



THE WAR IN SOUTH AFRICA: MR. MOODIE, MAGISTRATE OF LADYSMITH, COLLECTING NATIVE HUT TAX.—SEE NEXT PAGE.  
FROM A SKETCH BY OUR SPECIAL ARTIST, MR. MELTON PRIOR.

FINANCING COLONIAL RULE : THE HUT TAX SYSTEM  
IN NATAL 1847 - 1898

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## PREFACE

The functioning of African societies in the colonial environment has become a popular subject of research by historians. However, these are areas of neglect insofar as the investigation of the economic role of Africans in colonial states is concerned. In spite of the fact that the European population and the revenue of Natal have never been very large, there have been numerous studies examining the role of the white inhabitants in the economic development of the colony. Stimulus for this thesis has therefore been provided by the vacuum in the historical literature concerning the financial history of colonial Natal, and in particular, how the Hut Tax - one of the more significant manifestations of colonialism - served as a tool in coercing the northern Nguni inhabitants to finance the administration of foreign rule.

There are a number of acknowledgements which I would like to take this opportunity of making. By far, one of the greatest debts goes to Dr Charles Ballard, my co-supervisor. Throughout my years as a research student, he has displayed patience while providing me with the moral support which I needed. His scholarly knowledge of African societies and his stimulating criticism have proved most invaluable to my work.

Grateful acknowledgements are also due to Professor Andrew Duminy for his guidance, and to Mrs Connie Munro for her painstaking and efficient typing of this thesis. Sincere thanks are also due to the staffs of the South African Archives, Pietermaritzburg Depot and the Don Africana Library, Durban, for their assistance.

A personal note of appreciation is due to Sujata Ramdhani, whose encouragement stimulated my enthusiasm during my years of research. I am particularly indebted to Mashen Ramanand, without whose love, sacrifice and approval, this thesis might not have been possible.

Finally, what I owe my parents, Mr & Mrs H. Ramdhani, exceeds any acknowledgement.

ABBREVIATIONS

<u>B.B.N.A.</u>	-	<u>Blue Book for Native Affairs</u>
C.O.	-	Colonial Office Confidential Print
C.S.O.	-	Colonial Secretary's Office
D.R.	-	Departmental Reports
<u>L.A.D.</u>	-	<u>Legislative Assembly Debates</u>
<u>L.C.D.</u>	-	<u>Legislative Council Debates</u>
<u>N.B.B.</u>	-	<u>Blue Book for the Colony of Natal</u>
S.N.A.	-	Secretary for Native Affairs

LIST OF MAPS, ILLUSTRATIONS AND GRAPHS

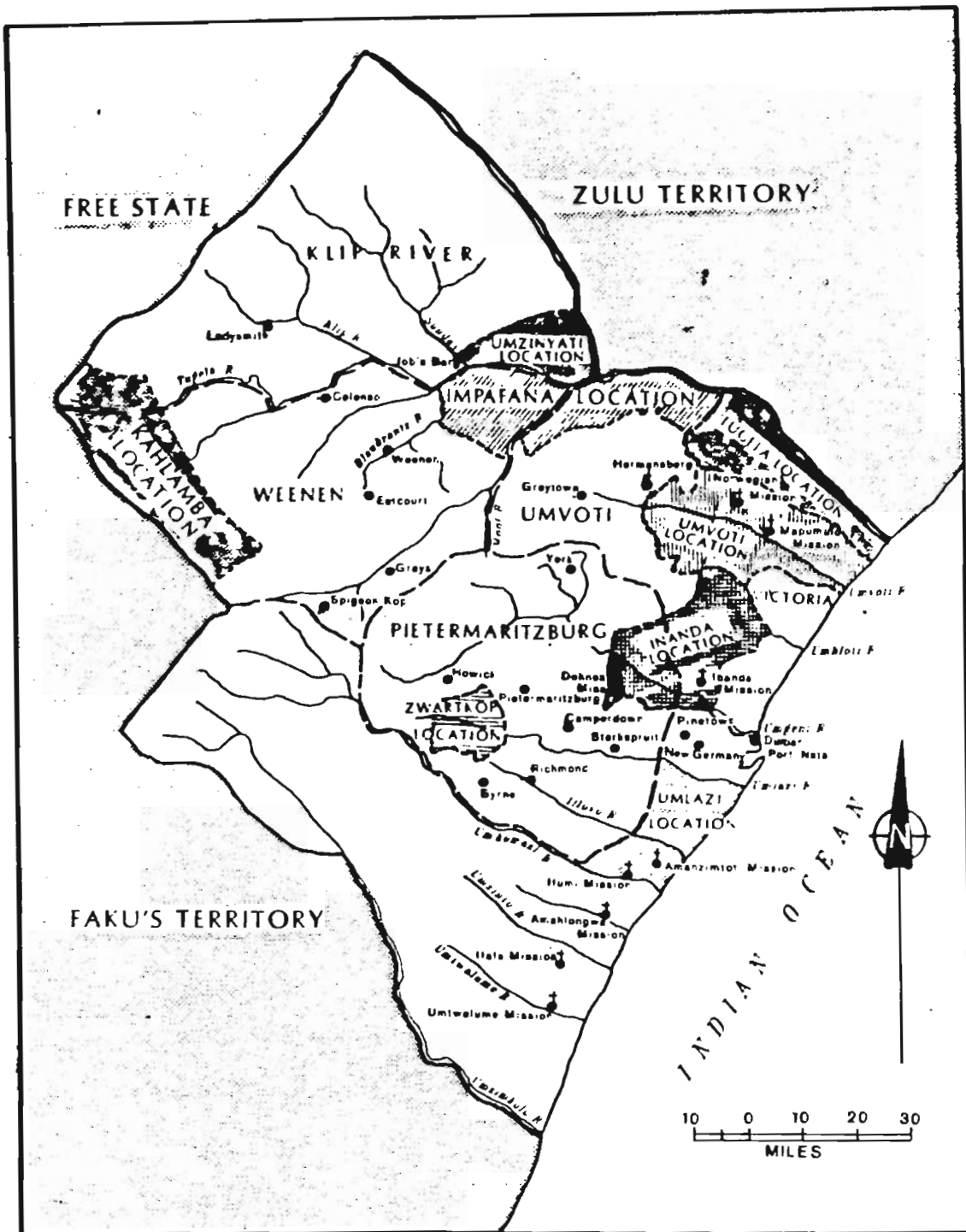
FRONTISPIECE : Collecting Native Hut Tax 1879

MAP A : Natal, to illustrate the beginning of the Location  
System

MAP B : Natal Magisterial Divisions

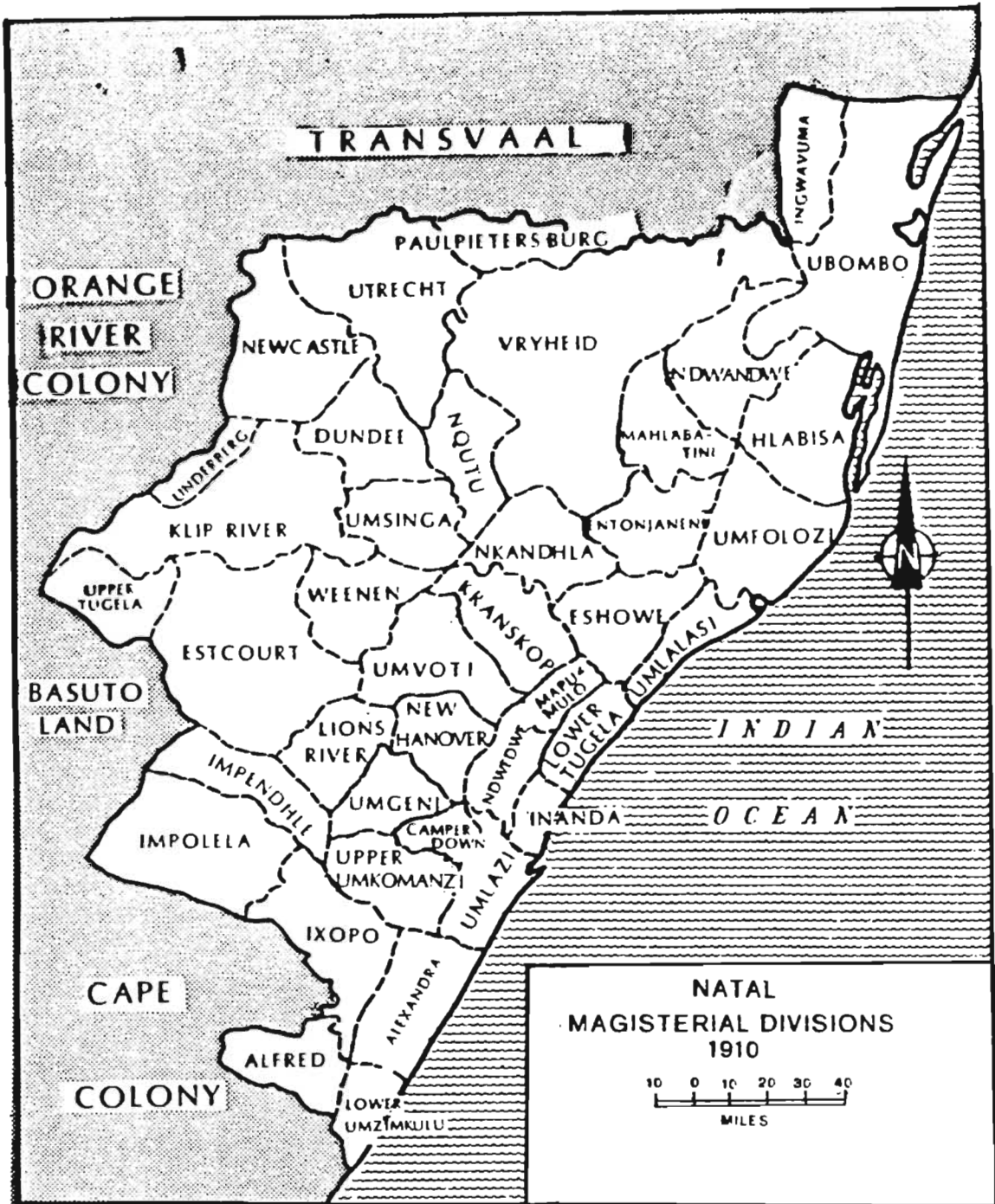
HUT TAX RECEIPT

HUT TAX EXEMPTION TICKET



NATAL, TO ILLUSTRATE THE BEGINNING OF THE LOCATION SYSTEM.  
 From Mann's *Colony of Natal*, 1859. Spelling unchanged.

Natal, to Illustrate the Beginning of the Location System



Natal Magisterial Divisions 1900

Town of Pietermaritzburg.

No 2274 187

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Tide \_\_\_\_\_  
Location \_\_\_\_\_

Hub \_\_\_\_\_

L

County of Pietermaritzburg

The City of Pietermaritzburg, the place known as the  
No 2274 Pietermaritzburg 187

Received from the name of the holder of the land  
of the title of \_\_\_\_\_  
\* Location the sum of \_\_\_\_\_

being Taxes on \_\_\_\_\_  
Year 187 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

L

Resident Magistrate.

\* The location the taxes being in the name of the holder of the title of the  
the Colony have no relation to land.  
+ The name of the holder of the land being always inserted in the page  
this space is unnecessary.

Hut Tax Receipt

Advertisement offering to supply  
 Amalaya Labourers from Onka  
 at £3 per head to be indentured  
 or two years.

Prot. Immigrants

## HUT-TAX EXEMPTION TICKET.

18

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Tribe \_\_\_\_\_

Location \_\_\_\_\_

Employment of \_\_\_\_\_

Exempt from Payment of the Hut Tax for the Year 18

on land in the lawful occupation of any man of European  
 descent, and under agreement of service with the occupier, made before  
 the 1st January 1894, and being employed in the employment of the  
 occupier, and receiving wages for his services.

having no other means of subsistence, and having only one wife, and otherwise con-  
 forming to civilised usage.

NUMBER OF HUTS.

NUMBER OF HUTS.

Resident Magistrate

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

The Hut Tax, a form of property tax, was the system of revenue collection imposed upon the northern Nguni inhabitants of Natal by the British colonial authorities to finance the administration of African Affairs. This system of taxation, was a unique innovation in its time as it represented a milestone in revenue collection of the British imperial system. The Hut Tax was an enduring and, from the British perspective, successful administrative vehicle that taxed Africans with a minimum of expense and coercion. The general intention of this thesis is to chart the institutionalization of the Hut Tax system and to illustrate how it became an integral part of African life, thereby becoming a yearly reminder of the existence of the power of the colonial state through the Lieutenant-Governor in his capacity as the "Supreme Chief" and spokesman for the British government.

While this thesis devotes its attention to the origination of the Hut Tax system in nineteenth century Natal, it must be emphasised that the imposition of the Hut Tax on indigenous peoples as a means of financing administration, was not a feature exclusive to British rule. As Keppel-Jones has pointed out, the Hut Tax was a "standard device in Africa" in the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> But what makes the Natal

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1. Arthur Keppel-Jones, Rhodes and Rhodesia, The White Conquest of Zimbabwe, 1884-1902 (Pietermaritzburg, 1983), p.400.

system exceptional is the certainty that it was the forerunner to the systems employed by the other colonial powers in adjacent territories as well as British in other parts of southern and central Africa.

In Tanganyika, the introduction of the Hut Tax (Huttenstever) in 1897 was generated out of earlier futile attempts on the part of German administrators and settlers to recruit labour.<sup>2</sup> As in Natal, when the tax was initially introduced, it could be paid in cash, or kind. But in the years of the famine, smallpox, drought and locust invasions, much of the African population experienced severe environmental and economic problems such as the decline in the production of major staples like rice, and sorghum. The German authorities subsequently recognised the inability of the population to pay the Hut Tax, therefore they postponed the collection for the year 1898.<sup>3</sup> However, this was not the case in Natal where the colonial government insisted always that the Hut Tax be paid in full at all times, even in calamitous economic times.

The Portuguese, on the other hand, had imposed the Hut Tax (Palhota) in its territories of Mozambique and Angola, with three motives underlying their policy.<sup>4</sup> Firstly, the Palhota was looked upon as signifying a symbol of submission to Portuguese rule.

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2. Helge Kjekshus, Ecology, Control and Economic Development in East African History : The Case of Tanganyika 1850-1950 (London, 1977) pp.133-154.
  3. Ibid., p.133.
  4. Malyn Newitt, Portugal In Africa : The Last Hundred Years (London, 1981), p.55.

A district was considered to be pacified only when the Hut Tax was collected. Secondly, it purported to finance the nearly always bankrupt Portuguese administration. And, thirdly it was believed that the Palhota would generate surplus funds which could then be forwarded to Lisbon. The tax collector in Portuguese territories was always followed by the labour recruiter.<sup>5</sup> Thus much of the resistance by indigenous peoples to Portuguese rule in Africa resulted from the attempts of the authorities to collect the Hut Tax and recruit "cheap" African labour.

During the British South Africa Company's administration of Rhodesia, the Colonial Office approved in July 1894 the imposition of a Hut Tax of ten shillings in Mashonaland to pay for administration and to supply labour.<sup>6</sup> From evidence found, it is unsettling to note that Africans were flogged for failure to pay the tax and it was often said that the tax collection in most cases, was a violent business.<sup>7</sup> A tax of this nature was also implemented in Basutoland, Bechuanaland and the Cape Colony in order to finance British administration in those areas.<sup>8</sup>

In a comparative vein it could be argued that like Britain, the other European colonial powers in Africa introduced the Hut Tax to first finance administration. But the Natal System was exceptional in the sense that there was, throughout the nineteenth century no marked

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5. Ibid., p.55.

6. Keppel-Jones, Rhodes and Rhodesia, p.400.

7. Ibid., p.401.

8. Ibid., p.400.

resistance to the collection of taxes nor was there any evidence to support the view that Africans were physically punished in their attempts to evade taxation.

It is appropriate and necessary to trace the evolvement of literature on African administration and how the Hut Tax system has been interpreted. Edgar Brookes in his The History of Native Policy in South Africa from 1830 to the Present Day, attempted to investigate "Native Policy" in South Africa against the balance sheet of its successes and failures. Nevertheless, in his study, Brookes describes in general terms, African administration in South Africa, with the exception of episodes like that of the Bambata Rebellion of 1906-7 which he considered to be a dramatic moment in African History. Although he has devoted an entire chapter to the architect of the Hut Tax system, Theophilus Shepstone, he has unfortunately considered it fit to dismiss the tax on huts as being "just one of the many forms of economic pressure which Africans were subjected to in Shepstone's time".<sup>9</sup>

The fairly recent publication of the two-volume Oxford History of South Africa represents the emergence of the liberal tradition of historical writing in which the authors have tried to prove that the cultural, economical and political gap which exists between the various races of South Africa would inevitably be attenuated by economic development. Monica Wilson's chapter on "The Growth of Peasant Communities", deserves mention as it depicts the first attempt to examine the history of the Black agriculturists in South Africa.

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9. Edgar Brookes, A History of the Policy in South Africa, 1830 to the Present (Cape Town, 1924), p.55.

Wilson described the various processes involved - population density, food production, herding, individual tenure and migrant labour.<sup>10</sup> Wilson's work has proven useful as it has provided an insight into the state of African agriculture in South Africa from the early years of the nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup>

David Welsh in his Roots of Segregation systematically examines the colonial system of African administration that was created by Sir Theophilus Shepstone in Natal. Welsh devotes a good deal of attention to the vacillating attitudes of colonists and missionaries. Although he professes to examine the "system created by Sir Theophilus Shepstone in Natal for the administration of the Zulu people", Welsh has tentatively considered Hut Tax as being one of the institutions within the framework of African affairs created by Shepstone. Welsh mentions in passing that this tax,

was an important element in the system of administration...designed to achieve the threefold aim of raising revenue, forcing Africans out into the labour market and effecting social change among them. 12

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10. See Monica Wilson, "The Growth of Peasant Communities", in Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson (eds.), The Oxford History of South Africa vol.II 1870-1966 (Oxford, 1975).
  11. Colin Bundy, The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry (London, 1981), p.8.
  12. David Welsh, The Roots of Segregation : Native Policy in Natal 1845-1910 (Cape Town, 1971), p.23.

In this statement he has acknowledged it as being an "important element" in the British system of administration, but it is disappointing to observe that he has not sought to actually examine the system and its impact on the African communities of the Colony.

Colin Bundy and Henry Slater present their historical writings in revisionist terms, examining the African population of South Africa from a material perspective and therein attempting to incorporate African taxation within their historiographical framework. In his essay on the "Changing Economic Relationships in Rural Natal", Slater emphasises the importance of relationships existing between land and labour questions in Natal and has tried to illustrate the numerous attempts made by "those who held state power to render land a still more scarce and differentiated resource",<sup>13</sup> therefore making it more difficult for Africans to pay rents and taxes through an independent existence on the land. A common theme which runs throughout his essay is that "once the era of cash crop experimentation was over", attempts were made "by commercial farming interests in Natal to win control of the state apparatus and to use it to implement a version of this blueprint and thus overcoming African resistance to proletarianisation".<sup>14</sup> Bundy's work on the peasantry fits in well with this pattern. Seen in its broadest context, his work rejects liberal orthodoxy and instead, he argues that :

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13. Henry Slater, "Changing Economic Relationships in Rural Natal, p.155. Henry Slater, "The Changing Pattern of Economic Relationships in Rural Natal", in S. Marks and A. Atmore (eds.), Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa (London, 1980), p.55.

14. Ibid.

There was a substantially more positive response by African peasants to economic changes and market opportunities than is usually indicated; that an adopted form of prevailing subsistence methods provided hundreds of thousands of Africans with a preferable alternative to wage labour on white colonists terms in the form of limited participation in the produce market ; that a smaller group of black farmers made considerable adaptations, departing entirely from the traditional agricultural economy and competing most successfully with white farmers.... 15

In his discussion on the peasants of Natal Bundy elaborated briefly on the ways in which Africans had been able to raise cash for the payment of their fees and Hut Taxes. He has also endeavoured to demonstrate how, as a result of political pressure, Natal's African farming communities were slowly being deprived of their different sources of income, thus being forced to enter the wage market. Bundy's comments on the Hut Tax during the period of the decline of the peasantry in the 1890s were useful although his evidence was related, to a large extent, to the years 1900-1906 which culminated in the outbreak of the Bambata Rebellion, an area adequately covered by Shula Marks in her admirable work Reluctant Rebellion. Bundy's work is also important because it represents the first attempt to assess the responses of Africans to the developing colonial capitalist state before and after the discovery of gold and diamonds.

Although African administration forms an integral part of any historical study of South Africa, it is worth observing that most

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15. Bundy, The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry, p.13.

writers have viewed the Hut Tax in fairly general terms or regarded it as being one of the many instruments involved in African administration. They have neglected to examine closely the philosophy and the mechanics of the Hut Tax System and its impact on African communities in Natal during the various phases of their economic and political history. Thus it is important to treat the subject of African taxation in more depth and hopefully provide further insight into the subject of the collection of Hut Taxes in colonial Natal.

As a starting point for this investigation, this thesis will examine the reasons behind the colonial government's decision to implement the Hut Tax and the role played by the white settlers of the new Colony in the implementation of such a tax. It is equally imperative to scrutinize the crucial issue of the level of Black acceptance of the Hut Tax. Another theme which deserves attention is that which looks at the procedures involved in tax collection, with emphasis in particular, being placed on the role of the Resident Magistrates. Consideration has also been focussed on an inescapable dimension of the Hut Tax - the clash between the interests of the colonial administration which attached priority primarily to questions of revenue and expenditure, and some white settler groups who desired to use taxation to compel Africans to become "cheap" wage labourers in the employ of whites.

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Chapter Three concentrates on the issue of African taxation against the background of the changing economic fortunes of the colony, with special emphasis on the depression of 1865-68. The revenue crisis of the 1860s is seen as the major contributor to the debates involving the introduction of the Marriage Tax in 1868 and the doubling of the Hut Tax in 1875. Indeed, these two issues form the major themes of this chapter. British Metropolitan authorities usually interpreted Natal's affairs in the broader context of imperial affairs while, often, Natal's settler community resented Metropolitan policy on African Administration and issues such as the increasing of the Hut Tax. However, the Colonial Office's decision in 1875 to double the tax represented an harmonious conjunction of settler interests with the aims of the Colonial Office in London.

African prosperity and the ability of Africans in Natal to pay the doubled Hut Tax after 1875 are themes central to the discussion in Chapter Four. As there was little marked resistance to the increased tax and Africans were able to pay the tax with relative ease, there was an abundance of evidence to suggest that they were economically independent - even prosperous in the 1870s. The outbreak of the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879 and its subsequent effects on the economy of the colony is also an item of discussion in relation to its effects on African communities and their ability to pay the Hut Tax.

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Chapter Four concludes with an interpretation of the changes effected in the political economy of the colony and the beginning of the period of decline of the African farming communities of Natal in the 1880s.

Chapter Five has been devoted to the decline of African communities as independent producing entities, a result of the interaction of various processes between 1886 and 1898. The discovery and development of the gold mining industry, the commercialization of the white farming sector in Natal, the granting of representative government to the white settler community in Natal - and the environmental calamities of the late 1890s are seen collectively as contributing to African peasant decline. It is suggested that the Africans' independent sources of income were diminishing rapidly by the mid-and-late-1890s, thereby reducing their ability to pay the Hut Taxes. It is also suggested that the granting of representative government to the white settlers in the colony signalled that the destiny of the African population lay in the hands of those who instituted State pressure on Africans to leave their land and seek work in white owned enterprises.

For much of the nineteenth century (1847-1890), it is suggested there was little or no difficulty on the part of Africans to pay Hut Taxes. However, after 1890, the evidence tends to indicate that African communities came to look upon the system of taxation - in these trying years - with growing resentment which culminated in the Bambata Rebellion of 1905-06. It has also been necessary, as often

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as possible, to reflect African responses to the Hut Tax system and to demonstrate - how the Africans perceptions of taxation and life under foreign colonial rule were fashioned and reshaped - as Natal's political economy was transformed between 1847 and 1898.

The chronological period covered in the study includes the years from 1847 through 1898. The intention was to include the years up to 1900 in this thesis. However, the outbreak of the South African War in 1899 heralded a whole new era for much of the African population of the colony.

This thesis has had to rely to a great extent on an examination of primary source material through an inquiry into, and analysis of, statistics provided by the colonial administration. It has been possible to estimate the ability of the Africans to pay the Hut Tax by firstly assessing the proportion of income from various occupations held by them and by endeavouring to ascertain the percentage of income taken in the form of taxes. In this respect the Colony of Natal Blue Books for the years 1860 to 1889 and the Statistical Blue Books for the years 1894-1898 have proved invaluable. Statistics from these sources have also assisted in disclosing figures relevant to one of the major themes of this work, that is, the nature of African agriculture in the years 1860 to 1898. Data on areas cultivated, quantity produced, cattle population and market prices of produce and livestock were of inestimable value in assessing the extent of African peasant prosperity and poverty.

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The Colony of Natal Departmental Reports for the years 1884 to 1898 were beneficial as these annual reports yield commentary on the conditions prevailing in Natal's magisterial divisions. These reports provided first-hand information on the specific economic state of the African population of the different magisterial districts and of the manner in which they reacted to and paid the Hut Tax at different times. During the years of the locust invasion and rinderpest, these reports furnished an account, for the first time, on the numerous difficulties encountered by Africans in these trying years, their inability to pay the Hut Taxes and the various attempts at evading the tax. Likewise, the annual reports of the Collector of Customs and Excise, the General Manager of Railways and the Commissioner of Agriculture offered an insight into the state of the colony's trade, railways, agriculture and general economy.

A scrutiny of the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly Debates shed much light on the conflicting views of the members on the issues involving African taxation. Throughout the period under study, many interesting debates took place over the issue of raising the Hut Tax. The existence of such debates proves that African taxation was a highly controversial issue in nineteenth century Natal. In order to demonstrate how contentious an issue the Hut Tax was, I have tried to refer to these debates as often as possible.

Colonial Office Confidential Correspondence (the CO.879 series) was used as a source for the early years to determine the reasons behind the Colonial Office's decision to turn to the African popula-

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tion of the colony to finance the administration of Natal which was considered "worthless". Evidence from the official correspondence was also drawn upon, to assess the period relative to the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879 with its subsequent impact upon the colony and its white and black inhabitants.

Much useful evidence has been drawn from the Pietermaritzburg Depot of the South African Archives - notably the Secretary for Native Affairs (S.N.A.) papers and to a limited extent, on the Colonial Secretary's Office (C.S.O.) papers. The C.S.O. papers yield much information of the role of the Magistrates in the system of African administration; the S.N.A. papers were scrutinized as a major source related to African Affairs in the Colony. Poignant appeals from Africans to Magistrates in the disastrous years of 1896 and 1897 provided one with a vivid picture of the hardships experienced by them and of their subsequent material decline. Since most historians have in past years neglected to incorporate African opinion in their works, the use of these papers, have been vital in providing that essential equilibrium of opinion - be it African or European.

The Natal Witness and the Natal Mercury have been used throughout this thesis to furnish sufficient evidence on the manner in which Colonists agitated in the early years, for Africans to be taxed and how, after the Hut Tax was introduced, they agitated for further increases to alleviate the chronic labour shortage.

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Finally, no historical work on South Africa is possible without reference to Colin Webb's Guide to the Official Records of the Colony of Natal, a source, which without alluding to, I would have been at a loss.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE ORIGINS AND ESTABLISHMENT OF THE HUT TAX IN COLONIAL NATAL 1843-1864

History abounds with examples of government measures that have had unforeseen consequences, but few can rival the Natal colonial Hut Tax. The rationale that underlay the implementation of this distinct method of taxation was rooted in the British official and colonial system. Therefore, in order to trace its origins, it is necessary to initially focus attention on the year 1843 as it marked the establishment of formal British control over Natal and its incorporation as a District of the Cape Colony. The British government decreed that Natal was to be under the administrative control of a Lieutenant-Governor, assisted by an Executive Council of not more than five members which could recommend such laws as it deemed necessary.

In creating this Colony, the British government hoped to stabilize the African population of Natal, thereby curbing the threat of raids and warfare on the Eastern Cape Frontier.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, she hoped to prevent the possible danger of foreign interference in Natal. Finally, Britain hoped to prevent the Boers from gaining an outlet to the sea <sup>2</sup> through Port Natal.

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1. C.C.Ballard, "The Transfrontiersman : The Career of John Dunn in Natal and Zululand 1834-1895", (Ph.D. Dissertation, History, University of Natal, 1980), p.50.
  2. Ibid.

In spite of the priority of strategic security which swayed the decision to annex Natal, Britain considered the infant colony to be economically worthless as there were no indications of mineral deposits or a rich trade to exploit. Furthermore, the only forms of income provided by exports were those derived from ivory, skins and hides, which comprised 70% of the exports of the colony in 1845. In the colony's early history the major source of revenue was obtained from harbour customs duties (see Table I and Table II).<sup>3</sup> In a newly developing colony, such a method of securing revenue from a pioneer population was considered to have innumerable advantages. This was especially true for Natal as the rough country and lack of roads made the importation of goods overland extremely difficult. In 1848 customs duties comprised 16,9%, in 1849 53,8% and in 1850 39,0% of Government revenue.<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, the development of Natal into a colonial state required a more elaborate form of government than had previously existed, and it was considered necessary to introduce further taxation. Prior to 1856 a duty on transfers of landed property, an auction duty, licence and stamp duties and an excise duty on spirits were introduced. But in the period 1850-1875 the main sources of the colony's revenue, excluding the Hut Tax, remained the customs and excise duties on trade goods. (See Table II for statistics on customs and total revenue).<sup>5</sup>

3. Ibid., p.61.

4. Colonial Office Confidential Print (hereafter abbreviated as (C.O.) 879/1/xxiii, p.40. Statement of Revenue and Expenditure, 1846-1854

5. Blue Book for the Colony of Natal (hereafter abbreviated as N.B.B.), 1850-1875. Auditor's report on State of Revenue and Expenditure.

