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THE LAND STRUGGLE OF THE NEWLANDERS OF THABA PHATSWA

Abstract

The current (2018) South African public discourse is dominated by land issues. Land attributes are not unknown modalities in the South African political landscape. For centuries land was an important identity marker, which constructed the national, political and economic parameters for the existence of various communities in South Africa. The significance of land ownership was the proverbial golden thread that weaved through intergroup relationships in the central interior of South Africa during the early to mid-1800s. The struggle for land was not a one-sided affair between the Boers of the Free State and the different indigenous communities. In order to survive and obtain political/ethnic recognition, leaders like Moshweshwe (Basotho), Moroka (Barolong), Barend Barends (Griqua), Jan II (Hanto or Jan Kaptein) and his brother Gert Taaibosch (Korana), and Carolus Baatje and his followers, known as the Newlanders, were also involved in various land skirmishes amongst themselves. Against this background, the quest for land by the Newlanders of Carolus Baatje forms the basic structural framework of this article.

The Newlanders of Carolus Baatje have lived in the Caledon River valley since the 1830s. Up to now, no comprehensive historical research has been done on them and very little is known about their origin and their doings. Almost without exception in the literature, references to the Newlanders are made only insofar as their actions connect with the main role-players in events and occurrences under discussion. In other words, these references are indirect and do not present, in themselves, a point of departure. The epistemological challenge hereof was that only through the interaction between the various internal groups could the Newlanders be singled out and highlighted.

Keywords: Wesleyan Mission; intergroup relations; Basotho; violence; Orange Free State

Slutelwoorde: Wesliaanse sending; intergroep verhoudinge, Basotho; geweld; Oranje-Vrystaat

1. INTRODUCTION

Thaba Phatswa is a settlement in the south-eastern part of the Free State Province in South Africa.¹ The community is poor and there are scarce work opportunities. A few individuals keep livestock with the liability of theft from Lesotho, as in the past. Most of the inhabitants depend on social pensions and grants. In 2012, there were about 220 households with a total of 1 100 inhabitants, and there is a school. The 2011 census indicates that 84.7% of the inhabitants are Afrikaans and that 76.4% classified themselves as 'coloureds'. In 1940, ten Afrikaans 'coloured' families had been relocated here from a nearby farm (Brakfontein no. 140) and from the Transkei (then in the process of becoming 'independent') (Murray 1992). In 1974, this number had risen to 15 families. The greater majority of the so-called coloureds are descendants of Carolus Baatje's (also written as Bantjes or Batje) followers (Louw 1964:11; Van der Merwe 2012:499).²

There is no certainty about the origin and vicissitudes of Baatje and his people. References in the literature are incidental, incomplete and fragmentary. Sources often contain only a single, coincidental reference, making it difficult

- 1 The settlement takes its name from the mountain Thaba Phatswa. The name is of Setswana or Sesotho origin and means 'long black mountain' (Ellenberger 1992:208). The settlement was developed in 1940 on the farms Thaba Patchoa (no. 106), Thaba Potchoaberg (no. 668), Mammashoek, (no. 802) and Dassiehoek (no. 666) with a total surface of 1 988 hectares. The original owner of Thaba Phatswa was Mr Stephanus Koko, a son from the Barolong chief Moroka's fourth house and also a councillor (Murray 1992:261–263). Mr Jeremiah Makgothi owned the land from 1905 to 1922 and a relative, Mr Moses Masisi, bought it in the 1930s. The original farm was subdivided into seven parts. Apart from the four farms already named there were also Sweet Home (no. 667), Tshiamelo (no. 664) and Segogoan's Valley (no. 665). These three farms initially stayed in the possession of the Barolong as South African Native Trust (SANT) land (Murray 1992:215). The former Department of Land Affairs purchased it from Mr Letsapa Masisi and transferred it to the Department of Coloured Affairs. A successful land claim has seen the transfer of these three farms in 2004 to the Boitumelo Communal Property Association, an association consisting of 44 families who have lived on and exploited the land as tenants.
- 2 To distinguish the history of Carolus and his people from that of Jan Gerritze Bantjes, I have decided to use the orthographical 'Baatje' with reference to Carolus. Jan Gerritze Bantjes, like Carolus, was of slave descent and became an important figure amongst the Voortrekkers during the 1800s. Kleijn (2018:20–25) mentions that one Jan Gerrit Bantjes, who was born on 24 January 1734, Groningen, Netherland, had arrived during 1755 with the Stadwyk at Cape Town and married, *inter alia*, a daughter of slave origin. She was the grandmother of Jan Gerritze Bantjes one of Jan Gerrit Bantjes' grandsons. Jan Gerritze Bantjes was born, according to some sources, at a place that was called Nieuwveld in the district of Graaf-Reinet. Jan Gerritze Bantjes together with field cornet Jacob de Klerk from the Beaufort district joint the Voortrekker leader Gerrit Maritz during 1837 at Thaba Nchu. It is well known that the Barolong chief Moroka gave shelter to Gerrit Maritz and his people at Thaba Nchu during November 1836. I shall in detail later shown that Carolus Baatje and his followers, together with Moroka, settled at Thaba Nchu during 1834. Carolus Baatje and Jan Gerritze Bantjes were thus at the same time at Thaba Nchu which opens up the circumstantial possibility that Carolus Baatje and Jan Gerritze Bantjes could have met each other. Despite the resemblance in their surnames as well as their slave relatedness, no proof could be found that they ever met each other or that they were indeed relatives.

to form a picture of them (See Collins 1965; Muller 1907; and Schoeman 1996). There is also a question mark hanging over the origin of these people. Etherington (2001:316), for example, speaks of the 'old Kora raider Carolus Baatje', while Molema (s.a.:40–41) initially refers to them as 'the Koranas who called themselves New Zealanders', but he describes them elsewhere as a 'mixed Hottentot clan' (Molema s.a.:32). Van Aswegen (1993:283) mentions that the 'Bastaards under Carolus Baatje' called themselves Newlanders, and this first label is also used by Sanders (1969:446). Wadley (2001:160) refers to 'Carolus Baatje and his Coloureds', while Dreyer (2001:66) simply refers to 'the people of Carolus Baatje of Platberg'. Referring to the Korana, Leśniewski (2010:22) remarks that they 'would not have differed from Oorlam-Afrikaners or some Bergenaar bands like the Karolus Baatje Newlanders'. Mears (1970:39) refers to the Newlanders as 'semi-civilised people', about five to six hundred strong, who migrated with their flocks and herds from the Cape Colony to escape the discrimination they experienced there.

