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The settlers of South Africa and the expanding frontier¹

Johan Fourie²

Abstract

The arrival of European settlers in the mid-seventeenth century at the southern tip of Africa profoundly affected the region's development. They quickly displaced the local Khoesan and began a process of colonisation that would, some might argue, continue until 1994 with the first democratic elections, 342 years after their arrival. This is the story of their migration into the southern African interior. Combining a rich historiography with new quantitative source material – and the story of one family – I show that, despite the political, cultural and religious rhetoric that inspired their migrations, their reason for trekking was at heart economic. Their story is closely tied to the fortunes of those around them: their actions were often both a response to and a cause of events beyond their borders, a dynamic process that continues today.

Keywords. migration, colonialism, settler, Voortrekker, South Africa

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‘Trek verder!’ So klink dit
die môre heel vroeg;
en laat in die aand:
‘Nog nie ver genoeg!’
- Totius, *Trekkerslied*, 1913

‘Trek on!’ The call rings out
at the crack of dawn;
and at sundown:
‘Yet further still!’
- Totius, ‘Trekkers’ song’, 1913

Introduction

The first of the Fourie family to settle at the tip of Africa was a refugee by the name of Louis Fourie. Born in the Dauphiné, a former province of southeastern France, Fourie fled his country after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. Like many Huguenots of his time, he found his way to Amsterdam. Then, perhaps more adventurous than the thousands of his compatriots who headed for England or North America, Fourie chose to head south. On 27 July 1688 he boarded the *Wapen of Alkmaar*. Six months later, on 27 January 1688, at the age of 20, he set foot on African soil for the first time.

We know little about his first few years in the Cape. He reported three head of cattle in the 1692 tax census. In 1695 he married Suzanne Cortier. But a decade after his arrival, when he was given a farm by the governor, Willem Adriaan van der Stel, the story begins to gather detail. On this farm, *De Slangerivier* (‘Snake River’) in the *Wagenmakersvallei*, which is today the town of Wellington, he remained for the next five decades until his death in 1750.

Fourie was not a very prosperous farmer by Cape standards. The tax censuses report that he owned 37 head of cattle in 1700 and by 1702 he had planted 4000 vines, though he was predominantly a wheat farmer,

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sowing around six *mudden* in each of the tax censuses and reaping between 25 and 70 *mudden*.³ His productivity seems to have increased over the course of his life. But he is perhaps better known for productivity of another kind: he had 21 children, more than any other Cape Huguenot, and 99 grandchildren. After his first wife died in 1714, leaving him with five young children (five more died in infancy), he married eighteen-year-old Anne Jourdan, with whom he had another 11 children.⁴

Like so many other Cape settlers of European origin, almost all of Fourie's sons would move across the Cape mountains that separated the fertile Cape peninsula from the drier interior in search of better opportunities. His eldest, Louis Jnr, settled in Swellendam, a district east of Cape Town, and became a wealthy farmer and local *heemraad*.⁵ His wife, Susanna, owned a stock farm in Outeniqualand, even further east. They and their siblings all pushed on towards the east. In fact, when the elder Louis died in 1750, not one of his sons wanted to return to *De Slangervivier* and the farm was sold.

Louis Fourie's story exemplifies that of many Dutch and French settlers who arrived at the Cape during the second half of the seventeenth century and dispersed into the interior during the eighteenth. By 1806, when the Cape became a British colony, they inhabited a vast area of mostly sparsely populated pastoral farms. Three decades later, those on the frontier migrated deeper into the interior, starting a wave of colonisation that would ripple through southern Africa for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The European settlers' internal migration affected African demography and biogeography not only locally but far beyond the borders of the Colony. They brought with them a commercial, market-oriented society that made many of them remarkably wealthy. To make this wealth possible, they imported slaves. They brought wheat and vines and other winter-rainfall crops, new livestock species and more productive farming methods, boosting agricultural productivity and population growth. They brought Christianity and the Bible, and new kinds of property rights, and the rule of law and the European style of government. And, of course, they brought 'guns, germs and steel'.⁶

The patterns of the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth century settler migrations can shed light on later migrations in Africa. The descendants of the first Dutch and French farmers, later known as Afrikaners, were following a strategy of resistance against and flight from colonial policies when they trekked into the South African interior. This was the strategy of many internal migrations elsewhere on the continent. The 'Great Trek' was not a single event but a series of haphazard migrations that ultimately resulted in two independent republics where the definition of citizenship and control over state bureaucracy was of vital import. Others would later migrate beyond the Limpopo for reasons similar to those of the Voortrekkers. But not all migration was rural to rural; in the 1960s, black Africans would move to the cities for the same reasons that white Africans were urbanising half a century earlier.

