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NATAL SOUTH COAST REGION: A review of African interaction with colonization

By Duncan Du Bois [March/April 2014]

‘The benefits of education are becoming year by year more appreciated by the native races.’
– Fred B. Fynney, Inspector of Native Education, *Natal Blue Book*, 1885, U72.

In almost every aspect of their lives, Africans were affected by colonialism. This review outlines their experience from their confines in the location system which Shepstone devised,¹ their attempts at enterprise, their exposure to education opportunities and health care, their labour contribution and their clashes with the colonial authorities over issues such as alcohol consumption and environmental exploitation.

The settler mindset which prevailed during the period under review was the product of a series of experiences. Following the Sixth Frontier War in the Eastern Cape, the 1857 mutiny in India, the Morant Bay rebellion of 1865 in Jamaica, and the 1845-1872 Maori wars in New Zealand, there was a rise in settler influence over the colonial state which, as the policy of confederation in South Africa (which sought to bring the Boer republics, British colonies, and independent African groups under common control), intended, was to consolidate settler domination and hegemony.² That outlook received endorsement from Anthony Trollope, a prolific English novelist of the Victorian era. Arising from his tour of South Africa in 1877, he published a two-volume work in which he supported the idea of white supremacy which he saw as being necessary to ‘civilise’ the indigenous African.³

Settler presence on the South Coast of Natal was never threatened by hostility from the local African population. Incidents of cattle stabbing in the late 1860s were few and isolated. During the Langalibalele crisis of 1873-1874 the daily reports of the Resident Magistrate for Alexandra County described the situation as ‘perfectly quiet.’⁴ Although fear gripped the Colony in the wake of the British defeat at the Battle of Isandlwana in January 1879, settlers were never in danger due to what Governor Henry Bulwer described as ‘the most loyal behavior of our Native population.’⁵ Morrell, Wright and Meintjes argue that this ‘was not surprising [as] most African communities in the colony accepted the establishment of alien rule... Many were glad to be rid of oppression by the Zulu state and the weaknesses of the new colonial state meant that for many years it could not make heavy exactions on the African population subject to it.’⁶

¹ For a comprehensive account of Shepstone’s system, see: J. Guy, *Theophilus Shepstone and the forging of Natal*, (Scottsville, 2013).

² Secretary of State Glenelg repudiated Cape Governor Sir Benjamin D’Urban’s reference to the Xhosa as ‘irreclaimable savages.’ Settler outrage at atrocities perpetrated by Xhosa tribesmen in which over 400 homesteads were burnt and forty whites perished, included demands for the confiscation of Xhosa property and the execution of any Xhosa who could be shown to have had a part in the killing of settlers. See: A. Lester, ‘“Otherness” and the frontiers of empire: the Eastern Cape Colony 1806-1850,’ *Journal of Historical Geography*, Vol. 24, 1, January 1998, 9-11; 13.

³ J.H. Davidson, (ed.), *Trollope’s South Africa*, (Cape Town, 1973), 455.

⁴ CSO 454, No. 2696, 25 November 1873- 10 January 1874.

⁵ CSO 728, No. 5190, Encl., 6 November 1879, 3. Bulwer’s reference was to Africans across the Colony.

⁶ R. Morrell, J. Wright and S. Meintjes, ‘Colonialism and the establishment of white domination 1840-1890,’ in R. Morrell (ed.), *Political Economy and identities in KwaZulu Natal: Historical and Social perspectives*, (Durban, 1996), 36-37.

Land and Labour

The contradictions between Natal's settler ideology and economic reality 'were no more vividly revealed than in the debate over land,' argues Jeff Guy. Citing Governor Henry Bulwer's estimation of the extent of Natal's land surface, Guy points out that only two million acres were reserved for Africans who numbered about 300,000 in the late 1870s, six million acres for white settlers who numbered 20,000 with the remaining four million acres left unoccupied and uncultivated. But that was not the only reality of the skewed land allocation. Half of the African population did not live within the location reserves. They dwelled on private land or Crown land and thus were 'vulnerable to attempts at land reform and opportunistic financial speculation in land.'⁷

Indigenous Africans were seen as a potential source of labour for the Colony's white economy. As James Belich points out, in South Africa

'it was blacks, not Boers or Britons, who supplied the muscle and energy behind the South African booms. From the white perspective, the problem was that they did not do it the way they were supposed to. What whites wanted from blacks was labour under unreasonable conditions – tight control to the point of semi-slavery, and wages so low they were sometimes only a tenth of those earned by white workers. Blacks were naturally reluctant to accept this, leading to white mythologies of black indolence. Blacks could be forced to work on white terms through restrictive labour laws and the absence of alternatives, such as sufficient land to subsist.'⁸

An additional perspective of the relationship between the colonial state and indigenous Africans is made by A.A.Costa who argues that African custom and tradition was employed in the service of the state.

'The implementation of indirect rule in South Africa and the subsequent conceptualization of chiefly rule cannot be understood except against shifts in imperial and liberal thought away from assimilation and towards preservation.'⁹

Complaints about the shortage of African labour were a constant refrain of settlers. From as early as 1864 it was reported from Ifafa in Alexandra County that African labour was scarce.¹⁰ The submission of 103 applications for Indian indentured labour in Alexandra County in 1866 indicated the extent of settlers' frustration with the lack of availability of local labour and their belief in the reliability of Indian labour and unreliability of African labour.¹¹ The suspension of indentured immigration to Natal from 1866 to 1874 added to the labour woes that settler farmers experienced. As a case in point, William Hawkworth of Undercliff estate wrote to Governor Benjamin Pine in 1873 requesting him to grant an order to the Alexandra Resident Magistrate to compel fifty Africans, who were residing on Hawkworth's estate, to make themselves available to assist in the erection of his new mill.¹² Following the resumption of indentured immigration in 1874, the Resident Magistrate of Alexandra County, Gould Lucas, noted in 1878 that the use of Indian labour exceeded that of African labour and that Indian labour was found to be more reliable, less troublesome, and only marginally more costly.¹³

⁷ J. Guy, *Theophilus Shepstone and the forging of Natal*, 463-464.

⁸ J. Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939*, (Oxford, 2009), 382.

⁹ A.A. Costa, 'Chieftaincy and civilization: African structures of government and colonial administration in South Africa,' *Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 59. 1, 2000,17.

¹⁰ *Natal Mercury*, 15 September 1864. The African population in the County in 1862 was given as 12,000. See: CSO 171, No. 689, 28 February 1863, Resident Magistrate's Report.

¹¹ CSO 244, No. 544, 3 March 1866. By 1866 there were 381 Indians in Alexandra County. The white population was 364. See: CSO 264, No. 43, 28 February 1867.

¹² CSO 455, No. 2726, 15 November 1873.