The general state of lawlessness in Transorangia during the latter part of the eighteenth century and the first part of the nineteenth led to inhabitants of this area following a largely shared lifestyle of raiding, hunting and livestock farming, while mixing took place on a large scale. It is thus impracticable to assign clearly defined ethnic, cultural or racial labels to the people of Transorangia. The Rev. J. Archbell did voice the opinion that the Newlanders were 'just commencing their existence as a distinct group' (Schoeman 1991:71). What this was supposed to mean is not clear to the current Baatje descendants. Informants use various markers, such as 'Bastard', 'Griqua', 'coloured' and 'Korana', to refer to themselves or describe their identity as follows: 'We are well-mixed coloureds' (Ons is goed-gebasterde kleurlinge). The South African indigenous movement sees the Newlanders as part of the indigenous community. While the umbrella term 'Kho-San' is used in this regard, it is not equally acceptable to all Baatje descendants. Especially those who see themselves as coloured, reject this term as a marker. There is thus neither in the literature nor among informants clarity about who they were then and who they are now. One of the aims of this article is to achieve greater precision about the origin of this group of people.

There was a long close-knit association of joint armed action between Baatje, Pieter Davids (Griqua), Gert Taaibosch (Korana) and Moroka (Barolong). The first three leaders did not have many followers, but they had horses and firearms at their disposal and could give a good account of themselves. Moroka, on the other hand, was an excellent ally because of the strategic location of his seat, Thaba 'Nchu. Through joining forces, these leaders played a distinct political role in Transorangia. By looking at the distinctive relationships between these groups, it is possible to arrive at a diachronic reconstruction of the history of the Newlanders and one can obtain greater clarity regarding their lot. The information presented

here is marked by a narrative style and driven by data from published sources and archival documents.³ A further attempt was made to present authentic indigenous voices through interviews conducted in 2013 and 2014. As the participation of informants was on the condition of anonymity, no details about them will be provided in this article. Interviews were conducted in Afrikaans (the mother tongue of the informants) and several individuals, as well as groups, were involved over two years.

2. ORIGIN: THREE POSSIBLE SCENARIOS

As we have mentioned, the origin of Baatje's people is uncertain, but we know that they had left the Cape Colony by the end of the eighteenth century (Schoeman 1991:90). Logically, the search for their origin must begin at the early history of the Cape. In the first place, there is the possibility of Dutch origin. According to Mears, the Newlanders were descendants of 'Dutch farmers who had cohabited with Hottentot women' and they spoke Dutch (Mears 1970:39). The phenomenon of speaking Dutch was not uncommon among colonial Khoe-San⁴ and it is indicative of the consequences of imperialism and colonialism. The language question can therefore not be viewed here as representing physical mixing or as a marker of origin for the Newlanders. As far as could be established, the surname 'Baatje' / 'Bantjes' is, however, not a general Dutch surname⁵, and it leads us to a second consideration. At least nine slaves with this surname were sold at the Cape of Good Hope between 25 April 1698 and 25 November 1730 (Böeseke 1977; Hattingh 1983). All were male, but they originated from different regions in Indonesia.⁶ Emotional and sexual relations among male slaves and Khoekhoe women on farms were common occurrences (Worden & Groenewald 2005:xxxiv). Runaway slaves often found a following under the local Khoekhoe population and they established themselves outside the borders of the Cape Colony to escape colonial repression. Court documents analysed by Worden and Groenewald testify to great-scale attempts at escape and there were at least

3 Documents of the Free State Archives Repository in Bloemfontein were consulted.

4 Authors, such as Ross (1974:29), Trail (2002:29) and Bleek (1862:5) bring to our attention that, already before hundred years had lapsed after 1652, the Western Cape Khoekhoe languages were beginning to disappear and they were gradually replaced by Afrikaans-Dutch as first language.

5 *Achterhoek Ancestors* (www.netherlandsgenealogy.com) and *History of Family Names* (www.familyeducation.com), for example, do not mention Baatje or Bantjes as a Dutch family name. However, according to the *Database of Surnames in the Netherlands* (www.meertens.knaw.nl), there were 24 people in 2007 with the surname of Bantjes (but not Baatje) in the Netherlands. This, however, does not mean that these people originated from the Netherlands – they could as well have migrated to the Netherlands.

6 Four of them were from the city of Macassar, two from the island Bali, and three were from Bugis, on the Indonesian island Sulawesi.

two examples where a slave called Baatje was involved (Worden & Groenewald 2005:xxxiv).

The reference to Baatje's people as 'Newlanders' supports to some extent the notion of slave heritage. As the Cape colonial territory expanded, the Dutch East India Company (DEIC or VOC) established outposts on their borders. The borderline connecting the outposts of Nieuwland and Hottentots-Holland was the second border of the Cape Colony (Sleigh 1989:7–11). Slaves would follow the route over Nieuwland to flee from the colony (Worden & Groenewald 2005:160). This could equally be the origin of the name 'Newlanders' for this group. However, a further possibility is that Platberg (also known as New Platberg, hereafter Platberg II), where Baatje's people settled in 1834, had formerly been known as 'Nieuwland' (Hofstede 1876:129). One must not confuse 'Nieuwveld', where Jan Gerritze Bantjes originated, with 'Nieuwland'.

An interesting incident of 1837 strengthens the supposition that the Newlanders had a slave identity. Shortly after their establishment at Platberg II some of the Newlanders visited a former Bengali slave who was sold to a Frenchman at the Cape of Good Hope. He lived with his Khoekhoe wife and children in the Roggeveld Mountains on the periphery of the colony. The family was statutorily free but their employer treated them like slaves. During their visit, the Newlanders persuaded the family to move to Platberg II.⁷ Unfortunately, there is no information given as to prior ties with the slave family or with regard to the reason behind the visit. Considering that the journey covered approximately 2 000 kilometres and that the means of transport was primitive in those days, there had to have been a very good reason for tackling dangerous routes through the inhospitable territory.

Against this background, one cannot exclude the possibility that Carolus Baatje had been a slave descendant, or even himself a slave. This possibility has been discussed with informants on more than one occasion. The fact that they do not have any knowledge of this does not exclude the possibility; runaway slaves would not have gone about proclaiming their fugitive status.

The third scenario concerning the origin is, according to informants, that the Newlanders were a breakaway Griqua group from Adam Kok. They were, however, unable to explain why Baatje would have broken away from Kok. In his *Griqua Records: The Philippolis Captaincy, 1825–1861*, Schoeman (1996) makes no mention of such an incident while Ross (1974:31) states in his research on the Griqua that the Newlanders were an independent group that did not form part of Kok's Griqua. To Rev. Cameron, who lived at Platberg II and worked among the Newlanders for five years, there is a definite difference between the two groups. He explains as follows:

7 Letter Book of the Wesleyan Rev. James Cameron, Accessions no. 11.2, Henderson Collection, Archives of the Free State, Bloemfontein (hereafter Henderson Collection).

The Bastards [Newlanders] and Griquas are mixed races from the Colony, but differing widely from each other in disposition and habits. They are both in a transition state from barbarism to civilization, but the former are several degrees in advance of the latter. The Bastards are a quiet, inoffensive, comparatively industrious people, cultivating the soil and living from the produce, in connection with what they obtain by occasional hunting excursions; but the Griquas are a restless, turbulent, and lazy set of people, choosing rather to live by plunder than industry. (Henderson Collection)

To summarise: the heritage and origin of the Newlanders cannot be placed with exactitude. Sources do not support the narrative regarding a Griqua descent and informants are ignorant about a possible slave heritage, but there is a possibility of Dutch forefathers.