None of these migrations can be easily categorised as a specific migration type. Following Patrick Manning's taxonomy of migration types, the European settlers can be considered invaders, settlers and, to some extent, sojourners as cross-community migrants, but at various stages could also be considered part of Manning's colonization or even home-community migration types.⁷ The experiences of the Cape settlers demonstrate the complexity and diversity of migration systems. But despite the political, cultural or religious rhetoric, in essence these settlers migrated, as many South Africans do today, in pursuit of a better life. One consistent thread I emphasise in this paper is the economic motive for migrating.

³ A *mud* is approximately 100 litres.

⁴ I am a descendant of Fourie's 20th child, Stephanus, born in 1734.

⁵ 'Home-advisor', similar to an alderman.

⁶ Diamond. 1998.

⁷ Manning, 2013.

In this paper I discuss four stages of European settler migration in southern Africa: the eighteenth-century migration of Dutch and French settler farmers beyond the first mountain ranges of the Cape peninsula; the early nineteenth-century migration of their descendants into the South African interior; the further expansion of these descendants into southern Africa in the later nineteenth century; and finally the twentieth-century migration of whites to the cities.

European settlers in Africa and the early frontiers

When the first crew of Dutch officials and workmen stepped ashore at the Cape in April 1652, the plan was not to colonise the African interior. They were there to establish a refreshment station. The Dutch East India Company aimed to reduce the shipping costs between Amsterdam and the spice islands in the East Indies. The Cape would supply passing ships with fresh fruit, vegetables, water, meat and fuel.

The Cape made sense for a number of reasons. It was about halfway between Europe and the East Indies. It had fresh water and was sparsely inhabited. Settling here was easy compared with subduing the more densely settled indigenous populations further along the east coast. And it was also free from the deadly diseases that characterised much of Africa, such as malaria or trypanosomiasis ('sleeping sickness'), for example.⁸ Had settler mortality been high at the Cape, European settlement might have taken a very different form, with more extractive institutions that would be detrimental to later development.⁹

But the future growth of what would become the Cape Colony was not immediately obvious. Soon after settlement, Jan van Riebeeck, the first commander, ran into trouble. Almost 6000 soldiers and sailors arrived in Table Bay every year and the small refreshment station could not produce even enough to satisfy its own needs.¹⁰ A new plan was needed, and so in 1657 nine Company servants were released to become free settlers. In Manning's taxonomy, the semi-permanent VOC *sojourners* became *settlers*. Van Riebeeck had envisaged a small, densely settled farming community, much in the style of the Netherlands, with farmers producing wheat and vegetables and selling these at fixed prices to the fort in Cape Town, which would then resell them, at inflated prices, to the passing ships. The small community never materialised. Farm sizes soon increased on the windswept Cape peninsula, meat instead of wheat was the preferred produce, and a region that Van Riebeeck had thought would accommodate thousands of small farmers was soon taken over by a few dozen.

These early settler farmers had many problems to deal with: not just the south-easterly winds and the tough Cape vegetation, but also retribution from the indigenous Khoesan, dispossessed of their grazing and hunting lands.¹¹ The Khoesan put up a good fight, but conflict was always one-sided – the settlers had the advantage of guns and horses. After several decisive victories in the 1670s, the fertile land below the encircling mountain ranges was opened for settlement. It was the promise of this land that attracted about 180 French Huguenots to the Cape. Fleeing persecution, they were given farms between those of the Dutch settlers so that they would assimilate as quickly as possible. This they did, although they seem to have maintained their advantage in making wine, a staple of the sailor's diet at the Cape.¹²

By 1700, then, the Cape had a population of about 3000 people, 40% of whom were settlers, and half of these were children. Another 20% were Company servants and *knechten*.¹³ The final 40% were slaves, imported from the Indian Ocean regions of modern-day Malaysia, Indonesia, India, Madagascar, Mauritius and Mozambique, of whom 30% belonged to the Company and 70% to the settlers.

