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Research Article

Homepage: www.MC-caddogap.com**INVESTIGATING THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT, SOCIOECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ASPECTS OF THE DUKUDUKU FOREST COMMUNITY IN KWAZULU-NATAL UP TO THE 1990s****Patrick Nyathi****Oluwatoyin A. Ajani***Languages and Social Sciences Education, University of Zululand, South Africa***ABSTRACT**

The history of the Dukuduku forest is punctuated by four instances of government-initiated efforts to forcefully displace its inhabitants, spanning from the 1930s to the early 1990s. Initially, these endeavours aimed to create space for the expansion of commercial forestry and subsequently for nature conservation. However, neither the state nor environmentalists achieved their desired outcomes. This study adopts a comprehensive approach, utilizing diverse sources, including archival materials such as newspaper articles, meeting minutes, and written documents. Furthermore, it integrates insights obtained from in-depth interviews conducted with local residents and traditional leaders within the region. The interviewee pool comprised 25 participants, including traditional leaders, senior citizens, and subsistence farmers. These semi-structured interviews played a pivotal role in gathering a rich and extensive dataset. Subsequently, a content analysis was performed to offer a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. The repeated attempts at forced relocations significantly disrupted and compromised the livelihoods of the forest residents. These attempts encountered strong resistance, particularly during the 1990s, leading to the ultimate failure of the state's efforts to displace the people from the forest. This paper combines various sources, including archival materials like newspapers and meeting minutes, along with written and oral materials derived from in-depth interviews involving traditional leaders, local environmental activists, land claimants, and community members. The central argument presented in this paper revolves around the state's contradictory approach to relocation. Initially geared towards facilitating commercial forestry expansion, this stance later shifted towards nature conservation. This paradox has further complicated the land issue in the area, as previously displaced individuals have initiated land claims. Additionally, forest inhabitants employed various tactics to resist evictions, which were largely successful but resulted in the significant destruction of a substantial portion of Dukuduku's unique indigenous forest.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Dukuduku forest, located in northern KwaZulu-Natal, has been at the centre of a long-standing dispute between its indigenous residents and the state since the 1930s. This forest holds a complex and contentious history characterized by multiple instances of forced displacement of its inhabitants to other regions of Mtubatuba. In an era preceding the arrival of the first European settlers in South Africa, the Dukuduku area fell under the jurisdiction of African traditional authorities, often referred to as chieftainships. The indigenous

population owned and inhabited the land, leading self-sufficient lives where land served as their primary means of production and was collectively held, belonging to the community as a whole (Mzala, 1988, p. 22). These communities shared a communal production structure centered around homesteads, interconnected within chiefdoms, and overseen by clan leaders or chiefs (Nigel, 2012, p. 11). However, the arrival of Europeans on South African soil marked the beginning of a two-century-long struggle by Africans to defend their land rights (Mzala, 1988, p. 22).

In August 1930, during British control of Zululand, Dukuduku was officially declared a state forest through Government Notice No. 1479, dated August 15, 1930 (Ndlovu, 2013, p. 15). This sudden transition transformed Dukuduku into state-owned land, effectively categorizing its indigenous inhabitants as 'squatters' on their ancestral soil (Sundnes, 2013). This marked the start of a series of evictions that displaced the indigenous African population from Dukuduku. In 1946, a consequential interdepartmental land exchange further divided Dukuduku into two distinct sections. The northern part became a forest reserve, while the southern expanse transformed into a significant agricultural area (ibid.). This geographical division ultimately led to the creation of a farming village in the southwestern part of the forest, named Monzi (ibid.). Despite historical and contemporary government narratives referring to the African inhabitants of Dukuduku as 'invaders' and 'squatters,' a substantial body of existing literature strongly asserts that the legitimate custodians of Dukuduku were the indigenous African populace who had long established their presence in the forest before the arrival of white settlers along the coastal regions of KwaZulu-Natal (Sundnes, 2013, Bryant, 1929, AFRA, 2003, Africa Resource for Housing, Research Report, 2018). This paper embarks on an exploration of Dukuduku's early years to address the crucial question of land ownership: who were the rightful stewards of Dukuduku during its formative period? To achieve this, we delve into the historical human habitation of the forest and examine the arrival of white settlers. Our investigation extends to the socio-economic fabric of the forest's inhabitants during the period under scrutiny. The underlying argument contends that segregating nature conservation from human society is fundamentally problematic and has fuelled conflicts and unfortunate loss of life that could have been avoided. A sombre observation is that the contemporary Dukuduku forest stands significantly reduced compared to its expansive state in the early 20th century. Contributing factors to this reduction include the establishment of sugarcane farms across the uMfolozi floodplain, afforestation efforts, forced displacements, and the establishment of a military encampment, the 121 Infantry Battalion. Collectively, these elements have had a substantial impact on the diminishing expanse of the original forest, shaping it into the landscape we encounter today.

