from those districts did not want to align with Transkei's 'independence'. From 1976, Ciskeian politicians were equally prepared to lure these people under their control, and thus planned reallocating newly released farmlands from Queenstown district to reshape a new Northern Ciskei region around the old Hewu area. New Ciskei resettlement sites here became places for those who submitted to refabricated new tribal authority areas of this homeland from 1976 onwards. The relocation scheme also produced shocking relocation sites, with poor living conditions and infinite hardships, exposed in the publications of the Surplus People's Projects (SPP) during the early 1980s. One of these, west of Queenstown, on Thornhill and Loudon farms, housed those who moved out of Herschel (SPP 1983). The other, aptly called Zweledinga (or Promised Land), west of Whittlesea lodged Glen Grey relocatees.

In a repulsive twist, Sebe completed the misery for all those displaced families by copying Matanzima and accepting political ‘independence’ for Ciskei in 1981. Ciskei politics and apartheid removals made it a futile and yet harrowing experience for those who in 1976 attempted to cling onto South African citizenship by separating from the then-occurring Transkei ‘independence’.

Their poor living conditions within a changing Ciskei continued throughout the 1980s. Despite publicity and involvement from progressive NGOs, such as the Grahamstown Rural Committee (GRC) and Black Sash, some of the resettled families did not receive land allocations in the Northern Ciskei region. Dissidents who rejected Sebe’s CNIP and newly imposed tribal authorities did not receive rural resources, even though they informally still shared rural resources such as residential and agricultural land with adherents to tribal authority. Although such protesters could still access other rights, and social services like schooling, health, welfare and burial sites within the tribal authority localities, most still faced discrimination. Abuse and restrictions still applied, leading to the regular suspension or punitive termination of these informal rights (Wotshela 2014, 2018).

These harsh treatments contributed to the struggle for the democratisation of rural local government, but there were still contrasts in the pattern and timing of the mounting challenge to the Ciskei homeland. Equally important, there were socio-political forces in play affecting other bantustans asymmetrically throughout the 1980s. In the Ciskei homeland, the campaign to resist removal in the ‘black spots’ in the Border districts was evident as early as 1982. It soon became a wider campaign against apartheid removals, even before the campaigns of the United Democratic Front (UDF) began in 1983. By then, many of the older communal settlements within the Ciskei, or those that faced relocation threats, had entered a downward production slide because of the misfiring villagisation schemes of the 1960s that shrunk land and agrarian options (de Wet 1994; Wotshela 2018). Within newer resettlement sites, appalling conditions arising from the alienation of dissident groups cultivated hostility towards the homelands process. At the core of such enmity, unremitting complaints regarding the impact of resettlement and tribal authority politics ensued throughout the mid 1980s (Hendricks 1989; de Wet 1994, 1995). The often prejudiced or continuing harsh treatment of those who did not align with tribal authorities during this time contributed largely to the increased mobilisation against these authorities in several Ciskei districts. The organisation of residents’ associations, initially with the facilitation of proactive NGOs like the GRC within ‘black spots’, started to spread to the mainland districts of the Ciskei after 1985 and began posing challenges to the embedded tribal authorities (Wotshela 2018).

Ciskei’s accessibility and the mobility of many people who had set up earlier Border residents’ associations during the early 1980s cannot be over-emphasised. Many were able to draw inspiration and tactics from the actions of other Eastern Cape towns to the west. Some key urban centres, like Port Elizabeth (now Gqeberha), the adjacent industrial Uitenhage (now Kariega), and the further-flung Cradock (now Nxuba), had increasingly challenged their own Black Local Authorities (BLA) system. Port Elizabeth townships hosted the activities of the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) and a civic and youth movement, the Port Elizabeth Black Civic Organisation (PEBCO). These organisations drove civic mobilisation in the area during the early to mid 1980s (Cherry and Gibbs 2007). The BLA system, which the NP government promulgated countrywide via legislation in 1982, created two formations of local government for African people: the town,

and then village councils, responsible to the Director of Local Government within a rehabilitated Department of Cooperation and Development (DCD) (Beinart 2001; Wotshela 2018). DCD had a long legacy and authority over the running of countrywide African affairs. Essentially the BLA system was an adapted apartheid initiative that still upheld extended control, under the national reform policies of Botha, who succeeded Vorster in 1978 (Bekker and Humphreys 1985). With its use, apartheid planners realised their objective of devolving urban administration to African clients and fostering black allies while subjecting African urban areas to regular segregation. This strategy followed from the focus on homelands, which were to absorb much of the African people, serving as geo-political ethnic enclaves in a perfect apartheid model (Wotshela 2019).

