

**“Who Put the Mission in Civilizing Mission?  
Reconsiderations of Shepstone’s Early Career”**

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*“Sir T. Shepstone was to all intents and purposes exactly like a native chieftain. He behaved like one; witness the having a snuff-box bearer.”*<sup>1</sup>  
–John Kumalo

*“The proposition, therefore, is nothing else than that Great Britain should establish a new kingdom in South Africa—and make Mr. Shepstone the King of that country!”*<sup>2</sup> –Sir George Grey

**Introduction**

In 1854, Natal’s Government Secretary for Native Affairs, Theophilus Shepstone, renewed a proposal that he be permitted to lead half of the colony’s African population to an area just south of its border, where he would rule as “paramount,” loyal to but independent of the British Crown.<sup>3</sup> The plan was taken seriously at least at the local level, where after its endorsement by the Natal’s Native Affairs Commission of 1853, the Lt. Governor gave Shepstone approval to make preliminary arrangements with the Pondo king Faku and with potential followers. Had this proposal been approved, Natal’s system of rule over Africans might not have come to be known as the Shepstone system, the putative model for indirect rule in Africa, and that system might have taken a somewhat different shape. Shepstone’s role in colonial history might have been closer to that of such literary figures as the heroes of Conrad’s *Lord Jim* or Kipling’s *The Man Who Would be King* than to the stern-faced administrator suggested by familiar portraits—both photographic and historical—of Natal’s master of African affairs.<sup>4</sup> The fact that Shepstone made such a proposal reminds us that what became known as the Shepstone

system was not a blueprint created by a diabolical mastermind, but that it emerged over time in response to contingent local, regional, and imperial actions and ideologies. It should lead us to a wider view of colonial relations in Natal, which were not isolated, but were part of a broader web of African, settler, and imperial politics in southern Africa. This paper will examine the removal scheme for what light it may shed on underlying debates about the nature, purpose, and possibilities of "native" policy in the early Natal colony. The plan and reactions to it are revealing of emerging ideas about race, land tenure, labor, and especially of Shepstone's conception of himself as a secular missionary and African king. The shifting nature of the debate in this period reflects the delicate balancing act maintained by a colonial state, responding to the initiatives of its putative African subjects while also attempting to satisfy the aspirations of settlers. Shepstone's actions and rhetoric were central to the working out of these conflicting colonial aims.

My main goal is to suggest that the person and early career of Shepstone brings together the church-centered and state-centered aspects of the colonial "civilizing mission" in nineteenth century southern Africa. As a result of the monumental work of the Comaroffs, much attention has deservedly focused on the "long conversation" among Christian missionary societies and various African communities.<sup>5</sup> Westerners, inspired by a renewed vision of spreading the gospel and an individualized notion of conversion sought to bring Christianity and what they saw as its attendant cultural benefits to heathen peoples. In the wake of this movement, but pushed by a broader complex of strategic, economic, and ideological forces, as well as the interactions of settlers and indigenous communities, colonial rule spread in southern Africa during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>6</sup> It did so despite the prevailing currents that opposed formal empire before the 1870s. Expansionist

imperialism, like evangelical Christianity, justified itself in terms of a mission to civilize peoples deemed to be outside the benefits and restraining forces of civilization. Though for some imperialists and officials, this rhetoric was clearly a mere cynical justification for exploitation, and though some saw missionaries as hopelessly naïve actors, others, like Shepstone, seemed to believe firmly in the civilizing mission and saw church and state as partners in that enterprise.

Shepstone was also a child of the frontier who was deeply influenced not only by settler and missionary cultures and ideologies, but also by African norms and environments. His flair for communicating with African leaders was not merely a matter of language, but of his ability to act the part of an African patriarch, as the quote from Khumalo suggests.<sup>7</sup> Given that he grew up among African communities on the Eastern Cape frontier, it is unlikely that this was entirely an act. Rather, I would suggest, it was a role that Shepstone was familiar and comfortable with. The other major influence of growing up on the frontier, besides inculcation of African language and values alongside those of his missionary family, was the recurring threat and reality of war. Indeed, war launched Shepstone into his public career, when in 1835 he joined the imperial military forces fighting the Xhosa as an interpreter. This brought him into contact with Col. (later Sir) Harry Smith, who became Shepstone's most important mentor, influencing Shepstone's style, his ideas about ruling colonial subjects, and his sense of politics.

### **Shepstone's Origins**

Given his importance to the historiography of indirect rule and segregation, there is surprisingly little published work on Shepstone's life, work, and thought. The most

detailed work was completed over thirty years ago. The late Ruth Gordon's 1968 biography of the Shepstone family in 19<sup>th</sup> century South Africa is comprehensive, but is mainly a factual narrative that lacks any analytical approach. Moreover, it is a hagiography that openly displays a colonial frame of mind, sometimes drawing its imagery straight from Conrad. In discussing the Shepstone family's circumstances as a missionary family in Eastern Cape during Theophilus' youth, for instance, Gordon writes, apparently with a straight face: "On the 25<sup>th</sup> May the Shepstone family and the Robinsons were left alone—a small white island of Christian culture in the midst of a dangerous sea of barbarism."<sup>8</sup> Despite this perspective and these occasional lapses into colonial romanticism, Gordon's family biography remains a useful source for details that do not appear in any of Shepstone's own records, especially concerning his early life. The source for much of this information, apparently, was the ubiquitous James Stuart's interviews with Theophilus' brother, John. David Welsh's 1971 analysis of Natal's system of governance over the African population is, on the other hand, a work of considerable academic merit. Welsh, of course, cast Shepstone in a major role in his influential contention that policy now known as the Shepstone system was prominent in the genealogy of segregation and apartheid.<sup>9</sup> This idea has sometimes been disputed as overdrawn, most especially by Dubow, who pointed to the system of administration in Transkei as an alternative model, but Welsh's contention has remained central to most scholars' understanding of indirect rule in South Africa.<sup>10</sup> Mamdani built on this idea to argue that apartheid was simply another name for indirect rule (which Mamdani called decentralized despotism, arguing that it lives on in postcolonial Africa), and that both were rooted in Shepstone's combination of hierarchical rule through chiefs and

customary law.<sup>11</sup> The wide readership and considerable influence of Mamdani's work has put Shepstone back in the diabolical pantheon of colonial officials whom Africanists love to hate, but it did little to help us understand the influences on Shepstone or the way his ideas developed over time. Lambert looked closely at the development of relations between Africans and the state in colonial Natal, with a good deal of attention to Shepstone. His work is mainly concerned, however, with the crisis that developed in homesteads in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as a result of oppressive taxation, settler encroachment, migrant labor, and environmental disaster.<sup>12</sup> All these works focus most attention on the fully-flowered stage of the Shepstone system, especially after the codification of customary law in the 1870s. Ironically, Shepstone opposed this, and the moment coincided with his fall from grace in the wake of the Langalibalele affair.<sup>13</sup>

This urge to find "the" source of indirect rule, combined with a lack of attention by the grand theorizers to development and changeability of "native" policy in colonial Natal, has done a disservice to our ability to understand Shepstone, his policies and actions, or their development over time. I want to explore Shepstone's methods and ideas during the formative period when the direction of imperial policy was in flux. In Natal's first decade, colonial officials, settlers, and missionaries were engaged in debates over the purpose of the colony and the best way to minimize opposition on the part of Africans while maximizing their economic contribution. At the same time, some colonial officials—especially Shepstone—continued to share with missionaries grand visions of carrying out a civilizing mission in southeast Africa.<sup>14</sup> But these debates did not occur on some sort of colonial *tabula rasa* or in an African political vacuum. Africans seeking

refuge, new opportunities, and political alliances themselves created opportunities and obstacles for colonial officials.

Shepstone was a product of the tumult of the Eastern Cape. His parents were 1820s settlers, with whom he came to Grahamstown at the age of three. His father, William, soon abandoned his work as a stonemason in favor of his commitment to missionary work as a lay preacher with the Wesleyans. Importantly for Theophilus, his father was among those Wesleyans who saw the movement as a reformist one within the Anglican Church rather than a wholly separate church. This no doubt eased Theophilus' later entry into the Anglican Church in Natal, where as a prominent official he was a church leader and staunch friend of the Anglican Bishop Colenso. As Theophilus grew up, his family moved through a series of missionary stations on and beyond the colonial frontier. In the process, he became well acquainted with Nguni languages, becoming a mission translator at the age of fifteen,<sup>15</sup> and with the complex politics of alliance and resistance on the frontier. In addition, the family's moves enabled young Shepstone to meet and observe the leading royals of the Eastern Cape and Transkei. When Theophilus was about 10, for instance, the Shepstons helped establish a new mission at the capital of the Xhosa paramount, Hintsá.<sup>16</sup> The most remote (from the colony) station that the family occupied was at Morley, on the Umtata River, where they were under the protection of the Pondo paramount Faku, who was later to figure centrally in Theophilus' removal scheme.