¹³ *Natal Blue Book*, 1878, JJ19.

There were several reasons for the lack of labour. One was that Africans who owned land or had access to land were not prepared to work for poor reward under conditions where they were rigidly controlled. The relatively stable relationship between settlers and the indigenous African population on the South Coast can be ascribed in part to Shepstone's location system which ring-fenced African land ownership.¹⁴ Resentment was expressed at the assignment of land to the Mnini chieftainship because it resulted in the isolation and separation of Alexandra and Alfred Counties from the rest of the Colony.¹⁵ It was also noted by, amongst others, John Robinson, editor of the *Natal Mercury*, that mission reserves for Africans accounted for nearly 60,000 acres of land along the coast between Amanzimtoti and Umzumbe.¹⁶ As late as 1890, the idea of permitting European occupation of the African locations on the South Coast was debated in the Legislative Council, but nothing came of the proposal despite pressure from settlers.¹⁷

The location system perpetuated customary law and indigenous systems. This frustrated many settlers who felt that it was limiting the extent to which Africans were exposed to European influence and to what Sir George Grey termed 'acquiring habits of industry.'¹⁸ But as John Lambert has pointed out, Africans were drawn steadily into the cash economy that evolved based on their proximity to settler villages and estates. Until insolvency put paid to their enterprise, members of Mnini's Thuli chiefdom in the Umgababa region engaged in sugar and coffee production between 1876 and 1880.¹⁹ In the 1870s and 1880s the food economy of Alexandra and Alfred counties was dominated by Africans. This was particularly apparent as regards the cultivation and production of maize.²⁰ The ready market for their produce meant that few Africans were dependent on cash wages. Colin Bundy makes this same point for the wider Southern Africa when he argues that many Africans responded more effectively to economic change than white landowners. Bundy provides compelling evidence of independent and successful African engagement with a changing South African economy.²¹ However, by 1890, as Lambert and Morrell have noted, 'the failure of coastal and midland *kholwa* to compete effectively with white and Indian agriculture saw a steady influx into the towns.'²²

¹⁴ On the South Island of New Zealand, promises made to the NgaiTahu tribe regarding the reservation of land for tribal agriculture and subsistence hunting and fishing were not honoured by the colonial state. In 1896, the New Zealand minister of Lands, J. McKenzie, justified the dispossession of Maori land saying 'when Europeans got land it was immediately turned to good account.' See: J. McAloon, 'Family, wealth and inheritance in a settler society: the South Island of New Zealand 1865-1930,' *Journal of Historical Geography*, Vol. 25, 2, April 1999, 203-204.

¹⁵ In 1876, in a submission to the Select Committee on European Immigration, David C. Aiken expressed criticism of the fractured territorial integrity of the South Coast. Resident Magistrate Gould A. Lucas also expressed similar sentiments in his Report for Alexandra County in 1883. See: *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 1613, 17 October 1876; *Natal Blue Book*, 1883, GG45. W.Y. Campbell in his book *The Natal Sugar Industry: an enquiry and report* (Durban, 1885), 20, noted 'grumbles' about Mnini's uncultivated lands.

¹⁶ Robinson was highly critical of this in compiling a report following his tour of the South Coast in 1871. See: *Natal Mercury*, 8 August 1871. A report in the *Mercury* on 24 January 1871 stated that 'the greater part of the coast southwards of Durban is set aside for the use of the black man.'

¹⁷ *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. XIV, 1890, 329-331. William Hartley of Durban County claimed less than one percent of the 270,000 acres of African reserve between Isipingo and the Mzimkulu was cultivated by Africans.

¹⁸ Despatch of Sir George Grey to Lord Russell, 3 December 1855 cited in Report of Select Committee on Tribal Titles to Lands for Natives, *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. XIV, No. 720, 19 August 1862.

¹⁹ J. Lambert, *Betrayed Trust: Africans and the state in colonial Natal*, (Pietermaritzburg, 1995), 47.

²⁰ In Alexandra County, Africans cultivated 4, 300 acres of Indian corn in 1875 and realized a harvest of 16,500 muids. White farmers cultivated 483 acres and produced 2,477 muids. In Alfred County in 1875 Africans cultivated 10,400 acres of Indian corn producing 52,000 muids. Production by settlers was negligible – a mere 57 acres producing 456 muids. See: *Natal Blue Book*, 1875, X2-X7. Also: *Natal Blue Book*, 1878, AA4-AA7; *Natal Blue Book*, 1884, X2-X7.

²¹ C. Bundy, *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry*, (Cape Town, 1988), 112.

²² J. Lambert and R. Morrell, 'Domination and subordination in Natal,' in R. Morrell (ed.), *Political Economy and identities in KwaZulu Natal*, 71.

Before the coming of railways, Norman Etherington has noted that members of the *kholwa*, African converts to Christianity, competed locally with settlers in the transport business as wagon drivers. By 1880 they were also engaged in wagon-making and shoe-making in addition to producing agricultural surpluses. Evidence submitted at the Native Commission in 1882 recorded that *kholwa* members were bidding at sales of Crown lands alongside whites. But that practice was discontinued in 1903 after the Lands Department was instructed to refuse African bids.²³ Settlers had long expressed concern about African land purchases. Robert M. Archibald, the senior Alexandra County representative appears to have differed in this regard. In 1899 he expressed the view that individual purchases of land by Africans were preferable to community land holdings as they led to progress and development.²⁴

The hearings of the Native Commission, of which Thomas Reynolds MLC for the South Coast (1880-1885) was a member,²⁵ did produce one exceptional finding as far as colonisation was concerned, namely, that Africans preferred to live under British administration rather than return to Zululand.²⁶ However, as regards the African presence in Natal and the land issue, four of the Commissioners submitted a Memorandum strongly objecting to paragraph 26 of the Report. Reynolds, Akerman, Stainbank and Cato, all members of the Legislative Council, opposed the view that Africans should be encouraged to purchase land in freehold while still under Native Law. 'We consider that inasmuch under Native Law.....the freehold of land is utterly unknown, no native who elects to remain under that law should be permitted to become a freeholder in land.'²⁷ They were opposed to the view that Africans should enjoy a dual privilege of being able to own land outside of the designated African locations whilst simultaneously having claim to land within the locations. By 1890 Africans had purchased 147,918 acres of Crown land in Natal, 13,928 acres in Alfred County and 4, 782 acres in Alexandra County.²⁸ As Bundy has pointed out, settlers objected to land sales to Africans because those lands were often sub-leased to other Africans. That had the effect of exacerbating the shortage of African labour available to white farmers.²⁹ In 1903 the view of Reynolds and his colleagues prevailed when the Lands Department was instructed to refuse all African land bids.³⁰

Aside from the curb on land purchases, overpopulation of reserves and natural disasters such as rinderpest and the locust plague reversed flourishing African agriculture by the late 1890s and contributed to the process of labour migration.³¹ In pondering as to why no indigenous equivalent of mining magnate Cecil John Rhodes or sugar baron Sir James Liege Hulett emerged, Norman Etherington has suggested that a combination of legal, land and leadership issues stifled the emergence of an entrepreneurial African middle class.³² The Royal Instructions of 1848 which provided for the continuance of Nguni law, constituted the premise of the dual legal system to which Africans were subjected, namely, African traditional practices and colonial laws.³³

²³ N. Etherington, 'African Economic Experiments,' in B. Guest and J.M. Sellers, (eds.), *Enterprise and Exploitation in a Victorian Colony*, (Pietermaritzburg, 1985), 274; 264; 272; 278.

