
FROM COLONIAL HEGEMONIES TO IMPERIAL CONQUEST, 1840–1880

NORMAN ETHERINGTON, PATRICK HARRIES,
AND BERNARD K. MBENGA

The period covered by this chapter is marked by the expansion of power exercised by Europeans or their descendants in South Africa. In the Cape Colony, power shifted from a series of military governors to local officials elected under a nonracial, qualified franchise. A more original form of government emerged in Natal, where representatives of the metropolitan government ruled the African population while colonists of European descent exercised only limited political powers. In the interior, Boer settlers built two fragile republics on the basis of a racial franchise limited to white men. The growth and expansion of these very different settler states was conditional upon the conquest of the original inhabitants and the alienation of their land. Wool-farming and plantation agriculture, and later the mining of diamonds in the interior, brought a new urgency to the development of the British colonies and to demands for land and labor. The swell of change was carried far beyond the confines of British rule as people adopted new identities more suitable to their changed situation. Race grew into a primary factor of social classification, belonging, and exclusion and, over time, came to be regarded by many as a scientific means of explanation. The delineation and transcription of languages divided people into ethnic groups that rapidly developed their own values, practices, and histories. During this period, Christianity spread up the coast and into the interior. Many converts adopted the Christian beliefs and practices brought to Africa from Europe whereas others adapted them to local conditions. In some areas class-consciousness grew in importance whereas gender relations, based on the social practices associated with sexual difference, underwent extensive change. As the labor market expanded, many young African men returned home with wages and freedoms that challenged the gerontocratic structure of rural life.

For many, the forced march of progress quickened the rhythm of existence and undermined the stability of an older, more secure world. Original answers had to be found to new problems that affected the most isolated

villages as much as they did the urban centers. Perhaps most notably, economic change and movement started to give a unity to the extended spaces that would one day find a political coherence as South Africa.

CONFLICT ON THE CAPE'S EASTERN FRONTIER

A brief period of peace came to the troubled area east of the Fish River during the late 1830s and early 1840s. The influence of humanitarians on the British government had caused the annexation of the area between the Fish and Kei rivers to be rescinded, after which direct rule was limited to amaMfengu immigrants settled by the British in the vicinity of Fort Peddie. Elsewhere, a series of treaties governed the relations between the British colonial government and the leaders of independent Xhosa and Griqua communities. These treaties deflected the Boers' drive for land away from the coastal plain to the dry interior, where they settled alongside immigrant Griqua communities and native Sotho-Tswana speakers. The treaties also placed the onus on the remaining white farmers to protect their herds and prohibited them from sending armed commandos to retrieve their stolen cattle or to extort compensation from frontier chiefs. The British further consolidated their recognition of Xhosa sovereignty by installing diplomatic agents, without the support of soldiers or police on the chiefs' lands, to oversee the application of the treaties.¹ This sudden reversal of policy underlined the tension between direct rule and assimilation, on the one hand, and various shades of indirect rule and territorial separation, on the other. It was to color life on this frontier over the next forty years by juxtaposing a policy of economic and cultural intercourse with that of intrusive military rule. The one was a cheap means of colonizing the consciousness of the amaXhosa; but its results were less immediately visible than those imposed by military conquest. The Cape's frontier politics would slew between these two poles throughout the period covered by this chapter.²

Powerful commercial interests wanted a stronger British presence on the frontier, as an army consumed local goods created a climate of confidence for investment and immigration and, in general, was expected to advance the interests of the settlers. Many farmers had benefited from slave compensation payments and the availability of cheap land vacated by Dutch-speaking emigrants in the mid-to-late 1830s. When the price of wool boomed in the

¹ J. B. Peires, *The House of Phalo* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1981), pp. 119–21; John Frye (Ed.), *The War of the Axe and the Xhosa bible: The journal of the Rev. J.W. Applewood* (Cape Town: C. Struik, 1971).

² A point particularly made by T. Keegan, *Colonial South Africa and the origins of the Racial order* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1996).

early 1840s, and with it the cost of land, these farmers called on government to abandon the treaty system and annex unproductive African lands. They had strong ties to commercial interests in garrison towns along the frontier and, being mainly British settlers, had stronger links to government than the established Boer farmers. As their confidence grew with their wealth, these sheep farmers exercised an increasing influence on the administration.³

Metropolitan interests were also changing at this time. The humanitarian lobby declined in importance when slavery finally came to an end throughout the empire in 1838. The mighty experiment engendered by the costly liberation of slaves seemed to falter and fail as workers left the West Indian plantations and the price of sugar soared in Britain, and when free traders sought to open the British market to sugar produced by slaves in Cuba and Brazil, humanitarians found themselves politically marginalized. Intellectuals like Carlyle and Dickens would soon pour scorn on the hypocrisy of the “telescopic philanthropy” that favored inscrutable pagans in foreign lands rather than the poor at home. The humanitarians at the Cape had advocated the adoption of a package of freedoms by native peoples. These included freedom from slavery and servitude, free enterprise and free trade, freedom of religion and worship. But an integral part of this package was freedom from what was seen as the dark superstitions of tribal life, such as polygamy and bridewealth, and from dancing and the consumption of liquor. Most Africans found it difficult to abandon customs that, in the case of bridewealth, provided the payments needed for a son to marry and establish his own homestead. Through the consumption of liquor, and by participating in dancing, people constructed community ties that extended beyond those of kinship. For many, the power of ancestors or witches seemed more immediate than the interventions of a transcendent Supreme Being. However, the humanitarians saw these practices in starkly different ways. Bridewealth and polygamy enslaved African women, drinking and dancing were considered to be signs of ascendant savagery, and witchcraft and ancestor worship were products of diabolical agency. When Africans refused to abandon these practices and beliefs, or when Christian converts slid back into the dark maw of paganism, humanitarians experienced a sense of betrayal. The refusal of Africans to accept the leadership of the missionaries, or their cultural absolutism, would gradually undermine the strength of the humanitarian movement at the Cape.⁴

³B. le Cordeur, *The Politics of Eastern Cape Separatism, 1820–1854* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

⁴L. Switzer, *Power and resistance in an African Society: the Ciskei Xhosa and the Making of South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1993), pp. 115–35.

These changes reverberated on the eastern frontier as early as 1839 when an impetuous British colonel, John Hare, replaced Stockenström as lieutenant-governor. They grew in magnitude as the influence of James Read was all but effaced by a new generation of missionaries that, led by Henry Calderwood, threatened to impose Christianity on the amaXhosa by force. The decline of the humanitarian lobby also was felt at Cape Town where aging liberals like John Philip and his son-in-law, John Fairbairn, mounted little resistance when, in July 1844, Hare proposed a military reoccupation of the lands west of the Kei. Two months later a new governor, Lieutenant-General Sir Peregrine Maitland, finally annulled the treaty system and allowed farmers once again to follow their stolen cattle. At the same time, he prohibited independent Xhosa chiefs from applying tribal law and custom to Christians living in their areas.

By extending the thin wedge of colonial rule across the Fish River in this manner, Maitland effectively brought the dynamics of conflict back to the frontier. The vicious cycle of drought, cattle rustling, and armed reprisals grew during the summer of 1845–46 when the rains failed to fall. When a Xhosa rescue party freed a prisoner accused of stealing an axe, the British sent a force of regulars, Cape Mounted Rifles and colonial militia across the Fish River. The Seventh Frontier War marked a new level of viciousness on the frontier. The amaXhosa were far better armed, albeit with old flintlock guns, than a decade earlier. They fought out of desperation to prevent the British from expelling them from their lands and out of fear that they would be broken up, like the Khoekhoen, and scattered across the farms, like the amaMfengu. They tortured and killed prisoners, mutilated the corpses of their enemies and, when they crossed the frontier, burned settler homes. In their turn, the British mobilized the biggest army ever assembled in South Africa, about 14,000 men, of whom regulars made up less than one-third. Most of the fighting fell to amaMfengu and Khoekhoe auxiliaries, based on the Indian “Sepoy” model, or to colonists who despised inexperienced imperial troops. During the fighting, British commanders refused to extend the concept of chivalry to what they saw as a barbarous enemy and pursued an active strategy of burning Xhosa homes, seizing cattle, and destroying food stores.⁵

This scorched earth policy brought the amaXhosa to the edge of starvation and, without the logistics needed to pursue the war, immobilized their fighters. As the amaNgqika entered the hungry period before the rains, first Maqoma and then Sandile sued for peace. But without a clear military

⁵ N. Mostert, *Frontiers: The Epic of South Africa's Creation and Tragedy of the Xhosa People* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1992), pp. 874, 878, 896, 899–90; Peires, *House of Phalo*, pp. 153–8.

victory, the British were unable to end the war. In the face of continuing Xhosa resistance, particularly from the amaNdlambe who crossed the Kei with impunity, the secretary of state for the colonies, Lord Grey, turned to a policy of military rule and cultural assimilation. When a new governor, Sir Henry Pottinger, arrived at the Cape to implement this policy, he was persuaded by the settler elite to force the amaXhosa across the Kei River. However, he had neither the means nor the ability to achieve this and was soon replaced by Sir Harry Smith, the veteran soldier who saw discipline, rather than diplomacy, as the solution to the frontier problem.⁶

Smith's objective was to pacify and subdue the amaXhosa in the shortest time possible. In December 1847, he threatened and humiliated a gathering of Xhosa chiefs, warning them of the consequences of taking up arms again. He then brought the territory between the Fish and Keiskamma rivers into the Cape Colony as the district of Victoria East. The amaXhosa were expelled from this area and their land was either settled by Mfengu or Khoekhoe immigrants or it was sold to sheep farmers, many of whom came from the Albany district. Africans who chose to reside on farms owned by settlers or missionaries were expected to conform to the values and practices of British civilization. Although cultural assimilation proved the rule in the Cape, Smith introduced a form of martial law, combined with indirect rule, in the territory between the Keiskamma and the Kei (the eastern section of D'Urban's old province of Queen Adelaide) that he named British Kaffraria. In this Crown Colony, the amaXhosa were squeezed into reserves, or rural locations, and subjected to a head tax. Humanitarians raised little objection to these policies, at least partly because they were coming to see the imposition of British civilization as the only means of assuring the freedoms associated with Christianity and commerce. Smith rewarded their inactivity by bullying the chiefs into prohibiting polygamy and witchcraft, and by placing the resolution of important contraventions of the law in the hands of military courts or magistrates who ruled alongside the chiefs.

The position of the Kat River settlement was soon threatened by the flagging energy of the humanitarian lobby and the turnaround in British opinion that allowed this expansion of the colony. During the Seventh Frontier War, the settlement's position as a buffer against Xhosa expansion had been underlined when large numbers of men were conscripted into the British army. But following the incorporation of Victoria East into the Cape Colony, the Kat River settlement lost much of this military function and the weapons of its occupants were called in. At the same time, amaMfengu

⁶ A. Lester, *Imperial Networks: Creating Identities in Nineteenth-century South Africa and Britain* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), Chapter 6.

displaced by white farmers in Victoria East, and amaXhosa looking for work, or pastures for their cattle, started to crowd into the area. Already a dumping ground for displaced peoples, the Kat River was unable to accommodate these new immigrants. Poverty in the area grew, particularly because the settlement's farmers were unable to sell their land on the open market or acquire the mortgages and capital needed to convert to sheep farming. White settlers traced the rise in cattle rustling to the anonymous newcomers and, ever critical of the endemic poverty in the area, called for the Kat River settlement to be disbanded as a distinct, self-governing territory under the tutelage of the LMS. The government responded to these requests when, during the harsh winter of 1850, police evicted what they regarded as illegal immigrants from the settlement. For the Kat River farmers, this seemed to presage their future if, through discussions entered into at the Cape, Britain agreed to hand the government of the colony to the settlers.⁷

Matters came to a head along the frontier when the amaXhosa, squeezed into locations and menaced by drought, began to respond to the messages of a prophet, Mlanjeni, who traced the ills of his people to witchcraft. If the amaXhosa sacrificed their dun-colored cattle, he promised, the English would disappear. Smith returned to the frontier to address the chiefs; but when Sandile failed to attend a meeting, he deposed the Ngqika chief in October 1850 and replaced him with a government magistrate, Charles Brownlee. This extension of direct rule brought the amaXhosa into open rebellion. Through their improved proficiency in the handling of firearms, they were able to inflict considerable casualties on British troops. The war spread as the amaXhosa mobilized the support of kinsmen living as tenants on farms in the frontier districts, as well as Thembu fighters living to the west of the Kei. It took a new and more serious direction when a large section of disaffected coloreds from the Kat River settlement, as well as deserters from the Cape Mounted Rifles, took up arms against their erstwhile British allies. The paternalism of their British officers and the racial abuse of a growing stratum of colonial society had caused these men of Khoekhoe and mixed race descent to defend their patriarchal honor and, at the same time, to fight for the preservation of the last vestiges of a Hottentot culture and identity.⁸

⁷ T. Kirk, "The Cape economy and the expropriation of the Kat river Settlement, 1846–1853," in S. Marks and A. Atmore (Eds.), *Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa* (London: Longman, 1980), pp. 226–46.

⁸ E. Elbourne, *Blood Ground. Colonialism, Missions, and the Contest for Christianity in the Cape Colony and Britain, 1799–1853* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), pp. 58–61; R. Ross, "The Kat river Rebellion and Khoikhoi nationalism: the fate of an ethnic identification," *Kronos*, 24, 1997.

The Eighth Frontier War was drawn out, marked by numerous frightful atrocities, a high loss of life, and a growing racial hatred. The British soldiers' grisly practice of taking trophy skulls from their enemies increased markedly at this time, at least partly because these objects had become items of phrenological study. This callousness was repaid in full by the Xhosa practice of torturing captured soldiers to death and dismembering their corpses.⁹ The war lasted for twenty-seven months, required the presence of almost 9,000 British regulars, and cost the lives of some 16,000 amaXhosa. The Eighth Frontier War also led to the recall of Sir Harry Smith, the public execution of Kat River rebels, and the breakup of their settlement. It finally came to an end when, in February 1853, the British withdrew the order of deposition on Sandile. However, whereas the Ngqika chief was restored to his prewar position, his people were excluded from some of the most fertile land in British Kafraria. The fears of the Kat River rebels, that they would be disadvantaged by responsible government, materialized when the new representative government passed a Masters and Servants Law in 1856 that treated defaulting workers as criminals.¹⁰

The deprivation caused by the Eighth Cape Frontier (or Mlanjeni's) War grew more serious when an epidemic of lungsickness tore through the Xhosa herds in 1855 and the maize crop faltered due to excessive rain and insect infestation. These reverses undermined the structure of Xhosa society and left it open to extremist solutions. In April 1856, Nongqawuse, a young woman of about fifteen, had a dream in which a New People promised to come to the rescue of the amaXhosa but only if they destroyed their contaminated cattle and goods. Nongqawuse's vision combined traditional forms of divination and ways of purifying society through sacrifice with Christian ideas of resurrection and the battle between good and evil. When lungsickness ravaged the cattle herds to the east of the Kei, the prophecy took on a new urgency, and Sahili called on the chiefs of the Gcaleka amaXhosa to follow Nongqawuse's instructions. On the eastern side of the Kei, Sandile originally adopted the position of a passive unbeliever; but as the lungsickness destroyed his cattle he was driven to adopt the

⁹ Mostert, *Frontiers*, pp. 1040, 1051–3, 1077, 1083, 1096–7, 1102, 1117, 1142, 1152–3; A. Bank, "Of 'Native Skulls' and 'Noble Caucasians': Phrenology in Colonial South Africa," *JSAS*, 22(3), (1996), p. 401. On warfare more generally, see C. Crais, *White Supremacy and Black Resistance in Pre-Industrial South Africa: The Making of the Colonial Order in the Eastern Cape, 1770–1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 173–88.

¹⁰ The act would be amended in 1873, 1874, and 1875. This law replaced the Masters, Servants and Apprentices Ordinance of 1841; it would remain on the statute book until 1974. S. van der Horst, *Native Labour in South Africa* (London: Frank Cass, 1942), pp. 34–8.

position of an active believer. Xhosa society was divided between “soft” believers (*amathamba*) who awaited the coming millennium and “hard” unbelievers (*amagogotya*) whom they held responsible for its delayed arrival. Many people refused to sow crops in the spring of 1856 in anticipation of the Resurrection day due to arrive in the coming months. But by the following winter the New People had still not arrived, food stocks were depleted or destroyed, and soon people started to die. Hunger and exposure eventually killed between 35,000 and 50,000 amaXhosa in this “national suicide” and forced perhaps 150,000 to leave their land in search of food.

As many as 60,000 starving amaXhosa crossed into the Cape Colony in search of work. Sir George Grey’s government attempted to control this immigration in 1857 through legislation requiring work-seekers to register at magistrate’s offices where their contracts were attested. At the same time, it became a criminal offence for “Kafirs or other Native Foreigners” to enter the colony without a pass.¹¹ With their lands drained of population and their society shattered, the amaXhosa could only look on as the governor of the Cape, Sir George Grey, opened British Kaffraria to white settlement. German mercenaries, who had fought for the British during the Crimean War, and later German peasants were settled in the area where they established small towns with names like Stutterheim, Berlin, Braunschweig, and Hamburg. Although the Xhosa cattle killing should be viewed, as J. B. Peires suggests, as “a popular mass movement of a truly national character,” it was an event that advanced the interests of the British far more than any military victory.¹²

Far from the violent upheavals on the eastern frontier, Cape Town’s merchants drew some benefit from the supply to British armies of food and equipment. By the early 1840s, Cape Town was a recognizably British colonial town with a population of more than 30,000. In 1846, gas lighting was introduced and, two years later, the town welcomed its first Anglican bishop, Robert Gray, who encouraged the establishment of church schools based on the British model. The introduction of civil service exams encouraged the spread of formal schooling and caused several Dutch families to adopt the language and culture of the English. Local knowledge was reflected in newspapers and bookshops that tied Cape Town into an empire of learning dominated by Britain. The *Cape Monthly Magazine*, established

¹¹ J. Peires, *The Dead Will Arise* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1989), pp. 249–50; van der Horst, *Native Labour*, pp. 29–34.

¹² J. Peires, *The Dead Will Arise*. In 1969, Monica Wilson judged the cattle killing a “pagan reaction,” *Oxford History of South Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 256–60, while, thirty years earlier, C. W. de Kiewiet declared it “an incredible madness,” *Cambridge History of the British Empire*, 8, p. 403.

in 1859, mixed politics and history with investigations of climate, irrigation, and evolution. The town reflected a new self-confidence in its substantial buildings and original architecture. In 1859, a handsome edifice was erected, in the Greek-revival style, on the north side of old Company Gardens to house the South African Public Library and the museum. These institutions provided employment for well-connected intellectuals who brought the ideals of metropolitan scholarship to the Cape. Ernst Haeckel's cousin, Wilhelm Bleek, initiated research into the languages and customs of the Bushmen. His collaborator and sister-in-law, Lucy Lloyd, would continue this work after his death in 1875 and, particularly through her *Folk-lore Journal*, provide inspiration for some of the first ethnographic essays to appear in South Africa.¹³ Robert Owen supported the candidature of the ornithologist Edgar Layard for the post of museum curator, a position he occupied from 1855 to 1872, when the entomologist Roland Trimen replaced him. The South African College was established in 1841 on the grounds formerly occupied by the zoo at the southern end of Government Avenue. Housed in a single building, the institution was initially little more than a center for examinations and the conferring of degrees. But when the college became the University of the Cape of Good Hope in 1875, two new buildings were erected and, in 1881, a chemistry laboratory. The university complex at the one end of Government Avenue, and the museum–library at the other, formed the intellectual heart of the city. The establishment in 1877 of a South African Philosophical Society, with its own transactions, secured the link to metropolitan sites of knowledge. Grahamstown formed another core of settler intellectual activity with its own, Albany, museum (founded in 1855), public library, and short-lived *Eastern Province Monthly Magazine* (1856–58). Collections were built on the work of men in the field who, like the frontier entomologist and botanist Mary Barber, were sometimes women.¹⁴ During the late 1830s, Andrew Geddes Bain, while building roads in the Fort Beaufort district for the Royal Engineers, discovered the fossilized bones of prehistoric (mammal-like) reptiles that Owen, in London, identified as dicynodonts from the

¹³ R. Thornton, "'This dying out Race': W. H. I. Bleek's 'Approach to the languages of South Africa,'" *Social Dynamics*, 9, 1983; A. Bank "Evolution and racial theory: the hidden side of Wilhelm Bleek," *South African Historical Journal*, 43, 2000; Mario di Gregorio, "Reflections of a non-political naturalist: Ernst Haeckel, Wilhelm Bleek, Friedrich Müller and the meaning of language," *Journal of the History of Biology*, 35, 2002.

¹⁴ W. Beinart, "Men, Science, Travel and Nature in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Cape," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 24, 1998; A. Cohen, "Mary Elizabeth Barber, the Bowkers, and South African Prehistory," *South African Archaeological Bulletin*, LIV, 170, 1999.

