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# PRECOLONIAL ECONOMIC CHANGE

## AMONG THE TLHAPING, c. 1795-1817

Gary Y. Okihiro

South African historiography has been transformed over the past decade by the "revisionist" or "radical" school of history. The change reflects a more modern emphasis on the world economy and the processes of dependency and underdevelopment. Influential in that advance have been the writings of Colin Bundy, the Palmer and Parsons volume, *Roots of Rural Poverty*, and the essays and lively exchanges published in the *Review of African Political Economy*.<sup>1</sup> As Shula Marks and Anthony Atmore have pointed out, however, the primary concern of these scholars is not unlike the question posed by Afrikaner historians over a decade ago: "how has it come about that so small a number of whites has been able to impose itself on a far greater number of African peoples to achieve its present position of dominance, exploitation and power?"<sup>2</sup> Critics of the "revisionist" school maintain that to properly understand the restructuring of social formations, one must move beyond the limited focus on capitalist penetration and examine the precolonial antecedents. As Martin Chanock has observed:

The newer literature [Saul and Woods], though it contains a customary genuflection towards the importance of understanding the dynamics of precolonial economies, still sees the capitalist economy as transfiguring the market relations of the bulk of the population with the outside world - the peasant proper being created by colonialism. While it does not, as the subsistence/cash school did, write off the complexity of the precolonial economy, it does ... effectively share the same departure base-line, which is the beginning of the European colonial period.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Colin Bundy, "The Emergence and Decline of a South African Peasantry," *African Affairs*, 71,285 (October 1972), 369-388; and *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry* (Berkeley, 1979); Robin Palmer and Neil Parsons, eds., *The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa* (Berkeley, 1977); and see for example *Review of African Political Economy*, Number 7 (September-December 1976).

<sup>2</sup> Shula Marks and Anthony Atmore, eds., *Economy and Society in Pre-industrial South Africa* (London, 1980), 2.

<sup>3</sup> Martin Chanock, "Agricultural Change and Continuity in Malawi," in Palmer and Parsons, eds., *Roots of Rural Poverty*, 397. See also Terence Ranger, "Growing from the Roots: Reflections on Peasant Research in Central and Southern Africa," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 5,1 (October 1978), 99-133; and Frederick Cooper, "Peasants, Capitalists, and Historians: A Review Article," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 7,2 (April 1981), 284-314.

A consequence of that time-line has been a reliance on synchronic descriptions of precolonial social formations principally drawn from the much maligned structural-functionalist literature. Indeed, as Comaroff has noted, "Marxist African history has sometimes come, by default, to rely on conceptions of rural forms derived largely from the anthropological orthodoxies which it rejects. Thus, notwithstanding that these forms are seen as an historical product rather than as historically given, they are often described as little more than an inert assemblage of manifest institutional principles."<sup>4</sup> Colin Bundy, in his landmark study of the South African peasantry, generalizes broadly on the precolonial social relations of the Bantu-speakers and provides an ahistorical description. He acknowledges that such a description "is in danger of presenting a static or synchronic view; in mitigation of this shortcoming the plea is entered that its presence should not be taken to imply that Cape Nguni societies were static or lacking in internal dynamics of change."<sup>5</sup>

A second major criticism of the "revisionist" school is that they fail to give attention to the pre-existent variations of class relations of production and exchange and underestimate the complexities of African responses to colonial domination. Theda Skocpol, in a review essay of Wallerstein's *The Modern World-System*, criticizes Wallerstein for his adherence to liberal economics in his focus on the ruling class and their single-minded drive to maximize profits. Rather, she observed, Wallerstein should have taken his cue from the basic Marxist insight that the sociological key to the functioning and development of any economic system is the social relations of production and surplus appropriation. Thus, to fully understand the dialectic of articulation, in Comaroff's terminology, one must comprehend the "institutionalized *relationships* between producing and surplus-appropriating classes and allow for the ever-present potential of collective resistance from below."<sup>6</sup> This neither denies nor diminishes the influence of transnational structures or markets; rather, it seems unlikely that they can be properly comprehended without accounting for the specific patterns of pre-existing class relations. Such studies help to locate the variables of time and place, and show that markets cannot solely explain social transformations. Thus, for example, Brenner has shown that in parts of northwestern Germany during the sixteenth century, peasants, rather than their enserfing lords, took advantage of the new export opportunities after "a prolonged period of anti-landlord resistance."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup>John L. Comaroff, "Dialectical Systems, History and Anthropology: Units of Study and Question of Theory," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 8,2 (April 1982), 145.

<sup>5</sup>Bundy, *Rise and Fall*, 14. Much progress, nonetheless, has been subsequently achieved in pushing back the historical analysis, especially in seeking the origins of peasantization and migrant labor. See for example the essays by Philip Bonner, Jeff Guy, and William Beinart in Marks and Atmore, eds., *Economy and Society*; and the chapters by Kevin Shillington and Patrick Harries in Shula Marks and Richard Rathbone, eds., *Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa* (London, 1982).

<sup>6</sup>Theda Skocpol, "Wallerstein's World Capitalist System: A Theoretical and Historical Critique," *American Journal of Sociology*, 82,5 (March 1977), 1079.

<sup>7</sup>Robert Brenner, "Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-industrial Europe," *Past and Present*, 70 (February 1976), 53.

Comaroff has suggested that an approach to African responses to colonialism begins with a "recognition that the construction, reproduction and transformation of such systems is inevitably shaped by an ongoing dialectic between internal forms and external forms." That dialectic of articulation is shaped by both an internal dialectic relatively autonomous to the local system and the articulation of that system with its encompassing context.<sup>8</sup>

This present study of Tlhaping precolonial economic change contributes little to a theoretical conceptualization of the process of peasantization or the precise nature of pre-capitalist social formations. In fact, by the standards established by the current debate in South African historiography and the literature of Marxist anthropologists on pre-capitalist modes of production,<sup>9</sup> this essay appears a regression to the "liberal" historiography of the past. Despite the acceptance by "revisionists" of an extended time-frame, however, few studies have documented in detail South African precolonial social formations and relations of production.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps, as Ranger observed, a principal defect has been a reliance on archival material in the absence of oral sources.<sup>11</sup> In addition, studies on Nguni societies have predominated to the near exclusion of Sotho-Tswana societies. That is particularly surprising because the latter have been traditionally viewed as having larger-scale and more complex economies and social structures. Finally, in terms of contact and interaction, direct capitalist penetration of the Sotho-Tswana first occurred among the Tlhaping. This paper on the material base of Tlhaping society describes the changes undergone during the periods of pre-contact and contact, c. 1795-1806 and 1806-1817, and reiterates some well-established notions: that African producers made choices to increase their individual utility, that there exists a dynamic connection between production and exchange, and that contact involved the contradictions of absorption and resistance. Still, those points bear repeating, as they can shed light on detailed historical change and such micro-studies can form the building blocks for more ambitious designs.

While not advancing theory, this paper profits from its application. In fact, without a theoretical base, a meaningful consideration of the precolonial past is hardly possible given the scant documentary evidence. Formalist economics is implicitly assumed throughout this paper; that model assists in offering explanations for disconnected events and data of varying degrees of historical usefulness. Additionally, the Marxist conception of mode of production provides an analytic framework from which to view the Tlhaping social formation.<sup>12</sup> Herein mode of production is defined as the

<sup>8</sup> Comaroff, "Dialectical Systems," 146.

<sup>9</sup> See for example Barry Hindess and Paul Q. Hirst, *Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production* (London, 1975); Maurice Godelier, *Perspectives in Marxist Anthropology* (Cambridge, 1977); David Seddon, ed., *Relations of Production* (London 1978); and Joel S. Kahn and Josep R. Llobera, eds., *The Anthropology of Pre-Capitalist Societies* (London, 1981).

<sup>10</sup> See footnote 5 above.

<sup>11</sup> Ranger, "Growing from the Roots," 107-117.