2. THE LAND QUESTION IN DUKUDUKU FOREST: THE DISPUTED HISTORY

In the pre-Shakan era, the Mthethwa chiefdom, led by Inkosi Dingiswayo, wielded significant influence and control over a vast territory spanning from the north coast to Hlabisa and Hluhluwe in the northern regions. During the reign of Jobe, Dingiswayo's father, smaller clans facing adversity sought refuge and protection under the Mthethwa, known for their formidable regiments during that period. This strategic move allowed the Mthethwa to establish new subordinate clans, all pledging allegiance to the Mthethwa chieftaincy (Bryant, 1929). Notable among these clans aligning with the Mthethwa were the Mkhwanazi of Mpukunyoni (present-day Mtubatuba), the Mbonambi chiefdom located between KwesakwaMthethwa and the coastline, the Dube chiefdom along the northern lagoons of the uMhlathuze River, the people of EmaNdlazini, the Msweli, the Ncube in Dukuduku, and several others.

Following the passing of Inkosi Dingiswayo, 'Shaka assumed the imperial mantle of Dingiswayo, demanding the submission of all former Mthethwa dependencies to his authority' (ibid. p. 110). Consequently, the Zulu nation emerged as a minor chiefdom under Mthethwa control. It was only after the demise of Inkosi Dingiswayo that Shaka triumphed over the Ndwandwe and solidified a powerful Zulu nation under his leadership (Nigel, 2012). The region known as Dukuduku was allocated to the people of eMancubeni by Inkosi Jobe, Dingiswayo's father and leader of the Mthethwa chieftaincy, in the early 1800s. Inkosi Jobe bestowed this area upon the Ncube clan as a token of appreciation for their role in expelling the Msane people, who had settled within Mthethwa territory without the inkosi's consent. The Msweli people advised the Mthethwa to seek out the Ncube, who were under Inkosi Buthelezi, as it was believed that the Ncube possessed profound knowledge of *intelezi* (traditional muti or medicine used by regiments during warfare) that could aid in ousting the Msane from Mthethwa territory. The accord between the Ncube and the Mthethwa stipulated that once they had successfully dealt with the Msane, they would be granted territory for settlement within Mthethwa lands (Z. Mncube, personal communication, December 29, 2019).

Upon the successful completion of their mission, the Ncube were 'allocated a homeland around the

Dukuduku bush, near the mouth of St Lucia Bay' by Inkosi Jobe of the Mthethwa (1790-1807). Consequently, from the early 1800s onward, the Dukuduku region became inhabited by the Ncube people, who maintained their allegiance to the Mthethwa chieftaincy. Before their arrival at the coast, they were referred to as the people of eMancubeni; however, upon reaching the coastal area, they became known as abakwaNcube, signifying their association with the Ncube clan but not specifically as residents of eMancubeni (Bryant, 1929). Notably, even though Ncube controlled this territory by Mthethwa grant, they did not administer or oversee the area as independent chiefs. Instead, they continued to pledge allegiance to the Mthethwa as indunas (Z. Mncube, personal communication, December 29, 2019). However, their tenure in Dukuduku would soon be challenged by the state's establishment of commercial farms within the forest, ultimately leading to their displacement.

Land dispossession caused severe devastation to the livelihoods of many black South Africans (Walker & Cousins, 2015). Land was the fundamental resource in southern Africa during the pre-colonial period as economic and social relations were agrarian in character. Dispossession disrupted the nature and livelihoods of rural people in South Africa during the colonial and apartheid periods (ibid.). The removal of African people from their indigenous places was a humiliating experience. Africans who were removed were often dumped on barren and uninhabitable land (Kgatla, 2013). This was the case in Dukuduku, where inhabitants were victimized through forced removals. Njeke Mdamba, a senior citizen in Dukuduku, born in the Futhululu forest (a part of Dukuduku), indicated that his grandfather was evicted in the 1930s. White people introduced a squatter tax, and 'people had to pay for their cattle, grazing on their land' (N. Mdamba, personal communication, September 27, 2019). Failure to pay tax would result in immediate eviction (ibid.).

Nustad (2013) argues that those who wanted to stay paid tax and some offered much-needed labour on the newly established farms. They paid tax but were evicted at the end of the day, and evictions were often forceful. However, it is important to note that some people remained in the forest, and some of those evicted returned. The Association for Rural Advancement reported in its special report (2002, p. 7) that 'the forest has never been empty.' Therefore, the notion that Dukuduku was a thick and impenetrable forest with no homes is a fallacy. The area belonged to the people, as 'there were homes here, our grandparents kept cattle and planted crops here, long before white people arrived' (N. Mdamba, personal communication, September 27, 2019). Induna Sithole indicated that white people drove them out of the forest in the 1970s to Nkolokotho. 'We were forced to leave our cattle, goats, and chickens [here]. We ran for our lives and scattered throughout the forest. We stayed there unhappy and frustrated, but in 1979, we decided to come back' (A. Sithole, personal communication, January 02, 2020). He specified that they would return at night to avoid arrest and harassment by the security forces and hide in the forest. Mdamba and Sithole share the same sentiment with other participants in this study who claim ancestral ties to the area. These groups of people refer to themselves as the original owners of the Dukuduku area and have lately organized themselves as the Dukuduku Land Claims Trust. They argue that Dukuduku is theirs, and among them are the Ncube, Msweli, Thethwayo, Mdamba, and others.

