1. Description

1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family: Pondo of South Africa; Xhosa; Bantu Language

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): xho

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): Southwest Cape Province (between the provinces of the Cape and Natal)

1.4 Brief history: The Pondo people became a part of the Cape Colony in 1894, and have always been an African territory. The Pondo were never defeated in battle or greatly affected by white settlers. “The Pondo have incorporated modern innovations with their traditional methods and much of their life is unchanged from that of four or five hundred years ago” (3).

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:

- “Pondoland has been less influenced by Europeans than any other of the Cape reserves. The Pondo were not involved in the boarder wars; they were the last tribe in the Cape Province to come under British administration; and their chiefs were left more power than any other in the Cape Province” (1).
- “Pondoland has fewer mission stations, fewer schools, and fewer stores than other areas in the reserves” (1).
- “The group of ‘dressed people’ in the Pondoland has within recent years been greatly strengthened by the immigration of a number of Fingos, and some Xhosa, from the overcrowded Ciskeian and western Transkeian districts.

1.6 Ecology (natural environment):

- “Pondoland is a rugged strip of coastal separated from Natal by the umThamvuna River. Pondoland is characterized by sour grasses, forest and patches of fynbos” (1).
- There is relatively high rainfall and is temperate, with high sub-tropical temperatures along the coast in the summers. (1).
- The area is also known for its indigenous forests, estuaries, and scenic landscapes (4).

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density

- Home range size: “Formerly as many as twenty married men related in the male line lived together in one umzi. Now an average umzi contains four to five adults and four children” (1).

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): Maize, millet, sorghum, various kinds of pumpkin, calabashes, sweet potatoes, peas, and beans. (1).

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: Cattle, goats, horses, sheep, pigs, hens, ducks and geese. (1).

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?

- “Pitfalls were dug and sharpened stakes set in paths to catch big game. The men from one umzi or from one ridge would go hunting together with dogs and spears, and later with guns. Now the only game to be found in Pondoland are a few bush buck and blue buck, a monkey or two, some cats, and birds; so hunting no longer plays any appreciable part in the domestic economy of the people” (1).
- “The people living on the coast gather shell-fish and spear other fish in rock-pools and lagoons” (1).
- “They make no nets or traps for fish. Pronged spears are used for fishing, and men go in parties at night with torches of sneezewood” (1).
- “The weapons of war were spears (imikhonto). Each man carried a bundle of light long-handled spears for throwing and a short-handled long-bladed spear for stabbing” (1).

2.4 Food storage:

- “Stock is enclosed at night in circular stockades, or kraals, built within the semicircle of huts. Usually there are two kraals, one for cattle and one for calves, goats, and sheep.

2.5 Sexual division of production:

- Men take care of the cattle, goats, sheep and horses.

2.6 Land tenure:

- “If a Pondo is asked to whom any area belongs he will give in answer the name of the paramount chief of the country, or of the chief ruling over that district, or the name of the tribe or the predominating clan occupying it. A chief has jurisdiction over people-if his people spread into unoccupied territory he would still claim their allegiance—but also has jurisdiction over land” (1).
- “Land to cultivate was not allowed (ukalawula), but each woman was free to cultivate where she chose within her own chief’s district, provided she did not encroach on any area already cultivated. Now the exclusive right to cultivate certain arable areas is now granted through magistrates” (1).
- “Officially a man is entitled to one land (up to 8 acres) on payment of a 30s. tax, whether he be married or not. For each additional wife he is allotted another land” (1).
- “Amadikazi (women living with their fathers or brothers) may obtain one land each on the payment of IOs. tax.
- “All the country not under cultivation is public grazing ground” (1).

2.7 Ceramics: “Pottery is a specialized art. The art is usually passed down from mother to daughter, but any woman who chooses may learn. Special clay is dug and pounded fine. A ring of clay the size of the base of the pot desired is placed on a mat. A lump of clay is flattened out and fitted into the ring to form the base. The pottress works in her own time and may keep a costumer waiting for months before fulfilling an order” (1).

