

Diversity in Rural African Economic Activities: A Case Study of Cattle and Modernization in Swaziland, 1930s to 1980s.

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Abstract

Unfamiliar socio-economic structures created interpretation problems to scholars from different places of origin. Here incomplete conclusions were made on societies that were studied. Thus if Doran, Low and Kemp (Doran, Low & Kemp, 1979:41-9) perceived Swazi activities as static it was because of cultural differences. After 1945 more dynamic developments occurred than perceived by Doran, Low and Kemp (Doran, Low & Kemp, 1979:41-9). Swazi cattle played a dynamic economic role which overshadowed social ones when market forces became stronger. Economic diversities occurred in agriculture. Ox-power featured in transportation. The market economy ushered in investments in cotton which modernized the Swazi .

Introduction

The Swazi are part of Southern African societies who drew their income from agriculture. As farmers, Southern African societies used livestock (cattle included) widely in their economic activities. Cattle also featured prominently in rituals and other social ceremonies (Doran, Low & Kemp, 1979:41-9; Konczacki, 1978).

Cattle were the pillar of agriculture. Oxen, being the beast of burden, were used widely in Southern Africa to pull the plough, and ox-wagon to transport agricultural inputs and outputs to and from farms or fields. Cattle were also a source of finance. In addition to the views of Doran, Low and Kemp (Doran, Low & Kemp, 1979:41-9) that cattle were a store of wealth, the Swazi used cattle to multiply their areas of investment. The Doran, Low and Kemp view of Swazi cattle being a "store of wealth" (Doran, Low & Kemp, 1979:41-9) does not suggest that Swazi cattle were used to multiply investment opportunities. In addition to "the accumulation of assets which confer, among other things, security, prestige, and status" (Doran, Low & Kemp, 1979:41-9), Swazi cattle also increased investment avenues. These economic developments expanded in the 1950s (Sikhondze, 1991:173) and took similarity to those found in the Western world where cattle were "generators of income" which bestowed wealth on owners (Doran, Low & Kemp, 1979:41-9).

Cattle were also used as security for credit that was solicited from financial institutions and security against death and other mishaps. These aspects are omitted in the Doran, Low and Kemp study (Doran, Low & Kemp, 1979: 41-9). It is clear that when the Swazi invested cattle in agriculture they demonstrated the economic role cattle held in society.

According to Konczacki livestock were a form of capital good, which produced other forms of goods for the market (Konczacki, 1978). In his observation cattle females, had "two important functions of a distinct nature: one being the production of other capital goods in the form of new animals, and the other being the provision of a variety of consumption goods" Konczacki, 1978). Konczacki refers to other animals of the same kind to illustrate the point further. But Konczacki extends the discussion to the inclusion of commodities whose production depended on cattle. These items were bones, meat, skins and milk (Konczacki, 1978).

The present study addresses the role of cattle in Swazi society during and after World War Two. The author is uncomfortable with the Doran, Low and Kemp (Doran, Low & Kemp, 1979:41-9) concept of the economic role of cattle in Swazi society. These scholars are convinced that Swazi cattle play a static in the economy; "a store of wealth". Apart from the prestige that cattle-ownership bestowed on the Swazi, and the social purposes that were associated with cattle there

were important economic roles that cattle played after World War Two (Sikhondze, 1991:173). While the Doran, Low and Kemp interpretation is historically valid, the Swazi society needs to be placed in the perspective of the impact of trade, and recognize both forced and independent change in the society in response to the market demands (Doran, Low & Kemp, 1979:42). This paper therefore fills in conceptual and interpretative gaps that exist in the Doran, Low and Kemp thesis (Doran, Low & Kemp, 1979:41-9). The study admits that there were traditional and primitive elements in the Swazi economic structure even as late as the duration of World War TWO but modernization had come and some Swazi farmers accepted change positively.

