

THE NATAL AFRIKANER AND THE ANGLO-BOER WAR

by

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PREFACE

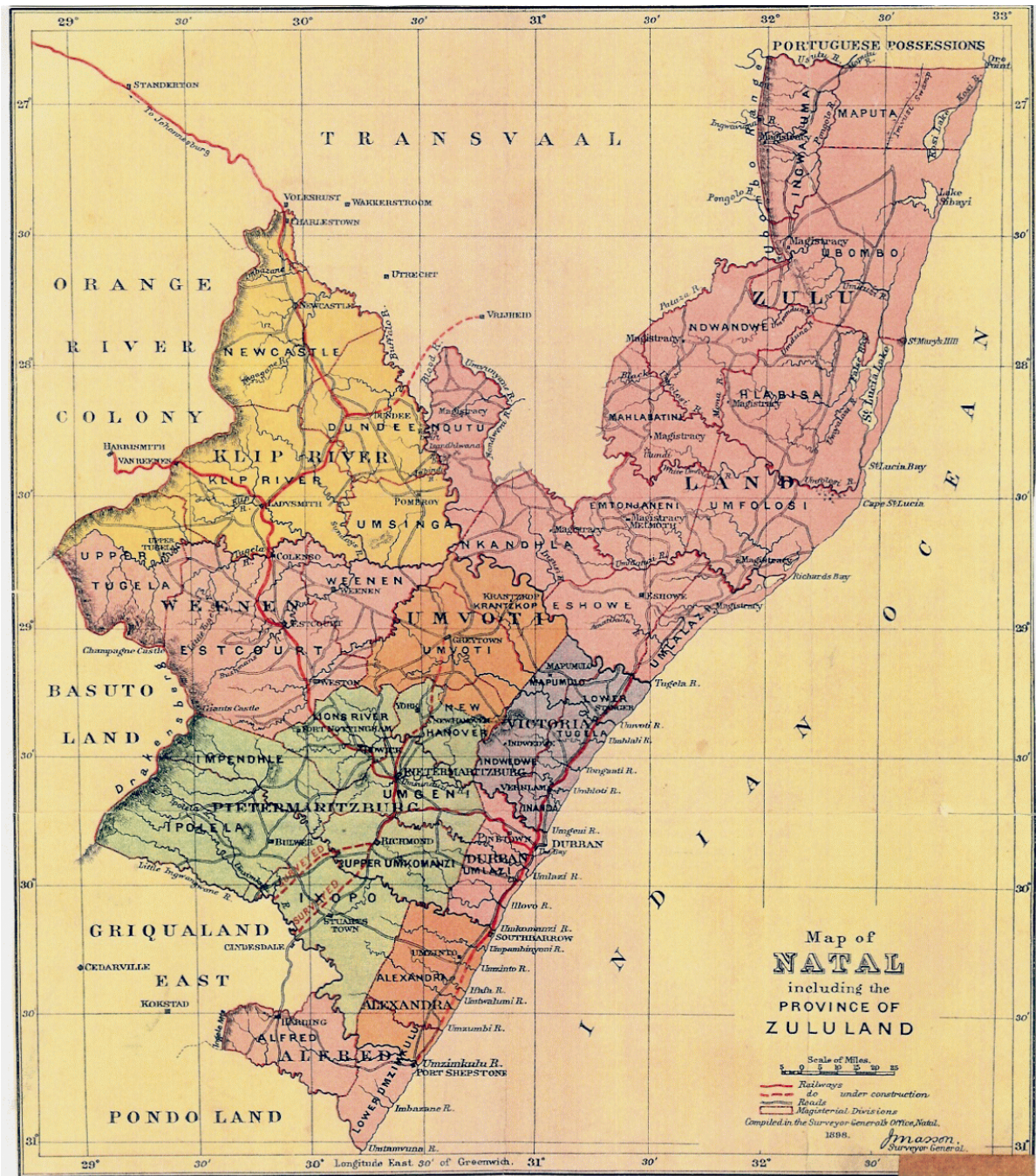
In the preface to *Kommandolewe tydens die Anglo-Boereoorlog 1899-1902*, my supervisor, Professor Fransjohan Pretorius, jokingly commented that a history thesis invariably takes longer to complete than the duration of the events studied. The same quip applies to this study, for it took me six years to conclude the story of Natal Afrikaners and the Anglo-Boer War.

Numerous people and institutions assisted me during this time. They all deserve a big thank you. My supervisor, Professor Fransjohan Pretorius, and co-supervisor, Dr Jackie Grobler, deserve my gratitude for their time, practical advice and professional support. Furthermore, I would also like to extend my appreciation to my colleagues and students at the Faculty of Education (Durban School) at University of KwaZulu-Natal for their encouragement and interest. I would also like to record my deep indebtedness to the staff of the following archival repositories and libraries who rendered assistance in a friendly and professional manner: the Durban Archive Repository, the Don Africana and Killie Campbell Africana Libraries in Durban, the National Archive Repository in Pretoria, the War Museum of the Boer Republics in Bloemfontein, the Pietermaritzburg Archive Repository, the Public Record Office at Kew in London, the Talana Museum in Dundee, the Umvoti Mounted Rifles Archive Repository in Durban, the Free State Archive Repository in Bloemfontein, the Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk of Natal Archive in Pietermaritzburg, the Local History Museum in Durban, the Fort Amiel Museum in Newcastle, the Vaal Technorama in Vanderbijlpark and the South African National Library in Cape Town. My hearty appreciation also goes to individuals such as, Foy Vermaak and OE Prozesky, who kindly allowed me access to their private collections. Thanks also go to friends like Professor Brian Kearney, Louis Eksteen and Pieter Nel for the real interest they showed in my research, Fran Saunders, Heater Kohler and Gavin Heath for the proof reading and language editing, as well as Professor Hennie Kock and the board of the former Durban College of Education for their generous financial support.

In conclusion, I wish to express my appreciation to my wife, Annette Wohlberg, for all her support, encouragement, comments and for the valuable help she provided in so many ways.

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MAP OF THE COLONY OF NATAL, 1898¹



1. Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository (hereafter PAR), Map number 323: Natal including the Province of Zululand, 1898. Although dated 1898 the map for some unknown reason refers to the Orange Free State (hereafter OFS) as the Orange River Colony (hereafter ORC).