TABLE I:

YEAR	IVORY	OX AND COW HIDES
1853	£ 8 634	902
1854	14 688	2401
1855	13 504	3201
1856	13 715	11568
1857	18 470	21440
1858	31 754	16229
1859	17 618	12460
1860	No records available.	
1861	22 825	10551
1862	27 259	5884
1863	40 736	6351

TABLE II

	£	£	£
YEAR	CUSTOMS	LAND SALES	TOTAL REVENUE
1850	11 200	-	28 410
1851	11 864	-	26 409
1852	10 060	-	27 158
1853	10 126	-	28 648
1854	10 936	-	28 570
1855	8 683	-	28 700
1856	10 319	-	28 352
1857	14 705	-	40 415
1858	15 990	-	44 061
1859	18 717	-	50 082
1860	33 927	566	77 480
1861	34 472	1499	107 465
1862	40 672	2721	98 799
1863	47 366	1716	113 214
1864	59 970	8128	137 803
1865	42 166	2683	105 747
1866	29 509	2966	94 885
1867	35 399	2807	96 781
1868	30 629	1442	95 762
1869	38 146	229	114 811
1870	47 090	342	126 293
1871	47 022	3101	125 628
1872	81 915	7819	180 499
1873	96 003	591	208 086
1874	109 725	1711	249 249
1875	114 777	19203	260 271

From the intense scrutiny of primary sources It was evident that when Britain took control of the colony, she encountered a number of problems in administration, but the obtaining of revenue through various kinds of taxation was by far the most important issue in the long run. Furthermore, as the British government had issued a strict instruction that it would not be involved in any additional expenditure arising from the defence of the new colony, there was little or no prospect of additional British treasury aid to finance the colonial administration.<sup>6</sup>

At the time of annexation in 1843, Natal was largely inhabited by northern Nguni peoples, who had experienced the Mfecane, the formation of the Zulu Kingdom and the migration of the Trekkers from the Cape. Driven by economic necessity, the new colonial government looked to the large African community to provide a partial solution to the problem of raising revenue. The African population contributed very little to the customs revenue for their wants at this stage, were few and they produced their own foodstuffs and wore little European clothing. Beads, however, were much in demand by them for decorative purposes and in 1854 an attempt was made to increase their contribution to the revenue by the imposition of a customs duty of 3d per pound on beads.<sup>7</sup>

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6. M.F.Bitensky, "The Economic Development of Natal, 1843-1885". (M.A. Thesis, University of London, 1955), p.59.

7. The Natal Witness, 24 February 1850.

Despite all their efforts in the 1840s, the colonial authorities were hard-pressed in raising the funds necessary for administration as the settler community was small in numbers and highly resistant to the idea of direct taxation. A probable reason for this resistance could be attributed to the fact that the idea of a tax on personal income was viewed as tyranny by a laissez faire minded Britain in the 19th century. The white settler community was very small and included the 5 000 Byrne settlers who arrived in Natal between 1849-1850 and thereafter began to influence the social, political and economic life of the Colony.<sup>8</sup> By 1850 the European population was estimated at 6 626 and the African population at 103 685 souls. Although the white population increased to about 8 000 by 1855, they were outnumbered by the Africans at a ratio of fifteen to one.<sup>9</sup> As a result of their being so greatly outnumbered by Africans, (see Table III), the settlers proved to be highly fearful of this Black majority.<sup>10</sup>

Upon their arrival in Natal, the Bryne settlers were confronted by a number of problems. Despite their high expectations, they found that the best grazing and agricultural lands were in the hands of a few large land companies and speculators. Absentee landowners, who owned over 5 million of the 6 million acrs of land owned by whites, rented much of their unoccupied acreage to African peasant

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8. Bundy, Rise and Fall of the S.A. Peasantry, p.168.

9. C.O. 879/1/xxiii, p.40. Despatch from Assistant Commissioner Mostyn Owen to the Duke of Newcastle, 6 March 1854.

10. C.O. 879/2/5, p.6. Table of African Population for years 1838-1859; and N.B.B., 1862-1864.

TABLE III:

POPULATION:

YEAR	EUROPEANS	NATIVES
1838	-	11 000
1843	-	50 000
1848	-	100 000
1852	7 629	112 988
1853	-	130 000
1859	11 580	148 590
1862	13 990	156 061
1863	14 534	141 631
1864	16 369	175 220

cultivators who produced maize, vegetables and sorghum and sold the surplus at nearby markets.<sup>11</sup> Bundy in his work on the African peasantry has suggested that the Africans presented an economic threat to the white settlers who arrived in Natal.<sup>12</sup>

Natal's peasants were rapidly becoming rich and independent, complained the 1852-53 Native Affairs Commission, 'they preferred the most independent state, and hence has arisen the uniformly insufficient supply of labour'. The major proprietors in the colony found that their easiest source of revenue lay in renting lands to Africans. Prior to 1870 these latter were able to withstand pressures on them to work for the White man and had been able to pay their taxes by selling off their surplus grain or cattle.

The white settler community complained of the injustice of the existence of taxed (white) and untaxed (black) classes. As they belonged to the taxed class, the white settlers believed that the entire support of the government, and the prosperity of the colony devolved solely on their shoulders. They complained that they were forced to purchase and pay for every inch of land they required, whereas the Africans could squat anywhere without having to pay transfer dues, quit rents, measurement fees, stamps, title deeds or any other forms of expense.<sup>13</sup>

Various groups of white settlers, notably several prominent commercial farmers and planters, complained about the labour shortage

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11. Bundy, Rise and Fall of S.A. Peasantry, p.168.

12. Bundy, "The Emergence and Decline of a South African Peasantry", African Affairs, 71, 2885, (1972), p.374.

13. The Natal Witness, 12 January 1849.

which resulted from the 'idleness of the native'. Settler logic concluded that the Africans lived rent free on estates and, if they took it into their heads to refuse to work and to sit for days and weeks drinking and eating, they could do so. This caused entire crops on white farms to be lost. One cotton planter complained that he had 600-800 Africans living on his land but not a single labourer.<sup>14</sup> This type of situation, it was alleged, resulted from the inability of African parents to exercise effective control over their children if they did not want to work. Therefore, the colonists appealed to the government to institute measures which would make parents responsible for their sons.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, a majority of settlers believed that the African population should provide funds for the construction of roads, bridges or other improvements in the colony as they were benefitting from such improvements as well as from the security provided by the Natal government.<sup>16</sup> An article, published in the Natal Witness and which reflected contemporary public opinion,<sup>17</sup> expressed this grievance as follows:

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14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid., 20 October 1848.

17. Ibid., 16 February 1849.

Every day that passes without a proper arrangement for raising a revenue from this source (Africans), is a day of public injustice for the settler, a day of injury to the native, and a day of damage to the colony. With a 100 000 pairs of hands, and tens of hundreds of thousands of acres of fertile country, it is not very creditable that we cannot show a better balance sheet.

Metropolitan officials at the Colonial Office in London held the view that Africans living in Natal, lived in peace and security as a result of British administration and that they should therefore contribute to its cost. In a despatch dated 4 December, 1846, the Secretary of State for Colonies, Lord Earl Grey, stated that "it is mainly for the native inhabitants that this Colony is to be maintained, and therefore it is only just to require that no part of the cost of supporting it for which they can be made to provide should be thrown upon this Colony".<sup>18</sup> The British Treasury in the 'Hungry Forties' was ill fit to bear any additional burdens. Therefore in a despatch dated 10 December of the following year, Lord Grey again stated that the Natives 'should be required to pay more directly for the protection they receive'.<sup>19</sup>

From the study of official correspondence, it becomes quite apparent that such views had emanated from an imperial policy that was pursued by the Colonial Office in the first half of the nineteenth century. Given this, an examination of the guiding principles of British colonial policy, especially in relation to southern Africa, becomes necessary. After all, the annexation and subsequent government of Natal was guided by these very principles.

18. C.O. 879/1/xxiii, p.39. Despatch from Earl Grey to Governor West, 4 December 1846.

19. Secretary for Native Affairs (hereafter abbreviated as S.N.A.), vol. 1/1/1. Copy of Minute Paper from Earl Grey to Lieutenant Governor West, 11 December 1847.

British colonial policy, especially towards southern Africa was determined by numerous factors such as the conflict between the "Little Englanders", the expansionists and the humanitarians, financial considerations, the opinions of colonial officials, and finally the control exercised by the British treasury and Parliament.

The "Little Englanders" represented the liberals who regarded the acquisition of colonies as burdensome rather than of any economic value to Britain. In opposition to this, the humanitarians advocated colonial expansion in order to assist in the social and moral upliftment of "backward" races.<sup>20</sup> Lord John Russell, the Colonial Secretary, promoted the doctrine of imperial expansion, asserting that he was "not in principle averse to the extension of our colonies, the Crown and of the strength and wealth of our Empire".<sup>21</sup> But there were certain circumstances under which he repudiated the move towards expansion. Two of these circumstances were :

1. Where the occupation of territory hitherto held by aboriginal tribes must lead to flagrant injustice, cruel wars, and protracted misery -
2. Where the burthen of occupation is so great as to require a large expenditure for which there is no prospect of an adequate compensation. For an increase of troops cannot take place without an increase of establishments, nor an increase of expenditure without the increase of the burthens of this country. 22

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20. J.H.Galbraith, Reluctant Empire (Connecticut, 1978), p.5.

21. Ibid., p.5.

22. Ibid.

It can be argued that he was not a theorist insofar as his views on Empire were concerned. But despite his concern for the welfare of Aboriginal races, his desire for a "prospective balance sheet" took precedence.

Grey, holding the post of High Commissioner, and assuming the responsibility for the whole of southern Africa, stressed the need for the "economy measure" in Colonial policy. But he also felt a sense of obligation "to honour Christian morality".<sup>23</sup> He had, after all, pledged himself to economy and reform.

After the Napoleonic Wars, all government departments in Britain were subjected to rigorous inspection by the treasury which was fervent in its desire to eradicate all unnecessary expenditure forthwith, especially in regard to the colonial empire. With these factors influencing imperial policy, one is able to discern that most sectors of English society and colonial officials were in broad agreement on the need for financial economy in colonial pursuits - thus discounting the prospect of burdening the British taxpayer.

Against the background of this discussion, it is equally appropriate to examine British colonial policy towards South Africa. The annexation of the Cape had been undertaken in order to "gain the master link of connection between the western and eastern world",<sup>24</sup> the Home Office being determined to control Simon's Bay

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23. *Ibid.*, p.7

24. R. Robinson and J. Gallagher, Africa and the Victorians (New York, 1968), pp.1-3.

and the whole South African coastline in order to defend the route to the East. Despite this determination, the decision to annex the Cape had been deeply regretted as it proved to be the most odious of all British colonies. The Cape provided little revenue, while the numerous frontier wars proved to be a considerable drain on the British treasury. With the existence of such conditions, it became almost impossible to appease British public opinion. The position has adequately been described by Galbraith, who argued that:

While asserting jurisdiction over a large territory with a frontier stretching over hundreds of miles, Britain incurred huge expenditures, exacerbated racial friction and contributed to periodic wars which were an ever increasing drain on the British treasury. 25

Since humanitarianism appeared to be one of the factors influencing British expansion in southern Africa, the Cape example with its recurrent 'Kaffir wars' served to illustrate that humanitarians who had been doctrinaire in their views concerning the protection of the welfare of backward peoples, instead of transforming the "savages of South Africa into inoffensive Christians made them formidable enemies".<sup>26</sup> It was therefore not without some justification that the British public vehemently attacked the British government for spending money on such a worthless area.

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25. Galbraith, Reluctant Empire, p.3.

26. Ibid., p.9.

With the Cape exercising a drain on the Exchequer, Grey was over-zealous to transfer "colonial functions" to colonists themselves, therefore allowing dependencies to be self-supporting. Grey's attitude towards the financing of colonies was clearly visible in the system which he employed in British Kaffraria. The system which he introduced here was in accordance with his concept of Africans being ruled via a system of indirect rule, while being supported by their own taxes and simultaneously being directed along the path to "civilization". A similar system was to be developed in Natal after annexation.

With the annexation of the Cape providing a grim reminder of "all the errors of British colonial policy", it was inevitable that British officials should remain irresolute about incorporating Natal into the Empire. Fears of this colony proving expensive and perilous to the government were not without substance. From the correspondence of Lord Glenelg, the Colonial Secretary during the 1830s, it would seem that the Home Government, was loathe to annex Natal, particularly since it was not economically viable and harboured one of the densest concentrations of African peoples in all of southern Africa:

Its distance from Cape Town accentuated its isolated position. Parallel to the coast-line, the Drakensberg shut it off from the hinterland, and beyond the southern half of this range were the formidable Basutos. In the south-east were the densely populated tribes of the Cape Eastern Frontier, while the Zulus, a powerful military kingdom, pressed upon

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the north-eastern boundry. In addition, Natal had a vast number of Africans within its borders. The sparse white population could not offset the Africans' destiny, nor could the small force of British troops act as any real protection. Unrest among the tribes in or around Natal might spread, and it was possible for a war on the Cape frontier to inflame the Zulus and to cut off Natal from land communications with the Cape. 27

From the above description of Natal, it would appear that Natal held no attraction for imperial officials. Even as late as 1840, Russell adamantly stated that he was "not prepared to expend funds to conquer the territory for emigrant farmers".<sup>28</sup>

Nevertheless, the actions of the trekkers reinforced the urgency of annexing Natal. Its only source of value lay in its ability to act as a buffer against Boer expansionism which posed a threat to British control of the Cape and the entire South African coast-line. After the annexation of the Colony, Grey discussed the principles which were to direct British policy in Natal in a despatch to Sir Harry Smith:

It is my duty...to discountenance the expectation that any plans for the improvement of the Natal district, which would involve large expense to be provided by parliament, can be adopted. The local authorities must clearly understand that it is absolutely necessary that they should confine their views to the accomplishment of such gradual improvements in the social state of the district as may be introduced without looking to the mother country for pecuniary

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27. Leigh Reginald Anderson, "The 1846 Locations Commission and the Origins of the Shepstone System of Native Affairs in Natal" (B.A. (Hons), History, University of Natal, 1984), p.69.  
 28. Cited in Welsh, Roots of Segregation, Russell to Napier, 5 September 1840, p.8.

assistance to more than a moderate extent. The maintenance of no very large military force for the support of the authority of the government, and to aid the inhabitants in defending themselves, is the only charge which I am prepared to recommend that parliament should be asked to provide for Natal; the expenditure incurred for other purposes must be provided for from such funds as can be raised within the settlement. 29

Therefore, having looked at Natal from the broader spectrum of views emanating from London and particularly from the Colonial Office despatches, one recognises the determination of Metropolitan authorities to maintain the Colony of Natal with the minimum of expense.

In a despatch to Natal's Lieutenant-Governor West, Grey listed possible suggestions of procuring revenue from Africans to pay for the protection they received. The first called for a moderate tax to be imposed on all lands occupied and cattle possessed. "The objects of this tax", Grey stated, "would be to raise revenue, check excessive cattle rearing by Africans and to encourage the use of money by Africans".<sup>30</sup>

Grey suggested that the chiefs should be responsible for the payments required from their tribes and that 'moderate stipends' should be paid to them from the revenue thus collected. To enable the Africans to earn money, he urged, they should be given employment

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29. Anderson, "Locations Commission", p.71.

30. S.N.A., Vol.1/1/1. Copy of Minute Paper from Earl Grey to Lieutenant-Governor West, 11 December 1847.

in road construction or by European settlers in order to earn money to contribute towards the costs of colonial administration and defence.<sup>31</sup>

A few weeks before the despatch was written, the Commission for locating Africans on reserves had issued its report. One of its recommendations was the setting aside of a number of reserves or locations for Africans. The annual costs of African administration was estimated at £5 500 which could be defrayed by a poll tax of 3/- on all male Africans over 16 years of age.<sup>32</sup> The Commission recommended this system of direct taxation as Africans were not, at that time, consumers of imported goods. The different proposals put forward included the imposition of poll tax and a quit rent. The poll tax idea was abandoned because of the difficulty involved in collection, as many government agents would be required to oversee the collection and they would impose a further financial burden on the government.<sup>33</sup> The colonists also suggested that Africans who were in the employment of white settlers for six months of the year should be exempt from any form of direct taxation as this would induce them to enter the labour market.<sup>34</sup>

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31. Ibid.

32. C.O. 879/8/80, p.2. Minute of Sir F. Rogers, 28 November 1874.

33. C.O. 879/1/xxiii, p.8. Governor Pine to Duke of Newcastle, 12 March 1854.

34. The Natal Witness, 8 February 1849.

In March 1849, James Archbell, an influential missionary, presided over a public meeting held to discuss how Africans should be governed. He urged that the African population be brought under a uniform system of taxation which included the payment of a land tax of 10/- for a specific number of acres of land cultivated, a protection tax, for the benefits of being protected by the government, of 5/- for every individual over 14 years and under 60 years and finally a property tax of 5/- for every head of cattle.<sup>35</sup>

Thus the method by which Africans would make a contribution to the colony's revenue was one of the major problems which faced the administration. After the debate had raged from 1846 to 1849, the decision was finally made to impose a Hut Tax of 7/-, on the recommendation of Theophilus Shepstone, who believed that certain advantages could be derived from this method of taxation. Firstly, evasion would be difficult as all huts would fall under this taxation system. Secondly, it would discourage polygamy.<sup>36</sup> As Nguni customs usually demanded that each wife be given her own hut, every husband who possessed a number of wives would be obliged to pay 7/- for each of the huts. So the polygamist would suffer heavily. This method of taxation seemed, therefore, an ingenious way of compelling Africans to contribute to the general revenue of the colony and to discourage the 'barbaric' customs attached to northern Nguni marriage rites.

35. *Ibid.*, 8 March 1849.

36. C.O. 879/1/xxiii, pp.61-62.  
Newcastle, 29 May 1854.

Despatch from Pine to Duke of

Theophilus Shepstone can be described as being the pivotal figure of African administration in the colony and the originator of the Hut Tax System. Shepstone was born in Bristol, England, in 1817, and came to South Africa with his father, the Reverend William Shepstone. As a young man, he was engaged by a missionary press to supervise the printing of Xhosa grammar texts and parts of the Xhosa language Bible. These early experiences made him extremely knowledgeable on African laws and customs. In 1846 he was appointed to the post of Diplomatic Agent, his task requiring him to deal with the large African population of Natal. He remained at this post until his resignation in 1876. Between 1846 and 1876 he played a crucial part not only in African affairs, but also in the political, social and economic history of the colony.

Unfortunately, Shepstone was guilty of adopting a rather paternalistic attitude, "an unquestionable belief in the superiority of nineteenth century western society and an ambition which bordered on arrogance".<sup>37</sup> Although he was dogmatic in his views on the methods by which Africans could benefit from British rule, he was loathe to repeat the violence of British Kaffraria and the Eastern Cape in Natal. African policy in the Cape was based on the destruction of institutions, traditions and customs of the African

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37. Anderson, "Locations Commission", p.71.

people, and the subsequent imposition of a totally alien system of administration. Instead of stabilizing and pacifying the Black population of the Cape, this system had served to inflame them, resulting in a series of "Kaffir Wars". With these frontier experiences behind him, Shepstone was determined to develop a workable system for African administration in Natal. From the study of the official sources, it becomes obvious that African policy in the colony was synonymous with Shepstone. But it must be emphasised that Shepstone did not formulate the "Native policy" of Natal. Instead, he was responsible for implementing it in a manner that was acceptable to his superiors at the Colonial Office. However, Shepstone's success in ensuring the acquiescence of the northern Nguni inhabitants of the Colony was unquestionable especially when one recalls that while wars were raging in the Cape, Africans in Natal remained at peace with their colonial rulers throughout much of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

British policy in Natal was dominated by financial constraints and it was therefore not surprising to find the burden of governing Africans being shifted to the "man on the spot". Shepstone's role as administrator of the Black population of the colony, was directed by the Colonial Office. It has often been asserted that the system of "indirect rule" in Natal was devised by Shepstone. But this assertion is incorrect. Among other reasons, Shepstone disapproved of this system because of the freedom it granted to chiefs. Nonetheless, tribal responsibility remained a dominant feature of Shepstone's administration which succeeded in replacing the need for a large and expensive military and police force.

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Despite his views on "indirect rule", Shepstone realized that insubordination would not have been tolerated by the Colonial Office. Since he was under constant scrutiny by his metropolitan bosses and by the colonists, he had to carry out his instructions as accurately as possible. With the lack of proper authority and the existence of such restraints, he found it virtually impossible to improve the system of African administration as often as desired :

The inelastic outline of the policy dictated by the environment...left little scope for constructive originality. Economy, labour and safety all vied with each other for first consideration; and, in addition to these difficulties, Shepstone had always to manoeuvre a balance between the natives, whom he represented, the Colonial Office, to whom he was answerable, and the Colonists, whose criticism he had to face every day. His was a position which required infinite tact and patience. 38

After the annexation of Natal, the Colonial Office agreed to settle Africans in a number of locations scattered among European settlers. Although the location system was not one of Shepstone's innovations, he was persistent in his attempts to keep the system intact as he considered this to be the best method of administering a large African population with limited funds. Colonists often criticised him for such persistence because they believed that the locations deprived them of land and labour. But the location system survived because it was approved by the Colonial Office as being a suitable method of minimizing expenditure and resistance in the Colony.

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38. F.Wolfson, "Some Aspects of Native Administration in Natal under Theophilus Shepstone, Secretary for Native Affairs 1857-1875" (M.A., History, University of the Witwatersrand, 1946), p.99.

Shepstone has been widely criticised by historians for failing to improve the moral and social aspects of the African Society of Natal. An absence of "civilizing" agencies even in the locations, had been noted. The only form of "moral" improvement was brought about by the few mission stations in Natal. One can hardly blame Shepstone for this, particularly when one considers the limited funds at his disposal. Although the Colonial Office was committed to civilizing and christianizing Africans, the British taxpayers and the treasury refused to sanction funds for such a mission. Being compelled to function within the framework of Colonial Office policy hindered Shepstone's attempts to civilize the black inhabitants of the Colony.

The "Shepstone system" survived because it satisfied imperial policy and security needs, and far more important was the fact that it satisfied the Colonial Office's concept of financial economy.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, Shepstone's decision to impose the Hut Tax of 1849 was intended to satisfy these requirements.

In the final analysis it can justifiably be argued that Shepstone had succeeded in establishing a workable system of African administration in Natal in the nineteenth century. His success was evident from the collection of the Hut Taxes which proved to be a peaceful method of persuading Africans to contribute to the revenue of the colony.

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39. Anderson, "Locations Commission", p.73.

The suggested hut tax was heartily approved of by Earl Grey, who reaffirmed his opinion that it could serve to improve the Africans while enabling Britain to govern them without incurring any expenditure. It is interesting to note that he emphatically stated that whatever was collected from the Africans in this manner should be locally expended on police, roads, schools, free hospitals and other institutions of benefit for the Africans. This would make the idea of taxation more palatable.<sup>40</sup> The authorization was also given for the acceptance of cattle in place of money when it was necessary.<sup>41</sup>

In his capacity as Supreme Chief, Martin West, the Lieutenant Governor of Natal, issued a proclamation on 12 July 1849, authorizing the Diplomatic Agent who was in charge of African Affairs, Theophilus Shepstone, to collect an annual tax of 7/- for each hut inhabited by Africans.<sup>42</sup> An exception was made of those huts erected in that year by Africans who had been moved into locations on the orders of the government, as well as of separate huts on farms, homesteads and town allotments inhabited by Africans who were receiving monthly wages from the owners of the land on which they lived.<sup>43</sup>

The announcement of the introduction of the Hut Tax seems to have been accepted without protest by the chiefs and their people in 1850 as was evident in their willingness to pay. The chiefs also received

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40. C.O. 879/1/xxiii, p.35. Despatch from Grey to Pine, 4 May 1854.

41. The Natal Witness, 13 July 1849.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid.

the assurance that, in the absence of public works in certain parts of the district (where Africans could earn money), cattle or produce would be accepted in lieu of money for the taxes.<sup>44</sup> The "tax in kind" policy revealed the desire of the government to induce Africans to involve themselves in some type of economic activity.

According to the instructions of the Secretary of State, the Diplomatic Agent was initially instructed to value cattle paid in lieu of money at 10% to 20% below their market price. Shepstone pointed out that this would involve considerable hardship since the Africans had been given a very short period in which to earn the money necessary and labourers' wages were only about 5/- per month. Permission was finally granted for the valuation of cattle at their full market price, but by 1853 the 10% deduction was in force.<sup>45</sup>

The Africans were apparently given to understand that the tax was a payment in full to the government for being allowed to come and locate themselves in the country and for the land they occupied. The first collection was made by Theophilus Shepstone, the Diplomatic Agent, in September 1850.<sup>46</sup> Those Africans living in the vicinity of Pietermaritzburg, went to Shepstone's office to pay the taxes, so that it was surrounded by crowds of Africans. His clerks were kept busy with the counting and piling up of thousands of silver coins.<sup>47</sup> Although it had been presumed that the Africans would be reluctant

44. S.N.A., Vol. 1/1/1. Minute from Earl Grey to Governor West, 11 December 1847.

45. S.N.A., Vol. 1/1/6. Circular sent from Colonial Office to Magistrates concerning Hut Taxes, 4 November 1856.

46. Colonial Secretary's Office (hereafter abbreviated as C.S.O.), Vol. 958, no. 1884/1546. Memorandum of H.G. Shepstone to Colonial Secretary (Mauritius), 12 April 1884.

47. The Natal Witness, 21 December 1849.

to comply with the demand which was made upon them, they seemed to display a readiness to pay the taxes, although they had to undertake long journeys or swim across full rivers or go to money lenders or part with cattle.<sup>48</sup> During this crucial period Shepstone also visited the outlying districts, during a tour which lasted forty-eight days, addressing several tribal gatherings.

The first collection amounted to £8 734 4s 9d.<sup>49</sup> Shepstone was allowed 8% of the total collected - which was approximately £698. But he had to pay all his own expenses which amounted to £183. This figure included the rationing of 41 Africans who were employed in herding and driving to town all the cattle that were collected. The net amount collected for 1575 head of cattle was £1 782 1s 0d. The percentage allowed to Shepstone was a rather paltry sum, (£698 - £183 = £515) especially since this was to be his annual salary. Only after his work of collecting the tax was taken over by magistrates did he receive a fixed annual salary of £600.<sup>50</sup>

The "willingness" displayed by the Africans in paying the first tax was most extraordinary. Shepstone noticed that in their anxiety to pay the full tax, some paid more than was due. One chief, Pagadi, expressed his surprise at change being returned to those who paid too much.<sup>51</sup> In accordance with the Hut Tax regulations all married

48. Ibid.

49. C.O. 879/1/xxiii, pp.69-70. Pine to Newcastle, 29 May 1854.

50. C.O. 879/3/26, pp.6-7. Keate to Legislative Council, 1868.

51. The Natal Witness, 2 December 1849.

African men, including those in the police corps, private service and those located on missionary stations were required to contribute. Shepstone had collected the taxes from huts belonging to forty-one fragmented tribes. Each tribe, if not each family is said to have kept watch on their neighbours in case they failed to pay this form of tribute.<sup>52</sup>

In retrospect, it appears rather remarkable that a small white population could so easily impose a tax, equivalent to six weeks of a labourer's wages for each hut, on a 'barbarous' and 'warlike' African population, numbering some 100 000 souls. There appeared to be a number of reasons for the ready acceptance by Natal's northern Nguni population of the tax. Firstly, they were anxious to prevent losing access to adequate land. Secondly, they were accustomed to making a contribution to their chiefs. Many Africans believed that the imposition of the Hut Tax was not an annual demand. Perhaps Africans thought that the Hut Tax was a once-only payment for locating themselves on the land, although there is no direct evidence to suggest that this impression was intentionally cultivated.

The ready acceptance of the tax could also be attributed to the fact that the Africans in Natal desperately desired protection from the Zulu kingdom and were therefore prepared to accept almost any condition.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, the colonial government's threat that the defaulting tribe or individual would not be allowed to remain in the colony and enjoy any form of protection must have proved effective.

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52. Ibid.

53. Ballard, "The Frontier Interregnum", Journal of Natal and Zulu History, vol. V, 1982, pp.56-57.

After all, many of the Natal Zulu were refugees who were both hostile to and fearful of, the Zulu kingdom. When the white settlers first arrived in Natal in 1824, the area had been inhabited by only three hundred destitute members of the Amatuli tribe. By 1831, however, the Black population had risen to about three thousand. During the rule of Shaka, most of the refugees were made up of displaced Nguni who were not incorporated within the new Zulu kingdom. After Shaka's assassination, his successor Dingane adopted a ruthless domestic policy that meted out severe punishment such as execution and confiscating the property of those tribes and chiefdoms which sought independence from the Zulu kingdom. Fragments of the rebellious chiefdoms, namely the Qwabe, Cele and Qadi thus looked upon the British settlement in Natal as a sanctuary from Zulu rule.<sup>54</sup>

That there had been a misunderstanding over the annual nature of the Hut Tax is further suggested by the fact that, during the second year of collection some Africans revealed their bewilderment and began complaining. In a despatch to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lieutenant Governor Pine stated quite emphatically that Shepstone had tried in vain to discourage the belief that the Hut Tax was a temporary imposition.<sup>55</sup> The proceeds from the taxes, however, fell drastically in 1851 to £7 169 1s 9d - a drop of 18% from the amount received in 1850, revealing a measure of discontent by Africans towards the annual nature of the tax.<sup>56</sup>

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54. Ibid.

55. C.O. 879/1/xxiii, pp.69-70. Pine to Newcastle, 29 May 1854.

56. Ibid.

After the first two collections by Shepstone, his work was continued by the Resident Magistrates of each Division. The role of the Resident Magistrate was a very important one. His duties as administrator of the district, included making regular inspections of the district, holding branch courts, keeping records of all matters within his division, keeping all expenses down to a minimum, collecting Hut Taxes, collecting Dog Taxes and checking evasions.<sup>57</sup> From this list it can be seen that his task was not an easy one, especially as the effectiveness of the Hut Tax system depended on his initiative and abilities.

Before proceeding to collect the Hut Tax, the magistrate was required to write to the Colonial Secretary notifying him as to how long he would be absent, when he anticipated leaving and what arrangements had been made for a replacement for him. From 1852 the Hut Tax was collected during April/May, as reaping usually occurred towards the end of the agricultural year. As the African society in Natal was largely agrarian it depended greatly on the weather and the seasons, the wet summer season stretching from November through March and the dry winter season between April and October.<sup>58</sup>

The magistrate had to send a notice to the chiefs or to the Indunas in charge of sections of tribes in the various districts, informing them when and where they would be required to pay the Hut

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57. C.O. 879/1/xxiii, pp.38-39. Memorandum of Walter MacFarlane to Governor Pine, 14 June 1854.