⁸ Alsan. 2015.

⁹ Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson. 2001.

¹⁰ Boshoff and Fourie. 2008.

¹¹ 'Khoesan' is a composite term for the Khoe pastoral farmers and the San hunter-gatherers.

¹² Fourie and von Fintel. 2014.

¹³ European wage labourers.

By this time, too, most of the available land west of the first mountain ranges was occupied and so the farmers began to move beyond the mountains to the north and northeast, into the dry interior, or along the coast below the southern mountain ranges. At first this was only seasonal migration to find grazing for their livestock. But the pasture seeking soon became a permanent migration eastward, taking with it the sons of Louis Fourie. Again, *sojourners* became *settlers*.

At the end of the seventeenth century the border of the Colony was about 80 km east of Cape Town; by the end of the eighteenth century it had moved more than 800 km further east.¹⁴ The eastward migration finally came to a halt when the settlers met groups of amaXhosa pastoralists, who were slowly migrating westward, in an area between the Sunday's River and the Kei River, later known as the Cape's eastern frontier.

The repeated eastward migration of the Cape frontier farmer, the *trekboer*, is well documented in South Africa historiography. In his extensive 1995 study, PJ van der Merwe noted that a 'combination of game hunting and the requirements of extensive stock farming kept the pioneers in a state of great mobility'.¹⁵ Their lifestyle, he suggested, was very similar to that of the Khoesan: 'half-nomadic, carnivorous hunter-stock farmers – the migrant farmer', in a world of solitude and simplicity.¹⁶

The history of the frontier farmers has informed an ongoing debate about whether the migrating settlers were pushed or pulled eastward.¹⁷ The standard view is that they were pushed. Agricultural land close to Cape Town began to be in short supply. High fertility rates meant that the settlers' many sons had little chance of inheriting enough land to secure their survival, let alone their upward mobility. Instead, they chose to marry and then migrate eastwards in search of a means of survival. The subsistence lifestyles of those on the frontier, reported by European travellers and documented by scholars like Van der Merwe, support the 'push' view.¹⁸

Table 1: Average ownership and production by district, 1790

District	Number of farms	Household members	Slaves	Wheat	Wine	Horses	Cattle	Sheep
Drakenstein	1011	3.13	4.02	4.32	3.27	4.48	16.43	99.74
Stellenbosch	360	3.20	5.92	2.53	5.05	5.92	13.33	43.79
Graaff-Reinet	747	3.73	0.86	NA	NA	1.88	41.53	318.84

Source: J109 (Graaff-Reinet) and J218 (Stellenbosch and Drakenstein), Cape Town Archives.

An alternative view, first proposed by Neumark, suggests that the high returns these young farmers could obtain on the frontier pulled them eastward.¹⁹ Meat was a sought-after commodity at the Cape, supplying both a growing local market and the passing ships. Their rudimentary pastoral lifestyle may have masked a flourishing and lucrative commercial trade in livestock, a very different picture from that of the isolated frontier subsistence farmer.

¹⁴ Giliomee. 1990.

¹⁵ Van der Merwe. 1995. 43. Van der Merwe's formidable corpus of work was, sadly, never published. Today, his unprocessed research material is preserved at the Western Cape Archives in Cape Town as the PJ van der Merwe Collection, occupying almost 22 metres of shelving.

¹⁶ Van der Merwe. 1995. 43.

¹⁷ Newton-King. 1999.

¹⁸ Harris and Guelke. 1977.

¹⁹ Neumark. 1957.

A new historiography, based on micro-level evidence, provides support for this ‘pull’ view. Using probate inventories, I have shown that the average farmer in the Cape Colony attained levels of wealth comparable to those of Europe or the United States.²⁰ Recent work using newly transcribed tax censuses, confirm the surprisingly high levels of assets and output.²¹ Table 1 shows the average levels for three districts in 1790 – Stellenbosch and Drakenstein, both close to Cape Town, and Graaff-Reinet, on the frontier.