Permo-Triassic Age preceding that of the dinosaurs. The work of these collectors helped the metropolitan experts uncover and explain the vast diversity of species and gauge the enormous depth of time.¹⁵ But these colonial footsoldiers of science were often experts themselves who, through their close contacts with the metropolitan world, brought to the Cape new ways of understanding the natural and human environment.

Much of this work had unexpected political consequences. First, European scientists saw their findings and explanations as universal and brushed aside those of the indigenous inhabitants. Second, the discoveries of geologists, palaeontologists, botanists, and zoologists showed Africa to be an ancient continent harboring primitive species made extinct in more advanced parts of the world. Third, these new ideas rapidly influenced the way scientists looked at the human population. Missionary linguists made tremendous advances in these years; the New Testament appeared in Setswana in 1840, isiXhosa in 1846, and South Sesotho in 1855. The following year, Bleek grouped these, and other, languages into a new classificatory category: the Bantu family of languages.¹⁶ The missionaries' linguistic work was paralleled by their attempts to order and understand the indigenous peoples of South Africa. By midcentury, their monographs and essays had developed an ethnographic genre that divided the native population into a clear patchwork of tribes. These advances allowed Gustav Fritsch to produce, in 1872, the first ethnographic survey of the Bantu peoples of South Africa.¹⁷ This reification of linguistic categories into tribes and then into an overarching social group, "the Bantu," provided science with categories that could be examined and analyzed in the manner

¹⁵ The fossil collections sent to the British Museum by Bain are still being identified and have, only recently, helped scientists uncover the catastrophe that destroyed the trilobites and most other forms of life some 250 million years ago, M. Benton, *When Life Nearly Died: the greatest extinction of all time* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2003), pp. 206–8; S. Dubow, "Earth history, Natural history, and Prehistory at the Cape, 1860–1875," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 2004.

¹⁶ W. Bleek, "South African languages and books," *Cape Monthly Magazine*, 3, (1858), p. 325. W. H. I. Bleek, *Comparative Grammar of South African Languages* (London: Trubner, and Cape Town: Juta), I (1862) and II (1869).

¹⁷ Starting with works like J. Campbell's *Travels in South Africa: Being a Narrative of a Second Journey in the Interior of That Country* (London: Westley, 1822), pp. 193–222, J. Philip's *Researches in South Africa Illustrating the Civil, Moral, and Religious Condition of Native Tribes* (London: James Ducan, 1828), and R. Moffat's *Missionary Labours and Scenes in Southern Africa* (London: Snow, 1842), pp. 234–55. See especially E. Casalis, *The Basutos: or Twenty-three years in South Africa* (published in French, 1859, translated in London, 1861); W. Holden, *The Past and Future of the Kaffir Races* (reprinted Cape Town: C. Struik, 1963); H. Callaway, *The Religious System of the AmaZulu* (Springvale: Blair, 1868–70). G. Fritsch, *Die Eingeborenen Sud-afrika's* (Breslau: Hirt, 1872).

of plants and animals. Much of this work portrayed Khoesan and Bantu languages as little developed, weak, or feminine whereas the ethnographic work often sought to find the origins of language, religion, or the family in the primitive customs of African people living in a land that seemed to have undergone little change since the beginning of time. So, whereas this knowledge ordered and domesticated the human environment and gave government the intellectual resources needed to administer and control tribal peoples, it also extended the social distance between whites and Africans. It also portrayed colonized people as tribesmen living at an early stage of evolution or as dying out or inferior races in need of Christian care and colonial tuition. History as a discipline tended to confirm these ideas, particularly at the end of the 1870s and early 1880s, as the field moved in a professional direction following the appointment of the first state archivists.¹⁸

The intrusion of the state into the daily lives of individuals was particularly noticeable during the governorship of Sir George Grey, who replaced military rule with enlightened civil administration.¹⁹ This was reflected in his labor legislation as much as in the construction of the Roeland Street jail in Cape Town and the impressive government hospitals erected in the capital and in King William's Town. It also was reflected in a campaign to build and extend schools, most notably Lovedale (established on the eastern frontier in 1841) and Zonnebloem (in Cape Town), and to provide an education for young women.²⁰

When a hard road was built across the sandy Cape Flats in 1845, Cape Town's gaze turned hesitantly from its old, maritime hinterland and looked northward to the interior along new lines of contact, control, and commerce. New roads linked Cape Town to its hinterland, encouraged regular omnibus services with rural towns, and facilitated the movement of agricultural

¹⁸H. C. V. Leibbrant was appointed colonial archivist and parliamentary librarian in January 1881. G. M. Theal had started to work through, and order, state archives a few years earlier. C. C. Saunders, *The Making of the South African Past* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1988), pp. 12–14. On the earlier historiography, cf. Robert Ross, "Donald Moodie and the origins of South African historiography," in *Beyond the Pale: Essays on the History of Colonial South Africa* (Hanover and London: Wesleyan University Press and University Press of New England, 1993).

¹⁹The ambivalence of this term is reflected in historians' starkly divergent opinions of Grey. The role played by the institutions of the British colonial state in filtering power throughout civil society is stressed by C. Crais, *White Supremacy and Black Resistance*.

²⁰D. Gaitskell, "At Home with hegemony: Coercion and consent in African girls' education for domesticity in South Africa before 1910," in D. Engels and S. Marks (Eds.), *Contesting Colonial Hegemony* (London: British Academic Press, 1994); N. Erlank "Raising up the degraded daughters of Africa': the provision of education for Xhosa women in the mid-nineteenth century," *South African Historical Journal*, 43, (2000).

produce. Secure mountain passes soon allowed these lines of contact, control, and commerce to extend into the interior. The first railways were built in the early 1860s and, once diamonds were discovered, lines were extended to Beaufort West and Cradock in 1881. Kimberley would be reached four years later. By 1850, it took three days for troop reinforcements to travel from Cape Town to East London by coastal steamer; and a further day to reach King William's Town overland. Steamships reduced the length of the voyage from Britain to the Cape by a third and a telegraph linked the two countries for the first time in 1885. Much of Cape Town's energy grew out of a new political confidence. Colonists were able to exercise some political influence through road boards, school committees, and church synods. In 1846, they were able to enter into electoral politics for the first time with the establishment of a two-tiered form of municipal government dominated by wealthy town notables.²¹ Three years later, the municipality brought together various groups calling for representative government when, in direct opposition to popular wishes, the metropolitan government attempted to bring convicts to the Cape to work on roads and other public works. The broad agitation provoked by this issue isolated the governor and his conservative allies, as well as political leaders, in the eastern district who feared the dominance of Cape Town and, in the wake of the Kat River rebellion, an unrestricted franchise. The constitution passed in 1853 was the product of notions of liberal democracy imported from Britain as well as economic interests that bound white merchants and black peasants into a single, prosperous class.²² It introduced a color-blind franchise open to all males who earned £50 a year or owned property worth £25. They were not required to be literate. Men who met the low franchise qualification were eligible for election to the House of Assembly; but a relatively high property qualification (£2,000 fixed or £4,000 unfixed property) restricted entrance to the Upper House, or Legislative Council.

The first representative government was elected in 1854 but, for the next twenty years, failed to raise substantive new issues, beyond the competition between eastern and western districts or the shape of the budget, and succeed in mobilizing few voters, whether black or Dutch, in rural areas. For these reasons, responsible government came quietly to the Cape in 1872 when the colony was, for the first time, able to choose its own

²¹ V. Bickford-Smith, *Ethnic Pride and Racial Prejudice in Victorian Cape Town* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

²² Historians remain divided on the benefits brought to the black population by the franchise. Compare Mostert, *Frontiers*, pp. 1160, 1273, 1275 with Trapido, "The friends of the Natives": merchants, peasants and the political and ideological structure of liberalism in the Cape, 1854–1910," in Marks and Atmore (Eds.), *Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa*, pp. 267–8.



FIGURE 7.1A. The Eastern Cape frontier area 1858–66.

prime minister. A large and imposing building was constructed, between 1875–84, to house the new parliament. Situated at the head of Adderley Street, the main thoroughfare in Cape Town (named after a member of the British parliament opposed to the settlement of convicts at the Cape), this building, and the neighboring slave lodge turned supreme court, looked across government avenue to the library–museum, modeled on the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, and the Anglican cathedral, built in the early 1830s after the model of St. Pancras Church in London. The four institutions seemed to unite politics, law, knowledge, and religion in an apex of settler power.



FIGURE 7.1B. Eastern Cape and Transkei 1895.



FIGURE 7.1B (continued)

The elected government was expected to contribute to the defense and expansion of the colony. Soon after the Xhosa cattle killing, Thembu and Mfengu emigrants crossed the Kei where they came into conflict with the local Gcaleka amaXhosa. As the fighting intensified, the British came to the aid of their allies and pushed Sahili and his followers further eastward. A decade later, in the mid-1860s, Thembu and Mfengu immigrants had, with the encouragement of their British allies, occupied the heart of the old Gcaleka territory. This movement of peoples created new frontier districts on the eastern side of the Kei: Emigrant Thembuland in the foothills of the Drakensberg, Fingoland, and, when Sahili returned to a severely reduced area on the coast, Gcalekaland. In 1866, the Cape Colony brought to an end its long annexation of the Ciskei when it took possession of British Kaffraria and divided the territory into two districts: East London and King William's Town. The Cape's annexation of this area swelled the numbers of isiXhosa-speakers in its population and, the following year, this change was reflected in a redrafted pass law. This no longer regarded "Kaffirs" as automatic foreigners and, as the need for land and labor changed after the discovery of diamonds, prepared the way for the piecemeal annexation of the Transkei territories.²³

The last Cape Frontier war took place in 1877–78 as the amaXhosa mounted a final, futile struggle against British rule. The cost of this war, which resulted in the annexation of Fingoland, and particularly the disarming of the Basotho two years later, fell heavily on the Cape's taxpaying voters. This increased the disaffection of Dutch farmers who were suffering from free-trade policies and a growing dependence on imperial banks. In 1879, J.H. Hofmeyr started a political movement aimed at protecting the interests of largely Dutch farmers while S. J. du Toit established a political party, the Afrikaner Bond, and launched the first Afrikaans language movement. Although Cape Muslims had written some of the earliest Afrikaans texts in Arabic, they were not welcomed by du Toit's followers.²⁴ The more moderate Hofmeyr initially stressed the importance of Dutch and, when he took over the Bond a few years later, successfully established the right to use the language in Parliament, the civil service, and the higher courts. However, his mobilization of Dutch-speaking colonists did not seek to

²³ C. C. Saunders, "The Annexation of the Transkei," in C. C. Saunders and R. Derricourt (Eds.), *Beyond the Cape Frontier: Studies in the History of the Transkei and Ciskei* (London: Longman, 1974).

²⁴ A. Davids, "My Religion is Superior to the Law': The Survival of Islam at the Cape of Good Hope," in Y. da Costa and A. Davids, (Eds.), *Pages from Cape Muslim History* (Pietermaritzburg: Shuter and Shooter, 1994) pp. 12, 68, 152; A. van Selms, "n Arabiese Grammatika in Afrikaans," *Tydskrif vir Wetenskap en Kuns*, 16(1), (1956).

bring about confrontation with English-speakers, and Hofmeyr and his followers remained staunch members of the British Empire.²⁵

Another consequence of the last frontier war was the transportation of prisoners to the Western Cape where they labored on farms and railways. Until this time, the descendants of slaves brought from Mozambique, Madagascar, and other areas of Africa constituted the major part of the black population in the Western Cape. The anti-slavery squadron established at Simonstown in 1808 liberated about 2,000 slaves in the first two decades of the nineteenth century and, between 1839–46, as the indentures of freed slaves expired, and the need for labor soared, brought another 4,000 of these “prize negroes” to Cape Town. The introduction of assisted immigration from Britain brought an end to this scheme; but the need for labor rose sharply after the discovery of diamonds and, between 1876 and 1883, another 3,200 contracted laborers were brought from southern Mozambique to the Cape. These men soon contributed to the ethnic mosaic clustered around churches like St. Paul’s, constructed on the slopes of Signal Hill in 1880 and, later, St. Phillip’s in Woodstock.²⁶ Islam flourished in the neighboring Bo-Kaap where a Turkish missionary of Kurdish origins, Abu Bakr Effendi, helped revitalize the religion after his arrival in Cape Town in 1862. The wealth and confidence of the Muslims grew, like that of most sectors of the population, with the growth of the economy occasioned by the diamond discoveries. In the 1884 House of Assembly elections, the Muslims indicated, for the first time, their ability to influence local politics.²⁷ Meanwhile, much further north in what was to become the Transvaal, another “ethnic mosaic” was taking place involving Boer and African communities.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN INTERIOR

From the mid-eighteenth century, the South African central and western Highveld was destabilized, both politically and economically, by general conflict among Tswana societies. This uncertainty reached a climax in the 1820s and 1830s with the invasion of the region by the Ndebele

²⁵ H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2003), pp. 212–23.

²⁶ Saunders, “Free, yet slaves’: Prize Negroes at the Cape revisited,” in N. Worden and C. Crais (Eds.), *Breaking the Chains: Slavery and its legacy in the nineteenth-century Cape Colony* (Johannesburg: Witswatersrand University Press, 1994); Harries, “Culture and Classification: a history of the Mozbieker community at the Cape,” *Social Dynamics*, 26(2), (2000).

²⁷ N. Worden, E. van Heyningen, and V. Bickford-Smith, *Cape Town: the Making of a City* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1998), p. 221.

impis of Mzilikazi, resulting in the physical displacement of thousands of Sotho-Tswana speaking communities.²⁸ The Africans and the Boers were pastoral and agricultural societies. Both needed to recover after the equally disturbing periods of the Ndebele invasion and Great Trek, respectively. The frontier of Trekker expansion was a volatile region as both the Boers and the local African populace wanted to gain control over important resources, particularly land and workers. This situation made for a competitive and potentially hostile relationship between the Boers and the African groups. Yet, as will be shown in this chapter and as a number of other works on the history of the Transvaal have shown, there were also times when Boers and Africans cooperated and worked together.²⁹ From the late 1970s, historians have been especially concerned to shade in these specific nuances and differences, so that we now have a more detailed and complex picture of the Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR) and how it functioned or failed to. What becomes manifestly apparent from these analyses is that the African population was able to dictate, to a significant degree, the nature of the ZAR.

Following the defeat and expulsion of Mzilikazi and the amaNdebele in 1837 from what was later to be called the Transvaal, the Voortrekkers under the leadership of Andries Potgieter proclaimed the area as Boer territory, by right of conquest. The creation of a new state on the South African Highveld was an arduous task for the Trekkers due to a number of problems. From the 1830s, the Voortrekkers on the Highveld lived in scattered communities in far-flung areas. The problem of such scattered Boer communities was worsened by disunity, manifested by internal splits. In April 1844, for example, Potgieter and his followers established a new Voortrekker “republic” with its own set of rules, the Thirty-Three Articles, as its basis of government. These articles were basically about issues of order and security in a fledgling society still grappling with the creation of a territorial government. As a pointer to the racial policy of the Voortrekkers to Africans, parts of these articles specifically excluded “half-castes, down to the tenth degree” while “natives” would “[not] be permitted to take

²⁸ This is more detailed in A. Manson, “Conflict in the western highveld/southern Kalahari,” in C. Hamilton (Ed.), *The Mfecane Aftermath* (Johannesburg: Witswatersrand University Press, 1995), Chapter 13.

²⁹ See P. Bonner, *Kings, Commoners and Concessionaires* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1982); P. Delius, *The Land Belongs to Us: The Pedi Polity, the Boers and the British in Nineteenth Century Transvaal* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1982); R. Wagner, “Zoutpansberg: The Dynamics of a Hunting Frontier,” in Marks and Atmore (Eds.), *Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa*; A. Manson, “The Hurutshe in the Marico District,” Ph.D. thesis, University of Cape Town (1990).

up their residence near any townlands to the detriment of the [white] inhabitants of the town . . .”³⁰

Potgieter stayed briefly at Potchefstroom and in August 1845, he and his followers left to establish the new settlement of Andries Ohrigstad. This was partly due to personal ambition, but also in order to establish a commercial outlet to the Mozambican coast, to ward off Portuguese territorial ambitions and move beyond the reach of British authority at the Cape. The Ohrigstad community, however, was faced with problems such as the tsetse fly, malaria, Portuguese and African opposition, as well as dissension within its leadership. Consequently, in 1848, Potgieter and a small following broke away and moved north to found another new settlement, Soutpansberg, leaving J. J. Burgers and others in charge of Ohrigstad. Some of the Ohrigstad community also moved out to found yet another new settlement about 10 km to the south, which they named the Republic of Lydenburg. Another group of Trekkers had struck out to the Madikwe region where they founded the settlement of Zeerust. Thus, by 1844, there were four distinct Voortrekker communities. Although all of them were motivated by the same social, political, and theological concerns, they were fundamentally disunited and split into factions based on loyalty toward certain leaders. Pretorius, for example, had his own following whereas many other Boers who were opposed to him refused to serve under him. He eventually settled at what later became Rustenburg. Those who were loyal to him gradually came to settle in the Magaliesberg, but the Boers of Ohrigstad, Olifants River, and Derdepoort insisted that they would never serve under him.

Following an earlier decision to unite, the Potchefstroom and Soutpansberg groups formed a united Volksraad at Hekpoort in the Magaliesberg in 1849. The Volksraad agreed to meet thrice a year. The four Boer communities of Mooi River and the Magaliesberg, Soutpansberg, Lydenburg, and Madikwe would each have its own commandant-general, but all of them under one united Volksraad. Whereas the envisaged Volksraad never met due to lack of a quorum, Pretorius, nevertheless, negotiated the Sand River Convention in 1852, explained in the following, on behalf of all the others.

As already indicated previously, initially the Trekkers were only a concentration of a few thousand inhabitants in centers far removed from each other, and it took nearly fifteen years to agree upon the need for, and basic characteristics of, the ZAR. The Sand River Convention of 1852 had done little to unite the three Boer communities in the area north of

³⁰ G. W. Eybers, *Select Constitutional Documents Illustrating South African History, 1795–1910* (London: Routledge, 1918), pp. 349–56.

the Vaal: at Potchefstroom, Lydenburg, and Schoemansdal. The Sand River Convention granted the Boers the right to govern themselves and buy arms and ammunition from the British colonies. It also undertook to repudiate all previous treaties with African communities north of the Vaal and not to sell arms or ammunition to them.³¹

Gathered around patriarchal leaders, Boers communities at times resorted to arms to settle their differences. It was only in 1860 that they were able to form a common government with its own constitution and infrastructure. Even after this, it took decades to unify and strengthen the new state and, despite its later resistance to British imperial advancement and attempts to dismantle it, the ZAR never stamped its authority firmly over the local black population.³² The policies and laws of the ZAR were unevenly applied, varying from region to region according to a range of factors, among them the physical landscape, the nature of the local economy, the dispersion of disease-free areas, the density of black and white settlement, and the character of individual leaders, both Boer and African.

VOORTREKKER APPROPRIATION OF AFRICAN-OCCUPIED LAND

As the new authorities and “owners” of the land in the Transvaal, the Voortrekkers considered the Africans to be under their jurisdiction. If they found African-occupied land suitable for their occupation, “the natives were obliged to either regain possession by purchase or to become farm servitors.”³³ Land in the Transvaal was given to the original Voortrekkers “on a very generous basis” and, up to 1870, two 6,000-acre farms were given to each one “as of right.”³⁴ In about 1841, for example, when Paul Kruger, later president of the ZAR, was only sixteen years old, he was entitled to choose two farms for himself, one for grazing and another for growing crops.³⁵ From the 1850s, title-holders such as veldkornets

³¹ Eybers, *Select Constitutional Documents*, p. 359.

³² S. Trapido, “The South African Republic: Class Formation and the State, 1850–1900,” *Collected Seminar Papers on Societies of Southern Africa in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, 3 (hereafter *SSA*). (1971); S. Trapido, “Aspects in the Transition from Slavery to Serfdom: The South African Republic, 1842–1902,” *SSA*, 6 (1975); S. Trapido, “Reflections on Land, Office and Wealth in the South African Republic, 1850–1900,” in Marks and Atmore (Eds.), *Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa*.

³³ L. V. Praagh, *The Transvaal and Its Mines: The Encyclopaedic History of the Transvaal* (Johannesburg: Praagh and Lloyd, 1906), p. 79.

³⁴ Trapido, “Aspects in the transition from slavery to serfdom,” p. 27.

