

# Economic remittances from employment in the Second World War and family conflicts, Swaziland, 1941-1950

Hamilton S Simelane  
*University of Zululand*  
Simelaneh@unizulu.ac.za

## *Abstract*

Swaziland was connected to the Allied conduct of the Second World War through colonial ties and about four thousand Swazi men were recruited to serve in the war. Historians are beginning to analyse the different ways in which Swazi society was shaped and probably changed by the events of the war. However, no research has been conducted to show how Swazi civilians were affected by the events of the war and how they responded. This article contributes toward closing this research gap by interrogating the negative impact of economic remittances on family relation. The article focuses on family conflicts that surrounded authority over remittances at family level and how the remittances were utilized. Much as there are positive impacts of remittances from war service, they do not form part of the subject of the article. The article argues that remittances from employment in the Second World War negatively affected Swazi families as it resulted in conflicts that left families divided for a long time or permanently. This argument integrates a neglected angle of the impact of the war on Swazi society. While the argument of the article is built around remittances from employment in the Second World War, it is contextualized within the broader literature on the impact of remittances. The research methodologies employed for data collection are archival and qualitative.

**Keywords:** Economic remittances; The Second World War; Remittances; Family; Conflict; Employment; Military labour; Culture and conflict resolution.

## **Introduction**

The study of the Second World War and its impact on different societies in different parts of the world has been a subject of numerous studies. Oleg Rzheshesky has pointed out that the Second World War has been examined in "... thousands of books, countless magazines, newspapers and articles".<sup>1</sup> However, the historiography of this war has remained overwhelmingly

---

1 O Rzheshesky, *World War II: Myths and realities* (Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1984), p. 5.

Eurocentric for many years.<sup>2</sup> Although the events of the war have been extensively researched, the experiences of some African societies have largely been neglected. This is in spite of the fact that:<sup>3</sup>

There was scarcely a level of life both human and less tangible that was not fundamentally affected from the Cape to Cairo. Few Africans remained untouched by the great events taking place for the most part thousands of kilometres away from their homes whether they recognized the war as the ultimate author of those changes or not.

While Africa has had its fair share of studies on the political role played by demobilized African men in the politics of their countries,<sup>4</sup> the effects of the war on African groups who remained behind still needs more in-depth research. The publication edited by John Lambard, with the title *Daily Lives of Civilians in Wartime Africa*, in which most of the chapters deal with the effects of the war on civilians indicates that Africans who remained behind carried the brunt of war even though they were far from where the war was physically fought.<sup>5</sup> The effects of the war on African populations that remained behind after mobilization still needs more research for a better understanding of the effects of the war and how it shaped the future development of some societies. There is a corpus of literature within the realm of British imperial and Commonwealth history covering different aspects of the war, this article is informed by this literature in one form or another, but is anchored on the experiences of Swazi families that were negatively affected by issues surrounding remittances from military service from 1941-1945.

Research on the impact of the Second World War on Swaziland has only recently emerged.<sup>6</sup> Such research has fallen short of unveiling how at the time of the war Swazi society was internally impacted upon by developments associated with the war. As a result there is still no clear understanding of how the country's socioeconomic dynamics were affected by the recruitment of men for the war effort.

- 
- 2 This seemingly Eurocentric bias can be seen in the works of FT Miller, *History of World War II* (Toronto, Dominion Book and Bible House, 1945); P Calvoressi and G Mint, *Total war: Causes and courses of the Second World War* (London, Penguin Books, 1972); H Michel, *The Second World War* (London, Deutsch, 1975).
  - 3 D Killingray and R Rathbone (eds.), *Africa and the Second World War* (London, Macmillan, 1986), p. 5.
  - 4 Some of the studies in this category are, EPA Schleh, "Post service careers of African World War II veterans: British Africa with particular reference to Ghana and Uganda", PhD, thesis, Yale University, 1968; OJE Shiroya, "The impact of World War Two on Kenya: The role of the ex-servicemen in Kenya nationalism", PhD thesis, Michigan State University, 1968.
  - 5 J Lambard (ed), *Daily lives of civilians in Wartime Africa: From slavery days to Rwandan genocide* (Scottsville, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press), 2007.
  - 6 Research on the Second World War and Swaziland is found mainly in the writings of Hamilton Simelane. It includes: "War, economy, and society in Swaziland, 1939-1945", PhD-Thesis, University of Toronto, 1991.

The aim of this article is to critically analyse the experiences of Swazi society during the war with particular reference to the families that experienced conflicts as a result of the control and distribution of financial remittances from Swazi men employed in the different theatres of the Second World War.<sup>7</sup> In development discourse economic remittances have been viewed as one of the major contributors to the economic growth or development of nations.<sup>8</sup> The article shows that the men recruited from Swaziland were workers and while there is no doubt that the money they remitted home played a crucial role in the reproduction of Swazi households,<sup>9</sup> it also generated conflicts in Swazi families and at times worsened some of the tensions that were there before the recruitment of men.<sup>10</sup> The article also shows that the majority of the conflicts had to do with power and control over the remittances. The argument raised in the article is not new as it has been raised in reference to labour migration from different countries in Southern Africa to the mines in South Africa.<sup>11</sup> No study has extended the analysis to the effects of remittances from Swazi men in World War II. The article integrates the neglected subject of how families were negatively impacted upon by remittances from military employment.

## Methodology

The research that led to this article is a product of a combination of research methods. The portions of the article that deal with the different tasks performed by Swazi men in the different theatres of war were largely a product of archival

---

7 For the Swazi men in the war remitting money home was mandatory, and therefore, the men can be viewed as a monolithic group not differentiated by variables such as education. Some studies have differentiated remitters in terms of levels of education. G Johnson and W Whitelaw, "Urban-rural income transfers in Kenya: An estimated remittances function", *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 22, 1974, pp. 473-479; H Rempel and R Lobdell, "The role of urban-rural remittances in rural development", *Journal of Development Studies*, 14(3), 1978, pp. 324-341.

8 For more detail see, S Castles and MJ Miller, *The age of migration: International population movements in the modern world* (New York, Palgrave, 2009).