The available literature and informants concur that forced removals in Dukuduku occurred at least four times from the 1930s to the 1980s (Rule 5 Research Report, 2018). For instance, some informants point to the Futhululu forest as their home. Meanwhile, Nustad (2015, p. 107) views this part of Dukuduku as the remaining forest that appears untouched by human settlement, representing the last remains of undisturbed nature in conservation reality. Msweli and Mdamba in separate interviews stated that their ancestors were buried there. However, the most devastating aspect of forced removals was that people were not granted a chance to move their ancestral spirits to their new homesteads (Skelcher 2013, Skosana 2018, Kgatla 2013). The Dukuduku residents, however, were not mere spectators in the process. They were not prepared to give up their fertile ancestral land to the state that disrupted rural South Africa's ideal life. Explanations of why removals were carried out vary from one place to another. Platzky and Walker (1985) attempt to address the reasons for the removal of African people from their land in South Africa before and during the apartheid era. They estimate that about 3.5 million Africans have been victimized by forced removals. However, the victims of forced removals in the country may be far beyond the estimate made during the Surplus People Project, given that some evictions were carried out without proper administration and many without compensation. This figure shows the extent of the brutality of apartheid policies, converting Africans into wanderers and squatters on their soil. Forced removals and the treatment Africans received from the apartheid state were tantamount to reducing Africans to non-citizens in South Africa (Kgatla, 2013, p. 120). Platzky and Walker (1985) support Kgatla's (2013) argument, pointing out that relocation sites were designed to be out of sight from all national roads. In Ladysmith, for instance, Africans faced evictions because the Ladysmith Farmers Association believed that Roosboom, a 'black spot' in the area of Ladysmith, 'causes harmful injury to the image of South Africa in the eyes of overseas tourists' as it was the only 'Black Spot' through which the Durban-Johannesburg National Road (N3) passes (ibid.).

It is not clear in the available literature whether Dukuduku was intended to be a small-scale agricultural area or a conservation site. The people were confused about the exact reasons for their eviction. Some believed that they were removed as part of grand colonial and apartheid projects to reserve 'adequate space' for white people, as they had settled in St Lucia and the Monzi farming village, which has been part of Dukuduku. Joseph Thethwayo (personal communication, December 23, 2019), the chairperson of the Dukuduku Land Claims Trust and the son of the late Thethwayo, who played a prominent role in the struggle against removals in the forest, recalls that white farmers planted pine and gum trees on their land. They were threatened that if those crops were destroyed, either by them or their cattle, they would face the full might of the law or evictions. This act by these farmers seems to have compromised peace and harmony in the Dukuduku area, and people began to live in fear. Ernest Mlambo, the co-founder of Manukelana Art and Nursery and the founder of Umganu Eco-Care, pointed out that before the 1960s, the approach of the white government was not based on conservation but preservation. They saw Dukuduku as rich land for the expansion of commercial forests. This was so, at least until the 1960s when the approach changed from preservation to conservation, with the emergence of environmental groups (R. Langa, personal communication, July 02, 2019).

The availability of land as a precondition for the establishment of conservation has been acquired through several strategies, including the use of brutal force, guns, dogs tear gas, 'land purchase,' leasing, and donations. Environmentalists were concerned with the pace at which biodiversity was being lost and the impact that this would have on climate change globally (Ramutsindela, 2015, p. 176). As a result, calls to conserve biodiversity were made with an emphasis on natural indigenous forests. This move by environmental groups resulted in forced evictions of African people, in most cases without fair compensation or no compensation at all, in many parts of South Africa. The view held by environmentalists that conservation could be achieved separately from human beings has created serious conflicts between African communities and environmentalists. This notion led to numerous and inhumane displacements of African people across the country. This has been the case with the Makuleke community in Limpopo, the Ncube in Dukuduku, the Mbuyazi clan in Bhangazi, and many other dispossessed African communities in South Africa in the name of nature conservation, which scholars have referred to as green grabbing (Maluleke 2018, Carruthers, 1995, Sundnes 2013, Sundnes, 2015, and Skelcher 2013). In a broader sense, Ramutsindela (2015) reminds us that the environmental themes in the nineteenth century revolved around the colonialist desire to conquer, tame, and 'protect' nature. This desire was rooted in the broader colonial enterprise, which was based on a view that Africa was a 'wild space' and the first step to 'civilization' was to control the Africans and to sustain the capitalist system, which would make Africans rely on wage labour.

Paradoxically, black people were forcefully removed in the name of nature conservation while the state, through white farmers, expanded commercial forestry that would compromise the very indigenous forest. This complicates the land-use question and raises the question of whether Dukuduku was to be a conservation site or a small-scale agricultural space. It created tension and confrontation between the white settlers and Africans who resided in the forest. Africans wanted to protect their ancestral land from invaders. On the other hand, the state referred to African people inhabiting the forest as "squatters," which resulted in hostility between these two groups.