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns: Neighbors typically gather for festivals and feasts and share everything. (1)

2.9 Food taboos:

- “People with umlaza are dangerous to cattle and to all stock except pigs and poultry. No one with umlaza may drink milk” (1).
• “In practice most will not drink milk of cattle other than those belonging to their own grandfathers’ descendents, and although they will avoid milk if they hear of the death of a member of one of these clans, they do not observe any other mourning rites for him” (1).

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?
• “They have no canoes of any kind, nor tradition of having had them” (1).
• “Of the use of magic for protection and cure and in important enterprises there is adequate proof. The use of magic to secure death is more doubtful. Sorcery is practiced. Cases of poisoning have been proved in magistrates’ courts. Witchcraft obviously cannot be practiced except in the form of bestiality. Some of the ‘familiars’ believed in are fabulous animals: pheres are believed to be used for end, which are impossible” (1).

3. Anthropometry
3.1 Mean adult height (m and f): Not found.
3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f): Not found.

4. Life History, mating, marriage
4.1 Age at menarche (f): 10-12 years of age. (1)
4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):
• Families start soon after marriage. (1)
• “Girls of 6 begin caring for younger children, and helping their mothers with household tasks” (1).
• 10-12 children are considered ideal. (1)
4.3 Completed family size (m and f): Families range in size from 7-20 (1).
4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f): Not found.
4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): Females: 16-18 years; Males: 20-25 years
4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:
• “Although adultery is by Colonial law a ground of divorce, whereas under Pondo law it is not, the proportion of divorces among couples married by Christian rites is lower than the proportion of Native customary unions dissolved” (1).
• “Dissolutions of marriages, whether contracted by Native custom or by Christian or civil rites, are frequent” (1).
4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:
• “Marriage is polygynous and patrilocal.
4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?:
• “The mark of a marriage is the passage of cattle from the groom’s group to that of the bride; the cattle which pass are collectively known as ikhazi.
• “Always it has been customary for young men to spend nights with girls in the girls’ homes. This relationship when a man comes to ukumetsha with a girl in her own home is marked by the exchange of gifts (ukunyoba) between his group and her’s. Sometimes a man sends a gift to the father of the girl as soon as he has persuaded her to be his partner. Sometimes he only sends it when caught lying with the girl at a young people’s gathering, by her bother or other male relative, who seizes his sticks and blankets, which can then only be redeemed with a goat or a beast” (1).
• “The payment of umnyobo does not give a man the exclusive right to ukumetsha with a girl” (1).
• “Only by giving cattle to the family of a woman can a man obtain the legal guardianship of children, and only a married woman can bear children without disgrace” (1).
4.9 Inheritance patterns: Eldest son takes care of the family once the father dies. (1)
4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:
• “If cattle have passed the marriage is legal, and the children belong to the father” (1).
4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals: Not found.
4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): None.
4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these “other fathers” recognized?
• “The sperm of the man meets the blood of the woman. There is formed a white string. The woman ceases to menstruate, and what blood she does not discharge goes into that string. At the end of the two months it is like a big clot of blood. Movement within begins during the fourth month” (1).
• “There are no qualities believed to be inherited exclusively from either parent” (1).
4.14 What is the belief of the mother’s role in procreation exactly? (e.g., “receptacle in which fetus grows”)
• “In the fourth or fifth month of her pregnancy a bride is given an isihlambezo, a plant which she grows in water or boils. Instead of drinking ordinary water she drinks that in which it is growing” (1).
4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)? No.
4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape
• After Amagubura, the girls are sometimes examined to make sure they are still virgins. “Fines for seduction and causing pregnancy are still generally levied. Premarital pregnancy is not unusual” (1).
4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin): Physical attraction and if the families agree. (1)
4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?
• It is customary for women to remain virgin until marriage and then only have sexual relations with her husband. (1)
4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring
4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare: Not found.

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:
- "Feasts are common occasions for fights. Sexual rivalry is aroused. Men’s solo dances tend to be dramatizations of military exploits. Fights with sticks between individuals are imidlado (‘dances’). Couples break off from the main dance for imidlado and in a moment their display may turn into a serious fight. The dividing line between dance and military display is blurred, and very quickly the women drop out, and the groups change from rival bands of dancers into companies of warriors” (1).
- "The Pondo army was organized on a territorial basis. Every able-bodied man fought, and when the army was mobilized each man went to his petty headman and marched with him to the great place of the headman or chief immediately superior. The army was summoned by runners sent round to each district, or in cases of sudden attack by a war cry shouted from ridge to ridge by the women. Since the army was treated regularly little preparation was necessary immediately before battle” (1).