58. C.O. 879/1/xxiii, p.69. Pine to Newcastle, 29 May 1854.

Taxes. This prevented much inconvenience with regard to travelling on the part of the Africans who came to pay the Hut Tax. In his turn, the chief had to notify the people of the magistrates' instructions. A Clerk of Court who was also the interpreter and a small body of armed African constables accompanied the Magistrate on the Hut Tax collection. On returning, he was required to submit a report to the Colonial Secretary.<sup>59</sup>

The time taken to collect the taxes differed for various reasons, the first one being related to the differing sizes of the divisions, and the number of collection centres in them. In some divisions, Africans were scattered over large areas, especially when many of them were residing as squatter-tenants on private farms. The magistrates had to spend time interviewing chiefs, talking over matters affecting African society, explaining new laws and providing them with any information which they required. It is interesting to note that the Secretary for Native Affairs continually reprimanded magistrates for spending so much time . . . on the collection of the Hut Tax. He believed that 13 days was sufficient, a stipulation which failed to take into account the great disparity in distance and population that existed between the various magisterial divisions.<sup>60</sup>

The expenses of the magistrates in travelling for the purpose of collecting Hut Tax was defrayed by an allowance of 5% on all amounts

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59. C.S.O., Vol. 548, No.1876/995. Minute of Resident Magistrate of Umvoti to Colonial Secretary, 10 April 1876.

60. C.S.O., Vol. 1432, No.1895/2722. S.N.A. to Colonial Secretary, 25 April 1902.

of tax collected.<sup>61</sup> As the African population increased, the revenue from the Hut Tax collection increased and the percentage became a source of profit to the magistrate. This percentage was introduced to make magistrates more diligent in their collections and it was emphasised that it was necessary for each magistrate to travel the whole extent of the division under his jurisdiction, especially the remote and broken parts of the districts. As a result of the profit being amassed by the magistrates and the inequality of the system, a consolidation of salaries and allowances was effected in 1873. Magistrates in all divisions were to receive a salary of £300 per annum except those of Durban and Pietermaritzburg (£350).<sup>62</sup> By 1876 the expenses incurred during the Hut Tax collection, including the transferring of money to the treasuries at Durban and Pietermaritzburg were borne entirely by the magistrate. After this period, they were allowed to charge travelling expenses out of a vote of £50, provided this amount was not exceeded. In addition to the salary and the £50 vote, the magistrates received small allowances for forage and house rent.<sup>63</sup>

As the magistrates were continually beset by problems and were responsible for numerous duties, it could be argued that their salaries were disproportionate to the extent of their functions. Moreover, they were an indispensable link in the colonial administration of African affairs in Natal.

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61. C.O. 879/3/155, p.35. Lt.Gov Keate to Duke of Buckingham, 7 November 1868.

62. Ibid., p.37.

63. C.S.O., Vol. 1432. Circular from Colonial Secretary to Resident Magistrates, 4 November 1885.

The white settlers reacted favourably to the introduction of the African Hut Tax as many had complained for several years prior to its implementation. The following comment which appeared in The Natal Witness reveals a typical public reaction of the time.<sup>64</sup>

As was predicted, the introduction of the Hut Tax is leading to various collateral advantages....We have at once put into requisition a force whose operations will tell as directly on our prosperity as if it were engaged in fencing or ploughing. The road party employed between here and Durban are essentially everyman's workmen, the necessity which has summoned them to handle the pickaxe, and to act their part for the general improvement, will recur annually so that in addition to public improvement, an immense amount of labour will be made available for agricultural purposes....Natives are also fulfilling one of the intentions of their Creator - to work.

In the nineteenth century Western Europeans believed "firmly in the superiority of their technology, their faith in Christianity and their system of government and jurisprudence; they also held the view that Europeans and the white race in general were innately superior and far more 'advanced' than non-white races".<sup>65</sup> Such ideas and attitudes British immigrants brought with them to the Colony of Natal

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64. The Natal Witness, 31 August 1849.

65. Robinson and Gallagher, Africa and the Victorians, pp.1-3.

of Natal. Settlers, missionaries and officials alike viewed the Africans as 'uncivilized' and 'heathen', and therefore considered it their moral duty to 'civilize' and 'christianize' them. As Africans were looked upon as being in the early stages of cultural development, the settlers felt justified in retaining their superior position in all spheres so that they could guide and, if necessary, coerce these 'infants' along the path to civilization.<sup>66</sup> Since the Northern Nguni population was numerically superior to that of the European settler in Natal, it was believed to be even more imperative that these 'heathens' be 'civilized'. The Natal Witness provided an apt definition of the colonist's views of these indigenous African peoples.

The other class of our colonial population consists of men in a state of infancy as regards civilization. They are far more numerous than the Europeans, and their numbers are likely to be increased by additions from the adjacent tribes. Scattered over large tracts of country and unimpelled by want, they have worn their lives away up to the present time in slothful indolence, to the full development of the depravity of human nature. 67

It is necessary at this stage to examine the economic activities of Africans in Natal and to assess their ability to pay the Hut Tax.

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66. D.M.Schreuder, "The Cultural Factor in Victorian Imperialism : A Case Study of the British Civilizing Mission", Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, Vol.IV, No.3, May 1976, pp.283-284.
67. The Natal Witness, 15 January 1847.

According to recent studies of the South African peasantry, a striking feature of the period was the amount of wealth which had been accumulated by the African communities, whose production and sales had increased dramatically. As a result of this, the African population had been able to produce enough surplus grain to supply even white farmers.<sup>68</sup> Their economic independence had thus enabled them to pay their taxes by selling surplus grain, vegetables or cattle.

In addition to their participation in the domestic economy, Africans participated in the wider market. Evidence for such activities could be found in reports of the year 1849 which record that large quantities of African grown maize were exported to Cape Town.<sup>69</sup>

Shepstone, with considerable diplomatic skill, had succeeded in persuading a large section of the African population to move into locations. Nevertheless, by 1851 he had admitted that the majority of the population still resided outside locations on Crown and private lands.<sup>70</sup> Initially, Shepstone's reserve system provided sufficient land for many Africans to produce enough agricultural surplus to pay their taxes to the government without having to work for cheap wages for white farmers, thereby causing a labour shortage.

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68. Bundy, Rise and Fall of the S.A. Peasantry, p.172.

69. Ibid., p.171.

70. Ibid., p.170.

The labour question was made more complex by the fact that Africans has a range of land catogories to choose from. The African peasants were free to choose between occupation of Crown lands or land owned by absentee landlords or Mission lands or land provided by white farmers in return for labour. In addition to this, the granting of nearly 200 000 acres of Crown lands to Mission Stations afforded many Africans the opportunity to occupy land and at the same time, of benefitting economically from the education and training offered to them by the missionaries.<sup>71</sup>

By 1853 African Peasant Cultivators were well established thereby causing many colonists to complain that "the Kaffirs are much more insubordinate and impatient of control; they are rapidly becoming rich and indepedent".<sup>72</sup> In contrast, Natal's white agricultural sector was in a depressed condition. The British immigrants who came to Natal had been unable to afford the purchasing of seeds, farming implements and animals for draught purposes. In order to accumulate capital, many turned to hunting, trading or commerce. Evidence of such poor agricultural activities on the part of the white sector could be found in official government returns on the economic state of the Pietermaritzburg area in 1855.

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71. *Ibid.*, p.172

72. *C.O.* 8791/1/xxiii, pp.26-27.  
Commission (1852-1853).

Report of Native Affairs

The produce raised from the soil of the District of Natal has been inconsiderable, consisting of oat hay, which is occasionally brought to market in small quantities, of good quality, and at expensive prices. Poultry and a few vegetables are raised for the use of the growers. The farmers are chiefly occupied in rearing horned cattle, the prices of which are £1 10 0 to £4 10 0 according to quality, and of which they possess large herds. The Kaffirs have great quantities of horned cattle, and a few goats. 73

An additional reason for the 'prosperous' nature of the African peasantry was their ability to exercise a choice with regard to the kinds of economic relationships they could enter into, in the colonial economy. There were three ways in which cattle and other resources could be utilized. They could engage in hunting for ivory, which could be bartered for cattle from the white colonists. Secondly, they could barter their agricultural surplus. After British settlers arrived in Natal, Africans found their positions strengthened because these whites bartered food supplies from them. Thus, Africans in the Zwartkop location dominated the trade in wood, vegetables and maize at Pietermaritzburg. A third, and least attractive alternative, was that of labouring for the white settlers.<sup>74</sup>

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73. The Natal Witness, 4 December 1855.

74. Slater, Changing Economic Relationships in Rural Natal, pp.156- 157.

The changing economic relationships which took place during the early colonial period (1860-1870) found many white settlers unable to compete with these African producers, "except through a pattern of labour relations based on overt coercion which financial and political constraints prevented". As is revealed in a recent study of the changing economic relations which occurred in rural Natal at this time, it had become clear that "as long as Africans were able to obtain sufficient income from the herding of cattle or the cultivation of land to meet their own ends, white farmers would be unable to obtain sufficient, cheap and long term labour to make the enterprises to which they aspired, feasible".<sup>75</sup>

In the final analysis it could be seen that, whether situated in government locations, on Crown lands, mission lands or even on white farms as rent-paying tenants, Africans had been successful in withstanding pressure from white settlers and their political spokesmen to become wage labourers. They had been able, firstly, to meet subsistence needs and secondly, to pay Hut Taxes, rents and to buy manufactured goods such as ploughs, hoes, blankets and clothing. Their ability to maintain this independent state and thereby cause an acute labour shortage was illustrated by the colony's decision to import Indian labourers from 1860 and to introduce labour from Swaziland and Lourenco Marques after this had been allowed by the Colonial Government in the early 1870s.<sup>76</sup>

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75. Ibid., p.158.

76. Welsh, Roots of Segregation, p.198.

The imposition of the Hut Tax, however, wrought a number of changes among Africans. It probably resulted in greater physical demands being made on African women to produce a surplus in maize and vegetables as most cultivation was carried on by them. Wives therefore acquired an increased value in Natal's northern Nguni society. Hut Tax money could be obtained by the surplus produce that was sold to Europeans by African farmers. Such peasant farming evolved mainly among African communities living in the immediate vicinity of towns, as transport of produce from outlying areas posed a serious problem. As the majority of Africans were living in the less developed parts of the colony in 1849, there was little or no market for surplus crops. Many Africans, it was reported, were forced to pay the Hut Tax in the form of cattle or to leave home for a period in order to seek work and earn wages. In 1850, out of the total amount of Hut Tax collected, £3 306 was paid in cattle. This meant that large numbers of cattle fell beneath the auctioneer's hammer. On Saturdays, the market square in Pietermaritzburg attracted crowds of people who were keen to purchase African cattle which went on auction.<sup>77</sup> The Hut Tax therefore forced more African cattle onto the market for white farmers to purchase, than would have been the case had there been no tax.

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77. The Natal Witness, 2 November 1849.

But after this, the payment of the tax in cattle was regarded as a last resort for, "cattle is to the native - what cash is to the miser".<sup>78</sup> According to northern Nguni customary usage, the number of cattle indicated the extent of the owner's wealth. In order to prevent so large an annual sacrifice, Africans in outlying districts were pressured into taking up other occupations or into working for low wages, as labourers, to pay Hut Tax.

The absence of men from their kraals and from their families even for a fairly short period must, however, have had a considerable influence on tribal and family life. Moreover, the close contact with Europeans, and with town conditions must have contributed to the growth of wants hitherto unheard of, and hence to a tendency to work for a longer period than was necessary, to earn the Hut Tax. The absence of men for various periods from the direct control of their chiefs, and the observation of European modes of life, must certainly have contributed to the partial disintegration of tribal life.

In addition to the Hut Tax, Africans living in locations were, until the end of the century, liable to compulsory labour or Isibhalo on public works. The earliest known instance of this compulsory service occurred in 1850, when one of the Magistrates was instructed to order an African chief to supply a certain number of men to work on the Durban/Pietermaritzburg road.<sup>79</sup> Wages and rations were paid at the

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78. Ibid.

79. S.N.A., Vol. 1/3/1, No.126. Resident Magistrate of Inanda to S.N.A., 26 November 1850.

average rate prevailing then. This system must have been highly unpopular with the Africans as it restricted their freedom of choice of employers. Although the Africans recognised the right of the Lieutenant-Governor as Supreme Chief to demand their labour, they were almost always reluctant to comply with this system, thereby causing their chiefs much aggravation. The Resident Magistrate of Inanda complained to Shepstone:

In compliance with instructions in your letter...I have used my utmost exertion to induce several chiefs to send men to work on the new road between Durban and Pietermaritzburg...but I have been unsuccessful...I think Kaffirs find work too laborious. 80

The Superintendent of Roads also complained about the determination of Chief Faku's men not to work on roads. This system of compulsory labour on public works compelled many Africans to leave the locations and live on private lands although they had to pay rent.<sup>81</sup>

During the years 1852-1853, Natal was in the throes of an economic depression. According to The Natal Witness:<sup>82</sup>

Mercantile business is stagnant, farmers are complaining there is no market for their produce, and large numbers are deciding to leave the colony.

As a result of the colony's economy having reached a rather depressed level, the white population of the towns were unable to purchase even beans or potatoes. The depression was intensified by late rains

80. Ibid.

81. S.N.A., Vol. 1/3/1, No.1. Superintendent of Roads to Diplomatic Agent, 20 April 1850.

82. The Natal Mercury, 2 December 1852.

having caused so much havoc with the crops. Large numbers of cattle perished in the intense cold and snow. The Customs Revenue dropped from £11 864 in 1851 to £10 060 in 1852.<sup>83</sup> (See Table II) and exports fell drastically.

So it soon became evident that the optimism which had accompanied the introduction of the Hut Tax had been misplaced. This was evident in the recurring growth of white settler dissatisfaction in the years that followed, when the question of the African contribution to the revenue was hotly debated. The main reason for this was that the labour shortage reached serious proportions and the economic activities of the colony were considered to be handicapped by an economically independent African society.

Wealthier African men were able to make their wives and children work for them and produce more surplus. African men, however, took up independent occupations as farmers, artisans and transport riders. But when comparing this period with the period before the introduction of the Hut Tax, it is evident that there was definitely an increase in the numbers of Africans seeking work. They worked, however, only for short periods at a time - time enough to earn the amount required to pay the Hut Tax. Since Africans were earning higher wages (minimum of 10/-) than they did previously, they were able to earn the required sum in a shorter period of time.<sup>84</sup> At this stage, the wants of most Africans were limited. So an increase in wages would tend to reduce rather than increase the supply of labourers.

83. N.B.B., 1850-1875. Auditor's report on State of Revenue and Expenditure.

84. The Natal Witness, 4 October 1850.

This period was characterised by many suggestions concerning the modification of the Hut Tax as a means of forcing African men to become wage labourers, as it was strongly believed by the colonists that "labour is the pivot upon which the destinies of the colony, for good or for evil, will assuredly turn".<sup>85</sup>

The Secretary for Native Affairs desired to encourage the Africans to produce surpluses for sale and especially for export. With this object in mind, Shepstone instructed magistrates in 1857 to accept payment of the Hut Tax in sesamum seed at a rate not exceeding 7/- per muid (about 157lbs). In 1856, with the same objective, he advocated a new system whereby the government should insist on the payment of the Hut Tax in cotton, for a period of 3 years, while increasing the Tax to 10/- per hut on all those who paid in money.<sup>86</sup> If this were done, all the cotton cultivated would be purchased by the government. This move had the added attraction that it would indirectly assist in augmenting the general revenue of the colony.

While Shepstone toyed with such schemes to increase African peasant productivity, the settlers continued to agitate for an increase in African taxation with the object of stimulating the labour supply. As early as 1854, the Land Commission suggested an increase in the Hut Tax from 7/-. It was of the opinion that the Africans were

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85. The Natal Mercury, 16 June 1853.

86. S.N.A., Vol. 1/8/77, No. 453. Circular from Shepstone to Resident Magistrates, 13 November 1853.

in a wealthier position than previously, as they received higher wages and high prices for their produce. The price of maize increased from 3s 9d in 1846 to 16s per muid in 1850.<sup>87</sup> The Commission also brought forward the view that the increase of the Hut Tax would increase the number of labourers and encourage industrious habits among Africans as it was believed that they were very independent. Since it was said that the prosperity of the colony was retarded by the labour shortage, it would be feasible to suggest that one of the reasons behind the commission's idea of increasing the tax was the desire to draw out the labour supply. Unfortunately for the Commission, its suggestions were rejected as the Colonial Office was of the opinion that the black population might rebel if additional taxes were demanded.

In September of the same year, a rather different reason for the possible increase of the Hut Tax emerged. This was evident in a despatch sent to Sir George Grey by Lieutenant Governor Pine. Pine believed that the government should force the Africans to adopt European housing by placing an additional Hut Tax on every hut which did not have a high door and at least one window. The object of this additional tax was to encourage Africans to build houses conforming to European and therefore 'civilized' standards.<sup>88</sup>

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87. *The Natal Witness*, 15 November 1850.

88. C.O. 879/1/xxiii, p.93. Despatch related to "Suggestions for the future Government of Natives", 1852.

In 1857, a law was enacted enabling Pine in his capacity as Supreme Chief, to authorise the collection of this tax. All Africans living in houses of European construction and having only one wife and otherwise conforming to 'civilized' usages, had to be exempted. This exemption was brought about as a result of representations by missionaries, who insisted that the Christian Africans on the mission stations who lived in square houses and dressed in European fashion already contributed their share towards the revenue of the Colony in the same way as did the Europeans.<sup>89</sup>

In this period, the Natal government also considered it necessary to find a way of augmenting the revenue as it was now imperative to accommodate the increased cost of government and the financing of the importation of Indians from India. The Lieutenant Governor, in 1856, looked to the Hut Tax to provide the solution to this problem. He proposed an increase of the Hut Tax from 7/- to 11/- and also an increase in Customs Dues. The Legislative Council rejected his arguments for an increase of the Hut Tax on this occasion, contending, as the Colonial Office had done, that this might endanger the peace of the colony. Instead it agreed to increase the duty on tobacco, spirits, blankets and picks. The duty of tobacco was increased by more than 50%, and the duty on spirits was increased by 2/-. The duty on blankets was increased by 15% and beads to 9d per lb. (an increase of 200%) and on African hoes and picks to 1/- each.<sup>90</sup>

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89. C.S.O., Vol.958, no. 1884/1546. S.N.A. to Colonial Secretary (Mauritius), 12 April 1884.

90. C.O. 879/3/26, p.7. Keate to Legislative Council, 1868.

The result of the measures was an increase of revenue in 1856 amounting to £28 352, while in 1864 it went up to £137 803. (See Table IV). The European population increased from 6600 to 16 369. The African population increased even more rapidly from 103 685 to 175 220, (See Table III). Therefore, there was a total population increase of about 50%. <sup>91</sup>

In the early 1860s, commercial crops, especially sugar faced difficulties during the planting and harvesting seasons due to the shortage of African labour. The loss in production and therefore profit, adversely affected the economy of the colony. A few sugar companies made several suggestions as to how the labour shortage could be combated. One of the most interesting of these was made by the Umhlanga Valley Sugar and Coffee Company. The Hut Tax was levied in April each year, this being the most convenient date for the Africans as their crops were reaped in the early months of the year. Many Africans accordingly offered themselves for service in the first quarter of the year, in order to earn money for the tax. The company suggested that as the sugar plantations required most of their labour from September to December, both inclusive, the tax should in future be levied in December, thus ensuring that the period of maximum supply of labour should coincide with the peak demand of the sugar planters. Shepstone rejected the suggestion on the grounds that Africans depended mainly on the sale of their produce to pay the taxes, and not

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91. C.O. 879/2/5, p.6. Table on African Population.

FILE IV:

YEAR	REVENUE		EXPENDITURE		CUSTOMS			RAILWAYS		PUBLIC DEBT
	ACTUAL	TOTAL RECEIPTS	ACTUAL	TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS	IMPORTS	EXPORTS	REVENUE	TOTAL RECEIPTS	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
1846...	3,073	...	6,905	...	...	...	472	...	...	...
1847...	6,641	...	8,340	...	...	...	2,882	...	...	...
1848...	9,269	...	10,101	...	...	...	4,752	...	...	...
1849...	12,832	...	14,941	...	...	...	5,681	...	...	...
1850...	28,410	39,742	21,774	36,771	111,016	17,106	11,200	...	...	...
1851...	26,409	32,573	21,912	28,440	125,462	17,425	11,864	...	...	...
1852...	27,158	29,650	24,296	29,625	103,701	20,165	10,060	...	...	...
1853...	28,648	30,272	29,199	29,754	98,170	36,969	10,126	...	...	...
1854...	28,570	31,398	31,533	32,496	124,722	43,599	10,936	...	...	...
1855...	28,700	34,050	28,311	33,894	86,551	52,073	8,683	...	...	...
1856...	28,352	36,097	28,545	35,230	102,512	56,563	10,319	...	...	...
1857...	40,415	45,733	33,321	38,535	184,549	82,496	14,705	...	...	...
1858...	44,061	47,043	41,557	48,209	172,832	100,587	15,990	...	...	...
1859...	50,082	50,905	45,628	49,917	199,917	110,415	18,717	...	...	...
1860...	77,480	86,872	56,869	80,385	345,987	139,698	33,927	...	...	50,000
1861...	107,465	114,087	91,082	121,711	402,689	119,207	37,472	...	...	50,000
1862...	98,799	109,299	85,928	94,525	499,469	127,228	40,672	...	...	100,000
1863...	113,214	123,088	92,676	96,381	473,333	158,565	47,366	...	...	100,000
1864...	137,803	152,242	113,290	142,765	591,686	220,267	59,970	...	...	100,000

on the earnings of wages, while the changed date of collection would involve either double taxation in one year, or the loss of a year's Hut Tax.<sup>92</sup> The interests of the Colonial administration in gaining revenue from African producers had priority over the labour interests of white commercial farmers.

It is significant to note that while farmers wanted labour for their own commercial farms and plantations, they were not politically or economically strong enough to challenge the interests of the Colonial Office and the merchants, traders absentee landowners and land companies, all of whom depended on the Hut Tax and hence upon the profits which Africans made from the sale of maize, vegetables, fowls and cattle. Shepstone even admitted that the government was, at that time, supportive of an independent African society because it could meet tax obligations and satisfy the economic expectations of the merchants and traders. For their part, Natal traders looked upon African maize production as vital to their operations, while absentee landlords looked upon the rents paid by their African tenant cultivators as a "lucrative business".<sup>93</sup>

On the other hand, the colonial interests which were primarily concerned with obtaining adequate supplies of labour suggested that African taxation should be increased in order to equalize Black and

92. S.N.A., Vol. 1/8/3, No.62. Shepstone to Henry Brind of the Umhlanga Valley Sugar and Coffee Company, 2 April 1869.

93. C.O. 879/8/172, p.3. Despatch from Garnet Wolseley to Earl of Carnarvon, 3 August 1875.

White taxation. In 1863 a petition was presented to the Legislative Council praying for the Hut Tax to be raised to the high figure of £2 per hut, or for the imposition of a poll tax of £1 on every male over 14 years of age.<sup>94</sup> These surprising figures reveal the desperation of the white settlers, who perhaps believed that only high amounts such as these would compel Africans to work as cheap wage labourers.

It is difficult at this early stage to reach any conclusions as to the real burden of the Hut Tax on the African population. It is an even more difficult task to compare their burden with the tax burden which rested upon the white population owing to the different social positions of the two sections of the Natal's population. An attempt was made by the Native Commission of 1852 to compare the burden of taxation on Africans and Whites by comparing the rate of tax per head for each section of the community. In its report, the contribution of Africans to the customs revenue was excluded from consideration as being insignificant, leaving only the Hut Tax as their contribution. At the rate of 3 souls per hut, this was equivalent to 2/4d per head on the African population, while the rate per head for the Europeans was given as £2.<sup>95</sup> The European rate of taxation was determined, presumably, by their contribution to customs, licences, stamp duties and registrations. In this way the Commission endeavoured to create the impression that the tax paid by Africans was very light.

94. C.S.O., Vol. 958/1546. S.N.A. to Colonial Secretary (Mauritius), 12 April 1884.

95. C.O. 879/1/D3, p.38. Report of Walter MacFarlane, President of Commission enquiring into "Past and Present State of Natives", 1852.

Table V indicates the amount of Hut Tax collected for the years 1850-1864, the percentage of the total revenue which the Hut Tax comprised, and the total revenue of the colony of Natal for those years. From this table, it would seem that, although the Africans formed the vast majority of the population, their average contribution towards the administration of the colony was only about 32,2%. However, the Native Commission was incorrect in assuming that the African contribution to the Customs Revenue was insignificant. After all, these indigenous people paid duties on picks, ploughs, agricultural implements, blankets and beads, and due to their large numbers, they probably accounted for most of the retail sales in the colony's stores.

It is not possible to arrive at any conclusions regarding the merits of the system of taxation which operated in the Colony without examining, not only the amount of taxes paid and the position of the tax payers, but also the manner in which the tax revenue is expended. It was emphasised by Earl Grey that the entire amount collected from the Hut Tax should be utilized solely for the benefits of the African population. This decision was modified in 1852, when the new Secretary of State for the Colonies stated that part of the tax could be utilised to offset general administrative expenses in the colony of Natal. This decision was heartily approved of by Governor Pine and the white settlers.

In 1856 the white population contributed £12 709 (see Table II) towards the general revenue in the form of customs dues, port and harbour dues, transfer dues, auction dues, licences, stamps, fines and fees of court and office. The Africans contributed £11 062 in

TABLE V:

YEARS	HUT TAX	HUT TAX - % OF REV.	TOTAL REV OF COLONY (approx)
1850	£ 8 734	31, 19%	£ 28 000
1851	£ 7 169	25, 5	26 000
1852	£ 8 632	33, 2	26 000
1853	£ 8 132	29, 04	28 000
1854	£10 038	35,85	28 000
1855	£10 630	36,65	29 000
1856-1861	No records available.		
1862	£17 925	18, 10	99 000
1863	£18 856	16 68	113 000
1864	£19 902	14, 42	138 000

the form of customs dues, Hut Taxes and fines and fees of court. Of the £12 709 contributed by whites, £1 575 was expended on items which were described as being exclusively for their benefit. This included expenditure on ecclesiastical establishments, educational institutions and grants to religious, charitable and scientific institutions.<sup>96</sup> Out of the £11 062 contributed by Africans, the paltry sum of £70 was expended for their exclusive benefit, this amount being expended upon educational establishments. The balance of the revenue, that is, £11 134 from the white contribution and £10 992 from the African contribution, was utilized for the general services of the colony which included roads, bridges, harbours, police and posts. These general services tended to benefit white communities in developing towns, more than African communities in the rural areas.<sup>97</sup> Although the Hut Tax, at this time represented about one-third of the total revenue of the colony, the Africans benefitted much less in services given them.

Perhaps the African contribution would seem "insignificant" when one compares it to their resources and income. Since the average monthly wage paid to African labourers had doubled in 1853 to about 10/- to 15/- as compared to the 5/- received in 1849, it would not have taken the labourers long to earn the Hut Tax money of 7/-.

In addition to this, the average price of cattle and produce had risen sharply. The price of mealies increased from 7/- to 9/- per 196 pounds, while wheat fetched 24/- per bag, and potatoes increased

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96. C.O. 879/2, p.21, S.N.A. to Governor Keate, 16 October 1863.

97. Ibid.

from 7- to 10/- per 150lbs. Poultry which had fetched from 3d to 4d per head in 1849, rose to 1/6 per head in the early 1860s, while slaughter oxen and draught oxen fetched about £4.<sup>98</sup> From this increase in the prices of produce, poultry and cattle, and from the increased wages received by Black labourers, it could be concluded that, during the 1850s and early 1860s, African society in Natal could cope relatively easily with the Hut Tax obligation. Due to their independent resources as peasant farmers and transport riders Africans could easily resist working for whites for cheap wages. The only section of African society which could have been affected greatly by the Hut Tax were the polygamists, who had to pay 7/- each for a number of huts, depending on the number of wives they possessed.

The available statistics reveal that an extremely minor sum was devoted to African purposes. However, both white and black contributed roughly equal shares towards the general services of the colony. But the benefit derived by the white population from these general services was far greater than that derived by Africans. This is evident when one considers the number of institutions and amenities established for the sole benefit of whites. Indeed, until the end of Pine's first term as Lieutenant-Governor in 1856, relatively little of the proceeds from the Hut Tax had been devoted to the amelioration of Africans in Natal. In March 1850, Reverend Archbell condemned the scheme as "rotten at the foundation in as much as it draws money from the people without profiting them", and in May, as the first collection proceeded, he referred scathingly to the Government's

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98. Ibid.

discovery of "Californian mines in the Caffer Huts".<sup>99</sup> Shepstone himself admitted in late 1852 that although approximately £24,600 had been collected to date, very little had been done even to establish effective magisterial control in the locations.

At the beginning of 1854 the Duke of Newcastle and the Colonial Office reminded Pine of the obligation upon the Natal government to improve the state of the Africans by using a large proportion of the revenue which the Africans themselves contributed through the Hut Tax. He pointed out that the Hut Tax produced about £9 000 annually, the Natal Estimates for 1854 showed the proposed expenditure specifically for African affairs as £1 551. Newcastle refused to believe the explanation that a proportion of the general expenditure of the District was incurred on behalf of the Africans.<sup>100</sup>

It could finally be deduced that as neither the white nor the black population felt secure, they both paid for the benefit of enjoying the protection afforded them by imperial troops against the potential armed threat posed by the izimpi of the powerful Zulu kingdom.