<sup>12</sup> Social formation implies the unity of economic and social relations within a society and its structure derives from the modes of production. The term also stresses processes of change rather than static, synchronic units of analyses. Marks and Atmore, eds., *Economy and Society*, 38.

manner in which material surplus is produced and appropriated, and the focus is on the social relations of production and surplus appropriation. The Tlhaping social formation is viewed as being comprised of a set of relations of production which competed in attempting to appropriate surplus, although only one predominated at a given point in time. That dialectic provided the basis for embryonic class conflict and for social transformation and change. Generally in Marxist literature, exploitation is secured by non-producers who control the means of production by appropriating surplus value created by wage laborers. As pointed out by Hindess and Hirst, however, that view is insufficient to explain precapitalist modes of production in which the laborer seems to be the effective possessor of the means of production with a variety of ways to escape exploitation by the ruling class.<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, they go on to explain, the elders intervened through controlling marriage or the reproduction of production, thus ultimately separating the laborer from access to the means of production.<sup>14</sup> Further, Bonner has argued that the low fertility of African soils, a relatively low level of technology, and low population densities made it impossible for the ruling class to extract surplus on the Asiatic scale. Thus, the elders' appropriation of surplus value through a control of access to women, prestige goods, and claim to excess product appeared more appropriately to be a tributary mode of production.<sup>15</sup> The primary internal dialectic of concern in this paper accordingly is the tension in the tributary mode of production between the intervention of elders and resistance from below, or in Comaroff's schema, the antagonistic tendencies of aggregation and hierarchy on the one hand and individualism and egalitarianism on the other.<sup>16</sup> In addition, given the formalist bias herein, increased production is not viewed as the result of state intervention but is derived from the individual pursuit of utility on the part of African producers when confronted with an enlarged range of opportunities. Such was the situation brought about by the initial penetration of mercantile capital among the Tlhaping during the late eighteenth century.

### *Introduction*

Our knowledge of precolonial Tlhaping society is limited. There exists no detailed political history of the Tlhaping, except for the brief accounts of Language and Breutz,<sup>17</sup> and no comprehensive

<sup>13</sup>Hindess and Hirst, *Pre-Capitalist Modes*, 9-10, 194, 196-197, 200.

<sup>14</sup>Hindess and Hirst, *Pre-Capitalist Modes*, 226-228, 232-238. See also Comaroff, "Dialectical Systems," 150-155; and Philip Bonner, "Classes, the Mode of Production and the State in Pre-colonial Swaziland," in Marks and Atmore, eds., *Economy and Society*, 86-87.

<sup>15</sup>Bonner, "Classes, the Mode of Production and the State," 80-86.

<sup>16</sup>Comaroff, "Dialectical Systems," 150-159.

<sup>17</sup>F.J. Language, "Herkoms en Geskiedenis van die Tlhaping," *African Studies*, 1,2 (June 1942), 115-133; and P.-L. Breutz, *The Tribes of Vryburg District* (Pretoria, 1959) See also L.F. Maingard, "The Brikwa and the Ethnic Origins of the Batlhaping," *The South African Journal of Science*, 30 (October 1933), 597-602.

ethnographic study, except for the few studies of aspects of Tlhaping social organization.<sup>18</sup> There has been no systematic collection of Tlhaping oral history (in contrast to the northern Tswana)<sup>19</sup> and there are notable gaps in the historical record. Contemporary European observers visited the Tlhaping in 1801, 1805, 1811, 1812, 1813, and 1820, leaving little documentation for the intervening years. Further, their stay among the Tlhaping was generally brief; the British trade commissioners, Truter and Somerville, for instance, remained in the Tlhaping capital, Dithakong, for fifteen days in November/December 1801, Lichtenstein in June/July 1805, and Burchell in September 1811 and July/August 1812.<sup>20</sup> The primary concern for most of those early travellers was to explore the possibilities for European trade; consequently, their accounts focus on Tswana trade networks, commodities, and prices rather than on the modes of production. Despite the limitations and diffuse nature of the available sources, evidence for dynamic relationships and changes in the Tlhaping economy can be found.

The principal feature of Botlhaping<sup>21</sup> was its rivers. The Molopo, Harts, and Orange rivers framed Botlhaping to the north, east, and south, and the location of the Tlhaping capital alternated between the banks of the Moshaweng and Kuruman, both tributaries of the Molopo. The flat and slightly undulating grasslands in Botlhaping decline in elevation from east to west, from about 4,000 feet fifty miles east of Dithakong to about 3,500 feet fifty miles west of the capital. Rainfall likewise declines from east to west, as is typical for most of South Africa. Average rainfall for the period 1921-1935 ranged from fifteen to twenty inches fifty miles east of Dithakong, ten to fifteen inches around the capital, and even less towards the borders of the Kalahari.<sup>22</sup> The first rains generally

<sup>18</sup>F.J. Language, "Die Verkryging en Verlies van Lidmaatskap tot die Stam by die Tlhaping," *African Studies*, 2,2 (1943), 77-92; F.J. Language, "Die Bogwera van die Tlhaping," *Tydskrif vir Wetenskap en Kuns*, 4,2 (1943), 110-134; B.A. Pauw, *Religion in a Tswana Chiefdom* (London, 1960); and B.A. Pauw, "Some Changes in the Social Structure of the Tlhaping of the Taung Reserve," *African Studies*, 19,2 (1960), 49-76.

<sup>19</sup>I. Schapera, ed., *Ditrafalo tsa Merafe ya Batswana* (Lovedale, 1954); I. Schapera, ed., *Mekgwa le Melao ya Batswana* (Lovedale, 1938); and I. Schapera, *Praise-Poems of Tswana Chiefs* (Oxford, 1965). Rolong oral histories, however, have been collected and used, as in J.C. MacGregor, *Basuto Traditions* (Cape Town, 1905); S.M. Molema, *Chief Moroka* (Cape Town, 1951); and S.M. Molema, *The Bantu Past and Present* (Edinburgh, 1920).

<sup>20</sup>Truter's report was extracted and appended to Barrow's account of his travels in John Barrow, *A Voyage to Cochinchina* (London, 1806). Borchers, a member of the Truter and Somerville expedition, published his account in Petrus Borchardus Borchers, *An Autobiographical Memoir* (Cape Town, 1861). Lichtenstein's observations are found in Henry Lichtenstein, *Travels in Southern Africa*, I (Cape Town, 1928) and II (London, 1815), trans. by Anne Plumtree. Burchell's visits were recorded in William J. Burchell, *Travels in the Interior of Southern Africa*, I and II (London, 1822; 1824). Campbell travelled to Dithakong in 1813, John Campbell, *Travels in South Africa, 1813* (Andover, 1816) and again in 1820 accompanied by Robert Moffat. John Campbell, *Travels in South Africa...1820*, 2 vols. (London, 1822); Robert Moffat, *Missionary Labours and Scenes in Southern Africa* (London, 1842); and Robert Moffat, *Apprenticeship at Kuruman* (London, 1951), edited by I. Schapera. We also have the correspondences of resident missionaries but these have not been all that helpful.

<sup>21</sup>Botlhaping is here employed to designate the geographical area within which the supremacy of the Tlhaping *kgosi* was recognized. Those borders varied considerably and were ill-defined.

<sup>22</sup>Breutz, *Vryburg*, 7-8.

fell in November, reaching a peak in March and ending about April. The winter months of May through August were normally dry, with a cold wind from the west. Temperatures ranged from an average high of 79° F and an average low of 28° F during the winter month of July 1812,<sup>23</sup> to a high of 97° F in the shade and a low of 62° F one summer day in December 1801.<sup>24</sup> A notable climatic change was the progressive dessication of the area observed during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. One indication of that was the decline of the Kuruman river. Elderly informants in 1820 remembered when the Kuruman extended into the Kalahari and remained so high that people could not cross it for long periods of time.<sup>25</sup> In contrast, although still perennial, the Kuruman at the commencement of the rainy season in November 1801 was thirty feet wide and two feet deep near the Tlhaping town, and at the height of the dry season in July 1812 was fifteen feet wide and one foot deep.<sup>26</sup>

#### The Tlhaping Social Formation, c.1795-1806

During the period from around 1795 to 1806, Botlhaping centered around the capital and its western outpost at Patani, and reached about one hundred miles south to Sebilong.<sup>27</sup> The Tlhaping town was compactly laid out with the *kgotla* of the *kgosi* at the center and other *makgotla* radiating concentrically around giving the town a circular plan. Land adjacent to and encircling the town was devoted to agriculture, while the areas beyond were devoted to grazing and hunting.<sup>28</sup> The capital moved twice, in 1802 when the Tlhaping moved south from the banks of the Moshaweng to the Kuruman, and in 1806 when it was relocated back to the Moshaweng just east of the 1802 site.<sup>29</sup> Botlhaping's population consisted of a mixed group of Tlhaping, Taung, and Kora, most of whom were concentrated in the capital and Patani. Both Truter and Borchers estimated a population of 10-15,000 in Dithakong and about 2,000 in Patani. One year later, in 1802, Mokalaka's Taung separated from the Tlhaping, taking with them about two-thirds of Dithakong's population. Lichtenstein estimated a population of 5,000 in the Tlhaping capital in 1805.