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:
- "Sub-districts fight over grazing and over girls. Gatherings in the hit of a girl being initiated, weddings, and festivals are usual occasions for a fight. Fights at festivals between sub-district and sub-district often become serious” (1).
- "The attempt of another brother to seize the chieftainship from the heir was a common cause of fighting within the tribe” (1).
- "Sometimes a man of one district would be accused of killing a man of another district by witchcraft or sorcery and the friends of the deceased would attempt to kill him or seize his property, and a fight between the two districts results” (1).

4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):
4.18 Cannibalism? No. (1)
5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size: Not found.

5.2 Mobility pattern (seasonality): No migration due to seasons/climates, only labor. (1)

- "Nowadays in Pondoland practically every man goes at least once during his life to a labor center to work for Europeans. Many go again and again. Most men go the gold mines or to the sugar estates in Natal; a few to East London, Captown, Durban, and Maritzburg" (1).

5.3 Political system (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes):

- "The clan (isiduko) is a group all members of which trace patrilineal decent from a common ancestor. Members of a clan as such have no mutual economic responsibilities" (1).
- "Each headman, or chief, with the men under him, forms a court of first instance, and from the court of every headman or chief there is an appeal to the court of his immediate superior, and from thence to the court of the paramount chief" (1).

5.4 Post marital residence:

- "Each woman in the umzi who has been married a year or more has her own hut, and often also a store-hut. The senior male of the umzi is ‘owner of the umzi’. The hut of his mother, or if she’s dead of his first wife (the ‘great wife’), is built opposite the gate of the cattle kraal. His second wife is ‘right-hand wife’ and her hit goes to the right of the great hut; the third wife married is a ‘rafter’ (iqadi) of the first wife, and her hut goes to the left of the great hut; the fourth wife is a ‘rafter’ of the right-hand wife, and her hut goes to the right of that of the right-hand wife; if other wives are married they are alternatively ‘rafters’ of the great house” (1).

5.5 Territoriality? (Defined boundaries, active defense): Not found.

5.6 Social interaction divisions (age and sex):

- Children are taught to show their elders utmost respect. (1)
- "Men swear by their sisters and mothers, women by brothers and make ancestors” (1).

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships: None.

5.8 Village and house organization:

- "Pondo live in groups of huts, (umzi, pl. imizi) scattered through their 3,900 square miles of country at irregular distances, of anything from fifty yards to a mile or more apart. In each umzi is a man with his wives, married sons with their wives and children, and unmarried daughters” (1).
- "Members of imizi in one small area—often those on one ridge-recognize one of their number as a petty headman, fight together, and sit together at feasts. People living in one district recognize a chief who formerly had administrative and judicial powers, and they fought as a unit in the tribal army. A number of districts make up the tribe, controlled by a paramount chief” (1).
- "Cutting across there territorial groupings are exogamous patrilineal clans (iziduko). A man does not necessarily build his umzi near that of his father, so clans do not coincide with territorial groups. But sons tend to settle in the same neighborhood as their father, and therefore one clan, usually that of the chief, predominates in a district” (1).
- "Huts are arranged in a semicircle, which, if the nature of the site permits, faces east. The open segment of the circle is filled by a cattle kraal” (1).

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens’ houses): Men live in the great house. (1)

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

- The Pondo live in huts with a wickerwork frame, mud walls, and a rounded thatched roof. (1)

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc:

- "The ancestor cult is a sanction for the respect of seniors upon which the social and political system is based. The ancestors are believed to be powerful in sending good or evil to their descendants” (1).

5.12 Trade:

- "Kay mentions that the Pondo got copper rings from the tribes to the east of them in exchange for grain and corn; and the Oyce that they exchange maize and tobacco for elephant ivory with Bushmen. Pondo on the coast now trade a rare shell (iyila) with Xhosa, who prize it as an ornament, also shark skin which Xhosa use as medicine for fields” (1).
- "The main cause of circulation was the custome of ukulobola (the giving of cattle by the groom’s group to the bride’s group upon the occasion of marriage) and the giving of clothing and household utensils by the bride’s group to the groom’s group” (1).