²⁴ *Debates of the Legislative Assembly*, Vol.28, 1899, 264.

²⁵ Sir Henry Connor, the Chief Justice of Natal, was the chairman. Other members were: Bishop Colenso, J. Green, G.C. Cato, D. Stainbank and J.W. Akerman.

²⁶ Natal Native Commission, *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 1971, 31 October 1882, 1009.

²⁷ Report of the Natal Native Commission, *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 1971, 31 October 1882.

²⁸ J. Lambert, *Betrayed Trust*, 77, 79. The purchases were generally by chiefs. See: *Natal Blue Book*, 1883, GG21.

²⁹ C. Bundy, *The rise and fall of the South African peasantry*, 182.

³⁰ N. Etherington, 'African Economic Experiments,' in B. Guest and J.M. Sellers, (eds.), *Enterprise and Exploitation in a Victorian Colony*, 278.

³¹ J. Lambert, *Betrayed Trust*, 18; 159; C. Bundy, *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry*, 184.

³² N. Etherington, 'Natal's first black capitalists,' *Theoria*, Vol. XLV, October 1975, 37-38.

³³ N. Etherington, 'African Economic Experiments,' in B. Guest and J.M. Sellers, (eds.), *Enterprise and Exploitation in a Victorian Colony*, 279; 285.

Mission reserves occupied over 30,000 acres of coastal land in Alexandra County. The usefulness of those reserves was the subject of critical remarks down the years as exemplified by the *Mercury* in 1871,³⁴ James Aiken, the South Coast's first MLC, in 1876;³⁵ and by Resident Magistrate Gould Lucas in 1883.³⁶ The common objection to the presence of reserves was not only to the physical barriers which they posed to the territorial homogeneity of the County but to their lack of agricultural development. As the *Mercury* enquired: 'Have these reserves fulfilled the purposes for which they were created?'³⁷

Wittingly or unwittingly, missionaries were part of the colonising process. Mission-based projects in manufacturing tended to be limited and short-lived in the success they enjoyed. The Umvoti community co-operative sugar milling enterprise, which lasted twenty years until 1882, proved the most enduring.³⁸ In Alexandra County, the only mission station which engaged in manufacturing was that at Mtwalume under Reverend Wilder. Between 1862 and 1877 Africans on this mission station produced sugar using ox-powered mills.³⁹ Norman Etherington has advanced three reasons for the failure of these projects, namely, their co-operative nature which hobbled individual initiative, a lack of managerial expertise, and lack of access to capital. He also cites the legal system, to which Africans were subject, as stifling the emergence of a nascent African bourgeoisie.⁴⁰ In those respects, therefore, the lands reserved for Africans on the South Coast did not measure up to settler views on progress.

The Anglo-Zulu war of 1879 exacerbated the scarcity of African labour. As Alexandra County Resident Magistrate Lucas noted in 1881, the result was that 'most of the planters employ indentured Indians.' He also pointed out that 'natives prefer employment as wagon-drivers and store assistants to engaging as field labourers or domestic servants.'⁴¹ Public works such as railway construction and the Durban harbour works also attracted African labour thereby integrating Africans into the colonial economy.⁴² In 1889 John Kirkman of Beeverstowe estate in Alexandra County complained of the serious shortage of African labour. 'We cannot get it. I am offering as high as seventeen shillings – but all the natives are out of the County,' he stated in a letter to the Secretary for Native Affairs.⁴³ A.H. Bisset of Lower Umzimkulu claimed that the district was being 'denuded of its African labour chiefly onto the railway extension and harbour works.' He asked the Government to 'devise some means' to stem the exodus of African labour, failing which 'planters down South will be completely ruined.' By responding that it was not a 'matter in which the Government can interfere,' the Secretary for Native Affairs indicated that economic integration was an unavoidable consequence of colonization.⁴⁴ That trend continued as further evidence indicated.

³⁴ Amahlongwa reserve – 7,464 acres, Ifafa – 7,500, Mtwalumi – 13, 407, College Reserve Equeefa – 3,000 acres. See: *Natal Mercury*, 8 August 1871.

³⁵ Report on European Immigration, *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 1613, 17 October 1876.

³⁶ *Natal Blue Book*, 1883, GG45.

³⁷ *Natal Mercury*, 8 August 1871.

³⁸ N. Etherington, 'African Economic Experiments,' in B. Guest and J.M. Sellers, (eds.), *Enterprise and Exploitation in a Victorian Colony*, 269; 282.

³⁹ R.F. Osborn, *Valiant Harvest: the founding of the South African Sugar Industry*, (Durban, 1964), 135;158.

⁴⁰ N. Etherington, 'African Economic Experiments,' in B. Guest and J.M. Sellers, (eds.), *Enterprise and Exploitation in a Victorian Colony*, 270; 278.

⁴¹ *Natal Blue Book*, 1881, GG58.

⁴² The correspondent responsible for the 'Notes from Alexandra County' column in the *Mercury* stated on 7 August 1888 that the procurement of labour was causing 'much uneasiness.' Planters could not compete with the 'high wages' of £2 per month being offered by the railways.

⁴³ SNA 1/1/120, No. 1207, 7 and 11 November 1889. Kirkman was informed that 50 Africans had applied for Public Works jobs. Jeff Guy notes in *The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom*, (Pietermaritzburg, 1994), 239, that by 1894 Zululand was described as 'one of the chief sources' of the supply of African labour to the Witwatersrand gold mines.

⁴⁴ SNA 1/1/121, No. 1260, 18 and 22 November 1889.