Botlhaping was administered by the *kgosi*, Molehabangwe (b.1740/55-1812), *dikgosana*, and the *pitso* or general assembly, and because the population was largely confined to the two administrative centers, political and economic controls were exercised direc-

<sup>23</sup>Burchell, *Travels*, II, 370.

<sup>24</sup>Barrow, *Cochinchina*, 415.

<sup>25</sup>Campbell, *Travels, 1820*, II, 93, 111-112, 116.

<sup>26</sup>Barrow, *Cochinchina*, 387; and Burchell, *Travels*, II, 218.

<sup>27</sup>Lichtenstein, *Travels*, II, 347.

<sup>28</sup>Barrow, *Cochinchina*, 390-391, 413-414; Borchers, *Memoir*, 85, 126-127, 130; and Lichtenstein, *Travels*, II, 365, 373, 379.

<sup>29</sup>Lichtenstein, *Travels*, II, 380; Burchell, *Travels*, II, 360-361; George Thompson, *Travels and Adventures in Southern Africa*, I (Cape Town, 1967), edited by Vernon S. Forbes, 107, 109; and Moffat, *Apprenticeship*, 17-18, 76.

<sup>30</sup>Barrow, *Cochinchina*, 391, 414; Borchers, *Memoir*, 85, 88; and Lichtenstein, *Travels*, II, 373, 379-380.

tly by Molehabangwe in the capital and by Serakoti, his brother, in Patani.<sup>31</sup> The *kgosi* and *dikgosana* allocated land for housing, herding, and cultivating, levied and collected fines, taxes, and tribute in goods and labor, enforced the seasonal variations of productive activities, and regulated trade within the borders of Bothaping. Those prerogatives enabled the ruling class to appropriate surplus value at the expense of the laborers. That accumulation, generally concentrated in livestock, had a multiplier effect in that cattle permitted polygynous marriages and the attachment of clients, both sources of additional labor in cultivation, herding, and hunting.<sup>32</sup> One group of clients, the Balala, were to play an essential role in the later period.

While social stratification was based upon kinship, the division of labor was based upon gender. Male labor was generally employed in production for the external, exchange sector, such as animal husbandry, skins and metals, and hunting, while female labor was largely confined to production for the internal, household sector, as in gathering and cultivation, pottery, and house construction.<sup>33</sup> It is clear, however, that no absolute boundaries existed in the sexual division of labor. For example, women sometimes accompanied men on trade expeditions,<sup>34</sup> and the products of cultivation constituted important articles of exchange.<sup>35</sup> Further, there was a distinct interrelationship between productive sectors. Burchell noted that when there was an abundance of game, Tlhaping agriculture declined, and conversely when game diminished, cultivation increased.<sup>36</sup> Ultimately, however, wealth and the means for its generation remained in the hands of men.

Cattle constituted wealth. "A *Booshuana* is accounted wealthy according to the number of cattle, knives and beads he may possess: these are the money and the currency of *Leetakoo*," observed Truter.<sup>37</sup> As Schneider has pointed out, the economic value of cattle does not derive from their provisioning ability to provide milk and meat, but simply from the demand for them.<sup>38</sup> Cattle thus could be exchanged for commodities or labor, were not normally slaughtered, were carefully raised to maximize their reproduction, and were used as a means for upward mobility through their accumulation.<sup>39</sup> Tlhaping cattle were kept in pens adjacent to the owner's household inside the town and allowed to graze just beyond the cultivated fields.<sup>40</sup> In the morning, the herd was divided into small

<sup>31</sup>Borcherds, *Memoir*, 77.

<sup>32</sup>Lichtenstein, *Travels*, II, 414; and Monica Wilson, "Changes in Social Structure in Southern Africa: The Relevance of Kinship Studies to the Historian," in Leonard Thompson, ed., *African Societies in Southern Africa* (New York, 1969), 71-85.

<sup>33</sup>Barrow, *Cochinchina*, 396-397.

<sup>34</sup>Moffat, *Missionary Labours*, 485.

<sup>35</sup>*The Journal of Hendrik Jacob Wikar* (1779) (Cape Town, 1935), trans. by A.W. van der Horst, 149; and Campbell, *Travels, 1820*, II, 7-8.

<sup>36</sup>Burchell, *Travels*, II, 369.

<sup>37</sup>Barrow, *Cochinchina*, 396.

<sup>38</sup>Harold K. Schneider, *The Africans* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1982), 174-176.

<sup>39</sup>Barrow, *Cochinchina*, 393; and Lichtenstein, *Travels*, II, 409.

<sup>40</sup>Borcherds, *Memoir*, 126-127.



groups and placed under the care of younger members of the family or clients. Each would then set out with his cattle to a predetermined pasture and return by sunset where the cattle were welcomed and counted by the owner, milked, and secured in the pen for the night.<sup>41</sup> "In reckoning the number of a large herd of cattle," wrote Burchell, "the Batlhaping separate them into tens, and thus gain a more distinct notion: but in ascertaining whether any might be missing from the herd ... they depend ... solely on their knowledge of the colors, particular spots, size and countenance, of each animal."<sup>42</sup> The detailed care accorded cattle reflected their value and probably maximized their maintenance and reproduction. Besides cattle, the Tlhaping kept goats which were consumed largely within the household and had little exchange value. Perhaps in earlier periods, goats played a more central role in the Tlhaping economy.<sup>43</sup>

Each household maintained a cultivated plot on the outskirts of town. Those family plots, unlike grazing land, were individually held by the household. "Lands which their ancestors have dug and sown, become the property of the family," reported Campbell, "and all of them know well what ground in this way belongs to each family."<sup>44</sup> Agricultural land was plentiful, however, was not in demand, and thus had no intrinsic value. That principle was tested later when European missionaries introduced the notion of real property. After the first rains, the women worked their fenced fields with iron hoes preparing the soil to a depth of "about four inches."<sup>45</sup>

In the morning, about eight or nine o'clock, the women are seen leaving their houses in groups of two or three hundred, with small pickaxes hanging over their shoulders, - some with children on their backs and a bundle of food, and generally with a wooden or earthen vessel on the head for water; they then proceed to work the extensive gardens with these axes, and sow Kafir corn (holcus), beans, watermelons, etc. Between three and four in the afternoon they return to prepare the family meal, consisting of boiled dried watermelon, corn, or beans.<sup>46</sup>

To increase productivity, the preparation of the soil was accomplished communally. It is difficult to determine whether these work units constituted a single lineage group or some other aggregation based on kinship. The net result, nonetheless, enabled the women to till their plots and sow the seeds in timely fashion before the

<sup>41</sup> Borchers, *Memoir*, 126-127; and Burchell, *Travels*, II, 265, 285.

<sup>42</sup> Burchell, *Travels*, II, 394.

<sup>43</sup> To the Khoi, the Tlhaping were known as Brickwa or "goat people." Barrow, *Cochinchina*, 387; Borchers, *Memoir*, 77; Burchell, *Travels*, II, 216; and Wikar, 15.

<sup>44</sup> Campbell, *Travels*, 1820, II, 149.

<sup>45</sup> Lichtenstein, *Travels*, II, 410; Campbell, *Travels*, 1813, 169; and Burchell, *Travels*, II, 413.