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6.0 Time allocation to RCR: Not found.

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

- "Husbands are said to use medicines to protect their wives and revenge themselves on adulterers. The woman is given medicine in food and does not know that she has taken it. The medicines do not harm her, they harm the first person to have sexual intercourse with her” (1).

6.2 Stimulants:

- "The use of beer at birth, initiation, marriage, and death has been described. At birth and death beer is an essential part of the cleansing rites. At initiation and marriage a best is always killed and beer is not essential, but it may be regarded as part of the offering. Beer may also be the sole substance of an offering for a sick person with the ritual centering around it” (1).

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal):

- Both boys and girls must go to Amagubura before puberty. (1)
“After puberty and before marriage a girl should be ukathombisa (‘to put forth shoots, to bud, to sprout, to menstruate for the first time’). The essentials of the initiation are the seclusion of the girl in the hut of her father’s umzi, the observance of certain taboos during the seclusion, the use of bleaching agents on the skin, the performance of certain ritual killings and ritual dances, a ritual cleaning at the end of the seclusion, and the behavior of a girl for a period in her own home as if she were a bride. The ceremonies are performed during the winter months after reaping, when the community has leisure” (1).

6.4 Other rituals:
- **Umlaza:** ritual impurity. A woman has umlaza during her periods until she washes after the flow ceases, after a miscarriage, or the death of a husband or child, for about a month, and after sexual connexion until she washes. A man has umlaza for a month after the death of a wife or a child and after sexual connexion until he washes. Meat of an animal, which has died, pork, and honey infect those who eat them with umlaza until they wash.
- **Amaqubura:** gatherings of unmarried girls, boys, and young men, for dancing and sweethearting (ukumetsha). The young people of one small local district gather in the evening in a secluded spot in the veld or in a deserted hut. They dance and sing, then pair off to sleep together. The couple lie in each other’s arms, but the hymen of the girl must not be ruptured” (1).

6.5 Myths (Creation): None found.

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):
- “Wooden pipes and bone snuff-spoons are carved by men specialists. Trade tin (usually the remains of an old dish) is cleverly used to line the bowls of the pipes and to make an inlaid pattern on the outside of the bowl. Fine holes are drilled in old canned meat tins, and they are used as sieves for sifting stuff” (1).
- “Teachers’ wives and other educated women buy sewing machines, and make clothing for fellow ‘school people’ and braided skirts for pagan women. They are paid in ash or in grain, or occasionally in loads of wood” (1).

6.7 Sex differences in RCR: Not found.

6.8 Missionary effect:
- “Contact influences touch the ancestor cult directly though the teaching of churches which deny the power of the ancestors to bless or harm their descendant and forbid their members to take part in any ritual killing. Ritual mutilations of the body are dropped by most Christians, but some still sacrifice, saying, like Geza, that it is ‘to make the blood good’” (1).
- “UTHixo, the word used by missionaries to translate ‘God’ is now in general use in Pondoland. When asked, all Pondo, even great-grandfathers, who have not come under direct Christian influence, assert positively that they have always known the work and that they always called upon UTHixo when they sneezed, when they were saved from danger, and when laying a stone upon the istivane (cf. below)” (1).

6.9 RCR revival: None.

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:
- “When some one dies the people of umzi begin to wail. The corpse is regarded as contaminating and dangerous, and is buried as quickly as possible. It is rolled up in the deceased’s blankets and carried out on the door of the hut in which he died. Now the grave is usually dug with a shelf at the side, and the body placed in a crouching position on this shelf, which is then walled up with sods. Close relatives of one recently buried often visit the grave during the night to make certain that is undisturbed” (1).
- “All the belongings of the deceased, such as sticks, spear-shafts, blankets, mats, beadwork, are buried with him. Grains of millets and maize and pumpkin seeds are thrown into the grave by the man who buries the corpse and as he does so he says, ‘Usiphe amazimba, usiphe umbona, usiphe amathanga’ (Give us millet, give us maize, give us pumpkins)” (1).
- “All except the head of the umzi and persons who have died by violence are buried on one side of the umzi, facing in towards the umzi. Young wives are buried at some distance away, old wives nearer, and children in between. Any who have died by violence are buried at a distance in the bush” (1).
- “After the corpse is buried every one from the umzi goes to the river to wash. A beast is killed at the deceased’s umzi. Those men who have dug the grave and handled the body have the contents of the gall bladder poured over their hands and wash their hands in it. They avoid field work on the day of the death” (1).
- “The Pondo believe in the survival of the dead, and in their interest in, and power over, the life of their descendants. All ‘old people’ who die become amathongo (ancestral spirits) and can influence the lives of their descendants. What happens to children and young persons after death is not clear” (1).
- “A young man who dies, even though he has a child, cannot trouble people. But an old woman, although barren, becomes an ithongo capable of influencing the survivors of her umzi or her brother’s children” (1).