The implementation of Hut Tax in Natal may be interpreted as one of the most effective tools employed by the British government to introduce a new colonial system to the northern Nguni. The colonial administration, being dependent for revenue on limited sources, found

99. The Natal Independent 14 March and 16 May 1850.

100. Government House, 4, No. 3a. Newcastle to Pine, 12 January 1854.

the method of the Hut Tax a convenient, ingenious and economical way of collecting a third of the colony's total revenue. Hence one is left with the impression that the new tax was part of an ultimate plan to impose a colonial system of rule which would establish a western capitalist ethos on African society. The African response to this new system was characterized by an economic adaptation which prompted an increase in agricultural production. There was a notable rise in maize cultivation, as well as in stock-keeping, to meet the new demands and wants of the colonial system. These demands included the payment of the Hut Tax, customs duties and the acquisition of goods such as spirits, blankets, ploughs, wagons and clothes.

The question as to whether the Hut Tax succeeded in achieving its aims is one of considerable complexity. From the evidence presented, it can be argued that it was successful in achieving its aim of augmenting the revenue of the colonial government; but it had failed to satisfy the strident demands of the white settlers for a cheap, reliable and abundant supply of black labour. Its continued collection also clearly depended upon the ability of the African population to pay it with relative ease. If it became a burden, it was likely to become a source of resentment and its collection would therefore then create a security problem which could only be met by means of expending greatly increased amounts on security, thus making its collection hazardous and economically self-defeating.

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CHAPTER THREE  
AFRICAN TAXATION AND THE REVENUE CRISIS IN NATAL  
1865-1875

In the years 1860-1864, the Colony of Natal experienced a brief period of prosperity as was evident in the steady increase of revenue from all sources. The total revenue of Natal in 1860 was £77 480 while in 1864 it amounted to £137 803, an increase of 44% in four years.<sup>1</sup> As far as the Colony was concerned a number of factors contributed to bouyant economic conditions prior to 1865. Firstly, there was a great measure of sympathy between conditions in Natal and the western world generally, as it could be observed that the boom in Natal coincided with the prosperous years in Great Britain.<sup>2</sup>

This period witnessed a substantial increase in the value of imports to Natal, the bulk of which were intended for the Orange Free State. This increase occurred as a result mainly of the surge in world wool prices, a factor which brought increased prosperity to Natal, the Cape and the Orange Free State wool-growers. Cotton fetched high prices in the world market, due to the shortage of American supplies at the time of the American Civil War, (1861-1865). As a result of the rise in the price of scarce cotton, there was an increased demand in Britain for raw wool in the textile industry.<sup>3</sup>

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1. N.B.B., 1860-1864, Statements of Revenue of Colony of Natal.
  2. Bičensky, "The Economic Development of Natal", p.46.
  3. Ibid.

Locally, an increase in the tariff or schedule of customs fees, was yet another factor which contributed generously to the colony's revenue. The chief features of this tariff were an increase in the duty on tobacco, spirits, blankets, hoes, picks and beads.<sup>4</sup> This increased taxation accounts for a part of the considerable growth in the revenue which took place between 1860 and 1864. The following table indicates not only the great increase in the revenue but also gives some indication of the features which chiefly brought it about.<sup>5</sup>

TABLE I (in thousands).

YEAR	IMPORTS	EXPORTS	TOTAL OF 1 and 2	CUSTOMS	TOTAL REVENUE
1860	355	140	495	40	77
1861	403	119	522	37	107
1862	449	127	577	41	99
1863	473	159	632	47	113
1864	592	220	812	60	138

4. Most of these items were sold to Africans.

5. N.B.B., 1898, Statistical Summary of Revenue and Expenditure for years 1848-1898 of Colony of Natal.

The year 1865, however, marked the beginning of a depression in Natal, as well as in England and Europe. A sudden fall in prices and, it would appear from the figures given below, a fall in imports and a sharp decrease in the flow of investment, led to a worsening of the economic climate.<sup>6</sup>

TABLE II

YEAR	IMPORTS (£)	EXPORTS (£)	REVENUE (£)
1864	592 000	220 000	138 000
1865	455 000	210 000	106 000
1866	263 000	203 000	95 000
1867	270 000	226 000	97 000
1868	317 000	272 000	96 000
1869	380 000	363 000	115 000
1870	430 000	383 000	126 000

The depression particularly affected the agricultural and commercial sectors as these were the main areas of enterprise in the colony during this period. This general depression also affected the British economy adversely as the cotton markets in India collapsed after the resumption of southern American imports at the end of the Civil War.

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6. Ibid.

The economy of the colony of Natal was inextricably linked with Britain and her colonies as raw materials such as sugar and wool were exported to Britain and the Cape Colony. Between the years 1861-1863 about two-thirds of the total value of exports amounting to about £248 000, went to England.<sup>7</sup>

The depression was further aggravated by the outbreak of hostilities in 1865 between the Orange Free State aided by their Transvaal allies, and the Basutos, which disrupted the Overberg trade.<sup>8</sup> The fortunes of the farmers also underwent a change for the worse as heavy rains retarded the agricultural productions of the colony in 1865. Sheep farmers had to contend with the outbreak of stock diseases, notably Blue Tongue, while the price of wool dropped sharply. As a result of the depression, international and regional instability, investment in South African development dwindled significantly.<sup>9</sup>

All these factors helped to create a deficit crisis in Natal whereby the expenditure of the Colony exceeded the revenue in the years 1865-1867. (See Table III).<sup>10</sup>

7. Bitensky, "The Economic Development of Natal", p.221.

8. Ibid., p.218.

9. Ibid.

10. Statistical Year Book for the Colony of Natal (N.B.B. Vol I), 1900, Statistical Summary of Public Finance.

TABLE III

YEAR	DEFICITS
1865	-£12 000
1866	-£25 000
1867	-£27 000

The Natal Witness succinctly summed up the situation in Natal by saying: "From a career of prosperity, Natal is now in a state of stagnation, especially of trade".<sup>11</sup> Tables II and III clearly illustrate the unsatisfactory state of Natal's finances and general lack-lustre economic performance.

The sugar industry also fell under the dark cloud of the depression as many sugar estates went insolvent or experienced financial difficulties. This state of affairs was again linked to the depression in Britain as this country was one of the two main markets for Natal sugar as well as a source of investment capital.<sup>12</sup>

Many planters who had invested in land and machinery by obtaining loans from banks were ruined. An added cause of distress in the sugar industry was the continuing shortage of labour. As production fell off, the Natal Government recruiting agencies for Indian indentures

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11. The Natal Witness, 14 April 1865.

12. Bitensky, "The Economic Development of Natal", p.117.

closed temporarily so that when the industry recovered in the late 1860s it was again faced with the problem of obtaining a "reliable" year round labour force. The fact that the five-year period of indenture had also expired led to further complications as many free Indians preferred to leave the estates for the less strenuous conditions of domestic service, or self-employment. The labour crisis was aggravated further when the Indian Government refused to allow the resumption of Indian immigration until better conditions of employment were guaranteed for indentures by the Natal colonial authorities.<sup>13</sup>

In the light of such conditions in the world market economy of which Natal was a very small part, the colonial authorities and the Legislative Council found it difficult, politically, to meet revenue requirements through further taxation of white settlers. Under Law I of 1867, the customs duties were increased, in some cases considerably, on ale and beer, spirits, refined sugar, tea, tobacco, wine, candles, cheese and dried fruits. As this meant that the indirect taxation of whites had increased, the Natal Government and Legislative Council had feared that further increases would lead to a mass exodus of white inhabitants from the colony and a decrease in immigration.<sup>14</sup> So instead, the increased taxation of Africans was deemed politically more expedient by the Legislative Council.

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13. *Ibid.*, pp.201-202.

14. *C.O.* 879/3/155, p.4. Keate to Legislative Council, 1868.

In 1866 a Bill had been passed by the Legislative Council in order to increase the African contribution by amending the Native Hut Tax.<sup>15</sup> While this Bill was awaiting the consent of the Colonial Office, Lt. Gov. Keate promised the Council that:

Should the mode of assessing this augmented impost not meet with approval, I shall be prepared to lay before you, as an alternative measure a bill which enables me to increase the contribution of the natives to public revenue by the imposing of special fees and fines upon their marriages. 16

The Bill did not receive approval because the Colonial Office believed that the coercion of such an alien population through further taxation could jeopardize security and this may well have resulted in further expenditure being incurred by the colonial authorities in order to crush possible rebellions. The solution to the problem of increasing the revenue was therefore to be sought in the imposition of taxes on African marriages. The majority of Natal's white settlers condemned African marriage customs because they were polygamous and the idea of "lobola" was considered to be a form of slavery. White settler arguments had, however, a strong economic bias, as polygamy greatly interfered with the settlers growing demand for cheap labour. They complained, often, that polygamy "locked up the labour supply which the reserves might potentially yield; it was assumed that the existence of polygamy enabled menfolk to sit idly in the sun while women did most of the work".<sup>17</sup>

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15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

17. Welsh, The Roots of Segregation, p.69.

The idea of such a tax was first advocated in 1867 by the Secretary for Native Affairs, Theophilus Shepstone.<sup>18</sup> Chiefs or headmen were to receive a salary or a percentage of the registration fee if they found that the information reaching the Magistrate was correct. The registration fee for births and deaths was to be 2/- or 2s 6d, the marriage fees were to be £1 for a first wife, £2 for a second marriage and so on.<sup>19</sup> The aim of the registration fee for marriages was firstly, to discourage men from acquiring many wives which caused them to be "idle", or "independent", secondly to increase the labour supply as men would be forced to work for longer periods in order to earn money to pay the registration fee and thirdly, to contribute towards the general revenue. A Bill setting out the scheme was published in September 1868.

In the meanwhile Shepstone held meetings with the representatives of the various tribes at which they were asked about their opinions concerning the proposed taxation. For the first time in the history of the colony's administration of African affairs, it would seem that Africans were consulted about a matter of importance which affected them. Shepstone explained to them that their contribution to the colony's revenue was insufficient, as compared to that of the whites. The choice given to them was that of paying a double Hut Tax or marriage fee. This can hardly be considered to be much of a choice as the answer would have been obvious. The general preference was for the marriage fee, for if a man did not have money and cattle, he did not have to marry, whereas he would be compelled to pay the Hut Tax.

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18. C.S.O. 1546, Vol.958. No.1884/1546. S.N.A. to Colonial Secretary (Mauritius), 12 April 1884.

19. Ibid.

The Amanyuswe tribe protested strongly, incorrectly assuming that the government proposed to double the Hut Tax and charge the marriage fee. Although this protest was based on a misunderstanding of what was being asked of them, their views illustrated their ambivalence to the government and its taxation policy. The following quotations were taken from speeches made at a meeting with the Secretary for Native Affairs and recorded by him:

Our labour is taken for the Hut Tax, our sons for public works and now our daughters are wanted to add money to the government stock. What is left to us if we must sell our cattle to pay the Hut tax, as every year we are obliged to do so, if our sons and daughters are required of us for the wants of the government.

You (Shepstone) open your hand, you draw us to your middle finger, then gently onto your palm, the rise is but small over the heel of your hand, along your arm to your elbow it is pleasant, and there you squeeze us between your arm and your body and we die. You should protect us instead of betraying us; we have no maker of money amongst us; we but pick up what falls from white hands and this no one knows better than you. 20

In reply to these complaints, Shepstone explained the provisions of the new measures and informed them that, if they were dissatisfied, they were free to return to Zululand. After all, many of the Natal Zulu were refugees who were both hostile toward, and fearful of the Zulu Kingdom.<sup>21</sup>

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20. S.N.A. 1/3/12, No.260. Shepstone's letters, 20 September, 1868.

21. Ballard, "The Frontier Interregnum", pp.56.57.

With regard to the marriage law and taxation, it could be argued that the colonial government used the Natal Africans' fear of the Zulu Kingdom as an effective weapon in coercing the black population into accepting British rule and obeying British laws or face possible banishment. Shepstone was not loathe to use the threat of expulsion as a method of forcing Africans to accept the new taxes.

By Law I of 1869, the fee for the registration of all African marriages was fixed at £5. Out of this a small sum was to be paid to two official African witnesses and to the local chiefs<sup>22</sup> - this being an extension of the system, whereby chiefs were employed as tax collectors for a fee. Firstly, this method of collection offered an incentive to chiefs to ensure that the collection was as efficient as possible. Secondly, it assisted greatly in relieving magistrates of much work. Thus Shepstone had devised a system of Marriage Tax collection based largely on offering material incentives to co-opted chiefs and headmen.

In July 1869, a Select Committee of the Legislative Council, which had been appointed to consider the financial state of the Colony, submitted its report. It emphasised that the African population did not contribute a sufficient sum necessary for ensuring the progress of the colony. Since the African population numbered around 220 000 and contributed from £25 000 to £26 000 to the treasury, their individual contribution amounted to only about 2s 3/4d per head. On the other hand, the contribution made by the European population to the revenue amounted to an average of £2 9s per head.<sup>23</sup>

22. S.N.A., Vol. 17/8/9, No.176. Circular from Shepstone to Magistrates, 6 January 1870.

23. The Natal Witness, 3 August 1869. Report of Select Committee of Legislative Council.

The Committee was also of the opinion that the Africans possessed the potential and resources to acquire enough money to sustain themselves, and at the same time contribute a "fair" proportion to the revenue. Among the advantages that they enjoyed was a large supply of female labour and the occupation of crown lands, rent free. Their ability to pay more taxes was shown by their ability to produce surplus agricultural commodities for sale, as well as in their possession of the large numbers of cattle which they supplied to the butchers in Durban and Pietermaritzburg. Of greater importance was the labour supply which, if mobilized, would prove beneficial to both races. Therefore in the light of these observations:

It cannot be deemed an act of oppression to require from them a larger contribution towards the support of the government and for the maintenance and establishment of government work from which they draw so large a benefit. 24

Although the Committee expressed doubts as to the effectiveness of the tax on marriages, the measure was nevertheless implemented. In effect however, the new measure led to a very substantial increase in tax receipts from this quarter.

The Hut Tax collection increased from nearly £9 000 in 1850 to £25 217 in 1869. The first year's marriage fees under Law I of 1869 amounted to £5 761 10s.<sup>25</sup> From its inception in 1869 until its abolition in 1875 the amount collected from the Marriage Tax averaged out to £4 500. The Hut Tax and Marriage Tax combined realized a yearly average of approximately £37 900 for the same period. The table below shows the percentage of first and subsequent marriages.<sup>26</sup>

24. Ibid.

25. C.S.O. 1546, Vol.958, No. 1884/1546. Secretary (Mauritius), 12 April 1884.

26. Welsh, *Report of the Committee*

Shepstone to Colonial

TABLE IV

YEAR	Total No of Marriages	% of 1st Marriages	% of 2nd Marriages	% of 3rd Marriages	% of 4th Marriages
1870	398		55,8	24,4	11,6
1871	1056		56,8	25,2	9,1
1872	1823		58,7	24,7	8,3
1873	2125		59,2	24,9	7,9
1874	2505		59,8	23,9	9,6
1875	2579		57,7	23,5	9,5

It is hardly surprising to find that the Marriage Law remained unpopular with the Africans. Not only were the payments resented, but the law had an adverse effect as growing numbers of Africans were forced to resort to working for periods as part-time wage labourers. From Table IV it is evident that polygamy was also declining. However, the perceived decline in polygamy did not seem to prevent a steady rise in the population. (See Table V).<sup>27</sup> A possible explanation for this could be found in the steady increase in the

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27. N.B.B., 1869-1872, Statistics of the African Population of the Colony of Natal.

number of single marriages as there were now more young women available for marriage. So the young men seeking first marriages benefitted greatly from the marriage tax while the status of the older polygamists deteriorated because of their growing economic inability to pay for additional wives. Since the African now entered the first marriage at a younger age, this could have been responsible for the increase in the fertility rate and subsequently for the fairly rapid increase in the African population for these years.

TABLE V

YEAR	POPULATION	% INCREASE
1869	246 244	-
1870	257 787	4.5
1871	266 817	3.4
1872	282 783	5.6
1873	279 895	
1874	281 797	
1875	277 864	

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But despite its demonstrable impact, the tax on African Marriages failed to produce as much revenue as had been hoped for or to force as much labour on to the market as had been expected. When the £5 fee was fixed, Keate estimated that an annual sum of £19 115 would be collected. But during the five years that the law operated, the estimates always exceeded the actual amount collected.

In 1870 Keate wildly estimated that £ 15 000 would be collected in the form of fees, but the amount received in that year was an abysmal £6 231,<sup>28</sup> this being indicative of the decline in polygamy.

TABLE VI

YEAR	FEES ON AFRICAN MARRIAGES AND FINES	HUT TAX
1870	£ 6 231	£26 000
1871	£ 6 401	£27 000
1872	£10 468	£28 000
1873	£12 000	£28 000

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28. S.N.A., Vol. 1/1/27. Draft Circular Minute from S.N.A. to Magistrates, 12 January 1876.

In view of the high return of Hut Taxes (See Table VI),<sup>29</sup> the Natal Government would have undoubtedly found it more profitable to have doubled the Hut Tax instead of introducing the Marriage Tax - the preferred option which the Colonial Office had vetoed.

In 1869 the mere rumour of diamond discoveries in Griqualand had been sufficient to stimulate an economic upsurge and with it an increase in imports, and thus in customs revenue. By the early 1870s, the opening of the rich Kimberley diamond fields provided a large market for colonial and imported goods and led to a great increase in the customs revenue of both the Cape and Natal. The improved position of the colony's revenue during the 1870s is shown by the following figures which also reveal how large was the proportion of customs and total Revenue.<sup>30</sup> (See Table VII).

TABLE VII

YEAR	TOTAL REVENUE EXCLUDING RAILWAYS	CUSTOMS	CUSTOMS AS A % OF TOTAL REVENUE
1869	115 000	38 000	33,0
1870	126 000	47 000	37,3
1871	126 000	47 000	37,3
1872	180 000	82 000	45,6
1873	208 000	96 000	46,2
1874	249 000	110 000	44,2
1875	260 000	115 000	44,2

29. N.B.B., 1869-1879, Statement of Actual Revenue of Colony of Natal.

30. Ibid.

Although Natal experienced a boom in the 1870s, in large part due to the diamond discoveries, the question of an African contribution did not fall away. This was because more money was always required to develop the infrastructure for the long-term economic development of Natal and attention was now focused on providing funds for railway construction.

In the 1870s Natal experienced a shortage of cattle. This shortage was caused firstly by the outbreak of cattle diseases such as Red Water and lung sickness (bouvine pleuropneumonia) in Natal and Zululand. These epidemics, especially the latter, saw the widespread slaughter of animals and subsequently a spectacular increase in Natal's hide exports. (See Table VIII).<sup>31</sup>

TABLE VIII

YEAR	HIDE EXPORTS (£)
1870	24 409
1871	36 225
1872	43 980
1873	56 062
1874	86 028
1875	105 279

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31. Ballard, "The Role of Trade and Hunter Traders in the Political Economy of Natal and Zululand, 1824-1880", African Economic History, No.10, 1981, p.14.

A second reason for the shortage was the increased demand for cattle transport to the interior as a result of the diamond discoveries.<sup>32</sup> As it was considered necessary to build railways if the Overberg trade was to be extended, it was necessary to raise funds to finance the costly construction. The British government, however, made it clear that this expenditure would have to be met by means of a public loan. A few of the suggestions for the augmentation of the revenue included an increase in customs duties or the introduction of a tax on immovable property. After very little discussion it was decided, however, to double the Hut Tax and do away with the fees on African Marriages.<sup>33</sup>

The new tax was introduced by Law 13 of 1875 which repealed Law No 6 of 1857 and Law No 1 of 1869. According to this law, 14/- was to be levied upon every hut occupied by an African. All houses of European construction inhabited by Africans having one wife and "otherwise conforming to civilized usages" were exempted from the tax, the aim obviously being to encourage "civilized" or western habits among Africans.<sup>34</sup> This philosophy fits in with the theme of the "grand civilizing mission" of British imperialism. Evidence of attempts to "civilize" the Africans can be traced back to 1854 when a despatch on the subject was sent to Sir George Grey by Lt. Governor Pine. Pine believed that the government should force the Africans

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32. Bitensky, "The Economic Development of Natal", p.211.

33. C.S.O. Vol.958, No.1884/1546. Shepstone to Colonial Secretary (Mauritius), 12 April 1884.

34. Ibid.

to adopt different types of houses by placing an additional Hut Tax on every hut which did not have a high door and at least a window. The object of this additional tax was to encourage Africans to build houses conforming to civilized standards. Also, in 1857 it had been decided to exempt from the Hut Tax all the houses of European construction inhabited by Africans having one wife. It must be remembered that this exemption occurred as a result of appeals by missionaries that there were many Christian Africans or Kholwa on the mission stations who had adopted European ways. The missionaries claimed that the Kholwa should be exempted because they indirectly contributed their share in taxes towards the government in the same way as white settlers.<sup>35</sup>

In addition to indirect taxes, the Kholwa on mission stations paid more in taxes because of their adoption of European ways. Yet again one observes another motive for the imposition of taxes on the African population. It was also convenient for settlers to believe that by coercing Africans into the labour market they were being "civilized" and subsequently being made more western.

The question to be examined now is why the Colonial Office and the white settlers felt they could double the Hut Tax in 1875. The emergence of a relatively prosperous African peasantry in nineteenth century Natal, was evident by the 1860s. During the even more prosperous 1870s, African communities had increased their agricultural output and had taken advantage of the market economy.

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35. Ibid.

African peasant communities had been able to produce enough maize to supply their subsistence needs and supply the markets of the colony as well.<sup>36</sup> The increase in present agricultural production was linked to the widespread use of imported European farm implements. In the 1880s many magistrates reported that African cultivators were the major growers of maize and vegetables for the colony. Indeed, a transformation in African agricultural practices was taking place in Natal by mid-century - the result mainly of African adaptation to imported western methods.<sup>37</sup> (See Table IX). By the mid-1870s, imported farm implements were in fairly widespread use by the colony's black farmers.

TABLE IX

AFRICAN OWNERSHIP OF AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENTS IN THE YEAR 1875 <sup>38</sup>

PLOUGHS	2823
HARROWS	379
WAGONS	381
CARTS	112

White farmers were at this time still unable to compete effectively with the African agriculturists in the production of maize. In the entire area between Pinetown and Pietermaritzburg, maize had been raised by Africans, who, besides supplying other

36. Bundy, The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry, p.172.

37. Ibid., p.176.

38. N.B.B., 1875, African Ownership of Agricultural Implements.

Africans who lived in towns and non-agricultural areas, provided large quantities to sugar planters for their African labourers.<sup>39</sup> Statistical estimates for the year 1870 reveal that 18 229 acres of mealies were grown by Europeans while 99 266 acres were grown by African agriculturists. The quantity produced by whites was 204 614 muids while Africans produced 328 004 muids.<sup>40</sup> From these figures it can be deduced that Africans produced the bulk of the staple maize crop in Natal and in normal crop years, earned a surplus, sufficient to meet the new wants and new demands of the colonial market economy.

The discovery of diamonds also helped to provide many economic opportunities for Africans. There was an increase in grain production in response to the demands of the growing population at Kimberley.<sup>41</sup> The general prosperity of African farmers in Natal is illustrated by the following tables on the cultivation of the major crops and estimates of live stock units.<sup>42</sup>

TABLE X (in acres)

YEAR	INDIAN CORN	KAFFIR CORN (Sorghum)	TOTAL NO ACRES REAPED OF ALL CROPS
1869	87 152	33 103	126 357
1871	90 714	44 469	136 941
1873	92 053	73 594	140 985
1875	108 565	35 738	156 002

39. Bundy, *The Rise and Fall of the S.A. Peasantry*, p.176.

40. N.B.B., 1870, Return of Land cultivated by Europeans and Africans.

41. Bundy, *The Rise and Fall of the S.A. Peasantry*, p.175.

42. N.B.B., 1869-1875, Return of Land cultivated by African farmers.

TABLE XI

YEAR	HORSES	HORNED CATTLE	GOATS	PIGS
1869	7100	334 563	144 409	2296
1871	7498	205 425	164 831	2344
1873	7590	357 123	153 653	2557
1875	9986	326 030	178 743	4169

The increase in agricultural output, the higher wages and the higher prices fetched for poultry and livestock tended to enrich the Africans. When the 7/- tax had first been introduced in 1849, African wages were usually 5/- a month and seldom exceeded 10/-, while poultry fetched 3d. or 4d. per head. But in 1876 wages rose from 10/- to 15/- a month and, in some instances to 30/-, while the price of poultry rose to between 1/6 and 2/- per head.<sup>43</sup> While this increase in wages and prices had taken place, the material wants of most Africans does not appear to have increased to any appreciable extent. It was this "low consuming lifestyle that gave him (the African) the competitive edge over whites".<sup>44</sup>

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43. Ibid., 1876, Return of Stock in Colony of Natal.

44. Bundy, The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry, p.178.

TABLE XII 45

AFRICAN WAGES - 1869-1875

YEAR	TRADESMEN (per day)	AFRICAN WITH RATIONS (per month)	WAGON DRIVER (per month)
	£ s d	£ s d	£ s d
1869	0. 7. 0	0. 7.9	1. 0.8
1871	0. 6.10	0. 8.6	1. 5.2
1873	0. 9. 1	0.11.0	1.16.2
1875	0.11.10	0.14.2 3/4	2. 9.4 1/2

From the preceeding table (see Table XII) it can again be observed that in the years 1869-1875, African wages followed an upward trend and this feature is significant in assessing their ability to pay the Hut Tax. Although the tax was uniform in character, the income of the Africans in this dynamic colonial society was not so, thus indicating a stratification of income. Africans were involved in different occupations such as tradesmen, transport riders, farm labourers and railway workers. Therefore, it made it easier for some, such as transport riders, to pay the tax whereas others, such as farm labourers would have given over a larger percentage of their annual income to meet the Hut Tax.

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45. N.B.B., 1869-1875, Return of Rate of Wages in Colony of Natal.

Nevertheless, it can be seen that these labourers in receipt of the lowest wages (14/- per month), would have had to work for a maximum period of three months in the year (42/-) in order to pay the tax for at least 3 huts and also at the same time, cater for their daily needs. As both the cattle in their possession as well as their cultivation of crops had increased, it had not been necessary to purchase many items relating to their daily needs.<sup>46</sup> According to the argument which emphasises the economic independence of the African peasantry and the difficulties of the white settler population, the wealth of the Africans had a negative effect on sections of the white commercial farming community and it was for this reason that many settlers had felt justified in demanding the doubling of the Hut Tax in 1875. Since settlers elected representatives in the Legislative Council of the Natal Government and had made consistent attempts to induce the African population to pay more taxes, it can be argued that the economic conditions that resulted in the depression of the 1860s and the "boom" of the 1870s, provided the colonial system with opportunities to force Africans to pay higher taxes.

However, a question which does prove rather intriguing is why the Colonial Office agreed with such surprising alacrity, to double the

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46. Slater, "The Changing Pattern of Economic Relationships in Rural Natal, p.158.

Hut Tax in 1875 despite its rejection in 1866 of such a measure. It is not possible to advance with any degree of accuracy the reason for the Colonial Office's reversal of its earlier policy. It can be speculated that the reason for the change in policy could be found in the inauguration of Lord Carnarvon's federation scheme in 1874. This policy called for a strengthening of British administration in her existing colonies of the Cape and Natal and for the unification - political, economic and military - of the independent Boer republics and African states under British paramountcy. Ultimately the Hut Tax must be examined against this background of more adventurous British imperialism as the Colonial Office's agreement to the doubling of the tax could be regarded as being one of the methods of "tightening" British rule in order to facilitate the financial and economic development of her territories in southern Africa.

TABLE XII <sup>47</sup>

YEAR	HUT TAX REVENUE	TOTAL REVENUE	HUT TAX AS % OF TOTAL REVENUE
1869	23 217	114 811	20.2
1870	25 785	126 293	20.4
1871	27 480	125 628	21.9
1872	27 655	180 499	15.3
1873	28 207	208 086	13.6
1874	27 688	249 249	11.1
1875	28 083	260 271	10.8

47. N.B.B., 1869-1875, Statement of Revenue of Colony of Natal.

The increase of the Hut Tax in 1875 is significant because it represents a conjunction of certain interests; that of the white settlers on the one hand and that of the Colonial Office on the other. The settlers demanded that the Hut Tax be increased in order to acquire labour and to make Africans contribute a larger proportion towards the general revenue, while the Colonial Office was concerned mainly with imperial financial constraints and policies that required British inhabitants of British territories to pay for British rule and administration. The doubling of the tax is therefore indicative of the linkage of Colonial Office policy with some of the interests of the white settler community, at a time of overall British political and economic expansion in South Africa.<sup>50</sup>

CHAPTER FOUR  
PROSPERITY, WAR, DEPRESSION AND THE HUT TAX  
 1876-1886

The first collection of the increased Hut Tax of 14/- commenced in the months of April and May of 1876. According to magistrates' reports, the increased tax on huts was paid "cheerfully" and "readily", while The Natal Witness described the payment as being so prompt, that it was "almost without parallel".<sup>1</sup> The considerable increase in direct taxation revenue derived from the Africans as a result of the increased Hut Tax, is illustrated by the following figures.<sup>2</sup>

TABLE I:

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>HUT TAX OF 7/- &amp; MARRIAGE FEE</u>			
1870	"	"	"	£28 000
1871	"	"	"	£33 000
1872	"	"	"	£38 000
1873	"	"	"	£40 000
1874	"	"	"	£41 000
1875	"	"	"(for 6 mths)	£34 000
1876	<u>DOUBLE HUT TAX OF 14/-</u>			£57 000
1877	"	"	"	£59 500
1878	"	"	"	£60 000

1. The Natal Witness, 27 April 1878.

2. N.B.B., 1870-1878, Statement of Revenue of Colony of Natal.

After the doubling of the Hut Tax, no great changes were made in the fiscal system until the fall in revenue in the early and mid-1880s necessitated the imposition of additional taxes.

From evidence gathered it appears that the doubled Hut Tax was paid without serious complaint or resistance. This significant feature can be attributed to the relatively prosperous state of the African population in the mid-70s and early 80s. From different districts in 1876, came magistrate's reports which reiterated the prosperous state of the Africans. The Resident Magistrate of Umlazi remarked that "the high wages that Africans now obtain, together with the profitable sale of their superfluous crops as well as the increase in their flocks and herds, tend to rapidly enrich them".<sup>3</sup> In addition to this, the acreage of maize and other crops under cultivation continued to increase. From Ixopo it was reported that "at present the natives grow most of the mealies consumed", while the magistrate of Umsinga noted that, since the white inhabitants of that district did not grow much maize, they depended on the Africans to supply them with it.<sup>4</sup> As many Africans were involved in transport riding activities, they were in possession of many oxen and wagons. Although the Africans were required to pay higher rents, as much as £5 per hut on some private lands, they were successful in their economic adaptation to higher living costs owing to the buoyant economic conditions of the 1870s.<sup>5</sup> As a result of the higher prices for farm produce and higher wages for transport riders, it was subsequently reported that the 14/- tax was "cheerfully" paid out of the abundance of agricultural surplus.<sup>6</sup> Hence, autarchy of the African population reigned supreme.