Two differences are immediately apparent. The Stellenbosch and Drakenstein settlers owned far more slaves than the settlers on the frontier.²² The frontier farmers, on the other hand, owned far more cattle and sheep. The averages of 42 and 319 are not just due to outliers: the medians are 32 and 200.

But there were nevertheless considerable disparities in wealth on the frontier, even among the landholders, as Giliomee noted more than three decades ago.²³ Newton-King, using a small sample of probate inventories, confirmed that some frontier households were extremely poor and others extremely wealthy (by the standards of the day).²⁴ Using new data sources and more sophisticated methods, others have found similarly large wealth differences.²⁵ The point here is that although *some* settler farmers were poor, the frontier as a whole was not sunk in poverty; a large subsistence class would be unlikely to reflect such extreme differences.

In short, these numbers suggest that the Cape’s frontier farmers were not, as was traditionally assumed, living just above subsistence level. Young men who had been able to secure land and a small stock of cattle and sheep (perhaps as an inheritance or through a loan), could, within a few years, build up a substantial herd that could be driven to Cape Town to sell to the Company. Despite the distance from Cape Town, they not only formed part of the commercial economy but responded to market conditions.²⁶

In the expanding agricultural economy of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the frontier farmers’ migrations were driven by the availability of cheap land, cheap labour and a reliable market for their produce. But competition with the Khoesan made the initial expansion of the colonial borders expensive. Conflict required resources that the Company, a short-term profit maximiser, had little appetite for. Several skirmishes during the 1660s and 1670s, however, opened the area west of the first mountain ranges for settlement. Movement north and east became easy after the deadly smallpox epidemic of 1713 reduced Khoesan numbers substantially. Those Khoesan who did not perish either fled into the drier interior or joined the colonial economy as a labouring class.²⁷

The drop in Khoesan numbers in 1713 may have been the primary reason the Company switched in 1714 from well-defined property rights for land tenure in the Cape peninsula to the loan farm system with limited government enforcement in the interior.²⁸ The Khoesan’s weakened resistance to settler intrusion made private enforcement of settlers’ territorial claims cheaper. This relaxation of the rules for property

²⁰ Fourie. 2013.

²¹ Fourie and Green. 2015. & Fourie and Garmen. 2020.

²² Worden. 1985.

²³ Giliomee. 1990. 455.

²⁴ Newton-King, S. 1999. 158.

²⁵ Fourie and von Fintel. 2014.

²⁶ Ross. 1990. 253.

²⁷ The size of the Khoesan population before and after its decline is still debated, but there is little doubt that by the end of the eighteenth century it had shrunk considerably from the time the first settlers had arrived. See Fourie and Green. 2015. & La Croix. 2018.

²⁸ Dye and La Croix. 2018.

rights was an important reason why, according to Dye and La Croix, the Colony could expand so rapidly.²⁹ The new system of property rights, developed within a very specific early eighteenth-century setting, would travel more than a century later with the frontier farmers on their exit from the Colony.

The migrating settlers were not only interested in land – they needed labour too. The Company had banned the enslavement of the Khoesan, to prevent settlers from raiding a potential trading partner.³⁰ Absent a large pool of European labour, and given the complementary skills the Khoesan brought with them, notably herding and handling of draught animals, the subjugation of the Khoesan not only opened vast lands for settlement but also provided a ready supply of labour, especially in the frontier districts.³¹

Khoesan labour was not the main source of labour, of course. The Cape was a slave economy. Between 1652 and 1808 the Cape imported an estimated 63,000 slaves.³² Although a large number were housed in the Slave Lodge in Cape Town and worked on Company projects, most were purchased by settlers and used in agriculture. Slave ownership at the Cape was widespread. Fourie calculates that the average number of slaves per settler household was five.³³ The numbers reported in Table 1 suggest higher averages for wheat and wine farmers.

Yet slaves were not only used as labourers. In the absence of a formal credit market, settlers had developed an intricate informal financial network with slaves as capital. The weak property rights of the loan farms and the liquidity of slaves as assets meant that slaves were the most convenient collateral in loan agreements. Using the credit and debit entries in probate inventories, Fourie and Swanepoel show that loans were not only mortgaged against slaves, but slave purchases were the most likely reason for entering a loan agreement.³⁴ The numerous volumes of slave mortgage rolls attest to the widespread practice of using slave men and women as collateral.³⁵ Only after the emancipation in 1834 and the establishment of a formal banking sector would this practice end.