9 For more information on the socio-economic transformative impulse of economic remittances from the South African mines, see HS Simelane, "Labour migration and rural transformation in post-colonial Swaziland", *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 13(2), July 1995.

10 There were numerous tensions that were present in Swazi society before the war. For instance, polygamous families were sometimes caught in serious tension between the wives and between the children of the different wives.

11 For more information on this subject see, JS Crush, *The struggle for Swazi labour, 1890-1920* (Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987); AR Booth, "The development of the Swazi labour market, 1900-1968", *South African Labour Bulletin*, 7, 1982, pp. 34-57; H Kuper, *Sobhuza II: Ngwenyama and king of Swaziland* (London, Duckworth, 1978); W Beinart, "Labour migrancy and rural production: Pondoland, c. 1900-1950", P Mayer (ed.), *Black villagers in an industrial society* (Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1980); HS Simelane, "Labour migration and rural transformation", *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 13(2), July 1995; HS Simelane, "Male labour migration and agricultural production in southern Swaziland: The role of women", *UNISWA Research Journal*, 10, 1996.

research conducted in the Swaziland National Archives and the Public Record Office (PRO) in London. Such research yielded invaluable information that made it possible to locate Swazi recruits in different theatres of the war and also information on wages paid and the conditions they were working under.

Most of the data on remittances, especially how they were collected, by whom, and how they negatively impacted on social relations at family level was generated through the qualitative research method. This method was useful because there is presently nothing written on economic remittances from employment of Swazi men in the Second World War. A total of forty-seven people were interviewed and they were selected through both purposive and snowball sampling. No attempt was made to make the sample representative as that would not have been practical. Consequently, the section on remittances is anchored on the concrete narratives of some of those who remitted money home, and those who collected, disbursed, and controlled the remittances. They were a combination of surviving World War II veterans, wives and relatives of some of the men who were recruited for the war. The average age of the majority of the respondents was seventy-two. Interviews with these respondents were carried out in a conversational manner and the researcher recorded all the responses. The interviewees were selected through purposive sampling. The research approach was necessarily a phenomenological enquiry because people's experiences were placed at the centre of investigation and meaning-making.<sup>12</sup>

There were two challenges faced in the collection of data. First, some of the respondents did not clearly remember the events of the period except those that directly affected them. Second, it was not easy finding the relevant respondents because of the length of time that has passed since World War II.

### **The employment of Swazi men in different theatres of the Second World War**

Military labour was first employed in the Middle East in 1941. It included the East African Military Labour Service (EAMLS), the African Auxiliary Pioneer Corps (AAPC), and the West African Labour Corps (WALC).<sup>13</sup> Pioneer labour began to be employed in the Middle East in the spring of 1940 with a handful of civilian labourers and a small number of locally recruited

---

12 C Seale, *Researching society and culture* (London, Sage, 2012).

13 D Killingray, "Labour mobilization in British Colonial Africa for the war effort", D Killingray and R Rathbone (eds.), *Africa and the Second World War* (London, Macmillan, 1986), p. 70.

Palestinian and Cypriot Pioneer companies.<sup>14</sup> Towards the end of 1940 this labour force increased as more men came from India and the Middle East.<sup>15</sup> This increase became even more necessary when in April and May 1941, a large number of Palestinian and Cypriot companies were lost in an operation in Greece and Crete.<sup>16</sup> After a few experiments that failed, the African Pioneer Corps were created in the summer of 1941. It was the formation of this unit that extended recruitment to the High Commission Territories (Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland).<sup>17</sup>

The recruitment of Swazi men for employment in the different theatres of war took place between 1941 and 1942<sup>18</sup> and about four thousand of them were recruited from inside Swaziland. There is still a question on the total number of Swazi men engaged in the war as some Swazi men were recruited under what was called the Native Military Corps (NMC) in the Union of South Africa.<sup>19</sup> When the Swazi men in the NMC were called back to Swaziland to join those recruited in the country, some opted to remain with the NMC and went to the war under that umbrella. The nature of recruitment inside Swaziland and the different forms it took, has been the subject of some studies.<sup>20</sup> Recruitment in 1942 came after the Middle-East Command indicated a shortage of about 130,000 workers.<sup>21</sup> The effects of the withdrawal of the men from the local economy was, to a large extent, similar to that of the recruitment of Swazi men for mine labour in the South African gold and coal mines.<sup>22</sup> In both cases the men were away from their homes for extended periods of time. In the mines they were mostly away for contract periods of twenty-four months without the opportunity of visiting home or

---

14 The concept of pioneers was also well developed in Britain where they were employed in road construction, camp site construction, handling dock stores, and stevedoring. For more information see, PRO, WO253/9 – Commands at home.

15 Public Record Office (PRO), DO253/1 – African Labour for the Middle-East: History of Pioneers and Labour in the Middle-East, 1940-1945.

16 See files in PRO, DO253/1 – African Labour for the Middle-East.

17 See files in PRO, CO968/132/1/14504/41/1 – Manpower, West Africa: West African Labour Corps.

18 In Lesotho the process of recruitment appears to have begun as early as 1940. See, MN Ntabeni, "Military labour mobilization in colonial Lesotho during World War II, 1940-1943", *South African Journal of Military Studies*, 36(2), 2008, pp. 36-59.

19 L. Grundlingh, "The recruitment of South African blacks for participation in the Second World War", D. Killingray and R. Rathbone (eds.), *Africa and the Second World War...*

20 For more information on the process of recruitment for war effort in Swaziland see, HS Simelane, "Labour mobilization for the war effort in Swaziland, 1940-1942", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 26(3), 1993.

21 PRO, Colonial Office, (hereafter, CO), 968/75/2/14504/45A – Part II – Manpower Requirements of G.H.Q. Middle East (Secret Defence). See also, PRO, Dominions Office (hereafter, DO) 35/925/Y432/7 – Recruiting an Additional 15,000 Natives for AAPC and possibility for closing mines to help mobilise natives.

22 HS Simelane, "Labour mobilization, labour shortage, and employer response in Swaziland, 1935-1945", *South African Historical Journal*, 44, 2001.

visited by their relatives,<sup>23</sup> while in the war they were away for between three and four years.