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3. Ibid., 1876, Reports of Resident Magistrates.

4. Ibid.

5. Bundy, Rise and Fall of the S.A. Peasantry, p.177.

6. N.B.B., 1876, Reports of Resident Magistrates

In the previous chapter, it was argued that Natal's black peasant farmers competed with white farmers in the production of basic foodstuffs - thus posing somewhat of an economic threat to the white population. Although this argument holds true for the 1850s, 1860s and early 1870s - a time when white settlers had just begun to arrive in Natal and were encountering a number of problems - the same cannot be said to apply to the later 1870s and 1880s.<sup>7</sup> By the mid-1870s, the white farmers did not regard black peasant competition as a very serious issue. Moreover, it has been noted that African farmers produced "the bulk of the maize crop raised in Natal" and because of this they were considered to be fairly successful farmers.<sup>8</sup> But from 1875 white farmers displayed a lack of enthusiasm for the cultivation of maize crops because they regarded this as being a financial risk, due in part to great price fluctuations and the fact that cheap railway transport was not yet available. Also, after an examination of agricultural figures for the period, it can be perceived that white farmers were not really interested in the production of basic foodstuffs as their agriculture was differently orientated from the black agricultural sector.<sup>9</sup> Crops grown by whites and the cattle in

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7. C. Ballard, & G. Lenta, "The Role of the Peasantry in the Agricultural Economy of Colonial Natal, 1844-1909", Manuscript in preparation for publication in W.R.Guest and J.M.Sellers (eds.), Enterprise and Exploitation : Essays on the Economic and Social History of Natal, Vol.1, forthcoming 1985 University of Natal Press, p.22.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., p.12.

their possession differed greatly from blacks in this period. They revealed a preference for the production of crops which could be exported, like sugar cane. Wool production in the Natal Midlands also developed into one of the most successful areas of colonial agriculture. Finally, it could be argued that, unlike the African's system, production for domestic consumption was of minor importance for most white farmers of the colony of Natal.

Meanwhile, the economic fortunes of the Colony continued to increase as Natal again faced a period of boom in the years 1877-1878. Such conditions resulted, firstly, from the prevalence of hostilities on the eastern frontier of the Cape Colony, which caused most of the trade usually passing through that area to be diverted to Natal. Another indicator of prosperous times in Natal was found in the rise in revenue derived from duties on imports and exports. Customs and excise returns for 1877 showed an impressive increase of 100 per cent over the previous year, due to the impetus provided by an increase in the Overberg trade, by the British annexation of the Transvaal in 1877 and also by the presence of a large number of British troops, who were fed, supplied and transported by colonial farmers, merchants, and transport riders respectively.<sup>10</sup>

The considerable contribution of the doubled Hut Tax also assisted greatly in augmenting the general revenue of the Colony (see Table III).<sup>11</sup> In the year 1875, the revenue amounted to the sum of £260 271, while in 1878 it increased to as much as £369 384, an increase of 29.5 per cent.<sup>12</sup>

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10. N.B.B., 1880, Report of Collector of Customs.

11. Ibid., 1875-1886, Statement of Revenue of Colony of Natal.

12. Ibid.

TABLE III

YEAR	CUSTOMS(£)	LAND SALES(£)	TOTAL REVENUE (£)
1875	114777	19203	260 271
1876	97118	16227	265 552
1877	106287	743	272 474
1878	162953	763	369 384
1879	228558	1133	473 478
1880	250783	4762	582 715
1881	201298	2405	439 853
1882	221045	18757	657 738
1883	165007	22695	620 497
1884	179908	28086	610 937
1885	163840	23841	662 915
1886	140402	15772	600 178

An additional stimulus to the booming economy of the colony was provided by the outbreak of the Zulu War of 1879. Natal derived great benefits from the resultant increase in revenue collected from taxes as well as from the increase in customs revenue. The customs duties in 1877 amounted to £106 000, in 1878, £162 000, while in 1879 it continued to increase to the amazing sum of £228 000.<sup>13</sup> An unusual demand was created for items such as beer, spirits, cheese,

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13. Ibid., 1877-1879, Statement of Revenue of Colony of Natal.

tobacco and blankets.<sup>14</sup> The receipts for spirits in 1879 were £72000, for blankets £61 000 and for tobacco and cigars, £25 000.<sup>15</sup> Large increases were also observed on most other articles of consumption. Locally, the white colonists and the African population benefitted from the larger consuming powers of colonial and imperial troops who poured into Natal. The arrival of large numbers of troops created a lively demand for stock and produce, leading to an increase in prices (see Table IV and V for prices).<sup>16</sup>

TABLE IV

<u>STOCK</u>	1876	1879	% INCREASE
Saddle Horses (per head)	£16	£21	24
Draught Horses (per head)	£19	£23	17
Horned Cattle (per head)	£ 7	£ 9	22
Draught Oxen (per head)	£ 9	£14	36
Slaughter Oxen (per head)	£ 9	£12	25
Sheep (per head)	14/-	14/-	-
Fowls (per head)	2/-	2/-	-
Swine (per head)	£ 1	28/-	64

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid., 1879, Report of Collector of Customs.

16. Ibid., Market Value of Stock and Produce.

TABLE V

PRODUCE/CROPS	PRICES		%
	1876	1879	INCREASE
Indian Corn (per muid)	13/-	28/-	54
Kaffir Corn (per muid)	11/-	25/-	56
Common Potatoes (per muid)	15/-	21/-	29
Sweet Potatoes (per muid)	10/-	10/-	-

According to Sir Garnet Wolseley, special administrator of Natal, and special commissioner in South Africa in 1879-81, the war meant to the inhabitants of the colony "the spending amongst them of millions of money drawn from the English treasury".<sup>17</sup> From the various divisions in the Colony came reports of magistrates who elaborated on the benefits derived by the local population from the outbreak of the war. The Magistrate of Umgeni remarked that the war had drawn to such an extent upon the resources of stock in that division that high prices had prevailed, while it was reported that in Lower Tugela the "prices of stock and produce ruled exceptionally high during the year because of the large demand to supply the imperial transport and Commissariat Services".<sup>18</sup> As military posts were created at Newcastle, Dundee and Landsman Drift, the surrounding districts benefitted from the demand for produce of all types :

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17. C.O. 879/18/228, p.35. Despatch from Wolseley to Hicks Beach, 3 March 1880.

18. N.B.B., 1879, Reports of Resident Magistrates of Umgeni and Lower Tugela.

mielies, forage, oxen, sheep, horses. A wide range of imported goods was sold at exorbitant prices, while a great demand was also created for the transport and labour resources of the districts.<sup>19</sup> The Resident Magistrate of Newcastle reported that in all these respects "this district had been the gainer by the enriching of its farmers, shopkeepers and labourers".<sup>20</sup>

TABLE VI

YEAR	ACTUAL REVENUE	<u>C U S T O M S</u>		
		IMPORTS	EXPORTS	REVENUE
1879	£437 478	2176 356	583 711	228 558
1880	£582 715	2336 584	890 874	250 783
1881	£439 853	1913 856	768 038	201 298
1882	£657 738	2213 538	731 809	221 045

The boom in the economy of the colony continued into the early 1880s, as was evident in the imports, exports and customs revenue (see Table 6 above).<sup>21</sup> According to the Collector of Customs, the year

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid., Report of Resident Magistrate of Newcastle.

21. Ibid., 1880, General Statistical Summary of the Colony's Finances.

1880 had "shown the highest point yet attained in the commercial progress of the Colony in relation to imports, exports and customs revenue".<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, the aftermath of the Anglo-Zulu War proved to be detrimental to the economic interests of some white colonists in Natal. Because the effect of the autarchic tendency of the African population was to diminish the labour supply, Africans who had accumulated wealth to such an extent during the war, now exhibited a greater indisposition to labour for the white farmers. As the wages offered during the war were as high as 40/- to 60/- per month, the African population had acquired large sums of money in the form of these wages and also through the hiring out of wagons and the sale of oxen and cattle. Even the corps of mounted Africans who returned from the Anglo-Zulu War were loathe to labour on white farms, despite the prevailing high rate of wages offered by employers. It was observed in Ixopo that "nearly all natives have ploughs and a thriving stock of cattle and are longing to purchase land".<sup>23</sup> The presence of imperial troops in Natal in 1879 and the outbreak of war between the Transvaal and Britain in 1881 had thus provided Natal's farming population with an excellent market for their produce at increased prices, (see Table IV4) and had served as an inducement to them to increase their cultivation and production.

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22. *Ibid.*, 1884, Report of Collector of Customs.

23. *Ibid.*, 1879, Report of Resident Magistrate of Ixopo.

In 1880, the total acreage sown by Africans was 208 714, but by 1882, it had increased to 279 298 acres. Magistrates' reports also carried constant references to the increased figures of cultivation of the various crops. The Magistrate of Newcastle reported that, while Africans in his districts had cultivated 2 545 acres of maize and sorghum in 1880, by 1881 they had increased their cultivation of these staple crops to 7 980 acres - an increase of about 210 per cent.<sup>24</sup> Although the wealth accumulated by Natal's African farming communities signified continuing difficulties for some settler farmers as far as labour was concerned, it proved a profitable method of augmenting the colony's revenue. The figures in Table VII illustrate the apparent success of the colonial administration in imposing and collecting the doubled Hut Tax for the late 1870s and early 1880s.<sup>25</sup>

TABLE 7

YEAR	HUT TAX
1879	£61 000
1880	£63 000
1881	£64 000
1882	£67 000

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24. Ibid., 1881, Report of Resident Magistrate of Newcastle.

25. Ibid., 1879-1882, Statements of Revenue of Colony of Natal.

As the African population continued to increase, so did their demand for land (see Table VIII for Population Statistics).<sup>26</sup> And, by the early 1880s Africans were for the first time beginning to experience difficulties because of the higher premium placed on the categories of land available to African peasant farmers.

TABLE VIII

POPULATION STATISTICS

YEAR	POPULATION
1876	252024
1877	290035
1878	316711
1879	319934
1880	362477
1881	329253
1882	345515
1883	359841
1884	361766
1885	377581
1886	374915

African tenants on private farms were obliged to pay an average annual rent of £2 per hut, and they complained bitterly of these

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26. Ibid., 1876-1886, Annual Return of African population of the Colony of Natal.

exorbitant rents. Reserves were beginning to stagnate economically because of overcrowded conditions. According to a report released by the Secretary for Native Affairs, reserves contained 33 913 huts occupying 2 050 880 acres which provided an average of about fifty-one-and-a-half acres per hut at approximately 13 acres to each person occupying the hut.<sup>27</sup> In order to solve the problem of overcrowding in reserves, many Africans had become tenants on white-owned farms. There were two types of tenancy in operation at this time. There were those Africans who paid cash rents to landowners and were not obliged to work for their landlords while, at the other extreme, there were those who paid no cash rent but supplied their labour at a lower rate than the average. Most Africans opted for exceedingly high rents, rather than to supply their labour to white farmers or to the government public works because they valued their independence and self-sufficiency as independent providers and entrepreneurs.

In the year 1880 Crown Lands were opened up for sale.<sup>28</sup> The African population responded enthusiastically as it was implied that they could purchase their own land, and thus escape the need to supply their labour to farmers on whose lands they originally rented. An observable fact was that these sales usually took place in districts of thriving agriculture.<sup>29</sup> The enthusiastic response of the blacks

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27. Report and Evidence of Natal Native Commission; 1881-1882, p.35.

28. Bundy, Rise and Fall of the S.A. Peasantry, p.181.

29. Ibid.

to the opening up of Crown lands was indicative of their ability to invest the capital they had acquired - a fact which aggravated many colonists, who were competing for land or feared the loss of their reliable black labour. It was recognised by The Natal Witness that the extent of peasant prosperity was so great that there is "evidence around us everywhere of the ability of natives to sustain greater taxation...One cannot but regret that in former years they were not called upon to contribute more towards the general revenue...." <sup>30</sup>

After a review of the applications for lands in freehold in 1881, the Surveyor General reported that:

A considerable number (of applications) were received from natives who appeared to put forward much solicitude in the frequent enquiries they were making with regard to forms of revenue, and other conditions of occupation and payments. In the few sales that were held, a good beginning was made by some of the natives who were able to attend personally and enter into a spirited rivalry with other persons (Europeans) who desired to secure some portions of the land then offered. <sup>31</sup>

The inextricable link which existed between agriculture and land purchases was acknowledged by a missionary from Upper Umkomaas in Richmond.

Civilization is advancing among the Kaffirs in every direction around us. Transport riding or working bullock-wagons for hire is the order of the day. And ploughing with oxen instead of women working with hoes is greatly resorted to. On the hills around here natives have purchased from white men plots of land from 50 to 200 or more acres, on which they build a house and fence a large extent for cultivation. <sup>32</sup>

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30. The Natal Witness, 27 April 1879.

31. Bundy, The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry, p.181.

32. Ibid.

During the decade 1880 to 1890, Africans in Natal bought 67 077 acres of Crown lands for £36 412 while whites bought around 500 000 acres for £275 000. The purchasing of Crown land by Africans was vigorously opposed, especially by European farmers from northern Natal who argued that the acquisition of freehold land "interfered with the supply and control of labour", a phenomenon which they claimed jeopardized the economic advancement of the colonists of Natal.<sup>33</sup>

The white inhabitants of the colony persisted in maintaining a hostile attitude towards the Africans - an attitude which, if investigated, maybe attributed to the problem of an inadequate labour force. In order to make amends to the colonists, in 1881 a government Commission was appointed and assigned with the arduous task of assisting "his Excellency in adopting the most practical measures for the future government, civilization and moral improvement of the native population of this colony".<sup>34</sup>

Seeing that many of the elected members of the Commission were prominent colonists, the report of this commission was most likely going to reflect contemporary colonial attitudes. It is not therefore surprising that its report of 1881-1882 instantaneously perceived that:

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33. Ibid., p.182.

34. Debates of the Legislative Council of the Colony of Natal (hereafter abbreviated as L.C.D.), 1880, Vol.2, p.102. Mr Garland, Member for Victoria County, 16 November, 1880.

There appears now to be a greater difficulty in procuring native labour, nor can the same dependence be placed on the labourers as formerly. Wages are much higher than they have ever been before, but this does not seem to produce a better or more reliable class of labourer. 35

The members of the commission went on to complain about Africans who squatted on Crown lands, where they were able to live without paying any form of rent. They disapproved of the system of squatting because it served to diminish whatever remained of an adequate supply of labour for farms. One of their recommendations was therefore the imposition of rents as far as these Africans were concerned.<sup>36</sup>

Apprehension was expressed by the commission at the rapid rise in size of the African population, for this seemed to indicate that Natal was becoming a "black colony" - an expression that was more than capable of conjuring up ghastly images in the minds of the white inhabitants of the Colony.<sup>37</sup>

An intriguing feature of the 1880s was a modification of the colonists' views concerning the tribal system. Prior to this period, they vehemently attacked the tribal system, firstly on the assumption that it posed a military threat to the colony and, secondly, because they considered it to be an economic obstacle as it locked up the

35. Natal Native Commission, p.10.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid., p.15.

labour supply. As early as 1858, spokesmen for the European population of the colony even expressed the necessity of "separating the Kaffir and his family from the evils of tribal association" and of "destroying the power enjoyed by the chiefs".<sup>38</sup> In the 1880s these views experienced a sudden, if not surprising change, as whites now called for a preservation of tribalism together with traditionalism. Since African society was being exposed to western social and economic methods, a decline in tribal values was perhaps unavoidable. The process of "civilizing" Africans also came under attack because colonists believed that this very process had bred "independence" and "audacity" in some blacks which resulted in complaints by chiefs that they were rapidly losing control of people, and heads of families could no longer command respect from their children. This breakdown of the tribal system and the subsequent loss of control by chiefs affected Europeans adversely as the labour supply was jeopardized.<sup>39</sup> According to a view prevailing at that time, the tribal system was useful for administrative purposes and the tribal African was said to be "a more docile labourer that was easily amenable to authority than the westernized"<sup>40</sup> African who was being condemned.

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38. Welsh, Roots of Segregation, pp.219-220.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid., p.230.

When tribalism had been a potent force, it had been condemned, and one of the reasons advanced for the introduction of the Hut Tax in 1849 had been that it was to motivate Africans to work and "civilize" themselves. But, when tribalism began to erode, the so-called "civilizing" process was denounced. This change in the attitude of the white inhabitants of the colony may be explained in terms of their determination to safeguard their own material interests, to the complete disregard for consistency in African affairs. It was therefore not surprising that when Wolseley, the Administrator of Natal, was considering the feasibility of granting responsible government to the colony, he expressed doubts over the colonists' ability to administer African affairs.<sup>41</sup>

Subsequent to the conclusion of the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879, Natal received a startling demand from the Home government that the colony should pay its share of the costs of the war. The Colonial Secretary, Sir Michael Hicks Beach, in a memorandum to the Lieutenant-Governor, expressed the view that "Natal will have to bear special expenses since the revenue of Natal has shown considerable improvement due to the increased importation into Natal of goods and stocks to be consumed beyond its borders, owing to the passage through the eastern parts of the Cape Colony being impeded by war in that part of Africa. So it is only fair to us as well as Natal to bear its fair share of the cost of military operations".<sup>42</sup> The Colonial Secretary argued that, since the war was undertaken for the defence

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41. Ibid.

42. C.O. 879/18/228. Despatch to Bartle Frere, July 1879.

No. I from Michael Hicks Beach

of the colony, it was not unjust to require of Natal a contribution of one million pounds as her proportion of war expenditure.<sup>43</sup> But the suggestion that Natal should raise a loan to cover this amount, to be paid into the British Treasury, led to a heated controversy as to whether Natal's taxable capacity would endure the raising of the interest which was necessary to meet the sinking fund instalments on so large an unproductive debt. According to observations made by the Colonial Secretary, the only feasible course lay in the imposition of additional taxation. He therefore recommended that Natal raise her custom duties to the level of the Cape Colony and also increase the taxation on Africans.<sup>44</sup>

A member of the Natal Executive Council suggested that if a loan were raised, the additional revenue required to meet interest payments could be obtained by increasing the customs duties from six per cent to ten per cent - the rate in force in the Cape Colony. This suggestion was opposed by Sir Garnet Wolseley on the grounds that, if duties on luxuries and necessities required by Europeans were raised, Natal would, owing to the "badness of the harbour at Durban", lose all her trade with the interior. He also focussed attention on the fact that although Natal's duties on ordinary commodities were much lower than those of the Cape, her duties on African goods were considerably higher since "the Colonists of Natal have been careful to obtain from the natives all they can in the shape of indirect taxation".<sup>45</sup> The duty on African blankets was 15 per cent and on African picks and

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43. *Ibid.*, p.28. Despatch No. 1 from Hicks Beach to Garnet Wolseley, 18 December 1879.

44. *Ibid.*, p.30. Despatch No. 34 from Hicks Beach to Garnet Wolseley, March 1880.

45. *Ibid.*, p.35. Wolseley to Beach, March 1880.

hoses, 30 per cent, while duties upon articles intended for use by Europeans, was only 6 per cent, with agricultural implements being imported duty free. Owing to the high rates of duties imposed by Natal on merchandise purchased by Africans, it did not seem feasible to increase indirect taxation on this section of the population, nor was it possible to increase direct taxation as the Hut Tax had just been doubled in 1875.<sup>46</sup>

Since it was difficult to raise a large loan on the London money market, the Legislative Council argued that the colony was only capable of contributing £300 000 and it would be unreasonable of the Home government to require of her a larger contribution.<sup>47</sup> In a telegram to the Governor of Natal, the then Colonial Secretary Lord Kimberly notified him of the consent of the Colonial Office in London to accept the sum of £250 000 from Natal as a contribution to the cost of the Zulu War.<sup>48</sup>

Unfortunately for the Home government, in 1883 the Colony of Natal was hit by a depression which reduced its ability to make any contribution towards the cost of the war. This general depression, resulted in a rapid fall in revenue and a series of deficits. The seriousness of the position is illustrated by the following figures, contained in Table IX.<sup>49</sup>

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46. *Ibid.*, p.36.

47. *Ibid.*, pp.37-39.

48. *Ibid.*, p.51. Telegram from Lord Kimberly in London to the Governor of Natal, 15 October 1880.

49. *N.B.B.*, 1882-1886, Statements of Revenue of Colony of Natal; Reports of General Manager of Railways.

TABLE 9

YEAR	CUSTOM in thousands	LOSS ON RAILWAYS in thousands	TOTAL REVENUE excluding railway receipts in thousands	DEFICITS in thousands
1882	221	36	494	-
1883	165	79	464	77
1884	180	96	468	97
1885	164	116	527	111
1886	140	109	451	117

The Collector of Customs reported that the import trade had also suffered a considerable decrease, firstly, as a result of the inflated imports of previous years in relation to military occupation and, secondly, due to the accumulation of heavy stocks of goods which had not since diminished, owing to the commercial depression which had affected the whole of South Africa in the early 1880s.<sup>50</sup> The depression in trade and the fall in duties on imports also adversely affected the revenue since the traffic was largely dependent on this trade, so that revenue from this source had amounted only to the sum of £ 155 771. The fall in the railway revenue was accentuated by the competition of the ox-wagons with the railways, for which reason

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50. N.B.B., Report of Collector of Customs.

the General Manager of Railways advocated that ox-wagons should not be permitted to compete upon routes served by railway communication.<sup>51</sup>

The decrease in the number of ships that arrived at the port of Natal contributed to the depressed state of the colony and its fiscal position. Table X below illustrates the number and tonnage of vessels that arrived at Port Natal in 1883 as compared with 1882.<sup>52</sup>

TABLE X

YEAR	SHIPS	TONNAGE
1882	397	244 636
1883	328	232 097
Decrease	69	12 539

This fall-off in in the number of ships amounted to 18 per cent.

Besides its detrimental effect on the colonial economy, the depression years were aggravated by adverse weather, notably by droughts and the lateness of spring rains. Thus farmers endured a double blow, with both unsatisfactory harvests and depressed prices for agricultural products coinciding. Tables XI and XII illustrate this reduction in the prices of produce and stock.<sup>53</sup>

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51. Ibid., 1883, Report of General Manager of Railways.

52. Ibid., Report of Collector of Customs.

53. Ibid., 1879 and 1883, Average Market Value of Stock and Produce.

TABLE XI

	1879	1883	% DECLINE
Saddle Horses (per head)	£21	£15	40
Draught Horses(per head)	£23	£19	17
Horned Cattle (per head)	£ 9	£ 6	33
Draught Oxen (per head)	£14	£ 8	43
Slaughter Oxen(per head)	£12	£ 9	25
Sheep (per head)	14/-	14/-	-
Fowls (per head)	2/-	2/-	-
Swine (per head)	28/-	29/-	-

TABLE XII

	1879	1883	% DECLINE
Indian Corn (per muid)	28/-	8/-	71
Kaffir Corn (per muid)	25/-	11/-	56
Potatoes (per muid)	21/-	12/-	43
Sweet Potatoes(per muid)	10/-	7/-	30

Evidence of African prosperity began to recede during these years of depression and adverse weather during which magistrate's reports had carried constant references to the evidence of "poor crops", "hardness of times" and "scarcity of money". In 1882 half the crops

cultivated were surplus and thus available for sale, whereas in 1885 only one-third were available for sale.<sup>54</sup> The growing inability of Africans to grow sufficient food for their own subsistence forced them to rely on their white neighbours. The depressed condition of trade in Natal in 1885 and the cessation of the railway works in Weenen reduced the price of labour to between 7/- and 14/-.<sup>55</sup> Besides having to sell their crops and even their cattle at low prices, the only other practicable method of procuring money to pay rents and taxes, was to provide their labour to white farmers. This could have been the explanation behind many Resident Magistrate's reports which emphasised the great increase in the number of Africans supplying their labour to farmers.<sup>56</sup>

As those Africans who had purchased Crown Lands experienced difficulty in paying their instalments, by 1884 the total sum in arrears on land purchases amounted to £9000.<sup>57</sup> It was becoming more difficult for Africans to pay rents or debts attached to the different types of land available.

While in 1860 rents had averaged about 5/- per year, in 1886 the rents of the Natal Land and Colonisation Company averaged about 28/- per year.<sup>58</sup> African tenants had been ordered to vacate Crown lands which had been offered for sale and it was not possible for them to return to the reserves, which were becoming overcrowded. As early

54. N.B.B., 1882, 1885, Reports of Resident Magistrates.

55. Ibid., 1885, Report of Resident Magistrate of Weenen.

56. Ibid., 1883, Reports of Resident Magistrates.

57. Bundy, The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry, p.182.

58. Ibid.

as 1882, the members of the 1881-1882 Commission had recognised that "the land set aside for these locations are for the most part exceedingly rugged, broken and very difficult to traverse on horseback".<sup>59</sup> The huge Inanda location near Durban, which had no roads, created many problems for Africans, who had to convey their produce to the markets which lay outside the reserves.<sup>60</sup>

The land shortage and the changes which had occurred in the fortunes of the African population was brought to the attention of the Legislative Council in 1884 by one of its members, who stressed that "...Kaffirs are not in the position they were in....Kaffirs then had an easy mode of living in comparison to what they have now, and what they will have in the future". Since more land was being occupied by Europeans and they had to pay large sums of money in order to gain access to markets, a Mr Walker appealed to the Council to reflect on these problems whenever they considered measures which included taxation of the colony's African population.<sup>61</sup>

An important factor which emerges from the study of the period of depression is that, in the mid-1880s, the ability of the African population to pay the annual Hut Tax of 14/- was adversely affected. From most districts came magistrate's announcements of "taxes being paid with difficulty", although they were paid. Thus, although the revenue derived from the Hut Tax collection indicated an increase, due to the "hardness of times", this increase was considered below average.

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59. Natal Native Commission, p.35.

60. Welsh, *Roots of Segregation*, pp.188-189.

61. L.C.D., 1884, p.103, Mr Walker, Member for Alfred Country, 3 July 1884.

Nevertheless, the colonial treasury was pleased to report to the Legislative Council that the "native Hut Tax maintains a gradual increase year by year".<sup>62</sup>

TABLE XIII <sup>63</sup>

YEAR	HUT TAX REVENUE
1883	67 708
1884	70 042
1885	71 155
1886	72 000

In July 1884 a rather controversial debate took place in the Legislative Council - a debate which certainly justifies scrutiny as it concerned the problematic issue of African taxation. Kershaw, the Pietermaritzburg member, introduced a Bill firstly, to increase African taxation from 14/- to 20/- and secondly, to impose a tax on houses of European construction. His reason for making such drastic proposals was that there was no other way of dealing with the deficit which had resulted from the cost of operating the railways and the high rate of interest which was being paid on the moneys which had been borrowed for their construction. As it seemed imperative to raise alternative means of revenue to eliminate this problem, Kershaw,

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62. Ibid., 186-1887, Vol.19, pp.22-23. Colonial Treasurer in his Supply Bill to the Council, 14 September 1886.

63. N.B.B., 1883-1886, Statements of Revenue of Colony of Natal.

together with a few other members argued that it was only fair that Africans, rather than whites, should bear any additional taxation, since they "enjoyed priceless advantages of security to life and property" without having to pay for it. Many settlers firmly believed that until the 1880s, the burden of taxation had been evenly spread over the whole population of the Colony.<sup>64</sup>

The proposal to introduce such a Bill was met with a great deal of opposition from other members of the House for a number of reasons. H.Binns, the member for Victoria, fervently objected to this measure on three grounds. Firstly, he believed that it was too soon to raise the tax because, after the doubling of the tax in 1875, Africans had been assured by the Government that the Hut Tax would not be increased for a long, long time. Secondly, Binns considered the Bill to be "ill-timed" as the Anglo-Zulu War had just been concluded and, finally, he was of the opinion that from a financial point of view, the African population already paid more than its fair share in direct taxes. The member for Durban, Harry Escombe, opposed the proposal on the grounds that, as Africans contributed around a third of the money towards the general revenue of the colony, it was not fair to expect a larger contribution from them. Another objection was voiced by the Secretary for Native Affairs, who believed that, as South Africa was in the throes of a depression which had a negative effect

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64. L.C.D., 1884, pp.97-98, Mr Kershaw, Member for Pietermaritzburg, 3 July 1884.

on the lives of Africans, as well as whites, it was not feasible to increase direct taxation because this would carry with it the danger of provoking insurrection. Also, it was commonly acknowledged by these members that Africans were no longer as prosperous as they had been in the years prior to the depression. "Their lands are being taken up by those who have embraced the opportunity the government has afforded them of acquiring land...their lands are being closed...".<sup>65</sup>

Owing to such objections and the absence of sufficient support for the Bill, the motion was dropped in the House.<sup>66</sup> The fiscal position of Natal continued to deteriorate in the year of this controversial debate to the extent that the revenue of the colony had dropped to £610 937.<sup>67</sup> Although in 1888 the railways made a profit of about £2 600, the first since 1881, the situation was urgent and some method of increasing taxation would have to be found. The serious state of the colony's finances compelled all the members of the Legislative Council to agree to the introduction of increased taxation, direct as well as indirect. By Law 16 of 1884, excise duty was raised from 3/6 to 4/6 per gallon on spirits distilled for consumption in Natal. In 1883 the Cape Colony had raised its customs tariff because of a fall in state revenue. This led to a diversion of trade to Natal, while in May 1884 the Cape proposed to increase its tariff again. Encouraged by the fact that the Cape tariff was still higher than that of Natal, the Legislative Council risked an increase

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65. Ibid., pp.97-101.

66. Blue Book for the Colony of Natal and its Supplement of Departmental Records (hereafter abbreviated as D.R.), 1888, Report of General Manager of Railways.