The hut tax was one inducement for Africans to sell their labour to the settler farmer or entrepreneur. Whatever minor benefits that some Africans derived from the settler presence in no way equalled the financial contribution that they made to the colonial state. From its inception in 1849, hut tax at the rate of seven shillings, increased to fourteen shillings per annum in 1875,⁴⁵ proved a major component of colonial revenue. In 1886 it was listed as the third largest source of Natal's revenue, accounting for £72,299. Customs charges brought in £140,401 with Natal Government Railways contributing £178,287.⁴⁶ In Alfred County, for example, in 1880, hut tax amounted to £3,340 from an African population of 21,474.⁴⁷ Despite this sterling contribution to the colonial and county coffers the indigenous African population received very little in return by way of social services to say nothing of infrastructural development.⁴⁸

Incentivised by the mineral discoveries of the 1870s and 1880s, Africans increasingly became involved in the evolving settler-dominated economy. But given the racially-determined hierarchy of white supremacy, the role of the African was mostly limited to that of labourer.⁴⁹ In that respect the reluctance of Africans to sell their labour or their inconsistency in doing so, resulted in the importing of indentured Indian labour thereby adding a further dimension to colonisation.⁵⁰ In justifying the influx of indentured labour, Governor Walter Hely-Hutchinson noted that Africans came 'to labour only to obtain a certain remuneration, and having received that remuneration, whether it be obtained in three months or six months, they return' to their kraals.⁵¹ A detailed report on Lower Umzimkulu published in the *Mercury* on 9 April 1891 stated that not since 1873 had 'such a lack of native labour' been experienced. In desperation, planters like the Aiken brothers sought permission to introduce migrant labour from Pondoland because of 'the entire breakdown of usual supply of native labourers out of Alfred County.' They claimed that railway contractors were bribing chiefs in order to obtain labour.⁵² A.H. Bisset also sought to procure Pondo refugees as a substitute 'for the natural supply of labour.' H.C. Shepstone, the

⁴⁵ C.H. Feinstein, *An Economic History of South Africa: conquest, discrimination and development*, (Cambridge, 2005), 55.

⁴⁶ *Natal Blue Book*, 1886, R2.

⁴⁷ *Natal Blue Book*, 1880, Q9; V4.

⁴⁸ £4 and four shillings was spent at Archibald's store in Umzinto in 1882 on the purchase of medicines to treat African sufferers from enteric fever. The money was then claimed from the Government. See: CSO 843, No. 517, 3 February 1882. Notwithstanding the African contribution to the Treasury, there were instances when their payments fell into arrears. In 1889, for example, the Secretary for Native Affairs advised the Resident Magistrate for Lower Umzimkulu that Africans squatting on Crown land owed the Government £400. See: Minute Paper of the Resident Magistrate, Lower Umzimkulu, 104/89 Vol. 3/2/1, 1PTS, Secretary of Native Affairs, 23 August 1889, Durban Archives Repository. In 1888 the Resident Magistrate for Alfred County, with reference to taxes owed by Africans, suggested that there was an 'insufficiency of land to live on' and, as a result, questioned the legitimacy of 'enforcing the payment of [hut] tax.' See: SNA, 1/1/108, No.736, 30 August 1888.

⁴⁹ In 1852 Charles Barter wrote in *The Dorp and the Veld or Six Months in Natal*, (London, 1852), that settlers 'supposed the native population would afford the means of dispensing with extraneous aid and this circumstance has been held out as an additional temptation to the emerging capitalist' (163). John Bird stated that 'the rate of low wages and the cheapness of the food needed by the native led every European who landed in Natal to wish for kafir labour.' See: 'The form of Constitutional Government existing in the Colony of Natal,' 1869, 8. (KCM 19930, Bird Papers, File 3).

⁵⁰ Kaletso Atkins in *The Moon is Dead! Give us our money! The cultural origins of an African work ethic, Natal, South Africa*, (Portsmouth, 1993), 104, points out that 'mainly owing to the lack of positive experiences encountered on the [sugar] estates, plantation work lost the appeal it originally held for Natal Africans.'

⁵¹ *Debates of the Legislative Council*, 1893, Vol. XXI, 4.

⁵² SNA 1/1/145, No. 900, 6, 11 and 18 August 1891. James and David Aiken also drew attention to the dire shortage of African labour on their Marble Delta limestone quarry where they were down to only four labourers.

Secretary for Native Affairs, conceded that while the Pondos were not seeking to settle permanently, hiring them for 'small wages and food' could be considered.⁵³

Nonetheless, whilst praise was rightly lavished on William Bazley for his efforts in making the mouth of the Mzimkulu more accessible to shipping, his construction of the seawall would not have been possible without the involvement of African labour. By mid-1886 the wall was 600 feet long, fourteen feet high and twenty wide at its top structure. Built with stone quarried higher up the river, its construction was the achievement of 30 African labourers under the leadership of Bazley and four settlers.⁵⁴ All heavy construction work, whether roads, the erection of mills and buildings was achieved thanks to local African labour. African labour was also extensively used on the construction of the Kinsey training wall which replaced Bazley's seawall in the years after 1897. In December 1903 up to 80 Africans and Indians were employed on the project.⁵⁵ Whereas indentured labour was critical to the sugar industry, the role of African labour tends to be overlooked in the construction of infrastructure such as the erection of telegraph poles, the clearing of bush for the laying of railway track, road work and maintenance and the construction of bridges.

What do we know about other aspects of African life in this area?

Drunkenness

Whilst the existence of locations provided continuity for African customs and traditions, they did not prevent Africans from developing a liking for the white man's alcohol. Notwithstanding the fact that Law 18 of 1863 prohibited the sale or supply of alcohol in any form to Africans, by the mid- 1870s drunkenness amongst Africans became a matter of concern. In reports filed in 1876, the Resident Magistrates for both Alfred and Alexandra counties expressed alarm at the extent of the sale and consumption of alcohol by Africans. Magistrate James Giles of Alfred County contended that Law 18 'defeats itself partly by its very severity.' He endorsed the fact that farmers gave their labourers alcohol in cold, wet weather 'when not to give it would be almost cruel.' He claimed intoxication was greatest amongst wagon drivers.⁵⁶ As a measure to restrict the use of alcohol by Africans he suggested a drastic increase in the licence fees charged to purveyors of alcohol. Gould Lucas, the Resident Magistrate of Alexandra County, noted that there appeared to be no effective deterrent against the sale of alcohol to Africans and that licensed dealers sold liquor 'to any kafir who asks for it.' He proposed doubling the fine from £10 to £20 for those who flouted Law 18.⁵⁷

In his first debating foray in the Legislative Council in 1877, William Hawksworth, the South Coast's representative, noted that drunkenness amongst Africans was worsening in Alexandra County. A corollary of the growth of the sugar industry was the production of rum. In 1875, for instance, 12,579 gallons were produced in Alexandra County.⁵⁸ Hawksworth proposed the removal of liquor licences from stores and the sale of alcohol only at places of accommodation.⁵⁹ Law 22 of 1878 required licenced

⁵³ SNA 1/1/142, No. 749, 3 and 7 July 1891. The use of Pondo labour became widespread in Alfred County and in the sugar industry after 1910. P.M. Dickinson, 'The South African Sugar Industry 1910-1940,' in B .Guest and J.M. Sellers, (eds.), *Receded Tides of Empire*, (Pietermaritzburg, 1994) 168,171.