3. THE HISTORICAL ESTABLISHMENT OF HUMAN COMMUNITIES AND THE COMPULSORY DISPLACEMENT OF INDIGENOUS INHABITANTS IN DUKUDUKU FOREST

The people who reside in Dukuduku today have a historical relationship between occupation and land use with the forest (AFRA, 2002). Although this is contested by some government departments, archaeological research suggests and has proven that the area had been inhabited as early as the Early Iron Age. Dukuduku and its surrounding areas were used during the precolonial era 'for lodging, hunting, fishing, grazing, planting, gathering, interring and refuge.' (Rule 5, Research Report, 2018). This assertion also has support among most informants I have interviewed who claim ancestral ties to the area. The land claimants claim a direct ancestral connection to the area and refer to areas and activities they used to carry out during their childhood. They cite stories shared by their grandparents about life in Dukuduku and many of the areas they refer to are now within the fenced game park, including their ancestors' graves, of which they complained that their forebears were not at peace.

The removals in Dukuduku started in the 1930s, with the introduction of the hut tax. In addition, the squatter tax was introduced and enforced in 1935, which brought evictions even closer as those who could not pay tax had to leave the area. Those removed from the forest were dumped in KwaMpukunyoni under Mkhwanazi Tribal Authority. They had to seek building sites for themselves without any form of compensation.

When asked whether they were compensated for being forced to leave Dukuduku, most informants indicated that no reparation of any form was granted. Thethwayo had this to say:

When the Mtubatuba magistrate court issued an order that everyone in the forest should be removed in 1974, many people just went to local farm compounds and subjected themselves to working for white farmers. Very few agreed to be taken by GG trucks. The authorities tasked my father who was an induna to record all the relocated families, but my father was illiterate as a result no list was recorded. Those who went to nearby farms soon returned to the forest and we had no choice but to return as well in 1988. My father said to me people have all the right to return to the forest because they had been removed without compensation. No one was compensated (J. Thethwayo, personal communication, December 23, 2019).

The above assertion suggests that African people were relocated without compensation, nor were they given shelter where they were dumped. Mdamba and Msweli pointed out, in support of the above, that they were dumped in the Mpukunyoni area to seek building sites for themselves and forced them to pay allegiance to the Mpukunyoni Traditional Authority who had denounced them on more than one occasion (N. Mdamba, personal communication, September 27, 2019; N Msweli, personal communication, January 05, 2020). Making his ruling on 30th May 2003, Judge J. Moloto, in the Land Claims Court of South Africa (LCC), Case Number: LCC30/02 said:

The fact that the first respondent (Regional Land Claims Commissioner: KwaZulu Natal) found, during her investigations, that there had been a dispossession as contemplated in the Restitution Act, that there is a prima facie a community and that the applicant (The Dukuduku Community) had received no compensation, yet still dismissed the claim; tends to suggest bias or mala fides or improper motive on her part (J. Moloto, 30 May 2003).

Judge Moloto's decision was a triumph for the people of Dukuduku, in particular the land claimants, who had accused the land commissioner of bias. They felt that her primary decision to reject their claim was politically influenced.

Furthermore, claims that the people of Dukuduku were part of the Mpukunyoni Traditional Authority are disputed by the indigenous people from Dukuduku. The area in question was under Ncube. Some, even today, still refer to the area as the KwaNcube. The area was given to Ncube by the Mthethwa as a reward for his gallantry and act of bravery in driving out the Msane who had established themselves in the Mthethwa territory without the accord of Inkosi Mthethwa. The Mkhwanazi men, on the other hand, were tasked to safeguard the Mthethwa royal homestead called oYengweni (Z. Mncube, personal communication, December 29, 2019). Soon after, Malanda, Veyane's son married King Mpande's sister and the Mkhwanazi became royal and the area between the uMfolozi river and Hluhluwe was given to them to reign over. This area would later become Mtubatuba, named after Inkosi Mtubatuba Mkhwanazi who died in 1955 (Nyathi, 2018, pp. 34-40, Harrison, 1989).

Although evictions were carried out, the forest dwellers never left it permanently. They would come back and hide in the forest because to them it meant life and the connection to their ancestors, hence they are buried in Dukuduku. 'The forest provided us with food, the land was extremely fertile thus drawing more people to come and settle here. Perhaps it is what motivated them [white] to drive us away from our land', Msweli said. The principal reason given to the people was that the government needed more space to expand commercial forests in areas where they resided (N. Msweli, personal communication, January 5, 2020).

Arguably, the evictions in the 1930s, 1950s, and 1970s were not as significant and far-reaching as the 1980s evictions. It is difficult to establish the exact number of families evicted in the forest in the 1930s and beyond but Sundnes (2013) points to a squatter list that had about seventy-nine men and about one hundred and ninety-two huts, which had been recorded in preparation for the evictions from the Dukuduku reserve. While little is remembered about the evictions in the 1950s and the details about such evictions remain sketchy, in 1974 they were just taken out of the forest without proper records (J. Thethwayo, personal communication, December 23, 2019). Given that it was never left unoccupied, there is a sense that even in the 1930s and 1950s, not all inhabitants of the forest were recorded. Mncube (personal communication, December 29, 2019) indicated that white people did not know the forest hence they could not evict everyone from the forest. African people had mastered the art of navigating the forest and hid from the white people. The current claim is filed by the thirty-eight families, which further complicates the actual number of dispossessed people in Dukuduku before and after the 1980s.