3. ARRIVAL AND DESTINY IN THE CALEDON RIVER VALLEY

At the time of the Newlanders' arrival from the Cape in the central interior of South Africa, that is, during the late 1820s, this region was caught in the destructive grip of the *difaqane*. The Newlanders sought shelter at the mission station of Platberg⁸ (or Plaat Berg, hereafter Platberg I) near Warrenton on the Vaal River (Schoeman (1991:90)). This was the Tswana mission station established by the Wesleyan Mission Society (WMS) in 1826 when Sefunelo and the Seleka Barolong settled there together with the missionaries Archbell and T.L. Hodgson (Schoeman 1991:17, 139; Schüler 1965:35). Sefunelo died here and was succeeded by his son Moroka. Other groups that sought refuge here were Barend Barends (of the Griqua)⁹ and Jan II (Hanto or Jan Kaptein) and his brother Gert of the Taaibosch Korana.

The increase in numbers at Platberg I was such that there was a shortage of water and the need for another WMS station became apparent (Mears 1970:16; Schüler 1965:38). Thus, on 4 May 1833 the missionaries Archbell and J. Edwards, together with the four leaders referred to above, undertook an expedition to the Caledon River and the depopulated country along the Modder River valley. The expedition met chief Moseme, a petty chief of Moshweshwe, and he undertook to report the reason for their visit to Moshweshwe (Germond 1967:165). Moseme supported their request to establish a mission station by saying, *inter alia*, 'The Bastards I respect. They never committed depredations

8 Known as Motlhana-wa-pitse (or Motlhanawapitse), the signifier for a zebra's jawbone or a horse's rump (Schoeman 1991:15).

9 They originated from Buchuaap, the modern-day Boetsap, between Barkley West and Vryburg. Barend Barends was succeeded by his son-in-law Pieter Davids.

upon us' (Mears, 1970:18). Moshweshwe and Moseme signed an agreement with the missionaries on 7 December 1833. An area of 310 798 hectares in the Thaba 'Nchu district was accordingly transferred to the WMS (Mears 1970:36). The missionaries paid with seven young oxen, one heifer, two sheep and one goat (Mears 1970:36). One of the signatories, as a witness, was a Thorolos (perhaps Carolus?) Batje (Mears 1970:38). According to Colin Murray, this land was useful for cultivating wheat and maize as well as excellent pasturage (Murray 1984:30).

In December 1833, after the agreement had been signed, between 12 000 and 15 000 people moved to Thaba 'Nchu (Mears 1970:19; Schoeman 1991:24). Because only the Barolong would settle at Thaba 'Nchu, other mission stations were established for the other groups. The followers of Jan Taaibosch II initially settled at Umpukani. After his death in 1836 with his brother Gert Taaibosch as succeeding chief, the group settled at Marumetsu. Baatje settled at Platberg II and Barend Barendse at Lesowane, also known as New Buchuaap. The agreement between the WMS with Moshweshwe and Sekonyela regarding Platberg II was signed on 17 July 1834. The payment received was eight horned cattle, 34 sheep and five goats (Mears 1970:39; Theal 1883a:4-6).¹⁰ In this case, the title deeds were also held by the WMS. We will discuss the far-reaching consequences of these transactions later in the chapter, but it is first necessary to explain the circumstances surrounding the consolidation of Baatje's leadership.

According to Archbell, there were many disputes among the Newlanders because they did not have a generally accepted chief with hereditary rights. Hofstede (1876:146-147) refers to a Baatje faction and a Schalkwijk faction with regard to the disunity. To settle the disputes Archbell insisted on a leadership election¹¹ and Baatje, 'who is one of our class-leaders, a good man' was chosen.¹² The annual re-election of the captaincy, however, led to great discord in the community. Consequently, Rev. Cameron decided in 1841 that a 'captain for life' had to be elected, and this was Baatje. Cameron described Baatje as follows:

The Captain though old, and in some points of his character weak, is nevertheless a man of good understanding, and open to salutary advice, which in some cases he has followed to the great advantage of the people (Henderson Collection).

10 The borders of the area involved are described in the agreement (Mears 1970:40).

11 Ross (1974:32) points out, in his discussion of the Griqua government, that various groupings with a Khoekhoe heritage, such as the Griqua, the Waterboers, the Newlanders, the Rehobothers and the Vilanders had chosen leaderships. In archival documents reference to chosen leaders, such as Kok and Baatje, is made by using the label 'captain' and not by using the label 'chief', which is the case in references to Moshweshwe, Moroka and Sekonyela, for example.

12 The unsuccessful candidate was Cornelius van Wyk (Schoeman 1991:71). A great-grandson living on Thaba Phatswa was one of my informants.

The consolidation of his leadership allowed Baatje to become involved with the internal politics of the central interior, and this had mainly to do with land issues, vassalage and claims to resources.

As was often the case with agreements between indigenous leaders and mission stations there was also a lack of clarity, 'clouds of misunderstanding' as Murray put it, with regard to the agreements discussed above. Ownership, also the concomitant question of vassalage, was a constant rub between Moshweshwe and the incoming leaders (Murray 1992:15). Where ownership was concerned, the title deeds were in the name of the WMS. It must be noted that Schoeman places a question mark over the authenticity of the WMS documents,¹³ while it is also possible that the communities supplied the livestock paid towards the land. There was, for example, a general understanding among the Newlanders that Platberg II was their lawful property because they had paid for it with their livestock.

Watson (1977:395, 1980:371) emphasises that Moshweshwe never intended selling the land rights to the WMS. He maintains that Moshweshwe only lent the land to Moroka. Germond explains in this regard that, 'according to native custom, [Moshweshwe] received presents in cattle from the chiefs [Moroka, Davids, Taaibosch and Baatje] as a peace offering and an acknowledgement for the favour granted' (Germond 1967:166). In June 1845, during a conference at Touwfontein with Sir Peregrine Maitland (governor of the Cape between 1844 and 1847), Moshweshwe emphasised, as in a previous letter (dated 11 April 1844) (Theal 1883a:68) that the agreement with the incoming leaders was not a purchase act, but a lease.¹⁴ Taking into account the paltry payment received from the WMS for the expanses of land, as well as the fact that an indigenous leader did not have the right to alienate land from his subjects, Moshweshwe's assertion is probably true.

Several writers are convinced that the position of the newcomers was one of vassalage to Moshweshwe (Coplan 2009:515; Ellenberger 1992:393; Murray 1992:30; Schüler 1965:41; Twala 2005:126). We quote Germond as follow:

[W]hilst the said chiefs [Moroka, Davids, Taaibosch and Baatje] retained the right to be the sole governors of their own people, they would

13 Schoeman (1991:26). Land transactions concluded in this way by Archbell later became an embarrassment to the church. We quote Schoeman (1991:99): 'James Archbell, [...] refused to be transferred to Kaffraria, according to Cameron because he was loath to relinquish his property in Natal ("he acquired landed property to an extent altogether inconsistent with his calling as a missionary: he is lord of a province rather than master of an estate")'.