⁵⁴ Letter to the Editor, *Natal Mercury*, from J.F. Rethman, 19 July 1886.

⁵⁵ *Natal Mercury*, 20 July 1903.

⁵⁶ Their mobility and the wages they earned facilitated their access to and affordability of liquor.

⁵⁷ SNA 1/1/116, No. 375, 1885: Correspondence on the subject of increased drunkenness amongst the native population especially in the coastal districts. Reports from Resident Magistrates Giles, 16 September 1876 and Lucas 12 September 1876.

⁵⁸ *Natal Blue Book*, 1875, X4-5.

⁵⁹ *Natal Witness*, 13 July 1877.

liquor suppliers to record details of their sales together with the names of those to whom alcohol was supplied.

But the problem of drunkenness persisted. Resident Magistrates in the other sugar-producing counties noted that Indians who worked on estates and in distilleries ‘surreptitiously supply the natives with rum.’⁶⁰ The inability of the colonial authorities to police the situation abetted and perpetuated matters. A correspondent of the *Mercury* noted in 1884, there was ‘an enormous amount of drunkenness’ amongst the African population in Alexandra County and that no attempts were being made to stop it.⁶¹ The consumption of beer brewed from maize was, in any case, an African tradition. By 1888, however, that tradition came under colonial scrutiny when Cecil Yonge of Pietermaritzburg County proposed that controls be applied to ‘large scale festivities’ at which much beer was consumed by Africans. Abundant crops of maize in that year meant, in his view, ‘no end to kafir beer drinkings.’⁶² His concerns were echoed by the Alexandra County correspondent in the *Mercury* who pointed out that near Dumisa alone there were 100 acres of maize belonging to three local kraals which would enable them to produce huge quantities of beer known as *utywala*.⁶³ Yonge proposed that Africans be required to seek permission from the Resident Magistrate or Justice of the Peace to hold beer-drinking festivities.⁶⁴ Although the Council passed Law 11 of 1888 which regulated the sale of liquor from taverns, canteens and taps by requiring an annual licence fee of £1, without adequate enforcement the ‘mischief and scandal’ associated with beer – drinking, as Yonge described it, undoubtedly persisted.⁶⁵ While William Darby, the South Coast’s representative on the Council, endorsed the legislative regulation of *utywala*, he seemed sympathetic to African beer-drinking traditions when he asked: ‘Shall the poor man be robbed of his beer?’⁶⁶

Crime and security

Although the South Coast was a frontier area, it did not experience the unrest and confrontation which characterised the Cape’s Eastern frontier or the ‘long-standing Zulu difficulty,’ as the Resident Magistrate for Umvoti County stated in his report for 1878, or what his counterpart for Weenen County described in 1878 as an ‘unsettled state.’⁶⁷ The small force with which General Bisset proclaimed British authority over Alfred County in 1866 and the apparently peaceful way in which Adam Kok and his clan seemed to accept their colonial status served as an indicator of the stability which came to characterise Natal’s southern region.⁶⁸ A minuscule settler presence in Alfred County of only 29 adults by 1869⁶⁹ and a police detachment, which, by 1875, still comprised of only one white policeman and eight African assistants,⁷⁰

⁶⁰A.E. Titren, Acting Magistrate for Umlazi, Durban County; C. Barter, Resident Magistrate, Inanda Division, Victoria County. See: *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. XXIX, No. 1655, 3 July 1877. Walter Peace noted in *Our Colony of Natal*, (London, 1883), 69, that a bottle of rum in the early 1880s cost only one shilling and sixpence.

⁶¹ Letter to the Editor, *Natal Mercury*, from ‘Umtwalume,’ 26 March 1884. Acting Resident Magistrate for Alexandra County W.R. Gordon remarked in his report for 1884 on the debilitating effects the consumption of what he called *tsithimigana*, an alcoholic brew, was having on Africans. No statistics on charges of drunkenness were stated. *Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal*, 1884, B58.

⁶² *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. XII, 1888, 127.

⁶³ *Natal Mercury*, 7 August 1888.

⁶⁴ *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. XII, 1888, 127

⁶⁵ *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. XL, No. 2319, 11 September 1888; *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. XII, 1888, 127. At the 1889 AGM of the Bluff and Wentworth Farmers Association, an area then on the outskirts of Durban, the main topic of discussion was the illicit trade and traffic of liquor. See: *Natal Mercury*, 23 January 1889.

⁶⁶ *Debates of the Legislative Council*, Vol. XII, 1888, 127.

⁶⁷ Magistrates’ Reports, *Natal Blue Book*, 1878, JJ14; JJ16.

⁶⁸ Bisset’s military presence comprised: one officer and seven men of the Royal Artillery responsible for one twelve pounder howitzer; one NCO and twelve men from the 99th Regiment and two men and their NCO of the Colonial Mounted Rifles. See: Select Document No. 25, 1866, Bisset to Cardwell, 16 January 1866, 89-90.

⁶⁹ CSO 323 No. 242, 25 January 1869

co-existed peacefully with an indigenous African population in excess of 18,000.⁷¹ Incidents of crime remained very low, averaging 72 cases per year for the period 1874 to 1878.⁷² Nonetheless, concern at the 'indiscriminate sale of firearms' to Africans, resulted in the submission of a petition to Governor Pine signed by 43 residents of Alexandra County in 1873. Trade in guns was brisk on the diamond fields in the Northern Cape which attracted African labour. The thought that Africans may be returning home armed, evidently alarmed some settlers, unnecessarily as it turned out.⁷³

By the 1880s stock theft in Alfred County became problematic as a result of that county's proximity to Pondoland. Early in 1885 James Giles, the Resident Magistrate complained that stock losses were being incurred by both African and settler farmers with as many as 50 sheep at a time being plundered and taken across the border.⁷⁴ By December 1885, the problem of stock theft had become so great that Giles called for extradition rights to be used to counter the perpetrators. 'Offences of all sorts can be committed in this county and immunity from punishment secured by the offenders merely by crossing the border,' he wrote. As a result, Colonial Secretary Mitchell asked the Cape Government to effect 'some arrangement' to deal with the matter.⁷⁵ But the problem persisted. For example, in 1891 and 1892 J.F. Rethman, the MLC for Alfred County, complained about the 'wholesale' theft of livestock by Pondos.⁷⁶

Faction fighting flared up in Pondoland from time to time. From 1890 what has been described as 'continuous anarchy' commenced as a result of rivalry between Paramount Chief Sigcau and Mhlangaso, the Pondo Chief who lived near the Alfred County border.⁷⁷ In response, the number of Natal Mounted Police was increased from fifteen to twenty.⁷⁸ That number was increased to fifty by December 1890.⁷⁹ By March 1891, the situation was described as having gone from 'bad to worse'.⁸⁰ Official concern at this state of affairs was reflected in the fact that the number of police barracked at Harding, the administrative control point of Alfred County, had increased to 80.⁸¹ Addressing the newly-elected Legislative Assembly in October 1893, Governor Hely-Hutchinson expressed concern at the state of affairs on Natal's southern boundary arising from inter-tribal disturbances in Pondoland.⁸² Essentially, as William Beinart points out, 'the civil war in Pondoland was a struggle for power between a new paramount and the dominant councillor of the old, a struggle over policy towards the colonial powers.' Hostilities between the two continued until early 1894 when the Cape annexed Pondoland.⁸³

⁷⁰ CSO 505 No. 201, 14 January 1875.