In several cases homelands politics and especially resistance strategies to the tribal authority system linked up with those of adjacent townships hostile to the BLA system. Though urban township revolts manifested in different forms and dimensions from ‘black spots’ resistance, their coordination broadened after 1983. This owed much to the emergence of the UDF, which galvanised civil and political actions on multiple fronts that cut across homelands and the townships, mostly still located within white South Africa. In such cases, for instance, movements within and outside the Ciskei could not happen in isolation from those of other adjacent townships in the corridor connecting East London to Queenstown further north. Pertinently, the Botha government had also intensified civil campaigns against its regime when it created the tri-cameral system that enfranchised coloureds and Indians in their own discrete, but unequal, parliaments. There was countrywide antipathy to the tri-cameral system, broadening insurrectional activity. Common township revolts and ‘black spots’ removal resistance tactics were interactive in the mid 1980s, connecting political movements in urban spaces to those of the countryside as homelands and townships became vessels of resistance politics (Swilling 1988; Seekings 2000). Nevertheless, resistance to Ciskei tribal authorities entwined with that to the BLA system within adjacent townships was only beginning.

Widening challenges to the Ciskei local administration and adjacent Border districts’ black local authorities in the mid 1980s to early 1990s

Beyond the failed attempt to remove ‘black spots’ that backfired on Sebe’s regime, the fluidity of movements and constant interface of the Ciskei with other areas of the Cape Province and the rest of the country continued to test the artificial precincts of this homeland. Some of those further away urban sites secured employment for others: migrant and industrial routes between this homeland and western zones such as Port Elizabeth and the Uitenhage area continued during the 1980s. It was nevertheless within the Border corridor of East London to Queenstown districts that mobilisation against local authority took on a wider dimension in the late 1980s. Removal-resisting ‘black spots’ had already exploded during the early 1980s. Continuing protests against councillors affiliated with the BLA also peaked in the townships of the region and in the process amplified the rural–urban connection. This connection was buttressed with the advent of the Border Civic Congress (BOCCO) during 1987. The UDF instantly embraced BOCCO (Manona 1997; Wotshela 2019).

By the late 1980s, BOCCO coalesced growing protests from almost all Ciskei rural villages and townships, adjacent Border districts and parts of the western Transkei, from Butterworth stretching to Queenstown, which itself was a site of resistance against the BLA councillors and poor social services. That caused a series of consumer boycotts, one involving the killing of 11 people and the injuring of many more by police during one bloody day in November 1985 (Wotshela 2019). These police actions led to a series of reprisal rent boycotts in adjacent areas of the Transkei, mainly the Northern Ciskei district of Hewu, including the townships of Sada and Ekuphumleni (Dongwe). By 1987, with the advent of BOCCO, which instantly impelled such actions, rent boycotts threatened to collapse the revenue of the Hewu district's administrative town of Whittlesea. By then this area had become fervid in its rebuff of Sebe's CNIP, albeit it was also one of main recipients of consolidation land, and the location for displaced families from farms, as well as from Glen Grey and Herschel. Likewise, by 1989 residents' associations had emerged in the overly congested resettlement sites of Thornhill and Zweledinga, connecting robustly with those in the Northern Ciskei region through BOCCO's mobilisation activities (Wotshela 2018).

Equally, the most intense protests against the BLA system complemented spells of crushing consumer boycotts during 1988 and 1989 in residential areas of Stutterheim and King William's Town within the corridor of the Border districts. To squash the protests, police and state security from both towns detained and harassed some militant members of the Stutterheim civic organisation. Nevertheless, with the support of BOCCO and the Border Region of the UDF, remobilised residents launched further consumer boycotts from September 1989, focusing mainly on Stutterheim. The action continued for seven months, sealed the fate of some 14 local businesses, and white commercial trade and farming activity in Stutterheim, and the economic activities of the inner Border districts generally, disintegrated. Although the boycott disrupted the lives of local Africans, who commuted between residential areas and outlying towns for their household goods, by 1990 it resulted in the collapse of the Stutterheim white-controlled municipality. These Stutterheim and King William's Town actions spilled into the adjacent Ciskei districts of Zwelitsha, Keiskammahoeck, Middeldrift and the Victoria East in mainland Ciskei. In all these areas, tribal authorities and Ciskei government functionaries became targets of popular resistance groups, as defiance campaigns had already started in the northern part of Ciskei (Nel 1994; Nussbaum 1997; Wotshela 2019).