³⁵ S. J. P. Kruger, *The Memoirs of Paul Kruger*, vol. I (London: Unwin 1902), p. 13.

and commandants in particular, were able to acquire “substantial land holdings” easily. Such officials in positions of power had inside information about the workings of the land market and therefore could more easily ensure that their rights or titles were validated. In the 1850s and 1860s, white officials of the state were paid in land rather than in money because of the chronic shortage of cash in the ZAR government.³⁶ That is how in the Lydenburg district, for example, as Peter Delius records, H. Bührmann who was *landdrost* in the period 1849–51 and subsequently member of the Volksraad had acquired eighteen farms by 1869. But quite apart from state officials, there were other individuals who acquired incomes from hunting and trading and then invested them in land as a way of speculation. Thus, by 1877, one D. J. G. Coetzee, a prominent trader in the eastern ZAR, had bought and sold seven farms.³⁷

In 1859, land appropriation by the Boers was facilitated further by a government decision which, in addition to a freehold farm which each burgher was entitled to, gave each one at least one more quitrent farm. This decision enabled those in positions of authority and influence to acquire, as Delius states, “truly massive landholdings.” That is how, for example, by 1866, one Johannes Vos, then the *landdrost* clerk to Marthinus Wesselstroom in the Lydenburg district, had accumulated a staggering 120 farms.³⁸ Although such a large number of farms may have been an exception, it is nevertheless a pointer to the ease with which Boer individuals of influence could acquire a lot of farms.

A feature of Boer land acquisition in the Transvaal is that some of it was passed on to individuals and companies based outside the territory, notably the Cape and Natal. This incidence became so widespread, at least in the Lydenburg district, that in 1873 the residents there wrote a petition to the government complaining against this practice by “people residing in the neighboring colonies and in Europe who have no interest in the development of the country . . .”³⁹ The significance of the foregoing pattern and rate of Boer appropriation of African-occupied land in the northeastern Transvaal lies in the fact that:

It applied as markedly in areas of predominantly African settlement and within the domains of effectively independent African polities, and in contested areas, as it did in zones of white settlement and control . . . Even those societies sufficiently strong to resist Boer exactions were nonetheless unable to prevent the process whereby

³⁶ See Trapido, “Aspects,” 27; Trapido “The South African Republic,” p. 56.

³⁷ Delius, *The Land*, p. 128.

³⁸ Delius, *The Land*, pp. 128–9.

³⁹ Quoted in Delius, *The Land*, p. 129.

the land upon which they lived was transformed into [white-owned] freehold and quitrent farms.⁴⁰

Appropriating land that had Africans already living on it had obvious and important advantages for the Boers. First, it was likely to be fertile and well watered. Second, the Africans on it had to pay rent in labor, kind, or cash as tenants. This general pattern, it should be noted, was very similar to land appropriation elsewhere in the ZAR, the difference being that in the western and southern parts, the process occurred earlier.

The missionaries were not to be left out of the ongoing land appropriation. Some began to acquire land from as early as the 1860s. The Rev. Henri Gonin of the Dutch Reformed Church, for example, bought four farms for himself in the Pilansberg during the 1860s.⁴¹ It is unclear why, but it may have been “for better security in old age, or simply for sale at a profit in future.” But, meanwhile, he settled the ex-slave Christian members (*Oorlams*) of his church on one of his four properties, Welgeval. Except for one other property, Schaapkraal, inherited by his children after his death in 1915, Gonin eventually sold all of his farms. Similarly, during the 1870s in the eastern Transvaal, the Berlin Mission Society (BMS) missionary, Alexander Merensky, personally owned many thousands of acres of land, whereas the Hermannsburg missionaries in the Rustenburg district also owned land and farmed, as did the BMS missionaries in nearby Kroondal. There were various reasons for missionaries owning land. Before the Second World War, the BMS missionaries, for example, were paid extremely small salaries which were, for example, “only a third of what Reformed and Methodist missionaries were paid” and, therefore, resorted to owning land, farming, and livestock production to survive as some of them “lived in great poverty.”⁴² Whereas missionaries in the Transvaal were involved in acquiring land for their future security, the fledgling Boer societies were engaged in processes of both conflict and accommodation with African societies.

BOER–AFRICAN RELATIONS

Up to the 1880s, incursions into, and settlement in, what later became the Transvaal resulted neither in an easy victory by, nor a complete dominance of the Boer colonists over African societies. There was, instead, a complex set of

⁴⁰ Delius, *The Land*, p. 130.

⁴¹ B. Mbenga, “The Bakgatla-baga-Kgafela in the Pilanesberg District of the Western Transvaal, from 1899 to 1931,” Ph.D. thesis, Unisa (1997), p. 213.

⁴² F. Hasselhorn, *Mission, Land Ownership and Settlers' Ideology* (Johannesburg: South African Council of Churches, 1987), pp. 18–20.

relations between the two societies, ranging at various times between conflict and cooperation. In practice, the existence and continued livelihoods of the ZAR's inhabitants were as a result of agreements and compromises reached in the various districts of the Transvaal by local Boer officials and African leaders. This did not imply that there was an absence of violence but rather that such violence was a symptom of the Boers' inability to impose their dominance over the local population. Their initial attempts to subjugate African societies met with stiff resistance. In the northern Transvaal during the 1840s, as Delius has shown, the amaNdzundza Ndebele resisted Boer demands for their labor. With guns acquired through migrant labor, trade, and raiding, the amaNdzundza successfully beat off Boer attempts to subdue them. Delius further records that "by the late 1860s, many farmers [i.e., Boers] who had settled in the environs of the amaNdzundza trekked away in despair" while "those who remained recognized the authority of the Ndzundza rulers and paid tribute to them."⁴³ Following the annexation of the Transvaal in 1877 and defeat of the Pedi by the British in 1879, however, the balance of power swung greatly against African states in the region. Shortly afterward, the amaNdzundza came under the rule of the ZAR. Subsequently, a combined force of Boers and some African auxiliaries surrounded the amaNdzundza in a siege that lasted until July 1883, by which time they had been starved into submission and surrender. To press their victory home, the Boers torched the Ndzundza capital and imprisoned most of the ruling family, including Chief Nyabela, in Pretoria.⁴⁴

Elsewhere in the Transvaal, Boer–African relations followed a similar pattern. In the Marico district in the early 1850s, as Andrew Manson has shown, following the continual raiding of cattle on Boer farms and the killing of three Boers by Bahurutshe, the Boers were forced to abandon their farms and go "into laager before finally leaving for Potchefstroom and Magaliesberg in January 1853."⁴⁵ Although the Boers returned to the Marico the following year, instability continued with the murder of several more of them over the next few years. The ZAR authorities were clearly unable to dictate terms to the Bahurutshe. In fact, they were too weak to exert hegemony over the Bahurutshe or any other Tswana community in the region. This factor and the importance of keeping open the crucial "Hunter's Road," which ran from the Marico north through Tswana territory into

⁴³ P. Delius, "The Ndzundza Ndebele: Indenture and the making of ethnic identity, 1883–1914," in P. Bonner et al. (Eds.), *Holding Their Ground: Class, Locality and Culture in 19th and 20th Century South Africa* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press and Witwatersrand University Press, 1989), p. 229.

⁴⁴ Delius, "The Ndzundza Ndebele," p. 231.

⁴⁵ A. Manson, "The Hurutshe and the Formation of the Transvaal State, 1835–1875," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 25(1) (1992), p. 91.

Matabeleland, forced the Boers into a relationship of dependence upon African groups in the western Transvaal as allies.⁴⁶ This ambivalent Boer–African relationship of conflict and cooperation was commonplace in the rest of the Transvaal. In the northern Transvaal, for example, as in the Marico, African groups such as the Bakopa under Boleu, the amaNdzundza Ndebele under Mabhogo, and the Bapedi under Sekwati were also initially able to successfully resist Boer attempts to subjugate or extract forced labor from them at will.⁴⁷

Boers and Tswana groups had been allies in a number of ways that were mutually beneficial. In this relationship, Tswana regiments were used by Boer commandos as auxiliaries in their many raids against other African groups in far-flung parts of the Transvaal.⁴⁸ At a time when the Sand River Convention of 1852 expressly prohibited Africans from possessing firearms, the Boer leader, Paul Kruger, allowed Tswana chiefs such as Kgamanyane of the Bakgatla and Mokgatle of the Bafokeng and their followers to own guns and participate in profitable ivory trading across the Limpopo River. Guns were given as a reward for participating in these raids and this enabled these groups to take part in the still lucrative ivory trade in the 1840s and 1850s. According to the historian Fred Morton, Mokgatle and Kgamanyane “acquired wealth in cattle, plantations, tools, buildings, and dependants.”⁴⁹ In the northern Transvaal, Chief Sekwati had a similar relationship with the Trekker leaders, particularly Potgieter, “which was reflected in the mounting of joint hunts and raids.”⁵⁰ As in the Eastern Cape during an earlier period, the leaders of immigrant and indigenous communities often exploited the open nature of the frontier to the benefit of their two communities. Another way to accumulate wealth was through trade, particularly in liquor and guns. Through this trade in guns, Africans were able to partake more fully in the slaughter of game that was threatening several species of animals with extinction. Independent chiefs also were able to arm their followers with these guns and either bought powder or acquired the skills needed to manufacture it. In the north, Boers gave guns to local hunters during the summer months when malaria increased the dangers of hunting, and tsetse fly prevented the use of horses and wagons. Black

⁴⁶ Manson, “The Hurutshe,” p. 91.

⁴⁷ Delius, *The Land*, pp. 36–7.

⁴⁸ About *Voortrekker* military expeditions using surrogate African groups against independent African polities in the Transvaal during the nineteenth century, see, for example, War Office General Staff, *The Native Tribes of the Transvaal* (London: War Office, 1905), pp. 100–6; J. Meintjes, *President Paul Kruger: A Biography* (London: Cassell, 1974), pp. 64–7; M. Juta, *Pace of the Ox: A Life of Paul Kruger* (Cape Town: Human and Rousseau, 1975), pp. 46–55.

⁴⁹ Morton, “Slave Raiding,” p. 107.

⁵⁰ Delius, *The Land*, p. 37.

hunters, known as *swart skuts*, acquired guns in this way and eventually grew strong enough to turn on their erstwhile employers and, in 1867, eject them from their northern capital of Schoemansdal. The northern frontier then retreated southward to leave the area immediately south of the Soutpansberg in the hands of Joao Albasini, a Portuguese trader by origin, and a disparate group of immigrants, many of them his followers. Pushed from the coast by famine, war, and disease, these immigrants were attracted to the transfrontiersman by his control of a profitable trade in slaves and ivory.⁵¹

On this frontier, isolated Boer communities seemed to experience a “reverse colonization” as they came to depend for their survival on African allies and assistants. With growing frequency, missionaries came across whites who, separated from their institutions and beliefs, employed slaves and traded in “black ivory.”⁵² European immigrants like Coenraad de Buys and Joao Albasini had married Africans, or taken local concubines, and they, together with other people of European descent, consulted rainmakers, diviners, and healers, or personally threw the bones.⁵³ The mode of production practised on this impoverished frontier seemed to have regressed after 1867 from a form of settled farming to a shiftless, itinerant hunting. Whites trekked after migrating game, lived from their rifles, and squatted in the same insalubrious conditions as the natives. The sight of a black servant teaching his master to read appalled one Swiss missionary, for whom this image encapsulated the astonishing ignorance to which the Boers had reverted in this northern wilderness.⁵⁴

In areas where the Boers settled in greater numbers, they were likely to impose a more servile relationship on the local population. From the early years of their settlement in the Transvaal, the Voortrekkers were faced with what they perceived to be an acute shortage of labor. In the Cape where they earlier came from, they had built up a tradition of dependence upon slave labor. But such labor was not readily available in their new environment

⁵¹ J. C. A. Boeyens, “‘Black ivory’: The Indenture System and Slavery in Zoutpansberg,” in *Slavery in South Africa*, in E. Eldredge and F. Morton (Eds.), *Slavery in South Africa: Captive Labor on the Dutch Frontier* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press and Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1994).

⁵² Boeyens, “Black ivory,” pp. 195–7.

⁵³ Swiss Mission Archives, Lausanne: 8.10.B Paul Berthoud to Mission Council, 28 December 1876 and 22 December 1877; *Bulletin de la Mission vaudoise*, 5 (1875), p. 73. *Nouvelles de nos missionnaires* 10, 1, 1887, 8. Arthur Grandjean would refer to Albasini as an “Africanised Portuguese,” “L’Invasion des Zoulous dans le Sud-Est Africain,” *Le Globe*, 36 (1897), p. 20.

⁵⁴ P. Berthoud, *Nègres Gouamba* (Lausanne, 1896), p. 20. On the Cape’s eastern frontier the British prosecuted farmers who turned to African diviners for protection against witchcraft, cf. *South African Commercial Advertiser* 21 October 1843, pp. 163–4.

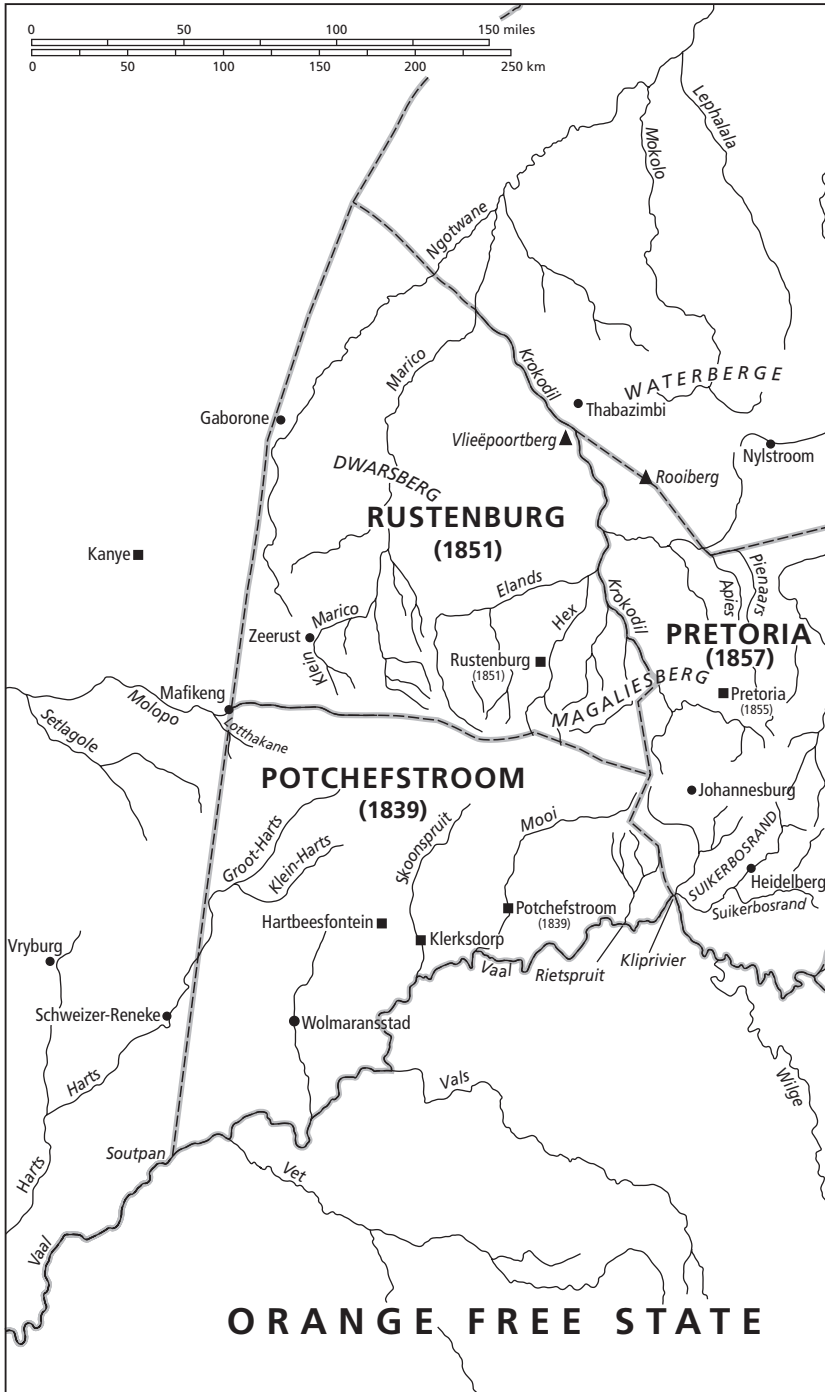


FIGURE 7.2A. Transvaal, administrative districts.

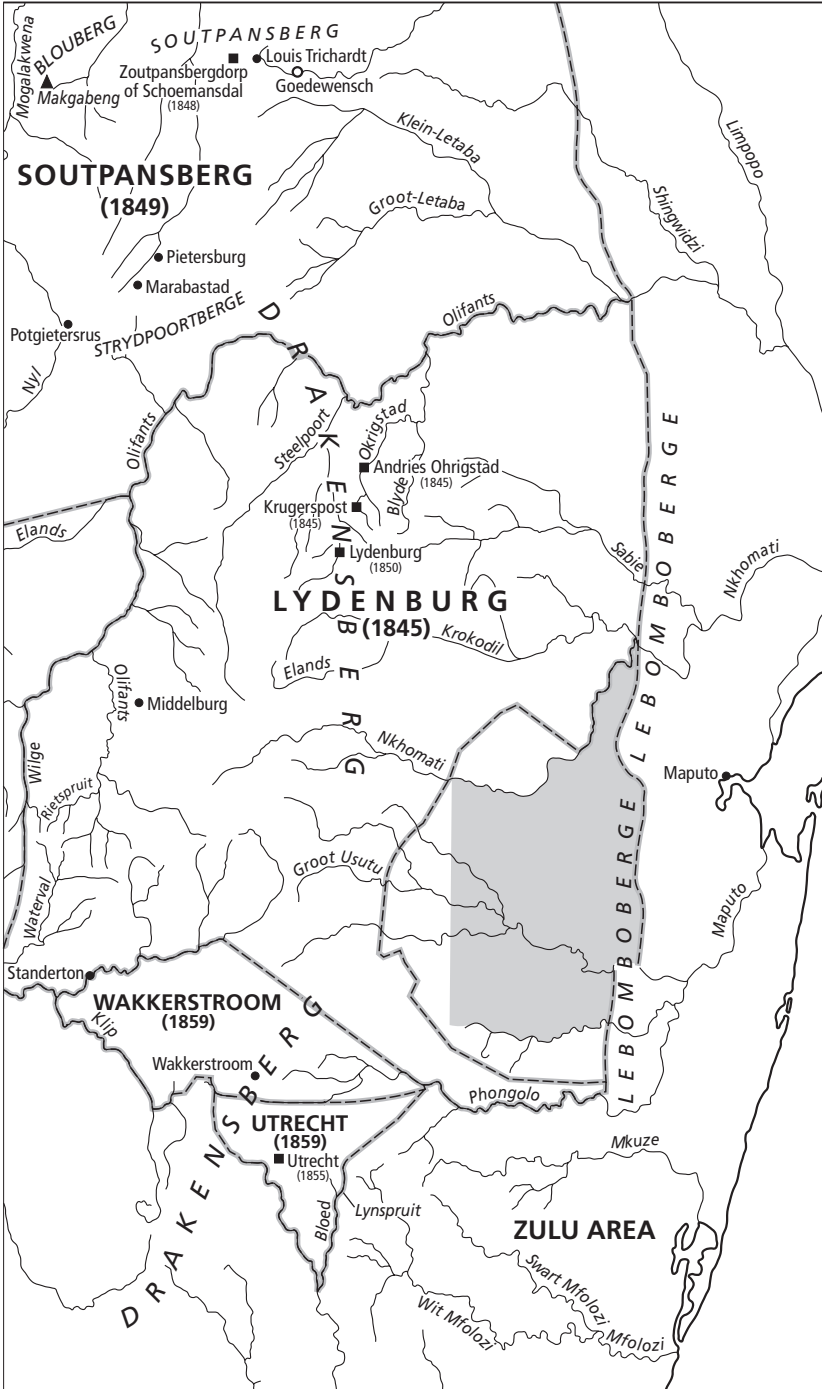


FIGURE 7.2A (continued)



FIGURE 7.2B. Transvaal, African polities and Afrikaner towns.