14 Maitland called the meeting in an attempt to settle the land disputes between Moshweshwe, the Boers and the incoming leaders involved. He suggested that each leader had to divide his territory into an alienable and an inalienable part. In the alienable sections, quit-rent farms could be rented to farmers. Each chief would rule over his people while the Europeans would stand under the authority of a Resident.

acknowledge the supremacy of Moshweshwe in matters relative to the soil and the general welfare of the country. (Germond 1967:166)

He also states that Moshweshwe 'made it a point to call them [Moroka Davids, Taaibosch and Baatje] to all national assemblies of general importance'.

Initially, there was a broad alliance with good relations between Moshweshwe and the incoming leaders (Coplan 2009:514). Twala (2005:125) remarks that the bond between them: 'was cemented to an extent that there appeared in September 1842 a proclamation warning the emigrant Boers not to interfere with Adam Kok and Moroka'.¹⁵ However, the incoming leaders increasingly denied that Moshweshwe had paramountcy over them and alleged that they had full landownership (Schüler 1965:49). This, together with the competition concerning resources, contributed to the deterioration of their relationship. Wherever Moshweshwe gave permission for mission stations he surrounded the newcomers with his followers (Germond 1967:166). The Newlanders had, for example, between 7 000 and 8 000 surrounding Basotho neighbours (Coplan 2009:514). This state of affairs caused trouble. Cameron wrote about this to the Rev. E. Casalis in Lesotho in 1842:

Moshesh knows well that every time he visits Platberg the Bastards have to complain of their being hemmed in by the Basuto on every side so that the pasturage is consumed, the arable land lessened in value and many unpleasantness as originated ... Now is the time or never for Korolos [sic] to make a firm but reasonable stand against the influx of the Basuto on the Platberg lands. (Henderson Collection)

In the light of the deteriorating relationship with the kingdom of Moshweshwe, the incoming leaders made a declaration on 10 March 1846 at Platberg II in which they requested the British government to appoint a commission of enquiry to 'our respective rights' and to determine borderlines between them (Theal 1883a:119-120).

During a meeting between Warden and this group of leaders in Bloemfontein on 27 August 1849, Baatje repeated the standpoint that the land question was too complicated for the leaders to resolve by themselves and he asked for impartial arbitration (Theal 1883a:272). The leaders also confirmed their alliance with the British government and declared their willingness to assist the British Resident

15 Four years later these leaders did act against the Boers in collaboration with Adam Kok and Pieter Davids when they aided Major Henry Douglas Warden (the British Resident of the Orange River Sovereignty from 1848 to 1852) against Jan Kock of the Winburg Republic in a skirmish at the Vet River. This followed upon the rebellion of Kock and his men against Adam Kok the previous year. The joint forces succeeded in forcing the Boer forces to surrender (Schüler 1965:50 and Theal 1964:409).

in armed combat during this same meeting. To end to the ongoing land question, Warden staked out the border, the so-called Warden line, between the Orange River Sovereignty¹⁶ and the Basotho two months later. The Warden line assigned definite territories to Moroka, Baatje and Gert Taaibosch, but failed to bring peace (Schoeman 1991:103). The Basotho refused to relocate to their side of the line and there was no way of forcing them to move (Van Rensburg & Van Schoor s.a.:113).

The extent of the problems with the Basotho forced Baatje to write a letter to Warden on 8 October 1850 in which he claimed that: 'They have since August 1849 been losing considerably by the plunder of the Basutos. ... Scarcely a day or night passes without some theft being committed'. He also declared his 'unaltered attachment to the British Government'. Six months later, on 29 May 1851, he reported that Moshweshwe's brother Paulus had raided 500 cattle from them and urgently requested firearms and ammunition from Warden (Theal 1883a:401). The following month (June 1851) several indigenous leaders, Adam Kok, Moroka, Baatje, Gert Taaibosch and Sekonyela, among others, met Warden at Platberg II and pointed out the continuous Basotho attacks on Boers and on their communities. The losses of, for example, the Newlanders were reported. Warden was convinced that those present had to act jointly against Moshweshwe to put an end to the offences of the Basotho. Baatje indicated that he wanted to live in peace with his neighbours and he would, therefore, be willing to help Warden (Theal 1883a:415–420). The proverbial last straw was apparently Moletsane's attack on the mission station Merumetsu on 30 August 1850 in which 12 of Gert Taaibosch's followers were killed, huts were burnt down, and cattle raided.¹⁷ This was coupled with his attacks in May the following year on several Barolong cattle posts.¹⁸

Several factors contributed to the tension in the Caledon River valley reaching the breakpoint. War could not be warded off and its outcome was catastrophic for the Newlanders.

4. THE BATTLE OF VIERVOET

As it was decided to take military action against Moshweshwe during the meeting on June 1851, Warden immediately sent a small force to Thaba 'Nchu. Warden had only 162 men at his disposal and he consequently had to rely on the incoming leaders (they rallied about 1 000 men) and about 120 'reluctant' Boers (Collins 1965:35–36; Sanders 1969:448). On 20 June 1851, Warden, assisted by Major T. Donovan of the

16 The region that is today known as the Free State was formerly called the Orange River Sovereignty (1848–1854), the Orange Free State (1854–1900) and the Orange River Colony (1900–1910).

17 Reported in the *Orange Free State Monthly Magazine*, June 1879, p. 808.

18 The feud between Moletsane and the Barolong was of long date, from 1827 (Ellenberger 1992:214).

Cape Mounted Riflemen, moved his forces from Thaba 'Nchu to Platberg II. After negotiations between Warden and Moshweshwe had come to a dead-end, Warden broke up camp on 27 June and moved his men to Viervoet. The Newlanders feared for their lives and Warden allowed all men, women and children to accompany the armed forces and to take their livestock along.

Moshweshwe, on the other side, was assisted by Moletsane and the Korana of Gert Links and the Sotho leader had nearly 10 000 men at his disposal.¹⁹ The battle of Viervoet that ensued led to great losses for Warden and his allies: 152 men fell in total, 131 of them from the camp of Moroka.²⁰ Warden's forces withdrew to Thaba 'Nchu where the allied leaders resisted for a while before they had to beat a retreat.

According to Murray (1992), the intention was that the Newlanders would leave Platberg II only temporarily. It is not clear where they were moved. Archival sources mention the farm Springfield between Bloemfontein and Thaba 'Nchu.²¹ From WMS reports it seems that the British government relocated the Newlanders to Rietspruit, about 80 km north-west of Bloemfontein, probably in 1852 (Schoeman 1991:116). However, according to Moodie (1888:105), it was the Free State government (established in 1854) that moved them there. Whatever the case, sources confirm that there were Newlanders settled on Rietspruit (Murray 1992; Theal 1883a).