67. N.B.B., 1884, Statement of Revenue of the Colony of Natal.

in the Natal tariff, in the hope that it would increase her revenue without losing her trade.<sup>68</sup> As an ultimate means of increasing the revenue, it was agreed to impose a Squatters Tax of £1 per hut on all Africans living on Crown lands. With the passing of Law 41 of 1884, about 6000 Africans were affected. The payment of £1 was actually a rent paid for the use of Crown lands, as it was believed that "since 1848 squatters upon these Crown Lands have been trespassers according to the Law".<sup>69</sup> The amount of £1 had been suggested because that was the average rent which African tenants had been charged by private landowners.

African society had been subjected to colonial rule ever since 1843. It was wildly assumed that, as Africans were exposed to European influences, they derived considerable benefit from white rule. It would be pertinent at this stage to examine colonial expenditure on the African population of Natal.

In accordance with the Charter of 1856, a sum of £5000 was placed under the Lieutenant-Governor's control, to be utilized annually for "native purposes". This amount known as the "Native Reserve Fund" was intended, in the words of the Lieutenant-Governor, "to be exclusively used for their religious, moral and industrial training, by which a way might be opened to them through which they might obtain a higher social position and emulate themselves in the arts of civilizing life".<sup>70</sup>

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68. Ibid., Report of Collector of Customs.

69. L.C.D., 1879-1880, pp.549-550, Mr King, Member for Klip River County, 5 February 1880.

70. S.N.A., Vol.1/1/25. American Board of Missionaries to S.N.A., 8 June 1875.

Unfortunately, there exists no detailed statement of expenditure of the Native Reserve Fund from 1856. In 1875 the Colonial Auditor requested the Secretary for Native Affairs to provide him with a statement of expenditure for any one of the years since 1856, together with a balance sheet. The Secretary for Native Affairs failed to comply with such a request, it being stated that his department did not keep a detailed audited account, as receipts and payments merely appeared under the general heading of "Native Purposes".<sup>71</sup> However, a detailed statement of expenditure was made available for the year 1877.<sup>72</sup>

TABLE 14

1877			
EXPENDITURE	£	s	d
Grants to Native Schools	1918	0	0
Government Sugar Mill	842	16	8
Government Special Surveyor	436	0	0
Tugela Valley Road	753	14	5
Office Keeper	100	0	0
Clerk - Natal Native Trust	50	0	0
Cattle and Kraal Keepers	80	10	0
Mule Wagon Repairs	44	0	0
Supreme Chief's Native Guard	55	3	8
Transaction of Law 28 1865	10	10	8
Bank Pass Book	3	3	0
	£ 4290	17	9

71. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1/1/26. Auditor to S.N.A., 17 June 1875.

72. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1/1/32. Statement of Expenditure related to Native Reserve Fund, 18 July 1875.

The following table provides evidence of the sums utilized for "Native Purposes" from 1873 to 1877.<sup>73</sup>

TABLE XV

Statement of sums received and paid on account of the "Reserved Civil List for Native Purposes" from 1873 to 1877 inclusive.

YEAR	RECEIPT	PAYMENTS	REMARKS
1873	88.15.9	3311. 6.9	
1874	1061. 6.5	4210. 5.5	£548.15.0 (not included) was withdrawn from the treasury as the supposed balance of the vote.
1875	844. 7.6	4598. 8.11	£1292.15.0 (not included) withdrawn from the treasury as the supposed balance.
1876	5213. 1.3	4372.11.3	Administered by the SNA
1877	5845.18.8	4290. 2.2	Administered by the SNA

An interesting feature relating to the Reserve Fund was that, at the end of each year the balance of the fund was allowed to lapse instead of accumulating.

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73. Ibid.

In 1883 the government spent £2 312 out of the £5 000 on grants to mission schools, the amount being divided amongst 52 schools which had a combined daily attendance of 2 052 pupils. In 1883, the Acting Secretary for Native Affairs admitted in the Legislative Council that only 1 per cent of the African population was being educated and that their education was being carried out by missionaries only. By 1887 the government had not established a single school for Africans.<sup>74</sup> In its report of 1881-1882, the Commission stated that there was little enthusiasm for education on the part of the Africans. However, by 1885 the government Inspector of African Education, who was appointed in that year, observed that there was a growing desire among Africans to be educated and he even provided the example of three pagan chiefs, who had requested that schools be established among their people.<sup>75</sup>

The neglect by the Natal Government of African society was drawn to the attention of the Legislative Council during the session of debates of 1884.<sup>76</sup> In the July 1884 debate, concerning a proposal to increase the Hut Tax, one of the members of the Council admitted that a negligible amount had been expended for the direct benefit of the Africans, although one would have experienced no difficulty in locating costly government institutions which were maintained for the exclusive benefit of the European population. In 1883 Africans paid approximately: <sup>77</sup>

74. Welsh, Roots of Segregation, p.268.

75. Ibid.

76. L.C.D., 1884, p.106, Mr Garland, Member for Victoria County, 3 July 1884.

77. Ibid.

£10 000	in Dog Licences.
£67 000	in Hut Taxes
£30 000	in Customs Duties.

These contributions excluded the fines and fees of court. From the above figures it can be deduced that they paid more than half of the colony's taxes, whereas they owned only one-sixth of the land. They numbered approximately 400 000, while the white population which owned twenty times more land than the Africans numbered only 37 000.<sup>78</sup> Although it was argued that the northern Nguni benefitted immensely from the protection and security afforded them by the colonial government, it must be remembered that these benefits were also enjoyed by the white inhabitants of the colony.

By 1885 African consumption of imported goods increased, thereby increasing their contribution by way of indirect taxation. In a memorandum to the Colonial Secretary of Mauritius, the Acting Secretary for Native Affairs informed him that Africans use ploughs to a great extent, and that European dress was becoming more and more fashionable. These items, together with blankets and picks imported for their use, were especially heavily taxed.<sup>79</sup> In 1884 the Legislative Council unanimously conceded that "every pound's worth of clothing they /the Africans/ purchased, every plough that they purchased and every spade that they purchased - in actuality every step in their progress towards civilization - was being taxed".<sup>80</sup>

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78. *Ibid.*, p.102.

79. *C.S.O.*, Vol.958, No.1884/1546. Shepstone to Colonial Secretary (Mauritius), 12 April 1884.

80. *L.C.D.*, 1884, p.103. Colonial Secretary to Council, 3 July 1884.

Although the doubling of the Hut Tax in 1875 could be considered to be yet another successful scheme of the colonial administration to augment its revenue, the measure had failed to induce the relatively independent African population to become wage labourers for the white inhabitants, who had initially greeted this measure with enthusiasm. Nevertheless, for the first time since the inception of colonial rule over the northern Nguni society, it is possible to perceive that the African peasantry was beginning to decline. This was to become more noticeable after 1883, so that it seemed to the white community that its ever-pressing problem of labour was at last being solved.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### "THINGS FALL APART"

#### ECONOMIC DISTRESS, DECLINE AND THE HUT TAX

The period 1886-1899 witnessed the inauguration of years of significant change and hardship for the Natal's African inhabitants, years which signified the end of an era of relative prosperity and economic independence. The existence of a diversity of evidence for those years commonly justified the lamentable plight of the hardpressed African farming community of Natal. This chapter therefore proposes to examine the payment of the Hut Taxes against the background of the mining revolution with its subsequent consequences, the granting of responsible government to Natal and the environmental calamities which plagued the African population of Natal during the latter part of the nineteenth century - thus severely reducing their ability to pay the taxes from their independent economic base.

Natal's economy, prior to the period of mineral discoveries, was insignificant and offered limited opportunities in the fields of agriculture and trade. Evidence for this highly unsatisfactory state of affairs emanates from reports of the General Manager of Railways and the Collector of Customs. In the annual report for 1886, the General Manager of the state-owned and operated Natal Government Railways laid emphasis on the depressed state of the railway revenue. The tariff in railway revenue in the 1880s was the result of the financial effects of the depression in trade, reduced rates, ox wagon competition and extended lines.<sup>1</sup> Yet an increase

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1. N.B.B., 1886, Report of General Manager of Railways.

in the railway tariff had originally been anticipated owing to the expected opening of the line which was built from Ladysmith to Estcourt. But because of the existence of a depression in trade in 1885 there appeared to be an intensified demand for the necessity of providing more of the carrying trade to transport riders, a resultant feature of 1886 being that the major portion of the up-country traffic, upon which the railway revenue mainly depended, diminished to no less than 54 per cent.<sup>2</sup>

According to the Report issued by the Collector of Customs, a rather dismal picture was extant owing to the doleful state of the internal and external trade of the colony. This decline in trade was aggravated by the competition offered by Delagoa Bay with its abated import charges. A drop in the imports was perceived in items such as beer, spirits, wine, tea, tobacco and blankets.<sup>3</sup> Invariably, at the beginning of 1887, the colony's finances were in a parlous state due to the presence of the deficit of the past four years and the certainty that a deficit of £46 000 was anticipated for that year.<sup>4</sup>

Since it was evident that any recovery of the economy was going to be painfully slow, the Legislative Council proposed a number of remedies to help facilitate the period of protracted convalescence.

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2. Ibid.

3. Ibid. Report of Collector of Customs.

4. L.C.D., 1887, p.220, Colonial Treasurer to Council, 22 July 1887.

As the imposition of new taxes was thought to be objectionable to the various sectors of the population, the colonial Treasurer, in his Supply Bill, alternatively advocated a method of retrenchment in the numerous government departments. But in view of the existence of a serious deficit, it was unanimously agreed to introduce a number of taxing bills, estimated to produce a sum of £60 000. It was proposed to raise under the Revised Customs Tariff the sum of £15 000, from Land Tax - £22 000, House Tax - £12 000 and Income Tax - £17 400.<sup>5</sup>

The Legislative Council, however, passed only the bill which provided for the taxation of occupied quarters and it was stipulated that these taxes were to be paid annually by occupiers, upon all structures occupied as residences. Before the new tax could be implemented, an event which was to have a profound influence on the economy of Natal, its population and South Africa in its entirety, occurred in the Transvaal. The Witwatersrand goldfields had been opened up. The discovery of the goldbearing reef in the Transvaal in 1886 marked the inauguration of a new era in the economic history of the country as investment flowed into South Africa's new mining industry. Commercial activity increased and the Cape and Natal ports experienced a decided boost in traffic and customs revenue because of their vital role as forwarding agencies for the imported products required by the mining industry and the burgeoning population of Johannesburg.

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5. The Natal Witness, 14 September 1886.

The opening up of the Rand signified a turning-point in the fortunes of the Natal Government Railways which saw an increase in the revenue which realised the amount of £257 877 as compared to £108 878 for 1886. The average number of miles opened for traffic increased by eleven per cent, while the revenue increased by 73 per cent; and the gross expenditure increased only by 26 per cent. In every class of traffic there was a substantial increase and there was an extended demand for transport from Ladysmith to places beyond. Also, large numbers of colonists from Natal desired to travel to the goldfields in search of better prospects - thus increasing passenger traffic. In 1888 the railways made a net profit, the first since 1881, estimated at £26 000.<sup>6</sup>

Owing to the revival of trade, the number of ships and tonnage of vessels that entered the Port of Natal had increased, as is evident from Table I.<sup>7</sup>

TABLE I

YEAR	SHIPS	TONNAGE
1886	285	191 651
1887	367	235 485

Due to the augmented demands for all types of goods required for the new towns established for the mixed population at the goldfields,

6. D.R., 1887, Report of General Manage of Railways.

7. Ibid., Report of Collector of Customs.

the import trade was revived considerably. Yet another factor responsible for the improvement in trade was the provision of the new Tariff Law of 1886 which permitted wines, spirits, tobacco, tea, and cigars to pass through Natal to countries in the interior at reduced rates. An increase of 94 per cent was reported in items such as blankets and "non-enumerated" goods. There was a decrease in exports such as grain, tobacco, sugar and rum because of the greater demands for local consumption and for export to the Witwatersrand. However, exports of "non-colonial" goods increased.<sup>8</sup> The mineral discoveries had thus brought about a dramatic improvement of the economy of Natal as the following table illustrates:<sup>9</sup>

TABLE II

YEAR	CUSTOMS(£)	LAND SALES(£)	TOTAL REVENUE(£)
1886	140 402	15 772	600 178
1887	231 412	36 767	816 816
1888	290 089	26 550	1130 614
1889	369 461	34 613	1327 105
1890	336 821	17 814	1422 688
1890-91	273 915	44 216	1318 769
1891-92	301 180	46 499	1392 455
1892-93	216 241	43 951	1069 678
1893-94	191 235	36 315	1011 017
1894-95	189 300	45 320	1169 781

8. Ibid.

9. Statistical Year Book (N.B.B.Vol.I), 1898. General Statistical summary of the Colony's finances.

The emergence of the mining industries of the Transvaal made a significant impact on the population of Natal which underwent a rapid transformation. After many years of settler agitation, the pendulum began to swing in favour of the white commercial farmers, while there was sufficient evidence to prove the deteriorating economic circumstances of Natal's African population. One of James Stuart's informants, Mxaba, outlined the hardships experienced by them in the period following the discoveries:

Look at the Natives of Natal...they are squatters on farms, they have to pay rents and taxes. If they cannot pay rent they are ordered to quit, and do quit. They are ordered off farms for not paying rent, have difficulty in finding another home, and when they get there, no consideration is shown by the government, but they must needs pay Hut Tax as before....Possibly a Man has holes full of corn or mieles; all this produce he is obliged to dispose of for next to nothing and yet, when he, after a lot of trouble, finds a new home, he is obliged to buy at the highest market prices. 10

The further commercialization of white agriculture and the granting of responsible government to Natal in 1893 were two major

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10. Colin Webb and John Wright (eds.), The James Stuart Archives, Vol. I (Pietermaritzburg, 1976), p.250, Mxaba to James Stuart.

factors responsible for the onset of economic decline among African peasant communities. The development of the mining industry provided new markets for the agricultural produce of Natal, and there was a corresponding increase in white agricultural activity by the mid-1880s and 1890s. In 1875 the total area under cultivation amounted to 82 000 acres and the white farming community numbered around 2 000 inhabitants. By 1890 the number of white farmers increased to around 3 000 and the area under cultivation was increased to 85 861 acres. By the year 1895 the combined agricultural output of the colonists realised the staggering figure of 129 925 tons.<sup>11</sup> One significant point to emerge from these figures is that white agriculture was being transformed into a more commercialized and specialized industry. Besides having to supply Natal's growing population (about 500 000 in 1891)<sup>12</sup> with some foodstuffs, the colony's farmers also began to supply their farm products to the population of the Witwatersrand. Bundy in his work on the African peasantry states that "Meat, dairy produce, maize and vegetables were all put on a commercial footing in response to the opportunities particularly in the agricultural zone along the main rail line north, past Lions River, Estcourt, Klip river and Newcastle".<sup>13</sup>

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11. Bundy, The Rise and Fall of the S.A. Peasantry, p.184.

12. N.B.B. (Statistical Returns), 1891, Population Statistics of the Colony of Natal.

13. Bundy, Rise and Fall of the S.A. Peasantry, p.184

1893 was a significant year in Natal's history for it marked the beginning of responsible government for the colony. For the white colonists, especially the commercial farmers, this was considered to be an event of paramount importance since it implied that they now secured the right to elect a government that would represent their own interests.<sup>14</sup> From the time Natal was annexed by Britain, the colonists were highly critical of the government's policy towards Africans, as they believed that instead of alleviating the labour problem, the policy aggravated it. Since the colony's white inhabitants now acquired control of the destinies of the black population, it was only inevitable that they should direct their powers towards the adoption of a "Native Policy" designed to coerce Africans to enter the labour force.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, the political economy of Natal was to move beyond the guidance and direction of those "local and British interests with a stake in the continued capacity of Natal Africans to earn an independent income, into the hands of the burgeoning class of commercial farmers and its allies".<sup>16</sup>

The interaction of the two processes, commercialization and the granting of responsible government aided in the deterioration of the African farming community as the wielders of political power implemented policies aimed at squeezing Africans off the land, and

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14. E.H. Brookes and C. de B. Webb, A History of Natal (Pietermaritzburg, 1979), p.168.

15. Ibid.

16. Bundy, The Rise and Fall of S.A. Peasantry, p.184.

in the process obtain cheap labour and diminish their ability to compete with white commercial farmers in the sale of agricultural produce. By 1890 it was growing apparent to Africans that their ability to pay the Hut Taxes, higher rents and other cash demands was increasingly dependent on sources of income other than those derived from farming and trade.

With the discovery of gold, white farmers faced more competition for labour; the Transvaal mining industry also needed labour and they wanted it as cheaply as possible. They could not attract sufficient labour while peasants still had access to lands and could produce enough for their cash requirements. So confronted with an alliance of white farmers and mine owners, African peasants began to lose their much valued independence as they were forced off white land or forced into the position of labourers on the farms. Africans were no longer able to exercise as great a choice, as they had done in the past, in respect of the different types of land they could occupy. The granting of responsible government resulted in a rise in the value of land causing Crown land to be "snapped at rising prices and private landowners to sell their properties to commercial farmers."<sup>17</sup> Many Magistrates reported in the 1880s that nearly all the Crown lands in their divisions were sold and a decrease was observed under the head of Squatters Rent.<sup>18</sup>

It was subsequently quite apparent that there was a move away from absentee proprietorship towards the more intensive commercial use of agricultural land. African peasants who were evicted from Crown

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17. Ibid.

18. D.R., 1891, Annual Reports of Resident Magistrates.

lands and private lands that were sold, were unable to move to the locations which were already overcrowded. And an additional hardship was encountered in the form of exorbitant rents on the remaining available land. The colony's black population experienced dire difficulty in finding land to reside on and it was proving expensive to pursue their original occupations as peasant farmers instead of as wage labourers. Mxaba, in a discussion with James Stuart expounded on the importance of land to the African.

He who has no land, he said, is like  
one laden with a heavy debt, hence it is  
that there can be no increase of wealth  
whilst we are in debt. Poverty arises out  
of having no fixed abode. 19

As land formed the foundations of African wealth and prosperity, and since this sector of the population was gradually being restricted in land occupation by state instituted pressure, many Africans were unable to successfully retain their independence and pay their taxes by the sales of accumulated surplus only.

The commercialization of white agriculture with its resultant consequences of high rents, overcrowding and evictions was greater in this period, thus increasing the monetary obligations of the Africans. Generally speaking, Natal's white electorate seemed totally unconcerned about the distressing state of their black population; and while white agriculture was aided by subsidies and grants, tax

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19. Webb and Wright(eds.), Stuart Archive, Vol.I, p.250, Mxaba to Stuart.

relief and advantageous rail rates, the African peasant population continued to deteriorate in every sense. Evidence of such deterioration can be observed in the following passage in which a Richmond farmer, J.W.McKenzie reiterated the poor condition of the Africans.

The natives earning power is not sufficient to enable him to pay his way...to pay his debts and his taxes. A man cannot live on nothing. When a man had cattle and land, like they had years ago, he could sell a beast and pay his rent; now they have no cattle and the land has practically run out; their cultivation has got worse ad worse - where they used to grow mielies years ago, you cannot get a sack now....he is worse off now because he has no cattle, and the land he cultivates does not produce nearly as much as it used to do, therefore his positions is worse than it was before, - it is getting worse. 20

Persistent failures on the part of Natal's Black farming community to gain access to land, attracted the attention of the Governor, Sir Henry Bulwer, who in a despatch to F.A.Stanley, a Member of Parliament, elaborated on the difficulties endured by Africans in complying with the demands for exorbitant rents.<sup>21</sup> He admitted that the Natal Native Commission of 1881-1882 hardly investigated this subject although in evidence presented before the commission, Africans complained bitterly of the high rents which they were called upon to pay. Bulwer recognised that since Natal's northern Nguni were stock-keeping cultivators, they required sizeable tracts of land to

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20. Bundy, *The Rise and Fall of the S.A. Peasantry*, p.186.

21. C.O. 879/23/309, pp.1-2. Sir Henry Bulwer to Col.Rt. Hon. F.A. Stanley, 10 October 1884.

accommodate their agricultural pursuits. But since Natal was primarily intended for British colonization, the outcome of the contest for land between the colony's two races was inevitable. Evidence, suggesting that the reserves set aside for African occupation was insufficient to satisfy their material needs, reveal that more than half of the black population was residing outside the reserves on private lands as tenants or on Crown lands as squatters. Under the communal tribal system, they were accustomed to residing on land that belonged to the entire tribe and also of being free from any payment for the occupation of such land. Instead they usually paid tribute in kind or in service to their chiefs.<sup>22</sup> Africans on locations lands believed that the tribute that was due to the Governor of Natal as Supreme Chief was represented by the payment of the Hut Taxes to the government. Africans no doubt felt justified in turning to this very government to solve their land problem. But Bulwer emphasised that the government was not going to interfere in the affairs of private white landowners and their contractual arrangement with African tenants:

There are locations which are set aside for you. You are free to go there to occupy without the payment of any rent. But if you prefer to live on lands which are the property of private owners, you must make your own terms with them. You are not forced to live on those lands. The owners are not obliged to let you live there. <sup>23</sup>

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22. Ibid.

23. Ibid., p.3.

From this evidence it would appear that the government had made its stand clear, that is, it had no intention of interfering and ameliorating the crucial problem of land shortage for Africans. Hence given this freedom of action, Africans in the past had resorted to the payment of rent to private landowners without any difficulty. But the increased rentals of the 1880s and 1890s together with the desire of colonists to deprive the peasant community of land, had caused much suffering for this sector of the population.

It was not surprising to find that the solution to these problems, as suggested by the Lieutenant-Governor, was for Africans to change their pastoral habits, therefore making no secret of his real motive to impel Africans to abandon their independent existence as peasant farmers on land and to become wage labourers.

The following table <sup>24</sup> clearly illustrates the terms of occupancy by Africans on private lands, whether by rent, rent and labour, <sup>25</sup> labour alone, <sup>26</sup> or other conditions. Although it is illustrative of the terms of occupation in a few divisions, it provides one with a clear understanding of the pressures experienced by Africans living on available private lands:

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24. Ibid., p.7.

25. Some private landowners demanded from Africans residing on their lands payment in the form of labour and part of it in rent.

26. These Africans paid in the form of labour only.

TABLE III

MAGISTRACIES	RENT - NO LABOUR	RENT & LABOUR	LABOUR - NO RENT	OTHER CONDITIONS
Umgani	£2 to £5 per Hut per annum	£1 to £1.10s per Hut per annum	10/- to 15/- per mensem	- -
Lions River	£1 to £6 per Hut per annum	7/- to 40/- per Hut and 7/- to 40/- wages	40/- per mensem	1 to 3 sacks of mieles per Hut and labour. Also £12 for 20 acres to cultivate
Weenen	£1 to £2 per Hut	10/- per Hut to £1	-	£1 extra if a plough was used.
Inanda	£1 to £3	-	1 man per Hut	1 sack mielies per hut - poll tax 13/- per month adult.

Another source of pressure which the African peasants encountered was the competition presented by the Indian peasant farmers of Natal. On completion of their period of indenture, many Indians remained in the colony and became an integral part of the economy as labourers, artisans, shopkeepers, traders and agriculturists. Many pursued independent occupations as market gardeners in the vicinity of towns or as peasant farmers elsewhere.<sup>27</sup> Africans regarded these Indians as alien intruders and complained about their being evicted from land which Indians had claimed to have purchased.<sup>28</sup> Indians were so successful that they had "captured practically the whole of the fruit and vegetable trade in the peri-urban areas of Durban, Pietermaritzburg and coastal areas of Natal". In areas such as Inanda and Alexander, they became the main producers of maize and tobacco crops.<sup>29</sup> Unlike the Africans, Indians had enjoyed the advantage of being able to proceed to different areas instead of being confined. The appearance of Indian agriculturists constituted yet another source of competition for resources and markets.

Magistrates' reports for the years 1890/95 also emphasized the poor agricultural methods of many African farmers and their agricultural system.<sup>30</sup> From the tables below it would appear that up to 1890, African farmers seemed to have increased their cultivation at a time when prices fetched for produce were lower in 1890 than in 1880.<sup>31</sup>

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27. Bundy, *The Rise and Fall of the S.A. Peasantry*, p.182.

28. Webb and Wright (eds.), *Stuart Archives*, Vol.I, p.147.

29. Bundy, *Rise and Fall of the S.A. Peasantry*, p.182.

30. D.R., 1888-1890, *Resident Magistrates Reports*.

31. *Ibid.*, 1880-1890. *Return of Agricultural Produce and Average Market Value*.

TABLE IV

YEARS	ACREAGE CULTIVATED
1888	234087
1889	241192
1890	305367

TABLE V

	1880			1890		
Produce	£	s	d	£	s	d
Indian Corn (per muid)	1	8	4	0	10	6
Kaffir Corn (per muid)	1	5	2	0	10	2
Beans (per muid)		19	6		18	0
Common Potatoes "	1	1	4		13	5
Sweet Potatoes "		10	6		6	9

As if these problems were not enough, the African population was beset by further hardships such as droughts and livestock diseases

throughout this period.<sup>32</sup> Magistrates reports for the period 1890 to 1895 carried constant references to the droughts and their effects on African farming communities.<sup>33</sup> In Umsinga the drought was considered to be a "drawback" as "agricultural spots were worn out".<sup>34</sup> Whereas in Upper Umkomanzi - (1891-2) - the "crops for the past year were very poor and a number of natives were selling or exchanging cattle for mielies".<sup>35</sup> From Ixopo came the report of the Magistrate in 1892-3 who remarked that: "the season has been bad...mielie crop has fallen far short of that of last year".<sup>36</sup> An outbreak of horsesickness caused the equine population to suffer while lung sickness killed many cattle. In his annual report for 1892-3, the Magistrate of the Umsinga District observed that "lung sickness was more usual...horse sickness more than usual...many horses died".<sup>37</sup> Since the best land was being taken up by Europeans, and the charges for rents and taxes were high, flocks and herds were reduced by sale.<sup>38</sup>

With the existence of such adverse conditions in the period 1887-1895, it is not surprising that the African community would attempt to evade the payment of Hut Taxes. A few magistrates in

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32. Blue Book for Native Affairs (hereafter abbreviated as B.B.N.A.), 1890-1895, Resident Magistrates Annual Reports.

33. Ibid.

34. D.R., 1891--1892, Annual Reports of Magistrate of Umsinga.

35. Ibid., Annual Reports of Magistrate of Upper Umkomanzi.

36. Ibid., 1892-1893, Annual Report of Magistrate of Ixopo.

37. Ibid., Annual Report of Magistrate of Umsinga.

38. Ibid., 1894-1895, Annual Reports of Magistrates.

their reports, complained about the attempted evasions and the difficulties involved in the collection of these taxes. As in the case of the Magistrate of Umsinga, many magistrates endeavoured to devise satisfactory methods of detecting such evasions.<sup>39</sup> A system was contrived which involved the visiting of kraals by nine African inspectors, acting as detectives, one month before the taxes were due. They denoted with strokes on the reverse side of each Hut Tax receipt of the previous year, the number of huts in the kraal for which taxes were to be paid. The number of strokes on the receipt, together with the number of huts shown to have been paid for the previous year, served to check evasions of the Hut Taxes. Other magistrates complained that there was no method of punishing systematic evaders of the tax, who made a point of being absent during the time of collection. The head of the kraal who was liable for the tax due on particular kraals was himself away for long periods. There was no systematic method of enforcing payments as the magistrates possessed no legal power to compel the attendance of Africans before them to answer any charges of evasion.<sup>40</sup> If they did not appear before the magistrate, they could not be arrested for contempt of court in that period, as no such law existed.

By the 1890s many Africans found it increasingly difficult to exist independently without entering wage labour. However, it would

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39. *Ibid.*, 1891, Annual Report of Magistrate of Umsinga.

40. *Ibid.*

would be too simplistic to believe that they finally rushed to the services of the white inhabitants of Natal, as this was not so. Instead they proceeded to the goldfields in order to earn the money required to pay the high rents and Hut Taxes. Nevertheless, many white farmers in Natal found it extremely difficult to compete with the lucrative wages offered by the mining interests.<sup>41</sup>

In its broadest implications, the mass movement to the goldfields contributed to the social ills of the northern Nguni society of the colony of Natal. From the various divisions came magistrates' reports complaining of a decline in the moral character of the African population. The Magistrate of Umsinga complained that the Africans "have not improved socially and morally since going to Johannesburg", while the Magistrate of Lions River reported that their "social and moral conditions were not good...laxity in moral character". Evidence for the existence of such problems could be observed in the increase of cases of indecent assault, bribery and abduction.<sup>42</sup> Apart from their being influenced by crime in Johannesburg, they also emulated the vices of Europeans - notably in the consumption of liquor and the indulgence in prostitution. It is also interesting to note the high mortality rate amongst Africans who returned with diseases such as syphilis, influenza and measles. These ailments had reached epidemic proportions by 1895.<sup>43</sup> Those who returned with large sums of

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41. *Ibid.*, 1891-1892, Annual Reports of Magistrates.

42. *B.B.N.A.*, 1895, Annual Reports of Magistrates of Umsinga and Lions River.

43. *Ibid.*, 1894-95, Annual Reports of Magistrates.

money squandered it on isityimiyana drinking which had a further demoralising effect on Africans. This was followed by their falling into idleness and debt and so failing to comply with the demands for the payment of the Hut Tax. Kraals were no longer well maintained, instead they presented a picture of delapidation. Closer contact with western material values eventuated in the growth of wants unheard of before this. Many therefore returned in a poorer state from the mines than they were before they left their homes in Natal - again inconveniencing magistrates by delaying the payment of their Hut Taxes.<sup>44</sup>

Many thousands who had left to labour on the goldfields neglected to forward money to their wives who resorted to prostitution as a means of earning the money required to pay the arrears in rents and taxes. Subsequently, according to magistrates, there was an increase in the number of divorces between couples married under Christian rites. Eventually there was a disintegration of tribalism as chiefs continued to lose power over their people and parents began to lose control over their children especially in the cases of unmarried sons who returned with very little respect for tribal or parental authority.