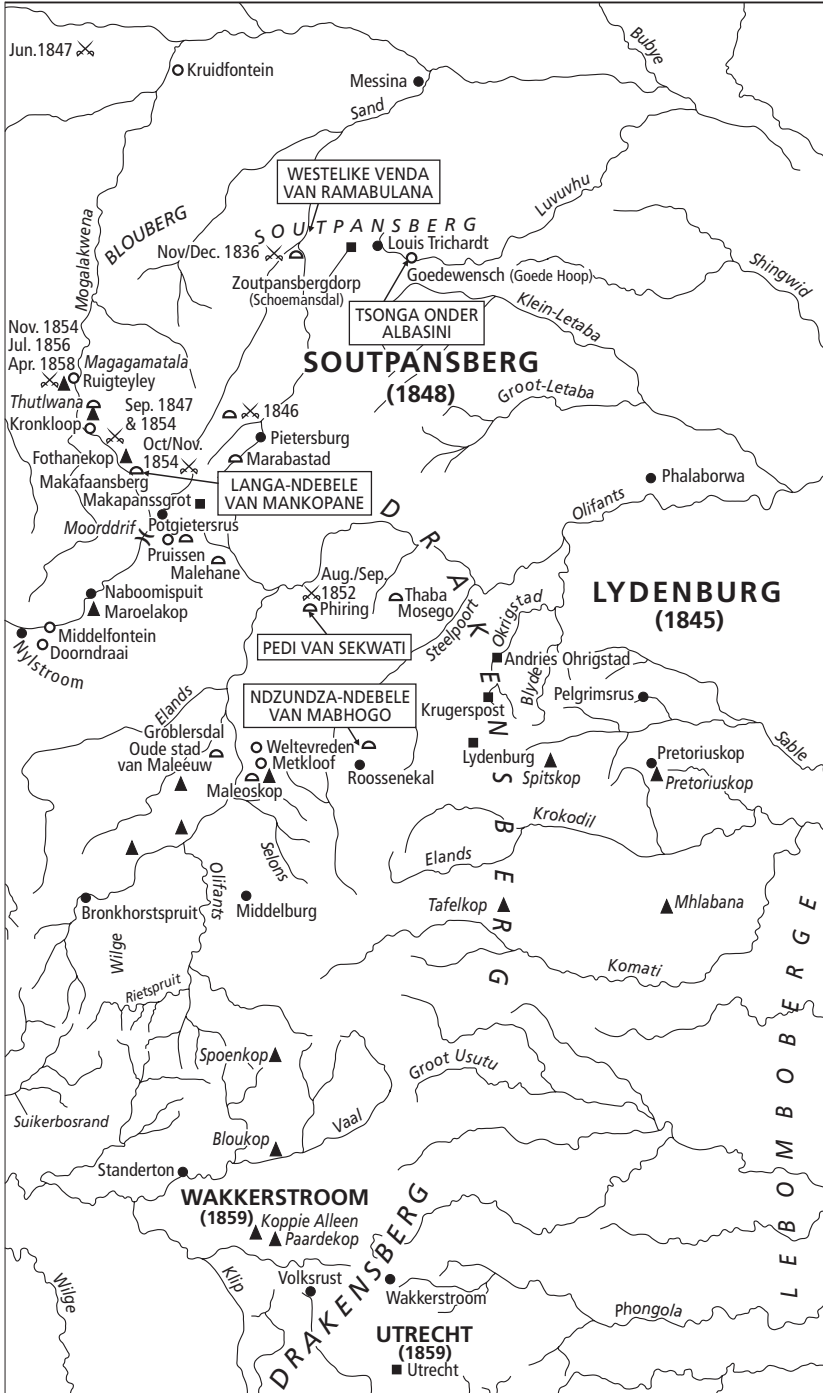


FIGURE 7.2B (continued)

of the Transvaal and they resorted to coercing it from the surrounding African communities. This is one of the reasons that brought the Boers into conflict with their African neighbors. Some voluntary labor of three- or twelve-month contracts was available and paid for. However, the Boers considered labor obtained in this manner both insufficient and lacking in the requisite skills they needed.⁵⁵

There was therefore another means by which the Boers obtained the sort of African labor that would be both skilled and permanent. As soon as they arrived in the Transvaal, Boer commandos periodically raided weaker and less organized African communities and captured their little children. In commando raids against communities such as the Bakgatla of Chief Mosielele, Bakwena of Sechele, the Bapedi of Sekwati, Bakgatla of Mankopane, Balaka of Mokopane, and the Balobedu of Modjadji, children were captured specifically in order to use them as “bonded laborers.”⁵⁶ Sometimes they were demanded as tribute, traded or secured through exchange. Such captive children, referred to in the contemporary Dutch parlance as *inboekelinge* (registerees) who were “booked in” and notionally seen as “orphans,” were indentured to their masters.⁵⁷ Rustenburg commandos, for example, raided African groups in the far northern Transvaal. Indeed, Rustenburg has been described as “a slave trading center with its own resident dealer.”⁵⁸ Young captives were shared amongst the Boer commandos, who brought them up on their farms.

The practice was common at the time throughout what was to become the Transvaal. The cooperation of the Batswana who assisted in the commando raids was no different from that of the amaSwazi, Bapedi, and Vhavenda in this regard.⁵⁹ The amaSwazi themselves participated in slave raiding and traded in slaves. In the early stages of this practice, in the 1850s, Swazi regiments captured slaves during attacks on communities within the Swazi kingdom and on its outskirts. Later, Swazi raids were extended into the Lowveld and southern Mozambique. Bonner states, for example, that “several hundred children a year” were captured mostly

⁵⁵ Delius, *The Land*, pp. 34–5.

⁵⁶ Morton, “Slave Raiding and Slavery in the Western Transvaal after the Sand River Convention,” *African Economic History*, 20 (1992), pp. 102–3.

⁵⁷ Delius, *The Land*, p. 35.

⁵⁸ Cited in Morton, “Slave Raiding and Slavery,” p. 107; “Captive labor in the western Transvaal after the Sand River Convention,” in Eldredge and Morton (Eds.), *Slavery in South Africa*, p. 175.

⁵⁹ See Morton, “Slave Raiding and Slavery,” pp. 99–118; P. Delius and S. Trapido, “*Inboekselings* and *Oorlams*: The Creation and Transformation of a Servile Class,” *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 8(2) (April 1982).

from the Lowveld communities and traded with the Boers of the eastern Transvaal.⁶⁰ In November 1869, a Swazi army incursion into the Soutpansberg, for example, netted, among a variety of other booty, about “400 women and children.”⁶¹ The child captives obtained from these raids were supplied to the eastern Transvaal Boers from whom, in return, “the Swazi rulers received hunting dogs, cattle, blankets, and to a lesser extent, at the beginning, guns and horses.”⁶² As servants on the Boer farms, they were trained in a variety of skills, such as, stonecutting and building, brickmaking, cookery, veterinary and folk medicine, literacy in Dutch, wagon repair, hunting, gun maintenance, making cheese, and plow farming. But perhaps the most important use of these servants is that, as Delius has said, “they could be trusted with firearms and placed in supervisory positions over herders and hunting and trading expeditions.” It was in this status that these servants were known as *inboekeling*e. In using this kind of labor, the Boers were in fact continuing an old tradition they had brought with them from the Cape; there, indentured Khoekhoen and colored laborers were used as “cooks, herders, and laborers, wagon drivers, and interpreters,” who were also “fine shots and horsemen . . .” in their auxiliary role “as soldiers on commando against the San and the amaXhosa.”⁶³

The male *inboekeling*e were manumitted at the age of 21 and the females at 25. But because of the lifelong separation from their geographical and family origins, they generally remained working on labor contracts on their ex-master’s farms or, as in the Rustenburg and Pilansberg areas, settled as tenants on missionary-owned land or bought their own farms and settled as peasant producers. It was in this status that they were known as *Oorlams*.⁶⁴ The children of *inboekeling*e were treated in the same manner as their parents by their Boer masters. Where they settled and what happened to them after manumission, however, differed from one area to another. Delius has shown that in the northern Transvaal during the 1850s, for example, some would settle among the local African communities. Yet others were bonded once again on further contracts to their masters.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Bonner, *Kings, Commoners and Concessionaires*, p. 92.

⁶¹ J. C. A. Boeyens, “‘Black ivory’: The Indenture System and Slavery in Zoutpansberg, 1848–1869,” in Eldredge and Morton (Eds.), *Slavery in South Africa*, pp. 200–1. Quotation, p. 201.

⁶² Cited in P. Delius and S. Trapido, “*Inboekselings* and *Oorlams*,” pp. 228–9. Quotation, p. 229.

⁶³ Quoted in Delius, *The Land*, p. 36.

⁶⁴ Mbenga, “The Bakgatla-baga-Kgafela,” pp. 56–8; Morton, *Slavery in South Africa*, pp. 167–214.

⁶⁵ P. Delius and S. Trapido, “*Inboekselings* and *Oorlams*,” pp. 235–6.

In the Rustenburg and Pilansberg areas, after manumission, the *Oorlams* tended to drift on to a farm called Welgeval, owned by the local Dutch Reformed Church missionary, Henri Gonin, which they eventually bought at the beginning of the twentieth century. Here, men like Cornelius Moloto, Cornelius Sefara, and many others prospered as peasant farmers, cultivating crops like wheat, rearing livestock, and making cheese for sale in the nearby Rustenburg market. Most of the missionary work of spreading the gospel and Western education was done by *ex-inboekeling*e teacher–evangelists. Whereas the central mission stations in the region were staffed by a few white missionaries, the African teacher–evangelists were entrusted with the running of the many “outer stations” dotted all over the region. By the end of the nineteenth century, for example, the DRC teacher–evangelist Stephanus Moloto was in charge of the school on the farm Welgeval, and Zacharia Tihira on Kruidfontein, Martha Moloto and Karl Thabole on Holfontein, while Leoke Mariri ran a school in the border village of Malolwane. All these were *Oorlams* upon whom Gonin heavily depended for his missionary work.⁶⁶ Among African communities in the western Transvaal, the *Oorlams* acted as interpreters, skilled artisans, and hunters. Socially, it was common practice for the *Oorlams* to marry within their own core community. This could be explained by their shared bonds of historical background, Dutch literacy, western education, and Christianity, factors which distinguished them from the rest of the Africans around them.⁶⁷ On the whole, by the end of the nineteenth century, they had integrated well into the African communities. However, the issues of Boer–African accommodation as well as the roles and socioeconomic status of the *Oorlams* might belie the more contentious question of land and land acquisition.

AFRICAN ACQUISITION OF LAND

On the premise that the Voortrekkers had defeated and expelled the Ndebele from the Transvaal, land in the western Transvaal was now the property of the ZAR government. Official policy therefore was that land could only be “given” to Africans as a “grant” for “services rendered” to them. In the western Transvaal, for example, the earliest known such cases date back to the beginning of 1837 when the Commandants Andries Potgieter, Gerrit Maritz, and Piet Uys gave land grants to some Tswana

⁶⁶ Mbenga, “The Bakgatla-baga-Kgafela,” pp. 66–8.

⁶⁷ F. Morton, “Manumitted slaves and the Dutch Reformed Church Mission in the Western Transvaal and eastern Bechuanaland at the time of the colonization of southern Africa, 1864 to 1914,” paper to symposium, “Manumission: the promise of freedom,” Twelfth International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, Zagreb, Yugoslavia (July 28, 1988), pp. 10–18.

chiefs who had assisted the Boers in expelling Mzilikazi from the Transvaal. Thus, the Rolong chiefs Moroka, Montshiwa, and Gontse, and the Hurutshe chief, Moiloa, were “rewarded” with grants of land by Potgieter in the same localities they had occupied before the Ndebele invasion. Chief Mokgatle of the Bafokeng was similarly rewarded.⁶⁸ Indeed, after the expulsion of Mzilikazi, these groups were allowed back only with the permission of the Boers.⁶⁹ In fact, throughout the Transvaal, the Voortrekker commandants gave land grants to black groups “for services rendered” or loyalty.⁷⁰

Africans therefore could not acquire land they could legally call their own as it was merely “loaned” to them. This was confirmed by Article 124 of a *Volksraad* Resolution 28 of November 1853, which stated that land was given to Africans “conditionally as long as they behave in accordance with the law and obediently.”⁷¹ According to another *Volksraad* Resolution 159 of June 18, 1855, Africans in the Transvaal were expressly forbidden to buy land.⁷² Indeed, up to 1871, the issue of Africans buying land was never even considered by the ZAR government. This complete lack of security of tenure deeply concerned many Africans. In the western Transvaal, for example, the people of Rustenburg district were perhaps the first to persistently request the government for permission to buy land. In 1868, the Commandant of Rustenburg echoed this concern that “certain Natives in his district wished to purchase land from a burgher.” At first the authorities agreed in principle to the idea of Africans buying land and suggested that its legal ownership be held in trust by the government on behalf of the African people concerned, “as long as they conducted themselves according to the law.”⁷³ Due to repeated African requests to buy land, especially from the Rustenburg area, the government of President T. F. Burgers did consider the issue in 1874, but then after further debates in the *Volksraad*, rejected it because of Article 9 of the *Grondwet*, which stated that: “The [Boer] people will not permit any equalisation of colored persons with white inhabitants.”⁷⁴

Arising from this frustration therefore, Africans resorted to the practice of buying land through the white missionaries working among them.

⁶⁸ General Staff, War Office, *The Native Tribes of the Transvaal*, p. 20.

⁶⁹ For details, see the government *Report by the Commissioner for Native Affairs, relative to the Acquisition and Tenure of Land by Natives in the Transvaal* (Pretoria: Native Affairs Department, 1904), pp. 15–16.

⁷⁰ *Acquisition and Tenure*, pp. 18–20.

⁷¹ *Acquisition and Tenure*, p. 20. The *Volksraad* was the parliament of the ZAR.

⁷² T. R. H. Davenport and K. S. Hunt (Eds.), *The Right to the Land* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1974), p. 4.

⁷³ *Acquisition and Tenure*, p. 21.

⁷⁴ For details, see *Acquisition and Tenure*, pp. 21–2.

Each able-bodied adult male in a community contributed at least one cow toward the purchase of a farm. However, those who could not afford were not compelled to, nor were they denied a share of the land.⁷⁵ The Africans would give the purchase price through their chief to the missionary who would buy the land from a white owner but register it in his name on behalf of that community.⁷⁶ This practice seems to have started quietly from as early as the mid-1860s and lasted until the early 1880s. Since the practice lasted for about a decade, the Boer authorities must have been aware of it but perhaps turned a blind eye to it. But what seems clear is that the government neither checked nor stopped it. Eventually, however, as it became more and more prevalent, the government realized the need to regulate and standardise the practice. Following the Pretoria Convention of 1881, a Location Commission was formed in order to demarcate African locations, take transfer of, and hold in trust, land previously privately bought through missionaries by Africans. This responsibility was transferred to the secretary for native affairs in the early 1880s, to the superintendent of natives in 1886, the commissioner for native affairs (during the Crown colony government) and, in 1907, to the minister of native affairs.⁷⁷ Closely connected with the issue of land was that of forced labor.

FORCED LABOR

The issue of forced labor, however, took a more general and coercive form that in turn brought about widespread distress among the African communities. The Boers considered the labor they obtained voluntarily from Africans in the manner we have noted previously to be insufficient. Hence, the resort to forced labor. Boer requirements for African labor were procured through the local veldkornet, who has been described by Jeremy Krikler as a “sinister landowning representative of the [white] farmers in each district who hovered above the tenantry, *violently intervening* – when necessary – to ensure the rendering of labor service.”⁷⁸

The Boer practice of forced labor was pervasive throughout the Transvaal. Following the founding of the town of Andries Ohrigstad in the northeastern Transvaal in August 1845, for example, the Voortrekkers there came to depend upon black “apprentices” and a “labor tax” forcibly extracted

⁷⁵ S. D. Matshego and B. N. O. Pilane, joint interview by Bernard Mbenga, Koedoesfontein, the Pilanesberg, February 7, 1993.

⁷⁶ *Acquisition and Tenure*, p. 22.

⁷⁷ E. Brookes, *The History of Native Policy in South Africa* (Pretoria: J. L. van Schaik, 1927), pp. 126–7.

⁷⁸ J. Krikler, *Revolution from Above, Rebellion from Below: the Agrarian Transvaal at the Turn of the Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 135, 235–6. Our emphasis.

from the surrounding African communities for agricultural and domestic purposes.⁷⁹ A contemporary writer had the following to say about Africans in the Transvaal generally:

The Tribes . . . are forced to perform all the labour of the fields, such as manuring the land, weeding, reaping, building, making dams and canals, and at the same time to support themselves. I have myself been an eye-witness of Boers coming to a village, and, according to their usual custom, demanding twenty or thirty women to weed their gardens, and have seen the women proceed to the scene of unrequited toil.⁸⁰

The economic malaise of the ZAR during the 1860s exacerbated tensions between the Boer authorities and the African communities.⁸¹ In this period, as Roger Wagner has shown for the Soutpansberg area, previously profitable sources of income for the Boers (such as hunting) were declining.⁸² With diminishing resources, ZAR officials, such as Paul Kruger and Andries Potgieter, resorted to ever harsher methods of extracting tax from the Africans. As Stanley Trapido has stated: “Between 1850 and 1868, various Volksraads attempted to raise taxes by exhortation, fines, proclamations, and hectoring instructions to landdrosts, with little or no effect.”⁸³ According to Trapido, the Boer need for more African labor at this time led to territorial expansion through military expeditions westward, eastward, and northward. However, although these expeditions were in themselves disruptive,⁸⁴ they do not seem to have procured enough labor from the northern and eastern parts of the Transvaal where Africans had not yet come under white hegemony. Therefore, until the 1880s and 1890s when such expeditions yielded much larger numbers of captive Africans,⁸⁵ the Boer authorities got their labor requirements from conquered African groups that were already under their jurisdiction, such as the various Tswana groups in the western Transvaal.

Both Trapido and Delius have shown how holders of high office in the ZAR were well placed to take advantage of not only accumulating personal

⁷⁹ Cited in Mbenga, “Forced labour,” p. 134.

⁸⁰ W. E. Garrett Fisher, *The Transvaal and the Boers, A Brief History* (reprinted: New York: Negro University Press, 1969), p. 275.

⁸¹ S. Trapido, “Reflections on land, office and wealth in the South African Republic, 1850–1900,” in Marks and Atmore (Eds.), *Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa*, p. 356.

⁸² For details, see R. Wagner, “Zoutpansberg,” pp. 323–37.

⁸³ Trapido, “Land, office and wealth,” p. 356.

⁸⁴ Trapido, “Aspects in the transition from slavery to serfdom,” p. 26.

⁸⁵ For details of these later Boer military campaigns, see especially T. J. Makhura, “The Bagananwa polity in the north-western Transvaal and the South African Republic, c. 1836–1896,” M.A. dissertation, University of Bophuthatswana (1993).

wealth but, more importantly for the African communities, extracting the ever elusive labor.⁸⁶ In the Pilansberg during the 1860s, for example, because of their need for labor, Boer leaders accelerated their efforts to obtain more of it.⁸⁷ It was during this period that Paul Kruger, then commandant in the Rustenburg District, began to build a dam for a wheat irrigation project in Saulspoor. Kgatla men were inspanned to wagons and carts containing stone boulders and forced to pull them to the dam-construction site. One afternoon in April 1870, after the Bakgatla had refused to continue to work, their chief, Kgamanyane, was tied to a wagon and, in front of a large gathering, Paul Kruger himself publicly flogged the chief. Angered and humiliated by this incident, Kgamanyane and about half of his people emigrated to Mochudi in Kwena country in what was later to become Botswana, where their descendants have lived to this day.⁸⁸ But there were in fact precedents of other African chiefs in the Transvaal who were in similar conflict with Boer leaders. Breutz, for example has recorded that as early as the 1840s, “owing to trouble with the Boers,” presumably over labor demands, the Tlhokwa chief, Matlapeng, and his people fled their home in the Matlapengsberg area of the Pilansberg “and sought refuge with the Kwena chief Sechele”⁸⁹ in today’s Botswana. In about 1860, still in the Pilansberg, Chief Mabe of the Batlhako “got into trouble with the Boers who gave him a flogging. He then left with his tribe for Molepolole [i.e., in modern Botswana] and settled at Magagarape.”⁹⁰ For the Marico (Madikwe) District, Andrew Manson has recorded that the Boers’ “persistent demands for labour . . . eventually forced [Chief] Mangope to lead the rest of his community out of the Transvaal in 1858.”⁹¹

African chiefs were in fact routinely punished by the Boer authorities if they were held to have transgressed the law or flouted authority. In 1851, Mahura, the chief of the Batlhaping, was summoned before the *Volksraad*

⁸⁶ See Trapido, “Aspects in the transition”; Delius, *The Land*, Chapter 6; “Abel Erasmus: power and profit in the eastern Transvaal,” in W. Beinart et al. (Eds.), *Putting a Plough to the Ground* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1986), p. 181.

⁸⁷ National Archives of South Africa (NASA), Pretoria, CAD, GOV/756/Ps 50, “Purchase of land by Natives after the Retrocession, 1884 to 1899,” p. 83.

⁸⁸ B. Mbenga, “Forced labour in the Pilanesberg: The flogging of Chief Kgamanyane by Commandant Paul Kruger, Saulspoor, April 1870,” *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 23(1) (March 1997), pp. 127–40.

⁸⁹ See Breutz, *The Tribes of the Rustenburg and Pilanesberg Districts* (Pretoria: Native Affairs Department, 1953), pp. 365, 380. The quotations are from the two pages, respectively.

⁹⁰ Breutz, *The Tribes*, p. 291. Our emphasis. Breutz does not state why Mabe was flogged, but it was presumably due to his inability to supply the required numbers of laborers. For details of two other Tswana groups who fled from the Pilansberg because of “trouble with the Boers,” see Breutz, *The Tribes*, pp. 431, 439.