<sup>46</sup> Borchers, *Memoir*, 128.

first gentle rains gave way to the heavy downpours which washed away recently planted seeds and young seedlings.<sup>47</sup> "The women here are the farmers," wrote Campbell. "Even the queen digs the ground along with the other females. The instrument they use is a kind of pick-axe. They all sing while at work, and strike the ground with their axes according to time, so that no one gives a stroke more than another...."<sup>48</sup>

The principal crop planted was *mabele* (*Holcus sorghum*), a drought-resisting crop well suited to the Tlhaping dry farming method.<sup>49</sup> Between the *mabele* were planted *dinawa*, a small species of "kidney beans," at least four varieties of *lekatani* or cooking melon, a variety of pumpkin, watermelon, a calabash gourd (*Curcubitaria lagenaria*), and sweet sorghum.<sup>50</sup> The variety of crops, each requiring differing amounts of moisture and lengths of growing season, helped to avert total crop failure. Agriculture as practiced along the Mashoweng was so successful that Truter recorded that Tlhaping fields presented a "never failing source of plenty and provision,"<sup>51</sup> and surplus grain and gourds were traded to the northeast and southwest along the Orange River beyond the Langenberg.<sup>52</sup> An indication of the extent to which the Tlhaping depended upon the products of cultivation was the large storage jars, six to nine feet in height and each having a capacity of not less than 200 gallons.<sup>53</sup> The wealthy, observed Burchell, kept the back portion of the house "completely filled with jars of this kind" and many families had "an additional *corn-house*, to contain several more such jars."<sup>54</sup>

Besides herding, men's productive activities included the clearing of new fields<sup>55</sup> and especially the manufacturing of leather and skins goods. While in Dithakong in November/December 1801, Truter observed that the men "employ a considerable portion of their time in hunting, in preparing skins and hides for cloaks and shoes."<sup>56</sup> The manufacturing in leather and skins was timed in anticipation of the upcoming winter trade expeditions in which those goods were an item of exchange. The industry during this period, however, was probably not as extensive or important to the overall Tlhaping economy as in the post-1806 period. Smaller skins were tanned by rubbing, while larger skins required considerable amounts of labor and the cooperative efforts of several men.

<sup>47</sup> For further elaboration, see, Gary Yukio Okihiro, "Hunters, Herders, Cultivators, and Traders: Interaction and Change in the Kgalagadi, Nineteenth Century" (Ph.D. thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1976), 77-80.

<sup>48</sup> Campbell, *Travels, 1813*, 189.

<sup>49</sup> J.H. Wellington, "Some Geographical Factors Affecting Agriculture in South Africa," *The South African Geographical Journal*, 6 (December 1923), 46, 62-63.

<sup>50</sup> Barrow, *Cochinchina*, 394; Borchers, *Memoir*, 85; Lichtenstein, *Travels*, II, 410; Burchell, *Travels*, II, 413-414; Campbell, *Travels, 1813*, 169; and Moffat, *Apprenticeship*, 188.

<sup>51</sup> Barrow, *Cochinchina*, 394.

<sup>52</sup> Wikar, 149; Campbell, *Travels, 1820*, II, 7-8; and George W. Stow, *The Native Races of South Africa* (London, 1905), edited by George McCall Theal, 428.

<sup>53</sup> Barrow, *Cochinchina*, 292; and Borchers, *Memoir*, 128.

<sup>54</sup> Burchell, *Travels*, II, 366.

<sup>55</sup> Moffat, *Missionary Labours*, 330-331.

<sup>56</sup> Barrow, *Cochinchina*, 397.

There was a hard smooth skin laid upon the ground, on which was put another skin which they intended to soften. Twelve men on their knees surrounded it: every second person, which made six of the circle, at one instant plunged down upon the skin; ... each person driving it from him, the whole skin was shrivelled into a heap in the center; but in raising again their bodies they pulled it to them, which made it flat as before, and made room for the other six to plunge down upon it in the same way. Both sixes alternately continued a long time at this exercise, as if they had been a machine, keeping exact time in falling and rising, by means of words which they sang...<sup>57</sup>

Each large piece required several days of such labor before it was considered to be sufficiently softened; the end-product was "exceedingly pliable" and "as soft as chamois leather."<sup>58</sup> From those, the Tswana *kobo* or cloak was sewn. Additionally, the Tlhaping produced the more expensive *kobo ya kgosi* made from between sixty to eighty fur pelts of the genus *Felis*, each adjoining piece carefully selected for matching color and sewn so skilfully that "no appearance of seams could be discerned on the hairy side."<sup>59</sup> The *kobo ya kgosi* required about a month to sew and usually was exchanged for cattle.<sup>60</sup>

Mining, hunting and trading generally took place after the end of the agricultural year in May and continued through the winter months until the first rains in November. Reserving periods of the annual calendar to certain productive activities was economically rational. Clearly cultivation had to be timed with the rainfall pattern; similarly, labor was conserved and efficiency maximized by hunting during the dry months because game would tend to congregate around permanent water pools unlike during the rainy season when they would have wider range. Travelling on trade expeditions was facilitated during the cool winter months especially since many routes led into the Kalahari. Besides the factors of rainfall and climate, the allocation of labor was oftentimes collective as required in the preparation of the fields, tanning larger skins, and hunting.<sup>61</sup> Productivity was thus dependent on group effort at particular times of the year. The seasonal variations of production illustrate the overall economic choices made by the Tlhaping aimed at conserving labor and maximizing production.

<sup>57</sup> Campbell, *Travels, 1813*, 175. Compare Campbell, *Travels, 1820*, I, 82; and Burchell, *Travels*, II, 415-416.

<sup>58</sup> Burchell, *Travels*, II, 416; and Wikar, 143.

<sup>59</sup> Lichtenstein, *Travels*, II, 379.

<sup>60</sup> Lichtenstein, *Travels*, II, 389; Borchers, *Memoir*, 123; Campbell, *Travels, 1820*, II, 219; and Okihiro, "Hunters, Herders," 103-107.

<sup>61</sup> Organized hunts employed the chase and trap or *hopo*. Game was encircled and directed toward a waiting ambush in the former method and a pit in the latter. Borchers, *Memoir*, 125; Burchell, *Travels*, II, 229, 298-299; David Livingstone, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* (New York, 1858), 28-29; and Henry H. Methuen, *Life in the Wilderness; or Wanderings in South Africa* (London, 1846), 136-139.

At Sebilong, the southernmost extremity of Botlhaping, the Tlhaping mined for *sebito*, "specular iron in very small flakes."<sup>62</sup> *Sebito* was used as a cosmetic for both men and women,<sup>63</sup> and was an important item of trade for the Tlhaping because Sebilong was the only place in Transorangia where high quality *sebito* could be found and because there was a demand for the article among many surrounding Tswana groups.<sup>64</sup> The importance of this commodity could be seen in the two mine workings at Sebilong, which, in 1811, consisted of a horizontal mine shaft about twenty feet high and thirty feet deep, and about a quarter mile distant, a large open pit having a depth of between fifteen and eighteen feet.<sup>65</sup> One probable effect of limiting mining to a few months of the year was to achieve stable prices through limited production.<sup>66</sup>

Manufacturing in metals likely faced stiff competition from Tswana smiths to the northeast, including the Rolong, Hurutshe, Lete, and Ngwaketse. Indications of that include the fairly common practice of purchasing a wide variety of metal implements from those groups through trade, and the small number of smiths in the Tlhaping capital. A source of the local producers' difficulty lay in the fact that no deposits of iron and copper were known in Botlhaping. Smelted metals thus had to be purchased from their northeastern neighbors first before items could be manufactured,<sup>67</sup> thus raising the costs. Tlhaping smiths, nonetheless, were skilful in general metal work and especially in making highly crafted wire jewelry. "This wire is flat," wrote Lichtenstein, "being beat with a hammer till it is made thin to a degree almost incredible, and which cannot be accomplished but at an immense expense of labour."<sup>68</sup> Still, metal-working apparently declined among the Tlhaping because of trade competition; Burchell in 1812 found only one smith in Dithakong "who had very lately learned it by attentively watching the operations of the smiths at *Melitta*, the chieftown of the *Nuakketsies*, where he had been on a visit to barter for iron goods of their manufacture...."<sup>69</sup> His business, as expected, was flourishing:

<sup>62</sup>Thompson, *Travels*, I, 84, fn 21; Lichtenstein, *Travels*, II, 347; Burchell, *Travels*, I, 287, and II, 183; and Campbell, *Travels*, 1813, 160.