There is some controversy as to whether Swazi men in the war were employed as fighting soldiers or labourers. The Swazi men were employed as labourers and they performed various tasks in the different theatres of war particularly in the Middle East, North Africa and Italy. The range of tasks performed by the Swazi men was summarised by a British military official:<sup>24</sup>

They did not fight. There are many things to do in an army, as well as fighting. If all the soldiers were fighting troops, there would be no one to see that the fighting man got his food, his weapons and railways along which his supplies come in good condition. So, the Swazis worked behind the fighting soldiers. They were soldiers with uniforms and guns, and yet they were doing all kinds of jobs.

Some repaired roads, while others helped to build railway lines. Airfields had to be constructed in south Mediterranean coastal countries to provide services for troops and aircraft from the United States and Europe.<sup>25</sup> Extensive runways had to be constructed and, as traffic became dense, accommodation had to be provided for permanent and transit personnel. Swazi recruits worked on these projects in their company formations under the Middle East Command. Qhude Ndzimandze noted, “In us the British were able to get cheap labour under the guise of soldiers. This became clear to us when we were in the different theatres of war, because when we were recruited we thought that we were going to fight”.<sup>26</sup>

They often collected dead bodies and other waste materials produced by war-related activities.<sup>27</sup> One portion of the 1998 company was employed in the unloading and reloading of bullets, ammunitions, and foodstuffs from military supply delivery trucks.<sup>28</sup> Whole companies or portions of companies were engaged in road rehabilitation and the construction of new ones.<sup>29</sup> The working conditions were sometimes very difficult,<sup>30</sup> but they acquitted

---

23 W Francis, *Labour in the South African gold mines, 1811-1969* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1972).

24 PRO, DO35/1183/Y1069/32, African pioneer Corps, General: The Swazi pioneers, September 1941-March 1945.

25 PRO, War Office (hereafter, WO) – African Labour for the Middle East: History of pioneers and labour in the Middle East, 1940-1945.

26 HS Simelane (Personal Collection), interview, Q Ndzimandze (World War Two veteran), 24 January 2013.

27 HS Simelane (Personal Collection), interview, N Mzinyane (World War Two veteran), 26 January 2013.

28 J Butler (ed), *History of the Second World War: United Kingdom military series*, II, 1956, p. 199; HS Simelane (Personal Collection), interview, Q Mdluli (World War Two veteran), 26 January 2013; Interview, MM Msibi (World War Two veteran), 27 January 2013; Interview, S Simelane (World War Two veteran), 29 January 2013.

themselves well,<sup>31</sup> especially when they faced the challenge of organized Italian gangs raiding petrol and oil dumps.<sup>29</sup> Most Swazi Pioneers spent long periods working on the docks in Tripoli. After the victory of the Eighth Army in January 1943,<sup>33</sup> they were showered with praises from Winston Churchill who said, “Your names will live in history, and the story of your deeds will gleam and glow through the ages long after we who are here are gone. When you return to civil life, it will be sufficient to say – I marched and fought with the desert army.”<sup>30</sup> In Tripoli, Swazi Pioneers worked for long hours unloading and reloading over 5,000 tons of merchandise a day.<sup>31</sup> This made Churchill to say: “Splendid, you have done your bit in history”.<sup>32</sup>

In Palestine Swazi workers received the admiration of the officers in charge. When Swazi Pioneers left Palestine to work in other areas, the commander of the depot said:<sup>37</sup>

I feel I would be failing in my duty if I did not write to put on record the great work done by your Swazi soldiers for me in this depot, during their short stay in this area. The way in which the men of 1997 and 1993 did their work was an inspiration and I cannot praise them enough.

British officials assigned to command the Swazi men were also pleased with the manner in which Swazi men dedicated themselves to their duties. This was expressed by FP Van Oudtshoorn:<sup>33</sup>

Anyone who watched the Swazis at the docks during the crucial months could have been struck with the carefree, joking manner in which they pulled, pushed and heaved sugar, mealie meal, machinery and bombs from place to place; but it would have been a mistake to imagine, as you listened to the continuous rhythmic chant of six or seven men lifting a heavy load, that they were oblivious to the importance of their work. In camp, in the odd leisure moments, they followed the progress of the war on maps, and listened to lecturers as they worked. Their purpose and effort was as conscious as yours.

A similar view was shared by EH Rhodes-Wood:<sup>34</sup>

---

29 HS Simelane (Personal Collection), interview, V Maseko (World War Two veteran), 3 February 2013; See files in PRO, WO253/1/3 – Middle east: Correspondence with directorate of labour and miscellaneous papers.

30 See files in PRO, DO35/1183/Y1069/32 – African Pioneer Corps, General.

31 *The Times of Swaziland* (hereafter, TOS), 23 August 1945.

32 HS Simelane (Personal Collection), interview, M Dlamini (World War Two veteran), 3 February 2012; PRO, DO35/1183/Y1069/32 – African Pioneer Corps, General.

33 Swaziland National Archives (SNA), Mbabane, File 606E – FP Van Oudtshoorn, “History of the part played by the Swazi in the war, 1941-1945”. The point is also raised in H Kuper, *Sobhuza II: Ngwenyama and King of Swaziland*.

34 EH Rhodes-Wood, *A war history of the Royal Pioneer Corps, 1939-1945* (London, Gale and Polden, 1960), p. 87; JSM Matsebula, *A history of Swaziland* (London, Macmillan, 1972).

The Swazi were the best of our African Pioneers, proud of being soldiers in the army of the King - Emperor and proud of their physical strength, which made it possible for them to perform herculean tasks in the most intolerable climatic conditions. They were good and cheerful workers. Their enthusiasm and, therefore, their efficiency increased the nearer they got to the fighting line, and their contribution to the war effort became to them more apparent. They responded well to good leadership and gave loyal service to officers for whom they had trust and respect.

When the Swazi men were demobilized, the Commander-in-Chief G.H.Q. Middle East informed the Swaziland Resident Commissioner:<sup>35</sup>

Having received three companies of Swazi APC this morning prior their leaving for your territory, I feel it my privilege and duty to write to tell you how high their reputation is in the Middle East. We have eight companies here at the moment, but lose three. All have conducted themselves most admirably throughout their stay here and their discipline, moral and soldiery bearing is the best I have seen among Native troops. No.1993 Company was in my group in Palestine in 1942. It has been a pleasure to have such men in ones command and my previous good opinion has been enhanced since their return from Italy.