At the heart of complaints within the Ciskei homeland were persistent demands for land and services. Thus, the Ciskei government continued to disintegrate under intense insurrection by the late 1980s. F. W. De Klerk ironically hastened its disintegration after taking over the NP government's presidency in 1989. He promptly unbanned liberation movements, enabling remobilisation countrywide, and buttressed that move with the release of Nelson Mandela from detention in 1990 (Houston 2013). Amid widespread celebrations of Mandela's release, the last memories of Sebe's rule over the Ciskei were of his police recklessly firing at jubilant crowds in Mdantsane, the biggest township in Ciskei. At least 10 people died. With the BOCCO enraged, a series of confrontations between Ciskei police and residents spread to parts of the homeland and continued relentlessly during early 1990 (Peires 1992; Manona 1997), cumulating in the end of Sebe's reign.

Brigadier Oupa Gqozo, a military attaché to the Ciskei embassy in Pretoria, emerged amid the disorder and overthrew Sebe's regime to proclaim a military government in

March 1990. In Transkei, Bantubonke Holomisa of the Transkei Defence Force (TDF) had similarly set up a military government after deposing George Matanzima, who had taken over from his brother Kaiser in 1986. This government became popular by later allowing even banned liberation movements to operate widely (Ntsebeza 2013). Gqozo too initially adopted a democratic stance and openly received Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress (ANC) early in his rule. He ended the death penalty in the Ciskei and amended labour laws, albeit clamping down hard on the strike then happening at Cecilia Makiwane, the biggest hospital of the Ciskei. Gqozo instituted a commission of inquiry to investigate corruption in Sebe's regime and arrested suspects, including Sebe's son Kwane, who faced a charge of misconduct. He also reintroduced and popularised bus services Ciskeian people had boycotted since the mid 1980s under a new banner: the Mayibuye (literal meaning, 'come back') Transport Corporation. Gqozo's most decisive, yet disruptive move was an attempted reform of the local authority system within the Ciskei (Manona 1997; Wotshela 2001).

Initially cognisant of and wanting to placate the growing wave of residents' associations, within his first month of office Gqozo suspended the roles of all headmen attached to tribal authorities. Oddly, he retained chiefs, though he too would verify their legitimacy during 1991, via a self-appointed commission (Wotshela 2019). Meanwhile, during 1990, adapting to the ongoing trend he encouraged local people in various districts to constitute residents' associations for local administration, but alongside chiefs. This move thrust the old and imminent residents' or civic associations into awkward positions. Over the years, within bantustans and particularly in the Ciskei, chiefs formed part of a government-reconstituted tribal authority system and did not work or govern with elected residents' associations, as Gqozo's new announcement suggested. Indeed, residents' associations emerged as part of a contestation of chieftaincy and its aligned tribal authority system in the quest for democratisation of local governance, against the apartheid local authority system in both rural and urban settings. Under Gqozo's new order, they found themselves inheriting hitherto tribal authorities' directorial functions in a critical phase of the political transition (Manona 1997; Wotshela 2009, 2018).

At the start of 1991, Gqozo complicated the activities of existing and prospective residents' associations further, as he changed his mind by rejecting their choice of local authorities, which he had earlier approved. He reinstated the Ciskei headmanships, throwing the rural Ciskei local authority system into deeper chaos. Naturally, residents' associations that had already gained positions of power refused to resign, as most of their followers could not realign with the reinstated headmanships and tribal authority system. In many areas, some leaders of recently formed residents' associations who wanted to defend their own powers manipulated Gqozo's incompetence while working with his call, and moved to headmen positions in districts like Keiskammahoek, Victoria-East and Hewu. More seriously, in the same districts and other larger ones that included Zwelitsha and Mdantsane, followers of residents' associations brutally hounded several headmen candidates. These clashes often resulted in bloodbaths, replicating those following the refusal of tribal authorities within 'black spots' to move into the Ciskei during the early 1980s. Nevertheless, the scale of challenge and allied violence became even more intense during Gqozo's reign (Wotshela 2019).