<sup>63</sup>Borcherds, *Memoir*, 127; and Lichtenstein, *Travels*, II, 347.

<sup>64</sup>Burchell, *Travels*, II, 182-183; and Martin Chatfield Legassick, "The Griqua, the Sotho-Tswana, and the Missionaries, 1780-1840: The Politics of a Frontier Zone" (Ph.D. thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1969), 56-57.

<sup>65</sup>Burchell, *Travels*, II, 182-183, 228. See also Lichtenstein, *Travels*, II, 347; Campbell, *Travels*, 1813, 160-162; Campbell, *Travels*, 1820, II, 194-195; and M.D.W. Jeffreys, "Sibello," *Africana Notes and News*, 16,1 (March 1964), 33-36.

<sup>66</sup>Campbell, *Travels*, 1820, II, 194.

<sup>67</sup>An example of this was the importation of copper wires from probably the Hurutshe. Lichtenstein, *Travels*, II, 412-413. See also Moffat, *Missionary Labours*, 466-468.

<sup>68</sup>Lichtenstein, *Travels*, II, 412.

<sup>69</sup>Burchell, *Travels*, II, 420. Compare Lichtenstein, *Travels*, II, 402; and Campbell, *Travels*, 1820, I, 100-101, 124.

His townsmen gave him more to do than he could perform, though he daily rose before the sun and was constantly employed till the evening. His work consisted generally in making hatchets, adzes, knives, hassagays, and hoes.... For this, he was paid either in unwrought iron obtained by barter from the north-eastern tribes, or in corn, oxen, cows, goats, tobacco, beads, koboes, leather, or undressed skins. Even the chief claimed no right to his labor, without paying him at the same rate as any other person. This blacksmith was, of course, rapidly growing rich and reaping the rewards of his industry....<sup>70</sup>

Tlhaping trade was dependent on both the surpluses of Tlhaping production and the retrading of commodities as middlemen. That position formed the basis for much of their trade profits and its erosion led to a decline in the overall economy. Clearly, then, exchange was integrally linked with the Tlhaping mode of production. Bothlaping was the southwestern terminus of an extensive Sotho-Tswana trade network. Metal and wood products, tobacco, and beads filtered down from the northeast and were exchanged for Tlhaping skins goods, *sebito*, ivory, and cattle.<sup>71</sup> Iron, copper, and beads were then retraded by the Tlhaping to the southeast with the Inqua and possibly the Chochoqua Khoi as early as the mid-seventeenth century in exchange for cattle and dagga.<sup>72</sup> Similarly the Tlhaping retraded iron, copper, beads, and tobacco derived from the northeast and dagga derived from the southeast to the Kora and Nama along the Orage River to the southwest in exchange for cattle. Wikar, writing in 1779 of the Tlhaping trade with the Nama, noted:

The Blip [Tlhaping] come each year to the tribes living along this river to trade, bring with them tobacco, ivory spoons, bracelets, copper and iron beads, glass beads, copper earrings and bracelets, knives, barbed assegais and also smooth axes and awls. This is the way they trade: for a heifer they give eight assegais, an axe and an awl, a small bag of tobacco and a small bag of dagga, and for a bull or an ox, five assegais plus

<sup>70</sup>Burchell, *Travels*, II, 340.

<sup>71</sup>Barrow, *Cochinchina*, 404; Borchards, *Memoir*, 124; Lichtenstein, *Travels*, II, 409; Burchell, *Travels*, II, 312, 375; William Desborough Cooley, "A Memoir on the Civilization of the Tribes inhabiting the Highlands near Dalagga Bay," *The Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, 3 (1833), 313-314; Vivien Ellenberger, "Di Rōbarōba Matlhakola--tsa ga Masodi-a-Mphela," *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Africa*, 25,1 (1937), 44; Alan Kent Smith, "The Struggle for Control of Southern Mozambique, 1720-1835" (Ph.D. thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1970), 337-338; and Alan Smith, "Delagoa Bay and the Trade of South-Eastern Africa," in Richard Gray and David Birmingham, eds., *Pre-Colonial African Trade* (London, 1970), 265-289.

<sup>72</sup>Gerrit Harinck, "Interaction Between Xhosa and Khoi: Emphasis on the Period 1620-1750," in Thompson, ed., *African Societies*, 160, 164; and *Journals of the Expeditions of...Bergh (1682 and 1683) and...Schrijver (1689)* (Cape Town, 1931), trans. by E.E. Mossop, 21, 234.

all the other things as for a heifer. They also bring soft, well tanned skins of hartebeest with the grain removed....<sup>73</sup>

Commodities in that southern trade directly traceable to Tlhaping production included skins, the gourd, and possibly metal jewelry. The net result for the Tlhaping was the accumulation of mobile wealth, cattle. That accumulation of cattle in turn was a factor in the economic changes of the next decade.

The intervention of the elders in the production process was evident in the following ways. The allocation of land, both residential and agricultural, was the prerogative of the *kgosi*. The compact settlement pattern reflected the unitary structure of the Tlhaping chiefdom and the evident power of the *kgosi* to appropriate surplus value. The organizing of collective labor as in the preparation of the fields, cattle-raiding, hunting, and skins manufacture was most likely the privilege of the elders. Labor for the tanning and sewing of skins, for example, ultimately exchanged for cattle, was apparently supplied by the *kgosi* himself and his *dikgosana* at the public square or *kgotla*.<sup>74</sup> The authority exercised by the *kgosi* over cattle and matrimonial arrangements served to entrench his control over the means of production. The *kgosi* determined the start of the agricultural cycle through his rain-making function, and the manufacture of hoe handles, possibly reserved for him and the elders, marked the upcoming season.<sup>75</sup> The mining of *sebito* was similarly controlled by the *kgosi*, and the elders collected a share of the cattle acquired through raids organized by them.<sup>76</sup> While the means for intervention predominated during this period and the relations of production favored the ruling class, there probably existed antagonistic tendencies within the kinship system identified by Comaroff from his study of the Tshidi-Rolong as aggregation and hierarchy, and egalitarianism and individualism.<sup>77</sup> That kinship dialectic mirrored the articulation of relations in the Tlhaping tributary mode of production emphasizing collective management at the expense of individualistic pursuit of utility, but nonetheless made manifest the ever-present potential for collective resistance from below and provided the basis for class conflict and social transformation. The penetration of mercantile capital during the next period presented Tlhaping producers with an expanded range of opportunities, and the choices made by them ultimately altered the relations of production of the former period.

<sup>73</sup> Wikar, 149. See also, Wikar, 145, 147, 167; and *The Journals of Brink and Rhenius* (Cape Town, 1947), edited/trans. by E.E. Mossop, 51, 53-55.

<sup>74</sup> Burchell, *Travels*, II, 272; and Campbell, *Travels*, 1813, 173.

<sup>75</sup> Burchell, *Travels*, II, 308.

<sup>76</sup> Burchell, *Travels*, II, 377. See also Ellenberger, "Di Rōbarōba Matlhakola," 35.

<sup>77</sup> Comaroff, "Dialectical Systems," 150-155.

The Penetration of Merchant Capital, 1806-1817

While population estimates must be viewed with caution, they offer an indication of relative size. Contemporary European observers have given the following population figures for the Tlhaping capital: 5,000 in 1812,<sup>78</sup> 7,500 in 1813,<sup>79</sup> and 8-10,000 in 1823.<sup>80</sup> The sources generally agree that the population of the outlying areas increased and eventually exceeded the numbers in the capital. In 1812, Burchell estimated 5,000 within the capital and an equal number outside;<sup>81</sup> in 1813, Campbell reported that besides the estimated 7,500 in the capital, "they have more than a thousand places, called outposts, where there are people and cattle."<sup>82</sup> A major factor in the population increase was Molehabangwe's military expansion of Botlhaping's western borders beginning around 1806, resulting in the conquest of Kora, Kgalagadi, Rolong, and Tlharo groups.<sup>83</sup> Campbell toured the Kalahari districts in 1820 and estimated a total population of over 20,000.<sup>84</sup> A second factor in the population increase might have been the attachment of clients through the accumulation of cattle.