Cattle: A Pillar of Swazi Rural Economy

In contrast to the view expressed in Doran, Low and Kemp Swazi cattle represented a profitable investment avenue (Doran, Low & Kemp, 1979:41-9). Swazi livestock farmers invested their money from cattle sales in projects that supported livestock development which included cattle. Swazi cattle-keepers also invested profits from the sale of cattle and other livestock in the purchase of equipment to promote cash crop production. The changing perception of the market value of cattle made some of the Swazi to improve the traditional *Nguni* cattle. The Schultz concept of the 'technological factors of production' which refers to chemicals used to improve the market value of commodities chief among which were cattle becomes more relevant to this study (Schultz, 1976:133-137; Grigg, 1982; Hayami & Ruttan, 1985; Knudson & Ruttan, 1988). In this case the Brahman was introduced in the 1970s (Sikhondze, 1991:173) to improve the market value of cattle for profitability compared to the traditional *Nguni* cattle. To implement these changes farmers sought bank finance while others avoided banks in fear of high interest rates that charged. At this point the discussion turns to the factors which led to the disintegration of the social structure, as commodity production expanded.

Cattle sales were executed in order to solve the financial needs of the Swazi, and among these needs were food deficits that resulted from adverse climatic conditions. Cattle were also used predominantly as beasts of burden where they pulled the plough, and featured in transport (SNA, Box117cvf1/8b). In other words, cattle promoted and enhanced rural sources of income. However, the economic role of cattle was expanded in the post-war era to include other important aspects of economic growth. These included the improvement of farming and other related activities, whose final goal was to improve the standard of living in rural Swaziland (SNA Box 98f 145).

In the 1950s the relationship between cattle and agriculture was complex. It also became difficult to determine the superiority of one over the other. In the minds of some economic analysts cattle appeared to be superior to agriculture in the economic development of rural Swaziland. But Swazi farmers understood the relationship between cattle and agriculture to be interdependent. In other words, the survival of agriculture was dependent on that of cattle. For instance, at its initial stages, cotton did not necessarily depend on the Schultz's 'concealed technological factors of production' (Schultz, 1976:133-135), which meant, agro-chemicals, but it depended on the correct application of compost, and kraal manure. Kraal manure improved the health and quality of the crop, on condition other variables like the weather and pests did not militate against its growth. But the other equally important factor was the improvement of the yield capacity of the crop, which the Schultz' and Knudson's 'produced means of production' boosted (Schultz, 1976:143-147; Knudson & Ruttan, 1988). According to the Schultz's 'produced means of production' kraal manure was the pillar of agriculture. Agro-chemicals reinforced the impact of kraal manure.

In 1955 cotton cultivation had already become a major economic activity in Southeast Swaziland. The ox-drawn plough was used commonly as a 'mechanical device' in cultivation. For their agility, oxen were preferred to donkeys. In 1957, cotton growers increasingly substituted the donkey with the ox because the latter was agile. Even though donkeys were being substituted they were still used to transport the cotton output to centres from where it was collected by trucks (SNA Box 92f.131 & Boxf.116/3).

Growers bought more farming equipment like ploughs, disc, planter and others to improve agriculture. The disc was used effectively to level the surfaces of the fields to facilitate the planting of seeds in straight lines with limited wastage of seeds (SNA Box 83f.116/4). Disc cultivation facilitated deep plough cultivation which delayed weed growth than shallow ploughing. Cotton was sensitive to weeds hence fields that were planted with it required repeated weeding to guarantee a bounty harvest to the farmer (SNA Box 131). The ox was the main beast of burden and was dominant in agriculture until the 1970s. When farming got mechanized cotton growing came to depend on the tractor among successful farmers. However, in the 1980s the use of the ox in agriculture was still dominant especially among poor farmers who were constrained by financial limitations. But some farmers still believed that the ox was more relevant to agriculture than the tractor because the latter hardened the soil to delay seed germination (Interview S. Nsibandze, October, 20, 1985). A hard soil surface also hindered root penetration of the soil and thus it affected crop growth (Interview S. Nsibandze & E. Shiba, August, 12, 1985). Growers who argued that the ox was preferred to the tractor did not mechanize their agriculture for some time (Interview S. Nsibandze & E. Shiba, August, 12, 1985). But the major constraint was lack of capital more than mere preference.

Cattle as a Social Bond in Swazi Agrarian Communities

At its inception cotton cultivation was not confined to owners of cattle per se. The difference between cattle ownership and cattle herding was that owners loaned some of their cattle to relatives for several reasons some of which are discussed below. First, Swazi owners of big herds loaned some to relatives. The loaning of cattle was a result of fear of being bewitched by poor neighbours. Cattle owners carefully selected custodians of their livestock hence they entrusted their cattle to trustworthy persons who were also diligent (Interview N. Sikhondze, August, 12, 1988).