- According to Coplan (2009:515), the Newlanders returned to Platberg II. It is uncertain when this happened. Baatje's letter dated 22 December 1852 to High Commissioner Cathcart does not give any indication in this regard. This letter was written after a meeting between Cathcart and Moshweshwe on 14 December 1852 at Platberg II during which the latter was informed that the Newlanders had to return to Platberg II.²² Baatje was dissatisfied how he and his people were treated with regard to Platberg II. He made, *inter alia*, the following assertions:
- There was an undertaking towards me to give me '[I] and of equal value ... in lieu of Platberg ... elsewhere in the Orange River Territory'.
- My people and I 'have sustained extensive losses through our adherence to the cause of the Queen of England'.

19 Reported in the *Orange Free State Monthly Magazine*, July 1878, p. 858.

20 Different figures are given concerning with regard to the casualties and the number of Barolong (see Coplan 2009:515 and Schoeman 1991:112).

21 VAB (Free State Archives Repository), NAB V6-R2118/08-1908)

22 VAB OSH V13-ROO/1-1848-1854

- There was an undertaking towards me that I would be able 'to return to Platberg with my people and reside in peace on the same land and on the same terms as we did before'.
- 'Your Excellency's proposition ... that I and my people should give up Platberg, neither I nor my people concur'.
- 'I express freely the suspicion of my people that Platberg might be given to others'.
- 'We obeyed in the first instance the order of the Queen's Representative, and to be thus virtually punished with the loss of our houses and lands for our ready obedience, does not comport with our ideas of justice'.

There are other sources besides Coplan (2009) confirming that the Newlanders returned to Platberg II. First, the *Friend of the Free State and Bloemfontein Gazette* reported that the 'Bastaards' of Platberg had warned a Boer commando of the presence of 70 'Kaffirs'. The 'Bastaards' who were told to go back to the OFS were supposedly very disgruntled because they had to leave good harvests behind.²³ Should we accept that this is a reference to the Newlanders, the order of return to the OFS seems to indicate that they did not settle there permanently and that they only exploited their arable land along the river. Next, Hofstede (1876:169) reported that Baatje and one Van Wijk turned up at the Boer forces during the Second Basotho War, telling the story of how they have been driven from Platberg II by Moshweshwe in 1865, slaughtered and consumed all their sheep and goats, expressing the wish to become OFS subjects together with their families. In exchange, they would help the Boers in the war.

Besides evidence of Newlanders on Springfield, at Rietspruit and Platberg II, there was, as we will show, proof that some of them worked on Boer farms and that some of them settled in parts of Thaba 'Nchu. It thus appears that there was no longer a question of the earlier functioning community.

While the Newlanders and Sekonyela were allies during the battle of Viervoet against Moshweshwe, the parties played different roles on 28 October 1853. In the battle of Khoro-e-Betloa against the Sekonyela's Batlokoa, it was now the Newlanders who formed part of the joint forces against the Batlokoa. Sekonyela, as reported by Twala (2005:126), apparently observed thus about the events at Khoro-e-Betloa at a later stage (on 10 December 1853): 'Moshweshwe's son was there and with him there were some bastards belonging to Carolus Baatje of Platberg. Letsie and the bastards left Davidsberg and went towards my mountain to seize the wagons' (Twala 2005:127). One cannot

23 *Friend of the Free State and Bloemfontein Gazette* (Vol. XVIII (91)), 29 November 1867.

escape the notion that alliances were concluded in a rather pragmatic and even opportunistic way in these times.

5. FREE STATE SUBJECTS

In 1854, the British withdrew from the Orange River Sovereignty. The new Republic of the Orange Free State was generally quite hostile towards missionaries and their work, and the Wesleyan missionaries were banned from the republic in 1857 (Coplan 2009:515; Schoeman 1991:121).²⁴ However, this was not the reason for the demise of the mission station at Platberg II. It was rather because the Newlanders left Platberg II when the battle of Viervoet was fought.

In 1858, the First Basotho War broke out between Moshweshwe and the OFS. The 'Commando Law' of the OFS made provision for calling up its burghers.²⁵ The Constitution of the OFS (article 1) defined 'burghers' as its 'white inhabitants, who shall have been resident in this country for at least six months' (emphasis added).²⁶ The OFS could call up only 3 000 burghers while Moshweshwe had 20 000 well-equipped men at his command (Theal 1883a:248, 255). To supplement his forces, the Free State government gave the order for enlisting freebooters who would receive looted livestock in exchange. Specific mention is made of coloureds in this regard. The Cape and British authorities were strongly against this practice as it would lead, according to the High Commissioner, to 'a career fighting for booty' and violence would escalate through continuous action and reaction.²⁷

In February 1864, President J.H. Brand was chosen to preside over the OFS, and he occupied the position of president up to his death in 1888. Because of the strategic location of Thaba 'Nchu, and also because it was important to have a strong ally against the Basotho, Brand visited Moroka on 15 April 1864, soon after his election as president. The goal was to negotiate the terms of a treaty that had been approved by the Volksraad on 26 February 1864. But Moroka refused to sign the treaty. His refusal may be attributed to the treatment he had received at the

24 The Free State government also made it impossible for the French missionaries to continue with their work in Lesotho after the Second Basotho War. Too little land was awarded for this purpose and the conditions were too strict. (*Friend of the Free State and Bloemfontein Gazette* Vol. XVII (864), 4 January 1867).

25 *Friend of the Sovereignty and Bloemfontein Gazette* Vol. IV (211), 13 May 1854.

26 *Friend of the Sovereignty and Bloemfontein Gazette* Vol. IV (205), 1 April 1854.

27 The imbalance between the OFS and Moshweshwe's forces was seen as a danger to the South African Republic (SAR) by President Pretorius so that Commandant-General Paul Kruger of the SAR was ordered to come to the aid of the OFS. On 29 September 1858, the OFS and Moshweshwe concluded peace in the presence of Sir George Grey on Aliwal North.

hands of 'our Government'.²⁸ Three weeks later, on 6 May 1864, Moroka again refused to sign the proposed treaty and declared that he had always been a good friend to the Free State without needing to sign any treaties before.

The Second Basotho War broke out in June 1865. It lasted 11 months and the OFS went into it with 2 000 burghers (white men) who were divided into four commandos (Theal:1883b:616). A month after this war broke out on 27 June 1865, about 2 500 to 3 000 Basotho under the lead of David Mantsoepa and Sekelo (sons of Moshweshwe) and Paulus Mopeli (Moshweshwe's brother) made a 'friendly call' on the Newlanders at Rietspruit. The Basotho treacherously murdered 54 men and boys and took the grown-up girls away with them. According to the sources consulted only eight men survived the massacre.²⁹ Of this group, seven were away on a hunting expedition during the attack and the other survivor managed to hide unseen in an ant-eater's den. The motivation for this attack is not known.