FREQUENTLY USED ABBREVIATIONS

AGO	Archives of the Attorney-General's Office
CID	Criminal Investigation Department
CIO	Criminal Investigation Office
CO	Archives of the Colonial Office
CSO	Archives of the Colonial Secretary's Office
DAR	Durban Archive Repository
DBC	Archives of the Director of Burgher Camps
DRC	Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk or Dutch Reform Church
Ds	Dominee or Reverend
1/DUN	Archives of the Dundee magistrate
GH	Archives of Government House
GOC	General Officer Commanding
1/GTN	Archives of the Greytown magistrate
JP	Justice of the Peace
KG	Archives of the Commandant-General
1/KRK	Archives of the Kranskop Magistrate
1/LDS	Archives of the Ladysmith (Klip River) magistrate
1/MEL	Archives of the Melmoth (Entonjaneni) magistrate
MJPW	Archives of the Minister of Justice and Public Works
MLA	Member Legislative Assembly
MLC	Member Legislative Council
NAR	National Archive Repository
NCP	Archives of the Natal Colonial Publications
NDR	Archives of the Natal Defence Records
1/NEW	Archives of the Newcastle magistrate
NGKA	NG Kerk van Natal Argief
NT	Archives of the Natal Treasury Department
OFS	Republic of the Orange Free State (up to 31.5.1902)
ORC	Orange River Colony (after 31.5.1902)
PAR	Pietermaritzburg Archive Repository
PM	Archives of the Prime Minister of Natal
PMO	Archives of the Provost Marshal's Office
POW	Prisoner of War
PRO	Public Record Office
PUS	Principal-under-Secretary
PVS	Archives of the Principal Veterinary Surgeon
SGO	Archives of the Surveyor-General's Office
SNA	Archives of the Secretary of Native Affairs
SOP	Archives of the Staff Officer Prisoners of War, Natal
UMR	Umvoti Mounted Rifles
1/UMS	Archives of the Umsinga magistrate
VCR	Volunteer Composite Regiment
VTR	Vaal Technorama (Vereeniging)
1/WEN	Archives of the Weenen magistrate
WM	War Museum of the Boer Republics
WO	Archives of the War Office
ZAR	South African Republic same as Transvaal (up to 31.5.1902)

INTRODUCTION

“It was once said of the Anglo-Boer War¹ that it resulted in the spilling of more ink than blood.”² Furthermore, it is also maintained that the Anglo-Boer War is the most written about South African historical event. Rather than try to give a general historiographical overview of the Anglo-Boer War it was, for the purpose of this study, deemed sufficient to refer to others who have attempted to do so.³

Within the meta-narrative of the Anglo-Boer War spanning the past hundred years, not a single work, academic or general in nature, tells the story of Natal Afrikaners and the Anglo-Boer War. In fact, the role and experiences of Natal Afrikaners were either dismissed in a single sentence,⁴ or it was assumed, without much evidence, that they had willingly joined the invading Boer forces.⁵

The only real attempt made until now to investigate the experiences of Natal Afrikaners during the war was the limited narrative, 64 pages in length, by VS Harris. His honours-thesis, submitted to the University of Natal - Pietermaritzburg in 1982, entitled: *The reluctant rebels: The impact of the Second Anglo-Boer War upon the Klip River Dutch*

1. Historically the war went by numerous names: Boer War, Engelse Oorlog (English War), Tweede Vryheidsoorlog (Second War of Independence), South African War and the politically correct term for the centenary commemorations in 1999 - Anglo-Boer South African War. The author feels, the name, Anglo-Boer War, remains the most appropriate historical term.

2. S Stone, *The Victorian Army: health, hospitals and social conditions*, p.7, as quoted by MS Coghlan, *The Natal Volunteers in the Anglo-Boer War, September 1899 to July 1902: reality and perception*. PhD-thesis, UNP, 2000, p.422.

3. F Pretorius, *Kommandolewe tydens die Anglo-Boereoorlog 1899-1902*, pp.15-24; I van der Waag, Re-fighting the second Anglo-Boer War: historians in the trenches, *Journal for contemporary history*, 27(2), May 2002, pp.184-210; FR van Hartsveldt, *The Boer War: historiography and annotated bibliography*, passim.

4. LS Amery (ed)., *The Times history of the war in South Africa 1899-1902, Volume VI*, p.62. *The standard encyclopedia of Southern Africa, Volume 9*, pp.260-261, fares no better and does not even acknowledge the existence of Natal rebels.

5. EH Brookes and C de B Webb, *A history of Natal*, pp. 202-209.

Community with special reference to the Dutch Community of Dundee, although limited in scope, was a groundbreaking piece of research as it investigated the reaction of a community of Natal Afrikaners to the Boer occupation.

In stark contrast is the historiography on the Anglo-Boer War experiences of the Afrikaners resident in the Cape Colony, the other area in Southern Africa which formed part of the British Empire at that time. The first such work to appear was that by CJS Strydom, *Kaapland en die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog*, in 1937. Subsequently, JH Snyman, completed a doctoral-thesis, *Die Afrikaner in Kaapland, 1899-1902*. The same author in his MA-thesis entitled, *Rebelle-Verhoor in Kaapland gedurende die Tweede-Vryheidsoorlog met spesiale verwysing na militêre howe, 1899-1902*, focussed on the treatment, by the military courts, of Cape Afrikaners who supported the invading Boer forces. The war-time or war-related experiences of the Cape Afrikaners are also dealt with in an academic article entitled “Generaal J.B.M Hertzog as kampvegter vir die Kaapse Rebelle 1902-1903” by PW Vorster, published in *Historia*, 35 (2), November 1990, and by Graham Jooste and Abrie Oosthuizen in their book, *So het hulle gesterf. Gedenkboek van teregstellings van Kaapse Rebelle en Republikeinse Burgers tydens die Anglo-Boereoorlog 1899-1902*.

Why then was the history of Natal Afrikaners and the Anglo-Boer War neglected? Perhaps historian Albert Grundlingh provides the answer in his analysis of Afrikaans historical writing on the Anglo-Boer War. Unlike other Afrikaners, Natal Afrikaners were never quite viewed as being part of the struggle “against the mighty British Empire, and the suffering of the women and children.” Therefore, their history was not really going to contribute to an “enhanced patriotism and national consciousness.” Their war effort did not contribute to creating a “nationalist spirit” while that of the numerically superior Cape Afrikaners did.⁶ In simple terms their suffering was not viewed as real.

An even harsher view on the Anglo-Boer War and the theme of this thesis was adopted by two academic historians. When I applied to a statutory body for financial assistance, an anonymous reviewer of the submitted proposal rejected it in a single sentences as a “pet project”, which holds little importance to the broader South African society and is therefore not worth funding. Similarly, a young colleague, now at Oxford working on the history of the South African chemical weapons programme in a later conflict, dismissed the topic under investigation as “old history”.

6. AM Grundlingh, War, wordsmiths and the ‘Volk’: Afrikaans historical writing on the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902 and the war in Afrikaner historical consciousness 1902-1990, in E Lehmann and E Rechwitz (eds)., *Mfecane to Boer War. Versions of South African history: papers presented at the symposium at the University of Essen*, pp.50-52.