That suggestion may have some merit. First, Tlhaping herders increasingly depended upon the cattlepost system in contrast to the practice of the former period. The system involved keeping a few cattle and goats within the town while placing the major portion of the herd at an outpost miles away tended by clients or junior branches of the clan.<sup>85</sup> The cattlepost was indicative not only of relative peace and security from human raiders but also of a stable settlement and an expanding herd. A consequence of the latter was the progressive decline in productive pastures around the town and greater distances from town to grazing land. Burchell observed that with the large herds of cattle it was "impossible" to keep them in town and thus the need for cattleposts.<sup>86</sup> It appears therefore that Tlhaping herds had grown since the previous period. Second, the Tlhaping seemed to have an increasing number of clients. Mothibi, Molehabangwe's successor, was reported to have had "a considerable number of the *poorer class* of his people" employed in herding his cattle. "They receive for their service nothing more than mere sustenance ... being allowed only a certain portion of the milk...."<sup>87</sup> Wesleyan Methodist missionaries Hodgson and Archbell noted in 1827: "All the chiefs maintain as many Men as their wealth will admit, to each of whom they assign the milk of one or two cows...."<sup>88</sup> Thus the number of clients may have been directly proportional to the number of cattle, although the relationship was not a necessary one. Cattle, however, constituted a necessary precondition for clientage.

<sup>78</sup>Burchell, *Travels*, II, 362, 376.

<sup>79</sup>Campbell, *Travels, 1813*, 189.

<sup>80</sup>Thompson, *Travels*, I, 84.

<sup>81</sup>Burchell, *Travels*, II, 362, 376.

<sup>82</sup>Campbell, *Travels, 1813*, 189.

<sup>83</sup>Language, "Herkoms en Geskiedenis," 124-125.

<sup>84</sup>Campbell, *Travels, 1820*, I, 181, 190; and II, 68-71, 82, 85, 108.

<sup>85</sup>Burchell, *Travels*, II, 368.

<sup>86</sup>Burchell, *Travels*, II, 368. See also Lichtenstein, *Travels*, II, 394.

The principal clients of the Tlhaping were the Balala, variously called Tswana "Bushmen" and "poor" Tswana by European travellers who perceived them to be an exploited class. Later analysts have depicted the Balala as politically unorganized and even as slaves of the Tlhaping.<sup>89</sup> It appears, however, that the economic relationship between Tlhaping and client was mutually beneficial. The Tlhaping acquired a cheap source of labor; the Balala, generally hunter-gatherers, obtained a reliable supply of food, milk, and were provided with an opportunity to begin herds of their own either through gifts or secreting animals from the outpost.<sup>90</sup> In addition, caring for Tlhaping cattle probably did not disturb Balala hunting activities because herding was largely done by younger boys. The products of hunting were exchanged with the Tlhaping for tobacco, beads, metal implements, and even livestock.<sup>91</sup> Still, the Tlhaping economy clearly profited from Balala labor.

During this period, cattle-raiding became an important and frequent means for obtaining livestock.<sup>92</sup> Describing Tlhaping warfare, Burchell wrote: "their principal object being the acquisition of plunder, more than the destruction of their enemies, they often succeed in bringing away large herds of cattle: and of these, the Chief always claims a certain proportion. It is by such means, added to a lucrative trade in beads with other tribes with whom they are at peace, that the Bachapins have greatly enriched themselves in this species of property."<sup>93</sup> Such raids utilized to a large extent the taxed labor of the recently conquered Kora, Kgalagadi, and Tlharo and were directed against Mokalaka's Taung, the Rolong of Mashow, and the Dighoya.<sup>94</sup> More ambitious raids were conducted against the Kwena and Ngwaketse, and as far north as the "Mampoor" who lived along the shores of Lake Ngami. One such expedition against the "Mampoor" took five months to complete, but the fifteen raiders captured 150 cattle.<sup>95</sup> Cattle acquired special significance to the Tlhaping during this period as an article of exchange with Cape traders, and its plentiful supply was critical to maintaining the Tlhaping middleman trade position.

The arrival in 1801 of the Truter and Somerville trade expedition and William Edwards and Jan Matthias Kok of the London Missionary Society pointed to a redirection of trade and signalled the beginning of incipient peasantization. The expanding trade frontier

<sup>87</sup> Burchell, *Travels*, II, 248.

<sup>88</sup> Quoted in Legassick, "Griqua," 54.

<sup>89</sup> Language, "Verkryging en Verlies"; I. Schapera and D.F. v.d. Merwe, *Notes on the Tribal Groupings, History, and Customs of the Bakgalagadi* (Cape Town, 1945), 148-154; and Legassick, "Griqua," 53-55. Compare Breutz, *Vryburg*, 15.

<sup>90</sup> Burchell, *Travels*, II, 248; Campbell, *Travels, 1820*, I, 153, 289; Moffat, *Missionary Labours*, 12; Moffat, *Apprenticeship*, 125-126; Campbell, *Travels, 1820*, II, 6-8; and Okihiro, "Hunters, Herders," 167-169.

<sup>91</sup> Campbell, *Travels, 1820*, I, 148; Moffat, *Missionary Labours*, 8-13, 390; Moffat, *Apprenticeship*, 124-126; Schapera and v.d. Merwe, *Bakgalagadi*, 148-154; and Okihiro, "Hunters, Herders," 169.

<sup>92</sup> Burchell, *Travels*, II, 375.

<sup>93</sup> Burchell, *Travels*, II, 377.

<sup>94</sup> Campbell, *Travels, 1820*, II, 73, 92-93, 172-175, 187.

<sup>95</sup> Campbell, *Travels, 1820*, II, 117-119. See also Campbell, *Travels, 1813*, 203-204.



into the interior had been stimulated by the desire for cattle and ivory and by an increasing margin of profit.<sup>96</sup> Its effects had preceded the actual arrival of the trade commissioners in the demise of former Khoi trading partners in the northeastern Cape and in the rise of various Kora and Griqua groups to the immediate south. Those changes resulted in the disruption of the traditional sources of Tlhaping cattle, underscoring the importance of the northeastern cattle-raids, and led to the decline of southern markets for domestically produced goods and commodities derived from the northeastern trade. The Tlhaping rejected the British commissioners' offer of knives, tinderboxes and steels, mirrors, and handkerchiefs for their cattle; the only acceptable medium of trade was beads, the sole item offered by the commissioners of universal value in the interior.<sup>97</sup> Displaying their commercial acumen, the Tlhaping kept the Europeans waiting until 10 December, just two days before their departure, before reaching an agreement on the exchange rate: "two pounds of fine glass and porcelain beads of various colours, or three pounds of small white, blue, green, red or yellow beads, or three and a half pounds of large blue and white glass beads" for an ox.<sup>98</sup> Further, they limited the number of cattle offered for trade to eighty-two, and when the commissioners complained that the prices were too high and proposed to continue on to the Rolong, the Tlhaping refused to provide guides and spoke of an impassable desert beyond.<sup>99</sup> The Klaarwater Kora had a saying, reported Burchell, "In Tlhaping country you will get nothing for nothing."<sup>100</sup>

By 1806, Tlhaping trade with the Khoi had probably receded to Klaarwater and the items of trade had changed. The primary exchange was in beads, fat-tailed sheep, and tobacco for Tlhaping cattle and ivory. That trade continued to be profitable even after the arrival of the British trade commissioners and other Europeans who followed. Lichtenstein reported in 1805 that although the Tlhaping had large herds of goats, they kept no sheep.<sup>101</sup> By 1812, however, Burchell noted that the Tlhaping had begun to accumulate fat-tailed sheep, preferring them over goats, through trade with European missionaries and Klaarwater Khoi.<sup>102</sup> In June 1812, Burchell met Cupido Kok "returning from Litakun, where he had been to barter for ivory and oxen. He had in his waggon about twenty Elephant's tusks, which had been obtained in exchange at the rate of a sheep for each tusk; the Bachapins being very desirous of procuring cattle of that kind, it having hitherto been little known to their nation, or, at least, seldom reared by them. He was driving home a herd of above forty

<sup>96</sup>S. Daniel Neumark, *Economic Influences on the South African Frontier 1652-1836* (Stanford, 1957).