Gqozo's brief but chaotic rule was already evident within 15 months of being in office. Opposition to his messy local authority operation coincided with civil service strikes in

most Ciskei districts. Hastily trying to restore order, he declared a state of emergency at the end of 1991. By then he had alienated most of his departments, leading to the intervention of De Klerk's government in the Ciskei's administration. At the end of 1991, De Klerk's government took over direct control of crucial ministerial portfolios, including finance, justice, and state administration (Peires 1992; Manona 1997). Yet Gqozo envisaged clinging to power via a relegitimised Ciskei chieftaincy, following the findings of his government's commission of inquiry. Like Sebe, he still saw chieftaincy and an officially controlled local authority as the main vehicles for securing grassroots support. The dwindling CNIP had meanwhile helped the ANC, following its unbanning along with other political organisations, to mobilise on the back of the rise of the UDF and other popular movements. Gqozo, however, also saw the combination of chieftaincy and rural local authority as a real political gain, but he was only prepared to build support with chieftaincies of his choice – hence the government commission (Wotshela 2018).

Chieftaincy had entered a complex terrain by the early 1990s since it too started reshaping its image, plainly tainted as an NP government creation. It had thus remobilised itself from the late 1980s under an ANC-aligned Congress for Traditional Leaders of South Africa (Contralesa). Some chieftaincies could still trace their lineages to prior to conquest, even though Contralesa embraced even those that had emerged through the Bantu Authorities system (Oomen 2005; Ntsebeza 2006). In Gqozo's case, however, chieftaincy was at the mercy of a homeland government that was determined to influence the institution to the very end. Thus, unsurprisingly, Gqozo's appointed commission on the Ciskei chieftaincy annulled many of them, almost certainly those he wished to remove for political gain, including those of the Northern Ciskei, the key area of land consolidation around the old Hewu, where the bantustan had created several tribal authority areas in relocating African families (Figure 3).

Gqozo's government ended all the Northern Ciskei chieftaincies save Bebeza's, located within the earlier relocation camp of Thornhill. As the two chieftaincies of Malefana and Hinana adjacent to Bebeza waned, Gqozo cunningly used their bases to build his self-created political party, the African Democratic Movement (ADM), in the Northern Ciskei region. ADM emerged in September 1991 as a government-funded political party, which like Sebe's CNIP relied on the support of a few civil servants, tribal authorities, and loyal followers. It coincided with the birth of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA), which enabled different political formations and key stakeholders to discuss post-apartheid arrangements. Within the CODESA talks, which began at the end of 1991, the fate of the homelands depended mainly on the NP government's negotiating power. Those homelands were already gripped by ongoing insurrection, and especially by the ANC's desire for a unitary democratic state. Gqozo tried to take part in the CODESA dialogue via his newly created ADM (Wotshela 2018).

The ADM differed from the ANC and shared a comparable philosophy to the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) with its emphasis on family, community and reverence for rule of 'traditional authorities'. It instantly worsened the conflict in Northern Ciskei as the area's youths who had aligned with the residents' associations opposed the ADM, continually harassing its members with the support of adjacent highly mobilised urban areas near Whittlesea. Gqozo's security forces camped in the Northern Ciskei with the intention of flushing out militant youths. By mid 1992, youth actions and Ciskei security personnel reprisals culminated in prolonged, bloody conflicts in villages within areas once controlled