The two comments should be seen in the context of how significant the Anglo-Boer War is in the new South Africa. According to Bill Nasson "...it is increasingly clear that a shifting historical context will affect the established ways in which the war has been remembered...Outside of elite cultural and academic circles, the Anglo-Boer conflict is not *felt* to be shared South African history, let alone a shared tragedy. By and large, the impulse of the black majority is to dissociate; for white Afrikaners and English speakers, it is to associate, however reticently, in many instances."⁷

7. B Nasson, The war one hundred years on, in GA Cuthbertson, AM Grundlingh and M-L Suttie (eds)., *Writing a wider war. rethinking gender, race, and identity in the South African War, 1899-1902*, p.14.

This neglect of the story of the Anglo-Boer War story of Natal Afrikaners cannot only be laid at the door of professional and amateur historians, Afrikaner nationalist politicians of the past, and present day African nationalist politicians. It can also be laid at the door of the Natal Afrikaner communities in general as reflected in the centenary commemorations of the Anglo-Boer War, 1999-2001. Between 15 January 1999 and 14 September 2001, the role of Natal Afrikaners in the war did not feature in the commemorations held at Newcastle,⁸ nor at Dundee. Despite the statement: "Dundee in the heart of the KwaZulu-Natal offers you a number of different events and occasions, planned to understand all the people involved, their motives and the trauma of the times", the town did not set aside a single ceremony or moment to reflect on, or try to understand the involvement in the war and the trauma, experienced by local Afrikaners a hundred years before. This happened, despite the fact that the descendants of the participants still reside in the area in significant numbers. Instead, they found place for, apart from the commemoration of battles, a vehicle exhibition and an *Oktoberfest* as part of the "Centenary Programme."⁹ Matters were no different in Ladysmith and its freedom festival fared no better. The only possible look in the descendants of Natal Afrikaners got was the so-called *Boerefees* promoted as: "Traditional Boer festival. Taste exquisite traditional Boer cuisine. Complete with *koeksisters* and *boerewors*. All day. Accommodation available in the most hospitable concentration Camp (from 29 October to 31 October 1999)."¹⁰ What makes this event even more ironic and insensitive was the fact that the author had to alert the committee to the fact that Ladysmith actually had a concentration camp, situated at the former Tin Town POW Camp, lasting from January to September 1902. One can only but come to the conclusion that Natal Afrikaners and their war experiences mean as little today as they did 100 years ago.

Another motivation to engage in this project stems partially from the stories of the involvement of my maternal family in the war. My mother, Fourie/Hattingh by ancestry, and originally from the North-Eastern Orange Free State would regale us, amongst others, with tales about her bittereinder grandfather, of the Vergeet-my-niet farm in the Rhenoster River valley, who fought with De Wet, the two aunts who died in the Bloemfontein Concentration Camp and the post-war economic hardships.

My mother's stories were juxtaposed with those of the residents in the area I grew up in, the Dundee district in Northern Natal. Here I resided amongst, and went to school with, the descendants of Natal Afrikaners who had endured the war, including the Slabberts, Labuschagnes and Vermaaks. What struck me was the silence on their part when tales

8. *Newcastle Advertiser*, 15.1.1999-4.9.2001.

9. Dundee Publicity Association and the Talana Museum, *Anglo Boer War centenary programme 1999, Dundee, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa*, 1999.

10. Ladysmith 99/2000 commemoration Project, *Ladysmith 99/2000 Freedom Festival*, 1999.

were exchanged about how heroic “our families” were during the war. It seemed as if they had no stories, no museum displays, no public monuments or memorials, no vernacular history of Natal Afrikaners during the war, thus no participation or memory.

As a result, my mother’s stories became my vernacular history of the Anglo-Boer War. In my mind, the Anglo-Boer War became a war about other places, battles and the misery of concentration camps, combined with the belief that only Republican Afrikaners had suffered.¹¹ In this process, my mother’s accounts were supported by the Afrikaner historiography of the time whose “official” versions of heroes, villains, injustice and war left very little room for social history of the kind that would have described the experiences of Natal Afrikaners during the war. It should be remembered though, that this in turn was a reaction to an equally aggressive and one dimensional British historiography of the war.

The observations made, during my school-going years, regarding the silence of my fellow Natal Afrikaners on the war, only made sense when, at the outset of this thesis, I read the words written in 1941 by a convicted Natal rebel, JC Vermaak, in the first page of his memoirs: “Dit is ‘n klein deeltjie van die groot oorlog, maar dit is ‘n gewigtige gebeurtenis wat aan die vergetelheid moet ontruk word. As dit nie nou vertel word nie, wie sal dit dan later kan doen? Die antwoord daarop is geeneen nie...”¹²

This statement by Vermaak made more than 60 years ago, as well as the lack of historiographical depth on the wartime experiences of Natal Afrikaners, highlighted the need to, within the current political, public and historical perspectives of the Anglo-Boer War, to protect “true history.”¹³ This thesis, an ethnographic study with the war as context, is an attempt to do just this. It is also, however, written for all Natalians and South Africans

11. D Thelen, The postmodern challenge of introducing past to present: teaching about memories and monuments, *Perspectives in Education*, 1993, 14 (2), pp.117-138.

12. Vaal Technorama (hereafter VTR), JC Vermaak collection, 03/2553/1: Memoirs of JC Vermaak, p.1, 1941.

13. H Gilliomee, *Die skryf van geskiedenis in radikaal nuwe omstandighede*, pp.14-15. <http://www.litnet.co.za/seminaar/hggesk.asp>

with an interest in history to enlighten them on what the war was like outside of the military campaigns. But most importantly, the greatest value of this study perhaps lies in its attempt to address an area which has previously been neglected in the historiography on the Anglo-Boer War.

History writing has undergone a profound change over the past 50 years. The historical narrative is no longer restricted to great statecraft, and in the case of the Anglo-Boer War, to great battles, but now encompasses everyday experiences of ordinary people as they tried to deal with the war. This thesis is therefore more than mere military history, it primarily investigates the experiences of ordinary people caught up in war, as well as the impacts the war had on them, and they on the war. The questions ‘what were their motivations and reactions?’, ‘what were the implications of the war for Natal Afrikaners?’, ‘how did they react to modify or redirect the course of their lives during the war?’ were grappled with. It must be borne in mind that it was impossible to follow a reductionist approach in answering these questions. For, although Natal Afrikaners were a small group on the fringes of both Natal Colonial and Republican society, they were not a homogenous group and did not all suffer the same experiences. It was therefore attempted to provide a comprehensive picture of their wartime experiences within a specific historical time frame, without merely recreating an idealised image of Afrikaners. In the process I hopefully managed to remain, in the words of C Vann Woodward, “detached and sympathetic.”¹⁴

No study is without its shortcomings. This study is no different and practical and personal considerations such as time, in that it took six years to complete, and the length of the thesis, in excess of 500 pages at a line spacing of 1.3, and the fact that at some stage the research and writing process must reach some finality, mitigated against certain themes and approaches.