No sooner had commercial farmers revelled in their successful attempts to pressure Africans by closing off access to the different types of land and by imposing high rents, than they began complaining

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44. Ibid.

of the large exodus of the Black population to the Witwatersrand - a movement which, they argued, proved to be detrimental to all colonists' interests as they again faced an acute labour shortage. From the various divisions came reports from magistrates about the desperation of white farmers who suffered as a result of the scarcity of labour. Meanwhile, many Africans who returned from the goldfields, refused to enter the service of whites in spite of the higher wages offered. While in 1887, wages were 11/- per month, in 1888 it increased to 13/- and by 1890 17/- per month was offered.<sup>45</sup> In 1895, J.W.Marwick, a clerk in the Native Affairs department, was appointed "to act as the Representative at Johannesburg of the Department of the Secretary for Native Affairs to whom Natives of Natal may go in case they require advice, or assistance, in times of sickness, or through whom they may communicate with their relatives in Natal".<sup>46</sup> Following this appointment, instructions were issued to magistrates requesting them to inform Africans going to the Transvaal of the existence of this department. The duties of this agent involved "taking charge of books and accounts in that office answering letters from the Colonial Secretary, warning Natives to pay their arrears in Hut Taxes, recovering wages being withheld by employers, persuading natives to remit amounts so recovered to relatives in Natal".<sup>47</sup> The appointment of Marwick raised a storm of protest from Natal's settler community as they strongly believed that this appointment aggravated the already acute labour shortage. Otto

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45. N.B.B. (Statistical Returns), 1887, 1888, 1890, Return of the Rate of Wages.

46. U. Dhupelia, "African Labour in Natal : Attempts at Coercion and Control 1893-1903", Journal of Natal and Zulu History, Vol.V, 1982, p.39.

47. S.N.A. Vol. 1/1/214. Marwick to S.N.A., 23 December 1895.

Jackson, the Resident Magistrate of the Newcastle Division complained that "the cry for labour will continue as long as Johannesburg and Labour Agents exist".<sup>48</sup>

During the controversy surrounding Marwick, it was discovered by the colonists that his brother was a labour agent in Johannesburg and his uncle a labour contractor. It was thus feared that this office would be utilized as a base for the recruitment of labour from Natal.<sup>49</sup> Cries for labour had reached such acute proportions that a deputation of seven colonists met the Natal Prime Minister, Sir John Robinson, and the Secretary for Native Affairs in order to exert pressure on the government to find a solution to the problem. The major grievance of the farmers, as mentioned by the members of the deputation, was the uncontrollable exodus of Africans to the goldfields. Despite a discussion of the numerous grievances and the many suggestions offered by the members, the only assurance that the Prime Minister was prepared to give them was that the government "would give the matter its attention".<sup>50</sup> Such a reply revealed the reluctance of Robinson to restrict the flow of labour to the goldfields. After all, the colony was in a sense economically dependent on the Transvaal, so by preventing the adequate supply of labour to the Witwatersrand, they would jeopardise Transvaal-Natal relations. Also the existence of such an office in the Transvaal was instrumental in preventing attempts on the part of Africans labouring in Johannesburg, to evade the payment of the Hut Tax.

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48. D.R., 1899, Annual Report of Magistrate of Newcastle.

49. S.N.A., 1/1/214. See also The Critic, article on "A Family Party", 3 January 1896.

50. Ibid.

Apart from labouring for white farmers, Africans of Natal were employed as toggt labourers (daily labourers), domestic servants, rickshaw pullers (in Durban) and transport riders.<sup>51</sup> So the labour issue affected many sectors of the colony, not only the commercial farmers. Concern was even expressed by the Minister of Land and Works of the insufficient labour available for public works. In correspondence to the S.N.A. in 1895 he reported that 1312 young men were still liable for public service but were not turning up.<sup>52</sup> Subsequent to this a circular was sent by the S.N.A. to Magistrates instructing them to emphasize to chiefs that "in terms of Section 36, Law 19 of 1891, the Supreme Chief has power to call upon natives in the various divisions to supply labour". Chiefs were therefore to convey this instruction to their people who were required to work for six months upon public roads at a rate of 15/- per month.<sup>53</sup> The offer of such a wage could have had the effect of discouraging young men from turning up as it was lower than the average wage paid in the colony at the time.

Concerned over Natal's labour crisis, the Colonial Secretary despatched a circular to magistrates requesting them to express their views on the possibility of increasing the Hut Tax to £1 per Hut. Most magistrates, however, agreed that it was not advisable to raise the Hut Tax, as it "would disturb the natives who would be against

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51. Shula Marks, Reluctant Rebellion : the 1906-1908 disturbances in Natal (Oxford, 1970), p.48.

52. S.N.A., Vol.1/1/206. Minister to S.N.A., 13 September 1895.

53. Ibid.

change,...would cause distrust,...would lead to trouble,...would definitely not be acceptable to the natives,...not wise to alter present system".<sup>54</sup> In view of the utterance of such sentiments, it was decided to drop the idea.

Despite the presentation of evidence concerning the Hut Tax evasions, the revenue derived from the collection of this tax, did not drop. Instead it maintained a gradual increase year by year up to 1895 (See Table VI),<sup>55</sup> although it must be remembered that the increase was below average. Though the colony's African population experienced dire difficulties in paying the tax, after being granted extensions, they did finally comply with the demands for the payment of their taxes and their arrears. The total number of evasions for 1895 numbered a mere 517, out of a total population of 503 208 souls.<sup>56</sup>

Following a consideration of the increasing pressures that the Africans were subjected to - commercialization of white farmers, land shortages, exorbitant rents, taxes, droughts, cattle diseases - most magistrates seemed to agree that they were "generally well behaved, quiet and orderly".<sup>57</sup> In 1892 the Magistrate of Ixopo reported that the Africans always paid their taxes cheerfully. He said that "it was very pleasing to note that they pay their taxes with a remarkably good temper every year. They march up in large bodies, each tribe

54. S.N.A., Vol.1/1/214, No.42/1896, Response to Circular No.44, 3 March 1896.

55. D.R., 1886-1891/2, Statements of Revenue for the Colony of Natal.

56. B.B.N.A., Statistical Return of the Secretary for Native Affairs Office for the year 1895.

57. D.R., 1890-1893, Magistrates Annual Reports.

with it's chief at it's head, singing, and on reaching the Magistrate, they form in a line and salute him". From the Magistrate of Umsinga, it was reported that "they are loyal subjects, appreciate British rule and pay taxes promptly. With such a large population and with so few native police to perform their duty, they are generally a well conducted people".<sup>58</sup>

Despite the existence of such views, it is indisputable that the Hut Taxes were one of the major factors which contributed towards revolutionizing the life of the African to such an extent that it led to the further destruction of tribal life.

TABLE VI

YEAR	HUT TAX REVENUE (£)
1886	72 299
1887	73 237
1888	74 319
1889	76 007
1889/90	77 213
1890/91	77 275
1891/92	80 377
1894	82 366
1895	84 868

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58. Ibid., 1890, Annual Report of Magistrate of Umsinga

The years 1895-1898 were crucial ones for Natal's African society as they were battered by a series of ecological calamities such as droughts, the locust plague and the outbreak of rinderpest. However, in the years 1895/1896, Natal's economy and society were particularly hard hit by the large swarms of locusts which swept across the entire colony leaving behind a trail of destruction. The production of staple crops and the colony's major exports, sugar and maize, dwindled significantly owing to the destruction wrought by the locusts. While in 1895 sugar exports realized a total quantity of 121 721 cwt (valued at £ 65 562),<sup>59</sup> By 1896 it had decreased to 36 123 cwt (valued at £22 696), a thirty per cent drop in quantities exported, thereby adversely affecting the colony's economy. Sir John Hulett, a member of the Legislative Assembly for Victoria County, informed members of the Assembly that the devastation caused by the locusts on the coast was so extreme, that the loss entailed by the sugar planters and other planters was of such a nature that "...the interests of the Coast Districts were sacrificed to the extent of many thousands of pounds".<sup>60</sup> The destruction of much of the maize crop proved to be detrimental to the economy of the colony as there was hardly any maize produced to meet subsistence needs or export demands. It therefore came as no surprise that Natal had instead to import maize to feed her undernourished Black population. In 1896 121 9317 cwt of maize valued at £240 472 was imported from the United States of America and Argentina and by 1899 the quantity imported had

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59. Statistical Year Book for Colony of Natal, 1895-1896, Imports and Exports.

60. Legislative Assembly Debates (hereafter abbreviated as L.A.D.), 1897, Vol. 25, J.L. Hulett, Member of Victoria County, 4 May 1897.

risen to 76 785 932 pounds.<sup>61</sup> The locust invasions were thus largely accountable for the success enjoyed by the U.S.A. and Argentina, in establishing themselves in the South African maize market earlier than would have been the case had there been no such plague. This was also a tough period for South African agriculturists as they faced increased competition from overseas due to the agricultural revolution taking place.<sup>62</sup>

Natal's Black farming communities, who saw much of their crops destroyed by the droughts and locusts, suffered grievously in these years as they endured malnutrition, starvation and a scarcity of money to pay the Hut Taxes and rents. An amplification of their affliction was evident from figures which reveal that 18 out of 26 magisterial districts experienced distressing crop losses of between 36 and 95 per cent. An estimated 30 000 or 70 per cent of the entire African population of Natal, which resided in these areas, were adversely affected by the locusts destruction.<sup>63</sup>

At the beginning of 1896 the Secretary for Native Affairs was inundated with floods of appeals for food from the devastated African communities. Chiefs Ndolomana and Dhlidhi of the Ipoleta Division reported that "the crops of their people have been destroyed and that there will be a famine in the district". They pleaded with the government "to do something to enable them to buy mielies for food and seed at reasonable rates until the next crop can be reared".<sup>64</sup>

61. Statistical Year Book for Colony of Natal, 1896-1899, Imports.

62. Ballard, "A Year of Scarcity", South African Historical Journal, No.15, 1983, p.51.

63. Ibid., p.51.

64. S.N.A., Vol. 1/1/124, No. 598/1896. Resident Magistrate, Ipoleta to S.N.A., 28 January 1896.

Storekeepers in that division were charging 20/- cash per muid for maize and 25/- on credit and expected to increase their prices not long after this.<sup>65</sup> The Resident Magistrate of Ixopo informed the S.N.A. that "the years crops are a total failure due to the locust ravages...the price of mielies are high...natives are in distress owing to the scarcity of food".<sup>66</sup> The Magistrate of Alfred complained that the Africans in his division were "next door to starvation".<sup>67</sup> Such reports from chiefs and magistrates on the pathetic plight of the Black population failed to move the S.N.A. who remained largely indifferent to their desperation. The sufferings of Natal's rural Africans was reiterated by the Resident Magistrate of Impendhle who reported that his division was "alive with locusts", while the Africans were experiencing a "scarcity of food and famine as has never been known before". He suggested that grain should be imported to supply the needs of the starving population.<sup>68</sup> The African chiefs of Ixopo complained that their crops were completely destroyed and that the people were unable to pay the Hut Tax and unless they were afforded some relief "they will be driven to thieving by which they will be imprisoned and so be fed by the government".<sup>69</sup>

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65. Ibid.

66. Ibid., Vol. 1/1/214, No. 738/1896. Resident Magistrate, Ixopo to S.N.A., 5 February 1896.

67. D.R., 1896, Annual Report of Resident Magistrate, Ixopo.

68. Ibid., Annual Report of Resident Magistrate, Impendhle.

69. S.N.A. Vol. 1/1/214, No.9131/1896. Resident Magistrate, Ixopo to S.N.A., 28 January 1896.

Although the agricultural economy of the colony had been adversely affected by the locust swarms, the Natal government was strongly opposed to the idea of granting to Africans an extension to pay the Hut Taxes. Since these taxes contributed by the 1890s, about one-eighth towards the colony's total revenue, a drop under this head was thought to be detrimental to the financial interests of the colonial administration. Subsequently, on 13 February 1896 a memorandum was circulated to the various divisions instructing magistrates to refuse appeals for extensions of time in order to pay the Hut Taxes:

...the government desires it to be understood that such applications should in no way be encouraged, and that Natives should be informed that the tax will have to be paid as usual. 70

Refusing to be swayed by further appeals, Frederick Moor, the S.N.A. issued circular No.3. to magistrates asking for a "report on the condition of native crops consequent to the visits of the locust". From the reports received from magistrates it was evident that the divisions of Upper Umkomanzi, Ixopo, Inanda, Lower Tugela, Ipoleta, Alfred, Mapumulo, Ndwedwe, Impendhle, Krantzkop and New Hanover, all suffered losses of between 60 to 80 per cent of their total crops.<sup>71</sup> However, before these reports were received, circular No. 4 was issued to the Magistrates of Mapumulo, Lower Tugela, Upper Umkomanzi, Ixopo, Alexandra, Lower Umzimkulu, Ipoleta, Indwedwe and Impendhle, in which they were directed to:

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70. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1/1/216, No. 203/1896. Minute of Principal Under Secretary to Resident Magistrates, 13 February 1896.

71. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1/1/214. Circular No. 3, S.N.A. to Resident Magistrates, 10 February 1896.

Please inform Native Chiefs in your division that in consequence of the recovery of the mielie crop in many of the districts of the Colony of the large importation of grain by merchants, there is not likely to be such a scarcity of native foodstuff as has been anticipated and that the young men should be urged to work to obtain the means for the purchase of food supplies. 72

It was evident from this circular that the S.N.A. was prompt in suggesting that the young men should be induced to enter the labour field. The locust plague, most certainly, could have been regarded as being in some ways beneficial to the white colonists as Africans were squeezed off their lands and into the labour market. Circulars were even despatched to magistrates of the divisions from which reports of crop destruction were received, instructing them to inform Africans of the great demand for underground and surface workers in the mines of the Witwatersrand. This was a successful ploy of the government to force Africans to quit their lands and end their existence as independent farmers by entering the wage market. The S.N.A. only realized the seriousness of the situation when many impoverished Africans in Natal failed to pay the Hut Tax during the time of collection in the months of April and May of 1896. The collection of the Hut Tax realized a sum of £76 847 in that year as compared to the £84 868 collected in the year 1895 - a decrease of ten per cent.<sup>73</sup> The following table denotes those divisions which

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72. Ibid., Vol. 1/1/214, No. 80/1896. Circular No. 4 from S.N.A. to Resident Magistrates, 12 February 1896.

73. Statistical Year Books for Colony of Natal, 1895/1896, Statement of Revenue of Colony.

suffered marked decreases of the Hut Tax Revenue as compared to 1895.<sup>74</sup> The number of evasions for 1896 were 910.<sup>75</sup>

TABLE VII

DIVISION	HUT TAX REVENUE (£)	
	1895	1896
Lions River	1341	1294
Upper Umkomanzi	2964	2773
Ipolela	2538	2489
Impendhle	1311	1284
Weenen	4517	4358
Inanda	804	803
Lower Tugela	4994	4960

August witnessed the presence of new swarms of locusts and renewed crop destruction in Natal and Zululand. In their annual reports, the magistrates of the different divisions referred to "a complete failure of the round potato crop...no crop returns...thousands of acres of sweet potato crop destroyed...reductions in yields of maize and amabele crops".<sup>76</sup> Table VII illustrates the decrease in the maize and sorghum crops of 1896 as compared to 1895.

74. B.B.N.A., Statistical Return of the Secretary for Native Affairs Office for years ended 1895 and 1896.

75. Ibid., Statistical Return of S.N.A. Office for year ended 1896.

76. D.R., Annual Reports of Magistrates.

TABLE VIII

OFFICIAL ESTIMATES OF MAIZE AND SORGHUM PRODUCTION AMONGST  
AFRICANS IN NATAL FOR 1895 AND 1896

Division	*Maize - 1895	(Muids)*** 1896	% decline	Sorghum- 1895	(muids) 1896	% decline
IXOPO	65 572	1 511	97.7	26 265	510	98.1
UPPER UMKOMANZI	102 875	3 720	96.4	30 000	2 150	92.9
IPOLELA	28 920	4 020	86.1	25 956	5 720	78.0
MAPAMULO	57 375	10 000	82.6	30 605	8 000	73.9
KRANTZKOP	20 085	5 000	75.2	43 934	10 000	77.3
ALFRED	28 152	7 000	75.2	22 810	4 500	80.3
ESTCOURT	36 504	11 353	68.9	25 939	8 288	68.1
UMGENI	23 283	7 742	66.8	19 884	2 500	87.5
INANDA	4 500	1 526	66.1	2 160	1 032	52.3
NEWCASTLE	30 500	10 978	64.1	17 889	5 469	69.5
LOWER TUGELA	10 150	3 745	63.2	8 439	3 120	63.1
NDWEDWE	21 668	8 000	63.1	12 186	12 000	1.6
UMSINGA	59 928	25 000	58.3	14 982	40 000	(+166.9)
UMVOTI	27 425	13 000	52.6	14 410	13 000	9.8
KLIP RIVER	23 093	11 254	51.3	43 121	12 121	71.9
LOWER UMZIMKULU	18 000	10 000	44.5	7 000	5 000	28.6
ALEXANDRA	4 550	2 800	38.5	12 400	12 360	0.4
IMPENDHLE	8 000	5 500	31.2	4 000	3 735	6.7
NEW HANOVER	6 395	5 800	9.4	4 155	3 740	10.0
DUNDEE	26 530	26 250	1.0	23 030	21 228	7.9
WEENEN	47 250	47 250	-	25 600	25 600	-
UMLAZI	5 662	5 835	(+3.0)	3 551	3 364	5.3
UPPER TUGELA	3 596	4 450	(+23.0)	3,200	2,435	24.0
LIONS RIVER	7 991	12 030	(+50.0)	2,016	773	61.7

\* Maize was the more important crop for Africans and it is used to determine the sequence of ranking in the table.

\*\* Those Divisions above the dotted line suffered what were considered substantial crop losses of 30 percent or more and those Divisions below the dotted line suffered little or no crop losses of less than 30 percent.

\*\*\* The muid was a standard dry measure in Natal and is equivalent to 196 English pounds.

By September 1896 reports of the sufferings of the African population spread throughout the colony. But it was only by October 1896 that the S.N.A. felt compelled to act by providing food for the starving elements of the population. A storekeeper, in Ixopo, J.R. Royston was commissioned to take delivery of 250 bags of mielies and to dispense them as he wished. Moor impressed upon Royston that it was the policy of the S.N.A. to sell each muid of mielies for the high market price of 25/- . So the storekeeper was ordered to provide credit only to those Africans who deserved it.<sup>78</sup> All sectors of Natal's white community attacked the government's "charitable" action of giving away free food to Africans as they believed that all rural Blacks should have entered the field of labour in order to avert famine. In keeping with this harsh settler attitude, food credits were supplied to African men in exchange for their labour on the colony's public works.<sup>79</sup>

With the passing of the Locust Extermination Bill No.29 in 1895, the government was authorised to adopt measures which could assist in exterminating the locusts. Since Sir John Robinson, the Premier of Natal, considered it necessary to "call out the Natives of the neighbouring districts in order to assist in putting down the plague", magistrates were instructed to "extract" labour from locations to destroy the locusts.<sup>80</sup> Thousands of Africans were thus forced to perform unpaid labour for the government in destroying locusts

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78. S.N.A. Vol. 1/1/231, No.1774/1896. S.N.A. to Royston, 27 October 1896.

79. Ibid.

80. L.A.D., 1896, Vol. 23, p.380. The Prime Minister, 13 July 1895.

especially on the sugar farms of whites. Mr Baynes, the Legislative Assembly member for Ixopo emphasized to members of the Assembly that "it was cruel to ask Natives to turn out to work to destroy locusts without providing them with means to do so and pay".<sup>81</sup> Africans in Natal were highly resentful of this system of conscription which resulted in white crops being spared from destruction while their fields were neglected and therefore more vulnerable to the locust infestations.

In the face of these calamities, African society in Natal suffered more heavily than the white population from the locust plague. Since their agricultural system relied on two basic crops, maize and sorghum (amabele), the destruction of these crops led to reports of "widespread malnutrition, indebtedness, starvation and increased labour migrancy".<sup>82</sup> A regrettable feature was that since the Blacks in the Colony possessed no political representation, they did not receive any of the state-aid that was provided to the white farming sector in resisting the locusts. Much to the satisfaction of Natal's white electorate, the locust invasions had succeeded in diminishing the wealth of Natal's African farmers to such extent that many thousands were compelled to abandon their independent status and sell their labour power. However, there was particular consternation among the whites when it was found that instead of entering the services of farmers of the colony, Africans migrated to the mining areas where the demands for labour were greatest, and the wages more attractive.

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81. *Ibid.*, 1896, Vol.24, p.236. Supplementary Supply Bill, 21 May 1896.

82. Ballard, "A Year of Scarcity", p.51.

The movement of African labour from Natal to the Witwatersrand was expedited with the commencement of passenger traffic in November 1895 on the newly completed Durban to Johannesburg line.<sup>83</sup> In 1894 10 466 passes were issued to Africans proceeding from Natal to the Transvaal, the numbers increasing in 1895 to 20 811 and in 1896 to 26 487.<sup>84</sup> It was obvious that the vast majority of Africans who migrated to the mines, did so for labour purposes. For example, in 1898, 18 604 passes were issued to Africans proceeding to the Transvaal, and of this number, 16 386 were definitely for labour purposes.<sup>85</sup> The S.N.A. directed that the magistrates should urge Africans to go out in search of labour in order to avert starvation, ignoring the fact that the old men, women and children who were most affected, were unable to leave their kraals and perform the hard labour or difficult tasks demanded by whites. The plight of the very old, very young and infirm was worsened by the system of migrancy which caused the absence of sons and fathers who proceeded to the Transvaal or laboured on the colony's public works. Therefore, wives, children and elderly folk had to wait for months or even a year before these men either sent part of their earnings through the Agent's office in Johannesburg or returned home with their earnings.

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83. Dhupelia, "African Labour in Natal", p.37.

84. B.B.N.A., 1894-1895, Statistical Return to S.N.A.'s Office.

85. Ibid., 1898, Statistical Return to S.N.A.'s Office.

In his annual report for 1896, the Magistrate of Lower Tugela complained that "under the Hut Tax, the decrease is owing to the number of Natives who leave the district and their wives and families, with no means of support".<sup>86</sup>

Therefore, the S.N.A.'s suggestion that Africans should proceed to the goldfields to earn money, was in direct conflict with the interests of colonists who, despite the implementation of various forms of economic and political coercion were unable to stem the flow of labour to the Witwatersrand.

Owing to their deteriorating agricultural circumstances, Natal's Black population tried desperately to find alternative sources of earning money required to pay the rents and Hut Taxes. The mines of the Transvaal were therefore regarded as being an alternative measure of earning money since they could in these disastrous years, no longer depend on the sale of agricultural surplus as a major source of income.

The series of environmental disasters that began in 1895-96 with drought and locusts continued when an even more severe blow came with the outbreak of the most fatal of all bovine scourges, rinderpest, an epidemic which was responsible for the near depletion of the African cattle population in 1897 and 1898.

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86. D.R., 1896, Annual Report of Magistrate of Lower Tugela.

Rinderpest was defined as "an acute contagious virus disease of ruminants and swine, characterized by diarrhoea, nasal and lacrimal discharge and by ulceration of the mucous membrane of the mouth".<sup>87</sup> The outbreak of this wave of cattle disease had a devastating effect on the economy of Natal and its population, especially the African population. From the Annual Report issued by the Commissioner of Agriculture, it was found that European cattle losses amounted to 40 per cent while that of the Africans amounted to 90 per cent.<sup>88</sup> An amazing characteristic of this disease was the swiftness with which it spread as observed by the Commissioner who reported that "when however, the disease appeared, it did so almost simultaneously over 2/3 of the Colony".<sup>89</sup> Between July and October of 1897, 24 of the 26 magisterial districts were affected by the bovine affliction.<sup>90</sup> From the different divisions came widespread reports of magistrates who had catalogued the distress of Africans in their districts. The Magistrate of Klip River estimated that cattle losses in his division amounted to 20 108 and that "the mortality may be set down at 90 per cent amongst stock belonging to natives and about 65 per cent amongst stock belonging to Europeans".<sup>91</sup> While the Magistrate of Weenen calculated that 36 000 out of 37 000 cattle of Africans were lost and he reported that the "disease appeared simultaneously at my kraals

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87. Ballard, "Climate, Pestilence and Northern Nguni History 1800-1913", (unpublished paper delivered at the 26th Annual Congress of the African Studies Association, Boston, Massachusetts (December 1983), p.30.

88. D.R., 1897, Report of Commissioner of Agriculture.

89. Ibid.

90. Ibid.

91. B.B.N.A., 1897, Annual Report of Magistrate of Klip River.

and it spread rapidly as the division was thickly studded with kraals", <sup>92</sup> and the Magistrate of Dundee estimated that out of a total of 24 066 cattle, Africans lost 19 939. <sup>93</sup>

With the outbreak of rinderpest, the recovery of Natal's African farming communities from the destruction caused by locusts was extremely difficult. The outbreak of this disease therefore proved to be disastrous for them as they saw their stocks disappearing with such rapidity and were thus affected in numerous ways. Those who depended on transport riding for their livelihood experienced substantial economic hardships as they saw their oxen dying before them. The Magistrate of Inanda reported that the disease "had a blighting effect on farming operations and transport". <sup>94</sup> Since transport riders were deprived of their only source of livelihood and income, many were left destitute and forced to sell their labour cheaper on white farms or on the mines. The outbreak of rinderpest was significant because it succeeded in depriving many Africans of a source of income to survive, pay Hut Taxes and rent. Of greater importance was the effect of rinderpest on the cultivation of staple crops which had already suffered from the droughts and the locust infestations. With the death of African oxen, the cultivation of crops was severely impeded. From the Mapumulo division came the melancholy report of the Magistrate who remarked that "there will be no oxen to plough with at the next planting season". While the Magistrate of Umsinga noted that "the prospect of the ensuing harvest is a gloomy one owing to the loss of oxen". <sup>95</sup>

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92. Ibid., 1897, Annual Report of Magistrate of Weenen.

93. Ibid., Annual Report of Magistrate of Dundee.

94. Departmental Reports, Annual Reports of Magistrate of Inanda.

95. B.B.N.A., 1897, Annual Reports of Magistrates of Mapumulo and Umsinga.

The destruction of 90 per cent of their cattle not only affected African transport riding activities, cultivation and the loss of the chief form of "storable wealth", it also had an adverse effect on the social system.<sup>96</sup> Rinderpest placed many difficulties on the African institution of marriage, as there were hardly any cattle to meet the requirement of the ilobola system. "The importance of cattle in the social system of the Nguni", made the outbreak of this epidemic, "far more than simply an economic blow".<sup>97</sup> Many young men could not get married because of the death of the cattle required for ilobola. The postponement of many marriages resulted in disappointment for young people. Since, in accordance with the Natal Code of Native Law, ten head of cattle was stipulated as being the maximum payable for the wives of commoners, many young men of marriageable age found this standard to be far beyond their reach because of the rapid rise in the price of cattle.<sup>98</sup> The Magistrate of Weenen observed "the disorganisation of the social system because of rinderpest...is disastrous."<sup>99</sup> Many magistrates reported also on the rise in the claims of sexual immorality in the colony as a consequence of postponed or delayed marriages due to the death of cattle.

A considerable number of African cattle were thrown onto the market and purchased by whites who saved them by treatment with a rinderpest serum.<sup>100</sup> The Africans only recourse was to seek alternative employment off the land. The loss of cattle was felt most acutely because of the scarcity of milk for children.<sup>101</sup>

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96. Marks, Reluctant Rebellion, p.128.

97. Ballard, "Climate, Pestilence and Northern Nguni History", p.32.

98. Marks, Reluctant Rebellion, p.128.

99. B.B.N.A., 1897, Annual Report of Magistrate of Weenen.

100. D.R., 1897, Report of Commissioner of Agriculture.

101. B.B.N.A., 1897, Annual Report of Magistrate of Dundee.

There was a greater tendency to depend on white neighbours for food as the extent of cultivation in African farming communities diminished in the face of a shortage of oxen with which to plough. Tables IX and X are indicative of the number of cattle units and crop acreages before and after the outbreak of rinderpest.<sup>102</sup>

TABLE IX

YEAR	CATTLE
1890/1	516827
1891/2	517338
1892/3	518578
1893/4	504645
1894/5	508938
1896	494402
1897	114829
1898	75842

In 1894/5 Africans owned most of the cattle in the Umvoti and Ixopo Divisions.<sup>103</sup> African cattle herds amounted to 57 000 in the Umvoti Division while in the Ixopo division it was found that they owned 50 660 cattle. But in the year after the outbreak of rinderpest, the cattle population in both the divisions dropped to 3990 and 2214 respectively.<sup>104</sup>

102. Statistical Year Book of Colony of Natal, 1890-1898, Return of Cattle population and acreage of crops.

103. N.B.S., 1894-1895, Black Agriculture.

104. Ibid.

TABLE X (Acres in Crops, Quantity Produced, Total Acres Planted).

YEAR	MAIZE ACRES	QUANTITY MUIDS	SORGHUM ACRES	QUANTITY MUIDS	SWEET POTATOES ACRES	QUANTITY MUIDS	PUMPKINS ACRES	QUANTITY TONS	TOTAL ACRES PLANTED
1890/1	138987	579264	142008	379878	10966	189788	8722	11519	305367
105 { 1891/2	160032	591528	105465	385997	12957	218184	7763	19909	294338
1892/3	165489	790559	113763	477780	10839	185057	9848	17261	306670
1893/4	165119	628238	145378	441694	12044	158476	10635	54498	341318
1894/5	196383	667104	114582	423542	11926	99597	12060	19724	337203
06 { 1896	123018	243969	94144	206684	16748	130728	13344	19702	255257
07 { 1897	141356	515581	129911	382269	24400	264307	11740	45100	301236
1898	131369	497497	101844	337591	22972	198836	12524	32464	276483

105. Years of Droughts and Livestock Diseases.  
106. Year of Locust Invasions.  
107. Years of Rinderpest.

In 1896, 13000 acres of maize was planted in the Alfred County Division, but only 7000 muids were harvested,<sup>108</sup> these figures being one of the many examples of the extent of damage caused to crops by the locusts.

