Guns, Race, and Power in Colonial South Africa

In this book, William Kelleher Storey shows that guns and discussions about guns during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries were fundamentally important to the establishment of racial discrimination in South Africa. Relying mainly on materials held in archives and libraries in Britain and South Africa, Storey explains the workings of the gun trade and the technological development of the firearms. He relates the history of firearms to ecological, political, and social changes, showing that there is a close relationship between technology and politics in South Africa.

William Kelleher Storey is associate professor of history at Millsaps College in Jackson, Mississippi. He is the author of *Science and Power in Colonial Mauritius* (1997) and *Writing History: A Guide for Students* (1998; 2nd ed. 2003; 3rd ed. 2008), which he developed when teaching in Harvard's Expository Writing Program. He has received a research and writing fellowship from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the Abbott Payson Usher Prize from the Society for the History of Technology. In 2006, he received the Teacher’s Award from the Mississippi Humanities Council.
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Guns, Race, and Power in Colonial South Africa

WILLIAM KELLEHER STOREY

Millsaps College
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Preface

This book is a narrative of the spread of firearms in South Africa during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. I recount more than the workings of the gun trade and the narrower technological development of firearms: I have related the history of firearms to ecological, political, and social changes. To accomplish this, I relied mainly on materials held in archives and libraries in Britain and South Africa. I also considered histories and sociologies of technologies set in other places to help flesh out the argument.

I argue that when South Africans discussed the gun trade and gun control, they were shaping broader aspects of colonial political culture. I make the related argument that the rise and decline of various shooting skills were related to the formation and destruction of African communities, settler communities, and indigenous wildlife. While social, political, and ecological changes occurred, the representation of guns and shooting skills became highly politicized.

I started to be interested in firearms and imperialism in 1985, when I was an undergraduate at Harvard. My tutor, Robin Kilson, introduced me to the work of Daniel Headrick. I was impressed by Headrick’s book, The Tools of Empire, which has chapters about firearms, but Robin held that Headrick gave too much credit to technological factors in explaining European imperialism. It is to Robin’s credit as a teacher that I have made a career out of trying to understand the relationship between conflict, environment, and technology. I pursued related topics during graduate studies under the supervision of Philip Curtin at Johns Hopkins, where, in 1993, I completed a doctoral dissertation on conflict over sugar canes in colonial Mauritius. In 1995, when I was a postdoctoral Fellow in Cornell
Preface

University’s Department of Science and Technology Studies, I returned to the history of imperialism and firearms after conversations with my mentor, Sheila Jasanoff, and my office mate, Michael Aaron Dennis. Since that time, several institutions have sponsored my research and writing. I am particularly grateful to the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, which underwrote full-time research in the United States, England, South Africa, and New Zealand from December of 1997 to May of 1999. During that time, I was hosted by Saint Antony’s College of Oxford University, the Department of History at the University of Cape Town, and the Stout Research Centre at the Victoria University of Wellington. Since returning to the United States, I have been a professor at Millsaps College in Jackson, Mississippi, where I have pursued this project with the support of college research and travel grants. I am also grateful for summer stipends from the Hearin Foundation in 2003 and from the National Endowment for the Humanities in 2004.

While I was writing, I received excellent advice from scholars who attended the presentations that I gave at Cornell University, Harvard University, Millsaps College, MIT, National University of Singapore, Northeastern University, Oxford University, and the University of Mississippi, as well as my presentations at the annual meetings of the American Society for Environmental History, the Southeastern Regional Seminar on African Studies, and the Society for the History of Technology. I was also able to present my ideas at two special conferences, the British World Conference, hosted by the University of Calgary in 2003, and the African Technopolitics Workshop, which was held in Ithala, Natal, in 2006, and jointly sponsored by the Society for the History of Technology, the University of Michigan, and the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

I also thank a number of individuals who have helped me as I brought this project to fruition. Sheila Jasanoff, John McNeill, and Pat Manning read drafts and proposals at various stages of the project. Christopher Saunders and Nigel Worden arranged for me to have a happy and productive stay in Cape Town, where I also had support and advice from Vivian Bickford-Smith, Patrick Harries, and Lance van Sittert. Many librarians and archivists helped me, particularly at Rhodes House, the Cape Town Archives Repository, the University of Cape Town, and the National Library of South Africa in Cape Town (formerly the South African Library). There, I especially thank Peter Coates for his work on indexing Cape newspapers, without which my research would have taken much longer. I spent two months in Wellington, New Zealand, exploring comparisons with the help of the staff at the Alexander Turnbull Library.
and the New Zealand National Archives. On returning home to Jackson, Mississippi, the librarians at Millsaps College helped me locate many obscure books and documents through Interlibrary Loan. I was fortunate that one of our students, Jon-Mark Olivier, and his father, Ross Olivier, were able to help me translate documents from Afrikaans. Louise Hetrick helped with the bibliography and record keeping. While I was writing, William Beinart, Saul Dubow, Shula Marks, and John Staudenmaier – plus four anonymous reviewers – made incisive comments on drafts of an article called “Guns, Race, and Skill” that was eventually published by *Technology and Culture* in 2004. I am also grateful for the thorough and thoughtful comments of the two anonymous scholars who reviewed the book manuscript for Cambridge University Press.

Finally, I add a personal note of thanks to my wife, Joanna Miller Storey, who has been a consistent supporter of my writing projects. She listened to me discuss the book, she read and commented on parts of it, and she accompanied me on research trips. These kinds of support are ordinarily acknowledged in a preface, but I believe that my wife's support was extraordinary. While she was helping me with the book, she was launching her medical career and bringing five children into the world: Ian, Andrew, Neil, Graham, and Robin. Sufficient words of appreciation cannot be said for Joanna, for the children, and also for their grandparents, Dick and Sue Miller and Bill and Mary Storey.
List of Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BPP</td>
<td>British Parliamentary Papers</td>
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<tr>
<td>CO</td>
<td>Colonial Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conf. Pr.</td>
<td>Confidential Print</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPP</td>
<td>Cape Parliamentary Papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTAR</td>
<td>National Archives and Record Service of South Africa, Cape Town Archives Repository</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LMS</td>
<td>London Missionary Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>OFS</td>
<td>Orange Free State</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRO</td>
<td>The National Archives of the United Kingdom, Public Record Office, Kew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RHL</td>
<td>Rhodes House Library, Oxford University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAAR</td>
<td>Breytenbach et al., <em>South African Archival Records</em></td>
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Figure 1. Map of Southern Africa in 1872. (From Molteno, Life and Times of Sir John Charles Molteno, frontispiece.)