⁷¹ *Natal Blue Book*, 1875, R10.

⁷² CSO 654, No. 111, 24 July 1878. Small police contingents were a feature of colonial administration. Umsinga magisterial district, with an African population of 32,000 in 1885, had only 'a paltry few native police,' as Resident Magistrate H.F. Fynn jnr. stated in his annual report (*Supplement to the Blue Book for the Colony of Natal*, 1885, B40). The actual security of districts was the responsibility of the Volunteers. Their importance was underlined by the Colonial Commandant, Major John George Dartnell, when he told the Alexandra Mounted Rifles that 'every able-bodied man would have to bear arms.' See: *Natal Mercury*, 22 August 1881.

⁷³ CSO 461, No. 152, 12 November 1873.

⁷⁴ SNA 1/1/80, No. 78, 2 February 1885.

⁷⁵ SNA 1/1/88, No. 838, 22 December 1885.

⁷⁶ SNA 1/1/162, No. 1165, 19 October 1892; SNA 1/1/147, No. 1166, 8 October 1891.

⁷⁷ B.E. Camp, 'A history of the district of Alfred,' (Harding, 1960), 22, KCM 55148, MS CAM

⁷⁸ CSO 1268, No. 4613, 24 and 29 July 1890; *Natal Mercury*, 29 October 1890.

⁷⁹ *Natal Mercury*, 12 December 1890.

⁸⁰ *Natal Mercury*, 9 March 1891.

⁸¹ W.H. Bizley, 'By post cart to Harding', *Natalia*, 25, 1995, 10. The Harding area falls outside the territorial scope of this study.

⁸² *Natal Government Gazette*, Vol. XLV, No. 2642, 19 October 1893. In a report on 10 August 1893, the *Natal Witness* referred to Natal's southern border as 'the most unsettled in the whole of Natal.'

⁸³ W. Beinart, *The Political Economy of Pondoland 1860-1930*, (Johannesburg, 1982), 34.

As the Lower Umzimkulu district attracted more settlers, incidents of theft and other criminal claims increased. But it would appear that the claims made about the state of lawlessness and disorder were exaggerated with a view to obtaining a separate magistracy in the district. Early in 1884, General Bisset claimed that his cattle were being killed by the local African population and requested measures to 'suppress this crime.' In his response, the Resident Magistrate noted that Bisset employed 40 Africans and twelve indentured Indians and that he had in fact lost two animals.⁸⁴ In December 1883, William Brickhill of the Lower Umzimkulu District Association, requested the stationing of a detachment of the Natal Mounted Police in the Lower Umzimkulu area because, he claimed, 'serious crimes' were being constantly committed in the neighbourhood. Resident Magistrate Giles rejected Brickhill's claim as 'totally untrue,' arguing that the only crime which had taken place concerned Brickhill's own bull. But Brickhill countered by pointing out that fifteen cases of petty theft had occurred involving poultry, sheep and garden tools. He also asserted that there had been nine cases of 'serious' crimes, including attempted rape and robbery.⁸⁵ Instances of stock theft perpetrated by Africans continued to trouble the district as a Norwegian settler remarked in a letter published in the *Mercury*.⁸⁶

Fresh claims of 'kafir outrages' were made at a public meeting in Port Shepstone attended by sixty residents on 10 December 1886. According to minutes of the meeting recorded by David Aiken, there were 'rapidly increasing cases of assault upon European females by natives.' The Norwegian contingent at the meeting was critical that a state of 'terror' could exist under the British flag and went as far as stating they wished themselves 'out of it and back home again.' A Vigilance Committee was formed and stated that it would visit local chiefs and headmen to inform them of the 'consequences of attacks on white women.' What those consequences might have been was not stated. Nor were any details recorded of the number of alleged attacks. Again, it would seem, the purpose of the vocal outpourings may have been to apply pressure on the colonial administration to provide the Lower Umzimkulu district with its own magistracy. Apart from perfunctory acknowledgement of receipt of Aiken's minutes of the meeting, nothing was forthcoming from the Colonial Secretary.⁸⁷ The report of Resident Magistrate Giles for 1886 made no mention of the alleged 'kafir outrages.'⁸⁸

Environment

One of the findings of the Forest Commission which presented its report in 1878 was that Africans should be prevented from cutting timber. The Commission stated that the 'destruction of woods has been proceeding at a rapid pace' and that there was 'little or no regulation.'⁸⁹ A subsequent Commission appointed in 1880 to report on the extent and condition of forest lands in the Colony, estimated that each native hut represented the destruction of 400 trees and claimed that 255 tons of timber was sold each month on the Pietermaritzburg market.⁹⁰ In an attempt to reverse the situation and to encourage tree planting by Africans, magistrates were asked to suggest how this could be achieved. The Resident Magistrate for Alfred County suggested that Africans be supplied with fast-growing Australian trees with incentives given to successful planters. His colleague in Alexandra County concurred on the need for

⁸⁴ CSO 953, No. 953, No. 1002, 7 and 21 March 1884.

⁸⁵ CSO 964, No. 4840, 4 December 1883, 22 and 31 March 1883.

⁸⁶ Letter to the Editor, *Natal Mercury*, from 'GK,' 23 December 1884.

⁸⁷ CSO 1109, No. 4924, 10 and 15 December 1886; *Natal Mercury*, 15 December 1886.

⁸⁸ *Natal Blue Book*, 1886, B40.

⁸⁹ CSO 747, Nos. 1273, 2194. *Government Notice*, No. 334, 1878. Increased domestic demand for firewood as well as the increase in manufacturing industries such as brick-making, tiles and soap, particularly around Durban and Pietermaritzburg, resulted in a rapid reduction of wooded vegetation. See: B. Ellis, 'The impact of white settlers on the natural environment of Natal, 1845-1870,' in B. Guest and J.M. Sellers (eds.), *Enterprise and Expectation in a Victorian Colony*, 82.