Most of the praise was motivated by the fact that Swazi workers did not resist manual work in the different theatres of war, in spite of the fact that some of them were forcefully conscripted. Chances of any form of resistance may have been limited by the fact that they were working in a foreign country under very strict military discipline.<sup>36</sup> The praise they received from the commanding officials presents them as a docile labour force who enthusiastically and without question performed the task assigned to them. Maybe this had to do with Swazi culture and the instructions given to them by King Sobhuza II when they left Swaziland.

The narrative as discussed plays an essential role in the analysis of Swazi workers in the different theatres of the Second World War. It concretely establishes the fact that Swazi men recruited in 1941 and 1942 were employed as manual labourers in the different theatres of war. They should, therefore, be treated just like all manual labourers who were recruited from Swaziland during the colonial period. Although there was a difference in modality, they

---

35 PRO, DO35/4071/Y2780/4 – Swazi regiments of the APC in the Second World War: Letter, Colonel HP Rice, (Commandant, Pioneer Corps Depot M.E.F.) / Resident Commissioner, 2 December 1945.

36 No research has unveiled forms of resistance by workers amongst the African Pioneer Corps during World War II. There is however some revelations of resistance when the men were demobilized and many of them found themselves having to wait for long periods waiting to be shipped home. For more details see, PRO, DO35/1184/Y1069/8/5 – Dissatisfaction in demobilization of High Commission Territories Troops.

were essentially temporary migrant labourers.

### **Swazi labourers and wages in the Second World War**

By the outbreak of the Second World War and during its course, the indigenous population in Swaziland was largely surviving out of remittances. A large number of Swazi men were working outside the country, mainly in South Africa and in the different theatres of war. For instance, during the course of the war an average of 10,000 men were working in South Africa per year, and over 4,000 were in the employ of the British in the Second World War.<sup>37</sup> This was in spite of the fact that in 1942 the British High Commissioner to South Africa in collaboration with the Gold Producers Committee of the Transvaal chamber of Mines agreed to suspend recruitment for the mines in the High Commission Territories.<sup>38</sup>

Before the military recruits left Swaziland they were required to sign a contract of employment in which they agreed to work wherever the British Government required them. The contract stated:<sup>39</sup>

Subject to acceptance after final medical examination, we the undersigned Africans hereby agree to perform to the best of our ability anywhere in Africa and in other such options of the Middle East Command, excluding Europe, as may be agreed between the High commissioner and the military authorities for a period of thirty months or less if His Majesty should no longer require our services. We further agree to work at the rate of pay set out here.

They were also required to provide the name of their next of kin who would receive the money mandatorily remitted from military employment.

When the men were recruited the daily rate of pay was low compared to employment in the South African mining industry. On joining war service a private was paid 2s 2d (see Table 1). HCT Corps' wages rose steadily during the course of the war:

**Table 1: Daily rates for HCP Corps, 1941**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Amount (shillings and pence)</b>
Private on joining	2s 2d
Private after 12 months	2s 4d

37 PRO, DO35/1172/Y708/14 – Memorandum by Lord Harlech on the High Commission Territories, 1941/1944. Such information can also be found in V Liversage, *Swaziland development* (London, HMSO, 1948).

38 PRO, CO968/75/1/14504/45A – Part I – Men Power Requirements of G.H.Q. Middle East: Telegram from the high Commissioner to the Dominions Office, 25 May, 1942.

39 SNA, File 2043 – Conditions of service for the High Commission Corps.

Lance Corporal	2s 6d
Corporal	2s 9d
Sergeant	3s 0d
Warrant Officer II	4s 0d
Warrant Officer I	10s 0d

Source: SNA, File 2043 – Conditions of service for the high Commission Corps.

The first change came after 1943 when the High Commissioner pressed the War Office for the provision of proficiency pay for the High Commission Corps after a year's service.<sup>40</sup> The High Commissioner argued that the High Commission Corps were worse off than Swazi men in the N.M.C. as their wages had remained stagnant for almost two years. The request was granted, thus improving the wages of Swazi men in the war (see Table 2). Those who were in the rank of Warrant Officer I did not benefit from the change because the War Office argued that they were already better paid.<sup>41</sup> All the Swazi in the rank of Warrant Officer I were indigenous chiefs. They were very crucial to British control over Swazi recruits, thus, reproducing the indigenous structure of control dominant in Swaziland.

**Table 2: HCT Corps daily wage rates with proficiency, 1944**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Amount (shillings and pence)</b>
Private on Joining	2s 3d
Private after 12 months	2s 5d
Lance Corporal	2s 8d
Corporal	2s 11d
Sergeant	3s 3d
Warrant Officer II	4s 2d

Source: PRO, DO35/1430/Y1069/5/1 – African Auxiliary Pioneer Corps: circular from JE Hall, War office, to Commander 203 Military Mission, Pretoria, 19 July, 1945.

Some of the men did not receive their proficiency pay as it was used to cover medical expenses. These were men who contracted venereal disease in Italy.<sup>42</sup> Military officials complained that some African men, especially those from the High Commission Territories, stationed in Italy were contracting venereal

40 PRO, DO35/1430/Y1069/5/1 – African Auxiliary Pioneer Corps: proficiency Pay in the AAPC.

41 PRO, DO35/1430/Y1069/5/1 – African Auxiliary Pioneer Corps: circular from War Office, 2 October 1943.

42 PRO, DO35/1432/Y1069/9/1 – Demobilisation: Confidential telegram from Allied Forces Headquarters to Under Secretary of State, War Office, 9 January 1945

disease as a result of sexual relations with Italian women. To discourage the African recruits from having affairs with white women, military officials dictated that men admitted to hospital for sexually transmitted diseases should lose their proficiency pay.<sup>43</sup> This loss reduced the margins of remittances sent home for the affected men.