On their return after the massacre, the Basotho were intercepted with their booty near Verkeerdevlei by Commandant-General I.I.J. Fick's commando and almost all the livestock were captured. At least a hundred Basotho were killed (Hofstede 1876:146–147; Moodie 1888:105; Theal 1883b:396–397; Tšiu 2008:35). According to Murray (1992:260), the surviving Newlanders were sent to Bloemfontein from where they were dispersed in the Moroka territory and other parts of the Free State.

On 23 October 1865, Brand made an interim proclamation whereby the Basotho territory conquered so far was annexed by the OFS. This territory included Platberg II.³⁰ On 3 April 1866, peace was declared through the Treaty of Thaba Bosigo and the Basotho had to cede large parts of their territory to the OFS. Article 7 of this treaty stipulated that Moroka had to be acknowledged by Moshweshwe as an ally of the OFS and that he would be included in the articles of the treaty.³¹ While Moroka may have refused to sign a treaty of alliance with the OFS, he acted as one in the war and was rewarded for his services. While there are affidavits stating that the Newlanders served under Commandant F.P. Senekal and Commandant C.J. Wessels³² and that they were excellent marksmen (Theal 1883b:369), this treaty does not mention their contribution

28 The determination of the border between the OFS and Moshweshwe after the First Basotho War effectively brought an end to Moroka's independence (*Friend of the Free State and Bloemfontein Gazette* Vol. XIII (660), 6 February 1863). On the one hand, it meant that Thaba 'Nchu became a black enclave within a white state as it was surrounded by the OFS. On the other hand, it reduced the territory of the Barolong with a third to about 200 000 hectares (Erasmus & Krige 1998:35).

29 Informants refer to this incident where only males were killed as the 'Moses massacre', in analogy to the killings described in the Old Testament.

30 *Orange Free State Monthly Magazine*, November 1879, p. 30.

31 *Orange Free State Monthly Magazine*, November 1879, p. 31.

32 VAB NAB V6-R2118/08-1908.

or their protection. The same year the *Orange Free State Occupation Law, 1866* was passed with an eye to establishing a barrier of white-owned farms, three deep, along the border of the conquered territory under military tenure (Theal 1964:284). But the Basotho refused to evacuate the land, and on July 1867, a commando was sent out against them starting the Third Basotho War.³³ This war was ended by the Treaty of Aliwal North on 12 March 1869.³⁴ Moroka died on April 1880. In July 1884 violence broke out in Thaba 'Nchu due to a dispute of succession between Samuel Moroka and Tshipinare. The latter, who was supported by Brand, died during the fighting on 12 July 1884. Under the pretence that the situation in Thaba 'Nchu was a threat to order and stability in the OFS the Volksraad sent a commando to Thaba 'Nchu on the same day of Tshipinare's death. Brand adamantly declared Thaba 'Nchu without government and proclaimed the country as part of the OFS (Watson 1980:369). Thaba Phatswa now fell inside the boundary of Moroka's territory as annexed by the OFS and was one of the so-called Barolong freehold farms (Murray 1984:31). From the discussion so far one can conclude that the Newlanders interacted with other incoming leaders, as well as with Moshweshwe, Sekonyela and the Boers. They were involved in various armed actions and, as such, they were a role-player in the politics of power relations in the Transorangia. The exact course of their destiny is, however, not clear.

33 Fick believed that the Basotho were completely shattered and would never fight again: '[S]o thoroughly beaten, dispirited, broken up and divided' were the Basotho that the thought that they would ever again stand up to the OFS was absurd to him (*Friend of the Free State and Bloemfontein Gazette* Vol. XVII (869), 8 February 1867). The OFS plundered the land and harvests, and the livestock and possession of the Basotho were confiscated to the extent that they were on the brink of extinction. A writer in this edition of the paper referred to the situation as follows: The OFS 'create a desert, and call it peace'. In a letter to Fick, Moshweshwe brought the situation of his people to his attention and offered to buy back the confiscated land with livestock (*Friend of the Free State and Bloemfontein Gazette* Vol. XVIII (870), 15 February 1867). The *Friend of the Free State and Bloemfontein Gazette* Vol. XVIII (920), 31 January 1868) also reported on the disgruntlement of the burgers during the Third Basotho War over the action taken by Chief Commandant J.G. Pansergrouw. There was a request to 'remove Pansegrouw from the chief command, there will be a mutiny in the camp'. The impression was that Pansegrouw 'like Fick in the '65 war [kept] the commandos in the field as long as possible in order to pouch'. Mention is also made of a letter of Letsie to Pansegrouw in which the former asked 'the reason why we [destroyed] so much of his corn and [took] all his cattle as he [had] made a treaty with Fick'. The newspaper report confirms that the Boers destroyed the farmlands and gardens all along their way next to the Caledon River.

34 This agreement was concluded between Britain and the OFS because Moshweshwe appealed to the Queen to declare Basutoland a British protectorate. This request was approved on 9 December 1867 by the British cabinet and on 12 March 1868 the British High Commissioner and Governor of the Cape, Philip Wodehouse, declared Basutoland a British colony.

6. A PLACE OF THEIR OWN

As was the case with the British government, the military help rendered to the OFS during the Basotho wars became the basis for the Newlanders' land claims. Newlanders' descendants usually relate that they took part in the war at Brand's request but were reluctant as they had enjoyed good relations with the Basotho. Brand supposedly surrounded them to prevent them from warning Moshweshwe. He pleaded with them, threatened them, and finally promised them 14 farms before the Newlanders agreed to fight. The version Hofstede gives of how the Newlanders became involved with the war differs in every respect from the version of oral tradition given above. From informants and written sources³⁵ (and this formed the basis of an unsuccessful land claim), Brand was apprehensive about possible revenge on the Newlanders by Moshweshwe. It is said that they relocated on Brand's request from Platberg II to Thaba Nchu.

Next, we briefly outline the complex issue of Brand's alleged involvement with the Newlanders. First, Brand realised that the OFS had to compensate his (non-white) allies in one way or another. It was reported that in the opening of the Volksraad on 2 May 1870 (par. 7), Brand, for example, declared: '*Omtrent de naturelle bondgenoten die thans in Harrismith en ander districten wonen, zal het nodig zyn, dat gy nadere voorzieningen en bepalingen maakt*'.³⁶ While the president's speech determined the Volksraad's agenda, it seems that this specific paragraph was, however, not discussed by the Volksraad.³⁷

Second, it is doubtful that Brand moved the Newlanders in 1865 from Platberg II to Thaba 'Nchu. He would only have the jurisdiction to do so about 20 years later, after the territory's annexation by the OFS in 1884. When relocation to Thaba 'Nchu took place in the late 1890s, as we will show, Brand had already died. There can, at best, only be speculation that Brand mediated with Moroka during 1865 in order to resettle a group of Newlanders in his area.