<sup>97</sup>Burchell contrasted beads with tobacco. Beads, "being considered more especially as *money*, to be employed only as the medium of trade with distant tribes, and for the purchase of the more expensive articles" while tobacco and snuff, "Being consumable merchandise, are, though highly valued, regarded as a less important species of property." *Travels*, II, 289.

<sup>98</sup>Borchers, *Memoir*, 83.

<sup>99</sup>Barrow, *Cochinchina*, 403-404; and Burchell, *Travels*, II, 312-313.

<sup>100</sup>Burchell, *Travels*, II, 310.

<sup>101</sup>Lichtenstein, *Travels*, II, 410.

<sup>102</sup>Burchell, *Travels*, II, 380.

oxen which had been purchased with beads and tobacco.<sup>103</sup> A reciprocal relationship called *maat* ("mate" or "partner") developed from the Tlhaping/Kora trade. Tlhaping and Kora traders selected a *maat* in Klaarwater and Dithakong respectively. The *maat* functioned as host and commercial supplier to his counterpart, arranging for the collection of goods before his *maat*'s arrival, providing accommodations, and assisting in making purchases.<sup>104</sup> The economic benefits of the system included reduced expenses, briefer trips, a guaranteed supply of commodities, and the flexibility to make purchases when prices were at their lowest probably on a credit system. The *maat* practice apparently spread into the interior or may have been an adaptation of an earlier version.<sup>105</sup>

As before, Tlhaping profits were largely derived from retrading and maintaining their position as middlemen. The Tlhaping, observed Burchell, received "great mercantile advantages over their more northern neighbours" by their location nearer the Cape.<sup>106</sup> That position accordingly was jealously guarded by refusing guides, spreading tales of an impassable desert and avaricious peoples, and by seeking to satiate the traders' demand. The strategy was successful at first with Europeans but not with the Khoi and Griqua who had better knowledge of the country. The Griqua, for example, had traded directly with the Rolong even before the arrival of Europeans in Botlhaping.<sup>107</sup> For the Tlhaping, serving as middlemen suppliers of beads to the interior meant profits, although they were competing with beads originating from Delagoa Bay. A probable consequence was a flooded market, with beads declining in value until 1835 when they were used only to purchase milk and firewood.<sup>108</sup> The falling value of beads, the loss of the Khoi as a source for cattle, and the Cape trade which took Tlhaping cattle pointed to the importance of the acquisitive cattle-raids and the growth of production and trade in skins.

Skins offered a means for replenishing one's herds and, for those without cattle, a way of acquiring them. During this period, skins were obtained not only from Balala clients but also from Kgalagadi hunters with whom Tlhaping traders exchanged beads, tobacco, metal implements, and *sebito* for the skins. In 1812, Burchell interviewed a trader who visited the Kalahari regularly "for the purpose of bartering for the skins of jackals, and kaamas, and various smaller skins used for making the fur-cloaks." The trader remained for one or two months until he had collected a sufficient quantity to load two or three oxen.<sup>109</sup> After tanning, the skins were exchanged for smaller objects such as metal implements or sewn into a *kobo* and

<sup>103</sup> Burchell, *Travels*, II, 196. See also 329, 338.

<sup>104</sup> Burchell, *Travels*, II, 391; and Thompson, *Travels*, I, 116.

<sup>105</sup> Campbell, *Travels, 1820*, I, 274.

<sup>106</sup> Burchell, *Travels*, II, 294.

<sup>107</sup> Barrow, *Cochinchina*, 404. See also Burchell, *Travels*, II, 329, 335-336.

<sup>108</sup> Percival R. Kirby, ed., *The Diary of Dr. Andrew Smith*, I (Cape Town, 1939), 225, 250; and Smith, "Struggle for Control," 339. Compare Burchell, *Travels*, II, 311-312.

<sup>109</sup> Burchell, *Travels*, II, 335. See also Campbell, *Travels, 1820*, II, 67-68; and Moffat, *Missionary Labours*, 381.

traded for cattle. Sources of such trade included the Hurutshe and Nama.<sup>110</sup> The domestic production in skins, therefore, acquired added significance in the redirected trade; European visitors to Botlhaping after 1806 who were impressed with its widespread importance.<sup>111</sup>

European missionaries were instrumental in the process of incipient Tlhaping peasantization. Their influence was exerted toward establishing a permanent town where agriculture and crafts could flourish, and as pointed out by Bundy, "Missionary enterprise, ultimately, was concerned to transform social institutions and practices that were alien or incompatible with capitalist society into ones that were compatible, and hence to encourage a total change in the world-view of the people in whose midst they lived."<sup>112</sup> They clearly did not introduce the Tlhaping to notions of accumulation and maximization in production and trade, however. In fact, the Tlhaping resisted missionary overtures for a permanent mission station precisely because they perceived no benefits from that and acquiesced only after being convinced that the missionary presence could be economically profitable to them. Mothibe's reply to Campbell's request for permission to send missionaries was: "That his people had no time for their instructions, having to attend to the cattle, to dig, sow, and reap the fields, and many other things - besides, the things which these people teach are contrary to all our customs, which the people will not give up."<sup>113</sup> After repeated failures, in 1816 James Read sought to attract the Tlhaping by establishing a "secular mission" with a forge to repair tools and a water-mill. "He emphasized the greater productivity which ploughing and irrigation could bring to agriculture, and when the Tlhaping moved to a new settlement on the Kuruman in 1817, a four mile water-ditch was soon built."<sup>114</sup> Those attractions, nonetheless, did not appeal to the Tlhaping. Instead, Mothibe's Tlhaping moved near the mission station for missionary protection and trade, especially in guns.<sup>115</sup>

Mothibe's decision to move not only split the Tlhaping into two factions, it had disastrous effects on Tlhaping agriculture. From 1817 to 1823, Tlhaping fields along the Kuruman failed to produce equivalent yields achieved at their former lands along the Mashoweng, resulting in famine and population dispersal.<sup>116</sup> In contrast, the Mashoweng fields cultivated by the бага-Maidi faction who

<sup>110</sup> Campbell, *Travels, 1820*, I, 119; Cooley, "Memoir," 314; and R. Moffat, Vreederburg, 20 August 1818, South Africa, 1817-1818, Box 7, Folder 5, Jacket A, The Archives of the Council for World Mission (London Missionary Society), School of Oriental and African Studies, London.

<sup>111</sup> See for example Burchell, *Travels*, II, 272; and Campbell, *Travels, 1820*, II, 72

<sup>112</sup> Bundy, *Rise and Fall*, 37.

<sup>113</sup> J. Campbell, Klaarwater, 26 July 1813, South Africa, 1812-1814, Box 5, Folder 2, Jacket D, LMS-SOAS. See also R. Hamilton, Griquatown, 28 April 1816, South Africa, 1815-1816, Box 6, Folder 3, Jacket C, LMS-SOAS.

<sup>114</sup> Legassick, "Griqua," 266.

<sup>115</sup> Burchell, *Travels*, II, 267-268, 276-277; Campbell, *Travels, 1820*, I, 108-109; II, 196; J. Read, New Dithakong, 12 July 1820, South Africa, 1819-1822, Box 8, Folder 2, Jacket B, LMS-SOAS; and Anthony J. Dachs, "Missionary Imperialism--The Case of Bechuanaland," *The Journal of African History*, 13,4 (1972), 648.