The second change in the wages of HCT Corps was effected in July 1945 (see Table 3). In spite of the changes, HCT Corps wages remained lower than wages in the South African mining industry. During the course of the war wages in the Witwatersrand went up by 24 per cent. In 1941 a nine months contract gave an African worker gross earnings of thirty-five pounds.<sup>44</sup> In the Second World War labourers earned three pounds five shillings a month<sup>45</sup> or twenty-nine pounds five shillings in nine months. The wage disparity between the two forms of employment was wider by the end of the war. By 1946 wages in the Witwatersrand had risen to forty-three pounds per nine-months contract, while a private in the war was grossing thirty-three pounds fifteen shillings for the same period. In both forms of employment workers were provided with food and accommodation.

**Table 3: HCT Corps daily wage rates after July 1945**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Amount (shillings and pence)</b>
Private on Joining	2s 4d
Private after 12 months	2s 6d
Lance Corporal	3s 3d
Corporal	3s 6d
Sergeant	4s 0d
Warrant Officer II	4s 11d

Source: PRO: DO35/1430/Y1069/5/1.

The rate of pay for Swazi workers in World War II was influenced by issues of racism practiced in South Africa. British colonial officials believed that the geographical position of the High Commission Territories made it necessary to follow what was happening in South Africa. The High Commissioner stated:<sup>46</sup>

<sup>43</sup> See files in PRO, DO35/1432/Y1069/9/1 – Demobilisation... .

<sup>44</sup> AR Booth, “The development of the Swazi”; M Wilson, *Labour in the South African gold mines, 1811-1969* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1972).

<sup>45</sup> See files in SNA, File 2043 – Conditions.

<sup>46</sup> PRO, DO35/1184/Y1069/5/2 – Memorandum, JE Hall/A Mackay, Treasury, 19 March 1945.

From the beginning the policy has been followed with the War Office agreement that the High Commission Territories troops should be treated in respect of pay, allowances, pensions, gratuities, in the same way as Africans in the Native Military Corps of the Union Defence Forces. Their conditions of life are similar and a considerable number of High Commission Territories Africans are serving in the Native Military Corps.

This policy was influenced by the views of colonial officials who were nursing the view that the High Commission Territories would eventually be incorporated into the Union of South Africa.<sup>47</sup> In some instances this policy worked in favour of the men from the High Commission Territories. For instance, they received higher gratuities than those of West Africans.<sup>48</sup>

## **Second World War II remittances and family conflict in Swaziland**

The flow of remitted income made a difference in planning and implementing processes of family reproduction. Even though the wages from military employment did not compare favourably with other forms of employment in the region, they played a crucial role in processes of economic reproduction in Swaziland. It is not clear how much money the individual recruits remitted to their families in Swaziland per month but it has been estimated that it was in the region of one pound, two shillings and six pence. Even the families that were involved are not able to show how much money they received in total.

The general estimate provided by colonial records is that the total amount of money received by the indigenous Swazi as a collective, was 281, 643 pounds.<sup>49</sup> The remitters were either husbands who remitted money to their families/wives or sons remitting money to their fathers, mothers or wives.

Most of the families and individuals were able to recall how they benefitted from the money and indicated some of the problems associated with it.<sup>50</sup> For instance, some families were able to show how they were transformed economically as a result of the money they received from those who were in the war. In the southern part of Swaziland, about 66% of the people interviewed traced their ownership of large herds of cattle to remittances from

---

47 R Hyam, *The failure of South African expansion, 1908-1948* (London, Macmillan, 1972).

48 PRO, DO35/1184/Y1069/5/2 – Telegram from War Office to G.O.C, in C., East Africa, 6 February 1945.

49 SNA, File 2188, War effort and post-war development in Swaziland.

50 Studies carried out in other parts of the world point out at the contribution of remittances to economic change. See R Faini, "Migration, remittances and growth", GJ Borjas and J Crisp (eds.), *Poverty, international migration and Asylum* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 171-187.

employment in South African mines while only 5% attributed their large herds to remittances from employment in the Second World War. Nzobo Hlongwane who owns an eighty-six strong herd of cattle said:<sup>51</sup>

When I was recruited for war service I was twenty-two years old and my father was an already established member of this community. All the money I sent back home from the war was used by my father to buy cattle such that when I returned from the war in 1946 I found that I had sixteen cattle. Over the years the cattle multiplied and they play a very important role in the economic well-being of my family. I think the main reason why my family was able to buy cattle for me is that they really did not have the need to use my remitted money on other things.

Evidence indicates that the investment of remittances in cattle led to other forms of accumulation that intensified the process of economic differentiation in Swaziland. This was especially the case with the accumulation of land that could be put under the plough. Some families indicated that they invested the money in the education of children. Much as there is evidence to demonstrate the positive outcomes of remittances from war service in the productive and reproductive processes of most of the families, the focus of this article is the negative consequences of remittances on family structures and relations. Such forms of investment were not different from those made by Swazi migrants in South African mines.<sup>52</sup>

One of the issues surrounding remittances was the dynamic of control.

This was very important because it drove to the core of Swazi patriarchy. The struggle over control of remittances pitted the parents of recruits, and the wives of the recruits. In Swaziland, the official recipient was selected by the recruit depending on his circumstances or cultural beliefs. Considering what happened in other territories of Southern Africa, and probably other parts of the British Empire, the Swaziland situation was somehow peculiar. In South Africa and Lesotho research indicates that in the case of married recruits, the recipient was the first wife.<sup>53</sup> If the recruit was not married, the recipient was the father, or the surviving parent. These were procedures set by colonial administrators or responsible officials. In Swaziland the procedure

---

51 HS Simelane (Personal Collection), interview, N Hlongwane (World War Two veteran), 10 February 2013.

52 HS Simelane, "Labour migration and rural transformation...", *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 13(2), July 1995.