⁹⁰ CSO 940, Encl., 13.

inducements and suggested the planting of black wattle trees whose commercial value would assist Africans in the payment of their hut tax.⁹¹

In complaining about the destruction of timber, settlers tended to discriminate and to rail primarily against Africans. In 1885, as the new representative of the South Coast, General Bisset wrote to Colonial Secretary Mitchell about what he termed the ‘destruction’ of timber at North Shepstone by Africans squatting on Crown land. The problem was not new, however. The year before Bru-de-Wold, a settler of Norwegian descent who commanded the Umzimkulu Mounted Rifles in 1884, had asked the Acting Resident Magistrate, William Rose Gordon, for a policeman to assist him in keeping control over wood cutting which, he stated, was ‘steadily increasing’ despite his warnings. In 1885 de Wold was appointed conservator of Alexandra County. But the district was too large for him to be effective while the salary of just £12 per annum was quite inadequate for the degree of travel involved.⁹²

An exception to the bureaucratic approach regarding Africans cutting timber concerned the case of Ndongeni. His role as the African who had accompanied Dick King on part of the way of his historic ride from Port Natal to Grahamstown in 1842 proved crucial in his request to be allowed to cut wattles on crown land in Alfred County. The Department of Native Affairs overrode the objections of the Director of Agriculture and the Conservator of Forests on the grounds that Ndongeni’s services to the Colony remained worthy of recognition. As a result, the cost of a licence to cut wattles and the provision of a large hut for Ndongeni were borne by the Department of Native Affairs.⁹³

Education

Education opportunities for settler children were few and far between, as a report in the *Mercury* stated.⁹⁴ The school for whites in Umzinto was closed in 1878 by the Council of Education on account of low attendance and unsatisfactory reports.⁹⁵ In 1880, the only other school for white pupils was in Umkomaas which had an enrolment of 29.⁹⁶ The situation was no better in 1884 when the report of the Acting Resident Magistrate for Alexandra County, William Rose Gordon, remarked that white children were growing up illiterate.⁹⁷ In contrast, not only did the number of mission schools for Africans exceed the number of Government schools for white children, but they were also better staffed and maintained. The American Board mission schools were able to provide teachers and thus ensure continuity and a degree of permanence. Although limited in the numbers they could enrol, there were four mission schools in Alexandra County, namely, Amahlongwa, Ifafa, Mtwalumi and Umzumbe. But it must also be borne in mind that no secondary level education was provided by the mission schools and that emphasis was laid on vocational skills development.⁹⁸

The Mtwalumi school was divided into two phases – intermediate and primary. There were nineteen pupils in the intermediate phase which was housed in a brick building. The Native Education Reports for 1885 and 1886 noted the pupils’ neat appearance, a ‘passable’ ability to read in Zulu, and that their curriculum included arithmetic, needlework, sewing, Geography and English. The primary phase had an enrolment of 58 of whom 29 were girls. The boys were made to perform ‘useful work’ such as tree

⁹¹ CSO 940, Encl. 4 January 1884.

⁹² CSO 1044, No. 4846, 7 October 1885; 14 September 1884; *Natal Blue Book*, 1888, C59; B4-6.

⁹³ Durban Archives Repository, LU 99/1903; SNA 470/1903, Vol. 3/2/11, 26 January, 3 February, 3 March 1903.

⁹⁴ *Natal Mercury*, 22 July 1882.

⁹⁵ *Natal Blue Book*, 1879, W8.

⁹⁶ *Natal Blue Book*, 1880, W9.

⁹⁷ *Natal Blue Book*, 1884, B57. The report did note the existence of a few private schools for white children.

⁹⁸ In 1882 the Rev J. Barker of Umzinto applied to the Secretary for Native Affairs for a grant-in-aid for a school for Africans. Subject to the numbers attending not being less than twenty, the Government agreed to the provision of a grant (sum not specified). See: SNA 1/1/53, No. 103, 5 March and 14 April 1882.

planting, building, and road work. According to the reports, the top eight pupils exhibited exceptional fluency in both English and Zulu and were taught by an African woman. Similar positive remarks were made about the Umzumbe mission school where the roles played by two white female teachers, Miss Welch and Miss Gilson, were commended in the Report. The Ifafa mission school, however, was considered unsatisfactory in terms of the small size of its classroom and the standard of tuition in 1885. But a year later, in 1886, the school was found to be making good progress.⁹⁹ Thanks to £500 from the United States, the American Board Mission school for girls at Umzumbe was described as ‘one of the finest establishments’ in the Colony according to the 1886 Report for Native Education. Equipped with a kitchen, laundry, study rooms, ablutions and dormitories, its enrolment was limited to 45 pupils.¹⁰⁰ Overall, the Inspector of Native Education, Fred Fynney, observed ‘a growing desire’ amongst Africans for education. ‘The benefits of education are becoming year by year more appreciated by the native races,’ he wrote.¹⁰¹

Fynney’s view of his portfolio was, however, a mere snapshot of reality. The report for 1887 recorded that at Ifafa only 20 of the 45 enrolled students were present by October. The others were away assisting their families with the mealie crop. A similar situation prevailed at Umzumbe Primary where Fynney noted a very low level of achievement. His most telling observation, however, was that the Umzumbe kindergarten had an enrolment of just eleven pupils despite being in the vicinity of a ‘dense native population.’¹⁰² From this it is possible to infer that African parents had dissenting views about the white man’s education which clashed with, inter alia, the customs and traditions of chieftainship. In any event, the exposure of Africans to European-type education was extremely limited.

That limitation was exacerbated by the early twentieth century when the state grants to mission schools declined from £1, two shillings and eight pence to thirteen shillings and three pence per child between 1893 and 1903.¹⁰³

Health

The frugal and extremely limited nature of government services was perhaps best exemplified by the office of the District Surgeon. In 1884, South Coast MLC Thomas Reynolds attempted to obtain the services of an additional doctor for Alexandra County so as to split the duties of the District Surgeon from those of the Indian medical circle officer, but to no avail.¹⁰⁴ The burden placed on a single doctor in a county as large as Alexandra was totally unrealistic in respect of both the territorial extent and the size of the different population groups.¹⁰⁵ Yet Dr Lancelot Booth, in his capacity as Alexandra County District Surgeon,¹⁰⁶ was not daunted by those odds. On two occasions in 1882 he demonstrated remarkable dedication to duty. Informed of the deaths of fifteen Africans in a four week period in the area between the Mzumbe and Mzimkulu rivers, Dr Booth visited numerous kraals distributing medicine to treat what

⁹⁹Native Education Report, *Natal Blue Books*, 1885, U56-58; 1886,U53-54.