Growing up on the frontier also meant a close acquaintance with military matters. From a settler point of view, the history of the Eastern Cape was one of periodic invasions and scares—indeed, the 1820 settlement was partly in response to the invasion

of the colony by African forces in 1819—coupled with shifting alliances with various groups of Africans, as well as disturbances between African kingdoms or attacks by marauding bands. In 1828, for instance, when Theophilus was 12, the family was forced to evacuate Morley due to the plundering "Fetcani banditti" within Faku's lands.<sup>17</sup> A large scale frontier war, the first since 1819, broke out in again in 1834 when Xhosa forces again invaded the colony, fighting a war on a broad front with guerilla tactics until they were decisively defeated late the following year.

It was this war that brought Theophilus, at age seventeen, into government service. In 1831, at fifteen, Theophilus had been sent to live and work with missionary William Boyce at Buntingville, near Faku's capital, in order to help Boyce translate some Wesleyan hymns and portions of the Bible into "Caffre" (*isiXhosa*). In the course of that work, Boyce, aided by young Shepstone's fluency, reached enlightenment in the form of realizing that nouns are the key to Bantu sentences, in that other elements agree "euphonicly" with the nouns.<sup>18</sup> This earlier official work, as well as his widely-recognized fluency gained from growing up among Africans, helped Shepstone gain an appointment as a government interpreter, assigned to the staff of Colonel Harry Smith, at the outbreak of war in 1834. In this position, he was able to observe Smith's Machiavellian tactics and flair for drama, and in its aftermath, Smith's ideas about governance.<sup>19</sup> Jeff Peires has described Smith's approach to rule over the Xhosa in the wake of the war as follows:

As Governor of the short-lived (1835-36) "Province of Queen Adelaide," [later British Kaffraria] Smith had attempted to turn the Xhosa hereditary chiefs into salaried magistrates, and to "civilize the Xhosa" by means of schools, missions and trade in money. Sir Harry had a taste for ceremony and rhetoric, and an inflated respect for the power of his own personality.<sup>20</sup>

Smith's personal influence on Shepstone is confirmed by the fact Shepstone was married (to the daughter of a military officer) at Smith's home in Cape Town and that Lady Smith became godmother to Shepstone's first child, named Henrique in honor of Sir Harry.<sup>21</sup> In the aftermath of the war, Smith kept up a regular correspondence with Shepstone, whom he always addressed by his Xhosa name, Somtsewu.<sup>22</sup> Smith peppered young Shepstone with advice about the proper way to deal with the chiefs and how to prosper in colonial politics, advising him for instance, "if you wish to flourish ... wear a Whig."<sup>23</sup>

Shepstone's first important assignment under Smith, during the 1834-35 war, was to oversee the removal of Mfengu allies, eventually numbering 17,000, to a new reserve in the Peddie district in order to protect them from "Xosa vengeance."<sup>24</sup> This experience, too, was a key precedent for Shepstone's later plans to remove considerable numbers of Africans from Natal colony, where in his view they were corrupted and oppressed by the settler presence, to a safe haven south of the colony.

Young Theophilus continued, after the war, to work as an interpreter in government and military service. Having spent the first three years after the war as a clerk and interpreter in Grahamstown, he was assigned shortly after his wedding in 1838 to a military expedition to secure Britain's interests in Natal. The Dutch Emigrant Farmers (DEFs) had entered the area from the Eastern Cape, and the situation remained unsettled in late 1838. Britain was determined not to let the region spin out of its control. First, it considered the DEFs to be still its subjects, though errant ones. Second, the Zulu kingdom, which claimed sovereignty over Natal under Mpande ceded it to the DEFs in 1839, was an important power in the region both in terms of trading relations and in terms of the power of its military expeditions to influence conditions as far away as the

Eastern Cape frontier, Indeed, the Mfengu were thought to have become "dogs of the Xhosa" and subsequently colonial allies as they came together from scattered refugees of warfare in the KwaZulu-Natal region. Finally, British traders had been established (as clients of the Zulu royal family) at Port Natal (later Durban), the only natural harbor between Port Elizabeth and Delagoa Bay, since 1824. The British government therefore dispatched an expedition under Major Samuel Charters to secure British interests in the region. Not long after the expedition arrived at and "took possession of" Port Natal, news reached it of the DEF's defeat of the Zulu forces at the Ncome (Blood) River.<sup>25</sup>

Shepstone's connections to Faku, as well as to the missionary families he had known as a child, were re-secured in this period. The expedition had reached Port Natal by sea from Cape Town, but it returned over land. It took the road that had been established by trading and missionary interests since the 1820s, and that passed through many of the sites where Shepstone had grown up and had known the key African royals of the time. On the way from Port Natal to Faku's capital, the expedition passed through the area that Shepstone was later to propose as his own promised land, which despite the difficulties of travel in heavy rains, Theophilus described in his diary as having "beautiful scenery."<sup>26</sup> When a new governor at the Cape five years later once again adopted a new frontier system, he relied on Shepstone's friendly acquaintance with Faku in sending the former to secure Faku's agreement to a treaty of protection.

Shortly after the Natal expedition, Shepstone was appointed in 1839 "Resident Agent for the Kaffirs of T'Slambie and Congo, and for the Fingoes...."<sup>27</sup> The post apparently became available due to some political entanglement on the part of his predecessor, Mr. Bowker, and Governor Napier therefore advised Shepstone (contrary to

the advice he had earlier received from Smith) to steer clear of political connections, including potential influence by missionary bodies, "notwithstanding your close connexion with the Wesleyan Missionaries, to which your worthy and most respectable father belongs...."<sup>28</sup> Shepstone remained in this post at Fort Peddie for seven years, until his transfer to Natal in 1846. As to this period, Gordon's biography is our only detailed published source, and it is not very informative. This is unfortunate, as Shepstone's first sustained period in charge of a government post that called on him to rule over African communities and as a head of family was bound to have been important in helping him form his ideas of how to conduct himself and formulate policy. Here, for the first time he was on his own in attempting to secure cooperation of African leaders and peoples, drawing on what he had learned as a missionary child and as a military interpreter. Gordon does reveal that Chief Phato (Pato in contemporary records) of the Gqunkhwebe, a former ally of the government disillusioned by the war of 1834-35, plotted to kill Shepstone during this period, but she is quite vague as to Phato's motives.<sup>29</sup> Phato was a long-time acquaintance of the Shepstone family, which had resided at the Wesleyville mission station near his capital from 1832 through the war of 1834-35. Wesleyville was a few miles north of the Keiskamma River, and a few miles inland, in the southern triangle of what became British Kaffraria. William Shepstone bragged in the *Graham's Town Journal*, soon after his posting to Wesleyville, that Phato and two other important chiefs had decreed observance of the Sabbath.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, Phato and other chiefs protected the Wesleyville station and reaffirmed their loyalty to Britain at the outset of war in 1834, supplying a considerable number of men for the British forces, and he led the retreat from the area when Xhosa forces threatened it.<sup>31</sup> After the war, Theophilus' father William

was named Commissioner for the Gqunhwebe of Phato and two younger brothers, as colonial governance and mission work became more intertwined than ever.<sup>32</sup>

One of Phato's junior chiefs was his brother Khama, who after the war became increasingly loyal to British interests, more closely associated with Christianity and with William Shepstone, while the disillusioned Phato moved increasingly into opposition to colonial forces, though he remained nominally loyal.<sup>33</sup> The divergence between the brothers' paths resulted in Phato's attempt to eliminate the younger Shepstone. When Khama's followers trekked northward with William Shepstone in 1843, Theophilus determined to distribute half of Khama's land to Mfengu rather than releasing all of it to the senior Gqunhwebe chief, Phato, and this proved intolerable to Phato.<sup>34</sup> The Graham's Town journal described the attempt on Theophilus Shepstone's life, which had resulted in the death of a neophyte traveling missionary, in the following terms:

There is strong suspicion exciting that this unfortunate victim was mistaken, when attacked, for the Diplomatic Agent Shepstone. If so, it shows very strikingly the perfect acquaintance that gentleman has of the Kafir character. He had been forewarned of this spirit of revenge, and aware of the unscrupulous character of the Kaffirs in carrying out a point on which they had resolved, had requested the government to be removed—his recent appointment to Natal being the result of such application. At the time of the murder, Mr. Shepstone was not known to have returned home, and in fact had only reached his dwelling the day previous from Graham's Town. His own servant was with the wagon used for the conveyance of the murdered man and his companions, and was killed in the first instance, as he lay outstretched alongside of his night fire.