Third, as we have remarked, Brand annexed Platberg II in 1865. Several issues of the *Friend of the Free State and Bloemfontein Gazette* contain advertisements regarding public sales of farms in the conquered area. Platberg II was not among those, so it probably remained in the possession of the OFS. But, then again, if this was the case, Brand would have had the authority to allow the Newlanders to return there.³⁸

35 For more information in this regard, refer to Van der Merwe (2012:498–499), Louw (1964:11–12) and the *Inter-Departmental Committee on Matters affecting Coloured Persons on Coloured Mission Stations, Reserves and Settlements*, UG No. 33 of 1947, p. 32.

36 *Friend of the Free State and Bloemfontein Gazette* Vol. XX (1038), 5 May 1870.

37 *Friend of the Free State and Bloemfontein Gazette* (Vol. XIX (940), 6 June 1868; Vol. XIX (943), 10 July 1868 and Vol. XIX (947), 7 August 1868.

38 Platberg II is now the farms Pinekloof (no. 291), Pinekloof A (no. 1004) and Pinekloof B (no. 1037) and belongs to a private person.

In the fourth place, Brand's alleged promise of 14 farms is not borne out by documentation.

In the fifth place, narratives about land claims passed on to later generations tell of Brand's alleged involvement in a 'political assassination'. According to Plaatjies (s.a.:41), Baatje and some of his councillors went to see Brand in Brandfort about the promised territory. The Newlanders wanted 14 farms at Mensvretersberg, situated between Tweespruit and Excelsior, as this is where 'Field General' Jacob Mauer and his son Langi died fighting the Basotho on 27 April 1865.³⁹ The results of the negotiations are unknown, but it is told that Brand's men ambushed Baatje and his councillors on their return journey, killing all of them. The date of this supposed incident is not known. Plaatjies reckons that it had to be between 1897 and 1929, but these dates cannot be correct. Should this incident have taken place, it had to be between 1869 (peace with Moshweshwe) and 1888 (Brand's death). In trying to verify the correctness of this allegation, yet another version of how Baatje would have met his end surfaced. A group of Boers who wanted to sink the Newlanders' claim to Platberg II to claim it for themselves took Baatje to Wepener under some or other unknown pretence. On his way there he was killed in a suspicious spider carriage accident. No date can be assigned to this incident. Relatives could equally not shed light on the subject, while a search through 24 years' issues of the *Friend of the Sovereignty (later the Free State)* and *Bloemfontein Gazette* (1854–1878), as well as official death certificates, led nowhere.

To return to the Newlanders' part in the 1865 war. Their involvement in the war was later used by the Newlanders as a claim to the farm Bofulo in the Thaba 'Nchu district. This led to the Free State Volksraad decision 21 June 1897 (*Volksraad decision No. 529*) to investigate the legal situation of some 'coloureds' living in

39 Jacob Mauer was of mixed descent. He was originally from the Cape Colony and lived on the farm Mauershoek where Ladybrand was laid out in 1867. The night of 26 April 1865, a great number of cattle were raided on the farm Mauershoek by the Basotho who were immediately pursued by Mauer and his men. In the skirmish' father and son, despite grave wounds, put in everything to get the cattle back. While the Basotho did finally beat a retreat, it is told by a great-grandson of Jacob Mauer, among others, that they cut open the chests of the Mauer's while they were still alive and their raw hearts were eaten to ingest the two men's courage. Out of fear of further Basotho attacks the Mauer followers left Mauershoek and joined Andries Waterboer in Griekwastad. In 1979, the Griqua National Conference of South Africa revealed a plaque there in commemoration of the Mauer's death. On 16 December 2011, on the same spot, descendants of Jacob Mauer vowed to make the Mauer House relive as one of the Free State Griqua Houses. According to informants, this is how Mensvretersberg (the mountain of cannibals) got its name. However, Raper (1987) and Meiring (2010) give a different explanation. These sources write that it was because of the cannibalism among fugitives who sought shelter here during the *difaqane*. Jacob Mauer had to have been a much-respected leader in the Caledon River area the following place names are also to be found: Mauermanshoek (Wadley 2001), Mauermansnek (Loubser & Laurens 1994), and the farm Magermanshoek (no. 588).

the Moroka ward.⁴⁰ Members of the Volksraad Van der Wath and Papenfus were appointed to the task.⁴¹ Five months later, this commission made their findings public. On request of the commission, the landdrost of Thaba 'Nchu compiled a list of all the 'coloureds' to whom certificates were issued to live in the district's location areas. The commission was, however, sceptical about the reliability of the information and interviewed 18 Newlanders in Thaba 'Nchu about this matter. They informed the commission that 116 Newlanders were living in the Moroka ward and that 600 Newlanders were spread all over the Free State.⁴² This group requested a piece of land from the commission on which they could establish a town and erect a school building. The commission visited several locations and decided that part of Bofulo would be suitable for these purposes.⁴³ By this time, there were already a couple of Newlanders, such as Mey and Weymers, who had received small lands grants of Tshipinare, living on Bofulo (Murray 1992:260). This is possibly the reason why Bofulo was acceptable to both the commission and the Newlanders. But to prevent Bofulo from being overrun by 'coloureds' a couple of conditions were set for applicants, the most important being that only those who had fought in the Basotho wars could obtain the right of occupation.

During December 1897, the state president and executive council of the Free State decided, on the grounds of the commission's recommendations, that Newlanders who had fought in the Basotho wars and who wanted to live in the Moroka ward had to apply at the landdrost of Bloemfontein. Eighteen months later (on 20 May 1899), nine Newlanders applied to the landdrost of Bloemfontein and requested that the entire farm Bofulo of 1 590 hectares (or 1 856 morgen) be set aside for their exclusive use. They requested that those who were too old to till the soil be allowed the assistance of their of-age children. They also asked that the 'bastards' on surroundings farms be allowed to establish themselves on Bofulo and that they be granted permission to establish a school and that a leader be appointed over them. Their choice for the leader would be Herklaas J. Daly. Ross points out that leadership, once appointed, would usually be hereditary (Ross 1974:32). This request means that none of Carolus Baatje's descendants succeeded him.⁴⁴

The Free State Executive Council responded to this request a month later, on 3 June 1899. Permission to relocate on a portion of Bofulo was given, but

40 VAB GS V1703-R1202/97-1897 en VAB CO V364-R751/06-1906.

41 VAB GS V1703-R1202/97-1897.

42 This confirms the notion that the Newlanders were not relocated somewhere as a group after the war.

43 The farm Bofulo (no. 1031, formerly no. 37) plus the farms Roodebult, Kgamo, Seliba, Tala, Morago and Kgatla formed the Moroka ward. These farms were set aside for African reserves by the Gregorowski land dispositions of 1885 (Murray 1992:37-39).

44 Carolus Baatje's male offspring in terms of eldest sons were: Jakob, Ben and George. The latter gave the information (2013). However, informants sometimes disagree about the genealogy.

none of the other requests were granted. Those too old to work could, provided that proof is given, hire a servant. When the elderly resident died, the servant would have to leave. The typical way of exercising control – of dominating and segregating the Newlanders – leaves the impression that the government of the OFS did not appreciate the role these people had played in the Basotho wars.