Second, cattle were loaned to successful herders. Patrons secured information about custodians from respected figures in each community. Custodians were community dwellers who possessed a scientific knowledge of herbs used to stop bad omens that might have an adverse effect on the multiplication of cattle. Some of the cattle owners 'built their kraals' on the practice of herbal skills (Interview J. Mhlungu, May, 17, 1987). Custodians were given a heifer in payment for administering herbal treatment on the cattle. Swazi farmers who were loaned some cattle enjoyed ox services in farming. These farmers also accessed kraal manure for their farming, and milk for feeding their families. The benefits were quite considerable.

Third, some custodians eked out a living as farmers from the soil. The latter category of farmers proposed cattle 'loans' to their relatives and friends (Interview A. Masuku, July, 8, 1987). The initiative came from the custodian who needed cattle for farming where cattle were central. In this case cattle were loaned specifically for agricultural purposes. Expertise in cattle keeping alone did not determine success in cattle loans but it was coupled with other attributes like kindness to animals (Interview S. Shongwe, July, 29, 1987).

The impact of cattle loaning on the social cord that supported unity in communities continued to hold society strongly together. In 1957, when cotton production expanded, cultivators who owned big herds of cattle conveniently reduced their herds through loaning to facilitate management even by young boys (Interview M. Kunene, July, 29, 1987). Most of the boys who looked after cattle were young and had not attended school due to lack of money or due to other reasons. Cattle sales had facilitated the expansion of cotton cultivation and it also facilitated the payment of school fees. Families that grew cotton cultivated a minimum acreage of 5 per season per family (SNA Box 98f. 145) which was an indication of the level of cotton expansion compared with earlier years when the maximum acreage was 2½ per season per grower (SNA Box 98f. 145).

Cash needs determined the symbiotic relationship that developed among cotton growing parties. Labour became a scarce and over-utilised commodity in cotton cultivation areas due to the labour intensity of the activity. Cattle loaning led to the emergence of a relationship that became the

foundation of the prosperity of some entrepreneurs. Later this relationship developed into an intricate socio-economic fabric where some destitute growers identified their shortcomings and sought credit from those who possessed a firm financial muscle. This clientele developed to improve the weak socio-economic positions of some growers. In the initial stages of cotton cultivation most of the cotton clients were destitute in such a way that they did not own even ploughs (Interview S. Mkhonta, February, 11, 1986). In the same community most growers progressed from harnessing donkeys to pull the plough to the ownership of the ox. These growers were classified as disadvantaged farmers who initiated the birth of clients with affluent cotton growers in order to build up financial bases (Interview S. Mkhonta & S. Shongwe, February, 11, 1986).

Cattle as an Instrument of Wealth Expansion

In a community of nascent commercial relations cattle became a means to accumulate wealth and expand avenues of investment. In rural Swaziland agrarian societies had begun to witness these developments. Destitute farmers who did not own ox-power but owned ploughs rented the latter to farmers who owned the former (ox-power). In the era of modernization there were still strong elements of the barter type of trade relationships in rural Swaziland. While the use of donkey power was tolerated for subsistence cultivation it was not anymore for commodity production because it limited the land that was put under cultivation per season and the output from that arrangement was also limited. Invariably the income was also declined.

There were several transactional practices that led to the purchases of ploughs through the barter system where hens and goats were the means of exchange. It was the barter system of exchange that motivated plough ownership even among non-owners of cattle. In this regard, the plough was a means to access ox-power and vice versa. Donkeys played a significant role in subsistence farming that cannot be downplayed. However, since the focus is on cattle suffice to mention that donkeys also featured significantly in farming before the revolutionary emergence of the market economy in rural areas (Interview M. Shongwe, February, 11, 1986). Donkey power paved the way for ox-power in ploughing.

When cotton cultivation expanded poor growers who did not own cattle hired ox-power to cultivate the crop. The income which accrued from cotton was used to defray production costs. These growers also purchased additional cattle to boost their herds and ox-power. Growers of cotton also became innovative on income generating projects because they are reported to have hired out ox-power including even the power loaned oxen to raise money for cattle purchases to build up their herds (Interview S. Mkhonta, February, 11, 1986). In some instances clients paid for ox-power services by working on patrons' cotton fields. Access to cattle bred a class of clients who depended on other poor growers who were loaned cattle by rich Swazi growers. Some of these custodians exploited these opportunities profitably. Sometimes the profits that accrued from these engagements were shared between patrons and clients. To maximise gains, some clients sacrificed their leisure time for gainful work which was extended to weekends (Interview A. Jele, February, 11, 1986). But the economic gains of these growers were grossly unequal due to some differences in the investment opportunities.

