

cinematic critique related to the quality rather than content of colonial films. Oral interviewees bare this social engineering strategy out: while most did not remember any particular films, they did remember the lessons in agriculture, health practices, and morality. By the 1950s, colonial officials began to take African critiques of colonial films more seriously, giving greater priority to narrative style and aesthetics, and involving more Africans in film production. As Ndanyi argues, 'by protesting against badly produced instructional films, African audiences inspired a national dialogue about changes in cinema production' (128).

*Instructional Cinema* offers a glimpse into the making of colonial cinematic cultures; Ndanyi puts colonial Kenya into dialogue with other areas of the continent and deftly weaves examples from Australia, Canada, the UK, and the US into his study. In addition, he highlights underexplored themes in studies of colonial cinema in Africa of labor, masculinity, childhood, and the gendered dynamics of film production and colonial education.

Ndanyi's economical and elegant writing style and excellent use of images make this book a pleasurable read. While provocative and largely convincing, Ndanyi does leave the reader wanting more. While examples are drawn from multiple regions, with greater emphasis on the larger population concentrations in central and western Kenya, the reader is left to wonder: how 'national' was the debate about cinematic production? Were there regional variations in the response to instructional films based on diverse religious, linguistic, and cultural audiences? What did vernacular presses say about colonial films? Who was involved in these film productions? Ndanyi is to be credited for his variety of sources; yet engagement with a wider range of oral interviewees, particularly women, as well as closer analysis of the films themselves and integration of vernacular sources would have enriched an already fascinating study.

For undergraduates, this book offers an accessible and enjoyable introduction to the world of cinema in colonial Kenya. For scholars of African history and colonial film history, this book demonstrates the 'bidirectional' nature of instructional films in 'educating' colonial subjects and the value of studying the active role of Africans in the translation, appropriation, and production of colonial cinematic cultures.

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## Administering the KwaZulu Bantustan

### *Bantu Authorities: Apartheid's System of Race and Ethnicity*

By Veronica Ehrenreich-Risner. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2021.  
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Veronica Ehrenreich-Risner's *Bantu Authorities: Apartheid's System of Race and Ethnicity* uses the Mthunzini District in South Africa's former KwaZulu homeland as a case study to explore Bantu Authorities, an elaborate form of indirect rule created by the apartheid state to govern South

Africa's rural Black population. With the passing of the 1951 Bantu Authorities Act, a three-tiered governance system was established, empowering African chiefs to rule ethnically defined subjects, and ultimately leading to the creation of the KwaZulu homeland and nine other pseudostates, which the anti-apartheid movement often referred to as bantustans.

At its core, the book's major claim is that the establishment of the Bantu Authorities system was central to the maintenance of apartheid and without it, apartheid would have crumbled far earlier (12). As a subsidiary claim, Ehrenreich-Risner also insists that the establishment of Bantu Authorities was primarily geared towards the needs of white capitalism; that it served the interests of racial segregationists was of secondary importance to apartheid's officials. This claim however is mostly built on Harold Wolpe's 1972 'Cheap labour thesis', not significant new primary research.<sup>1</sup> Rather, it is another argument she makes, that the Bantu Authorities system coopted the institution of the chieftaincy, perverting 'traditional' forms of rule, that is most explicitly discussed and woven throughout the book, demonstrating a key mechanism used by the white state to try secure African acceptance and the longevity of the system. Though the book would have benefitted from more careful editing, the range of archival sources and oral histories relating specifically to Mthunzini District means *Bantu Authorities* offers readers local insights into a complex governance structure implemented across the country.

*Bantu Authorities* is split into four parts, 'Acceptance', 'Consolidation', 'Devolution', and 'Transition'. In Part One, Ehrenreich-Risner examines the Department of Native Affairs' various efforts to secure Africans' acceptance of the Bantu Authorities system. In the back and forth between white Native Commissioners, chiefs, and ordinary Africans we get a feel for the *realpolitik* and compromises made in the day-to-day efforts to implement the structures of Bantu Authorities. While the rural revolts in Mpondoland, Sekhukhuneland, Zeerust, and elsewhere dominate the historiography on the introduction of Bantu Authorities, Ehrenreich-Risner's counter-examples give insights into less dramatic forms of resistance to the system.<sup>2</sup>

In Part Two Ehrenreich-Risner explores two processes she deems central to the Bantu Authorities system in Mthunzini: the financing of Bantu Authority governance structures and the forced removals of Zulu communities as part of the social engineering central to the bantustans. The careful unpacking of budgets and financial regulations offer fine-grained detail into the constraints and incentives shaping chiefs' responses to the implementation of the 1951 act. Exploring two case studies of forced removals in the Mthunzini District, Ehrenreich-Risner then goes on to demonstrate that the Bantu Authority system did not produce a uniform response from chiefs: in 1959 the interim chief in KwaDlangezwa worked with the white state to facilitate the removal of his subjects to make space for the construction of the University of Zululand; in the 1970s, the interim chief in Mangete resisted the removal of the residents settled on the land known as Reserve 7A.