⁹¹ Manson, “The Hurutshe,” p. 92.

and forced to pay a fine of 2,070 head of cattle for allegedly attacking one of his Tswana neighbors and “shedding blood on lands belonging to the Republic.”⁹² During one of the Boer expeditions of conquest against black groups in the western Transvaal in the early 1850s, Commandant P. Scholtz, then based at the Klein Marico Camp in the Zeerust area, commanded Montshiwa, the chief of the Barolong “to send immediately two hundred armed men on horseback . . . with victuals for a fortnight to assist us in punishing Sechele.”⁹³ When Montshiwa defied that order, Scholtz summoned him “before the Council of War to appear within five days to answer for your disobedience to my orders.”⁹⁴ Sensing danger, Montshiwa and some of his followers abandoned their home, Lotlhakane, on September 15, 1852, and fled to Setlhagole, about 70 km to the west of present-day Mafikeng. A Boer commando pursued them but Montshiwa managed to escape and eventually fled to the relative safety of Ngwaketse country in what was to become the British Protectorate of Bechwanaland where he lived in exile from 1856 to 1870.⁹⁵

MISSIONARIES, THE ZAR AUTHORITIES, AND AFRICANS

The foregoing kinds of relations between the Boer authorities and African chiefs became more conflictual over the matter of “bonded labor” about which we have already noted. “Bonded labor” was reportedly widely abused by the Boers and condemned as slavery by British missionaries and officials. African allies were also expected to return runaway captives. In 1848, for example, David Livingstone, of the London Missionary Society, reported meeting four Laka children at a Boer’s farm in Rustenburg. Livingstone encouraged them to escape but “they said they had often run away but Mokhatla (*sic*) [chief of Bafokeng] caught them and returned them to their owners.”⁹⁶ The missionary condemnation of the Boer practice of “bonded labor” originated from the 1850s when Livingstone, then working among the Bakwena of Chief Sechele, was accused by the Boers of influencing

⁹² J. A. I. Agar-Hamilton, *The Native Policy of the Voortrekkers: An Essay in the History of the Interior of South Africa* (Cape Town: Maskew Miller, 1928), p. 78.

⁹³ Quoted in S. M. Molema, *Chief Moroka, His Life and Times* (Cape Town: Methodist Church, 1951), p. 91. Regarding details of the conflict between Chief Sechele and the Boers, see Ramsay, “The Rise and Fall of the Bakwena Dynasty,” pp. 89–116.

⁹⁴ Molema, *Chief Moroka*, p. 92. See also T. V. Bulpin, *Lost Trails of the Transvaal* (Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1965), pp. 83–4.

⁹⁵ P. L. Breutz, *The Tribes of Mafeking District* (Pretoria: Native Affairs Department, 1956), pp. 190–1.

⁹⁶ Cited in Morton, “Slave Raiding,” from I. Schapera (Ed.), *David Livingstone’s Family Letters, 1841–1856*, vol. I (1956) (London: Chatto and Windus, 1959), p. 236.

the Bakwena against them.⁹⁷ This resulted in the Boer dislike and distrust of missionaries, especially if they were of British origin, as they were suspected of inciting African communities against the Boer authorities. From then on, African chiefs under Boer authority were not allowed to accept missionaries, especially English-speaking ones, to work among their people without the permission of the Volksraad.⁹⁸ That was why in the Rustenburg area, the ZAR authorities invited, instead, German-speaking Hermannsburg missionaries, instead, to work among the Bakwena, because they felt that they were “not so dangerous to them in their foreign policy as the English missionaries.”⁹⁹ The Rev. S. Hofmeyr, a Dutch Reformed Church missionary who worked among Africans in the Soutpansberg area during the early days of white settlement there, for example, was “practically boycotted” by the Boers in the area, “on account of his vocation,”¹⁰⁰ of doing missionary work among Africans.

From the late 1850s, when missionaries were seeking to work among African communities in the Transvaal, even if the Boer authorities had permitted them to do so, the next hurdle was getting the approval of the chief and his *lekgotla*. At first, the African groups simply had fear of the unknown. However, once the chief had agreed, missionary work proceeded fairly quickly. But sometimes a chief would expressly seek the services of a missionary. This often happened for security reasons. Chief Kgamanyane of the Bakgatla in the Pilansberg, for example, invited the Rev. Henri Gonin to his capital in 1865 because of conflict he had been experiencing with the Boer farmers around him for at least two decades. For the northern Transvaal, Isabel Hofmeyr has suggested that Chief Makopane of the amaNdebele invited the Berlin Mission Society missionaries to settle at his capital partly “for political and diplomatic ends, particularly because he had, for some time, been embroiled in a low level war with the Boers. Indeed, it was often as messenger and emissary that Makopane used the first missionary, W. Moschutz.”¹⁰¹ After having been permitted by the Boer authorities, the BMS missionaries first entered the ZAR in 1860

⁹⁷ Boer-missionary conflict is quite detailed in F. J. Ramsey, “The Rise and Fall of the Bakwena Dynasty of South-Central Botswana, 1820–1940,” Ph.D. thesis, Boston University (1991), pp. 82–116. See also S. Glassman, “Livingstone confronts the Boer Commandants,” *Midwest Quarterly*, 23(3) (1982), pp. 251–67.

⁹⁸ Eybers, *Select Constitutional Documents*, p. 414; Agar-Hamilton, *Native Policy*, p. 132.

⁹⁹ J. E. Carlyle, *South Africa and its Mission Fields* (London: Nisbet, 1878), p. 245.

¹⁰⁰ Agar-Hamilton, *The Native Policy*, p. 117.

¹⁰¹ I. Hofmeyr, “Jonah and the swallowing monster: orality and literacy on a Berlin Mission Station in the Transvaal,” *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 17(4) (December, 1991), p. 636.

and established mission stations among the Bapedi and Vhavenda in the Steelpoort and Soutpansberg areas. The BMS, the largest of the Lutheran societies operating in Southern Africa, had its most important station at Botshabelo, founded by Alexander Merensky, among the Bapedi with the permission of King Sekwati. As “the representative of the Z.A.R. among the Pedi,” Merensky played a partisan role in support of the Boer authorities vis-à-vis the Bapedi on every issue, particularly in view of the fact that the Pedi polity was still independent and had not yet come under Boer rule. In the mid-1870s, French-speaking Swiss missionaries settled in the Spelonken foothills of the Soutpansberg where they worked among immigrants from the east whom they would later qualify as “Tsonga.” As elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, the first Christian converts were initially harassed and shunned by chiefs until much later when the numbers of converts increased.¹⁰²

Up to the 1880s, the missionary field in the Transvaal was dominated by four Christian denominations: the Dutch Reformed Church and the Hermmansburg Mission Society in the west and the Berlin Mission Society and Swiss Mission in the north. The first Christian missionaries to the Batswana were involved in spreading the Gospel and the rudiments of western education. In doing this they did not only impart their Christian beliefs but also their cultural, political, and commercial values. They introduced the use of agricultural aids such as, for example, plowing with oxen, irrigation, and wagons, while their wives taught domestic skills such as knitting, sewing, baking, nursing, and midwifery. They also produced religious and language texts in African languages, following the translation tradition first established by Robert Moffat at Kuruman in the 1820s. Each missionary society published materials for the people among whom they worked, the Dutch Reformed Church in Sekgatla, the Berlin Mission Society in Sepedi, and the Hermannsburg Mission Society in Sekwena. It was the disposition of an African chief that determined the success or failure of Christian missionary work. As Roger Beck has stated:

The rulers invited the missionaries in and determined where they could settle, what activities they could perform, what benefits they must provide, what members of society they could influence, and when they must leave. Missionary fortunes shifted with the political, social, and economic forces at work among the Sotho and Tswana, forces over which the missionaries had little control.¹⁰³

¹⁰² Delius, *The Land*, pp. 117–21.

¹⁰³ R. B. Beck, “Monarchs and Missionaries among the Tswana and Sotho,” in R. Elphick and R. Davenport (Eds.), *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1997), pp. 116–20. Quotation, pp. 119–20.

CONQUEST AND EARLY COLONIAL RULE IN NATAL

In the southeastern lowlands, disappointments befell Boer Trekkers who attempted to seize territory from the Zulu kingdom south of the Thukela River. Although they had killed 3,000 of King Dingane's soldiers in a battle at Ncome River (or Blood River) in December 1838, they were unable to compel his submission until the king's younger brother, Mpande, defected with 17,000 followers. It was Mpande's regiments rather than Boer commandos that brought about the final defeat of Dingane in January 1840. This left Mpande with a diminished Zulu kingdom north of the Thukela and a Boer "Republic of Natalia" south of the river. Even that state proved to be a flash in a pan. Officials at the Cape and humanitarian societies in Britain were so alarmed by the prospect that Boers might provoke a general flight toward their eastern frontier that an armed expeditionary force was despatched in 1842 to effect the annexation of Natal. After a spirited defense, the republicans relinquished their claims to sovereignty. And even though the British guaranteed land titles issued by Natalia, a large portion of the defeated Trekker families had grown fond of independence and preferred to join their compatriots on the Highveld.

One person's setback was usually another's opportunity. Just as the departure of Mzilikazi opened the way for chiefs and people to reclaim land in the northwest, the Zulu and Boer defeats in Natal left large tracts open to occupation by small- and middle-sized chieftaincies. Some of these groups were local people who had emerged from hiding, some were returning from exile to the lands of their ancestors and others were adventurers on the make. Zikhali ka Matiwane typified the movement. His father, Matiwane, had led a large body of his Ngwane followers away from the Zulu kingdom in the 1820s, first to glory in the Caledon Valley and then to catastrophic defeat by British and Xhosa forces at the battle of Mbholompo on the Umtata River in 1828. When Matiwane returned ignominiously to Zululand and was executed by Dingane, Zikhali sought refuge with Sobhuza in the nascent Swazi kingdom. Sensing an opportunity to rebuild the family fortunes when Mpande left the Zulu kingdom, Zikhali offered his services to the Boer–Zulu coalition that marched against Dingane in 1840. The Boer government of Natal showed no gratitude for Zikhali's contribution and actually threw him into jail for alleged misappropriation of captured cattle. With the Boers deposed, Zikhali established his headquarters on the slopes of the Drakensberg and sent messengers to the widely dispersed Ngwane, inviting them to live under his leadership. His experience was repeated by adventurous chiefs, so that within a few years the numbers of Africans settled in Natal grew from a few thousands to an estimated 100,000. This population movement dwarfed the great Boer Trek and

created dilemmas for the newly established British authority, which did not get around to appointing a diplomatic agent to deal with the chiefs until 1845. Theophilus Shepstone, who filled that position (retitled secretary for native affairs in 1856), emerged as one of the most creative imperial administrators of his age. The system of government that evolved under his leadership was widely imitated as British colonization spread north to Kenya and laid the groundwork for the twentieth-century policy known as indirect rule.

Military, financial, and cultural considerations governed the development of Shepstone's system.¹⁰⁴ As an isiXhosa-speaking teenage son of a Methodist missionary, he had served as an interpreter on the staff of Major-General D'Urban during the war of 1834–35. Shepstone learned on the battlefield to respect the military capacities of his African adversaries. After the war he saw his own chief, D'Urban, dismissed for mishandling diplomacy, spending too much of taxpayers' money and pandering to the racial prejudices of settlers. Postwar employment as British resident agent among Xhosa groups on the eastern Cape frontier taught Shepstone something of the cultural forms and institutions of chieftaincy.¹⁰⁵ He put all these lessons into practice in Natal. The small British garrisons at Pietermaritzburg and D'Urban could not be expected to cope with an African uprising, even if they were reinforced by militia recruited from the tiny population of white settlers. Consequently, the first principle of Shepstone's military policy was to avoid actions that might provoke an uprising of chiefs or an invasion from the Zulu kingdom. That in turn required the provision of adequate land for the Natal chiefs – a task undertaken by a land commission in 1845. As European settlers were still thin on the ground, the commission had considerable scope for marking out large reserves even after endorsing the land titles granted by the Trekker government in a broad swath of territory from Ladysmith to Pietermaritzburg. Whereas settlers preferred farms on relatively flat land easily accessible by road, chiefs were accustomed to look for positions where cattle might be well defended. They did not mind "broken country" provided there was adequate rainfall and good pasturage. An additional factor bearing on the land commission's deliberations was missionary influence. Not only did his own background predispose Shepstone to favor missions, one of his fellow land commissioners was an American missionary. As originally envisaged, each reserve would have both a

¹⁰⁴ N. Etherington, "The 'Shepstone System' in the Colony of Natal and beyond the Borders," in A. Duminy and B. Guest (Eds.), *Natal and Zululand, a New History* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1989), pp. 170–92.

¹⁰⁵ T. McClendon, "The Man Who Would Be *Inkosi*: Civilising Missions in Shepstone's Early Career," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 30 (2004), p. 346.

resident magistrate dispensing justice and resident missionaries, promoting “Christianity and civilization.” Naturally, missionaries favored large reserves, hoping that their missions would gain a captive audience. The American missionaries were particularly favored by the provision of large reserves around their stations along the coast of Natal. The land commission could not have foreseen in 1846 that European growers of cane sugar would soon be demanding land in the coastal regions. On a map the distribution of “Native Reserves” suggests a grand design of social engineering – a wholesale relocation of chiefs and people to lands not required by settler farms. However, few if any people were moved in the first instance; the commission confirmed most chiefs in possession of land they already occupied. Moreover, large numbers of people continued to live outside the reserves on land theoretically held by settlers. A speculative commercial enterprise, the Natal Land and Colonization Company, took up large tracts of land earmarked for future settlement. While awaiting a boom in land values that would reap large profits, the company enjoyed a steady income by collecting rent from African “tenants.”¹⁰⁶ Because tenants were exempt from the hut taxes, the rents were tolerable. So long as these tracts and the reserves provided adequate space for people and their cattle, Shepstone could feel reasonably confident that there would be no concerted rebellion against British rule.

Another imperative of Shepstone’s system was financial: His administrative apparatus must pay for itself. In the early years he hoped for government grants large enough to pay for the direct government of the whole African population. When no such grants eventuated, Shepstone scaled down his plans. His principal source of revenue was the taxes paid annually by chiefs in cash on the basis of the number of huts inhabited by their followers. Also important were contributions made in kind through the forced labor demanded for roads and other public works. Reasoning that under the precolonial regime chiefs could command military and other services from young men, Shepstone insisted on his right to do the same. This not only gave him a labor force to build roads but a military force that could be mobilized to crush any threat of resistance. This aspect of the administration relied heavily on hand-picked men like Ngoza, who had no hereditary claims to chiefly status, but who was raised to an exalted position for his services to Shepstone and the government of Natal.¹⁰⁷

The cultural aspects of Shepstone’s system owed more to circumstances than to deliberate planning. In the early years, the government let chiefs

¹⁰⁶ H. Slater, “Land, Labour and Capital in Natal: The Natal Land and Colonisation Company 1860–1948,” *Journal of African History*, 16 (1975), pp. 257–84.

¹⁰⁷ N. Etherington, *Preachers, Peasants and Politics in Southeast Africa* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1978), p. 61.

rule their people pretty much as they wished, provided they paid their hut taxes and made no trouble. Given his limited resources, Shepstone could hardly do otherwise. However, in 1847 a difficult criminal case exposed the difficulties inherent in allowing two legal systems to flourish side by side.¹⁰⁸ Several men were brought to trial for killing an alleged witch. A senior Natal judge, Henry Cloete, insisted that this was a clear case of murder. Shepstone, in contrast, recommended clemency, arguing that customary practice had long sanctioned the execution of people convicted of witchcraft. Whereas British justice in the nineteenth century could not endorse witch trials, this case should not be treated as an ordinary homicide. Faced with the impossibility of reconciling the two positions, the colonial governor appealed to Britain's secretary of state for the colonies, Earl Grey, for a ruling. Although dual legal systems existed in Quebec, the Cape Colony, and certain parts of the British India Company's dominion, never before had the British Empire officially recognized the unwritten customary practices of indigenous people. Grey's masterly decision decreed that practices contrary to the principles of humanity must be suppressed, but that other customs could continue during the slow evolution toward "British civilization."¹⁰⁹ Thus, the killing of accused witches in Natal must cease, but other practices, such as polygamy and lobola could continue. Following Grey's decision, Shepstone set about gradually codifying the body of custom he called Native Law. This was not just law as understood by established chiefs. Natal's governor was formally constituted the supreme chief of all the African people. All magistrates on Native Reserves held concurrent commissions as administrators of Native Law and met with Shepstone from time to time to promote uniformity in the code. Discussions usually centered on matters of family law and inheritance, which differed dramatically from British practice.

A conspicuous feature of the new regime was that neither Shepstone nor his magistrates dealt with women. The oral annals of precolonial societies provide many examples of prestigious women wielding chiefly power. MaNthatisi, mother of Sekonyela, of the Batlokwa was only one of many well-known women who exercised such influence. On one occasion the impassioned speech of a matriarch in the councils of the amaHlubi stopped a threatened war with the amaNgwane.¹¹⁰ However, women had no place in

¹⁰⁸ For an extensive discussion of parallel colonial legal systems, see M. Chanock, *Law, Custom and Social Order: The Colonial Experience in Malawi and Zambia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

¹⁰⁹ Earl Grey to H. Smith, December 10, 1847, based on James Stephen's Minute of September 17, 1847, CO 179/2, National Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, UK.

¹¹⁰ N. J. van Warmelo (Ed.), *History of Matiwane and the Amangwane Tribe, as told by Msebenzi to his kinsman Albert Hlongwane* (Pretoria: Native Affairs Department, 1938), pp. 124–6.

Shepstone's system. Thus, the laws he made to regulate family life reflected male opinions. It is for this reason that Jeff Guy has termed Shepstone's arrangements an "accommodation of patriarchs."¹¹¹ This should not be read as an accommodation of two equally patriarchal societies; it represented a European patriarchal conception of African social systems acquired through dealings with male chiefs.

As numbers of European settlers increased, Natal's government confronted a cultural problem of a different order. New settlers brought with them ideas about social class and color that predisposed them to view themselves as a master class born to rule the African majority, whom they termed "savages." Although the settler population was small before 1880 – mostly settled in Durban, Pietermaritzburg, and a few other small towns – their influence was out of all proportion to their numbers. They founded newspapers, formed town councils, held meetings, established armed militia, and, after a large measure of self-government was granted to Natal by the British parliament in 1856, elected a majority of the membership of the colony's Legislative Assembly. Very few accepted the dictum of Natal's constitution that the law would permit no distinction of color, religion, or social origin. On the contrary, they insisted on unequal treatment before the law. A Select Commission on Native Affairs in 1852 foreshadowed what might be expected from a settler-dominated government.

In the absence of any representative body to express African opinion, it fell to Shepstone as secretary for native affairs to speak for the majority of the population in the Legislative Assembly. The most frequent bone of contention was the settler demand that government do more to drive African men and women into wage labor as servants and manual workers. Their favored solutions to their labor problem were that the Native Reserves should be reduced in size, that taxes on huts and other aspects of African life be increased, and that the customs of lobola and polygamy be abolished so that African men could no longer live off the labor of their women folk. Shepstone answered these demands with the argument that wholesale interference with African land tenure and customs would provoke an armed rising that the colony was ill-equipped to quell. On questions of African law and custom, he worked to shore up the boundaries between the settlers' British legal system and his department's administrative structure of chiefly rule and Native Law. In the longer run, he hoped that British rule might be extended to neighboring territories which could provide a "safety valve" for Natal's growing African population.

¹¹¹ "An Accommodation of Patriarchs: Theophilus Shepstone and the Foundations of the System of Native Administration in Natal." Paper presented at Conference on Masculinities in Southern Africa, University of Natal, Durban (July 1997).

If the experience of Zikhali is any guide, most of Natal's chiefs appreciated Shepstone's administrative system until well into the late 1860s. The hut tax seemed a small price to pay for security from the threat of Zulu power across the Thukela and raiding parties from other Natal chiefs. He prospered in the midst of his reconstituted Ngwane chieftaincy. A German missionary who settled near his headquarters gave advice on how to deal with colonial authorities and dispensed lessons in reading, writing, and arithmetic. Zikhali's wealth and prestige caused even people from Zululand to join him saying, "it were far better for us to become subjects of the son of Matiwane."¹¹² The increase of his herds eventually won him a Swazi princess as his great wife. Not far away, the son of one of his father's determined enemies, Langalibalele ka Mthimkulu, also watched with satisfaction as his cattle and people multiplied on the slopes of the Drakensberg. After a falling out with Mpande, Langalibalele had led a large following out of Zululand. Shepstone welcomed them on the condition that they wage war on the "Bushmen raiders" who came down from the mountains to steal cattle from white farmers.¹¹³ Natal's recognition of a form of customary law comforted people who had supposed the unsettling presence of Europeans would threaten the foundations of their existence. In particular, fathers who had feared a loss of control of their wives and daughters appreciated Shepstone's apparent understanding of their situation. Thus, a Victorian British social system that had yet to accord equal rights to women extended a helping hand to African men who worried that their control over the means of production and reproduction might be threatened by the new imperial order in Natal. Many chiefs welcomed the new order. A photograph taken in 1862, shortly before his death, shows Zikhali resplendent in a European military uniform surrounded by his most important subordinate chiefs.