The emancipation of the almost 38,000 slaves – and the partial compensation for what was then considered to be the settlers’ most important asset at the Cape – brought substantial changes in the distribution of wealth in Colony. Many slave owners received only a fraction of the true value of their slaves, resulting in widespread bankruptcy and poverty.³⁶ Martins et al. find that the larger losses had a negative effect on the life duration of farmers in the Stellenbosch district.³⁷

Figure 1: Cape settler farms in 1850 with the 37 Fourie farms in black

²⁹ *Ibid.* Although the de jure property rights of loan farms were indeed weaker than those of the free tenure farms close to Cape Town, Swanepoel and Fourie show, using an innovative identification strategy, that there was little difference between tenure and loan farms in their de facto property rights. See Swanepoel and Fourie. 2018.

³⁰ Settler-Khoesan relations varied across time and space. Elphick and Malherbe note that travellers had seen settlers who ‘were brutal and serenely indifferent to suffering and death among their Khoesan employees’ but also ‘happy farms where Khoesan received considerate treatment and looked to their employers with evident affection’. Elphick and Malherbe. 1990. 29.

³¹ Links, Fourie, and Green. 2019.

³² Shell. 1994.

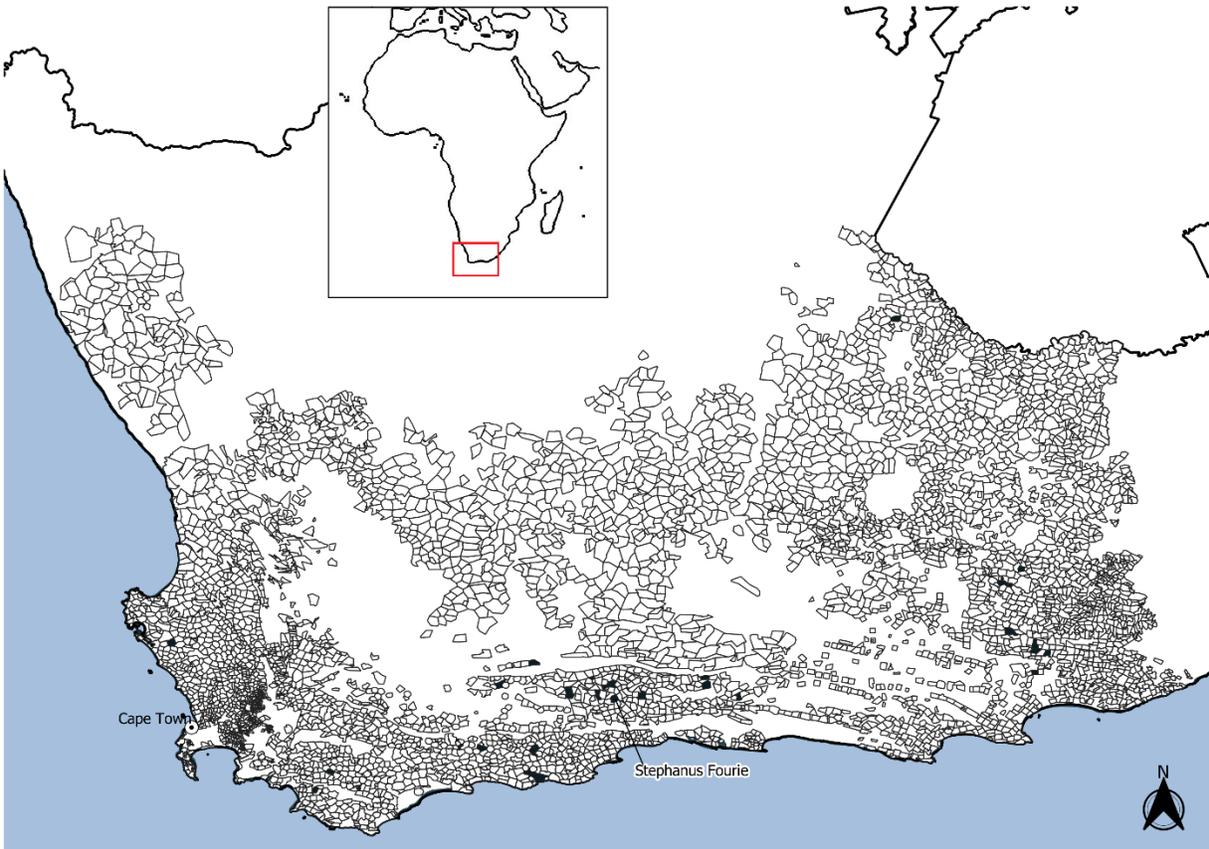
³³ Fourie. 2013.