The income that accrued from farming was used to improve the farming technology of affected growers. Some entrepreneurs formed associations to facilitate the creation of a fund to finance agriculture. At the end of 1958 some growers had purchased ploughs, and had also built herds to expand their investment opportunities (Interview E. Shiba, October, 20, 1980). Grower success was a result of diligence and dedication and careful planning. Growers used part of the money earned from ox services to boost cotton cultivation. In 1959 grower awareness of investment opportunities had expanded to the use of agro-chemicals to enhance the surplus generating capacity of the soil, in areas that suffered from fertility deficit (SNA Box 98f.145).

The role of cattle in rural economic investments became very complicated when custodians of loaned oxen rented them out to generate wealth to improve agriculture. The rates of hire fees

here were higher than those charged by owners who hired out services of their oxen as opposed to custodians (SNA Box 98f.145). This development got more complicated when recipients of the services failed to pay in cash but instead offered labour power on the cotton fields of pseudo-patrons. The gross inequality that this relationship exhibited got clearer when recipients of the services spent a better part of the season working on fields of patrons (Interview A. Maseko, & M. Sibisi, July, 20, 1984).

Oxen in Rural Transport

The traditional sledge transport was dominant in cotton areas until 1955 when the ox-drawn wagon and truck replaced it. This development coincided with an expansion in the use of tractors in agriculture and transport. Tractors were used to transport cotton bales to local market depots. But when modern transport became available dependence on sledge transport declined even among poor farmers where they still used it to transport maize. To transport cotton the ox-drawn wagon, tractor wagon and lorry remained dominant because the sledge soiled its threads thus reducing its quality and value (Interview A. Maseko, July, 20, 1984). These transport problems forced growers to discard the sledge in favour of the forms of transport mentioned above to avoid spoiling the quality of seed cotton (Interview A. Maseko, July, 20, 1984).

Ox-drawn wagons transported weighted loads because ox-power that pulled this form of transport was limited. Longer ox-drawn wagons were avoided because farmers were often tempted to load them to the point where ox-power failed to cope with the weight. This type of transport was risky due to the sloppy gradients that lay along the roads (Interview P. Nxumalo, July, 28, 1982). When modern transport, mainly the truck, was still limited the ox-drawn wagon made cattle significant to the economic developments that centred on transport. In this regard ox-power played a significant role in the development of cotton growing and marketing in rural Swaziland.

In the 1960s ox-drawn wagons still played a significant role in the transport sector among poor growers of southeast Swaziland (Interview P. Nxumalo & S. Shiba, July, 28, 1982). Ox-drawn wagons were a time saving substitute for donkey transport (Interview D. Nsibandze & E. Shiba, July, 31, 1982). However effective this transport was it still remained but in a few hands in the 1960s when its ownership was only symbolic of the economic growth and prosperity of the region (Interview E. Masuku & L. Ndlovu, July, 31, 1982). The money that was accumulated through these enterprises was invested in cattle purchases and in the development of cotton growing.

Ox-drawn wagons were widely used in some areas hence Malangwane Dlamini transported his cotton on wagons for considerable distances which stretched from the foot of the Lubombo Mountains to the market at Magudu (Interview E. Masuku & L. Ndlovu, July, 31, 1982). Malangwane expressed the idea that tractor transport was costly because of the amount of diesel it consumed, while the ox depended on grass for energy. Second, there were limited diesel filling points then to make the ox preferable (Interview P. Nkambule & D. Mazibuko, July, 29, 1982). Where the ox-power that pulled the wagon was drawn from loaned cattle relations deteriorated. The use of loaned cattle was confined to cultivation and other activities that involved lesser exertion than the distances mentioned above (Interview P. Nkambule & D. Mazibuko, July, 29, 1982). Despite such sanctions loaned cattle were instrumental to the economic rise of some cultivators (Interview A. Dlamini & M. Dlamini, December, 19, 1985).

