

# PLACING KANGWANE IN THE NEW SOUTH AFRICA\*

BRIAN H. KING

**ABSTRACT.** The South African homelands were central to the apartheid ideology of racial segregation and separate development and as a result became the location for large segments of the African population. Apartheid-era theorizations of the homelands tended to emphasize their importance to the state, with less attention directed to the divergent and unique social formations that often existed within them. Recent geographical research has been intent on evaluating the spatial imprint of these geographies for resident populations, as well as the varied class, gendered, and institutional formations that accompanied the democratic transition. Using a case study from the former KaNgwane homeland, this article examines the diverse ways in which rural households access environmental and economic resources to produce livelihoods. It is argued that a focus on community variation is needed to interrogate the differential encounters of these places with the local politics and development processes that are emerging in the new South Africa. *Keywords:* *apartheid, democratic transition, homelands, KaNgwane, South Africa, tribal authorities.*

South Africa's transition since the 1994 democratic elections continues to be shaped by its unique history. Colonialism and apartheid created social and spatial patterns of segregation that impact the economic, political, and cultural processes emerging in the rural areas. Of particular importance are the former homelands, or bantustans, which were specific areas demarcated by the apartheid government for the African population. The homelands were part of grand apartheid's vision of racial segregation and separate development and as a result became the central location for many Africans. This article uses a case study from the former KaNgwane homeland to examine the impacts of colonialism and apartheid on rural livelihoods and local perceptions of cultural identity and development in the post-apartheid era. KaNgwane was adjacent to the Transvaal Province, both of which were incorporated into the Mpumalanga Province following the 1994 elections. The study area is located about 300 kilometers east of Pretoria in northeastern South Africa, close to Kruger National Park and the Mozambique and Swaziland borders (Figure 1).

The article first provides a brief history of segregation, with particular attention to the construction of the homelands during apartheid, as well as a review of geographical research on the homelands. Although these territories were effectively abolished prior to the democratic transition, the state's empowerment of tribal au-

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✦ DR. KING is an assistant professor of geography at the University of Texas, Austin, Texas 78712.