It is unclear as to when the Newlanders moved to Bofulo. Plaatjies (s.a.:37) claims that it was in 1897, a date which does not agree with the archival information sketched above. Shortly after the decision of 3 June 1899, the Second South African War broke out on 11 October 1899. Peace was concluded on 31 May 1902. No archival documents regarding these matters could be found for the period corresponding to the duration of the war. The next document relating to these matters was a letter, dated 12 February 1904, in which Arie Schalkwyk, Jan van der Merwe, Gert Vries, Abram Botha and Marthinus Berman (former followers of Baatje) asked the lieutenant-governor of the Orange River Colony for an audience.⁴⁵ We thus calculate that the relocation to Bofulo had to have taken place between 1899 and 1904, more than thirty years after the war of 1865.

In February 1906, the Newlanders complained to the resident magistrate of Thaba 'Nchu about Barolong from surrounding farms letting their livestock graze on Bofulo and ploughing some of its fields. The Newlanders claimed, contrary to the facts, that they had received sole rights from the Free State government to live on the farm, because of the help given to the country during the Basotho wars.⁴⁶ The Beaumont Commission visited Bofulo during the execution of its duties (1913–1916) and pointed out that the Free State government had set aside only a portion of Bofulo for the descendants of 'the petty Bastard chief Carolus Baatje'. The commission found that 'the Bastards [had] ample ground for all their requirements [and that] the division already made between the Barolong and the Bastards should be considered as a final settlement'.⁴⁷ The Beaumont Commission scheduled Bofulo as a 'native reserve'.

The Barolong and Newlanders' ongoing land disputes and mutual accusations of trespassing came to a point where a definite line of separation had to be drawn in 1912. The Newlanders persevered with their claim to the whole of Bofulo and they drew up a petition to this effect, directing it to the Department of Native Affairs in 1923. This department regarded the 1912 separation line as final and was not prepared to reinvestigate the matter.⁴⁸ The separation line was later redefined in terms of *Proclamation 29 of 1933* and the northern section of Bofulo, Carolusrus, where the Newlanders lived was withdrawn from the provisions of the *Native Reserves Management Ordinance, 1907*. However, this did not ensure

45 VAB CO V258-R1042/04-1904.

46 VAB CO V364-R751/06.

47 Report of the Natives Land Commission, 1916: Appendix B, paragraph 2.

48 NTS 2801, file 116/303, dated 23 April 1923.

peaceful neighbourliness and, on top of everything, the Baatje community was seen as a 'stumbling block' in terms of the 1939 proposals for the development of the Seliba reserve (Murray 1992:261). These factors contributed largely to the decision to relocate the Newlanders to Thaba Phatswa, a Barolong freehold farm the Beaumont Commission defined in 1916 as an 'additional' area in the Thaba 'Nchu district. After dealing with the Newlanders' grudges about the size of the land and compensation for improvements to Bofulo, 45 households were relocated at the end of 1940 (Murray 1996:215). Most of these people had to complete the journey of three days on foot and with ox wagons. On the second day of their journey, they obtained permission to spend the night on the commons of Tweespruit next to the townspeople's pigsties. The next day their arrival in Barolong was celebrated through prayer led by Mr Tienie Bergman. He thanked the Creator for *rooigras* (*Themeda triandra* or 'red grass') for the livestock, for the mountain with firewood and for the river with water and fish. He ended the prayer with the words: '*Hier kan ons lewe*' (Here we can live).

As a Barolong freehold farm, Thaba Phatswa belonged to the South African Native Trust (SANT). In other words, the Newlanders would be governed as 'natives' by the Department of Native Affairs. This situation was unacceptable to them as it meant that the relatively advantageous status the Newlanders had enjoyed before as 'coloureds' would have to be relinquished. Also, they would have to pay 'native tax' in terms of the *Natives Land Act, 1913 (No. 27 of 1913)*. The Newlanders were not prepared to do this and requested to be governed by the Department of Welfare. In 1954, after years of negotiations and administrative red-tape, Thaba Phatswa was transferred to the Department of Coloured Affairs. In 1957, Thaba Phatswa was incorporated as a rural coloured area in terms of the articles of the *Coloured Mission Stations and Reserves Amendment Act, 1955 (No. 35 of 1955)*.

Thaba Phatswa was given municipal status in 1980. At the moment (2014), it lies within the borders of the Thabo Mofutsanyana District Municipality. Together with the Transition Local Councils of Tweespruit, Ladybrand, Hobhouse, Excelsior and the Maluti Transitional Rural Council, it forms what is known as the Mantsopa Local Municipality. This municipality came into existence on 5 December 2000 and the inhabitants of Thaba Phatswa are represented by a council member. The Department of Rural Development and Land Reform is busy transferring the rural areas (town areas are thus excluded) to a communal property association in terms of the *Transformation of Certain Rural Areas Act, 1998 (No. 94 of 1998)*.

7. CONCLUSION

Our point of departure for this article was about the ontological importance of land for the people of South Africa. The empirical data presented of the struggle over many years between the Newlanders of Thaba Phatswa and other groups to secure their land claims validated our assumption about the meaning of land.

To present the case of the Newlanders, it was necessary to clarify their origin and place in the history of South Africa. Despite their small numbers, they took part in the politics in Transorangia and gave armed assistance to different leaders. The data presented in this article makes it clear that the armed assistance was given primarily to be able to lay claim to the land or to strengthen claims to land. The path to an own territory was long and winding and one cannot escape the idea that the Newlanders were not always treated justly.

Regarding the origination of the Newlanders, we have shown that the data available do not indicate a single catalyst in their ethnogenesis; slaves, Dutchmen, Khoe-San or Griqua elements probably contributed to a greater or lesser degree to this group. This is also a clear illustration of the danger of a simplistic application of ethnic, racial and cultural markers. Such an application of markers has made it very difficult for the present generation of Newlanders to identify themselves in terms of some or other structured category. Contributing to this fact is that they are somewhat caught in the political power struggle that is playing itself out among indigenous factions. Both Griqua and Korana factions are trying hard to convince the Newlanders that their origin (and thus their political support) can only be found with one or the other group. The possibility of a plural descent, which is supported by the research and that finds expression in the identity construct 'Newlanders', is experienced by some informants as a rediscovery of themselves. It further makes it possible for them to distance themselves from the tug of war about where their loyalty should lie. Our reason for preferring the label 'Newlanders' above other labels in this article lies exactly in what we have described.

The text has often been focused on the contradictory nature of documents and narratives. From a positivist point of view, the lack of clear answers would render the information irrelevant and meaningless. But we see it differently. The absence of unity emphasises the fact that interpretation is always nuanced, that there is variety in our understanding and interpretation of reality, and it challenges the researcher of indigenous communities to be always up-to-date with intermethodological cross-validation.

The story of the Newlanders is novel confirmation of the treasury of indigenous histories to be found on South African soil. They wait to be told – not for the sake of political correctness, but for the sake of discovering ourselves.

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