The last attempt to evict the people and their reaction was now influenced by the national state of politics

in South Africa, that of intensified struggle against apartheid and the widespread violence in KwaZulu Natal between Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and the African National Congress (ANC). After this attempt, the population of Africans in Dukuduku increased significantly between 1989 and 1992 and the struggle against removals, now in the name of nature conservation, intensified. However, there were more deep-seated reasons for the removal of Africans from Dukuduku. Some speculate that after the establishment of St Lucia Wetland Park, white people in general, and white farmers who resided in St Lucia did not want to be surrounded by Africans, which might have led to the removals. Secondly, the fertility of land might have influenced the Department of Forestry to develop government commercial forestry. Lastly, the notion that coastal forests must be conserved, which emerged in the late 1960s with the involvement of conservation groups such as the Wildlife Society of South Africa, could have been another influential factor. The latter has been used by the current democratic government in its attempt to finish the segregationist and apartheid project of removing Africans from the forest which had its beginnings in the 1930s.

In 1973, according to Nustad, the apartheid government's Department of Forestry is said to have secured a court order to remove all the people who inhabited the forest. This was because the Forestry Department had required more space to plant imported alien plant species that turned out to be harmful to the indigenous forest. This move by the Forestry Ministry was vigorously opposed by the emerging conservation groups, who argued that Dukuduku must be protected. One such group was the Wildlife Protection and Conservation Society of South Africa. It is when the conservation interest emerged and white farmers were compensated with land elsewhere (Nustad, 2015, pp. 115-117). However, the new interest in nature conservation would not be smooth sailing. It received fierce resistance from the forest dwellers, probably because of the lack of the proper approach and the notion that nature conservation would mean indigenous people breaking ties with their ancestors. In the 1980s, forced removals were now in the interest of nature conservation. To a large extent, the people were able to resist evictions by employing various approaches including legal means. However, to achieve this they had to increase the number of inhabitants in the forest to intensify the resistance against evictions. In 1988 and 1989, it was reported that the number of Africans in the forest was increasing significantly. The Rule 5 Research Report (2018) argues that one factor contributing to the increase in the number of Africans in the forest was that;

The 1980s was the decade of widespread, coordinated civil disobedience in South Africa. The political motive behind this was the demise of the apartheid state... a time when the two biggest political parties in KwaZulu Natal, ANC and IFP were at war with each other. The Greater Dukuduku was a particular hotspot for confrontations and clashes. These appear to have resulted in many displaced and fearful families seeking refuge in the forest (Rule 5, Research Report, 2018).

This argument points to one dimension that contributed to the population growth in Dukuduku in the late 1980s and therefore cannot be rejected in its entirety. It is one factor that contributed but other key role players crafted the strategy to increase numbers in the forest. As mentioned earlier, the forest was never left uninhabited. The forest was thick and probably less penetrable to those who were not familiar with it. This means that when evictions were carried out some people managed to hide and remained in the forest Z. Mncube, personal communication, December 29, 2019). One such man was Nyamazane Mgenge and others, who remained in the forest and crafted *izinqoko* (curved wooden trays) (Zwane, personal communication, December 31, 2019). He worked with Thethwayo, Shikishela Mkhwanazi, Nkombane Msweli and others to return the people to the forest in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This was done to maximise numbers so that it would be difficult for authorities to drive them out of the forest (*ibid.*). It is believed that it was the Ncube people returning to their ancestral land after finding the resettlement camps that had been moved too congested, barren, and not conducive (Rule 5, Research Report, 2018). However, the state and environmentalists alike, called the return of the Ncube people to their land an 'invasion' of the forest by illegal squatters, and allegations spread that Inkatha was selling plots in Dukuduku for as little as R10 each to create its strong support base in the forest (*ibid.*). Perhaps this notion cannot be entirely overlooked because the key role players were indeed members of the IFP.

Various men were tasked with the allocation of plots to the returning people and the new residents in the four parts of Dukuduku, KwaNdongyana, just above the Lake St Lucia, Oweni, Khayelisha and KwaNyamazane where Nyamazane Mgenge resided. It was agreed that land would be allocated to the Ncube people who had been previously removed, but later the men facilitating the project reviewed their decisions and would later allow everyone to settle to ensure that white authorities found it difficult to evict them. The newly settled groups included the Tsonga from Mozambique and the amaThonga from the far north of today's KwaZulu Natal province who were already in the sugarcane farms in Monzi (N. Msweli, personal communication, January 5, 2020).

People were charged R60 per site. Funds were used to finance the legal battle as the people had resorted to

the legal approach to fight against unjust and inhumane removals that were taking place in Dukuduku (J. Thethwayo, personal communication, December 23, 2019). Thethwayo further pointed out that his father was arrested and charged for illegally allocating sites on 'state land' to 'squatters' and 'invaders'. However, as the case progressed, the Dukuduku people won it hence the white people failed to prove that the land belonged to them and Africans could identify their forefathers' graves and the old dipping site they had used for ages. It also proved that they had extensive and intensive knowledge of the forest itself (ibid.).