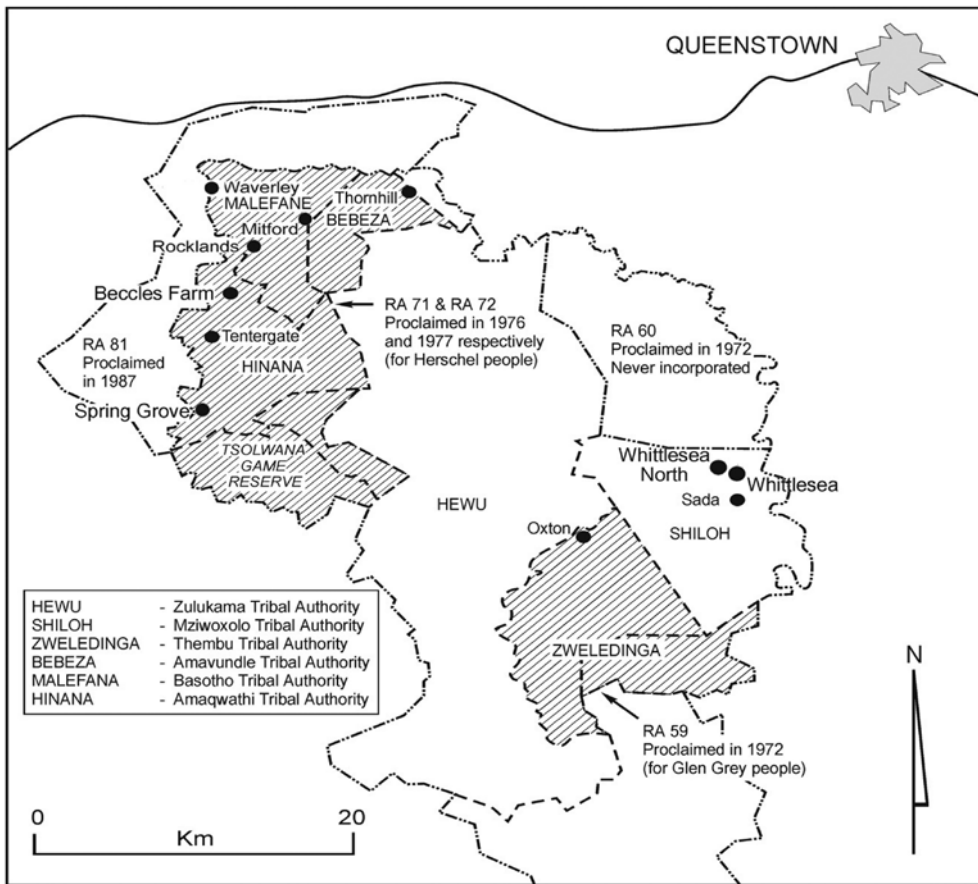


Figure 3. Consolidated areas of the Northern Ciskei, with resettlement sites and tribal authority areas at the height of apartheid from late 1970s to late 1980s.

Source: Wotshela 2001.

by the Hinana and Malefana chieftaincies. This convinced Gqozo to detach, administratively and for political reasons, the whole area initially used for relocating Herschel people from central Hewu, which he believed was too much under the control of popular residents' associations. He thus created a new magisterial district, Ntabethemba, in 1992 (*Daily Dispatch*, 14 February 1992; Wotshela 2018).

Ntabethemba became one of the last Ciskei investments in putative town planning. Anticipating the new district serving as a hub for the ADM, Gqozo invested in departmental services on one outer farmland, Waverly, that was part of land released for consolidation of the Ciskei. Despite such investment, he could not stop the expansion of militant residents' associations into Ntabethemba. One was the Thornhill Residents' Association (TRA), robustly active since the late 1980s and which had widened its influence when Gqozo briefly permitted residents' associations to function. Thus by 1992 there were two rival centres of power in this new district: the TRA, galvanised by the arrival of the South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO) the same year, and Contralesa. The ANC, which embraced the latter, was keen to bring those chiefs within its ranks (Wotshela 2019).

Continuing muddled power and the last rites of the Ciskei homeland, 1992–95

Rallying efforts by Northern Ciskei chiefs paled in comparison to the upsurge that came with SANCO, which emerged at a fitting time expressing the unlimited social, civil and political concerns of its countrywide organisations. Even though SANCO was a mainly urban protest organ, the ANC rapidly embraced the movement which expanded into the countryside while strengthening recruitment earlier initiated by residents' associations and the regional BOCCO. Within Gqozo's chaotic Ciskei, SANCO set itself to challenge the residuals of his tribal authorities (Manona 1997; Wotshela 2009).

At a countrywide level, SANCO's ideology was broadly inseparable from that of the wider liberation movement. In rural Ciskei, SANCO members who initially belonged to clusters of residents' associations were, at first, drawn from the landless, particularly those denied earlier tribal authority resources. At the core of their prior protests were demands for autonomous resources such as land and farming rights. Land and housing demands, with access to a wide range of basic and social services, had also encompassed township struggles. Thus, SANCO promptly evolved across the rural and urban margins, blending their demands and spurred on by the prevailing political rhetoric, 'the people shall govern.' This outcome's increasing likelihood enabled groups and individuals to pledge allegiance to SANCO. Consequently, the profile of its constituency within the Ciskei and adjacent Border districts shifted from being that of the landless to embracing a much wider range of people, including civil servants, young people, women, migrant labourers, stock farmers and the largely unemployed (Wotshela 2019).