53 MN Ntabeni, "War and society in colonial Lesotho, 1939-1945", PhD thesis, Queen's University, 1996; LWF Grundlingh, "The participation of South African blacks in the Second World War", DPhil. Thesis, Rand Afrikaans University, 1986.

was more fluid and subject to the dictates of Swazi culture and tradition. Consequently, the recipients came in different forms and did not follow any officially established procedure. For instance, some were the mothers of the recruits even if the recruits were married and the first wives were there or mothers of recruits even when the fathers were there. Evidence indicates that the majority of the recipients were women in the form of mothers or wives, probably because the recruits felt that the sustenance and reproduction of the family remained in the hands of women.<sup>54</sup>

From the beginning of the war, the colonial administration had to construct the logistics of disbursing the remittances to the recipients, but the whole process was anchored in the context of indigenous governance structures. Because of poor lines of communication, the insistence of the Swazi National Council and the general spread of the homesteads, the colonial administration was forced to designate certain areas of collection. The disbursement areas were usually local shops or in some instances government offices. These were the places where men and women converged every thirty days to collect the monthly remittances. For the duration of the war, the designated local shops developed into important institutions in colonial Swaziland. Indeed, the shops were institutions because they played an important role in the lives of rural people. They combined the role of disbursement areas for military remittances, with the traditional role of centres for the recruitment of Swazi men for employment in South African mines. The shop was also a trading centre that connected the Swazi with goods from different regions of the country and from beyond the borders of the country. It was also extensively used as a collection point for money and goods remitted by Swazi men who were employed in South African mines. It was therefore no surprise that the shop became a meeting point for women and some men to collect remittances from their husbands and sons who were employed in the different theatres of the Second World War. The majority of the shops were owned by white settlers and for most of the colonial period became convenient remittance collection points for the dependents of men employed in the war as they were usually closer to home. This was expressed by Ntombi Dlomo:<sup>55</sup>

Every thirty days women of this area whose husbands were out in the war converged at Mr. Smith's store because the government had told us that is where we were to receive money coming from our husbands in the war. The

---

<sup>54</sup> This was not peculiar to Swaziland as the same situation has been observed in other Southern African countries. For a comparative analysis see, M Ntabeni, "War and society in colonial Lesotho...".

<sup>55</sup> HS Simelane (Personal Collection), interview, N Dlomo (elderly of the southern Swaziland), 17 January 2013.

store helped us avoid travelling for long distances to government offices in town. That would have been very difficult for us because at that time the roads were bad and there were no public buses. Collecting the money from the store also helped Mr. Smith's business because after getting the money most of us bought goods for our families. The collection days were days of excitement for all of us, in fact it became some kind of days for social gathering.

Some of the recipients had to travel long distances to the collection points. The dates for collection of remittances from the shops were not without difficulties. For instance, some women travelled long distances to the stores only to be told that there was no money for them. According to the testimony of some women, they were told that their husbands were absenting themselves from work in the war and therefore not paid at the end of some months.

Siphiwe Tsabedze related her experience:<sup>56</sup>

At the time my husband was in the war I was still young and had only two children. I completely depended on the money I was receiving from his employment in the war. However, in some months I did not get any money and each time the officials told me that my husband was 'loafing' where he was working. This made life very difficult for me and the children. After some time I decided to reduce my spending to make sure that each collection lasted for two months and this made things to be very difficult. When I asked my husband about his 'loafing' when he came back he told me that at times he was not well and he could not go to work. I still feel that the government officials were playing some tricks on us.

In other instance they were told that their husbands were not paid because they caught venereal disease.<sup>57</sup> Some money due to them was withheld as military officials complained that some men from the High Commission Territories stationed in Italy contracted Venereal Disease as a result of relations with Italian women.

In many families the remitted money produced conflicts that could not be resolved or took a long time to be resolved. The conflicts were as diverse as the recipients of the money and their intensity depended on individuals. Some of the conflicts were between fathers and sons and they became evident

---

<sup>56</sup> HS Simelane (Personal Collection), interview, S Tsabedze (wife of a World War two veteran), 18 January 2013.

<sup>57</sup> PRO, DO35/1432/Y1069/5/1 – Demobilization: Confidential telegram from Allied Forces Head Quarters to Under Secretary of State, War Office, 9 January 1945.

after the war.<sup>58</sup> There were instances when fathers collected the remittances but used all the money for their own needs and the sons did not get anything when they came back from the war. Velaphi Zwane related his experience.<sup>64</sup>

When I was recruited for war service I gave the officials the name of my father as somebody who would be responsible for all my affairs regarding my connection with the war. I was already married at that time but I think culture demanded that my father should take responsibility of my affairs. As a result, all the money remitted when I was in the war was received by my father. The understanding was that he was going to keep it for me and assist my wife and child whenever they experienced serious needs. When I came back from the war my father told me there was no money because he had used it all. This was serious because my wife told me that they did not receive any monetary assistance from my father while I was away. I then requested my father to give me some cattle as compensation but he refused. From that time onwards I could not see eye to eye with my father. When he died I did not attend his funeral.

Velaphi's experience was not isolated but was one of many in which relations between sons and fathers broke down as a result of conflict over military remittances. It was within the context of Swazi culture that the remittances be collected by fathers of recruits. Culturally this was based on the assumption that the fathers will use the money in the interest of the recruit and the family.

In some instances the situation was worse because some fathers were in conflict with more than one son. Such multi-faceted conflicts were highlighted by Nkosingathi Mdluli:<sup>65</sup>

When my two brothers enlisted for the war, I was still young. However, in the years following the war, I became fully aware of the conflict between my brothers and our father. My brothers were bitter that my father misused their money that was remitted from their employment in the war. The conflict became very bitter as my mother was on the side of my brothers accusing my father of having used the money to please his mistresses. By the time my father died, he was staying alone because the rest of us had left the homestead to establish a new one headed by my elder brother. This was in protest against my father's misuse of remittances from my brothers' employment in the Second World War.

---

58 When research was conducted for this article, it was not possible to trace most fathers of the men who were recruited for the war. Indications are that most of them have passed on. Consequently, it was not possible to integrate their views on the conflicts that surrounded remittances from employment in the Second World War. HS Simelane (Personal Collection), interview, V Zwane (World War Two veteran), 17 January 2013; HS Simelane (Personal Collection), interview, N Mdluli (World War Two veteran), 24 January 2013.