A possible criticism of this thesis could therefore be that at times it merely winked at certain aspects and themes, and possibly did not deal with them as comprehensively as one should have. Examples of this include the following: the relationship between Natal Afrikaners resident in the “Dutch Districts” and their English neighbours, the wartime role of the 300 plus rebels not apprehended by the Natal authorities, Republican attitudes towards Natal Afrikaners prior to the war, Natal Afrikaner rebels as folk heroes and martyrs for Afrikanerdom, and an in-depth look at the war experiences of Natal Afrikaners in specific districts.

14. VC Woodward, *The burden on southern History*, pp.189-191.

Furthermore, it was also decided, again due to constraints in terms of time and length, not to do a comparative analysis between how minorities, related by kinship to the invading army, reacted to war. For reasons already stated, and because it was not part of the conceptualisation of the thesis, it was also decided not to compare the war experiences of the numerically inferior Natal Afrikaner to that of the Cape Afrikaner. To a certain extent, given the political and economic power Cape Afrikaners wielded when compared to their Natal brethren, such a comparison would have been unfair, while the dynamics and scale of the rebellion in the Cape exceeded that of Natal at least ten fold.

Attempting to include, especially the aspects/themes mentioned in the previous paragraph, within this thesis, would have made it unmanageable and could even have detracted from the emphasis on the experiences of the Natal Afrikaners during the Anglo-Boer War. Despite these shortcomings, and others that I am sure will be highlighted by its readers, the author feels that, all things considered, the thesis adheres fully to the outlined topic and provides an adequate overview and conclusions on the wartime experiences of Natal Afrikaners.

For the completion of this thesis, a wealth of information was located in especially the Pietermaritzburg Archive Repository. Some of the major archival groups consulted included, amongst others, the Attorney-General's Office, Colonial Secretary's Office, Prime Minister's Office, Natal Defence Records, Ministry of Justice and Public Works, Natal Colonial Publications, Natal Treasury Department, Government House, Secretary of Native Affairs, as well as the records of the various magistracies in which Natal Afrikaners resided such as Dundee, Umsinga, Klip River (Ladysmith), Newcastle, Weenen, Kranskop, Umvoti (Greytown), Melmoth and Pietermaritzburg. Within the said archival repository, accessions such as those of Ds HF Schoon and the Colenso collection were also extensively consulted. The fact that these collections were generally not fragmented made the research easier.

The large quantity of material within the above-mentioned archival groups invariably proved to be meticulous in its depth of detail. It seems that nothing happened in the Colony of Natal during the Anglo-Boer War which did not leave a thorough paper trail. According to Robert Morrell, this was brought about because of the exactitude and reliability which characterized the Natal administration at the time.¹⁵

In terms of evidence, the author leant heavily on the official colonial documentation found within the above-mentioned collections. Sources such as these might be biased but the intention was not to deliberately deceive, as the colonial officials would invariably be

15. R Morrell, *The family man and Empire*, pp.37-38.

exposed. The same cannot necessarily be said of the countless statements and claims, made before magistrates, courts, police, the Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission, and so forth. Many of these documents are based on mental pictures of what happened and conversations recalled. Furthermore, often the witnesses were merely following the lead of the investigators who steered the statement in a certain direction. Fortunately enough evidence was available to cross check or triangulate most of these statements.

According to a rough estimate at least 80% of the information used for the completion of this thesis comes from the Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository. This does not mean that the prodigious number of sources available were without problems. The predicament is not in the fact that the sources used were generally official sources generated by the authorities of the time, but in the administration of the sources by archivists. Some of the archival collections consulted have been resorted, reboxed and reclassified several times, raising problems with precise citations. As far as this is concerned, the author cannot but echo the sentiments expressed by Jeff Guy: "As a consequence of such 'reorganisation', comprehensive citations would have to reflect the history of archival collections. This is clearly impossible, but I have attempted to give sufficient information for subsequent researchers to track down the documents I have used." The problems Guy had with the numerous accession numbers inserted on the letters in the Colenso collection is not unique and is in some instances duplicated in other collections.¹⁶ To avoid problems with citations, these numbers were ignored so as to create uniformity.

A similar process was followed when dealing with the large numbers of minute papers that most collections in the Pietermaritzburg Archival Repository consist of. Furthermore, since most of the minute papers used were lengthy documents which sometimes spanned a considerable time period, the heading allocated by the officials on numerous occasions did not reflect the true contents of the file, or were overlong. An alternative and more descriptive heading, whereby the general nature of the documents contained in the minute paper is described in the appropriate footnote, were therefore used.

The second most important archival repository, in terms of this thesis, was the Public Record Office in Kew, London. The Colonial Office collection, dealing with matters related to the Colony of Natal, were meticulously organized and proved especially invaluable in painting the picture of the war time relationship between the mother country, the Colony, and their Natal Afrikaner subjects. Snippets of importance were also located in the War Office collection housed at the same repository.

16. J Guy, *The view across the river. Harriette Colenso and the Zulu struggle against Imperialism*, pp.455-456.

Within South Africa, successful inquiries were conducted in the National Archives Repository in Pretoria. Particularly valuable were the Archives of the Staff Officer Prisoners of War, Natal which dealt with Natal Afrikaners as prisoners of war, the Archives of the Director of Burgher Camps which covered the concentration camps system, and the Archives of the Commandant-General which provided valuable references to the relationship between the Transvaal and the Natal Afrikaners during the war. Useful insight was also gained from the Archives of the Colonial Secretary, the Provost Marshal's Office and certain private accessions as listed in the source list.

Other archival repositories consulted within South Africa included the following: the Talana Museum, Dundee; Fort Amiel Museum, Newcastle; the Local History Museum, Durban; the War Museum for the Boer Republics, Bloemfontein; the Free State Archives Repository, Bloemfontein; the Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk van Natal Argief, Pietermaritzburg; and the Vaaltechnorama in Vanderbijlpark. All these repositories yielded invaluable primary source material needed to complete the picture. Of the sources within the repositories mentioned, special attention must be drawn to the diary of JC Buys in the War Museum for the Boer Republics, and the memoirs of JC Vermaak located in the Vaaltechnorama. Although some historians view personal reminiscences as dubious, it provides a wonderful counterbalance to official documents. Furthermore, such personal testimonies, which serve to place the war-time experiences of Natal Afrikaners within the social context of the Natal society of the time, provided insight into the popular attitudes prevalent during the war, and gave a voice to those who participated directly. This, at times, also spilled over into poetry and song as found in the diary of Buys and also in that of Truscott, located in the National Archives Repository.

