The Borders of Race in Colonial South Africa

This book provides a detailed narrative of the Kat River Settlement in the Eastern Cape of South Africa during the nineteenth century. The settlement was created by the British to use the Khoekhoe as a living barrier between the Cape Colony and the amaXhosa. It was fought over with some regularity, however, and finally broken up after some of the Khoekhoe joined the amaXhosa in their war against the Colony. Nevertheless, in the time that the settlement existed, the Khoekhoe both created a fertile landscape in the valley and developed a political theology of great importance for the evolution of South Africa. They were also the subjects of – and participants in – the major debates leading to the introduction of a liberal constitution for the Cape in 1853. The history of the settlement is thus crucial in understanding the development of both colonial racism and the creation of the Colony’s non-racial democracy.

Robert Ross received a Ph.D. from the University of Cambridge in 1974 and has worked since then at Leiden University, the Netherlands. He has written several books, including A Concise History of South Africa and Status and Respectability in the Cape Colony: A Tragedy of Manners, both published by Cambridge University Press. He is also the editor, with Carolyn Hamilton, Bernard Mbenga, Anne Kelk Mager and Bill Nasson, of the two-volume series The Cambridge History of South Africa.
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The Borders of Race in Colonial South Africa

The Kat River Settlement, 1829–1856

ROBERT ROSS

Leiden University, Netherlands
For Jan-Bart, Dmitri and Sabine
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Preface and Acknowledgements

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In the course of this work I have of course visited the valley on a number of occasions, and I am most grateful for the cooperation I have received from its inhabitants, most notably Mw. Pommer of Philipton (a member of the family of the rebel Smith Pommer), who lived in James Read’s house; Hymie Groepe, one of the many descendants of the Commandant who live in Tamboekies Vlei, his old farm; Wilfred Arends; and John Toto, with his remarkable collection of poultry. I also twice spent a fortnight engaging in historical archaeological survey work, and, although this has not (yet) resulted in a formal publication, Chapter 4 in particular could not have been written without it. For their participation in this, and on other visits, I would like to thank Margot Winer (my main collaborator in the landscape archaeology), Justin Hyland, Janneke Jansen, Harriet Clift, Zuki Jakavula, the late Michael Besten, Arthur Ross,
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The most important thanks, though, are for my debt to, and love for, Janneke Jansen, who is the central figure in my life. She has given me so much, including the rest, the structure and the strength, in difficult times, to complete this book, and much more. It is, and remains, an astonishing miracle.
Abbreviations

AYB  Archives Year Book for South African History
BPP  British Parliamentary Papers
CA   Western Cape Archives Depot, Cape Town
CPP  Cape Parliamentary Papers
DRC  Dutch Reformed Church
GTJ  The Graham's Town Journal
JAH  Journal of African History
JSAS Journal of Southern African Studies
KP   Kitchingman Papers (ed Le Cordeur and Saunders)
LMS  London Missionary Society
PA   Periodical Accounts relating to the missions of the Church of the
     United Brethren, Established among the Heathen
SACA South African Commercial Advertiser
SCA  Report of the Select Committee on Aborigines, BPP 538 of
     1837
UCT  University of Cape Town
VOC  Vereenigde Oost-Indische Company (Dutch East India
     Company)
Note on Terminology

From time to time, I have occasion to talk about the seasons. It should be evident that I always use the Southern seasons, unless the action is at that moment taking place in the Northern Hemisphere, when I alert the reader to that fact. Thus in general “winter” can be taken as meaning the months of June, July and August, and so forth.

I have followed current ideas and orthography by describing the African part of the heritage and ancestry of my main protagonists as “Khoekhoe”, occasionally “Khoe”, not “Khoikhoi” as they would have been not long ago. I have not changed the insulting ethnonyms to be found in my sources when I have had to quote directly, but in general I have attempted to avoid this, except when they were being used by Khoekhoe themselves, as a part of the identity they were then expressing. The designation “settler” I have used in two ways, both to describe the inhabitants of the Kat River Settlement itself, and, in its more conventional South African way, to describe the British Settlers, particularly those who arrived in 1820, and their descendants. I hope that it is always evident from the context which of the two I mean. I have tended to use the term “colonists” for the latter group, despite the fact that the Kat River Settlers were, in a more local sense, just as much colonists as the British.