Conflicts of this nature and their importance to Swazi communities were admirably described by Sonile Dlamini:<sup>59</sup>

The war period and years after were very difficult for Swazi society. I am saying this because some of the things that took place during the war changed many things and they never went back to what they had been before. The issue of money that was sent home from employment in the war produced many dislocations at family level. For me it is something that made many men to lose their sons and many sons to lose their father. This situation arose from the fact that the disputes over remitted money were so many and that members of families did not see eye to eye. Looking at what happened, I feel it was one development that defied culture and produced cracks that were never closed.

It is important to note that such conflicts did not end with father and son/s but extended to members of the nuclear and extended families and affected the social fabric of many communities. As disputes between fathers and sons developed over remittances, family members took sides. While some members blamed fathers for spending the remittances on their needs, others blamed the sons for not accepting that it was the prerogative of the fathers to use the money on general family needs including their own personal needs. This made families fail to execute the responsibility of being conflict resolution mechanism as posited by Swazi culture and tradition. It became very clear that family members were influenced by personal interests and attachments in attempting to solve family conflicts over remittances.

Conflicts were also experienced in those instances where women were recipients. The first category was in those instances where the sons designated their mothers to be recipients while the father was still alive. Most of the fathers in these instances were bitter as they felt that culturally, the responsibility should have been given to them. Such conflicts were serious because the whole situation became one of power and control between fathers and mothers.

This was the case in those instances where the father of the recruit was not employed and without a reliable source of income. The bitterness emanating from this situation was well expressed by Fanzane Kunene:<sup>60</sup>

My son was recruited for the war and I remained behind because I was in the Union of South Africa when the recruitment was done. I later discovered that he had given the name of her mother to receive his monthly remittances.

---

59 HS Simelane (Personal Collection), interview, S Dlamini (elderly of the Central region), 19 January 2013.

60 HS Simelane (Personal Collection), interview, F Kunene (father of a World War Two veteran), 24 January 2014.

I was very angry at this because it was like he was giving his mother authority over me even though I was head of the family. This is an action that seriously undermined my authority. When he came back from the war I ordered him to leave my homestead with all his belongings and our relations became sour for many years.

According to Fanzane, the decision of her son had a huge impact on the power dynamics of his homestead:<sup>61</sup>

With the control of the income coming from my son my wife just drifted out of my control as a husband. When it came to purchasing things in the family she completely neglected me. She was even negotiating the price of cattle with men in the area without any reference to me. Each time I questioned her about this she told me to concentrate on controlling my own money and not interfere with the money in her custody. She became a decision maker in the family and it was like our roles had been reversed. The whole atmosphere in my family was very unhealthy and the situation continued after the war.

Fanzane's family was almost ripped apart because of the controversy over the control of remittances. His son explained why he gave power to control his remittances to his mother:<sup>62</sup>

When I left for the war my father was drinking too much and he was also a womanizer. I felt that I should give power to my mother to control the money because I knew she would put it to good use. I was also confident that she would use the money for the benefit of the whole family. I could not understand why my father was bitter about this because the mother was sometimes used to buy food which he also ate. Even when he chased me out of his homestead I was still happy with my decision because my mother bought me a lot of cattle and also land that I could use for farming. I think my father was greedy and selfish.

Controlling remittances changed the power configurations in the Kunene family and challenged the foundations of Swazi patriarchy. In those families that shared the Kunene experience, some women came out of the war more powerful than their husbands. They became the main decision makers in the disbursement of family income much to the discomfort of their husbands. Decisions to give power of disbursement to women amounted to a redefinition of Swazi culture and was bound to have long-term effects.

The second category was that of the mothers of recruits who were married who found themselves at the centre of tension and conflict. This was true of

---

61 HS Simelane (Personal Collection), interview, F Kunene (father of a World War Two veteran), 24 January 2014.

62 HS Simelane (Personal Collection), T Kunene (World War Two veteran), 24 January 2015.

the cases where married men registered the names of their mothers instead of their wives. They were given power to collect and control remittances and have the final decision on how the money was to be used by their sons. In such cases the conflict was between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law.

The wives of the recruits were bitter because they felt the responsibility should have been given to them. Nokuzola Shandu expressed how she was bitter because of the decision of her husband.<sup>63</sup>

If you are a married woman I think you have the power over the assets of your husband if he is not present. When my husband went to the war he registered her mother as the recipient and controller of his remittances. This gave my mother-in-law all the power to control my children and myself. It was very undermining to me and I was honestly bitter. It also made me to have a negative attitude towards my mother-in-law. For the four years my husband was away there was tension between us but fortunately it did not erupt into an open conflict.

The decision of some recruits to register their mothers instead of their wives was in accordance with Swazi tradition and custom. In Swazi culture, the mother-in-law is considered senior to daughters-in-law and they are expected to exercise authority over the wives of their sons.<sup>64</sup> They are even empowered by custom to exercise control over the property of their sons. Such conflicts were actually challenging the tenants of Swazi culture based on hierarchical seniority.<sup>65</sup>

Some of the wives agreed that their husbands were correct to follow tradition, but argued that the mothers-in-law should have disbursed the money in accordance to the wishes of the wives of their sons. Tholakele Shabangu who was involved in a bitter conflict with her mother-in-law about this matter responded:<sup>66</sup>

When my husband enlisted for war service I was still very young and may be it was correct for him to submit the name of his mother as the dependent who will control the remittance. This was particularly understandable because my father-in-law had already passed away. There was therefore no question that my mother-in-law was the most senior person in the homestead. At the same time I had children who had to be taken care of and I think I knew best how to

---

63 HS Simelane (Personal Collection), interview, N Shandu (wife of a World War Two veteran), 26 January 2015.

64 H Huper, *An African aristocracy: Rank among the Swazi* (London, Oxford University Press, 1974); B Marwick, *The Swazi: An ethnographic account of the natives of the Swaziland protectorate* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1940).

65 H Kuper, *An African aristocracy...*

66 HS Simelane (Personal Collection), interview, T Shabangu, (wife of a World War Two veteran), 21 January 2013.

use my husband's remittances. Instead, my mother-in-law was too controlling over the money and ended up denying my children and myself what we should have had with the money. She denied us the money throughout the war years when my husband was away... I sincerely think the remittance money brought out the evil out of her. Up to the point when she died I was still angry with her.