...

Strong suspicion rests upon the Chief Pato as being the prime agent in this deed of blood, and it would seem that the Lieutenant Governor has made a peremptory demand upon him to produce the actual murderers. In the event of his failing to do so, an appeal will, it is said, be made to the perpetrator of the guilty act.<sup>35</sup>

As this account shows, Shepstone had already by this time a dazzling reputation among whites as a man who knew the "native mind" and was as cunning as an African chief. The near-lethal dispute with Phato, led to a successful request for reassignment to an important post in the new colony of Natal, where he became "Diplomatic Agent to the Native Tribes" at the end of 1845, rather than to demotion or obscurity.<sup>36</sup> Shepstone's superiors had already learned to depend on him when important matters needed to be settled with African kings. In 1844, when the governor sought to make new treaties with kings beyond the colonial frontier, he sent Shepstone to obtain the signatures of Sarhili, the Xhosa paramount, and of Faku, the Pondo paramount. The treaty with Faku recognized him as ruler between the Umtata and Umzimkhulu rivers, and obliged him to offer military support to the Colony.<sup>37</sup> For Shepstone, this journey cemented an important personal alliance that he was to call on repeatedly in his role as the Diplomatic Agent (later Secretary for Native Affairs) in Natal.

### **The Imperial Mission at mid-Century**

The 1840s and 1850s were a time of shifting ideas about the imperial mission, and these ideas were shaped in part by the actions of colonial subjects and settlers.<sup>38</sup> The most dramatic were frontier wars, millenarian movements and uprisings such as the War of Mlanjeni and the Cattle Killing in the Eastern Cape, culminating from the imperial point of view with the Indian Mutiny in 1857 and the Jamaican Rebellion of 1865. Occurring in the wake of emancipation and at the peak ideological dominance of "free trade" and informal empire, these demonstrations of profound colonial dis-ease further undermined remaining support for the extension of imperial rule and for efforts toward westernization

of subject populations. Nevertheless, the actions white settlers, along with Britain's international strategic concerns, continued to lead the empire into further commitments in southern Africa. In the Eastern Cape, Britain both opened new areas for settlers and extended its rule over subject populations. In Natal, the empire's erstwhile subjects—the DEFs—potentially provided a buffer between the Zulu kingdom and the Cape, but their policies toward the Africans in their nascent settler republic threatened to cause even greater disturbances, which might ripple their way to the Cape's volatile eastern frontier, while their claim of allegiance to the Netherlands undermined British sovereignty and signaled a possible loss of tax revenue as well as causing profound strategic concerns.<sup>39</sup> During the short life of the DEF republic of Natalia, Britain stepped in repeatedly, finally proclaiming the territory British in 1843 and annexing Natal to the Cape Colony in 1845. British intervention was intended to prevent the DEF plan to deport large numbers of Africans to the south, as British officials believed this might have a destabilizing effect on the Cape's perennially unsettled Eastern frontier.<sup>40</sup> Britain also acted to protect its trading interest at Port Natal, established twenty years earlier under Shaka's protection, against possible DEF alliance with another imperial power, a consistent British worry in various areas of DEF-Boer settlement through the end of the century. British politics and taxpayer resistance might militate against adding to the areas of formal rule, but trade and strategy might force imperial hands in specific instances. Once annexed, however, Natal's administrators were quickly caught in the vise of imperial parsimony. In effect, their instructions were to administer the territory on behalf of British interests, but not to expect any financial assistance in doing so. The colony was forced to rely in the short run on revenues collected from reluctant African subjects, while in the long run hoping to

stimulate a prosperous settler economy. These contradictory aims, along with the actions of Africans and settlers within and without the borders, kept officials engaged in a constant shell game. The official view was that restoration of peace within Natal, along with continued disputes in the Zulu kingdom to the north, led to a steady flow of Africans into the colony. In reality, it is more likely that officials quickly became aware that the African presence in the region was larger than they had reckoned, though no doubt some people did cross the Thukela River in search of political refuge. Meanwhile, DEFs streamed northward out of the colony, propelled by a loss of political power, the uncertainty of their vast land claims, the rise in the African population over whom they no longer had unchallenged authority, and attacks by marauding bands from the mountains. Officials feared this loss of a settler base as well as the havoc that the DEFs might again wreak when beyond effective British rule. Meanwhile, thousands British settlers arrived between 1849 and 1852. Settlers old and new complained—as they would continue to do for scores of years—of a shortage of African labor. They attributed the shortage directly to the size of “locations” (in fact adequate to support only half the African population in Natal) established by the government under Shepstone’s direction in the late 1840s.<sup>41</sup>

A parallel debate was over the means of rule over subject populations in those areas that were added to empire. Should rule be direct, interventionist, and developmental, or should it rather be indirect and minimal? This debate, of course, concerned the purpose of empire and Britain’s image of its place in the world, as well as the colonizer’s notions of what was possible and desirable in terms of bringing about cultural, political, and economic change among the colonized. More fundamentally, it

revolved around what was fiscally and logistically possible in a thinly stretched empire. For a few years, until 1848, Natal operated through the fiction of direct rule, claiming a unitary system of law and administration. But as the settler-dominated "Kafir Commission" was to put it in 1853, "in reality they were governed, so far as there was any Government, through the Diplomatic Agent, by their own laws," though, as they pointed out, he had no authority to do so. However, that problem was remedied in 1848, with the issuance of Royal Instructions directing that Africans be ruled through indigenous norms and authorities.<sup>42</sup> Natal then, had always operated via some version of indirect rule, officially so since 1848. During the same period, however, policy in the more financially sound Cape Colony proper continued to flip flop with the rise and fall of colonial governors, the influx of settlers, and the outbreak and conclusion of wars.<sup>43</sup> During Shepstone's formative years in the Cape, the series of wars against the Xhosa had resulted in policies that alternated attempts to separate African chiefdoms from settler communities with attempts to exert formal rule over African chiefdoms in conquered territories. The latter mode had been championed by Shepstone's mentor Harry Smith, first in his role as a Colonel in the war of 1834-45 and its aftermath, and then upon his return as Governor and High Commissioner in 1847, by which time Shepstone was in Natal. Two things are significant about Smith's role in the 1834-35 war, considering his influence on Shepstone. First, as Etherington notes, by adopting the tactic of seizing large numbers of the enemy's cattle and horses, this was "the first which the British fought like heartland chiefs."<sup>44</sup> Shepstone was to adopt and threaten similar tactics in his disputes with several African chiefs in Natal, including Fodo, Sidoyi, and ultimately and infamously, Langalibalele. Second, in the wake of the war, Smith was charged with

implementing Governor D'Urban's policies. At first, this had called for expelling all Xhosa to the east of the Kei River, but that was hopelessly unrealistic in 1835. Instead, D'Urban decided to incorporate the African chiefdoms within the short-lived Queen Adelaide Province (later British Kaffraria). This meant including about 70,000 African subjects in the colony (cf. the approximately 100,000 Africans said to live in Natal by about 1850). D'Urban and Smith hoped to transform these subjects into pliant laborers and consumers by using chiefs as colonial administrators, but placing chiefs under the authority of British Residents, in a system no doubt influenced by patterns learned in the princely states of colonial India.<sup>45</sup> Keegan's description of this system and Smith's role in it provides an interesting foreshadowing of Shepstone's rule in Natal:

D'Urban's policy was to erode the power of the chiefs, and reduce them 'to the most wholesome position of magistrates (or field cornets) acting under prescribed rules and limits.' Colonel Harry Smith, the new ruler of Queen Adelaide Province, developed grand ideas of himself as supreme chief over the African chiefdoms, dispensing the magical benefits of civilisation to his grateful subjects."<sup>46</sup>