Rivaling the diaries of JC Buys and JC Vermaak, and the diary of Dominee HF Schoon referred to under the Pietermaritzburg Archival Repository, is that of a German missionary, JJA Prozesky, located in the private collection of OE Prozesky. Both Prozesky and Schoon were well educated, ministers of the church by profession, anti-war, pro-Republican, and with sensitivity and thoroughness managed to provide detailed and coherent accounts of numerous aspects of the war. These diaries, although very worthwhile, are not without flaws and did reflect the prejudices, preconceptions and honesty of the men and, at times, tended to dwell on the trivial. Like any historical source, they needed to be treated with some caution. Of equal value was the information gained from the letters within the private collection of Foy Vermaak, resident near Helpmekaar in the Dundee district. The letters exchanged between JC Vermaak, a convicted rebel serving his sentences in the Eshowe Prison, and his brother CT Vermaak, then in exile, who used the pseudonym of Miss C Herzog, provided, despite the prevalence of censorship, useful insights into the prison and economic life of Natal Afrikaners.

The references to the archival sources outlined above were accessed by means of the well indexed computerised retrieval systems. At other times, appropriate inventories were consulted while guidance, in terms of possible sources, was also provided by my supervisor and archival staff. At least in terms of the sources housed in the Pietermaritzburg Archival Repository, all documents for every collection for the period 1899-1902 were physically trawled through to ensure that not a single document slipped the net.

Owing to the abundance of archival material available, it was possible to portray a social history which sheds light on the wartime experiences of Natal Afrikaners which included heroism, collaboration, generosity, and cowardice all intermingled. This made moral judgement difficult and at times altogether impossible.

In terms of printed works, as explained earlier, in the form of books or articles, very little of real significance had been produced on Natal Afrikaners and the war. On the other hand, contemporary newspapers - regional, Republican and Colonial alike - proved to be very useful sources. In terms of the rebel trials and the macro-political landscape of the war, newspapers such as the *Natal Witness*, *De Natal Afrikaner*, *Natal Advertiser*, *Times of Natal* and the *Natal Mercury* proved to be especially helpful in understanding the official view taken. In fact, the reports of especially the *Natal Witness* on the hundreds of high treason trials were so comprehensive that the Natal authorities elected to forward the accounts published to the Colonial Office in London alongside their own official reports.

As sources, the Natal newspapers were, however, anything but unbiased and uncritical. Within the jingoistic mindset and euphoria surrounding the Imperial war effort, Natal Afrikaners were attacked, belittled and branded as traitors and disloyal. In contrast, the newspapers in question were almost totally uncritical of British forces, while the Natal authorities also came under fire for not handling the rebels in a tough enough manner. As a result of the one-sidedness of the reporting, one had to be critical in determining where accurate reporting started and jingoistic reporting took over. In spite of these shortcomings, the Natal newspapers consulted proved valuable in both confirming official documentation and to fill in gaps in the story of Natal Afrikaners

Other newspapers used to complete this study included *De Volksstem* which provided perspectives from the Boer side, and various local Natal newspapers which often sketched a more social picture. Both the newspapers on the Boer and on the British side had the same agenda, namely to provide their respective readers with the news that they wanted to read. The difference was that in particular the Natal newspapers suffered heavily under wartime censorship.

The use of oral sources was limited to the minimum in this thesis as they proved to be extremely biased and one-dimensional simply, because of the time that has expired since the events under investigation took place. Although the oral sources consulted were not rejected out of hand, they were used with great circumspect.

In terms of weights and measurements, one uses a metric system at the present time. Matters were very different during the Anglo-Boer War as British Imperial and some Cape Dutch measurements were generally used in the Colony of Natal. Generally, throughout this thesis, the Imperial system was applied, while the metric equivalent is provided in brackets. At the same time an effort was made to steer clear from pedantic practices, such as to render 100 yards as 91.4 metres. On the topic of numbers, numbers between one and ten are written in full while numbers larger than ten are written numerically.

As far as monetary units are concerned, pounds, shillings and pence were used during the period under investigation. It would be difficult, ridiculous and make little sense to convert these to rands and cents since the fluctuations in currency markets would deter from historical correctness, while at the same time it would prove difficult to convert them into realistic present-day values. Therefore, monetary values are expressed in the monetary system of the period under review.

A challenge that confronts most students writing a thesis on South African history is how to spell the names of people and places. In terms of place names and the names of geographical features, such as rivers and mountains, the principle applied was to use the names and spelling applicable at present. This was deemed possible and appropriate since KwaZulu-Natal, unlike some other provinces, has not experienced a spate of name changes. It needs to be noted that archaism was not deliberately promoted.

It proved more difficult to apply a uniform principle to the spelling of Christian names and surnames of Natal Afrikaners. Both the spelling of the names and surnames of Natal Afrikaners varied greatly. One of the reasons for this was the anglicising of names, especially by English speaking colonial clerks. Willem would for example become William and Pieter, Peter. Matters were further complicated by the manner in which semi-literate Afrikaners spelt their surnames, for example Combring rather than Combrink. Sometimes, even within a single household variations in spelling would occur, for example Van Vure by the wife and Van Vuuren by the husband.

In dealing with the above-outlined phenomena, the following principle was applied: it was endeavoured, as far as possible, to keep to the spelling in the consulted archival sources,

except where blatant spelling errors occurred, or where a name had a variety of spellings. In such instances, the most probable or the most commonly used spelling was applied.

Terms, concepts and vocabulary peculiar to the Anglo-Boer War, such as hendsoppers, joiners, and bittereinders were generally not explained, as the author worked from the premise that whoever read the thesis would be familiar with the language of the war. Terms imbedded in South African English such as for example bywoner/s were, for the same reason, not spelt out. Two terms that do need clarification are those of Boer and Afrikaner. The former was generally accepted to be a resident of the Republics and treated as such in this thesis.

The latter term Afrikaner proved to be much more problematic. Who and what the Afrikaners are is still a hotly debated issue and it is possibly fair to say that no single descriptive definition exists. Instead, a number of competing definitions coexist. Referring to the renowned Afrikaans author, PG du Plessis, “The Afrikaner is...the most described and redescribed, defined and redefined concept he has ever come across.”¹⁷ One possible definition could be that any person of Dutch, German and French or English descent could be considered an Afrikaner as long as “they identified themselves culturally with the Afrikaners through the adoption of their language and mores and, ultimately, through intermarriage.”¹⁸ The Natal Afrikaner was a perfect example of the grouping outlined above. Annie Charlotte Krogman, who resided in Natal after 1849, was a Swede, her husband a German, and two of her sons Orange Free State burghers and two Natal Afrikaners.¹⁹ The invading Boer forces applied their own criteria in determining who were Afrikaners, and stated that anyone who had resided in Natal for longer than 30 years was an Afrikaner.²⁰ For the purpose of this thesis the broad ideas as outlined in this paragraph will be used as a working definition.