¹⁰⁰Native Education Report, *Natal Blue Book*, 1886, U54-55.

¹⁰¹Native Education Report, *Natal Blue Book*, 1885, U72.

¹⁰² Native Education Report, 1887, 31-32 (separate publication).

¹⁰³ J. Lambert and R. Morrell, ‘ Domination and subordination in Natal 1890-1920,’ in R. Morrell, (ed.), *Political Economy and identities in KwaZulu Natal*, 71.

¹⁰⁴ CSO 959, No. 1631, 24, 28 April 1884.

¹⁰⁵ In 1882 the white population was given as 514, Indians 1,836, Africans 22,515. See: *Natal Blue Book*, 1882, T4.

¹⁰⁶ Dr Booth was appointed on 8 February 1877: See: *Government Notice*, No. 51, 1877.

he diagnosed as acute dysentery.¹⁰⁷ Then, in what may be noted as good colonial governance, he was able to provide critical evidence in what appeared to be a murder case. He did so by travelling to the Mtwalume mission station where he exhumed the body of an African. His post-mortem investigation revealed that the cause of death was from a skull fracture incurred in a fall and not as a result of violence.¹⁰⁸

Alexandra County was not spared the spread of syphilis amongst the African population. Following the report of a Colony-wide investigation into the presence of syphilis amongst Africans, it was noted that the disease had first been recorded amongst some 300 prostitutes living in the Pietermaritzburg district in 1849. In later years its spread was facilitated by wagon drivers and migrant workers on the diamond fields. Gould Lucas, the Resident Magistrate for Alexandra County, contended that the disease was being spread amongst kraals in the County by Africans who were returning from Durban. Dr Booth's view was that only hospitalisation could cure sufferers. The Acting Secretary for Native Affairs, J. Shepstone, agreed with that proposal but nothing came of it.¹⁰⁹ Indifference towards the South Coast was also reflected in health matters when, in 1890, the Indian Medical Officer, Dr S.W. Lennon, appealed for an enquiry to be made into an outbreak of what seemed to be smallpox amongst Africans in the Lower Umzimkulu area. Acting Colonial Secretary Hime flatly refused, saying that he saw 'no necessity.'¹¹⁰ Nonetheless, despite the challenges to their capacity, the colonial administration did attempt to provide the rudiments of health care. The Resident Magistrate for Alexandra County reported in October 1893 that 2,327 new vaccinations had been administered to Africans.¹¹¹

An outbreak of the highly contagious and endemic disease of smallpox in Alexandra County in 1903 saw the District surgeon, Dr Booth-Clarkson, carrying out comprehensive measures to contain it. He set up three quarantine camps in the Dumisa district and ordered the burning of the huts and clothing of those infected. New clothing was supplied as well as £63 for the building of new huts. Only one death occurred out of 37 cases that Booth-Clarkson treated. Vaccinations were carried out at ten assembly points in Alexandra County and a cottage hospital was set up near the gaol in Umzinto.¹¹²

Unrest

Until 1906, when unrest flared up in parts of the Colony, relations amongst Africans in Alexandra County were largely stable and peaceful. The disagreements that occurred from time to time were minor and usually the consequence of excess alcohol consumption.¹¹³ Discontent began to manifest itself in 1905 as a result of the imposition of a new £1 poll per adult male, irrespective of race. The tax was resented not only by the hitherto untaxed single Zulu men, but by their elders who felt it would encourage urban migration to jobs on the mines and in the towns and thereby weaken traditional authority and discipline. As a result there was widespread, sullen opposition to colonial rule.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁷ CSO 844, No. 628, 23 January 1882. The Resident Magistrate of Alfred County also reported deaths amongst Africans from what he called enteric fever. Medicines were obtained from Archibald's store in Umzinto, fifty miles away, to treat affected cases. See: CSO 843, No. 517, 3 February 1882 – Appendix 5.

¹⁰⁸ CSO 877, No. 3926, 16 October 1882.

¹⁰⁹ CSO 617, No. 4136, 15 and 30 March 1877; 23 May 1877.

¹¹⁰ CSO 1248, No. 755, 30 January and 4 February 1890.

¹¹¹ SNA 1/1/175, No. 1199, 17 October 1893.

¹¹² *Natal Blue Book on Native Affairs*, 1903, 22-23.

¹¹³ *Natal Blue Book on Native Affairs*, 1903, 21; *Natal Blue Book on Native Affairs*, 1904, 20; SNA 1/1/299/265, 1903.

¹¹⁴ E. Brookes and C. de B. Webb, *A History of Natal*, (Pietermaritzburg, 1965), 221. A comprehensive account of the rebellion is provided by Jeff Guy in *Remembering the Rebellion: the Zulu uprising of 1906*, (Scottsville, 2006).

In response to reported defiance by African tribesmen, Col. Duncan McKenzie of the Natal Royal Regiment came to Umzinto and confronted Charlie Fynn and his indunas. After disarming them he subjected them to a court martial. A report in the *Mercury* subsequently noted that stability and peace had returned to the County and that ‘the influence of Col. McKenzie’s column has been for good.’¹¹⁵ Whereas unrest occurred in Richmond with the murder of two white Police officers, in Camperdown where a white farmer was murdered and in Mahlabatini, Zululand, where the magistrate was murdered,¹¹⁶ no such incidents occurred in Alexandra and Alfred Counties. However, a wave of fear reverberated among settlers around the Colony as a result of the Bhambatha rebellion which influenced settler thinking on the Union issue in subsequent years.

The final years of colonial rule were characterised by peaceful co-existence between settlers and the indigenous Africans on the South Coast.¹¹⁷ Whereas confrontation and hostility characterised relations between the colonial presence and indigenous Africans on the Cape Colony’s eastern frontier, the South Coast, even though it was a frontier territory, was not subjected to such an experience.¹¹⁸ As a result, relations between settlers and Africans were generally harmonious and devoid of the rancour which was so evident between settlers and the Xhosas on the eastern frontier particularly after the Sixth Frontier War.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ *Natal Mercury*, 10 April 1906.

¹¹⁶ E. Brookes and C. de B. Webb, *A History of Natal*, 222-223.

¹¹⁷ Durban Archives Repository, LU 1777/06, September 1906.

¹¹⁸ David Aiken in a diary entry of January 1868 recorded that settlers and local Africans frequently indulged in informal trade. That might involve trading a horse for a bull or oxen. He also frequently purchased sacks of mealies from Africans. Diary of D.C. Aiken, 1867-1870, Old House Museum, Aliwal St, Durban, 12.

¹¹⁹ A. Lester, ‘“Otherness” and the frontiers of empire: the Eastern Cape Colony 1806-1850,’ *Journal of Historical Geography*, Vol. 24, 1, (1998), 7-9.