Another respondent who had a conflict with her mother-in-law was Zamokuhle Bhembe whose relationship with her in-laws was completely damaged said:<sup>67</sup>

My mother-in-law was in control of the money that was coming every month from my husband's employment in the war. My feeling was that I should have been the one controlling my husband's money. While I was aware of the explanations provided by the elders, the problem between her and me was that she used the money to make herself comfortable. While I was struggling, she was buying herself all sorts of things with my husband's money. The manner in which she handled the remitted money clearly showed that she was a greedy woman. Her greediness made her forget that her son had children who had to be taken care of. When my husband came back he was completely against my views about his mother. As a result my relationship with him deteriorated and after a few years we divorced. The remitted money from the war broke-up my marriage, but largely because it was controlled by a mean and greedy woman.

It was not only the daughters-in-law who were resentful, but it appears that some mother-in-law were resentful that their daughters-in-law were in control of their son's remittances. This is a response that is very difficult to research into because it proved impossible to identify surviving mothers-in-law. This is not surprising because even the surviving wives of the men who participated in the war are at an advanced age. It appears that the mothers-in-law were envious of the fact that their daughters-in-law were receiving steady monthly income through remittances. Many of them seem to have felt that they should have been the ones controlling the money. The situation became even worse when some daughters-in-law refused to share the money with other members of the family. There is indication that a lot of tension was generated and the relations between the mothers-in-law and their daughters-in-law were irrevocably damaged. The money remitted from the war changed relations for the worse. There were some instance when the conflicts became worse and the mothers-in-law became outrightly insulting to their daughters. Khumbuzile Zwane indicated this when she said, "I had a serious conflict with my mother-in-law and she called me *ingwadla* [prostitute] that was feeding on her son's money".<sup>68</sup>

---

67 HS Simelane (Personal Collection), interview, Z Bhembe (wife of a World War Two veteran), 3 February 2013.

68 HS Simelane (Personal Collection), interview, M Zwane (wife of a World War Two veteran), 7 February 2013.

Conflict was also experienced in polygamous households where the first wife was given the responsibility of receiving and disbursing the remitted money to other wives and their children. In such instances there were complaints that the first wife was not distributing the money equitably. Zanele Zondi explained:<sup>69</sup>

When my husband enlisted for the war he had three wives and I was the third wife. The first wife was given the responsibility of collecting the remitted money and there after distribute it amongst the family members. I must admit that the money was not much, but she was not fair in her distribution. She always left a larger share for herself and the rest of us were left to struggle. It became compulsory for me to find other ways of generating income to ensure that we survived. Her actions made me very unhappy because what she did was evil. Even when my husband came back from the war I did not want to have any dealings with her. Our relationship changed for worse because of the manner in which she distributed the remitted money. I was not the only one who was angry at her because even the other wives expressed the same feelings.

While issues around war employment remittances were characterised by widespread conflicts, many of the conflicts were deep rooted. In many instances the relations between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law; fathers and sons, and between wives in polygamous households, were already conflicted before war employment remittances became an issue. The remittances brought some of these issues to the surface and made reconciliation difficult. In many instances the conflicts were indicative of the tensions that afflicted Swazi culture during the colonial period.

While families was so conflicted, it at the same time acted as a structure for conflict resolution as dictated by Swazi culture. Evidence indicates that Swazi families in general failed to resolve most of these remittances. Surprisingly, chieftainships were not utilized as a conflict resolution mechanism. This was essentially because most of the conflicts were considered to be *tibi tendlu* [family dirty linen] that should not be taken to the public domain. There is also no evidence showing the use of colonial courts as conflict resolution structures. Perhaps this should not be strange either because up to the late 1940s Swazi rural dwellers and their chiefs continued to distrust structures associated with the colonial administration.<sup>70</sup>

---

<sup>69</sup> HS Simelane (Personal Collection), interview, Z Zondi (wife of a World War Two veteran), 14 February 2013.

<sup>70</sup> For a more elaborate discussion of this point see, AG Marwick, "The attitude of the Swazi toward government", Special Collections Department, University of Swaziland Library, 1955.

## **Conclusion**

Research around historical developments at the time of the Second World War is well developed but there are still gaps in experiences of some of the countries that participated in the war. This is particularly the case with issues pertaining to the experiences of civilian society in the majority of African countries like Swaziland.

It was pointed out in this discussion that Swazi men were employed in different sections of the war, but essentially as labourers. They performed various activities for which they received payment that was comparatively lower than what other Swazi migrants were receiving in South African mines. Just like other migrants these employed Swazis remitted money to their families as they were subjected to mandatory remittances. Their families had a steady flow of income in the period the men were away from home.

As was the case with other forms of income, the remittances from men employed in the war positively contributed to the economic wellbeing of their families. The buying capacity of families improved, cattle accumulation was healthy, and families were able to afford educational fees of their children.<sup>71</sup> The developmental impact of remittances has received the attention of several scholars.<sup>72</sup>

As was also emphasized: Remittances from military employment in the Second World War also aroused negative impacts, particularly at a social level. As a result, tension and open conflict afflicted those families that were receiving remittances. It appears that the main contest was for power and control over remittances. Throughout the course of the war and some years after, there was an evident deconstruction of the Swazi homestead in terms of power relations. Wives were rising against their husbands, and daughters-in-law were in open conflict against their mothers-in-law. Mothers-in-law were viewed as greedy and evil while daughters-in-law were viewed as gold diggers who were refusing to recognize the prerogatives of mothers-in-law as dictated by custom and tradition. Family relations were dislocated, some never to be repaired. Swazi society was never free of conflict and tension before the war, but the struggle over remittances brought some of the conflicts to the surface more forcefully. Cracks that had developed with the introduction of a money economy, were open wider by the desire to control remittances during the war.

---

71 HS Simelane, "War, economy and society in Swaziland, 1939-1945" (PhD, University of Toronto, 1991).

72 HS Simelane, "Labour migration and rural transformation", *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 13(2), July 1995.

Most of the families that received remittances from employment in the Second World War remained unstable, even years after the war. The limits of the family as a conflict resolution institution were glaringly exposed. Scars of conflicts over the control of remittances from military employment are evident, even today, though some of the contestants have long passed on.