However, documentation generated by the Imperial and Colonial authorities at the time of the Anglo-Boer War used the generic term “Dutch” when referring to Natal Afrikaners. Although appropriate at the time, it has now, like some other racial/ethnic descriptors, become dated. In fact, the renowned travel guide, *Lonely Planet*, states that the term “Dutchman” is “always used in a derogatory manner and offence is always taken, so be

17. Translated from, *Die Transvaler*, 11.11.1979.

18. G Schutte, Afrikaner historiography and the decline of Apartheid: ethic self-construction in times of crisis, in E Tonkin, M McDonald and M Chapman (eds)., *History and Ethnicity*, pp.216-217.

19. Pietermaritzburg Archive Repository (hereafter PAR), Archives of the Colonial Secretary's Office (hereafter CSO) 2888: Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission: Claim by AC Krogman, 5.4.1901.

20. At the time of the Anglo-Boer War the term, Afrikaner or Natal Afrikaner, was not uncommon and it appears in numerous documents. See for example, National Archive Repository (hereafter NAR), Archives of the Commandant-General (hereafter KG) 818: Letter Justice of the Peace (hereafter JP) JB Wolmarans to General PJ Joubert, 28.12.1899.

forewarned.”²¹ In the light of this, any attempt to justify the use of the term “Dutch” when referring to Afrikaners smacks of ignorance and insensitivity.

This thesis consists of 13 chapters, all dealing with a specific theme pertaining to the experiences of Natal Afrikaners and the war. Following this, a thematic approach was deemed to be the most appropriate method of illuminating the relationship between Natal Afrikaners and the Anglo-Boer War, and to deal with the large volumes of material without duplicating it in several chapters. This does not mean that certain broad themes, such as the war itself, do not feature in several or all chapters.

In order to place the war in its correct historical context, and to explain adequately the pre-war conditions Natal Afrikaners resided under, it was deemed necessary to, in the first two chapters, investigate Natal Afrikaner society since its inception in the late 1830s up to the heady days just before the outbreak of war in October 1899. The broad theme dealt with in Chapters 3 and 4 relates to Natal Afrikaners, and the conventional phase of the war in the Colony for the period October 1899 to May 1900. In Chapter 3 the emphasis is placed on the experiences of Afrikaners resident in the areas under Boer occupation to the north of the Tugela River. The pseudo-war experiences of their kin, resident to the south of the afore-mentioned river mostly under British and Colonial administration, is analysed in Chapter 4.

The repercussions for, and reactions towards, those Natal Afrikaners who, willingly or unwillingly, supported the invading Boers are scrutinized in Chapters 5 and 6. The overriding theme for the two-mentioned chapters centres around judicial aspects such as the investigation and apprehension of suspected rebels and the High Treason trials. In stark contrast to these chapters is Chapter 7, the chapter, in which the various guises of Natal Afrikaner loyalty are highlighted. Several intertwined themes form the nucleus of Chapter 8. Aspects such as the impact of Martial Law on Natal Afrikaners, and the socio-political, linguistic, and religious struggles, brought about by the war, are analysed. Imprisonment of Natal Afrikaners, from prisoner-of-war, to convicted rebels held in civilian jails, to those incarcerated in concentration and internment camps, are scrutinized in Chapter 9.

21. *Lonely Planet travel survival kit. Zimbabwe, Botswana and Namibia*, p.130.

Chapters 10 and 11 deal respectively with the position of Natal Afrikaner women in the war and the relationship between Natal Afrikaners and people of colour during the conflict. The idea was not to ghettoise either of the two afore-mentioned groupings. Afrikaner women, for example, feature throughout the thesis, but it seemed the most appropriate manner to address their roles and experiences separately. In all probability, if not approached in a thematic way, their stories would have remained silent.

The second to last chapter, Chapter 12, deals with the economic impact of the war on Natal Afrikaners. Within this chapter, various sub-themes such as the impact of war on landownership and economic means are explored. In the final chapter, several post-war issues faced by Natal Afrikaners are examined. These include the incorporation of several Transvaal districts into Natal; the questions surrounding rebels – both those still in prison and those bittereinders, not yet arrested and sentenced, relations within the broad Afrikaner society and with Africans and English in post-war Natal, and the political revival amongst Natal Afrikaners.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE	i
MAP OF THE COLONY OF NATAL, 1898	ii
FREQUENTLY USED ABBREVIATIONS	iii
INTRODUCTION	iv
CHAPTER 1 AFRIKANERS IN NATAL UP TO THE OUTBREAK OF THE ANGLO-BOER WAR: EXPERIENCES AND ATTITUDES PREVALENT AT THE TIME	 1
1.1_ Natal Afrikaners and the impact of the Federation Policy of Lord Carnarvon	2
1.2 The aftermath of the Anglo-Transvaal War and its effects on the lives of Natal Afrikaners	 5
1.3 The economic position of Natal Afrikaners prior to the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War	 11
1.4 The Jameson Raid and its impact on Natal and the Natal Afrikaner	18
1.5 Concluding comments	26
CHAPTER 2 ADMINISTERING NATAL AFRIKANERS IN THE PERIOD LEADING UP TO THE ANGLO-BOER WAR	 29
2.1 The restrictions of arms and ammunition and its implications for Natal Afrikaners	29
2.2 Natal Afrikaners and the armed forces of Natal	36
2.3 Courting the allegiance of Natal Africans	40
2.4 Attempting to deal with Natal Afrikaners in the run-up to the war - using espionage and close surveillance	 48
2.4.1 Reports on the Afrikaners of Proviso B	49
2.4.2 Developments in the Afrikaner stronghold of Umvoti county	51
2.4.3 The position of the Afrikaners of Weenen county	55
2.4.4 Afrikaner sentiments in Klip River county	56
2.5 The countdown to war	60
CHAPTER 3 THE KLIP RIVER COUNTY AFRIKANERS AND THE ANGLO-BOER WAR OCTOBER 1899-JUNE 1900	 65
3.1 The Klip River county Afrikaners and the Boer invasion	65
3.2 Taking advantage of the war - looting by Klip River county Afrikaners	71
3.3 Bringing the Klip River county Afrikaners into the fold	74
3.4 Enforcing the General Notice - meetings at Wasbank and Dannhauser	79
3.5 The Newcastle Afrikaners under the cosh	81
3.6 The Klip River (Ladysmith) district Afrikaners under Boer rule	87