This policy was soon revoked. Imperial authorities, reluctant to take on the expense of administering new territories, forced the abandonment of the province. Britain's withdrawal from the province resulted in a return to the so-called "treaty system," whereby Africans beyond the colonial boundary remained tied to the colony by treaties that imposed numbers of responsibilities on them, particularly with respect to the sensitive issue of stray and stolen cattle. This system was much reviled by colonists because it supposedly let loose the forces of "kaffir depredations." Indeed, some contemporary complaints about "native" crime in the colonial press sound much like the complaints of whites in the new South Africa.<sup>47</sup> A few years later, settler expansionism and military arrogance again forced war on the Xhosa, this time resulting in decisive loss

of what became British Kaffraria, and the reassertion of rule over large numbers of African subjects. The methods of rule, however, remained a subject of debate and vacillation.<sup>48</sup>

In a broader sense, the period saw the eclipse of the humanitarian lobby and the apex of free-trade imperialism. At the same time, however, officials continued to pursue the civilizing mission, hoping to recast colonial "others" as useful and unthreatening imperial subjects, redeemed by wage labor and Christianity. The mid-century civilizing missionaries, however, had to pursue such a vision in the context of a stingy treasury and deference to settler views as part of the free-trade orthodoxy.<sup>49</sup> Natal's policy in this period was therefore not the result of a settled imperial vision, but of a fluid one that still hoped to "civilize," while being willing to bring decisive military force to bear if that were necessary. At the same time, Natal had to shape its rule over its African population with a dire lack of funds as an undeveloped colonial appendage of the Cape. Natal's officials, like those of the Cape, found themselves responding to movements by both settled and resistant African subjects. They endeavored to prevent rebellion while simultaneously extracting taxes and labor. Changes in personnel also played a role, as they did in the Cape, with Shepstone's proposal of the removal scheme emerging directly from his conflicts over policy and clashes of personality with Lt. Governor Benjamin Pine in 1851.

### **The Removal Scheme**

When Shepstone wrote the 17 page memorandum in support of the removal scheme in 1854, he was reviving an idea that had been put forward several times already in Natal's

short colonial history. The DEF republic of Natalia had proposed expelling most of the area's African homesteads, leaving only five per white farm. The potential that this plan had for disrupting the area between Natalia and the borders of the Cape was high on the list of Britain's reasons for establishing its own rule in Natal in the early 1840s.<sup>50</sup> The idea continued to surface, however, for two reasons. First, white officials believed that there were too many Africans in the district in proportion to whites, and that the growing number of immigrants (or returnees) from Zululand was putting undue pressure on land set aside for Africans. Officials and settlers also feared the growing strength and independence of African chiefdoms in the region. Second, the area between Faku's effective area of governance and Natal's southern border (the Umzimkhulu) was seen as a source of disorder and a refuge for bandits, referred to by officials and settlers as "Bushmen," though they seem to have been heterogeneous communities. For a time, colonial officials tried to hold Faku responsible for depredations emanating from the area, but they also began to speak of annexing the area. Doing so would enable them to establish order, probably through slaughter of the bandits.<sup>51</sup> Shepstone and other officials also began to see strategic placement of loyal African communities as a way of providing reserved "locations" while also creating buffers to protect white farmers from marauding mountain men (referred to in the records as Bushmen). When Langalibalele's amaHlubi people crossed into Natal from the Zulu kingdom, Shepstone moved to establish them in the uplands between the Ukuhlamba (Drakensberg) and the white farmers of the Klip River district. After Langalibalele proved initially unwilling, Shepstone used the persuasion provided by an 800-man regiment obtained from Phakade's powerful Chunu chiefdom in the Thukela basin.<sup>52</sup> This was one of a number of instances in which

Shepstone used military might, provided by his leadership of African forces, to assert his authority against recalcitrant chiefs in the nascent colony, deposing them when he deemed it necessary.<sup>53</sup>

Shepstone first articulated the idea of leading a large number of Natal's Africans to the area between Natal and Pondoland in the context of the 1851 battle of wills between himself and Lt. Governor Benjamin Pine, who sought to wrest control of African affairs from Shepstone.<sup>54</sup> When Shepstone assumed his post in 1846, Martin West, the cash-strapped colony's first Lt. Governor, gave him a relatively free hand to administer African affairs and to develop plans for reserved land. West supported Shepstone's ideas, put forward by the 1846-47 Locations Commission, for developing a series of "locations" in Natal. The Commission recommended that a resident agent ("superintendent") be attached to each location, backed by an African police force officered by a "European," and that each location be supplied with training schools and agricultural education. Finally, the resident would rule through a mix of British and "native" law, using chiefs and councilors as assessors.<sup>55</sup> The overall system was intended to provide Africans with secure tenure, while promoting economic development aimed at nurturing a progressive peasantry. This plan not only fit with the progressive, direct-rule, promotion of amalgamation put forward by Governor Smith (Shepstone's mentor), but had the advantage of promoting the African food production and revenue generation on which the colony was utterly dependent.<sup>56</sup> Shepstone clearly saw the locations plan as part of a civilizing mission in southeast Africa. The purpose of establishing the locations, he testified, was "The amelioration of the moral condition of the natives within the District, the influence of whose [illegible] would it was thought extend to tribes in the interior,

their advance in civilization and ultimate amalgamation with the white inhabitants." As an afterthought, he added, "It was also thought they would afford great facility for procuring labor."<sup>57</sup>

These ideas foundered on the imperial government's unwillingness to assume any financial obligations in this marginal colony, and on its continued attempts to mollify and control its errant Dutch-speaking subjects. Despite West's support for the locations plan, and Smith's theoretical support for the principles it embodied, these considerations were more important to the wider view of imperial strategists, including Smith. The Governor, forwarding the Commission's report to the Colonial Office, noted that the plan was bound to require some financial commitment. Secretary of State Earl Grey was unwilling to make such a commitment. In the meantime, Cape Governor Sir Harry Smith arrived in Natal in 1848 on a mission to stop the reverse migration of the DEFs. His strategy was based on promising security to enormous land claims for the DEFS, which required decisively pulling the plug on Shepstone's plans. Smith quickly dismissed the Locations Commission, replacing it with a Land Commission, dedicated to securing white land titles. The Locations Commission had in the meantime managed to establish several locations, but Shepstone was given no funds for their development so continued in the indirect rule mode he had adopted since his arrival in Natal.<sup>58</sup>

As a result, Shepstone was faced with ruling a population scattered over some inadequate and under funded locations, Crown land, and white-claimed farms, but without any security of tenure or clear plans for integration into the colony's developing political economy. The government finally received authorization for Shepstone's de facto use of indirect rule and customary law through the Royal Instructions of 1848,

implemented in the following year.<sup>59</sup> Nevertheless, Shepstone grew increasingly pessimistic about the chances of implementing his vision as the African population continued to swell, while at the same time immigration from Britain brought 5,000 new settlers into the colony.<sup>60</sup> Shepstone argued that the shoestring indirect rule methods he had been obliged to use had not adequately prepared the Africans of Natal for the increased contact with whites that was bound to result from this immigration.

They have been governed and an active control exercised over them but they have not been prepared for the ordeal which their contact with civilised man renders it inevitable they should pass through, because the machinery that sufficed for the one would not accomplish the other.

Shepstone went on to note that failure to implement the Locations Commission's recommendations resulted in two problems.

The evil of the delay is twofold. First, the circumstances of the Natives have been continually on the advance, they are richer more independent and less willing to accept a new control. Second, The white man requires the savage to be under a more civilized description of control than their native rule furnishes for them to feel at ease with him.