<sup>116</sup> Moffat, *Apprenticeship*, 12-13, 22-23, 26,34, 38-39, 42, 55, 60, 67.

had refused to move with Mothibe were more extensive and productive.<sup>117</sup> Tlhaping women along the Kuruman were compelled to plant their crops beside the missionaries' ditch to irrigate their fields. The practice became a source of conflict between the women and missionaries, each determined to use the water for their crops.<sup>118</sup> Tlhaping dependence on irrigation had several consequences, including the feasibility of selling land. In November 1823, Mary Moffat wrote: "It appears to be the fixed determination of the Bechuanas to alter their system... They are wishing to grow wheat and tobacco, and each individual is to purchase his own ground, the missionaries having set the example. Muteebe says no one shall have any who does not pay a price, and some of them were talking that they would have a good piece whilst they were buying, for, when the other towns saw how well they were doing, they would want to join them."<sup>119</sup> Despite Mary Moffat's optimism, Tlhaping cultivators did not plant wheat, and instead of purchasing land, many Tlhaping simply moved away from the Kuruman settlement.

The erosion of the *kgosi's* power was evident in other ways. The northeastern cattle-raids beginning around 1806 were profitable in the acquisition of livestock but disastrous for the Kora, Kgalagadi, and Tlharo who had borne the brunt of the campaigns. Many of their villages were reported to have been decimated of their male population, and to escape further demands on their labor, they moved westward into the Kalahari, establishing semi-autonomous communities which recognized the authority of the Tlhaping *kgosi* more in form than in substance.<sup>120</sup> The cattlepost, because of its distance from the capital, helped conceal a person's holdings. In that way and from cattle-raids, individuals managed to escape the claims of the *kgosi* on their booty.<sup>121</sup> Finally, *sebilo* and the production and exchange in skins permitted individual households to acquire cattle as described above. Despite the *kgosi's* attempt to limit the digging of *sebilo*,<sup>122</sup> profit-seekers exploited the resource freely: "The place being open to every one without reservation or regulations, each person had dug away the quantity he wanted...."<sup>123</sup> Obtaining skins from Kgalagadi hunters was largely dependent upon the household production of tobacco.

Instructive of the relationship between customary constraint and economic behavior among the Tlhaping is the cultivation of tobacco. Among the Tswana, the Hurutshe maintained the sole right to tobacco cultivation, a privilege derived from their seniority in agricultural activities.<sup>124</sup> Social convention, however, was probably not

<sup>117</sup>Thompson, *Travels*, I, 107-108.

<sup>118</sup>Moffat, *Apprenticeship*, 23; and R. Hamilton, New Dithakong, 17 February 1823, South Africa, 1823-1825, Box 9, Folder 1, Jacket B, LMS-SOAS.

<sup>119</sup>Moffat, *Apprenticeship*, 111. See also Dachs, "Missionary Imperialism," 649.

<sup>120</sup>Campbell, *Travels*, 1820, II, 73, 92-93, 111, 126-128.

<sup>121</sup>See for example Campbell's account of a raid against the "Mampoor." *Travels*, 1820, II, 117-119.

<sup>122</sup>Campbell, *Travels*, 1820, II, 195.

<sup>123</sup>Burchell, *Travels*, II, 183.

<sup>124</sup>Moffat, *Apprenticeship*, 187; Livingstone, *Missionary Travels*, 51; and I. Schapera, *A Handbook of Tswana Law and Custom* (London, 1955), 3-4.

the decisive factor in restricting Tlhaping cultivation of tobacco. Insufficient rainfall to grow *Nicotiana rustica*, the Hurutshe round-leaved variety, clearly limited its cultivation. Further, the Tlhaping were probably aware that disregarding the Hurutshe monopoly might invite a disruption of the profitable trade in other commodities. A similar caution was exercised by Mothibi with the Griqua from whom Cape-cured tobacco was obtained, a variety preferred by the Tlhaping because of its stronger flavor.<sup>125</sup> Mothibi prevented its cultivation on the grounds that it might invite Griqua trade retaliation. "Mateebie formerly did not permit any of his subjects to grow tobacco, but insisted upon their purchasing it from the Griquas in order to keep up a friendly communication with persons of that community."<sup>126</sup> The introduction of irrigation and the hardier Virginia long-leaved tobacco, *Nicotiana tabacum*, by the missionaries made its cultivation possible for Tlhaping farmers who grew the crop in contravention of custom. Mothibi himself proposed to plant tobacco in 1826 following the successes of Tlhaping cultivators in producing tobacco which "soon became a profitable article of traffic."<sup>127</sup> Tobacco thus produced was important in obtaining skins from Kgalagadi hunters for the Tlhaping production and exchange in skins.<sup>128</sup> Perhaps tobacco then best symbolized Tlhaping economic behavior as a whole: the Tlhaping readily adopted new technology when it was deemed beneficial, disregarded social convention for economic profit, and exercised choice on the basis of utility.

### Conclusion

Tlhaping producers exercised options on the basis of maximizing their utility. That was evident in the allocation of labor, the accumulation of cattle, the seasonal pattern of production and exchange, and the conditions of trade. Further, there was a dynamic connection among the various productive sectors and between production and exchange, as in the relationship between cultivation and hunting, and cattle-raiding and trade. Finally, the expansion of Botlhaping after 1806 and the increased emphasis on cattle-raiding and production in skins can be explained at least in part by the penetration of mercantile capital. The market, represented by Cape traders and European missionaries, was to prove ultimately irresistible, but to Tlhaping producers it was simply a reorientation of the pre-existing trade network and commodities. Participation in the market was selective in rejecting the cultivation of wheat but not tobacco, and in rejecting the notion of real property but settling near the mission station and adopting irrigation technology. To the Tlhaping, Cape traders and European missionaries were clearly a means toward their own ends (utility).

Changes in the relations of production were manifested in the following ways. While allocating land remained the *kgosi*'s prerogative, laborers escaped from his plan to sell agricultural land by moving away from his town, and the *baga*-Maidi faction, in an apparent decision to maximize agricultural production, remained at

<sup>125</sup> Burchell, *Travels*, II, 230.

<sup>126</sup> Kirby, ed., *Smith*, I, 251.

<sup>127</sup> Moffat, *Missionary Labours*, 558; and Moffat, *Apprenticeship*, 187-188.

<sup>128</sup> See for example Campbell, *Travels, 1820*, II, 349.

Mashoweng rather than join Mothibe at Kuruman. The spatial arrangement of Dithakong, the capital, mirrored the looser structure of the Tlhaping confederation in contrast to the compact union of the former period. Burchell described the altered residential pattern as a "collection of little villages" each having its own and agricultural lands.<sup>129</sup> Like their Tlhaping counterparts, Kora, Kgalagadi, and Tlharo groups, members of the confederation, moved into the far reaches of the Kalahari to avoid the *kgosi's* appropriation of their labor. In fact, the increased dependence of the ruling class on Balala labor was, perhaps, prompted by a partial loss of laborers from the confederation pool. Tlhaping workers employed various means to elude the intervention of the elders through the cultivation of tobacco, open mining of *sebito*, independently organized cattle-raids, and the Kalahari skins trade. One account is suggestive; each raider on a successful expedition managed "to eat" six cattle during their two-week return trek.<sup>130</sup> The term "to eat" in Setswana is also used euphemistically to mean "to keep for oneself." The cattlepost system enabled such laborers to conceal their accumulated livestock, and from those remote outposts, individual family groups confiscated stray cattle, ordinarily the *kgosi's* sole privilege, and launched cattle-raids against the Ngwaketse.<sup>131</sup> Finally, the Kalahari skins trade enabled individuals ultimately to acquire cattle, avoiding the collective labor of the hunt managed by the elders. In those ways, Tlhaping laborers effectively gained a measure of control over the means of production, lessened the appropriation of their surplus product, and, through the acquisition of cattle, gained access to women and the reproduction of production. The range of opportunities accompanying mercantile capital and the choices exercised by Tlhaping producers resulted in changes in the relations of production and the predominance, during this second period, of the individual pursuit of utility. Still, the basis for those changes in the Tlhaping social formation lay in the pre-existent internal dialectic between intervention and resistance, class conflict. Despite the difficulties of interpreting the pre-colonial past, the variations of individual responses and internal dynamics of class relations must be understood before we can comprehend their articulation in the world economy.

<sup>129</sup>Burchell, *Travels*, II, 362.

<sup>130</sup>Campbell, *Travels, 1820*, II, 117-119.

<sup>131</sup>Campbell, *Travels, 1820*, II, 183.