Thus, the construction of the "Shepstone system" owed as much to Natal chiefs as colonial authority. It was an administrative and legal framework rather than a social order. Even its progenitors acknowledged that social and economic change must come. Shepstone frequently expressed the unrealistic hope that the whole population of Natal would move in the direction of enlightened progress. Whereas rapid changes occurred in very small sectors of society, they clearly indicated the course of future development. Settler demands for cheap labor required constant movement in and out of the designated reserves. To partially control those movements, colonial authorities resorted to an old Cape institution: the pass. Workers in villages and

¹¹² Van Warmelo, *History of Matiwane*, p. 126.

¹¹³ J. Wright, *Bushman Raiders of the Drakensberg, 1840–1870* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1971).

towns had to conform as well to dress codes, regulation of daily wages, and an unfamiliar criminal code. They learned new fashions, drank seriously alcoholic beverages, and caught new diseases. The few women who escaped control by husbands and fathers by moving to towns found themselves in demand as prostitutes; through sexual contact with settlers they acquired venereal diseases that gradually spread fear and loathing through the countryside. People who adopted the new faiths taught by foreign missionaries experienced even more startling change. As at the Cape, almost all missionaries insisted that Christianity came as part of a total cultural package. Conversion must be accompanied by outward and visible signs of inner change: European styles of dress; a new kind of family life based on radical changes in ideas about masculinity and femininity; novel notions of health and hygiene; and adaptation to an economy based on wage labor, and an aspiration to accumulate capital. The most challenging elements of the missionary cultural package were rules about marriage and kinship. Marriage was defined as the union of one man with one woman. Presentation of cattle to the father of one's bride was strongly discouraged, as was the widespread practicing of taking on the wife of one's dead brother. Resistance to the Christian cultural package was so widespread in the early days that missionaries gained very few followers. Those who did come to mission stations tended to be very young, very poor, or on the run. However, with the passage of time some converts to Christianity began to grow wealthy through growing cash crops, trade, and transport. Although Christians were not the only ones to prosper, their aspirations differed from people who clung to a more traditional lifestyle. Missionaries actively exhorted converts to be like them in all ways, including participation in the rights enjoyed by all the subjects of the British queen. By the early 1860s, converts to Christianity, known as the *khobwa* (believers), had begun to petition the government, demanding equality before the law.¹¹⁴

Shepstone's answer was to ask, equal before what law? Aside from missionaries, government officials, and a few brave individuals like David Dale Buchanan, editor of the *Natal Witness* newspaper, Europeans stubbornly resisted the extension of the vote beyond their own little circle. Torn between the settler's racial exclusivity and the constitution's insistence that there should be no legal distinctions based on color, Shepstone found a solution based on Earl Grey's recognition of Native Law. Legislation in 1865 decreed that no people subject to Native Law could vote unless they successfully applied for exemption on the basis of their property holdings, education, and commitment to conform to all British laws, including

¹¹⁴ *Natal Witness*, 27 March 1863; Etherington, *Preachers, Peasants and Politics*, Chapter 5, pp. 87–114.

those on marriage.¹¹⁵ The principle of this legislation outweighed any practical benefits because only a few dozen individuals ever succeeded in winning exemption from Native Law. Henceforth, Europeans inhabited a separate privileged world legally removed from the majority of the population. They used their privileges to ruthlessly minimize taxes on themselves while maximizing those paid by Africans. Though Britain's imperial government forbade them to occupy the Native Reserves, the settlers used every other means available to force labor into their service. These means included raising taxes and tariffs on imported goods primarily consumed by Africans, as well as government help in securing contract labor from neighboring territories and overseas. This brought Natal to a significant turning point in 1860 when the colony used taxes raised from Africans to finance the importation of laborers from Mozambique and indentured workers from British India. Unable to force local people into long-term contracts on their sugar estates, planters saw the imported workers as a stable, tractable labor force that would be available year round. The initial experiment with Indian indentured labor foundered during a recession and for a time Natal sought to build a stable labor supply for the plantations on the basis of migrants drawn from Mozambique. In 1874, Indian immigration resumed and, a decade later, as war in the Zulu kingdom and the lure of high wages at Kimberley made the importation of Mozambicans unprofitable, the plantations came to depend on these indentured workers.¹¹⁶ For the next four decades, Indian men and women continued to come to Natal on the understanding that their rights would be looked after by Britain's India Office – a hope that was only partially fulfilled. Their presence complicated the question of social status in South Africa. From the settler point of view, they were another subordinated group to rule, as were the "shiftless amatongas." From Shepstone's point of view, the Indians' status was ambiguous; certainly they could not be brought under Native Law. So long as they were engaged in work contracts, their movements could be controlled by the colony's so-called Protector of Immigrants using the stringent provisions of the Masters and Servants Act. However, they had rights to legal representation and the free practice of their religion (there were Hindus, Muslims, and Christians among them). Many workers chose to return to India at the expiration of their contracts, but others exercised the right to stay on. Gradually, the independent Indian community expanded, a largely literate and commercially sophisticated society bent on exercising the full rights of citizenship.

¹¹⁵ B. Guest and A. Duminy, *Natal and Zululand, A New History*, p. 147.

¹¹⁶ P. Richardson, "The Natal Sugar Industry in the Nineteenth Century," in W. Beinart et al. (Eds.), *Putting a Plough to the Ground*, pp. 134–5.

From the beginning, the British colony of Natal was entangled in the affairs of all Southeastern Africa. Bonds of language, culture, kinship, and inheritance bound its people to neighbors on all sides. The complex laws governing ownership of cattle in particular caused Shepstone and his corps of resident magistrates to be constantly in contact with people from faraway places who came to claim the cattle they believed were owed them through lobola arrangements made years – sometimes decades – earlier. Because some important chiefs and their followers had moved from the Zulu kingdom to new residences as far afield as Mozambique, Malawi, and Zimbabwe, Shepstone had access to a network of information about southern Africa unprecedented in the annals of British administration. Communication, of course, worked both ways. Distant chiefs and kings knew a great deal about the affairs of Natal. They watched with interest as the results of this experiment in cooperation between semiautonomous chiefs and British colonialism unfolded. A great deal of attention focused on the comparative fortunes of the mixed government of Natal and the independent Zulu kingdom across the Thukela River.

Relations between the two regional powers were never entirely comfortable. Shepstone maintained a number of border agents whose job was to watch for signs of Zulu aggression. Mpande, likewise, constantly sent messengers and spies to Natal during his long reign (1840–72). The king seemed always to be in two minds about the wisdom of developing his state along western lines – an issue that in the early years centered on the missionary question. His predecessor, Dingane, had mixed experiences with missionaries. Allen Gardiner had proved an invaluable intermediary in dealing with the turbulent traders of Port Natal and the British Empire. Francis Owen, on the other hand, had proved worse than useless in the crisis sparked by the arrival of the Voortrekkers. After assuming power, Mpande allowed an American missionary, Aldin Grout, to establish a station in the southwest corner of the kingdom. When runaways, dissidents, and accused criminals gathered round the missionary, claiming independence of the king's authority, he closed the station down and would not admit other missionaries until 1851. When an intrepid Norwegian, Hans Schreuder, gained a foothold through an offer of secular medical and technological services, he shrewdly avoided challenging royal authority, accepting the king's policy of treating Christian converts as noncitizens while serving as Mpande's amanuensis in written communications with Natal. There the missionary influence might have ended but for a crisis that exposed the fragility of the Zulu constitution. Unlike his elder brothers, Shaka and Dingane, Mpande married many wives and acknowledged large numbers of children. As his eldest children grew to manhood, they began to jockey for the position of heir-apparent. Tensions between Cetshwayo and Mbuyazi

came to a head in 1856. A dance competition provided the pretense for all-out war between their opposing factions that resulted in the death of Mbuyazi and the triumph of Cetshwayo's *Usutu* party.¹¹⁷ Mpande grasped the danger that he might become the pawn – or perhaps the next victim – of his overbearing son and moved to counter Cetshwayo's influence through diplomacy. Suddenly the door was open to missionaries, although the policy of treating converts to Christianity as aliens remained in place. Unable to meet the demand with Norwegians, Hans Schreuder in 1858 invited fellow Lutherans attached to the Hermannsburg Missionary Society to take advantage of the new policy. These missionaries were active in trade and readily provided technical aid, as when the Hermannsburgers built wagons and carriages for the king. Cetshwayo's rivalry with his half-brothers did not end with the death of Mbuyazi. In the wake of the civil war some of Mpande's wives and sons had fled to Natal, where they posed an obvious future danger. One in particular, Mkungu, had settled with his mother on the mission station of Anglican Bishop John William Colenso, who had formed a close friendship with Shepstone.¹¹⁸ Colenso spoke openly of Mkungu as a young prince who would be the future king of the Zulu. Fear that Zulu forces were about to invade Natal in 1861 (with the rumored intention of killing Mkungu) provided an opportunity for Shepstone and Colenso to visit Zululand in order to reach an understanding with Mpande and Cetshwayo. They reached an agreement that left Mpande in secure possession of the throne while officially acknowledging that Natal recognized Cetshwayo as his heir. Mpande also agreed that the door would be open to missionaries of all societies to establish stations in his kingdom. For a time, Colenso and Shepstone even toyed with the idea of going to the Zulu kingdom as spiritual and secular advisors, with the ultimate aim of bringing the kingdom under British protection. This demonstrated how far Shepstone's confidence in his system had advanced; it had become, in his own mind at least, a template for benevolent British rule of any region of Southeastern Africa.

DIPLOMACY AND CONFLICT BETWEEN THE ORANGE AND VAAL RIVERS

Whereas Natal remained far from a perfect illustration of the kind of future powerful chiefs desired, it certainly contrasted favorably with the war and

¹¹⁷ C. de B. Webb and J. B. Wright (Eds.), *A Zulu King Speaks: Statements made by Cetshwayo KaMpande on the History and Customs of His People* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1978), pp. 15–16.

¹¹⁸ J. Guy, *The Heretic: A Study of the Life of John William Colenso, 1814–1883* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1983), p. 222.

conquest inflicted on Xhosa chiefs over the last few decades. Shepstone was a man with whom chiefs could do business. Whereas earlier colonial officials had responded with derision to offers of marriage with any chief's daughter, Shepstone knew what to do when Mswati of Swaziland made such a proposal. He accepted with gratitude and married the princess to his military right-hand man, Ngoza. Like Mswati, Moshoeshe, self-made king of the Basotho, realized the importance of Natal, especially after Shepstone sent two regiments to aid his enemies in 1851.¹¹⁹ Moshoeshe had actively pursued alliances with the Cape Colony since 1835, only to find his overtures rebuffed. A period of special danger began in 1845 when the British placed a resident at Bloemfontein to represent their interests on the Highveld. Hopes that a permanent alliance with the British might develop were crushed when Resident Henry Warden drew a boundary line that greatly diminished Moshoeshe's claims to the Caledon Valley. Using his friendship with missionaries of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society, the king sent vigorous protests to Cape Town. However, he soon discovered that the tide of missionary influence had greatly ebbed at the Cape, particularly with the return of Sir Harry Smith. Although the new governor had promised to reduce expenses and impose peace on the colony's troublesome frontiers, he soon revealed a very different personal agenda: to bring peace through a bold annexation of territory north of the Orange River.

British suzerainty to the north of the Orange River was limited to a treaty concluded in 1834 with the leader of the western Griqua community under Andries Waterboer and, two years later, the extension of the Cape of Good Hope Punishment Act to cover the area south of twenty-five degrees south latitude. In 1843, the British established similar treaties with Adam Kok at Philippolis and Moshoeshe at Thaba Nchu. Moshoeshe and other chiefs initially welcomed these attempts to bring order to the region as they secured their own land claims and curbed those of the Boers. Smith, however, actively sought friendship with the Boers – notwithstanding the armed resistance put up by Andries Pretorius at the Battle of Boomplaats in July 1848. After Pretorius and his diehards had retreated north of the Vaal River, Smith appointed surveyors to carve arable land into farms throughout the area he proclaimed as the Orange River Sovereignty. Smith endorsed Warden's policy of forming a coalition to oppose King Moshoeshe's pretensions to dominance in the Caledon Valley. In 1851, Warden was ready to march against the king with a combined force contributed by Sekonyela, Moroka, Adam Kok, Andries Waterboer, and other minor chiefs. The ignominious

¹¹⁹ Etherington, *Great Treks*, p. 318.

failure of this assault was part of the reason that Harry Smith was recalled as governor and his annexations on the Highveld were abandoned. A face-saving expedition led by Smith's replacement, Lt. Gen. George Cathcart, partially redeemed Warden's defeat and concluded a peace settlement with Moshoeshe in December 1852.

Britain's withdrawal from the Highveld occurred in two stages. First, the Sand River Convention of January 1852 relinquished all land north of the Vaal River to the Krygsraad (war council) of scattered Boer communities. Second, by the Bloemfontein Convention of February 1854, the Orange River Sovereignty passed to a group representing British and Boer settlers and was renamed the Orange Free State. All treaties previously concluded between the Cape Colony and chiefs north of the Orange were declared null and void. This obliged many groups to fend for themselves. Moshoeshe's kingdom was once more left to its own devices. The king's first act was to sweep the Caledon Valley of his old enemies, leaving only Boer farms undisturbed. Next, he resumed the program of economic development and armament that had been the foundation of his success in the 1830s. The principal sources of wealth were wages earned by Basotho men working in the Cape Colony and money earned from sales of grain. Though these were substantial, they could not compare with the revenue pouring into the coffers of the Orange Free State government, as farms multiplied and the wool boom spread prosperity. War for possession of farmland west of the Caledon River broke out in 1865, and once again Moshoeshe put up surprisingly strong resistance against a combined mounted force of Transvaal and Free State troops. For a time, it seemed likely that Theophilus Shepstone would arrange a friendly occupation that would put Moshoeshe under a system of indirect rule similar to that practiced in Natal. In the end, a treaty of 1869 laid down the modern borders of Lesotho and put the kingdom under British protection, but not under Shepstone.

Griqua communities took another course after the extinction of the Orange River Sovereignty. After a brief period of prosperity built on the expanding ivory frontier and a wool boom, they began to find that their Christian individualism put them at a disadvantage in dealings with immigrant farmers. Many succumbed to the temptation to sell or otherwise alienate land, a trend that the weak Griqua institutions of government proved unable to control. By 1861, about 2,000 Griqua decided to trek with Adam Kok across the mountains of Lesotho to a new home in an area popularly known as Nomansland, sandwiched between Faku's Mpondo kingdom and the colony of Natal. Although Natal had laid claim to the district, it had not yet been subjected to formal rule, so the Griquas established their position in "Griqualand East" through negotiation with Faku. The ironic

result of their arduous trek was that they left their old homes just a few years before the discovery of diamonds made Griqualand West one of the most coveted regions on the face of the planet.¹²⁰

EARLY DIAMOND DIGGING: THE DYNAMICS OF RACE, CLASS, CULTURE, AND MONOPOLY CAPITALISM

Although the first diamond find occurred in 1867, near the confluence of the Vaal and Hartz rivers, the decisive discovery occurred in 1870 when, for the first time in history, a motherlode of diamonds lodged in the core of an extinct volcano was found away from the river at Bultfontein. The following year a richer deposit was discovered at nearby Colesberg Kopje and this site, soon to be renamed the Kimberley mine, was “rushed” by prospective diggers. By the end of the year the area had been annexed by Britain as the colony of Griqualand West and fortune-seekers were streaming to the four Kimberley mines (Kimberley, De Beers, Bultfontein, and Dutoitspan) from many parts of Southern Africa and the world.

In the early days, few diggers could pay cash wages and they were obliged to engage men under a share-working system. The high cost of mining placed the small diggers under constant pressure to sell their claims to larger, better-capitalized companies. This pressure increased as the pits grew deeper and the cost of bringing blue ground to the surface rose proportionately. By 1873, the Kimberley mine was 200 feet deep and covered about ten acres. Steam engines powered the cars and buckets, drawn by a network of steel wires and pulleys, that gave access to the mine and that allowed excavated ground to be hauled to the surface. Steam pumped water out of the pits, drove the washing machines, and allowed men to add increasingly small diamonds to the stones they recovered at the sorting yards.

High wages added considerably to the cost of mining as employers had to attract workers to Kimberley from areas as far removed as Cornwall, England, and Mozambique; and frequently had to lodge and feed them in the “compounds” built next to the yards in which they washed and sorted through the excavated blue ground. Drawing men to the diggings was no simple matter, especially as the deepest and most profitable of the four pits became the most dangerous mine in the world. For migrant workers, going to Kimberley was very much a lottery. Traveling overland entailed enormous risks as men faced swollen rivers, severe cold, long distances without food, water, or fuel; and were assailed by wild animals and bandits. As the pits grew deeper they suffered from landslides and flooding, as well

¹²⁰R. Ross, *Adam Kok's Griquas: a study in the development of stratification in South Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 94–100.



FIGURE 7.3. Diamond fields.

as numerous accidents caused by misfired charges or the unequal working of claims. The unhygienic conditions at the diggings bred diseases like dysentery, typhoid, and, especially, pneumonia. Epidemics of small pox and bubonic plague were never far off.

In these conditions, diggers found it difficult to discipline workers who sought to improve their conditions of work by stealing diamonds or by “deserting,” to secure higher wages or simply escape a brutal situation.

Many workers attempted to break a foreign and inhuman rhythm of labor by turning to alcohol; but in the process they often injured themselves, broke their equipment or, most seriously, failed in large numbers to appear for work at the start of the week. The Saint Monday phenomenon, typical of the early stages of mining in many parts of the world, became a marker of life at Kimberley as men sought refuge in inebriation and, through the practice of commensality, tried to forge identities that were serviceable to life on the diggings.

Race and class became important issues. As individuals and companies started to buy out the small claim holders, the diggers attempted to exclude men of color from owning claims and to confine them to the role of manual labor. The confrontation between capitalists and claim-owners exploded in mid-1875 when the diggers attempted to ensure their position by seizing the government of Griqualand West. The crushing of the “Black Flag” revolt by the British army had two important consequences: On the one hand, it caused the government to accede to the diggers’ demands to prohibit people of color from holding diggers’ licenses, whereas on the other hand it was a major defeat for the small diggers as it brought in a government favorable to the amalgamation of claims in the hands of large-scale capitalists.¹²¹ The hostility between African and white workers grew as whites came to depend on wages for their survival whereas most African workers retained a separate means of production in the rural areas. This meant that the interests of the working class were strictly divided by race; for although whites sought to protect their wages through organized labor combinations and the protection of individual rights, Africans found a more coherent defense of their working conditions in their ability to return home, a strategy that employers saw as “desertion.”

African mine workers brought a rural culture to the mines and ordered their lives in ways that were often very different from those of European proletarians. Many came from societies with little or no experience of individual rights. In the rural areas, authoritarian chiefs and elders tended to dominate the lives of young men and shape their views on labor and how it should be performed. This had different consequences: in the Zulu kingdom the freedom with which young men moved onto the labor market was restricted by their obligation to provide the king with labor and military service. However, in most areas chiefs encouraged the emigration of labor, either by sending parties to the mines, by “selling” men to recruiters, or by taxing them on their return. In a few instances these men were servile laborers, sometimes even slaves. This frequently caused the

¹²¹ R. Turrell, *Capital and Labour on the Kimberley Diamond Fields, 1871–1890* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), Chapter 3.

chief to determine the freedom with which men sold their labor, as well as the expected conditions under which they would work at Kimberley. The notion of work carried to the mines by these men was also shaped by an agricultural economy that demanded seasonal bursts of communal labor that, in turn, were dependent on sociability and leisure. On the Kimberley diggings, this concept of work frequently contradicted the employers' idea that costly machines should determine the rhythm and pace of labor. Nor was the length of time migrants were willing to stay at the diggings, and acquire mining skills, determined by Europeans' sense of the need to accumulate capital. Few African workers were driven to work, as was the case with many Europeans, by a dependence on a range of expensive commodities. Mostly, they worked a few weeks or months to earn the money needed to buy familiar products, such as clothing and imported liquor or perhaps beads and knives. Many bought guns at Kimberley with which they defended their independence and hunted game. The consumer needs of black workers grew as they came into contact with the Kimberley High Street-in-Africa; and their requirements spread into the rural areas when they returned to their villages laden with goods. Traders quickly gauged this new opportunity for wealth and moved into remote rural areas where they traded from their wagons or established stores and canteens. In some areas, men were pushed to the mines by the need to acquire a commodity with a special, local value. The Bapedi and Basotho particularly valued guns as a means of defending themselves against Boer aggression, whereas men in southern Mozambique used their wages to buy iron hoes with which they could acquire wives and the munificence needed to draw a following. But these demands could change suddenly. In the mid-1870s, French traders sought to benefit from the market for iron hoes at Lourenço Marques (Maputo) by manufacturing huge numbers of these items in Marseilles. The unimpeded importation of hoes caused a severe inflation in the brideprice and, eventually, to the adoption of gold coins as a more stable medium of bridewealth. By the early 1880s, Tsonga-speaking workers from southern Mozambique started to replace Sotho and Pedi workers at Kimberley who, recently conquered, were prohibited from acquiring guns. Almost everywhere, cyclical droughts and famines pushed men to the mines where they worked for as long as it took to earn the wages that would ensure the survival of their families back home.¹²²

The process of amalgamation on the mines, whereby companies absorbed small claims into their holdings, sped up in the early 1880s as the price of diamonds collapsed just as working tunnels were driven under the

¹²² P. Harries, *Work, Culture and Identity: Migrant Labourers in Mozambique and South Africa, c. 1860–1910* (London: Heinemann, 1994), pp. 86–90, 98–9.