Finally, Shepstone argued, since the Locations had not been put on any secure footing, settlers tended to seek their reduction, increasing African anxiety and ultimately threatening peace.<sup>61</sup>

The other factor leading Shepstone to set forth the removal plan in 1851 was his loss of authority to Lt. Governor Pine, who had arrived in 1850 to replace West after the latter's untimely death. Pine came to Natal from Sierra Leone, where he had for two years been Acting Governor. Just as Governor Grey was to see the Cape through the filter of his experience in Western Australia and New Zealand, Pine was inclined to see Natal as just another Sierra Leone.<sup>62</sup> He therefore proposed reducing the locations, instituting individual tenure, and interspersing black and white farmers. Settlers also urged reducing

the size of the locations in order to bring African labor onto the market. This was a debate in which the anti-location arguments continued to have the upper hand with imperial authorities, but Shepstone's improvised indirect rule nevertheless remained the only practical course, and the one thought least likely to engender direct opposition from Africans. But while Shepstone's emerging system had the continued support of officials in Cape Town and London, Pine set about using the Locations system to undermine Shepstone's authority. Pine appointed magistrates in the locations and insisted that they should communicate through him rather than through the Diplomatic Agent. Even worse, from Shepstone's point of view, the magistrates were chosen without his advice and at least three of them proved to be brutal tyrants.<sup>63</sup>

The dispute between Shepstone and Pine came to a head over an aborted plan, supported by Pine and opposed by Shepstone, to send a force of Natal Africans to assist colonial forces in the latest war on the Cape frontier. In the wake of wrangling over this matter, Shepstone demanded the restoration of his authority or to be permitted to effect the proposed removal, and was forced by Pine's intransigence to forward the request to Secretary of State Grey. This end run worked; as Grey supported Shepstone's claim that the magistrates should work through him, while recommending that Shepstone's position be more directly incorporated into the Lt. Governor's administration.<sup>64</sup>

The 1851 iteration of the removal scheme was hugely ambitious in scope, encompassing Shepstone's design for a comprehensive assertion of British authority over the coastal regions between the Cape and Natal in order to prevent any further frontier wars like the ones that had twice engulfed the Eastern Cape since his departure, and which were never far from the minds of white settlers and officials in Natal. It called for

disbanding the existing Natal locations and establishing one large location in the colony south of the Umkomanzi River. Shepstone proposed that all chiefs and followers be removed to this area, where they would be ruled through superintending magistrates and assistants, accompanied by industrial schools, missions and the full panoply of civilizing influences called for in the report of the Locations Commission. Those remaining in the "white" part of the colony would have to work for a white farmer, be settled on a mission station, or live in a township. A limited number could live on Crown lands when their labor was required for public works.

More broadly, Shepstone proposed that Britain annex a large portion of northeastern Transkei for white settlement, accompanied by military occupation. He described the area as follows: "The new settlement might extend from the Umtamvula [Umtamvuna] river north to the Umtata River south west and abut inland on the [Orange River] Sovereignty. The mouth of the St. Johns River is almost centrally situated on its coast as the principal sea port." Faku's Pondo people were apparently to be relocated north of the Umtavuna, as Shepstone claimed Faku wished to do. Later in the memo he describes the area as being as large and as geographically diverse as Natal. Laying little stress on settlement, however, he emphasized the necessity of military occupation. This scheme would prevent war in both the Cape and Natal by depriving African forces of safe havens for retreat when counterattacked by colonial or imperial forces.<sup>65</sup> Not surprisingly, this grandiose plan was soundly rejected since it called for an extensive commitment of British resources and political will in a region that would not come under decisive British rule for another forty years. Shepstone's plan quite simply went against

the imperial tide, which was intent on reducing expenditure and limiting the extension of formal rule despite countervailing tendencies among settlers and military officers.

Nevertheless, Shepstone did not abandon his dream of implementing some kind of removal scheme. The Native Affairs Commission (popularly known as the "Kafir Commission") that was appointed in 1852 was charged with considering the potential for a partial removal of Africans along with other possible reforms of the system of administration over the African population. Remarkably, the Commission's 1853 report approved the idea of removing a large number of Africans to an area south of the colony, while also recommending restructuring of native administration within the colony.<sup>66</sup>

Since the settler-dominated Commission was generally quite critical of the Shepstone's administration, it perhaps saw this as a good opportunity to be rid of him, while a reduced African population would justify the smaller, more directly ruled locations that the colonists sought. The Commission recommended the removal of thirty to forty thousand Africans from the colony, that is about thirty to forty percent of the existing population. Using this endorsement as leverage, Shepstone wrote his January 1854 memorandum describing and arguing for his revised vision of the removal, scaling down the plan to one that he thought would secure the approval of his superiors and the Colonial Office.

Shepstone made a series of arguments in favor of the plan. First, he argued that unlike the earlier plan, this one would entail minimal commitment on the part of the Crown, only that the territory be guaranteed to those Africans who chose to move to it. On the lines of the abandoned plans of the Locations Commission, he proposed that the territory be supplied with missions and the encouragement of productive enterprises. Knowing that

some might view the plan with alarm as the creation of an independent power on the colony's borders, Shepstone countered,

An independent power is already fast growing up in that country, which in a few years will only require consolidation to make it formidable; it is being filled up with malcontents ... necessarily inimical to British rule.... To guide what we cannot stem is one object of my proposal.<sup>67</sup>

Shepstone further argued that the removal would enhance, rather than reducing the availability of an African labor supply, as removal would require Africans to satisfy their desires for goods such as blankets through wage labor rather than through peasant production. His most persuasive argument, in terms of colonial opinion, was that it would enable a reduction in the size of the locations and a rise in the rate of African taxation. He had no doubt that a significant number of Africans, perhaps half those in the colony, would be eager to follow him into the new territory.<sup>68</sup>

Shepstone apparently described the plan in even more glowing terms to Bishop Colenso during their joint tour of Natal in 1854. The bishop, in a book designed to raise support for his emerging mission work in Natal, emphasized the positive benefits for Africans Shepstone would lead into the promised land, as well as for those left behind. Since the numbers of Africans in Natal would be reduced, it would be easier to enforce "such measures, with respect to decency of clothing, the discontinuance of polygamy and the sale of wives, &c., as are absolutely necessary for their improvement in civilization, and would greatly assist the efforts of the Missionary." Furthermore, the removed population would continue to be subject to missionary endeavors, as "Mr. Shepstone's Kafirs would still be a portion of my flock." Shepstone, the "devout" missionary son was eager for conversion. As a side benefit, from the point of view of an official of the established church, more land would be brought under British authority. Indeed,

Shepstone had apparently led Colenso to believe that the former would inherit the Pondo throne on the death of Faku!<sup>69</sup>

The plan got some support from British commissioner at the beginning of 1854, on the grounds that it would improve the colony's security, and Pine therefore authorized Shepstone to make enter preliminary negotiations with Faku for cession of the land (which Faku had agreed to some years before, though the British had disallowed the treaty).<sup>70</sup> That winter, taking his wife and seven children with him, Shepstone therefore traveled to Pondoland to negotiate with Faku. Another two hundred African followers accompanied them, raising some alarm among Faku's people. Shepstone used the Wesleyan missionary, Jenkins, as an intermediary in approaching Faku and dispelling fears occasioned by his arrival with so large a party. In a letter to his new friend Bishop Colenso written on his return, Shepstone described his nearly three month journey in glowing terms. He reported that Faku agreed to cede the land between himself and Natal, as well as the mouth of the St. John's River, and that:

"[n]early all the chiefs and councillors [sic], residing between Faku and Natal, signed an instrument, electing me as their supreme chief, in the fullest sense of the word; by which, as I explained to them most particularly, they placed themselves, their wives and children, their property and their country in my hands.

"I accepted this," Shepstone was careful to note, "only on condition that my Queen consented to my doing so...."<sup>71</sup> Shepstone seemed to believe that there was a reasonable chance that he would secure the necessary approval and that he would be able to implement his own ideas of how a reserve should be run, free of oversight and petty bureaucratic jealousies. He would be able to pursue his forte: African chiefly politics, aided by Colenso, supported by a variety of African allies, and with the implicit though

indirect backing of the British Crown. In addition, he would be performing what he saw as his duty.<sup>72</sup>

Indeed, though the memorandum and the letter to Colenso contain hints that Shepstone saw the removal plan as a path of greater glory, to becoming, as Grey mocked, an African king, it was also clear that he considered the necessity to implement the plan something of a hardship forced on him by the difficulties of Natal's political and demographic situation. Shepstone had assumed his post in Natal as an experienced but relatively young man of twenty-nine coming from a frontier position. Now, eight years later, Shepstone was planning to uproot his large family from the relative comforts of the colonial capital, as well as resigning his position. In his private communication to Colenso (which the latter made public the following year) Shepstone argued that the task was onerous but one that was his duty, and said that he comforted himself with the hymn that opens, "Put thou thy trust in God." In his memorandum proposing the removal scheme, Shepstone reiterated that the plan would result in material difficulties for himself and his family. He therefore proposed that his salary be continued, "in consideration of my past services," and that it be paid "in the shape of an allowance or pension."<sup>73</sup> The British Government, and its representatives at the Cape, was unwilling to undertake even this degree of commitment, however. Sir George Grey, newly appointed Governor of the Cape recommended against approval, as the plan was bound to lead to greater British responsibility in the area, and more fundamentally because Grey opposed the segregationist premise of the plan, favoring instead the interspersal of black and white settlement that was in progress in Natal.<sup>74</sup> In late 1855, therefore, the removal plan died, though it emerged in new forms "throughout [Shepstone's] career."<sup>75</sup> Colenso lamented

the demise of the plan, but remarked that it made mission work in Natal itself all the more important, and added that he would be fortunate to have Shepstone's assistance in such work.<sup>76</sup>