Traditional Marriages in a Rural Swazi Community

Most of the social developments that occurred in rural Swaziland hinged on the role of cattle in the rural Swazi economy. These social developments received reinforcements in the 1950s when arranged marriages between the poor and the rich, who owned big herds of cattle, occurred. Poverty stricken brides' families were the initiators of arranged marriages whose objective was to

boost their weak socio-economic backgrounds. In these instances girls were espoused at puberty. In order to build up both a kraal and a span of oxen, the prospective rich bridegroom paid **lobolo** (dowry) in cattle (Interview L. Shongwe, December, 27, 1985). This social development was a by-product of cotton cultivation and the expansion of the money economy to the cotton suited areas. The custom of arranged marriages was older than cotton but the dimension which cotton added to it in the late 1950s, commercialized the **lobolo** custom. Traditionally, the custom of **kwendzisa** (arrange marriage) was meant to save betrothed young women from marrying men of lesser status. Men of a lesser social status earned themselves that social category due to irresponsible characters they had developed in their communities. The intention of the community therefore was good (Interview M. Mamba, & A. Mthembu, December, 27, 1985). The custom of **kwendzisa** was not linked to the generation of any wealth but it was meant to create a cordial social environment. However, it was not every poverty-stricken cultivator that was a victim of this capitalist economic practice.

It is important to note also that not all men who acquired cattle through the custom of **kwendzisa** invested them in cotton. Most of the cultivators who invested cattle service and money in cotton used the income from the enterprise to purchase farming inputs like tractors and the equipment. Tractor power promoted farmers' socio-economic positions in their communities because tractors were also hired out to provide a variety of other services (Interview M. Mamba & A. Mthembu, December, 27, 1985). A flamboyant lifestyle and culture developed among cotton growers as a result of the wealth they had accumulated, a culture that led to a life of extravagance among some cultivators (SNA Box 83/116/3).

Agriculture and the Collateral for Credit Facilities

In the late 1960s cotton growers in southeast Swaziland required additional finance to that which cattle provided to support their businesses. Cotton cultivation was capital intensive because it involved the purchase of seeds, fertilizers, and payment for labour services. Some money went into the purchase of insecticides that were used to spray the crop and these inputs were also expensive. Credit facilities were not yet extended to the benefit of Swazi growers but still remained a preserve of settler farmers. Thus cattle became the palliative in that income from their sales went into the purchase of inputs. Livestock of goats and chickens needed were also sold but in larger numbers for cash to finance cotton cultivation. In the 1960s when cotton cultivation expanded in southeast Swaziland more finance was needed to sustain it hence the sale of more cattle than small livestock (SNA Box 83/116/3).

After its inauguration in 1965, the Swaziland Development and Savings Bank began to finance the cultivation of cash and food crops (SNA Box 51 f.53/5). The economic package that the bank sold to urban and rural Swazis included the promotion of entrepreneurship in the construction of flats for renting in urban areas. To the cotton growers the package addressed the development of Swazi agriculture. In its initial stages, the bank signed out loans to farmers without demanding a security. However, the financial credits made in good faith soon proved to have many loopholes, chief among which was the grower deliberate avoidance of repayments. In 1972, the bank began to demand security against all credit facilities it assigned farmers (SNA Box 51 f 53/5).

Growers on Swazi Nation Land (SNL) gave cattle for collateral, and in other instances farmers gave tractors for credit security. The collateral was introduced to guard against loss of bank money, and to instil responsibility in every farmer who was a client. Earlier farmers had failed to meet repayment deadlines but when security measures were adopted and introduced farmers honoured their responsibilities. Farmers began to make timely payments or gave timely explanations for failure (SNA Box 51 f 53/5).

Cattle that were given as collateral were branded and the client was barred from harnessing them. When growers failed to settle their debts they forfeited the branded cattle to the bank in a bid to recover the money from clients. The result of these developments was that some custodians forfeited loaned cattle and cotton cultivation was disturbed. Consequently, the socio-

economic relations thus created by the investment efforts got spoiled between cattle owner and custodian. In some of these cases custodians of loaned cattle reported falsely that the cattle were stolen yet they were forfeited to the bank. Some of the custodians were arrested and prosecuted for their fraudulent conduct. Resultantly fraudulent custodians forfeited the rights of usufruct to loaned cattle (SNA Box 51 f 53/5).