Rinderpest also placed considerable strain on the colony's finances. The Natal Government's financial estimates were thrown somewhat awry owing to the expenditure incurred in the state's effort to keep the disease out of the colony through fencing schemes and inoculation programmes. The large sum of £176 715 was spent on rinderpest control - thus injuring the colony's stringent budget.<sup>109</sup> This sum, however, comprised only 2,2 per cent of the total expenditure of the Colony (£8 018 143).<sup>110</sup>

Since the material position of Africans had been drastically altered, one would have expected to uncover evidence related to the difficulties experienced by them in paying the Hut Tax, as in 1896 - the year of the locust infestations. Strange though it may seem, this was not the case and the revenue derived from the Hut Taxes for 1897 realised the high sum of £94 038 as compared to £76 847 for 1896.<sup>111</sup> In 1897, Magistrates' reports reaffirmed the ease with which Hut Taxes were collected in that year of difficulty for the Africans of Natal. In his annual report, the Magistrate of Umsinga remarked of this unusual state of affairs,

108. N.B.B., 1896, Black Agriculture.

109. D.R., 1897, Report of Commissioner of Agriculture.

110. N.B.B., 1897, Statement of Expenditure.

111. Statistical Year Books for the Colony of Natal,  
1896, 1897, Statements of Revenue.

the Hut Tax which is the principal source of revenue was paid by natives with usual cheerfulness...fewer defaulters than in previous years...amount collected was larger. This dispels pessimistic view held by many that one of the effects of rinderpest would be a failure to pay the Hut Tax. 112

From Klip River it was reported that "although difficulties were anticipated as a direct result of rinderpest, natives paid taxes cheerfully and loyally unlike the previous year". The Magistrate of Weenen was surprised because "in my 23 years I have not known taxes paid more promptly".<sup>113</sup> A tentative conclusion which could be arrived at after an examination of the magistrates reports, is that despite the crushing cattle and crop losses they had suffered, Africans had succeeded in finding alternative means to pay the Hut Taxes, principally as were labourers.

By the year 1898, Africans in Natal and Zululand were affected by the arrival of renewed swarms of locusts which destroyed more crops. Standing maize crops were also destroyed by a new pest called grub (larvae of moths) and droughts. On the 12 March 1898, A.E.Titren, the Resident Magistrate of Umlazi complained, "owing to the early droughts, and grub and locusts, the result of this seasons crops will be a poor one, and far below the usual average".<sup>114</sup> While from Ingogo came the report of the Stranach Bros. who observed that,

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112. B.B.N.A., 1897, Annual Report of Magistrate of Umsinga.

113. Ibid., Annual Reports of Magistrates of Umsinga, Klip River and Weenen.

114. Natal Agricultural Journal and Mining Record, Report of Magistrate of Umlazi, 12 March 1898.

It is a sign of the times, and one greatly to be regretted, that many farmers (Africans) are desirous of selling out and investing their cattle in a more remunerative way, owing to the numerous plagues (locusts, rinderpests, grub), the uncertainty of the seasons, and the unreliable labour supply, a farmer's occupation of these late years been anything but a happy one. 117

With the destruction of crops, some of Natal's African farming community now looked more to wages as a means of paying the Hut Taxes.

It could be argued that the discovery of gold in the Transvaal, while having a favourable impact on Natal's economy, proved calamitous to the colony's African farming communities which suffered many harmful effects as a result of the discoveries. A significant trend of the years 1887-1895 was observed in the conjunction of political and economic forces that worked effectively to successfully end peasant persistence on the land, while simultaneously placing many impediments in the way of continued economic African independence. The interaction of these two processes thus made peasants more vulnerable in the years of the environmental calamities, resulting in suffering and difficulty in paying the rents and Hut Taxes. These taxes were, however paid with money earned by wage labour - a trend indicating that as many more Africans were deprived of the ability to exist independently - they were forced to enter the labour market.

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115. Ibid., Report of Stranach Bros of Ingogo, 12 March 1898.

### CONCLUSION

In assessing the evidence gathered for this thesis, a number of conclusions can be arrived at with regard to the operation of the Hut Tax system in colonial Natal. But since historians have not adequately covered this field of study in the past, the interpretations offered in this work are in some cases speculative.

Given the early history of Natal, it has been argued that when Britain assumed control of the colony in 1843, she found herself confronting numerous problematic issues, the most pressing and perplexing of which was related to the question of raising revenue. Since the colony's existing sources of revenue were restricted, the Metropolitan authorities focussed their attention on extracting the tax from the majority of Natal's population - the northern Nguni. The reason for this, it has been suggested, could be attributed to the contemporary colonial views which held, that since the colony was established, partly for the benefit and protection of the Africans, it was only "just" that they should be required to contribute towards the colony's financial maintenance - thus preventing any expenditure from being incurred on the part of the Home government. Subsequently, on the recommendation of Theophilus Shepstone, the Hut Tax of 7/- became an approved vehicle of taxation by the colonial authorities in 1849, and one of the most crucial elements

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in the overall administration of Africans.<sup>1</sup> However, what must be recognised is that the Hut Tax, when introduced, was accepted by the African inhabitants because of the fear of banishment to the Zulu kingdom or other hostile territories from which they had fled as refugees. The existence of such fear embedded as it was in the minds of the colony's black population also assists one in understanding why the system endured successfully for so long a period.

But when examining the Hut Tax from the perspective of the 'civilizing process' it could be argued that it was an integral part of the wider Shepstone's system for African affairs which stressed security and economy, while simultaneously being guided in some instances, by the broader philanthropic considerations taking place in Britain. Political pressures from liberal parliamentarians, mission societies, and anti-slavery movements in Britain thus acted as a tempering influence over the Colonial Office which was compelled, at times, to inject so-called "civilizing" guidelines into their policies towards Africans.

Given the grim example of the Eastern Cape experience, and the bloody measures adopted by the settlers, the Colonial Office was determined to exercise strict control over African affairs in Natal. This policy led to a clash with some settler interests. The idea of a "civilizing mission" was accompanied by the belief that adequate land was necessary in order to provide a modicum of economic security

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1. C.O. 879/1/xiii, pp.61-62. Despatch from Pine to Duke of Newcastle, 29 May 1854.

for Africans, and therefore prevent a repetition of the Eastern Cape experience which triggered off violence between the settlers and Africans, because of the acute competition for land. With this consideration in mind, it was found that one of the noteworthy features of the Shepstonian system was that it made available to Africans adequate land and also certain guarantees to land up to the mid-1880s. This enabled them to live a more stable life in a political and material sense than their counterparts in the Eastern Cape. Thus it becomes clear that since their lives were bearable and relatively comfortable, they were not desperate enough to rebel against the Hut Tax system which, as mentioned earlier, endured successfully throughout the nineteenth century in Natal.

Although the vast majority of settlers were elated when the Hut Tax was introduced, it has been illustrated that their reaction changed to one of agitation when it was discovered that the new tax failed to compel Africans to enter their services as wage labourers. From evidence studied it was also found that white commercial farmers lacked the political and economic power that was vital in challenging firstly, the Colonial Office which was solely interested in raising revenue and maintaining security, and secondly, the merchants, traders, landowners and land companies who regarded African prosperity on the land as beneficial to their material interests.

A significant conclusion to emerge from this discussion is that since the dictates of economy and security were uppermost in the minds of Shepstone and the colonial authorities, a clash with the settlers

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was unavoidable, as their interests evolved chiefly around increased African taxation and the recruitment of African labour. Nevertheless, by 1860, the Hut Tax system was firmly established under Colonial Office control.

An indispensable dimension of this thesis has been to examine what the implications of the Hut Tax were for the Africans, and what it demanded insofar as earning a living was concerned. An interesting observation was that they plunged themselves into the emerging capitalist system with ingenuity, by resorting to expanding agricultural production with renewed vigour. While some African peasants reached a modicum of material prosperity, the more humble majority managed at least to produce sufficient surplus to offset their cash needs, and avoid wage labour. However, this was only possible for as long as sufficient land was available - a situation which prevailed until the mid-1880s. With the introduction of the Hut Tax and the increased efforts to produce more agricultural wealth, the economic role of African women was increased. This view is considered valid since the bulk of the agricultural labour, that is, field labour, was performed mostly by women, the men devoting their labours to stock-keeping and trade.<sup>2</sup> Men therefore, resented having to pay the tax on huts in which older women resided, because these women were no longer economically productive. Most women were thus "trapped in the subsistence sector within the confines of the pre-colonial economy".<sup>3</sup>

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2. J.D.Beall, "Class, Race and Gender : the Political Economy of Women in Colonial Natal" (M.A.thesis, History, University of Natal, 1982), p.74.
  3. Ibid., p.83.

Perhaps the most remarkable effect of the Hut Tax was the rapid incorporation of the colony's northern Nguni inhabitants into the emerging capitalist economy.

Given the broad and complex nature of the colony's economy, consideration has been given in this work, to the manner in which the system of the Hut Tax was influenced by the changing economic fortunes of Natal. With the colony being overcome by the depression of the mid-1860s, not only were the commercial and agricultural sectors affected, but the colonial economy also severely suffered as a whole. Since the increased customs duties had failed to raise the general revenue, it was not surprising to find the authorities turning once again to the black farming communities. Since the Bill which had been passed by the Legislative Council, with the view to amending the Hut Tax, did not receive the approval of the Colonial Office, for fear of African resistance, an alternative tax on African marriages was imposed in 1869.<sup>4</sup> With regard to the introduction of such a tax, it has been argued that the marriage tax was not effective in augmenting the general revenue, although a decline in polygamy was perceived. Although the opening of the Kimberley diamond mines in the 1870s marked the recovery of Natal's economy, more money was required to construct railways. Hence after very little discussion, it was decided to double the Hut Tax to 14/- in 1875. Most white settlers had welcomed the decision to double the tax, as an improvement in Black labour supplies was anticipated as a result. Moreover, some settler farmers had been adversely affected by African economic operations in commercial agriculture.

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4. S.N.A., 1/8/9., No.176. Circular from Shepstone to Magistrates, 6 January 1870.

The Colonial Office's decision to double the Hut Tax resulted from the emergence of Lord Carnarvon's federation scheme which required the strengthening of Britain's control, financial and well as political, in South Africa. There are two issues of importance in this discussion. Firstly, there was for the first time, a conjunction of the interests of the Colonial Office and that of the white colonists, but for divergent reasons. Secondly, one is able to perceive how the economic status of the colony was dictated after what was perceived as a solution to the revenue crisis (that is, the Marriage Tax and the doubling of the Hut Tax). Recognition must also be given to the fact that the metropolitan authorities were reluctant to raise the tax in the beginning as demanded by the settlers because they believed that security always begat economy. The Colonial Office held the view that an increased Hut Tax could undermine security because of the possibility of it resulting in costly rebellion which could hamper the economic and administrative structure of the colony. These views, could perhaps best be explained by the existence of the gradualist approach adopted by the metropolitan authorities who refused to allow the white settlers to initiate radical policies in the sensitive area of African affairs.

Looking at the period following the doubling of the Hut Tax, it has been suggested that the Africans had been successful in responding to the demands of the new tax of 14/-. The ease with which they complied with this demand could be ascribed to the autarchic state which they enjoyed, and which resulted from increased

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agricultural activities. On the other hand, the doubled Hut Tax proved beneficial to the colony's general revenue which increased dramatically. African prosperity was enhanced also by the outbreak of the Anglo-Zulu War and the consumption of goods and services by imperial and colonial troops - thus intensifying African production to satisfy these demands. So the period from the mid-1870s to the mid-1880s can justifiably be considered to represent the 'heyday' of African prosperity, with regard to farming and trade. The existence of this period of prosperity revealed that the colony's black farming communities could easily pay the doubled Hut Tax while also attending to other material needs. Since all economic indicators pointed to Africans being in a generally healthy economic state, spokesmen from the settler community continued to complain about the acute labour shortage. However, when, in 1883 the economic fortunes of the colony and its inhabitants were affected by another depression, Africans faced reduced prices of stock and produce, a drop in wage rates, exorbitant rents and an increasing shortage of land - all of which began to affect their ability to pay the Hut Tax.<sup>5</sup> Given these difficulties, more and more of the colony's African inhabitants proceeded down the road to economic distress and decline.

Finally it has been suggested that Africans, as a result of the unfavourable circumstances prevailing in the colonial political economy, faced the end of a fairly sustained period of prosperity and the beginning of their decline. With the discovery of gold in the

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5. Bundy, Rise and Fall of the S.A. Peasantry, p.182

Transvaal in 1886, there followed a period of fervent commercialization in agriculture. Africans were becoming less and less able to compete with white farmers because of their deteriorating economic circumstances.<sup>6</sup> Besides the effect of economic forces, political factors also played a significant role in their decline, notably the granting of responsible government to Natal in 1893. This transition exacerbated the African's dilemma since the government's policy centred around their ability to coerce the black population into the wage market by squeezing them off the land and thus depriving them of their sources of independent income. Alternative sources of income, such as migrant labour were therefore sought as a means of paying their taxes, rents and other cash demands.

In the face of the devastation of crops and cattle experienced as a result of the drought and locust invasions of 1896, and the rinderpest epidemic of 1897, Africans were deprived of their major sources of livelihood on the land. At the same time, many others experienced dire difficulty in paying the Hut Tax. It has therefore been indicated in this work that during the phase of the locust invasions, the Hut Tax revenue fell drastically. In view of the existence of such factors, it has been possible to show the conjunction of economic and environmental forces and their effect on the ability of Africans to pay the Hut Tax.

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6. Ibid., p.184.

Given the evidence, it is suggested that up to the mid-1880s, Africans had displayed the ability to pay the Hut Tax with relative ease through the sale of agricultural surplus which fetched high prices and through the pursuit of independent occupations such as transport riding - thus, avoiding the compulsion to resort to wage labour. Regrettably, the ensuing years were ones of trepidation for the colony's African inhabitants as they were severely affected by the depression of 1883-1886, and in the 1890s, by droughts, cattle diseases, locusts, and a growing land shortage. With the onset of responsible government in 1893 and the passing of the reins of power into the hands of the settlers, the plight of Africans was aggravated. By means of unrelenting legislative and taxation measures, the white inhabitants had succeeded in squeezing thousands of African peasants off the land - after all, their whole policy epitomised the urgency of compelling Africans to enter the wage market. As indicated earlier, the aggressive attitudes and actions of the members of Natal's responsible government ministry facilitated the economic decline of the black population which found it more arduous a task to pay the Hut Tax through the sale of agricultural surplus only, and through other independent occupations. In any case, instead of a surplus of crops, a deficit was impending. Admittedly, after the locust invasions of 1896, and the rinderpest of 1897, the recovery of the black farming sector was extremely difficult. Since many Africans were divested of their remaining independent sources of sustenance necessary to pay

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the 'awesome' tax demanded by the Supreme Chief, wage labour was reluctantly contemplated as being the only solution to their dilemma. Ultimately, the labour market of the Transvaal eagerly awaited those who flocked thither in increasing numbers.

A significant issue which needs to be confronted at this juncture, is that which relates to the crucial question - "whose interests did the Hut Tax serve". At the outset, it must be emphasised that the Hut Tax system was a viable one for the Colonial Office for it served its interests admirably by contributing an annual sum that was more than adequate to pay for colonial rule over the indigenous African people who were colonised. The following graph which charts the rise of the Hut Tax reveals the rate at which this contribution increased annually, usually to the satisfaction of colonial officials.<sup>7</sup> (See Graph p.181).

The use of a skeleton European staff and African chiefs co-opted to be administrators in the tax collection, made this tax system, by far, an easily administered and economic one. It also served the interests of the British imperial authorities in providing the essential security and economy that was required in the administration of Natal. However, of greater importance, is the fact that it provided a sound financial foundation to the imperial and colonial authorities' administration of African affairs. Theophilus

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7. C.O. 879/1/39, p.40. Statement of Revenue and Expenditure for years 1850-1855; and N.B.B.; Statement of Revenue, 1862-1898.

Shepstone's long tenure as Secretary for Native Affairs was chiefly ensured by the ability of African administration to pay for itself. Moreover, it becomes obvious that Shepstone must have devoted so much of his energy to Hut Tax collection, that it eventually represented the material cornerstone of his success. One must also refrain from losing sight of the fact that with the exception of the year of the locust invasions, at no other time was any notable loss detected in the Hut Tax revenue.

Shepstone's administration of African affairs was not, however, without its critics, one of whom stated that :

You have not elevated the Natives of Natal, you have not raised them, you have not educated them : they are barbarous, and you have designedly left them in a state of barbarism. 8

Shepstone, in the eyes of some, was more concerned with the collection of the Hut Tax rather than the redistribution of this revenue on public services and amenities beneficial to Natal's African population.

It is suggested that the interests of Africans were not served by the Hut Tax system nor were they assured of the benefits to be enjoyed in a capitalist system in which they were eager participants. This does seem to be an inequitable feature, especially as they contributed between almost one third of the state's revenue in the earlier decades of Colonial rule to around one-sixth from the 1880s onward. As new sources generated by the expansion of the Natal Government Railways, land sales and the expansion of trade, Hut Tax contribution declined proportionally.

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8. Quoted in Brookes and Webb, *Natal*, p. 111.

Moreover, the area, which encompasses the "benefits", does appear to be a nebulous one because it is perplexing to arrive at a firm conclusion of what were really considered "benefits". Nevertheless, a broad "benefit" could be discerned in the modicum of security provided by the British garrison which protected the colony's African population from harassment by the Zulu Kingdom. This implied that they could cultivate regularly and safely while simultaneously being assured of some regular government. Therefore, in a material security sense it could be argued that the Hut Tax represented not only a tax in the modern sense, but also a form of tribute to the Supreme Chief for the protection afforded by the state.

In spite of this "benefit", African taxes were also beneficial to the colonial state since a significant portion of the revenue was utilized for purposes other than direct material and social benefits for Natal's African inhabitants. Regrettably, out of their total contribution to the revenue, only £5 000 was reserved for "Native Purposes" in accordance with the Charter of 1856, while in 1892 the sum set aside for the "education and welfare of natives", increased to £10 000.<sup>9</sup> Despite this increase, the large surplus of tax was still used for the colony and its white inhabitants, rather than for Africans. Civil and public services, as pointed out in Chapter Four were minimal for the black section of the population in comparison to

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9. Ibid., p.177.

those established for the colony's minority of whites. When the tax had been introduced in 1849, it had been affirmed by Lord Grey that the entire amount collected as Hut Tax was to be expended on institutions and other services of benefit to the African population. Unfortunately, this directive was modified in 1852, when the new Secretary of State for the Colonies, declared that part of the tax revenue was to be made available for the general services of the colony.<sup>10</sup>

The colony's inequitable educational policy for Africans merits scrutiny because it epitomises what the colony had in mind for this part of the population. Most African schools adopted a curriculum which emphasised industrial training. For boys, this implied woodwork, metal work, gardening and so on, while for girls, it meant domestic duties. Reporting with approval, on the industrial training provided for girls at the St Francis Xavier Roman Catholic Mission School, the Inspector of Native Schools observed that :

The girls are instructed in needlework, washing, ironing, and other household duties by one of the sisters; as was explained, the aim being to render them good and useful domestic servants, and it appeared to me that the means taken were likely to secure the end in view. 11

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10. C.O. 879/1/xiii, p.35. Despatch from Grey to Pine, 4 May 1854.  
 11. D.R., 1893, Report of Inspector of Native Education.

It is not mere conjecture to say that the colony instead of actually educating Africans, trained women to ultimately use their talents as domestic servants, while the men were instructed so that they could become labourers on white farms, or semi-skilled labourers in the towns. From this it could be discerned that since Natal was part of the capitalist periphery, "the main economic task of the colonial state was to create a labour force in those sectors in which finance capital could be most profitably invested".<sup>12</sup> Although the African farming communities began to decline after the mid-1880s, their attitude towards education began to advance. In 1887, a government Industrial Native School was opened in the Zwaartkop Location with an attendance of only thirteen pupils. The day school suffered a similar fate as it failed to attract Africans living in the vicinity. Africans had a tendency to mistrust the object of attending a school because they believed, not without any just cause, that they would ultimately have to pay for attending. Chief Umzumbe believed "that to educate the children, is but to spoil them". In that year, government grants-in-aid were made to fifty-four African schools with a total attendance of 2 943. By 1889, government grants were made to sixty-three schools with an attendance of 3 307.<sup>13</sup> According to a report issued by the Inspector of Native Education in 1889, there was an increasing appreciation of education of their part. He admitted, however, that a rather paltry sum was expended on African education.

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12. D.R., 1887, Report of Inspector of Native Education.

13. Ibid., 1883.

From the study of evidence related to education in the Colony, it was found that the government spent approximately £1 3s 2d per child examined. The Inspector of Education, rather surprisingly suggested at the time, the necessity of building more elementary schools that would have encompassed the whole colony instead of a few "showy centres".<sup>14</sup> By the 1890s, chiefs began showing an interest in education, while parents enthusiastically desired to give their children the benefit of being able to read and write.<sup>15</sup> From the preceeding discussion, it could be argued that although the colony's black inhabitants may have realized that they were on the road to moral, social and economic stagnation, they were not prepared to deny their children the benefits of the little education that was offered to them. Unfortunately, the colonial government stubbornly refused to acknowledge this determination on the part of some Africans to be educated and to direct their efforts towards their advancement.

After all, in accordance with the aims of the Shepstonian system, it was considered to be of paramount importance to keep the Africans "in order" rather than to elevate their lifestyle<sup>16</sup> or to allow them to assume a greater say in the political and economic spheres of the colonial system. With the coming to power in 1893 of

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14. *Ibid.*, 1883.

15. *Ibid.*, 1893.

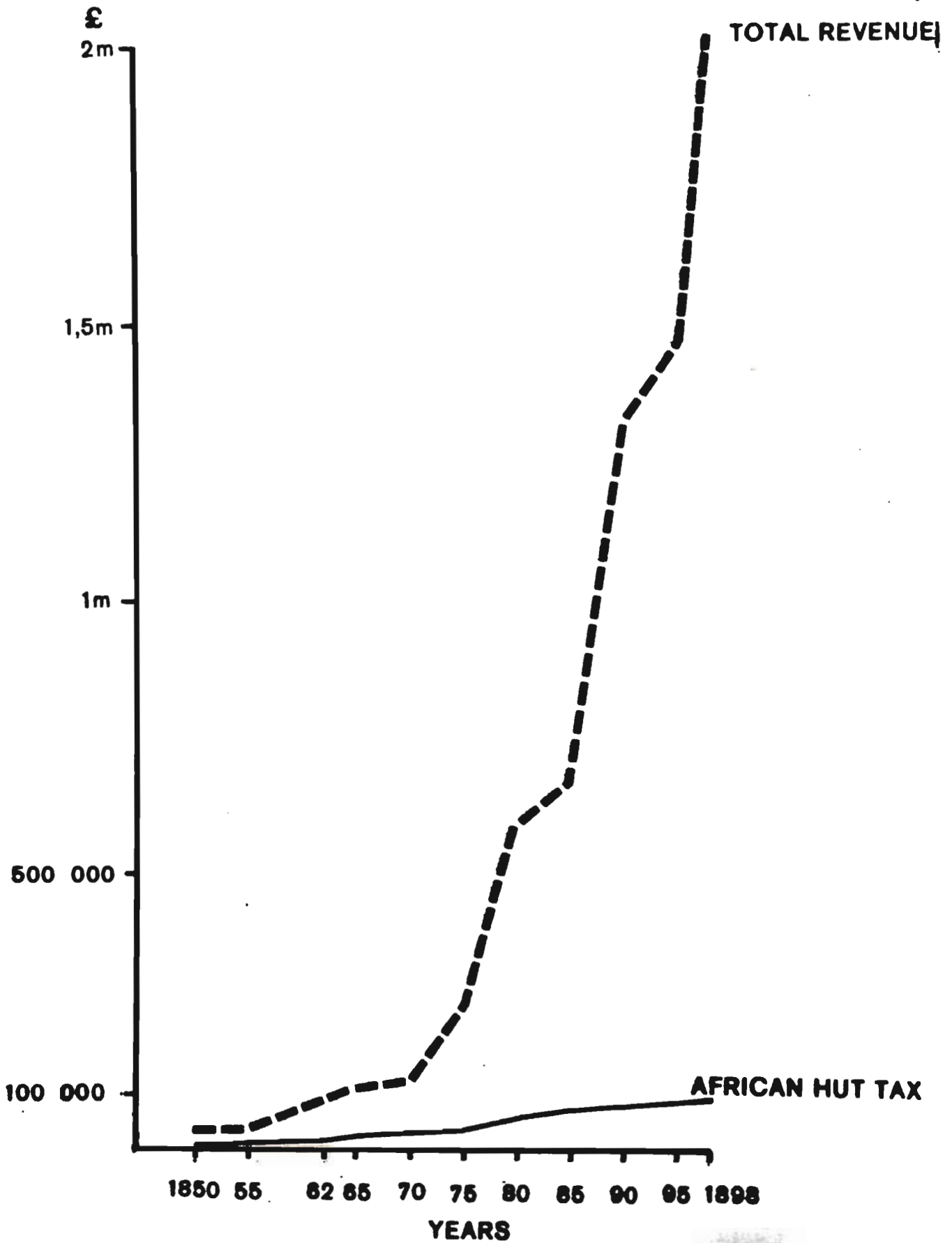
16. Brookes and Webb, History of Natal, p.167.

Natal's white colonists, the destinies of the African majority and the Hut Tax came to represent oppression - a system of authoritarian rule and taxation without representation within the British imperial and colonial system.

It could conclusively be argued that the Hut Tax was ingenious, and well established by 1898 and since the period under review was not marred by any mass revolt, it could be claimed that the Hut Tax was a suitable vehicle for disciplining Africans into accepting British rule. By recognising that the Africans did acquiesce, by paying the Hut Tax, a significant inference to be drawn from this is that the tax was not onerous enough to be evaded or resisted by violence. The decision was taken to conclude this study in the year 1898, because the turn of the century marked the end of the long period of peaceful African administration, stability and the acquiescence of the colony's African population in paying the Hut Tax. Because of greater economic and political pressures being brought to bear on Africans through repressive taxation or the Poll Tax, the growing disequilibrium which was a feature of Black-White relations in early twentieth century Natal, culminated in the period of the 1906/8 disturbances in Natal and Zululand.

I think they will remember  
this as the age of lamentations,  
The age of broken minds and  
broken souls,  
The age of hurt creatures  
sobbing out their sorrow to  
the rhythm of the blues -  
The music of last Africa's  
desolation,...

**COLONY OF NATAL**  
**HUT TAX COLLECTION 1850-1898**



BIBLIOGRAPHY1. MANUSCRIPT SOURCES

- (a) Official
- (b) Unofficial

2. PRINTED PRIMARY SOURCES

- (a) Official
- (b) Unofficial

3. CONTEMPORARY WORKS

- (a) Books
- (b) Articles

4. RECENT WORKS

- (a) Books
- (b) Articles
- (c) Unpublished papers
- (d) Unpublished theses.

## 1. MANUSCRIPT SOURCES

### (a) Official

#### (i) Records of the Colony of Natal: In the Pietermaritzburg Depot of the South African Archives

Colonial Secretary's Office. Correspondence between the Colonial Secretary of Natal and officials in the colony, particularly the Secretary for Native Affairs and the resident magistrates of the various districts. The bulk of evidence extracted from this official source produced the essential information on the role of the magistrates in the system of Tax collection.

#### Government House Papers

Secretary for Native Affairs Papers. These papers were unquestionably one of the inestimably valuable sources related to the collection of Hut Taxes and the functioning of the system of African administration in the colony. Particularly useful was the correspondence between the resident magistrates and the Secretary for Native Affairs during the years of the natural disasters which helped one to understand why the ability of the African population to pay the Hut Tax was severely affected.

## 2. PRINTED PRIMARY SOURCES

### (a) Official

#### (i) Colonial Office Confidential Prints. C.O. 879 series.

This series of official Colonial Office correspondence helped, to a large extent, to unravel the actual motives underlying the Colonial Office's decision to impose a Hut tax on the northern Nguni inhabitants of Natal. The correspondence also revealed the view of the Colonial Office on the acute land shortage which Africans experienced from the mid-1880s onwards. The volumes consulted in this series are as follows:

C.O. 879/1/xxiii	-	Despatches, reports
C.O. 879/2/5	-	Papers on Native Affairs
C.O. 879/3/26	-	Administration of Finances
C.O. 879/6/54	-	Proposed Construction of Railways
C.O. 879/7/63	-	Native Affairs, Draft Despatch to Governor.
C.O. 879/7/64	-	Draft Despatch to Governor
C.O. 879/7/65	-	Native Affairs; Mr Shepstone's Memorandum
C.O. 879/1/7/66	-	Memorandum
C.O. 879/7/68	-	Draft Ordinance to amend Native law
C.O. 879/8/80	-	Sir G. Wolseley's despatch on Native Policy
C.O. 879/9/94	-	Law for better administration of justice among Natives
C.O. 879/14/158	-	Transvaal-Zulu Boundary, Papers and report of Committee
C.O. 879/18/228	-	Contribution of Natal to Zulu War expenses; Correspondence
C.O. 879/23/309	-	Affairs : Correspondence

(ii) Records and Reports of the Colony of Natal

In the Don Africana Library, Durban.

This collection of official printed primary material provided all the statistical data related to an assessment of the ability of Africans to pay the tax on Huts that was demanded of them by the colonial government and the various other themes of this dissertation. The reports of the two Natal government Commissions shed much light on the views of the white colonists, while the Legislative Council Debates proved that African taxation was a highly controversial issue. The following official publications contributed information that was essential to this entire work.

Blue Book of the Colony Natal

Statistical Year Book of the Colony of Natal

Departmental Reports

Blue Book for Native Affairs

Natal Agricultural Journal and Mining Records

Debates of the Legislative Council

Proceedings and Report of the Commission appointed to Inquire into the Past and Present State of the Kafirs in the District of Natal, and to Report upon their Future Government, and to suggest such arrangements as will tend to secure the Peace and Welfare of the District, 1852-53.

Report of the Natal Native Commission, 1881-2.

(b) Unofficial

(i) Newspapers

The Natal Mercury and to a greater extent, The Natal Witness were the two most important newspapers dealing with the Hut Tax system. Of significance was the observation that these newspapers were vehement in their criticism of the African population while also simultaneously exaggerating the possibility of an African rising. These sources provided one with an opportunity of perceiving settler attitudes towards African taxation.

Illustrated London News, London.

The Natal Independent

The Natal Mercury

The Natal Witness

(ii) Published Documentary Sources

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Webb, C. de B. and Wright, J.B., (eds.), The James Stuart Archive Volume I., (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 1976).

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