So far, I have discussed the public elements of the removal plan. But Shepstone also had a private agenda that balanced the thought of a return to the life of the frontier with a large dose of adventure, speculation, and the possibility of becoming a man of financial substance as well as political power. In a series of letters in 1854, Shepstone and his friend George Cato, a banker in Durban, chatted merrily about the possibilities of copper mining and other unspecified businesses in the proposed territory. In May 1854, as Shepstone prepared to leave on his journey to make arrangements with Faku and other chiefs, he wrote to invite Cato to join him, and if possible to bring a cask of beer! But this was not simply a 19<sup>th</sup> century road trip. Shepstone goes on to ask, "Have you any information as to what the distance of the Namaqualand copper mines from the place of shipment or in other words what the distance of land carriage is?"<sup>77</sup> In late July, Shepstone wrote his friend again from the Umtamvuma river, proposing that he, Cato and "Mr. White" make another journey to the region in a couple of months "with the view of examining the country." On the subsequent journey, they would be able to "do the business thoroughly especially the copper mine question which after all my enquiries I am still in doubt about." Shepstone goes on to say that they will be able to search thoroughly once he had "got possession of the country."<sup>78</sup>

It is not entirely clear what business enterprises Shepstone and his partners were planning on, beyond their apparent interest in copper mining. But it is clear that they hoped to exploit KwaSomtsewu for profit, drawing on the labor supply that Shepstone's

plans would make available. What does this suggest about the place of the civilizing mission in Shepstone's range of motives? First, we should remember that in the minds of prominent imperialists, there was no contradiction between a civilizing mission and a quest for plunder and profit: a generation later Cecil Rhodes would perfect such a combination, though in his case there is less reason to believe that he took seriously the rhetoric of civilizing. In the immediate case of Shepstone, the prospect of leaving public service for the first time in his life carried some risk, but also opened up vistas of becoming a private man of substance. In this, he was acting the role of Victorian patriarch as well as seeking the opportunities for enrichment that might come with being an African king.<sup>79</sup> But I do not think we should let the copper enterprise divert us too much. Whatever profit motives Shepstone may have had, it is clear that he also saw the removal scheme as his duty and an opportunity to fulfill his secular missionary role as an uplifter of African peoples.

Most of all, the attempt to gain official endorsement for the removal scheme seems to have flowed from Shepstone's desire to re-enact and perfect his mission at the end of the 1834-35 war. Then, he led a group of people the missionaries and colonial officials portrayed as oppressed refugees into a colonial promised land, where he was eventually chosen to rule over them and other African chiefdoms. That earlier trek in itself must have had clear resonance with the biblical exodus, especially to this missionary son. Shepstone's time at Fort Peddie, of course, had ended badly, with his retreat in the face of attempted assassination by one of his chiefly subjects. A few years later, in Natal, Shepstone was again encountering obstacles to realizing a civilizing mission. To Shepstone, that mission was not only a duty but also an imperative to

preserve the peace. As a Methodist missionary publication put it on the outbreak of the 1834-35 war in the Cape, "Large and powerful masses of *unchristianized* and uncivilized men can never long be *safe neighbours* to a Christian Colony."<sup>80</sup> To Shepstone, this threat was compounded by the lack of permanence and inadequate size of the locations. Confronted by a parsimonious government unwilling to implement the plans recommended by his Locations Commission, and facing continued threats to the integrity of the reserves he had vaguely defined, Shepstone's thoughts turned again to a trek to a promised land. This time, the promised land would be beyond colonial boundaries, but still safely within the overall ambit of British authority. As Shepstone promised, "I should never cease to be an Englishman."<sup>81</sup> Here, the Africans in his charge would be free from the corrupting influence of daily contact with white settlers, most of whom were recent immigrants and had little understanding of African languages or cultures, and many of whom set a rather bad example of civilization. In his new kingdom, Shepstone could combine a variety of roles: Diplomatic Agent, king, missionary, patriarch. Never one to underestimate his own abilities, he believed that he alone was suited to these tasks, of course with the assistance of religious partners like Colenso, business partners like Cato, and political partners like Faku and Smith. Under Shepstone's guiding gaze, with the further civilizing influence of industrial schools and missions, his subjects would settle into their allotted role as peaceful peasant farmers, while many of them would also serve as oscillating labor migrants in Natal to earn money for taxes and for the worldly goods that men like Cato would begin to import.

## Conclusions

Shepstone's attitude toward Africans and the need for a civilizing mission is summed up in a letter he wrote during his second year as Diplomatic Agent in Natal. He described the Africans of Natal as savages in need of protection and upliftment:

In this District the hundred thousand Natives, Remnants of Nations and Tribes once powerful, broken and scattered by savage wars are assembled under a Christian government.... They are still lying in the lowest depths of barbarism but nevertheless yield a ready obedience to their new rulers, upon whom experience has taught them to look as protectors. Efforts attended with results more or less encouraging are being made by the different missionary societies to raise them in the scale of humanity, and the Government is also inclined to assist as far as its assistance can be available.<sup>82</sup>

He went on to describe the potential of Natal as a beacon to the barbarous.

Natal is the key to the black nations of South Africa. It is surrounded by numberless Tribes of Natives, multitudes of whom seeing the difference of enlightened from Savage Government have fixed their eyes upon it as the bright ultimatum of their hopes whenever they shall become emancipated from the thralldom of their present barbarous governments....<sup>83</sup>

Though he was skilled at playing the role of an African great man, snuff box bearer and all, Shepstone never ceased to believe in the superiority of white civilization and in the necessity of raising others to its lofty heights, by whatever means necessary and whatever means available. At the juncture of the early 1850s, with imperial policy in flux but generally favoring the interests of settlers and parsimony, Shepstone saw the removal scheme as the best way to continue with the civilizing mission in which he had participated since he was a child.

The missing voices in this account are those of the Africans who might have followed the Diplomatic Agent to his proposed Shepstonia (kwaSomtsewu?), as well as those who would have declined. Although we know that the Pondo paramount Faku had

agreed, at least twice, to surrender an area that he was deemed responsible for, but over which he lacked effective control, we know little of reactions to this proposal by other Africans within or beyond Natal's boundaries. Shepstone was effective at singing his own praises as a man with the utmost "respect" and "confidence" of Africans, and he was ably assisted by other prominent men such as Buchanan, the editor of the Natal Witness, and Colenso, the Anglican bishop. On the other hand, in this period Shepstone was continually warning that the colonial state, even with his powers of persuasion and ability to muster force, had limited influence with Africans. His gamble was that the precariousness of their situation in Natal, with a surging settler population screeching to dismantle or drastically reduce the locations, would lead a sizeable proportion of African homesteads to follow him into the security of a protected territory south of the colony. This was a reasonable supposition given that thousands of Africans had sought refuge in Natal in the early years of the colony and if we accept Shepstone's claim that people in the proposed principality, tired of the depredations of raiding communities, were quick to offer him their allegiance.

What we do know is that it was the actions of Africans that led to Shepstone's proposal and that led others to take it seriously. No matter how much officials wanted Natal to be based on white settlement, they could not ignore the fact that the beginnings of the colony saw an exodus of the DEF population and a steady rise (as they perceived it) in the African population. These African subjects were clearly more than willing to work, as Shepstone's testimony of rising prosperity suggests, but they were not necessarily willing to work on terms dictated by white immigrants in search of docile, cheap, and immobile labor.<sup>84</sup> And while Shepstone prided himself on his ability to

persuade and manipulate African notables, as well as his ability to muster African forces against recalcitrant chiefs, he clearly worried that the settler reluctance to commit to secure locations or to development of existing locations might result in an unstoppable "combination" of chiefdoms if the state were to press its luck too far through the imposition of taxes or demands for military service in the incessant Cape wars.