Modern Technology and Agricultural Modernization

Cotton cultivation depended upon a technology that kept changing from time to time while the search for a more appropriate and effective one continued. At the same time alternative ways to raise money apart from the sale of cattle for investment in cotton cultivation were identified. One of these alternatives was to invest in transport to move farming inputs in the region. Cattle played a prominent role in transport in the 1960s. With an expansion in cotton cultivation and in the output where more than 100 bales were produced per grower per season, Messrs Clark and Company rented their truck to cultivators to transport cotton in the region but withdrew it in the late 1960s. Clark's withdrawal created a vacuum in the transport industry that cotton growers were challenged to fill. Motor transport was first used in the mid-1950s but only began to impact the region's agriculture in the early 1970s. Motor transport had a time and labour saving effect because it moved faster and few people were required to manage it than primitive transport did before. Motor transport solved several problems that touched upon the cultivation of cotton in Southeast Swaziland.

Messrs Clark and Company transport was replaced by a local farmers' truck because they wanted to sell directly to the market where they received money on the spot (Interview J. Mhlungu, & S. Nsibande, October, 20, 1980). Hitherto some growers had sold their crop to nearby settlers but others resisted the settler market and hired transport to take their cotton to the market. Farmers pooled their resources to meet transport costs (Interview J. Mhlungu & A. Vilakati, October, 20, 1980). Joint ventures saw some growers pooling their limited resources to purchase used trucks from European farmers, where cattle were used as a form of exchange (barter trade). One of these developments involved Xaba Brothers who bought a truck in 1953. The purchase of trucks saved growers from the fraudulent dealings European farmers had given them. Europeans who owned transport exploited Swazi growers who either sold their cotton to them or through them to Magudu. Some of these growers included Albert Vilakati, Adrian Harrison, David Dlamini, Lokhakhi Dlamini, Josiah Vilakati, Amos Matse and Samuel Nsibande and others.

But the Xaba Brothers did not only provide transport to cotton growers instead they assisted them with several other facilities. For instance, Matse and Nsibandze are among the farmers who became successful cotton growers due to the help that the Xaba Brothers extended to farmers in the region. Once established in cotton growing, through the financial credit that the Xaba Brothers made available these farmers became joint investors with their patrons. The clientele relations became complicated once they attained this level of growth (Interview D. Nsibande & A. Vilakati, September, 29, 1984).

Some farmers already invested some of their cattle in tile deed land (tdl) in the 1970s to enhance their investments, as opposed to reliance on communal land in SNL. Tdls were purchased because of the economic they held provided. In association with tdls was more security to the farmer who enjoyed more room for the improvement of his agriculture. The implied improvement was often reflected in enhanced quantity and quality output. Tdls also gave the farmer some protection against chiefly interferences where customary sanctions frustrated land enclosure thus hampering cotton growing. Investors in cotton cultivation needed more land because their agricultural plans were too ambitious to be met through the traditional distribution of land. Swazi growers did not grow cotton per se; they grew food crops like maize and others along with cotton hence the insatiable land requirements. Tractor ownership afforded growers the opportunity to expand farming, and completed planting before the season ended. Tdls facilitated such an expansion (Interview J. Nkwanyana & E. Shiba, August, 30, 1984). But tdls did not stop the

grower from cultivating land on SNL hence some of them kept their feet in both worlds. Cattle, as an instrument in the acquisition of tdl's were either sold to raise cash for the purchases or bartered for tdl's (Interview J. Nkwanyana & E. Shiba, October, 27, 1984).

However, in the purchases of tdl's farmers did not depend on cattle per se but they sought additional cash from existing financial institutions internally. Financial institutions like the Swazi Bank intervened in the 1970s to assist Swazi growers in the purchase of tdl's. In these transactions the bank did not ask for any security because the land thus purchased was bonded to it pending the settlement of the debt. Failure to settle the loan led to the confiscation of the farm. Most of the farmers who received the finance worked hard to repay the debt in order to register the farms in their names. Cattle formed the basis of farmers' prosperity. Farmers ploughed the profits from this investment back into more cattle purchases and land development in order to boost cotton cultivation.

Some farmers did not borrow money from credit institutions but depended on money that accrued from cattle sales. Cattle were sold live to meat factories and other buyers even locally because operators of butcheries sold beef instead of live cattle. The main explanation behind this development was that the beef yielded more profit than the sale of live cattle.