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people? No.


7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint:
- “In some districts most women, and some men, have a line tattooed down the forehead, nose and chin. Some have rows or dots or stripes on their cheeks. The tattooing is usually done between 9 and 16 years” (1).

7.2 Piercings: None according to Monica Hunter.

7.3 Haircut:
- “Women comb out their wooly curls and roll their hair to make it long. At about 8 years they begin to comb out the tufts in front and plait it. Then they do the sides, and last of all the crown. When the plaits are a couple of inches long they are undone, and the hair made into two strands and rolled together. Fat is smeared on, and formerly all smeared the hair with red ochre. Now only some girls, and very few married women, continue that custom. By the time a girl is married her hair looks as if it is ‘bobbed’. Later, if she does not have to cut it off for mourning, it may fall below her waist” (1).
"A few men, dandies, grow ringlets, but most content themselves with shaving their heads in odd patterns. Young men shave their faces, but most over 50 have a short beard" (1).

7.4 Scarification:
- Ingqithi: cutting off a joint of a finger. “Most Pondo clans cut off the top joint of the little finger of the eldest child of a family, and every alternate child after the eldest. But if the eldest is a girl and the second is a boy, the boy will also have the joint amputated. Usually a girl’s left hand is cut, a boy’s right. Alternate children, instead of having the whole joint cut off, have a small bit of flesh cut off their little finger. Ingqithi prevents weakness; if it is not done the body will not go well” (1).
- Ukuchaza: custom of scarifying the body. “Scarifications are made on the face and body when the child is about a month old, and may be repeated at intervals through life ‘to make the blood good’” (1).

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):
- “As scent, strings of leaves, intyenba (wild mint), are worn around the neck. Leaves of imphepha are ground up and made, with a sticky substance, into sweet-smelling beads. Wooden beads of umthombothi are also worn for their scent” (1).
- “In some districts red clay is generally used on the hair and clothes” (1).
- “Christians do not use clay, or tattoo their faces, or braid their hair, but there is much rivalry between the belles concerning frocks to be worn to church on Sundays” (1).

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:
- “The most important artificial aid to beauty is love magic. Charms to secure and retain love are widely used by both sexes, pagan and Christian. Men wash with certain roots to gain the affections of girls. To compel a girl to love him a man may take some ornament of hers, or a handkerchief, and soak it in a pot of ubulawu” (1).

7.7 Sex differences in adornment: None found.

7.8 Missionary effect:
- “European trade goods have now almost entirely replaced skins as clothing, although in the recent depression some have resumed skin skirts. ‘School people’ all wear clothing of European pattern. The styles introduced by early missionaries are tenacious.

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment: None found.

8. Kinship systems
8.1 Sibling classification system:
- “From childhood there is a distinction between younger and elder brother. A younger brother is ordered about by his senior. After the death of the father the eldest brother, the heir, takes the place of the father, being responsible for the maintenance, and, if possible of his younger brothers. They should give him their earnings, as they should their father. An elder brother is referred to as umkhuluwe, a younger as umninawe” (1).

8.2 Sororate, levirate: None found.

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omah etc.): None found.

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):
- “All through Pondoland there are cairns of stones called isivivane. Passers-by used to pick up a stone, spit on it, and say as they placed it on the pile, ‘Isivivane give me strength and health’, or, ‘Look upon me God of our people. I ask strength of you, you God who created us in earth. Look upon us. Give us to eat.’” (1).

Numbered references