³⁴ Swanepoel and Fourie. 2018.

³⁵ Ekama. 2020.

³⁶ Ekama, Fourie, Heese, and Martin. 2020.

³⁷ Martins, Cilliers, and Fourie. 2019.



Source: Le Roux, Niemandt and Olivier (2012)

This was also true for the Fourie family. Louis Fourie owned slaves and so did his children and grandchildren. In 1776, the year that Adam Smith published *The Wealth of Nations*, another grandchild, David Hermanus Fourie, was born to the now long-dead patriarch. In 1797, two years after the first British takeover, David Hermanus married the twenty-year-old Jacoba Hendrina Heyns and settled in the Langkloof, in the district of George. When the commissioners who were appointed to appraise the value of the slaves moved through the Colony in 1834, this is where they recorded David Hermanus's seven slaves: six men, Mey, aged 44, Albertus, aged 42, Mawira, aged 42, Adam, aged 26, Damon, aged 19 and Frans, aged 13, and one woman, Regina, aged 44.³⁸ Their total value was assessed at £907.10. When compensation was calculated, David Hermanus was offered only £260.11.05, or 29% of the total value. Given his father's large losses when compensation was paid, it is no surprise that Stephanus Johannes Fourie, the eldest son of David Hermanus, moved to the district of George close to the present-day town of Oudtshoorn, naming his new farm *Armoed* – 'Poverty'. Figure 1 plots the 5503 farms in the Cape Colony in 1850. Polygons in black show the 37 farms owned by farmers with the Fourie surname.

The Great Trek

The loss of labour and capital when the slaves were emancipated in 1834 may have been two pressing reasons why bands of frontier farmers, by the mid-1830s, were organising to trek beyond the borders of the colony. Piet Retief, a well-known leader of the Voortrekkers, wrote in his manifesto that the trek was necessary 'to preserve the proper relations between master and servant'.³⁹ Ordinance 50 of 1828, which

³⁸ The spelling of these names is subject to uncertainty owing to the poor handwriting in the original source.

³⁹ *The Graham's Town Journal*, 2 February 1837.

protected Khoesan workers from the coercive labour practices that had become common by the early nineteenth century, combined with the emancipation of the slaves, resulted in severe labour shortages on the frontier and complaints from farmers.⁴⁰ The Voortrekkers also complained that they had lost ‘up to four-fifths of the market value of their slaves’ because the British government paid out the compensation money in Britain rather than in South Africa.⁴¹ While the difference between the market value and the cash compensation was largely due to the way Britain appraised the slaves and not the location of pay-outs, there is little doubt that some slave owners, heavily in debt and with their slaves as their only collateral, were financially ruined.⁴²

Yet if emancipation did play such a critical role in the settlers’ decision to migrate deeper into the interior, then one would expect that either those who were the largest slave owners or those with the largest losses would be the most likely to do so. The slave emancipation rolls and the list of migrants have not yet been matched, but the geographic origin of the migrants – from the frontier regions of Somerset and Graaff-Reinet – suggest that they owned few slaves and were unlikely to be those most affected by the inadequate compensation. The Voortrekkers themselves acknowledged this. In her diary, Anna Steenkamp, the niece of Piet Retief, stressed social and, as can be expected of a God-fearing people, religious reasons for trekking:

De schandelijke en onregvaardige handelwijs van die vrijhijt van onser slaven en nogtans heeft de vrijhijt ons so seer niet verdreven als de geleykhijt de gelykstelling met die Christenen, strijdig met de wetten van God en het natuurlik onderschijt van afkomst en geloof. Dat het onverdraaglijk was voor elk fatsoenlijk Christen onder sulk een last te buijgen waarom wij dan ons liever verwijderen des te beter ons geloof en leer in suyverheijt te behouden.

