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*Power and resistance in an African society: The Ciskei Xhosa and the making of South Africa*

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*Power and resistance* is an impressive book and one that makes a valuable contribution to South African historical writing. In a historiography as poorly served by regional histories as ours, the publication of a comprehensive, thoroughly researched and nuanced historical analysis of a particular region is a noteworthy occurrence. Switzer's history of the Ciskei, is to my knowledge, the first regionally focused study to cover the entire span of South African history from pre-colonial times to the recent past. It also represents a rare attempt at synthesis within the revisionist tradition of South African historiography.

Although a great deal has been written about the history of the coastal lowland between the Fish and Kei Rivers, known as the Ciskei from as early as the 1840s, there has been no general study of the region. The quality of the literature on the Ciskei is uneven and there are still many gaps in its history. Switzer is nevertheless fortunate to have some of the best scholarship on South African history at his disposal and his book is a showcase for the work of historians such as Jeff Peires, Colin Bundy, Jack Lewis and André Odendaal. *Power and resistance* is, however, much more than a synthesis of secondary sources. In its attempt to tell the history of the Ciskei from the perspective of the subordinate Xhosa community, it marshals a vast body of both secondary and primary material. Excellent summaries of the key monographic works on the Ciskei, pithy reviews of debates between historians, in-depth case studies and a considerable amount of Switzer's own original research are skilfully woven together into a detailed and thoroughly comprehensive history of the region.

The book is divided into three parts. The first takes the story of the Ciskei up to the end of the period of colonial conquest. Switzer starts his account with a discussion of the hunter-gatherer, pastoral and iron-age, farming peoples that inhabited pre-colonial Southern Africa. In the first of two chapters comprising this section he describes relations between the Khoi, San and Xhosa in the Eastern Cape and analyses the dynamics of power and privilege in Xhosa society. The second chapter deals with the interaction between European settlers and the Xhosa on the Eastern Cape frontier and the conquest of the latter in a series of nine frontier wars spanning a century. From the 1770s onwards Dutch-speaking trekboers moving eastward came into conflict with the Xhosa over grazing land in the area east of the Gamtoos River. Although they were more than able to hold their own against the trekboers the Xhosa were unable to withstand the power of the British who consolidated their control over the Eastern Cape frontier within half a century of permanently occupying the Cape in 1806. In a few bold strokes Switzer recounts the well-known tale of the Xhosa being expelled beyond the Fish River in 1812, pushed beyond the Keiskamma by the mid-1830s and militarily subjugated during the war of 1850-1853. The loss of much of the land they had once occupied, the disintegration of traditional social structures and institutions, the spread of lung sickness that devastated their herds and looming crop failure set the scene for the disastrous Cattle-killing and mass starvation of the Xhosa in 1856-1857. Switzer then sketches in the remaining episodes of primary resistance amongst the Xhosa which came to a close with the killing of Sandile in a skirmish with British soldiers north of Kingwilliamstown in mid-1878.

The next four chapters that make up the second part of the book are devoted to the period the Ciskei Xhosa spent under Cape colonial rule. The first of these deals with the socio-economic consequences of conquest for the Xhosa. It describes the breakdown of their pre-capitalist mode of production, the emergence of a peasantry and processes of social stratification and proletarianization at work in the Ciskei, especially after the discovery of minerals in the Southern African interior. The following chapter examines the impact

of the mission enterprise on the Xhosa and the emergence of a mission-educated Christian community amongst Ciskeian Africans. It was from within this group that the assimilationist 'School' folk culture emerged in contrast to the 'Reds' who clung to traditional beliefs and culture partly as a personal expression of resistance to colonial rule. Switzer then analyses the role of the modernizing petty bourgeoisie in settler politics during the latter decades of the nineteenth century. It was the mission-educated elite who qualified for the franchise and formed political alliances with Cape liberals. They were the ones who inaugurated the first political pressure groups from the 1880s onwards and initiated the tradition of moderate petitionary protest that was to dominate organized African politics till the mid-twentieth century. The final chapter in this section chronicles the rise of African nationalism. Political, religious and educational institutions in the Ciskei played key roles in fostering an inclusive African political identity and broadening the base of African protest politics, a process that culminated in the formation of the South African Native National Congress in 1912. The mushrooming of the independent church movement, the campaign to establish an African university (resulting in the institution of the South African Native College at Fort Hare in 1916) and the protest campaign against the Draft South Africa Act during 1909-1910 are amongst the themes explored here.

The third section covers the history of the Ciskei under the unified South African state from 1910 through to the early 1980s when it was granted sham independence by the South African government. The first of the four chapters in this section investigates what might be termed the underdevelopment of the Ciskei between 1910 and the beginning of the Apartheid era. Switzer here examines the creation of a "truncated Ciskeian reserve" under the Native Land Act of 1913 and traces the growth of economic dependency in the Ciskei during the first half of the twentieth century. He highlights the role of the state in the growing population pressure, overstocking, declining agricultural production and labour migrancy that, amongst other things, went into the making of one of South Africa's most impoverished areas. The next two chapters deal with protest politics and popular resistance in the Ciskei between Union and the banning of the main African political organizations at the start of the 1960s. The first is devoted to the interwar period. Although the strategy of petitionary protest still dominated the politics of the petty bourgeois elite, as exemplified by the protracted campaign against Hertzog's Native Bills, rural Ciskei witnessed sporadic eruptions of popular resistance during the 1920s and 1930s. Here the spotlight falls on the activities of the ICU and the millenarian movements led by Enoch Mgijima, Wellington Buthelezi and the prophetess Nonteta. In the next chapter we read of the country-wide resurgence of popular resistance during the 1940s and 1950s and the concomitant revival of the ANC as the South African economy experienced sustained and rapid economic growth. Industrial workers and impoverished peasants were increasingly drawn into the mass movement against the white supremacist state. Switzer's chronicle accentuates those aspects of the ANC-led civil disobedience campaign of the 1950s that "acted as lightning rods for converging local grievances in rural Ciskei" (p. 287). The focus here is largely on the Defiance Campaign, agitation against Bantu education and peasant opposition to the government's misnamed "betterment schemes". The penultimate chapter deals with the Apartheid state's labour control policies and the ramifications this had for the Ciskei which had lost all economic viability and "served as the principle dumping ground for unwanted Xhosa-speaking workers and their families" (p. 313). Switzer's history concludes with the creation in 1981 of the puppet Ciskeian state under the presidency of Lennox Sebe.

Having done an excellent job up to this point, the concluding chapter of the book is somewhat disappointing. I am puzzled by the decision to end the story with Sebe firmly entrenched as President and the failure to offer an analysis of the widespread civil strife that destabilized the region from the mid-1980s onwards. The discussion of the black consciousness movement and the revival of trade unionism tacked onto the conclusion should have formed part of such an investigation.

This criticism aside, in *Power and resistance* we have an excellently written, comprehensive and richly textured analysis that makes an important contribution to the reconstruction of South Africa's past. This is a book I would recommend to anyone interested in South African history or the roots of our contemporary politics.

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