SANCO also absorbed many older resisters of the BLA system. More importantly, it extended its campaign by targeting pockets of land for its landless followers. Almost all the Eastern Cape towns, including those in the Border districts and the homelands of Ciskei and the Transkei, became targets of land occupations organised by SANCO from the early 1990s. Subserviced or informal residential areas expanded onto portions of common land, public parks, golf courses, state lands and even portions of private lands. These barely planned human settlements, shaped by various local demands and community politics coordinated by SANCO, characterised the 1990s and beyond. The movements revealed close links between land grabs, expanding informal human settlements and political mobilisation. Local politics and demands profoundly shaped the patterns of new residential areas, a startling reversal of the heavy state intervention that had characterised apartheid resettlement and villagisation schemes four decades earlier (Manona 1997; Wotshela 2009, 2022).

On other levels, land occupations and the earlier manipulations of local authority by Gqozo had coincided with the 1991 CODESA talks. It did not help that high levels of poverty and minimal livelihood options beset most of the Ciskei during the period. Migrant job prospects, especially from the mining sector, had waned. Despite unending investment in bureaucratic operations and public and social amenities, the South African government still supported about 80% of the Ciskei's budget. Ciskei's industrial centres, once seen as saviours for economic development from an earlier industrialisation strategy, had largely flattered to deceive. They had not offered any solution for long-term employment, as nearly 40% of their male residents were still migrants to white South Africa (Cherry and Bank 1993; Black 2006).

Beyond the Ciskei's economic failure and its faltering administration, the ANC's recruitment drive had peaked during early 1990s. In the Transkei, Holomisa had allowed the ANC to operate freely and some of its leaders, such as Chris Hani, held frequent rallies in parts of the country. Among the bantustans, only Holomisa's Transkei and KaNgwane were originally welcoming to the unbanned political organisations, especially the ANC. Others had taken an uncompromising stance. Gqozo, after an initial open approach, began restricting liberation activities within the Ciskei despite the ANC's already growing support there. He, along with Mangosuthu Buthelezi (KwaZulu), Lucas Mangope (Bophuthatswana) and Andries Treurnicht (Afrikaner Conservative Party), had started a Concerned South African Group (COSAG) that resisted the reabsorption of homelands into a unified South Africa, as proposed at CODESA during early 1992 (Southall 1992).

The political negotiation process itself still faced challenges and latent threats. The NP government and representatives of homelands had pushed hard for a strong regional system of governance that also supported minority groups' rights. In that process, they had also rejected the ANC's proposed unitary state. Amid ongoing widespread violence, especially in the Natal midlands and parts of the East Rand, labelled as 'no-go areas', the spotlight had also shifted onto Ciskei. Here, Gqozo's obstinacy in restricting the ANC while promoting his ADM remained evident. The ANC wanted far more liberty to operate and recruit members inside Ciskei. Thus, it came as no surprise when, at the start of September 1992, it sent a memorandum to De Klerk demanding the replacement of Gqozo since he would not provide a free political environment. De Klerk's controversial response that Ciskei was '[an] independent state' in which he could not interfere was indicative of an NP government leader who still clung to the apartheid option, despite his government having already taken over key Ciskei ministerial portfolios. On 7 September 1992 the ANC decided to emphasise its point, with its top leaders and nearly 80,000 protesters embarking on a seminal march to the Bisho stadium at the heart of the Ciskei capital. The march became the pivotal symbol of disapproval of Gqozo's regime (*Daily Dispatch*, 8 and 9 September 1992; Evans 2018; Wotshela 2018).

The catastrophic upshots of the protest continue to linger in the bitter memories of the liberation history of South Africa. The Ciskei security forces, given orders by Gqozo to fire, shot recklessly at marchers, killing 28 instantly and injuring more than 200 (*Daily Dispatch*, 8 and 9 September 1992; *Eastern Province Herald*, 8 September 1992). While the Bisho massacre and other violent conflicts contributed considerably in re-instilling the resolve to search for common solutions, the political cost was terminal for Gqozo and Ciskei. At the start of 1993, De Klerk also had to surrender control over all apparatus of the state to a non-aligned Transitional Executive Council that oversaw reconvened CODESA-initiated talks through the Multi-Party Negotiating Forum. Reverend Bongani Finca, a long-time member of the Border Council of Churches and advocate of peace in the Border region, was appointed interim administrator of the Ciskei, under the Transitional Executive Council, to oversee Ciskei's affairs and its reincorporation into an undivided South Africa through the first democratic general elections in 1994.