Butchers operated their businesses near drinking places to attract drinkers to the beef that they sold. To the drinkers roast beef tasted better when taken with alcoholic drinks. In the 1970s and 1980s Swazi farmers kept herds of the small **Nguni** cattle whose resistance to diseases was high (Interview D. Dlamini & J. Vilakati, November, 1, 1985). The expansion of the money economy was negative to **Nguni** cattle. The market, then under European settlers, rejected the **Nguni** on non-profitability grounds due to its small size and low weight. Its meat was reportedly hard compared to that of the newly introduced Brahman. Consequently, in the late 1970s sections Swazi farmers replaced the **Nguni** with the market oriented Brahman.

Cotton cultivation determined the economic growth of the rural economy where **Nguni** cattle were crossed with the market oriented Brahman. It had adverse effects on the poor farmer. Its resistance to traditional cattle diseases was relatively low compared to that of the **Nguni**. Farmers reacted by inoculating their cattle in each season to increase resistance to the diseases of the region. Failure to treat livestock with vaccines involved farmers in heavy losses which impacted negatively on cotton cultivation (SNA Box 18 f.44/9; Box 18 f 45). Farmers differed one from the other in terms of beliefs. Though the Brahman was reared for the market some farmers did not protect it against diseases which affected it negatively. Farmers who perceived benefits from the business heeded the instructions of the Ministry of Agriculture and Co-operatives. The Brahman attracted farmers who were oriented to the market and understood its market value. Farmers who emerged in the region in the 1970s upheld the new developments. It was the market demand for the Brahman that led to an increase in it in the 1980s. Even retrogressive Swazi farmers got convinced about the lucrative market price the Brahman commanded and began to cross their cattle with it (SNA Box 18 f.44/9).

Crossing the **Nguni** cow with the Brahman was one matter and protecting the hybrid against regional diseases was yet another. Hence farmers who did not protect the hybrid against diseases sustained heavy losses. Each season went through a spate of epidemics which left a trail of destruction on livestock. Resistance of the development by farmers plunged them deep into poverty. Some of these farmers suspected that government wanted to replace the **Nguni** with the Brahman, a development they detested. A rumour gathered strength that government officers who pushed for the crossing of cattle had invested in veterinary products which were sold to the farmers to enhance the management their herds. Farmers used these arguments to object to cattle hybrids because that was a strategy to support politicians' businesses in rural areas (SNA Box 8f. 7/44).

Government officers facilitated the hire of a bull at a minimal charge per season. Hybrid insatiable appetite for the limited grass appealed more to owners of tdl's who developed these areas to

provide big grazing grounds. On the SNL hybrid population growth increased the maintenance costs. Cotton expansion had implications for the farmers' purse because production costs soared particularly for poor farmers. Alternatively, cattle were grazed on hills which were not cultivated but offered nutritious grasses for cattle. But protracted droughts affected the grazing grounds adversely and killed large herds. Developments like this one led to owners of tdl to invite poor farmers to graze their cattle at a minimal charge of E3.00 per season per cow (Interview D. Nsibandé & J. Vilakati, November, 16, 1986).

The study has delved into divergent issues that touch upon economic growth in rural areas. Cotton farmers began to grow the crop in the late 1940s in the region but their comprehension of the economic issues involved it was poor still in the 1960s. Some of these farmers believed that they were poor just because they did not control hefty bank accounts and had forgotten that the cattle they kept represented a bank in the rural areas. When payment of a rental was mentioned they believed that they could not afford the rental for grazing their cattle on tdl and refused to sell part of the herds to raise the rental. These are some of the farmers whose herds were killed when protracted droughts struck. Rural economies did not thrive well in spite of the farmers' access to the resources that could have been mobilized to build up rural resilience to violent conditions to their investments. Government had not yet provided adequate technical education to the rural dwellers to increase their aggression in investment opportunities hence the droughts of 1985 and 1992 left farmers with heavy losses (Interview V. Dlamini & A. Gamedze, November, 29, 1985).