Although this paper is not interested in the role of traditional leadership in the Dukuduku area per se, to grapple with the land ownership question one has to examine closely, the leadership structures in the area. Traditional leadership for centuries, before the introduction of local governance structures, served as a form of local government in rural areas of South Africa and elsewhere in the African continent. The funds collected by Nyamazane Mgenge in Dukuduku were reported by Mgenge himself to Enyokeni (Zulu Royal Palace), KwaNongoma. This was done because Dukuduku did not form part of the Mpukunyoni territory, and the Mkhwanazi Traditional house had distanced themselves from the Dukuduku people, supporting the removals and the claim that Dukuduku was the white men's land (Zwane, personal communication, December 31, 2019). Msweli (personal communication, January 5, 2020) indicated that he went to the Mpukunyoni Traditional Council, seeking intervention on the issue of evictions, and was denounced by the council. On numerous occasions, inkosi had meetings with influential individuals in the forest, convincing them to accept the resettlement offer from environmental authorities. 'I escalated the matter to the Zulu King to seek intervention on the Dukuduku issue', Msweli said. The king summoned Inkosi Mkhwanazi and reprimanded him for not supporting the people of Dukuduku. According to some informants, including Nkombane Msweli, this is how the Mpukunyoni Traditional Authority got involved in the Dukuduku matter. Meanwhile, others argue that it got involved through the role played by Shikishela Mkhwanazi (from the Mkhwanazi royal house and inkosi's brother), who was a member of the parliament of the KwaZulu government. Shikishela was deployed by the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) leader and the head of the KwaZulu government to assess the situation. He saw a golden opportunity to establish himself as a leader of the people of Dukuduku. There was then confusion about the role he would play. Mlambo remembers that at one instance Shikishela referred to himself as Inkosi of the Dukuduku people (E. Mlambo, personal communication, September 23, 2019). Upon his arrival, Shikishela did not get along very well with some leaders within the forest. This hostile relationship was borne from the fact that earlier in 1985, Nyamazane Mgenge had gone to the Inkosi Mkhwanazi to report the Dukuduku matter and seek possible intervention and was turned down. Mgenge did not want them to participate in the area they had distanced themselves from. It is possible that inkosi did not intervene on the issue since they would have benefitted from the eviction. The chieftaincy sought to benefit from the tourism potential and mining operations which were likely to take place if it were not for the environmentalists' movement that campaigned against it.

There are benefits that traditional houses are entitled to from mining companies and tourism potentials in areas under their jurisdiction. As Raymond Langa puts it that 'the Mkhwanazi Traditional authority gets levies from the Game Parks around its jurisdiction and the mining operations in KwaSomkhele and this will keep them quiet for the longest time' (personal communication, July 02, 2019). Allegations were that, although Dukuduku was not Mkhwanazi territory, white people had several meetings with the inkosi so that he could use his position to influence the people of Dukuduku to give in on the resettlement plan. There were suspicions that Inkosi Mkhwanazi was 'compensated by the government authorities for not opposing the 1974 removals' (Rule 5, Research Report, 2018, p. 20). According to Mlambo (personal communication, September 22, 2019), inkosi was a collaborator and he had succumbed to the apartheid laws and knew that his territory ended with the railway line that cut into Mtubatuba. Backing up his argument, Mlambo noted that the railway line was a boundary that separated what was the KwaZulu homeland from the White English Territory (Natal) or the 'Crown Land'. The South African Police station in town served the whites in the Crown Land while the other in Kwa-Msane township (KZP) served Africans.

Shikishela soon complied with whites and took with him the smaller group of followers to resettle in Khula village. He was accused by many of betraying the struggle. However, many believed that he had received a bribe from the environmental authorities (N. Msweli, personal communication, January 5, 2020). His move to Khula village saw him becoming an induna (headman) there until his death. Many people refused to follow him to the new area, and this created hostility between those following Shikishela and those that remained in the forest with Ncube, Msweli, Maphanga and other leaders. To complicate this, those who moved to Khula village did not destroy their homes in the forest, thus nullifying the attempts by the state to relocate them. Many of them continued with their agricultural activities in the forest and across the uMfolozi floodplain while staying in the new resettlement area (Rule 5, Research Report, 2018, p. 54).

Another possible factor contributing to the population increase in Dukuduku was the overflowing of the