Parts Three and Four take the story of Bantu Authorities system into the last two decades of apartheid. These two sections offer far less to scholars already well versed in the history of KwaZulu and late apartheid South Africa. While, for example, in Chapter Five, readers get some interesting glimpses into the complex efforts at Africanizing the Bantustan administration (225), much of the original material here is overshadowed by a broad overview of national-level politics. In a separate chapter, the career of the controversial Chief Minister of KwaZulu, Mangosutho Buthelezi, is used as a vehicle to explore the Bantu Authorities system as experienced from within, but the heavy reliance on secondary literature means that Ehrenreich-Risner opens no new lines of

<sup>1</sup>H. Wolpe, 'Capitalism and cheap labour-power in South Africa: from segregation to apartheid,' *Economy and Society*, 1:4 (1972), 425–56.

<sup>2</sup>P. Delius, 'Sebatatgomo: migrant organization, the ANC and the Sekhukhuneland revolt', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 15:4 (1989), 581–615; S. Zondi, 'Peasant struggles in the 1950s: GaMatlala and Zeerust', in South African Democracy Education Trust (ed.), *The Road to democracy in South Africa, Vol. 1, 1960–1970* (Cape Town, 2004), 177–208; T. Kepe and L. Ntsebeza, *Rural Resistance in South Africa. The Mpondo Revolt After Fifty Years* (Leiden, 2011).

inquiry. The book closes with a lament about the 2003 Traditional Governance and Leadership Framework Act, which gave chiefs similar authoritarian powers to those they received from the apartheid-era Bantu Authorities system. In this epilogue chapter, Ehrenreich-Risner implies that compromises made at the negotiating table in the early 1990s paved the way for the regressive 2003 legislation. While there may be some truth to this, careful historical work is required to build on what we already know about the African National Congress' changing approach to the chieftaincy in the 1990s and the link between decisions made in the dying days of apartheid and laws passed a decade into democratic rule.<sup>3</sup>

Parts Three and Four notwithstanding, the empirical detail laid out, especially in the first half of the book, sheds light on variations in the Bantu Authorities system and the state's attempts at walking the fine line in 'gaining ... African compliance without consent' (9). These insights are not sustained as an analytic framework, however, and instead the overarching arguments of the book present a familiar picture of twentieth century South African history. The book's main claim, that Bantu Authorities were central to rural apartheid governance, is well known by historians of South Africa. Though Ehrenreich-Risner says that '[a]cademic writings touched on Bantu Authorities but never identified it as the template for rural apartheid or acknowledged the system's influence on urban apartheid' (xiv), she also cites — albeit just a fraction of — the key literature that points to this exact fact (11).

There is also already an extensive literature on how the institution of the chieftaincy was shaped by the apartheid state.<sup>4</sup> Some of the most cutting-edge scholarship on this topic complicates the concepts of tradition and ethnicity, showing how African elites and chiefs were often active participants in what Ehrenreich-Risner refers to as 'the colonial distortion of ubukhosi (chieftaincy)' (15).<sup>5</sup> While none of the major historical actors in *Bantu Authorities* are presented without agency, closer attention to the complexities of Zulu identity and ethnicity may have opened up new avenues to explore the legitimizing tools used by white and Black officials to keep Bantu Authorities in place for over 40 years. Ultimately then, while *Bantu Authorities* offers interesting and lesser-known details about the eponymous system, for most scholars, the book's main arguments will come as no surprise.

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<sup>3</sup>See, for example, B. Oomen, *Chiefs in South Africa: Law, Power & Culture in the Post-Apartheid Era* (Oxford, 2005); L. Ntsebeza, *Democracy Compromised. Chiefs and the Politics of Land in South Africa* (Leiden, 2005); T. Thihe, 'The boundaries of tradition: an examination of the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act,' *Harvard Human Rights Journal*, online symposium (2014); M. Buthelezi and D. Skosana (eds.), *Traditional Leaders in a Democracy. Resources, Respect and Resistance*. (Midrand, 2019); W. Beinart, R. Kingwill, and G. Capps (eds.), *Land, Law and Chiefs in Rural South Africa: Contested histories and Current Struggles* (Johannesburg, 2021).

<sup>4</sup>For a helpful overview, see P. Delius, 'Mistaking form for substance. Reflections on the key dynamics of precolonial politics and their implications for the role of chiefs in contemporary South Africa' in Buthelezi and Skosana, *Traditional Leaders in a Democracy*, 24–49.

<sup>5</sup>See for example S. Ally, "'If you are hungry and a man promises you mealies, will you not follow him?'" South African Swazi ethnic nationalism, 1931–1986', *South African Historical Journal*, 63:3 (2011), 414–30; J. Kelly, *To Swim with Crocodiles: Land, Violence, and Belonging in South Africa, 1800–1996*, (Pietermaritzburg, 2019); A. Parcels, "'The empire that Shaka Zulu was unable to bring about': ethnicizing sovereignty in apartheid South Africa, 1959–1970', *Journal of Social History*, 56: 1 (2022), 195–225.