3.7	The unreliable Natal Commando	95
3.8	Waiting for Buller	103
3.9	The flight	106
CHAPTER 4 THE WAR EXPERIENCES OF THE NATAL AFRIKANERS SOUTH OF THE TUGELA RIVER AND IN PROVISO B: OCTOBER 1899-JUNE 1900		110
4.1	The war experiences of the Afrikaners of Weenen county, October 1899 to June 1900	110
4.1.1	Natal Afrikaners in the Upper Tugela district and the conventional phase of the war	110
4.1.2	The war experiences of the Estcourt Afrikaners	114
4.1.3	The war experiences of the Weenen district Afrikaners	122
4.2	The Afrikaners of Pietermaritzburg county and the conventional phase of the war	124
4.3	Umvoti county Afrikaners and the War - October 1899 to June 1900	127
4.3.1	The Umvoti district (Greytown) and the conventional phase of the war	127
4.3.2	Kranskop district Afrikaners and the Anglo-Boer War	136
4.4	The Proviso B Afrikaners and the Anglo-Boer War, October 1899-June 1900	144
4.5	In the shadow of war	149
CHAPTER 5 DEALING WITH THE NATAL REBELS (PART I) - REACTIONS, ARRESTS, IDENTIFICATION, INVESTIGATIONS AND EARLY TRIALS		151
5.1	Rounding up the rebels	151
5.2	Public reaction towards the rebels	155
5.3	The response of the Natal Government to rebellion	157
5.4	The creation of the Special Court	164
5.5	The Supreme Court and Zululand High Court trials of Natal rebels	167
5.6	Investigating and arresting the Natal rebels	170
5.7	Identifying the real rebels	178
5.8	Concluding comments	179
CHAPTER 6 DEALING WITH THE REBELS (PART II) - THE TRIALS		181
6.1	Witnesses in the rebel trials	181
6.2	The question of bail for suspected rebels	186
6.3	The Natal rebel trials	190
6.3.1	High treason trials conducted by the Special Court and special magistrate	190
6.3.2	The trial of Natal rebels by military court	205
6.4	Appeals to the Privy Council	210
6.5	Concluding comments	212
CHAPTER 7 NATAL AFRIKANERS AS LOYALISTS		215
7.1	Support for, and involvement in, the British and colonial forces	215

7.2	Loyalist experiences at the hands of the Boers	222
7.3	Brother against brother - revenge against and reaction towards loyalists Natal Afrikaners by Natal rebels	230
7.4	How much is our loyalty worth? The post-war relationship between Afrikaner loyalists and the Natal Government	237
7.5	Being a loyal Natal Afrikaner in the Natal civil service	241
7.6	The most loyal Natal Afrikaner - <i>De Natal Afrikaner</i>	243
7.7	The real Natal Afrikaner war heroes	248
CHAPTER 8 MARTIAL LAW, THE LINGERING WAR, AND ITS SOCIO-POLITICAL IMPACT ON NATAL AFRIKANERS		250
8.1	The lingering war and Martial Law	250
8.2	The impact of Louis Botha's second invasion of Natal on Natal Afrikaners	261
8.3	Education, language and politics under Martial Law	268
8.4	Religion	275
8.5	Concluding comments	283
CHAPTER 9 THE IMPRISONMENT OF NATAL AFRIKANERS		286
9.1	Natal Afrikaners as Prisoners of War (POWs)	286
9.2	Natal Afrikaners in prison as rebels	289
9.2.1	Initial imprisonment	290
9.2.2	Living conditions in prison - an overview	293
9.2.3	Food in prison	299
9.2.4	Passing time	301
9.2.5	Contact with the outside world	305
9.2.6	The release of the rebel prisoners	308
9.3	Natal Afrikaners in the concentration camps	314
9.3.1	Removal and life in the concentration camps	314
9.3.2	The Natal Government and the economics of keeping their subjects in the concentration camps	317
9.3.3	The support of the Natal Afrikaner community for the concentration camp inhabitants	322
9.3.4	Going home	328
9.4	Natal Afrikaners in internment in Portugal	331
9.5	Concluding comments	333
CHAPTER 10 NATAL AFRIKANER WOMEN AND THE ANGLO-BOER WAR		334
10.1	Military related involvement in the Anglo-Boer War by Natal Afrikaner women	334
10.2	Natal Afrikaner women in the shadow of the war - psychological and physical treatment	342

10.3	The economic experiences of Natal Afrikaner women during the war	352
10.4	Correspondence with men in authority - Natal Afrikaner women pleading for their menfolk	357
10.5	Concluding comments	363
CHAPTER 11	THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NATAL AFRIKANERS, AFRICAN AND INDIANS DURING THE ANGLO-BOER WAR	365
11.1	Natal Afrikaners and Indians and the Anglo-Boer War	366
11.2	Africans loyal to Natal Afrikaners	368
11.3	Natal Afrikaners, Africans and the occupation by the Boers	371
11.4	Africans spying on Natal Afrikaners	372
11.5	The relationship between Africans and Natal Afrikaners after the Boer retreat	374
11.6	Dealing with Africans who collaborated with the British	377
11.6.1	Murders	377
11.6.2	Evicting Africans	378
11.7	Natal whites close ranks against loyal Africans	388
11.8	Concluding comments	394
CHAPTER 12:	THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE ANGLO-BOER WAR ON NATAL AFRIKANERS	396
12.1	Economic experiences during the Boer occupation of Northern Natal	396
12.2	The economic impact of the actions of the British forces on Natal Afrikaners	398
12.3	The question of compensation - The Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission	410
12.4	The Derelict Stock Fund	415
12.5	Issues surrounding Afrikaner owned land	421
12.6	The Umvoti Afrikaners fight back	431
12.7	Concluding comments	432
CHAPTER 13:	THE END AND THE BEGINNING - THE AFTERMATH OF THE ANGLO-BOER WAR	437
13.1	Geo-political changes in Natal and the impact thereof on Natal Afrikaners	437
13.2	Dealing with the rebels	440
13.3	Post-war relations and reflections	453
APPENDIX A:	Details of the Natal Afrikaners convicted of high treason during the Anglo-Boer War	456
APPENDIX B:	Proclamation issued by General PJ Joubert	495
APPENDIX C:	Natal Afrikaner loyalists from the area occupied by the Boers	497
APPENDIX D:	Natal Afrikaners charged under Martial Law	501
APPENDIX E:	Natal Afrikaner rebels arrested and deported as Boer POWs	502

APPENDIX F:	Natal Afrikaners who died in prison either as convicted rebels or while awaiting trial	505
APPENDIX G:	Deaths of Natal Afrikaners in concentration camps	507
APPENDIX H:	Natal Afrikaners who died during military operations during the Anglo-Boer War	510