Kimberley “big hole” and the cost of mining operations soared. This resulted in a spate of bankruptcies and takeovers; and the process of amalgamation grew as it became clear that, if one company could exercise a monopoly over the sale of diamonds, it would be able to determine the price of the stones worldwide. The mine owners also attempted to curtail the theft of diamonds by introducing strip searching, a practice almost entirely restricted to black miners, and by establishing special IDB (illicit diamond buying) courts. They also attempted to enclose black workers’ living quarters within compounds in such a way as to isolate men from their sources of liquor, prevent them from deserting, and stop them from smuggling diamonds to illicit buyers. The first closed compound was erected in 1885 and, four years later, when C. J. Rhodes succeeded in placing all four mines under his De Beers Consolidated Mines, there were seventeen of these structures at Kimberley.¹²³ This greatly expanded the impact of migrant labor on family life, as men in the compounds lived entirely away from the company of women for long periods. Conversely, women in areas of high labor recruitment had to adapt to life with fewer young men. Yet at the same time, many rural families benefited from the growing market for their goods, largely maize and cattle, presented by growing towns and other centers of employment.¹²⁴

This new form of monopoly capitalism would exercise a strong influence on labor relations in South Africa. It produced a class of industrialists, like Rhodes, J. B. Robinson, Abe Bailey, and Max Michaelis, who would invest heavily in the public institutions and politics of white South Africa.¹²⁵ Their influence, as distinctly South African capitalists, would soon impress itself on life on the Witwatersrand. The militancy of white workers at Kimberley was curbed as employers drew them into racially defined positions as supervisors of black labor. In this way, white workers were separated, both spatially and in terms of their interests and culture, from migrant black workers in the compounds. De Beers further domesticated white workers and separated them from their potential black class

¹²³ W. Worger, *South Africa’s City of Diamonds: Mine Workers and Monopoly Capitalism in Kimberley, 1867–1895* (New Haven: Yale University Press and Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987), Chapters 5 and 6.

¹²⁴ C. Bundy, *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry* (London: Heinemann, 1979), Chapter 3; K. Shillington, *The Colonisation of the Southern Tswana, 1870–1900* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1985), pp. 62–70; W. Beinart, *The Political Economy of Pondoland 1860 to 1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 22–30. See also note 142 following.

¹²⁵ R. Rotberg, *The Founder: Cecil John Rhodes and the Pursuit of Power* (Johannesburg: Southern Book Publishers, 1988).

allies through an active policy of industrial paternalism.¹²⁶ A small black middle class started to emerge in parts of Kimberley in the early 1880s. Men who had acquired a degree of education in mission schools at the diggings or elsewhere found work as clerks, supervisors, or translators for mining companies, trading establishments, and, especially, the telegraph office. Some would establish families at Kimberley and contribute to the broad, British imperial culture of the town.¹²⁷

Black workers continued to be drawn to Kimberley by competitive working conditions. Even as the compounds closed in the mid-to-late 1880s, few companies had to buy labor from recruiters as was the practice in other parts of South Africa. Instead, they kept wages sufficiently high to draw men away from other major employers of labor, such as the sugar plantations in Natal, the railways, harbors in the Cape, and gold mines of the eastern Transvaal. They initially allowed men in the compounds to consume strictly controlled amounts of alcohol and sometimes allowed them to spend weekends in town. Employers also encouraged black miners to engage in an extensive penny capitalism in the compounds and, through the initiation of work tickets and task work, as well as short work contracts, allowed men to influence the pace at which they labored as well as the duration of their contracts. However, although miners were still able to influence both the pace and rhythm of labor, and the general conditions of their work, the prison-like compounds introduced a new and frightening level of control over their working lives. This new discipline contributed to a sharp rise in productivity as, during the period 1882–92, the output of Kimberley mine workers doubled.

Mine workers returned home with wages, ideas, and experiences that introduced a new turbulence into rural society. Many came into contact with Christianity on the diggings; either directly, through evangelizing ministers, or through the written and sung texts that circulated in their living quarters and public spaces. Missionaries viewed the diggings as a prime position for evangelical work. This was partly because miners were in need of spiritual support, but mainly because they carried the Christian message into distant rural areas where, following religious texts or simply inspired by hymns, they could await the coming of a missionary. Kimberley was not simply a center for the accumulation of capital; it was also a space in

¹²⁶ A. Mabin, "Labour, capital, class struggle, and the origins of residential segregation in Kimberley, 1880–1920," *Journal of Historical Geography*, 12, 1 (1986).

¹²⁷ R. Turrell, *Capital and Labour on the Kimberley Diamond Fields* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 184–94; B. Willan, *Sol Plaatje: a Biography* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1984), pp. 29–30.

which men learned new skills, such as reading, and acquired new identities, such as those associated with ethnicity, Christianity, and class.

DIAMONDS: THE SHORT- AND LONG-TERM IMPACT

At the structural level, development of the diamond fields accelerated some forces for change that were already present and launched other entirely new forces that permanently altered the course of South African history. In the short run, the demand for labor pushed up wages and expanded markets for African agricultural production. This in turn enabled the more powerful independent kingdoms and chieftaincies to push ahead with programs of military modernization designed to strengthen their defensive and offensive capabilities. Labor recruiters and gunrunners flourished in the independent kingdoms. British authorities reacted to the challenge with measures designed to disarm the most formidable of those states and to bring them under imperial control. Important streams of migrant labor passed through the independent republics of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, Basotholand, and the colony of Natal, showing that a single regional economy had emerged.¹²⁸ As a result there was a renewed imperial interest to bring those states into a general federation under British sovereignty. The diamond fields also provided opportunities for small-scale African entrepreneurs already involved in the capitalist economy. Peasant producers prospered in many areas, especially those associated with Christian missions. Others built up preexisting operations as traders and transport riders. Groups of peasants banded together to buy land outside the reserves. Growth in paid employment was not limited to the mines themselves. Dockyards, roads, railways, and other infrastructure expanded to meet the needs of the mining industry as a whole. In some segments of the economy, workers for the first time discovered the power to better themselves through strikes and other forms of industrial action. The specter of worker power frightened many large- and small-scale employers who pushed for legislation to provide more control over the workforce. The development of closed compounds at the diamond fields provided the most extreme example of a captive labor force and set an example that other industries would attempt to imitate. Structural change was, of course, accompanied by social and cultural change. Settler communities showed unmistakable signs of unease, which manifested itself in moral panics over an alleged increase in crime, especially in relation to white

¹²⁸ Delius, *The Land Belongs to Us*, Chapter 3; A. Kirkaldy, *Capturing the Soul: The Vhavenda and the Missionaries, 1870–1900* (Pretoria: Protea Book House, 2005), pp. 38–43.

females. As young African men gained experience of migrant labor, they found opportunities to escape control by older men and chiefs. Cash in hand gave some young men unprecedented independence in contracting marriages. A few young women also found ways of circumventing parental authority, leading to a general feeling among older men that they were losing control over production and reproduction – an anxiety that frequently expressed itself in laments that young people had abandoned all morality.

These interlinked structural and cultural shifts underlay – but did not determine – the unfolding of events in the 1870s. These depended, as always, on contingent factors of people, ideas, and politics. Britain's annexation of the diamond fields in August 1871 and the Cape's incorporation of Basotholand a few months later had provoked Boer opposition to the idea of federation. Although Natal was too far from the action to join the unseemly struggles to lay claim to the diamond fields, the mining revolution nonetheless profoundly affected the colony. Individuals closed their businesses and went to seek their fortune, including the editor of the *Natal Witness* newspaper, and the brothers Herbert and Cecil Rhodes, who had been experimenting with cotton farming. Promoters of trade and transport hoped to make Durban the preferred point of entry to the Highveld and looked for ways to extend railways beyond the Drakensberg. Farmers, on the other hand, looked on with dismay as they saw their workforces walk away in search of higher wages. In the early days of the diamond rush, diggers had no time for the cheap labor policies practiced on settler farms. They needed workers immediately and paid whatever was asked. This not only caused men from Natal to trek off to the mines, it also threatened to divert established streams of migrant labor away from Natal. The unsettling effects of these developments may have underpinned South Africa's first "black peril" scare, which gripped white settlers in Natal from about 1869–73. Although no statistical evidence pointed to an upsurge of sexual assaults on white women, newspapers and politicians demanded action in the form of harsher penalties for black males guilty of actual or attempted rape. In line with the prevailing double standard, nothing whatever was said about white males assaulting black women – a much more common phenomenon.

Signs of increasing unease and internal tensions also appeared in the Zulu kingdom, even though it sent few workers to the diamond fields. Although the amaZulu lacked the resources necessary to arm themselves on the scale of other regional powers, observers noted a buildup of both guns and horses. Boer farmers from the southeastern Transvaal had been encroaching on the western borders of the kingdom since the late 1850s

and it was quite conceivable that a war like that fought between the Boers and Basotho could break out at any time. It was obvious that old king Mpande had not long to live; Cetshwayo still felt some insecurity about the succession and worried that potential rivals may have been strengthening their capacity for independent action. All the amaZulu knew very well that chiefs such as Moshoeshoe, Soshangane, Sekhukhune, and Swazi king Ludvonga had been arming themselves with modern weapons. Rumors of war circulated constantly. What none of the independent kingdoms could know was that the British Empire was about to embark on a path that would reduce them all to a state of dependence.

The unexpected spark that set the process in motion was struck on the slopes of the Drakensberg in Natal where Langalibalele's amaHlubi people had been enjoying twenty-five years of uninterrupted peace and prosperity.¹²⁹ By 1873, the venerable chief had fifty-four sons, sixty-eight daughters, and vast herds of cattle. Some of the Hlubi young men had also traveled to the diamond fields and, like young Sotho and Pedi workers, had returned home with money to spend and guns to show off. Whereas Shepstone had made no serious effort to disarm the populations of the reserves, he had attempted to monitor gun ownership by requiring chiefs to register all firearms in their territories. John Macfarlane, the magistrate charged with oversight of Langalibalele, reported that many firearms had not been registered (including those brought back by Hlubi men who had accompanied Shepstone's son, George, on a fortune-seeking expedition to the diamond fields). In the edgy atmosphere of 1873 what might have been treated as an insignificant misdemeanor escalated into an armed confrontation. Soon after Macfarlane issued his first order that chief bring in his guns, the annual maneuvers of the Natal volunteer militia was held nearby, an event that Langalibalele wrongly interpreted as preparation for an attack on his people. Natal settlers were themselves nervous about the state of Zululand following the death of Mpande. Having accepted an invitation to witness the installation of Cetshwayo as king, Shepstone decided the time was ripe for a display of colonial power and marched into Zululand at the head of a large armed column in August. Many feared that the troops might be heading into a trap, Shepstone returned safely, having announced that he had given laws to the new king. In mid-October he sent one of his right-hand men, Mahoiza, to demand that Langalibalele come immediately to Pietermaritzburg. Seeing that white farmers in the district had started moving their cattle out of harm's way, the chief decided he was about to be killed and tried to flee over the mountains to Lesotho. On Shepstone's

¹²⁹N. Etherington, "Why Langalibalele Ran Away," *Journal of Natal and Zulu History* (1978), 1, pp. 1–25.

advice, Natal's governor, Benjamin Pine, sent an expeditionary force to punish the chief for the "crime" of attempting to leave the colony without permission. In a skirmish at the top of Bushmen's River Pass, four of the Natal troopers died, a misfortune that turned the expedition into a ferocious campaign of revenge marked by hideous atrocities such as the dynamiting of caves where Hlubi people had taken refuge. Following his capture on December 11, a forlorn Langalibalele was bound and taken for trial to the capital along roads lined by jeering settlers. Instead of trying the chief by British law with a jury, Shepstone invoked his version of Native Law and had Langalibalele condemned by a panel of chiefs headed by Governor Pine as titular supreme chief of the African people of Natal.

Because it epitomized all the currents of change swirling through the subcontinent and exposed central contradictions and anomalies in Britain's colonial policy, the misnamed rebellion became the occasion for agonized reappraisals in many quarters. Even before the crisis, the chiefs of Natal had begun to grumble about increased taxes. Now as they watched Hlubi herds and women led away in triumph by Shepstone's henchmen, the chiefs of Natal understood as never before the fragility of their own position. At the same time, the merits of Shepstone's system itself were being called into question at the heart of the British Empire. Appalled by the punitive expedition and the trial, Bishop Colenso abruptly terminated his long-standing friendship with the secretary for native affairs and set out to enlist what remained of the humanitarian/missionary lobby in a campaign to quash Langalibalele's sentence. Britain's House of Lords burst into amused guffaws when told that the governor of Natal, who was supposed to be conveying the blessings of European civilization to Africa, had taken up a position as a supreme chief. Benjamin Disraeli, who had led his Conservative Party to triumph at the general election of 1874, now faced the problem of putting into practice the high-flown rhetoric about the glories of empire he had lauded in a famous speech at the Crystal Palace in 1872. The task of balancing the needs of imperial defense, economic development, support for white settlers, and humane administration fell to Lord Carnarvon, the secretary of state for colonies. Taking up a policy of grouping small colonies into larger, self-sufficient states that had begun with the Confederation of Canada in 1867 and had already been discussed in relation to South Africa, Carnarvon set out to bring the Cape Colony, Natal, and the independent Boer Republics under a single government. But first he had to do something about Bishop Colenso's grave allegations. To gain an independent source of advice, Carnarvon commissioned historian James Anthony Froude to go on a fact-finding tour of South Africa. Not long after, Shepstone and Colenso arrived in London to give their own versions of the Langalibalele affair and recommendations for the future of South Africa.

As a result, Carnarvon had the benefit of three very different points of view. Froude articulated the most advanced views on racial science. Like his mentor, Thomas Carlyle, Froude dismissed Africans as people only fit for servitude and lauded white settlers – especially those descended from the Dutch – as a progressive force. Colenso, in contrast, argued on the base of abstract jurisprudence and tedious examination of evidence that nothing less than full restoration of Langalibalele to his chieftainship and the complete overthrow of the Shepstone system would vindicate Britain's claim to be the trustee of African welfare. Shepstone employed more subtle reasoning. Experience had taught him that Froude's trust in white settlers was misplaced. Certainly, a settler-dominated government in Natal could not be trusted to look after African interests. Only a firm but fair administration – such as his own – that understood African ways of life and thought could keep the peace and steer South Africa toward federation and a better life for all. Carnarvon drew something from each of these points of view. He was inclined to agree with Froude that Afrikaans-speaking people must be conciliated. He agreed with Colenso that Natal's administration of the African population was in urgent need of reform. But most of all, Shepstone bewitched Carnarvon with his apparent knowledge, wisdom, and broad view of South African affairs. Carnarvon's first move was to announce his intention to bring the colonies and republics into a confederation. Second, he dispatched the empire's most successful young general, Sir Garnet Wolseley, to deal with the unreliable colonists of Natal by persuading them to give up their limited powers of self-government. Third, as a signal of Britain's humanitarian intentions, he appointed Sir Bartle Frere, a noted champion of antislavery agitation and missions, to be high commissioner of South Africa. Finally, Carnarvon bestowed a knighthood on Theophilus Shepstone and sent him to the Transvaal, charged with a secret commission to annex the nearly bankrupt republic should circumstances appear propitious. Important as these agents would prove in their individual capacities, they must not be allowed to obscure the central importance of Carnarvon himself, a man too often dismissed by his political contemporaries and underestimated by historians. No one in Britain in the 1870s took a more ambitious approach to African affairs. Disraeli talked grandly about an imperial mission, but Carnarvon laid out the road map for achieving an empire stretching from Cape to Cairo. For strategic reasons Britain must safeguard the Suez Canal, in East Africa it must support measures designed to suppress the slave trade and close the door to potential European colonial rivals, and the emerging regional economy of mining, trade, and labor migration must be brought under a single British government. In a most revealing statement on Britain's destiny in Central Africa made in 1876 he told Bartle Frere:

I should not like anyone to come too near to us either on the south towards the Transvaal, which must be ours; or on the north too near Egypt and the country which belongs to Egypt. In fact when I speak of geographical limits I am not expressing my real opinion. We cannot admit rivals in the east or even the central part of Africa: and I do not see why, looking to the experience we now have of English life within the tropics – the Zambezi should be considered to be without the range of our colonisation. To a considerable extent, if not entirely, we must be prepared to apply a sort of Munro [sic] doctrine to much of Africa.¹³⁰

A comparably frank statement of his policy for the control of labor in Southern Africa expressed Carnarvon's intention to implement in every territory "a common system of treatment which shall be clear of the reproach of a system of servitude, and yet shall put that moral screw on the native which is desirable for the safety and interest of all parties."¹³¹

Of all the pieces in his confederation puzzle, Natal's settlers proved easiest to fit in place. Privately contemptuous of Natal's settlers but gracious and charming in public, Garnet Wolseley soon convinced the Legislative Assembly to adopt a "Jamaican" constitution that gave appointed officials a decisive say in government. At the same time, he drew on his military knowledge to make recommendations on defense. In his opinion the Zulu kingdom posed a menace that could hardly be challenged by the forces currently stationed in Natal. Shepstone went to the Transvaal in 1877 with the Zulu threat as the trump card that he hoped would persuade the Boers to seek the shelter of British administration. At a time when the South African Republic teetered on the brink of bankruptcy and seemed to be losing a war against Sekhukhune's Pedi kingdom, Shepstone had good reasons to hope for success. Instead of following Wolseley's example and securing a formal agreement to a British takeover, Shepstone simply raised the Union Jack and annexed the Transvaal in April 1877 – just nine days before Bartle Frere arrived in Cape Town to assume the post of high commissioner. Frere faced grave problems from the moment he stepped ashore. The Cape legislature was torn by internal divisions and in no mood to rubber stamp his plans for confederation. A petty squabble on the eastern frontier in 1877 provoked the Ninth Frontier War with the amaXhosa. This led the Cape government to introduce a form of indirect rule in the recently conquered areas of the Transkei and, at the same time, to bring Griqualand West under its control. Meanwhile, the Cape's administration of Basotholand had proved a dismal failure and a crisis was coming to a head over the same issue that had undone

¹³⁰ Carnarvon to Frere, December 12, 1876, Carnarvon Papers, PRO 30/6/4.

¹³¹ Carnarvon to Froude September 2, 1875, quoted in R. Cope. *Ploughshare of War: The Origins of the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1999), p. 83.

Langalibalele: guns. According to Shepstone, the “Zulu menace” identified by Wolseley was only one part of a larger, darker picture. He told Frere that his extensive intelligence network had uncovered a plot by all the large African kingdoms to combine in a general war on the Europeans. The key to winning the hearts of farmers and burghers in the Transvaal was to remove this threat before it exploded. Frere extended Shepstone’s reasoning, linking the success of Carnarvon’s confederation policy to a general disarmament of the independent kingdoms.

The kingdoms themselves had little or no idea of the workings of British officialdom. Although in touch with each other on a certain formal level, the kings had no plot for a combined rising in a general war. On the contrary, they saw themselves as engaged in desperate individual races to build up their own defensive strength to counter European aggression. Good social histories of life within the kingdoms in this period have yet to be written, probably because the common people of South Africa had little or no opportunity to influence the overall course of events. Most historical writing on the causes of the wave of war and conquest that swept across South Africa between 1876 and 1882 has emphasized the local factors that precipitated conflict. Undeniably local circumstances shaped local outcomes, but the overwhelming factor at work was the determination of Britain’s Conservative government to bring about confederation through a process that involved neutering or destroying the military power of African kingdoms. Frere and the generals accomplished the military objective – though with far more difficulty than they had anticipated. However, the grand design itself was clearly unraveling by 1879. It fell apart completely when William Gladstone won the British general election of 1880 on an anti-imperialist platform promising to terminate ill-conceived overseas adventures.

The ruin of the confederation scheme commenced in the Transvaal. Within months of the annexation, dissidents were scheming to undo it. Though their petitions fell on deaf ears, they influenced Shepstone to make conciliation of the Boers the keystone of his administration. As a result, he neglected to implement the combination of indirect rule and hut tax collection that had been the foundation of his success in Natal. Instead of saving the Transvaal from bankruptcy, he piled up debts. Shepstone had never been very good at cultivating settlers in Natal; he did much worse in the Transvaal.¹³² He promised to bring peace and security on the eastern frontier without explaining his program. Lacking the resources to strike a decisive blow against Sekhukhune, he let the Pedi war smoulder while he devoted his attentions to scoring a triumph in the Zulu kingdom that

¹³² I. R. Smith, *The Origins of the South African War 1899–1902* (London: Longman, 1996), pp. 25–30.

would demonstrate the blessings of British rule. In Natal he had taken the side of Mpande against the Transvaal settlers squatting on Zulu territory. As administrator of the Transvaal he reversed his opinion, claiming to have seen documents in Pretoria that confirmed the Boer claims. He opened secret lines of communication to missionaries and other opponents of Cetshwayo's rule, promising that sometime soon soldiers would come to overthrow the king.