‘The disgraceful and unrighteous freedom given to the slaves did not drive us away as much as the equality with us as Christians, which is contrary to God’s laws and to nature. It was simply too intolerable for any decent Christian to carry such a load, which is why we would rather leave [the Colony] so as to preserve our faith in its pure form’.⁴³

Political and racial segregation was a leitmotif for the settlers who moved beyond the borders of the Colony from early on. But segregation was only part of the story. After the Cape came under British rule in 1795 and again in 1806 (after three years of rule by the Batavian Republic), the institutions set up by the Dutch East India Company a century earlier had served their purpose. In 1813 a quitrent land system was introduced, with the purpose of increasing the colonial revenue through taxation. Many settlers complained about the new system and were, to some extent, protected by the inability of the new British government to enforce the new laws.⁴⁴ A provisional system of ‘request-places’ soon became a popular form of land tenure but caused some insecurity, especially when the new governor, Lord Bathurst, withdrew the property rights of 120 farmers.⁴⁵ Almost all of these 120 would eventually join the Great Trek.

Not only were the rights to land increasingly contentious, so too was access to land. The open frontier of the eighteenth century had closed by the second decade of the nineteenth century. During the 1770s colonists with little or no capital could still acquire land and start raising cattle, but by 1798 only 26% of the colonists owned farms, and by 1812 only 18%.⁴⁶ This situation was further exacerbated by the arrival,

⁴⁰ Peires. 1990.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Ekama, Fourie, Heese, and Martin. 2020.

⁴³ Steenkamp. 1939. 10. Own translation.

⁴⁴ Peires. 1990.

⁴⁵ Peires. 1990. 503.

⁴⁶ Giliomee. 1990. 450.

in 1820, of around 4000 settlers from Britain. Colonial officials hoped that these British settlers would help not only to anglicize the eastern frontier but also to placate the Dutch-speaking settlers, who were in constant conflict with groups of Khoesan and Xhosa. But the effect was exactly the opposite.

Not only were new groups of settlers arriving on the frontier but, around 1823, waves of black migrants too.⁴⁷ Where the Fingo – or Mfengu – came from is still debated, although there is little doubt that the immediate cause of their arrival was the Mfecane, a period of warfare that ravaged much of the interior of South Africa from 1815 to 1840. The reasons for the Mfecane are interrelated: the emergence of circumscription that limited movement, the introduction of maize that gave rise to larger populations, and an increase in the intensity of slave trade in Delagoa Bay.⁴⁸ Another strand of recent scholarship suggests that the cause of the Mfecane was resource shortages due to a serious drought caused by the eruption, in 1815, of an Indonesian volcano.⁴⁹ Whatever their reasons for migrating, the incoming Mfengu further complicated an already volatile situation on the Cape Colony's eastern frontier. Muller emphasises their continued mobility: 'These immigrants remained mobile on the Cape frontier. It is exactly this special mobility that contributed to increased frontier conflict and caused the Great Trek'.⁵⁰ Black mobility helps to explain white mobility.

This may be true for an altogether different reason too. As the conflict drove some black people away from the interior, white migrants moved in. South African historians have focused almost exclusively on push factors to explain the Great Trek. Yet it is perhaps useful, as Neumark did for the eighteenth-century frontier farmers, to also consider pull factors.⁵¹ Apart from the political and religious sentiment that permeates Voortrekker rhetoric, there is no doubt that the prospect of sparsely populated land beyond the Orange River, with abundant resources, would have contributed to their decision. It is not as if the region beyond the Colony's borders was completely unknown to the frontier farmers. One consequence of the depopulation of the interior was the return of large herds of game. Muller notes that, from 1819, large hunting expeditions, led by men like GPN Coetzee, OJ van Schalkwyk, JH Snyman and LJ Fourie, visited the region almost annually. He says that by 1830 several routes to the north were already known and this 'attractive, easily accessible region' was considered 'mostly depopulated', a region where, apart from some Khoesan, only 'some roaming blacks' could be found.⁵² News about the relatively open interior and its abundant resources would have reached frontier farmers, and hunters, by the 1830s.