A lingering question and brief conclusion: who governs?

The first democratic elections of April 1994 sealed the political fates of all 10 bantustans. The tripartite alliance of the ANC, the South African Communist Party (SACP) and

Congress for South African Trade Unions (COSATU) won just over 62% of the vote. Yet the interim constitution still had strong challenges to remove vestiges of apartheid. The four previous South African provinces were integrated together with the 10 separate homeland administrations into nine post-apartheid ones, administered by executive provincial governments with legislative assemblies elected by proportional representation (Wotshela 2019, 2022).

In the new Eastern Cape Province, the tripartite alliance's victory was even more emphatic, with 84% of the votes in the provincial legislature. Reorganisation of the new and vast province was however a test. It had suddenly absorbed the Transkei and the Ciskei, and together those two homelands' populations comprised almost 60% of the new province, which was marked by long-term poverty (Ruiters 2011). Moreover, elements of the old system persisted, including chieftaincy (now referred to as traditional authority), the protection of property and the retention of former homeland bureaucrats. The new provincial governments had to contend with these and as often stressed by Mandela, the ANC-led post-1994 government had to propose policies in the spirit of compromise.

At the ground level, the province still faced a glut of socioeconomic, political and administrative challenges, including rampant land invasions and expansions of subserviced human settlements, which had expanded the social boundaries of many Ciskei residential areas. At the core of these were aspects of governance in all the areas previously under the remit of homeland tribal authorities. Control of these fell explicitly under SANCO, leading to the democratic elections. Nevertheless, residuals and elements of remobilised chieftaincy under Contralesa still lingered in the shadows, and some of its affiliates still had influence. Ntsebeza had his first experience of these overlying muddled local authority formations while studying areas of the Northern Ciskei during 1994 and 1995. One specific instruction of the Border Rural Committee (a successor of the GRC), on whose behalf he did the research, was to conduct a social survey of the initial relocation camp of Thornhill, which became the long-term home for earlier Herschel relocated people. Thornhill had also become home for other displaced families from several parts of the Cape Province.

The survey focused on Thornhill's socioeconomic conditions in the aftermath of the 1994 elections, almost 20 years since the Herschel families had relocated in the area. It revealed the startling nature of poverty and the testing livelihoods of the greater majority of well over 3000 households. Ntsebeza remained baffled though by the cluttered system of local governance for the entire locality (Border Rural Committee 1995). On the one hand, a relic of what was an earlier homeland chieftaincy of Bebeza and followers seemed to be carrying lingering influence. This probably came from the endorsement his chieftaincy had received from Gqozo's commission on Ciskei chieftaincy, and its remobilisation under the wing of Contralesa. On the other hand, the all-pervading SANCO-aligned individuals were equally making critical decisions on day-to-day lives in the same locality. It left Ntsebeza with a lasting, but a problematic question: who governs in Thornhill? Much the same question was and is applicable to most of the South African countryside, which continues to face similar contested and muddled authorities. These areas are resonant of the permeating state of muddled local authority of the Ciskei homeland in its twilight years, from the 1980s to its collapse in the mid 1990s. Pertinently, such a disarrayed state of local authority continues to confront South Africa well into its age of democracy.

Note

1. The several Acts appropriating the Transkeian Territories to the Cape Colony vested the Cape Governor with an unlimited authority, and that power was reaffirmed by Cape Act 29 of 1897. Following conquest in the latter 1800s, the Transkeian Territories were first divided into three chief magistracies: Transkei, Tembuland and Griqualand East. In 1896, Pondoland, which was the latest to be annexed under colonial rule, was placed under the chief magistrate of Tembuland. All three chief magistracies were consequently merged under a single chief magistrate in 1902.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to comments made by Peter Lawrence on the earlier draft of this paper. Part of the section dealing with the last rites of the Ciskei was initially published in Wotshela (2019).

Funding

Funding for research of this paper came from the author's own account held at the Govan Mbeki Research Development Centre (GMRDC), University of Fort Hare.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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