uMfolozi River which forced people to move into the forest (E. Mlambo, personal communication, September 22, 2019). Between 1984 and 1987, flooding destroyed swamps and wetlands in the region. The crops of African farmers on the uMfolozi floodplain were destroyed. Some of these farmers lost their lives (N. Msweli, personal communication, January 5, 2020). Survivors were forced to move into the forest to avoid future destruction but continued to grow crops on the floodplain after the floods. Before this, the whites had created roads that would facilitate access to the forest and the creation of a golf course Rule 5, Research Report, 2018). The people saw this and took advantage and returned to the forest. People in Dukuduku were not willing to work for white farmers. Therefore, they were faced with a shortage of labour. In resolving this, white people drew labour from as far as Mozambique. Fearing that their land may be taken over by foreign people, indigenous people were motivated, even those who had given up, to return to their ancestral land. These Mozambicans had started farming crops in the floodplain of the uMfolozi River next to sugarcane farms (E. Mlambo, personal communication, September 22, 2019). Notably, these people were allowed by the indigenous people to settle in Dukuduku and would later play a key role in the struggle against removals. Zwane indicated that Nyamazane Mgenge allocated land to numerous African people from other parts of the province. The sole intention was to increase the number of forest occupants to strengthen the resistance against forced removals. Thethwayo emphasized that allowing people to settle in Dukuduku was a well-planned strategy which proved effective. 'We were able to raise funds to pay for legal costs' Thethwayo (December 23, 2019) argued. In a personal interview, induna Sithole pointed out that several key men played an important role in ensuring that the land was not lost to the white people. They were not indigenous, but they assisted the indigenous people to defend their land from white people. People like Shikishela Mkhwanazi, Mbefu, Nangeni, Shwabede, Skokeyana Msweli and others are said to have played a role in collecting funds from the community and allocating sites to newcomers to raise funds for legal costs (A. Sithole, personal communication, January 2, 2020). According to Thethwayo (December 23, 2019), his father and six other men were arrested for selling plots to the newcomers in the forest.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology applied in this investigation employs a multifaceted approach encompassing historical research, archival analysis, and oral history interviews to delve into and document the intricate history (Jackson et al., 2022), of the Dukuduku forest and its native residents. Historical research constitutes a foundational component (Jessee, 2019), serving to unravel the evolution of Dukuduku and its populace across various epochs. This phase entails an exhaustive examination of existing historical literature, documents, and records (Pellicano et al., 2020), pertaining to the forest, its ownership, and the pivotal events that have moulded its historical trajectory. This comprehensive historical inquiry forms the backdrop for contextualizing the forest's history and comprehending the dynamics of its inhabitants. Archival resources, comprising government records, land deeds, maps, and assorted written materials, are meticulously scrutinized to extract invaluable insights (Murphy et al., 2019), into the history of Dukuduku. This analytical exploration of archival materials aids in tracing the legal and administrative determinations that have impacted the forest and its inhabitants, including the formal declaration of Dukuduku as a state forest in 1930 and subsequent land transactions. In an endeavour to enrich the historical narrative and capture the firsthand experiences and viewpoints of (Ngoepe, 2020), local residents, traditional leaders, and the indigenous denizens of Dukuduku, extensive oral history interviews are conducted. These interviews involve engaging with individuals possessing knowledge concerning the forest's history, land tenure, and the socio-economic fabric of its inhabitants. The interviewee cohort encompasses members of the Ncube clan and other pertinent stakeholders.

The data acquired through historical research, archival scrutiny, and oral history interviews undergoes a rigorous content analysis (Ngoepe, 2020). This analytical process entails systematic organization, categorization, and interpretation of the amassed information with the objective of identifying central themes, recurrent patterns, and pertinent insights that align with the research inquiries. The data analysis methodology adheres to a structured and systematic approach, guided by the overarching research objectives (Jessee, 2019). The research methodology espouses an interdisciplinary orientation, drawing upon historical, anthropological, and socio-economic vantage points to furnish a holistic comprehension of Dukuduku's historical narrative and the interplay between its inhabitants and external influences. Ethical considerations loom large throughout the research trajectory, particularly in the context of conducting oral history interviews (Murphy et al., 2019). Stringent adherence to ethical standards is maintained, encompassing the procurement of informed consent from all interviewees and the preservation of their privacy and confidentiality. Furthermore, the research aligns with ethical protocols pertinent to historical and archival investigations. To bolster the reliability and validity of the research findings, a triangulation strategy is deployed. This strategy entails the cross-referencing of information garnered from diverse sources, including historical documents, archival records, and oral history interviews, to

corroborate key historical events and narratives (Jackson et al., 2022). The research methodology also takes cognizance of the existing historiography pertaining to the Dukuduku forest, subjecting prior studies and interpretations to critical scrutiny to pinpoint gaps and areas amenable to fresh insights. Through the amalgamation of these multifarious research methods and approaches, this study aspires to furnish a comprehensive and nuanced elucidation of the historical panorama of the Dukuduku forest, its ownership dynamics, and the intricate interplay between its indigenous inhabitants and external forces across distinct historical epochs (Pellicano et al., 2020).

5. LIFE IN THE FOREST: SMALL-SCALE FARMING AND THE NATURAL RESOURCES

People sustain their livelihoods using various resources which include natural, social, human, physical and financial resources. Traditional communities in the past, and arguably even today, have sustained themselves through the use of natural resources, with land forming the key component of these resources. Land provides basic needs such as shelter, grazing for cattle, water, and firewood and it also makes agriculture possible (AFRA, 2003). Like many other traditional communities, Dukuduku is no exception. For centuries the inhabitants of Dukuduku relied on the land to sustain their livelihood. Small-scale farmers had exploited the productiveness of the land in the forest. Dukuduku had proved to be the food basket for the surrounding areas. The primary reason people resisted relocation to a newly established resettlement area was that the area was not conducive to farming. The area, which had been a forestry farm, was dry and barren. This claim is supported by Induna Almond Sithole who pointed out that they could not survive the starvation in Khula village, hence they had to return to the forest. The areas surrounding Dukuduku had no industries where people could seek employment. The available jobs were farm-based and many people within the forest were not prepared to serve in the newly established farms.