Despite the clear offstage presence of African actors in this drama, I want to raise directly the question of the necessity of doing research on the actions of white colonial officials in southern Africa. Shepstone has been invoked, from Welsh to Mamdani, as the root of all evil in the apartheid and colonial states. Though this is no doubt an exaggeration, it does seem worthwhile to go beyond the stereotypes of indirect rule to attempt to understand how he arrived at the policy. In the process we may come to understand better some of the debates within the wider colonial world about race, segregation, and civilization. In addition, we must face the fact that our evidence is limited, and that the colonial archives constitute a large proportion of available evidence. It is of course possible to use such evidence to probe questions of consciousness and of conflicts within African communities, as I have done with court records and as many have done with testimony presented to commissions of enquiry.<sup>85</sup> But isn't it also necessary to understand the structures within which people sought to make their own histories? If we paint the structures only in broad strokes, will we not miss the subtleties and contradictions that were most apparent to those affected by them? And finally, isn't fascinating to know that Kipling and Conrad didn't make it up, but merely reported, as it were, the daily news in fictionalized form. Rider Haggard didn't hang around Shepstone for nothing.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Testimony of John Kumalo, 28 Oct. 1900, C. de B. Webb and J. Wright, *The James Stuart Archive*, vol. 1 (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1976), 220-21.

<sup>2</sup> Sir George Grey to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 3 December 1855, quoted in R.E. Gordon, *Shepstone: The Role of the Family in the History of South Africa, 1820-1900* (Cape Town: A.A. Balkema, 1968), 176 and n. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository (PAR), SNA 1/7/2, Memorandum of Mr. Shepstone's proposal to take with him a portion of the Natives, to the Country south of this District, 23 January 1854 (Shepstone Removal Memorandum, 1854).

<sup>4</sup> See e.g. Normal Etherington, "The 'Shepstone system' in the Colony of Natal and beyond the borders." In *Natal and Zululand From Earliest Times to 1910: A New History*, edited by Andrew Duminy and Bill Guest, (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1989), 170-92.

<sup>5</sup> Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa*, v. 1 and 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997 and 1991).

<sup>6</sup> Clifton Crais, ed., *The Culture of Power in Southern Africa: Essays on State Formation and the Political Imagination* (forthcoming, Heinemann), argues that there was a parallel "long conversation" between the colonial state and Africans. Crais' insight has been a fundamental inspiration for the direction of this project.

<sup>7</sup> Jeff Guy has elaborated on this theme in an influential but unpublished paper, "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.

<sup>8</sup> Gordon, *Shepstone*, 32.

<sup>9</sup> David Welsh, *The Roots of Segregation: Native Policy in Colonial Natal, 1845-1910*, (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1971)

<sup>10</sup> Saul Dubow, *Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid in South Africa, 1919-36* (Houndmills, U.K.: Macmillan, 1989).

<sup>11</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

<sup>12</sup> Lambert, John Lambert, *Betrayed Trust: Africans and the State in Colonial Natal* (Scottsville: University of Natal Press, 1995).

<sup>13</sup> For Langelibalele, see Jeff Guy, *The Heretic: A Study of the Life of John William Colenso, 1814-1883* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1983), 197-202.

<sup>14</sup> See Guy, *The Heretic*, 51, 84-86.

<sup>15</sup> Methodist Missionary Notices, Vol. VI, no. 201, Sept 1832, 133, South African Missions, Amaponda Land. Extracts from a letter of Mr. Boyce's, dated, March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1832.

<sup>16</sup> Gordon, *Shepstone*, 24-30.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 34. For a recent interpretation of the "Fetcani" marauders, see Etherington, *The Great Treks: The Transformation of Southern Africa, 1815-1854* (Harlow, England: Longman, 2001).

<sup>18</sup> *Methodist Missionary Notices*, Vol. VI, no. 201, Sept 1832, 133, South African Missions, Amaponda Land. Extracts from a letter of Mr. Boyce's, dated, March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1832. See also Boyce's praise of the superior quality of Shepstone's translations, which he believed gave the Wesleyans an edge over the Glasgow Missionary Society. Methodist Missionary Society (MMS) records, 1846-47, no. 112, W.B. Boyce (Bolton) to Rev. Geo. Browne (London), 3 Dec 1844.

<sup>19</sup> Gordon, *Shepstone*, 86-87.

<sup>20</sup> Peires, *The Dead Will Arise: Nongqawuse and the Great Xhosa Cattle-Killing Movement of 1856-7* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1989), 5.

<sup>21</sup> Gordon, *Shepstone*, 94, 106.

<sup>22</sup> Guy translates the name as "father of whiteness." Guy, *Heretic*, 198. Gordon's interpretation of the name is "white father," or "great father." She also notes that Shepstone's brother John said that the name was given to Theophilus in his youth and meant "mighty hunter." Gordon's best insight on this point is that the name "meant different things to different people, for it was used everywhere." Gordon, *Shepstone*, 100, n. 50.

<sup>23</sup> PAR, Shepstone Papers, 1/1/7/3, A96, v. 13, Harry Smith to T. Shepstone, 24 July 1838.

<sup>24</sup> Gordon, *Shepstone*, 87-88; *Methodist Missionary Notices*, Vol. VIII, no. 240, Dec. 1835, 177, South Africa. The Kaffer Missions. This latter source referred to the events as the "deliverance of the Fingoes from a state of slavery under Hintza." It should be noted that the war coincided with the phased abolition of slavery in the British Empire. See Etherington, *Great Treks*.

<sup>25</sup> Gordon, *Shepstone*, 96-99.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 101.

<sup>27</sup> *Grahams Town Journal*, 4 April 1839, quoted in Gordon, *Shepstone*, 103, n. 1.

<sup>28</sup> PAR, Shepstone Papers, 1/1/7/3, A96, v. 13, George Napier to T. Shepstone, April 3, 1839.

<sup>29</sup> Gordon, *Shepstone*, 53, 106, 112-13.

<sup>30</sup> *Methodist Missionary Notices*, Vol. VI, no. 220, April 1834, Postscript—The Sabbath Proclaimed in Caffraria.

<sup>31</sup> Etherington, *The Great Treks*, 230.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 42-50; *Methodist Missionary Notices*, Vol. VIII, no. 240, Dec 1835, 177, South Africa. The Kaffer Missions.

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<sup>33</sup> This disaffection went back to at least 1830, when Khama had been baptized. *Methodist Missionary Notices*, Vol. VI, no. 177, Sept 1830, 325, Missions in Southern Africa, Graham's Town, Extract of a Letter from Mr. W. Shaw, April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1830.

<sup>34</sup> Jeff Peires, *The House of Phalo: A History of the Xhosa People in the Days of their Independence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

<sup>35</sup> "The Murder of the Missionary Scholtz," Graham's Town Journal, December 11, 1845.

<sup>36</sup> PAR, Shepstone Papers, 1/1/7/3, A96, v. 13, P. Maitland to Col. Hare, Lt. Governor, 30 October 1845. Shepstone was named "Diplomatic Agent with the native Tribes in the Natal Settlement," and continued to draw the same salary that he had at Fort Peddie, L300 per year.

<sup>37</sup> Gordon, *Shepstone*, 111-112 and n. 36.

<sup>38</sup> Two excellent recent sources on this period are Norman Etherington, *Great Treks*, and Timothy Keegan, *Colonial South Africa and the Origins of the Racial Order* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1996). Etherington goes to considerable lengths to adopt an "eagle's eye view" from the Highveld, thus decentering the colonial point of view. For instance, he refers to the Cape Colony as the British Zone, and his text concerns the movements and machinations of a plethora of African leaders, as well as the movements and machinations of white settlers and officials.

<sup>39</sup> Etherington, *Great Treks*, 288-94.

<sup>40</sup> See e.g. Etherington, *Preachers, Peasants and Politics in Southeast Africa, 1835-1880: African Christian Communities in Natal, Pondoland and Zululand* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1978), 6-8 ; E. H. Brookes and C. de B. Webb, *A History of Natal* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1965), 29-41.

<sup>41</sup> John Lambert, *Betrayed Trust*, 7-11; Gordon, *Shepstone*, 123-31.

<sup>42</sup> Natal Colony, *Proceedings and Report of the Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Past and Present State of the Kafirs in the District of Natal* (Report of the Natal Native Commission of 1852-53), 20-21.