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	2.1	Muster roll for Cadet Corps in Natal as on 31.12.1899
TABLE	6.1	Number of Natal Rebels convicted of High Treason per court
TABLE	6.2	Number of rebels convicted per district
TABLE	9.1	Employment of male Natal Afrikaner concentration camp residents
TABLE	10 1	List of Natal Afrikaner women who signed the address of welcome to Commandant-General PJ Joubert on 13 February 1900
TABLE	12.1	Losses sustained by 121 loyal Natal Afrikaners per district as recognised by the Invasion Losses Enquiry Commission (75%)
TABLE	12.2	Profiles of Dundee Afrikaners who benefited from reconstruction

SOURCE LIST	513
ABSTRACT	534
OPSOMMING	535
KEY WORDS	536

ABSTRACT

The invasion by the Boers of Natal set a process in motion that changed the lives of Natal Afrikaners forever. As a group which shared family, cultural, and other ties with the invaders, but were British subjects by citizenship, they had to make a difficult decision: join the Republican forces or remain loyal to the crown. Factors which influenced this decision, amongst others, were the pre-war suspicion of all Natal Afrikaners by the Natal authorities and the prevalence of a general anti-Republican sentiment.

Despite the above-mentioned, and the sympathy which existed for the plight of the Republics, very few Natal Afrikaners joined the commandos. Doing that would have meant economic annihilation. This the Natal Afrikaners understood and the majority remained neutral. Matters were complicated when the British Army and the colonial authorities withdrew south, leaving especially the Afrikaners of the Klip River county unprotected. When occupation did not convince the Afrikaners of the area to join, a well-thought out strategy based upon fear and misinformation, brought most into the fray. Duty on these commandoes was generally slack, subversive in nature, and as much as one can expect from people forced into military combat. A small group, however, managed, despite the pressures placed upon them, to remain loyal to Britain. For these loyalists the greatest rewards were in terms of economics and power.

In stark contrasts were the economic experiences of the Natal Afrikaners who were somehow, either directly or indirectly, guilty of high treason. All their possessions were systematically looted or destroyed, leaving most of them in an impoverished state. Secondly, through a range of court cases 409 Natal Afrikaners or associated people were convicted of treason, mostly by the purposefully introduced Special Court and special magistrate. The outlined experiences coincided with victimization on socio-political and cultural levels under Martial Law.

Afrikaners resident in the southern part of Natal, and especially in Umvoti county, did not suffer directly because of the war but experienced a different kind of war namely a pseudo war in which they were spied upon, viewed with suspicion and under Martial Law harassed. However, these Afrikaners managed to maintain some political power while economically they carried on as before the war. They attempted to use these assets to assist the Afrikaners who had to endure desertion by their own government and Boer occupation. Natal Afrikaners also experienced other aspects of the war normally associated with the Republics. Some were arrested as POWs, while others were deported to concentration camps within the Colony. Furthermore, as a result of the war, relations between Natal Afrikaners and English colonists and Africans suffered. The collective impact and legacy of the war, as well as the shared experiences of suffering under the British, with their Republican brothers and sisters, eventually helped to bring Natal Afrikaners into the broader Afrikaner fold.

OPSOMMING

Die inval in Natal deur die Boere het `n proses aan die gang gesit wat die lewens van Natalse Afrikaners radikaal verander het. As `n groep wat familie, kultuur, en ander bande met die invallers gedeel het, maar ook Britse onderdane was, moes hulle `n moeilike besluit neem: sluit aan by die Republikeinse magte of bly lojaal aan die Britse Ryk. Die besluit is onder andere beïnvloed deur faktore soos die suspisie waaronder alle Natal Afrikaners gebuk moes gaan en `n algemene anti-Republikeinse sentiment.

Desondanks die bogenoemde, en die simpatie wat bestaan het vir die lot van die Republieke, het bitter min Natal Afrikaners by die kommando's aangesluit. So `n stap sou ekonomiese selfmoord wees en hulle het dit besef. Derhalwe het die meeste neutraal gebly. Sake is bemoeilik toe die Natalse owerhede en die Britse magte teruggeval het na die suide. Dit het die Kliprivier Afrikaners onbeskermd gelaat. Besetting deur die Boere het hulle nie oortuig om aan te sluit nie. Om die rede is `n strategie, gebaseer op vrees en disinformasie, gevolg om aansluiting te bewerkstellig. Diens op kommando was in die algemeen slap en ondermynend van aard, tipies van persone wat gedwing word om die wapen op te neem. `n Klein groepie het egter daarin geslaag om ondanks dreigemente lojaal te bly. Hul latere beloning was ekonomies en polities van aard.

In teenstelling hiermee was die ekonomiese belewenisse van die Natal Afrikaners wat op een of ander wyse skuldig was aan hoogverraad. Hul eiendom is geroof en vernietig wat armoede tot gevolg gehad het. `n Reeks hofsake het gevolg waartydens, grootliks in die Spesiale Hof en deur die spesiale magistraat, 409 Natal Afrikaners skuldig bevind is aan verraad. Die bogenoemde ondervindinge het hand aan hand gegaan met viktimisasie op kulturele en sosio-politieke vlak onder Krygswet.

Afrikaners woonagtig in die suide van die Kolonie, en spesifiek in Umvoti, het nie direk gebuk gegaan onder die oorlog nie maar het eerder `n skynoorlog beleef waartydens op hul gespioeneer is en hulle beskuldig is van dislojaliteit. Die Afrikaners het daarin geslaag om hul politieke mag tot `n mate te behou terwyl hul op ekonomiese gebied gefloreer het. Die voordele het hulle gepoog om aan te wend tot die voordeel van mede-Afrikaners wat in die steek gelaat is deur hul regering, en wat die okkupasie van die Boere moes beleef.

Oorlogstoestande wat gewoonlik met die Republieke geassosieer word is ook ondervind. Sommiges is byvoorbeeld gevangene geneem en na konsentrasiekampe gestuur. Die oorlog het ook die verhouding tussen Natal Afrikaners en Engelse en swart inwoners van Natal geskaad. Die kollektiewe impak en nalatenskap van die oorlog, en die gedeelde gevoel dat hulle saam onder die Britte swaar gekry het, het gehelp om Natal Afrikaners mettertyd in die hoofstroom van Afrikaner nasionalisme op te neem.

Key Words

Africans

Afrikaner

Anglo-Boer War

Boer

Concentration Camps

Dutch Districts

High treason

Imprisonment

Klip River County

Loyalist/s

Martial Law

Military courts

Natal Afrikaner

Natal Afrikaner women

Privy Council

Rebels

Special Court

Special Magistrate

Umvoti County

Weenen County