Claims were made by the local people in the 1990s that people from Dukuduku were unemployable in St Lucia Wetland Park, as a result of their refusal to leave the forest. Therefore, small-scale farming remained an available option for many in the Dukuduku forest to sustain their livelihoods in the 1990s. However, the increase in the number of occupants in the forest soon proved that subsistence farming was becoming less and less viable. As a result, people had to seek other ways of sustaining their livelihoods, which includes among others, arts, and crafts, which has received much criticism from environmentalists. In 1998, it was reported that about 10 000 people were living in the forest with about 1300 households. Ten years later the number had increased to 18 000 and currently, it is estimated that more than 30 000 people are living in the forest (Rule 5, Research Report, 2018, p. 20). Despite several attempts at resettlements in 1993 and 1997/8 respectively, numbers keep increasing in the forest, probably due to the illegal sale of land and other factors.

People planted various crops such as sweet potatoes, potatoes, amadumbe, brown beans, mangos, avocados, pawpaws, imbumba, bananas, mealies, peanuts and later, post-local government elections, sugarcane from Dukuduku was accepted at the uMfolozi Sugar Mill which was not the case in the 1990s. The timber industry also grew within the forest as African residents engage in gum tree plantation. These crops were grown at the homesteads and across the uMfolozi floodplain and swamps. They were both for household consumption and selling (AFRA, 2002). To many living in the forest, Dukuduku is conducive and suitable for subsistence farming. However, some people are concerned by the pace at which the gum tree plantations are booming. Mdamba indicated that Dukuduku in the next few years will be like Khula village because gum tree plants consume a lot of water and have a grave impact on the indigenous plants (N, Mdamba, personal communication, September 27, 2019). His argument is supported by Langa's assertion that it will 'only be the removal of pine and most alien plants that the indigenous forest will fully rehabilitate' (R. Langa, personal communication, July 02, 2019). But those who are engaged in this business seem to have turned a blind eye to the negative impact of gum tree plantation and only focused on the profit they make. Streams are going dry and soon the land will be less fertile (N. Mdamba, personal communication. September 27, 2019).

The fertile Lake St Lucia System and the riverbanks of uMfolozi have provided the people of Dukuduku with reeds and incema (grass used to make mats). The former has been a cause of serious contestation between the Dukuduku residents and the Park's authorities. In 1999, there was an uproar when about 500 people blocked the road between St Lucia and Mtubatuba over the Dukuduku land dispute. Residents said the Parks Board had 'granted permission to outsiders to cut grass on the land, which they consider to be theirs' (Business Day, 5 May 1999). The protest was motivated by the continued land battle between the conservation authorities and the Dukuduku people. Protesters demanded that their land be given back to them. Mfundisi Dlamini pointed out that this protest turned ugly, and Gideon Mathebula survived gunshots. 'Mathebula was shot but did not die, he has a bullet in his body to this day', Dlamini said (personal communication, July 4, 2019). On 14 May 2003, hundreds

of Dukuduku residents gathered outside the St Lucia town hall 'to hear the legal argument on the rejection of their land claim' (Sunday Times, 18 May 2003). This followed the rejection of their land claim by the Regional Land Claims Commissioner. Mathebula, addressing the crowd, said 'I still have a bullet lodged in my chest' showing the congregation a scar where the bullet had entered below his collarbone. He also indicated that he 'was shot in the face by the conservation officials while cutting reed in a protected area' (ibid. 18 May 2003). In the area, people used wood and reeds to erect a shelter. They erected simple structures because there was uncertainty about their future in the forest. However, the 2008 decision to allow the people to stay in the forest, provided they honoured the outer-boundary set to protect the wetlands and uMfolozi floodplain, saw an increase in the number of modern structures. After the failed efforts by the state to protect the entire Dukuduku forest, the government allowed the people who stayed in the forest to continue doing so.

6. CONCLUSION

The expansion of commercial forest and agriculture in Dukuduku did not only lead to tensions between government departments with varying interests, but also had a huge negative impact on the African population that inhabited the forest which was squeezed out through forced removals (Sundnes, 2013, p. 292). The attempts, however, by the various departments under apartheid and in the post-apartheid era to 'save' the forest from destruction proved a dismal failure. It is, in addition, problematic to view Africans as 'uncivilised' people whose interaction with the natural environment can only cause destruction. The lack of a proper approach by the apartheid government and the use of force instead of dialogue resulted in the government's failure to win the Dukuduku battle. Tragically, post-1994 the democratic government employed a similar approach used by the oppressive regime to force the people out of the forest without proper dialogue; hence it also failed to resolve the Dukuduku matter.

Forest residents were able to successfully resist forced removals by employing various methods of engagement to the detriment of the forest. This could be attributed to the lack of an effective approach by the state to engage the people of Dukuduku to relocate in favour of nature conservation. This was so because they had initially been removed for afforestation. As a result, residents could no longer support the idea of relocation in the interest of nature. In addition, the lack of environmental consciousness played a key role in the government's failure in winning the battle to save this unique indigenous forest. Many people saw the state's attempt to relocate them as a white man's project that sought to dislodge them from their productive land, from which they had made a living for years.

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