<sup>43</sup> Etherington, *Great Treks*; Keegan, *Colonial South Africa*; Jeff Peires, *Dead Will Arise*.

<sup>44</sup> Etherington, *Great Treks*, 233. "Heartland" is Etherington's coinage for the regions of South Africa east of the Western Cape.

<sup>45</sup> Michael H. Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India: Residents and the Residency System, 1764-1858* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991).

<sup>46</sup> Keegan, *Colonial South Africa*, 148, quoting Lancaster, *The Governorship of Sir Benjamin D'Urban at the Cape of Good Hope*, Archives Year Book for South African History (1991,II) at 117-18.

<sup>47</sup> See, e.g. Graham's Town Journal, "Frontier Affairs," July 17, 1845.

<sup>48</sup> See Peires, *Dead Will Arise*.

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<sup>49</sup> Keegan, *Colonial South Africa*, 209-11; Peires, *Dead Will Arise*, 45-69.

<sup>50</sup> Benjamin Kline, *Genesis of Apartheid: British African Policy in the Colony of Natal, 1845-1893* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988), 3-4; Norman Etherington, *Preachers*, 6-8.

<sup>51</sup> PAR, SNA 1/3/3, H.F. Fynn, Assistant Resident Magistrate Durban, Report, 16 September 1854; SNA 1/1/1, T. Shepstone, Report on communication from British Resident with Faku dated 4 July 1849; John Wright, *Bushmen Raiders of the Drakensberg* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1970).

<sup>52</sup> Gordon, *Shepstone*, 138-40.

<sup>53</sup> See e.g. PAR, SNA 2/1/2, Natal Native Commission 1852-53 Evidence, Shepstone to Lt. Gov., 7 April 1851; Shepstone to Lt. Gov., 27 May 1857; *ibid.*, 132-35; Phillip Kennedy, "The Fatal Diplomacy: Sir Theophilus Shepstone and the Zulu Kings, 1839-1879," Ph.D. dissertation (UCLA 1976), 82-88.

<sup>54</sup> PAR, Shepstone Papers, 1/1/7/3, A96, v. 67, T. Shepstone to His Honor B.C.C. Pine, March 11, 1851; SNA 1/8/2, T. Shepstone to Acting Secretary to Government, December 9, 1851.

<sup>55</sup> PAR< NCP 6/2/1/1/1, Report of the Commissioners for Locating the Natives in this District (1847); SNA 1/8/1, W. Stanger, T. Shepstone, N. Adams, C.J. Gibb, D. Lindley, Commissioners for Locating Natives, to D. Moodie, Secretary to Government, n.d; Welsh, *Roots of Segregation*, 12-13; Etherington, *Preachers*, 8-10.

<sup>56</sup> Lambert, *Betrayed Trust*, 10.

<sup>57</sup> PAR, SNA 2/1/1, Natal Native Commission, 1852-53, testimony of T. Shepstone, 25 November 1852.

<sup>58</sup> PAR, SNA 2/1/2, Natal Native Commission 1852-53 Evidence, Shepstone to Lt. Gov., 7 April 1851; Kline, *Genesis*, 9-12.

<sup>59</sup> Natal Colony, *Report of Natal Native Commission 1852-53*, 20; Etherington, *Preachers*, 10-11.

<sup>60</sup> Kline, *Genesis*, 15-16. Keegan asserts that policy in Natal was underpinned by "the erroneous assumption that Natal's Africans had entered the territory after its colonization by whites," Keegan, *Colonial South Africa*, 208. It is clear that there was a colonial perception of a rapid increase in African population, whether or not the increase was real. In addition, it is clear that some people were crossing into the colony from the Zulu kingdom. Shepstone believed that some Africans in Natal were pre-Shakan communities, while others were recent arrivals.

<sup>61</sup> PAR, SNA 2/1/2, Natal Native Commission 1852-53 Evidence, Shepstone to Lt. Gov., 7 April 1851.

<sup>62</sup> On Pine, see Kline, *Genesis*, 15-17. As to Grey, see Peires, *Dead Will Arise*, 48-50.

<sup>63</sup> Gordon, *Shepstone*, 165-66; see e.g. PAR, SNA 1/8/2, T. Shepstone to Acting Secretary to Government, PMB, Dec 8 1851; SNA 1/7/1, Native Complaints, 14 January 1852 (Gombela of

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the Umvoti Location reports that Magistrate Cleghorne had his assistants tie Gombela to a plow, beat him with a stick, and stop his mouth with horse dung); *ibid.*, 2 February 1852 (Chief Musi complains of threats and beatings by Magistrate Meshorn). For Shepstone's criticism of Pine's magistrate system, see PAR, SNA 1/8/2, T. Shepstone to Acting Secretary to Government, December 9, 1851.

<sup>64</sup> Gordon, *Shepstone*, 167-71.

<sup>65</sup> PAR, SNA 1/8/2, T. Shepstone to Acting Secretary to Government, December 9, 1851.

<sup>66</sup> PAR, NCP 8/3/1 Natal Native Affairs Commission, 1852-53, Report, 41-42; Shepstone Removal Memorandum, 1854, 71; Kline, *Genesis*, 22.

<sup>67</sup> Shepstone Removal Memorandum, 1854, 64-65.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> John William Colenso, *Ten Weeks in Natal* (Cambridge: Macmillan & Co., 1855), 149-50. The latter point may have been Colenso's incorrect inference based on Shepstone's account of Faku referring to Shepstone as "my son." But it is not hard to believe that Shepstone wanted Colenso to draw such an inference.

<sup>70</sup> PAR, Shepstone Papers, 1/1/7/3, A96, v. 13, Benjamin Pine to T. Shepstone, Secretary for Native Affairs, 12 February 1855; PAR, SNA 1/1/5, John Bird, for the Colonial Secretary, to T. Shepstone, 28 March 1854.

<sup>71</sup> T. Shepstone to J. Colenso, 31 August 1854, quoted in Colenso, *Ten Weeks in Natal*, 151-57. The letter is reprinted in Gordon, *Shepstone*, Appendix 10, 399-401. Shepstone also made a very brief report of his meetings with Faku to the British Resident in the Transkei. PAR, SNA 1/8/5, T. Shepstone SNA to M.B. Shaw, Aug 19, 1854. Strangely, Shepstone's letter to the Colonial Secretary in Natal, written just three days earlier and concerning negotiations with Faku about the return of cattle, makes no mention of negotiations concerning the possible removal. *Ibid.*, T. Shepstone to the Hon the Colonial Secretary, Natal, Aug 16 1854. It seems odd that Shepstone felt free to discuss this matter with the British Resident in Transkei, but not with the Colonial Secretary in Natal.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Shepstone Removal Memorandum, 1854, 76.

<sup>74</sup> Kline, *Genesis*, 38-39.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>76</sup> Colenso, *Ten Weeks*, 158.

<sup>77</sup> PAR, Shepstone Papers 1/1/7/3, A96, v.70, T. Shepstone to Cato, May 9, 1854.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, T. Shepstone to Cato, July 28, 1854.

<sup>79</sup> Jeff Guy, "Accommodation of the Patriarchs."

<sup>80</sup> *Methodist Missionary Notices*, Vol. VIII, no. 233, May 1835, 67, South African Missions (emphasis in original).

<sup>81</sup> Shepstone Removal Memorandum.

<sup>82</sup> PAR, Shepstone Papers, 1/1/7/3, A96, v. 70, T. Shepstone to the African Institute of Paris, November 10, 1847.

<sup>83</sup> Shepstone Removal Memorandum.

<sup>84</sup> See Keletso Atkins, "'Kafir Time': Preindustrial Temporal Concepts and Labour Discipline in Nineteenth Century Colonial Natal," *Journal of African History*, 29, no 2 (1988): 229-44.

<sup>85</sup> See e.g. Benedict Carton, *Blood From Your Children: The Colonial Origins of Generational Conflict in South Africa*. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000); Thomas McClendon, *Genders and Generations Apart in South Africa: Labor Tenants and Customary Law in Segregation-Era Natal* (forthcoming, Heinemann).

<sup>86</sup> See Carolyn Hamilton's account of the friendship of Haggard and Shepstone in later decades, and the influence of this connection on Haggard's fiction. Carolyn Hamilton, *Terrific Majesty: The Powers of Shaka Zulu and the Limits of Historical Invention* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 117-25. The plot of Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* was inspired at least partly by a claimant to the Ndebele throne who was under Shepstone's protection in Natal.