Dissatisfied with the independent line taken on the war and confederation by Cape Colony Prime Minister John Molteno, Frere peremptorily dismissed him and brought in a more tractable ministry led by Gordon Sprigg. It had become evident that Frere would pursue confederation at any cost. The scale of warfare conducted all over Southeastern Africa during his high commissionership dwarfed all previous conflicts in the region. Only the colonial habit of blaming all wars on African aggression and later historians' tendency to treat the history of Southern Africa on a region-by-region basis have prevented these conflicts from getting the label they deserve: the First British War for South African Unification (1877–82).

In February 1878, Sekhukhune signaled his intention to resist Transvaal demands for land, the admission of mineral prospectors and taxes with a renewal of armed struggle. Across the Highveld, Griqua and Tlhaping protests against the annexation of their territories along with the diamond fields led to another outbreak of fighting that continued through most of the year. For Frere, however, the main event on the schedule remained the Zulu kingdom. A boundary commission set up to pronounce on the respective claims of Cetshwayo and the Boers on the Transvaal frontier delivered an unexpected decision in favor of the Zulu king in June 1878. Frere reversed the practical effect of the ruling by extending British protection over all settler farms in the district, even those technically in the Zulu kingdom.¹³³ In December of the same year, Frere issued an ultimatum to Cetshwayo demanding nothing less than the destruction of the entire Zulu military organization – the cement that had bound the kingdom together since its foundation. Such proceedings in the 1830s would have been likely to provoke strong protests from humanitarian and missionary societies. On this occasion, divisions within the philanthropic camp rendered them largely ineffective. With the exception of Lesotho, the independent kingdoms had responded to Christian missionaries with a mixture of indifference and hostility. Many missionaries had arrived at

¹³³ Colin Webb, "The Origins of the Anglo-Zulu War," in A. Duminy and C. Ballard (Eds.), *The Anglo-Zulu War: New Perspectives* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1981), pp. 4–5; C. Hamilton, *Terrific Majesty: The Powers of Shaka Zulu and the Limits of Historical Invention* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1998), pp. 104–06.

the conclusion that only conquest would open the door for conversions. Like many of his colleagues on the eastern frontier, the Anglican Bishop of St. John's, Kaffraria, Henry Callaway hailed war as "the God-sent power" effecting change, and predicted that whites would soon govern all of Southern Africa "not only with kindness and justice, but with the firm hand of the law."¹³⁴ All the Hermannsburg Lutheran missionaries made an ostentatious departure from the Zulu kingdom in 1877, loudly complaining of persecution. Anglican priest Robert Robertson wrote anonymous despatches to a Natal paper describing Cetshwayo's "tyranny and injustice."¹³⁵ Only a few missionaries stood out against the tide. Norwegian Hans Schreuder stayed in the Zulu kingdom pleading on Cetshwayo's behalf for peace even as British troops approached. Bishop Colenso also sought a diplomatic solution, though his intervention came much too late. Frere ignored all Cetshwayo's messages, refusing to accept anything short of full compliance with his impossible ultimatum. On its expiry, January 11, 1879, Frere put the fate of his grand design in the hands of the generals, as three columns of British soldiers moved across the Thukela. Contrary to the expectations of those who believed in the myth of a general South African rising, the Zulu forces made no move toward Natal, taking up a purely defensive posture.

No one knew how well the amaZulu would perform, as they had not engaged in serious campaigns since the civil war of 1856; even the oldest of them were too young to remember facing the Boers at Ncome River. They lacked experience with the guns and horses they possessed, so the fortunes of battle would depend on fitness gained through dance competitions, the force of their numbers, and blind luck.¹³⁶ On January 22, on the slopes of Isandhlwana hill, luck favored the amaZulu when their estimated force of 20,000 overran a British encampment, annihilating in less than two hours one-third of the column under commander-in-chief, Lord Chelmsford. That one engagement shook the military self-confidence of the world's largest empire and ensured the Zulu warrior a permanent place in the annals of military glory. More books and articles have been written on the war than any other aspect of Zulu history, most of them focusing on battles, tactics, and strategy. Few of them address at all the central question posed by the Zulu defense. Why were so many willing to fight and die when the chances of victory were so slight? Tradition is sufficient answer

¹³⁴ M. Benham, *Henry Callaway* (London: Macmillan, 1896), pp. 309–10, 322–4. D. Chidester, *Religions of South Africa* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 41.

¹³⁵ Etherington, *Preachers, Peasants and Politics in Southeast Africa*, pp. 44–5.

¹³⁶ J. Laband, *Kingdom in Crisis: The Zulu Response to the British Invasion of 1879* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1992), Chapter 3.

for military historians but in the broader context of South African history another hypothesis worth considering is that the sad experience of British campaigns against Xhosa chiefs and people taught others what they might expect. Since the 1830s, the most devastating tactic employed by British and colonial forces had been the burning of crops and capture of cattle. Every Zulu family knew that a similar campaign in their country would destroy not only their livelihoods but the basis of all family life, prestige, and prosperity. Fortunately, victory at Isandhwana largely spared them that catastrophe. Public opinion in Britain sought scapegoats, and the Conservative government moved to distance itself from Frere's grand design. A shrewdly calculated release of documents falsely suggested that the Colonial Office tried to head off an invasion of Zululand. Garnet Wolseley was sent back to South Africa as commander-in-chief and high commissioner for Southeastern Africa, effectively superseding both Lord Chelmsford and Bartle Frere. Chelmsford, instead of employing the slash and burn tactics the amaZulu feared, rushed to score a face-saving victory before his replacement could arrive. This he claimed to have achieved in the battle of Ulundi at Cetshwayo's headquarters. The engagement lasted less than an hour, resulting in Zulu losses of something between 1,000 and 1,500 men. It was thus hardly decisive in real terms, but it laid the basis for Wolseley to make peace with many of the leading chiefs while dropping many of the conditions specified in Frere's original ultimatum.¹³⁷ Wolseley's private journal entry for August 4, 1879, disclosed the real attitude he took to South African affairs, even as he bowed to current political imperatives.

Up to now beyond shooting and wounding some 10,000 men, we have not nearly punished the people as a nation, and our leniency in now allowing all the people to return to their kraals, retaining all their cattle may possibly be mistaken for fear. I should therefore like to let loose the Swazis upon these northern tribes at once, But I have to think of the howling societies at home who have sympathy with all black men whilst they care nothing for the miseries and cruelties inflicted upon their own kith & kin who have the misfortune to be located near these interesting niggers.¹³⁸

Wolseley no doubt exaggerated the influence of the humanitarian movement but understood that his job was to get Britain out of the Zulu kingdom. With Cetshwayo captured on August 28, Wolseley set out to achieve a missionary-free settlement for Zululand. With the advice of John Dunn, a white man who had previously served as one of Cetshwayo's chiefs, Wolseley dismembered the kingdom into thirteen small chieftainships – the

¹³⁷ J. Guy, *The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom* (London: Longman, 1979), pp. 58–9.

¹³⁸ A. Preston (Ed.), *The South African Journal of Sir Garnet Wolseley 1879–1880* (Cape Town: A. A. Balkema, 1973).

largest of which fell to Dunn himself. For neither the first nor the last time in history, the imperial authorities responsible for an unpopular and messy war concealed their failures under the guise of restoring self-government. The consequence was that whereas Bishop Colenso launched a campaign to free Cetshwayo from exile and Robben Island, a powerful struggle in the Zulu kingdom laid the groundwork for a disastrous civil war that would end in the annexation of the territory to Natal in 1887. Meanwhile, another sector of Frere's far flung battle line needed attention – one on which Wolseley could “let loose the Swazis.”

Transvaal military operations against Sekhukhune had been suspended during the Zulu campaign. The Pedi kingdom took advantage of lull by shoring up their defenses and plainly stating their determination to resist any attempt to impose the Shepstone system. Sekhukhune's envoys declared:

... they will never be subject to the English who compel their subjects to build forts and work for them; that the English are liars, that rather than be in the position of the subject tribes they will fight, that they won't pay taxes before they had a good fight for it.¹³⁹

They correctly surmised that the Zulu kingdom had not been truly defeated, asking “how it was that cattle were not to be seen in the towns for sale, and how was it that prisoners were not sent to work on the road.” For decades, the Swazi kingdom had sought to neutralize the threat of the Pedi kingdom to the north and the amaZulu to the east by allying themselves to the Transvaal. When Wolseley determined to attack the Bapedi, King Mampuru brought 8,000 Swazi men to the battlefield. Their attack from the rear made all the difference to Wolseley's successful assault on November 26, 1879. After the loss of perhaps a thousand dead, Sekhukhune surrendered and was taken off to join Langalibalele and Cetshwayo on Robben Island.¹⁴⁰ According to the blueprint devised by Shepstone and Frere, that ought to have been enough to demonstrate to white farmers in the Transvaal the “blessings” of British rule. To their considerable astonishment, it put the final nail in the coffin of confederation. Since the second occupation of the Cape in 1805, British policy in South Africa had been grounded on the premise that winning the allegiance of the settler population of Dutch and Huguenot descent was essential to the peace and prosperity of the colony. Even when all the evidence pointed to the futility of the policy, officials in the Cape and in London clung to the ideal. Under Harry

¹³⁹ Delius, *The Land Belongs to Us*, pp. 242–3. At this time the threat of the Shepstone system was present in the form of the chief diplomatic agents, both of whom came from Natal, Marshall Clarke, and Shepstone's son Henrique.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 245.

Smith in the 1840s, the interests of all African kings and chiefs had been subordinated to that objective. Frere and Shepstone went down the same road, given added scholarly encouragement from Froude who assured them that their policy was grounded in scientific facts about race. Unfortunately, the leaders of the Orange Free State and the South African Republic had a different dream. Forty years' experience with independence had bred a self-confidence that was already blossoming into a sense of national identity and destiny.¹⁴¹ Already people resented the label Boer and some had begun to speak of themselves as Afrikaners (or Afrikanders). The removal of threats from African kingdoms did not lead to faith in British leadership, but rather a sense that independence might now be reclaimed. Shepstone was not revered as a savior; he was reviled as a tax collector. In December 1879, 6,000 Transvaal farmers and burghers gathered at Wonderfontein and hoisted the Vierkleur, the flag of independence.

Elsewhere, the last of the wars launched on behalf of confederation and African disarmament had already begun in Lesotho, a territory theoretically under the protection of the Cape Colony, where the sons of Moshoeshe were divided among themselves. Following the terms of the misnamed Peace Preservation Bill of 1878, the Cape Colony demanded that all Africans hand in their arms. An initial campaign in November 1879 was followed by a doubling of hut taxes and a general declaration of war in April 1880. By that time, the doom of Frere's grand design had been sealed by Gladstone's triumph in the British general election. Committed to a retreat from imperial adventures, he sent Bartle Frere home and instructed the new high commissioner, Hercules Robinson, to bring an end to the wars. At the end of the decade the Basotho were holding their own in the war and the Transvaal rebels had taken the field against British forces. In the changed political climate each would score a triumph: the Basotho by freeing themselves from rule by Cape settlers and gaining a Shepstonian administrator in the person of Marshall Clarke; the Transvaal Boers by demanding an independence that Gladstone, with his unbounded faith in the wisdom of settler colonial government, would readily grant.

CONCLUSION

On the eve of the mineral revolution in South Africa, the region had adopted most of the political borders that it would take into the twentieth century. The Transvaal's frontier with Mozambique was defined in 1869 and its western border in 1885. A decade earlier, the British had finally

¹⁴¹ See, for example, H. Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2003), Chapters 6–7.

relinquished their claims to the southern shore of Delagoa Bay.¹⁴² In the north, Venda chiefs cooperated with Boer hunters and welcomed traders; but they discouraged the movement of white settlers into the Soutpansberg as effectively as did, in the low-lying areas to the east, the anopheles mosquito and tsetse fly. Although most of South Africa was mapped by 1880, much of this work was sketchy and inaccurate, and it left large areas unsurveyed. But cartographers had succeeded in condensing an otherwise engulfing landscape into the manageable proportions of a simple representation on paper; and they had filled empty spaces with names that were reassuringly familiar to white settlers.¹⁴³

The economic growth initiated by the diamond discoveries brought a new wave of settlers to the subcontinent. Whites increasingly lived in a world defined by racial experiences and understandings. The racial divide grew firmer as the frontier closed and the discoveries of science described the indigenous peoples as “primitives,” occupying an early stage of evolution, to be protected or annihilated. This view was contradicted by industrious African Christians who farmed and prospered on mission estates such as Edendale in Natal, Bethany in the Orange Free State, Botshabelo, and Welgeval in the eastern and western Transvaal, respectively.¹⁴⁴ In some areas, peasants in the reserves, or tenants living on white-owned farms, were able to benefit from the market opportunities that accompanied economic growth.¹⁴⁵ Many of these men increased their wealth by migrating to farms, plantations, railway works, and mines, where they sold their labor for limited amounts of time before returning home.¹⁴⁶ A few settled permanently in the towns and, like their rural kinsmen, invested in the education offered by mission schools. But black people were mainly confined

¹⁴² Shillington, *Colonisation of the Southern Tswana, 1870–1900*, Chapter 6; Harries, *Work, Culture and Identity*, pp. 24, 84, 105.

¹⁴³ J. Carruthers, “Friedrich Jeppé: Mapping the Transvaal c. 1850–1899,” *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29(4) (2003).

¹⁴⁴ S. Meintjes, “Family and Gender in the Christian community at Edendale, Natal, in colonial times,” in C. Walker (Ed.), *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1990); A. Schultz, “In Gottes Namen Hütten Bauen. Kirchlicher Landbesitz in Südafrika – die Berliner Mission und die Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche Südafrikas zwischen 1834 und 2002,” (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Humboldt University, 2002).

¹⁴⁵ N. Etherington, “African Economic Experiments in Colonial Natal, 1845–80,” *African Economic History* 5 (1978) pp. 1–15. Duminy and Guest (Eds.), *Natal and Zululand, A New History*, pp. 136, 288–9; E. Eldredge, *A South African Kingdom: The pursuit of security in nineteenth-century Lesotho* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 150–61. See also note 121 previously.

¹⁴⁶ K. E. Atkins, *The Moon is dead! Give us our Money! The Cultural Origins of an African Work Ethic, Natal, South Africa, 1843–1900* (London: Heinemann, 1993), Chapter 5.

to reserves segregated from both the settlers and the modern economy, or to menial roles as farm tenants or impermanent wage workers. In areas particularly affected by land alienation and overcrowding, such as the former British Kafraria, the lineaments of rural slums could be discerned.

People of mixed race increasingly took on a broad identity as coloreds or, like the San of the Drakensberg and the servile hunter–gatherers in the northern Transvaal, called “Vaalpens,” headed for extinction. Bantu-speakers found new, ethnic identities as the missionaries and their African assistants determined the borders and content of standard, written languages. In 1865, a Zulu New Testament was added to the Xhosa, Tswana and South Sotho translations of the Bible. Swiss missionaries produced a Bible reader in Gwamba (xiTsonga) in 1883 whereas Berlin missionaries started to delineate standard North Sotho and Venda languages. Churchmen, traders, and travelers spread this new “vernacular” print culture, much of it coming from centers of Christianity like Kuruman, Lovedale, Morija, and Ekukanyeni, throughout the subcontinent. Readers of the seven standard South African “Bantu” languages had the means, along with their listeners, to escape the small communities bound by oral linguistic forms; and they found a shared recognition, common set of values, and a purposive unity in the images, symbols, and stories conveyed by these vehicular languages.¹⁴⁷ With the help of African community patriarchs, colonial officials in Natal and the Cape fixed the customs and habits of desultory communities into common “tribes” or peoples such as the amaXhosa and the amaZulu.¹⁴⁸ In the towns, these imagined communities became communities of action and experience as men shaped new forms of material and social culture, and new strategies of survival and advancement, into constructed ethnic identities. This new consciousness of self and others was strengthened when migrants returned home to the patchwork of “tribes” delineated by linguists and ethnographers.

A hesitant class consciousness emerged out of the social relations developed in areas of production as far removed as Cape Town and Kimberley,

¹⁴⁷ A. Ricard, “Introduction” to Thomas Arbousset, *Excursion missionnaire dans les Montagnes bleues* (Morija: Morija Archives, 1991), pp. 22–39; K. Mathieson, “Learning South African Languages: the historical origins of standard Xhosa” (M.A. thesis, University of Cape Town, 2000); Harries, “The roots of ethnicity: Discourse and the Politics of language construction in South Africa,” *African Affairs*, 346 (1988). Translations of *The Pilgrims Progress* appeared in Tswana in 1848, Xhosa (1868), Zulu (1868), South Sotho (1872). I. Hofmeyr, *The Portable Bunyan: A Transnational History of The Pilgrim’s Progress* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 2004), pp. 116–7, 122, 242.

¹⁴⁸ N. Erlank, “Gendering Commonality: African men and the 1883 Commission on Native Law and custom,” *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29(4) (2003); Etherington, *Great Treks*, pp. 6–7.

Bloemfontein, and Botshabelo; and this new identity was reinforced as a slow retail revolution allowing wage-earners and peasants to express themselves in new ways as consumers of mass-produced goods. The practices and beliefs of Christianity particularly cut across the old divisions of kin and community. In many corners of what was soon to be South Africa, missionaries raised the fruit of Christianity from the seed first planted by migrant laborers. Once a mission was established, its influence often spread little further than the walls of its compound; and missionary Christianity tended to reinforce the racial divide in South Africa. But by the 1880s, most of the population in the region had been touched by Christianity. Some congregations had become financially self-supporting and, in turn, demanded more control over their affairs, even the right to elect elders and pastors. An indigenous clergy emerged, consisting of “Native Agents,” “Evangelists,” and a few ordained ministers, whereas men like Johannes Dinkwanyane in the eastern Transvaal and Nehemiah Tile in the eastern Cape established their own churches.¹⁴⁹ On the eastern frontier, some Christians traced the legitimacy for armed rebellion to their readings of the Holy Scriptures whereas, in the western Transvaal, others used the new religion to legitimize their claims to power.¹⁵⁰

The settlers in the British colonies celebrated their membership of the British Empire by participating in pageants, festivals, town illuminations, regattas to mark the Queen’s birthday, and royal ceremonies, such as the opening of the Cape Town breakwater by Prince Alfred in 1860.¹⁵¹ Colonial soldiers quickly formed their own regiments and served on the eastern frontier, where they were initially appalled by the brutal discipline and ineptitude of the British army. Several Cape regiments fought in the Ninth Frontier War but, much to the displeasure of the newly responsible Molteno government, under a British commander.¹⁵² The separate interests of the

¹⁴⁹ K. Rüther, *The Power Beyond: Mission Strategies, African conversion and the development of a Christian Culture in the Transvaal* (Munster: Lit. 2002), Chapter 6; C.C. Saunders, “Tile and the Thembu Church,” *Journal of African History*, 11 (1970).

¹⁵⁰ Mostert, *Frontiers*, pp. 874, 1120; D. Attwell, “The Transculturation of Enlightenment” in P. Denis (Ed.), *The Making of an Indigenous Clergy in Southern Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1995), pp. 41–3; Elbourne, *Blood Ground*, pp. 363–7; P. Landau, *The Realm of the Word: Language, Gender and Christianity in Southern Africa* (Portsmouth and London: Heinemann, 1995).

¹⁵¹ L. Witz, *Apartheid’s Festival: Contesting South Africa’s National pasts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), pp. 40–1.

¹⁵² Cf. the Cape Town Rifles (1855), Cape Volunteer Artillery (1856), Port Elizabeth Rifle Corps (1856), the Queenstown Rifle Volunteers (1860), the Buffalo Volunteer Rifles (1876, renamed the Kaffrarian Rifles in 1883), and the First City Regiment (1875). Several participated in the Basotholand War of 1880–81. The Natal Carbineers (1855) fought in the Langalibalele campaign and in the Anglo-Zulu war.

colonists found expression in a thriving print culture that coalesced around local issues, such as eastern Cape separatism, the importation of convicts, or the Shepstonian system in Natal. In contrast to the Cape, the colonists in the Boer republics developed a system of democracy restricted to men of European descent. Even on the farms, bonds that had once been mutually accommodating often quickly skewed into exploitative relationships based on race. Boers found a common unity in opposition to the British, although this was more acute in the occupied Transvaal than in the Orange Free State. In 1881, the Transvaal Boers rose up against British rule and, after the victory at Majuba, regained their independence. All hope of federation seemed gone forever. However, a new threat to the independence of the Transvaal emerged at this time. For over a decade, considerable numbers of British and other foreign miners had made their way to the gold producing regions around Sabie and Barberton in the east. But these sources of gold would soon be dwarfed by the discovery in 1886 of outcrop reefs on the Witwatersrand. As a new wave of miners descended on the Transvaal, a new struggle for the soul of the republic was about to begin.