In order to expedite the project and extend its services on crossing the *Nguni* with the Brahman government established breeding grounds where cows mated with imported bulls. To attract more farmers to the scheme only minimal fees were charged. Project managers, who were senior officers in the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, reserved the right to sell a cow in the event the farmer did not pay the rental. The rental was collected for the defrayment of the management costs of the project (SNA Box 7f. 7/37 & Box 8f. 7/44). Some farmers supported the project in spite of its attendant financial costs because it was an alternative source of income. Senior government officers abused the scheme by allocating themselves more room for investment than the common farmer. The initial principle which provided that any farmer benefits from the scheme was good but its implementation excluded them in favour of influential government officials (Interview A. Gamedze & A. Sithebe, November, 29, 1986).

The plight of farmers worsened when drought conditions struck in the 1980s. In subsequent years rainfall did not stabilize, and farmers were the most affected when drought conditions killed their livestock. In southeast Swaziland, farmers depended largely upon livestock for a variety of economic activities in the rural areas. For some of the farmers the death toll in the cattle, placed at 80% per homestead was a huge economic loss. Farmers who owned tdl irrigated to improve the grazing areas for livestock. Drought conditions affected output in agriculture such that it declined in cotton until Cotona Ginning Company, the sole local cotton financier and consumer in Swaziland, closed down its depot at Matsapha.

The Aftermath of Drought Conditions

Cotton cultivation declined in southeast Swaziland, after Cotona wound up its business and left. Attempts have since been made in later years to revive cotton but all these efforts fell on rocky ground and revival efforts were abandoned. The modernization process slowed down also because cotton had been the main engine until protracted drought conditions stopped its cultivation. There were farmers who did not stop its cultivation because of its non-profitability but because drought conditions militated against the effort hence the acreage among those who persisted remained insignificant. Drought conditions also killed the cattle in large numbers and since cattle were the main driving force behind cotton cultivation, the prospects of continuing with the cotton business perished.

When the drought conditions struck to the detriment of cotton growers, the life of most cultivators had come to depend on cotton to the extent that when drought conditions stopped agriculture in

general in the region, the economy that had been built on cotton cultivation took a nose dive. Several developments had been initiated by cotton and cotton sales had been used as a basis of the running costs but when growers saw no point in continuing with it many projects were either stopped or halted for indefinite periods of time. In the twenty first century drought conditions have persisted and the cotton business has remained in the economic doldrums.

Cotton was the main engine that motivated farmers in the cotton belt to build up "kraals" for the finance of the rural economy so that when it collapsed it did so along with many other projects. Hospitals were built such as one of the biggest hospitals in rural areas at Matsanjeni, was a result of the benefits that accrued from cotton cultivation. In the 21st century even this only national investment cannot be maintained due to the collapse of the cotton economy. Several schools were built following the strength of the economic muscle that was owed to cotton but when it collapsed the maintenance of the schools became a national problem and burden. Farmers of southeast Swaziland had off-loaded government of the responsibility of providing social amenities like those mentioned above when the economy enjoyed its vitality. The 21st century Swaziland ideology of the decentralization of government socio-economic responsibilities had been part of the economic development plans of southeast Swaziland in the 1970s. Symbols of several projects that were initiated and brought to desired fruition by farmers are represented in the projects that are continuing but under some modification. The Jozini Dam project, which seeks to empower residents of Lavumisa and neighbouring areas, is a brain child of the early cotton farmers of southeast Swaziland. Livestock development projects are among other projects which were initiated by cotton growers in the 1970s but did not take off ground due to financial limitations. In the late 20th century these projects took off and most people associated them with wrong patrons.

Conclusion

The discussion has dwelt on the relationship between cattle and cotton and the extent to which it formed an important foundation for the agricultural economy in rural southeast Swaziland. In the years after the 1950s cattle and agriculture became interdependent, when cattle were bartered for tractors and tdl's. The money that accrued from agriculture was invested in more cattle and farming inputs purchases to expand commodity farming to meet market demands. In the 1960s cattle boosted agriculture when growers used it to secure capital from banks which enhanced the economic value of cattle in rural southeast Swaziland. In the social realm a dimension emerged where cattle became an instrument not only for enhancement of the social status but it was also used to create and enhance investment opportunities. At this level of agricultural development it galvanized in the minds of the entrepreneurs of southeast Swaziland that agriculture and cattle were two economic bedfellows. Empirical evidence has contradicted the view that cattle played a static economic role in the rural economy. Instead the evidence that has been provided has showed that cattle were the backbone of agriculture especially after the Second World War. The view that Swazi cattle played a static role in the rural economy was gradually changing and the economic significance of cattle was becoming dominant.

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