



1.3 Tea cultivation & processing



TEA CULTIVATION IN VENĐA

The cultivation of tea is one of the key industries in the newly established Republic of Venđa in Southern Africa. The commemorative envelope and four special stamps, which illustrate some aspects of the cultivation of this plant, were designed by Mr A.H. Barrett.

Tea was planted for the first time on a commercial basis in Natal in 1880. However, more lucrative sugar and wattle cultivation led to the abandonment of the project.

In the early 1960's a second start was made to establish a local tea industry. Cultivation commenced in Venđa in 1963. By the early 1970's plantations in Natal and the Eastern Transvaal had furnished proof that tea could be grown economically in Southern Africa.

Besides creating job opportunities for Blacks in rural areas and effecting savings in foreign exchange, the success of the tea

industry has led to the establishment of a tea estate on the banks of the Mutshindudi River where 26 ha were planted in 1973. A tea factory on the estate started production in April 1979.

From the start teas from the estate have enjoyed wide acclaim. In its second year of production the estate won the shield for the best tea produced by the Sapekoe Group, leading to speculation that Venđa may yet become the "Ceylon of Southern Africa".

When the estate is in full production, 1 300 people will be employed there. From the outset the Venđa people, who learn quickly and are stable workers, have been trained in the skills required on a tea estate. Employees are encouraged to further their studies and the first Black was appointed in a managerial position in 1977.

The estate, which will eventually boast more than five million tea bushes, has already produced a tea of a quality that has been acclaimed by the normally conservative London Brokers and has elicited statements that it "compares well with the brightest teas currently available from Africa".