The Mfecane pushed war refugees and other migrants into the already densely populated eastern frontier, where the rugged terrain offered security (as did the Drakensberg mountains where Moshoeshoe gathered war refugees into the Basuto Kingdom). The Mfecane may explain why, by the 1830s, blacks in South Africa were mostly concentrated in the rugged regions of what would later become the Transkei, Zululand, Lesotho and Swaziland (now eSwatini).⁵³ It has been argued that African settlement patterns were a consequence of the slave trade; in southern Africa, the violence of the Mfecane may instead explain why Africans opted for rugged terrain.

The migration of several thousand settlers to the interior was thus driven by a combination of push factors – such as a general dissatisfaction with the British authority at the Cape and its new labour, regulatory and fiscal institutions that undermined the autonomy of the frontier farmer – and pull factors – particularly the opportunity to acquire fertile land relatively cheaply in the interior. The exact number of

⁴⁷ Muller. 1974.

⁴⁸ Keeton and Schirmer. 2020.

⁴⁹ Garstang, Coleman, and Therrell. 2014.

⁵⁰ Muller. 1974. 134. Own translation.

⁵¹ Neumark. 1957.

⁵² Muller. 1974. 229. Louis Johannes Fourie, born in 1797 in the Swellendam district, was the first born of the fifth generation of Fouries. Author's translation.

⁵³ von Fintel and Fourie. 2019.

these settlers depends on how we define the period and who would be included in the count: Peires suggests that up to 15,000 ‘Afrikaners’ left, about a fifth of the total settler population.⁵⁴

What is clear is that the first half of the nineteenth century was a period of flux. The Great Trek has perhaps been overemphasised – it was just one of many migrations in search of a better life. The Mfecane and its forced migrations displaced millions of people across southern Africa, outnumbering the Great Trekkers by at least a factor of 100. Etherington says the Great Trek was ‘only one of many treks undertaken by people... seeking different homelands’ and ‘has no special claim to be called “Great”’.⁵⁵

The Great Trek was indeed just another group of people in Africa in search of better economic opportunities. It was different in one sense, though – for the Voortrekkers there was no going back. They had burned their boats. The frontier farmers of the Cape Colony remained dependent on the commercial capital, Cape Town, and later, Port Elizabeth, and could return closer to these centres if their existence was threatened on the frontier, (and many did so). But very few Voortrekkers who left for the southern African interior ever returned to the Cape.

Arguments about the differing significance of the South African migrations can perhaps be clarified by defining their types. In Manning’s taxonomy, the Voortrekkers could be classified as a special case of *itinerants*, moving from place to place before ultimately settling down. Because many of them settled in sparsely settled areas, avoiding the more densely settled, rugged areas, their migration could also be classified as *colonization*, as Manning defines it.⁵⁶ One might even make a case for them to be classified as *invaders*, who seize and dominate the local population, although this is probably more reflective of their descendants’ actions in the second half of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century.

Ultimately, though, I would argue that the Voortrekkers are best described as *settlers* in the category *cross-community migration* – moving but remaining segregated from the groups they would meet. A grandchild of Louis Fourie, David Stephanus Fourie, provides a good example of this type.⁵⁷ Leading a large party that left the Colony in 1838, Fourie purchased land between the Modder and Vaal Rivers from the mixed-race Korana leader David Danster on 15 May 1839. He called his farm Van Wyksvlei, after a Griqua who used to farm there. The farm later became the town of Boshof, named after the second president of the Orange Free State. It became a municipality in 1872.

Waves of expansion

As David Stephanus Fourie’s story demonstrates, the migration of settler farmers into the interior in the 1830s and 1840s resulted in a political transformation of the interior. The trek followed a haphazard process, with each band of Voortrekkers following its own route and with its own leader, sometimes combining and at other times separating, and sporadically clashing with Bantu-speaking groups, notably the Zulu at the Battle of Blood River on 16 December 1838. The most prominent leaders were Hendrik Potgieter (1835), Gerrit Maritz (1836), Hans van Rensburg (1835), Louis Tregardt (1835) and Piet Retief (1837). The routes they are thought to have taken are shown in Figure 2.

⁵⁴ Peires. 1990.

⁵⁵ Etherington, N. 2014. *The Great Treks: the transformation of southern Africa 1815-1854*. Routledge. 344.

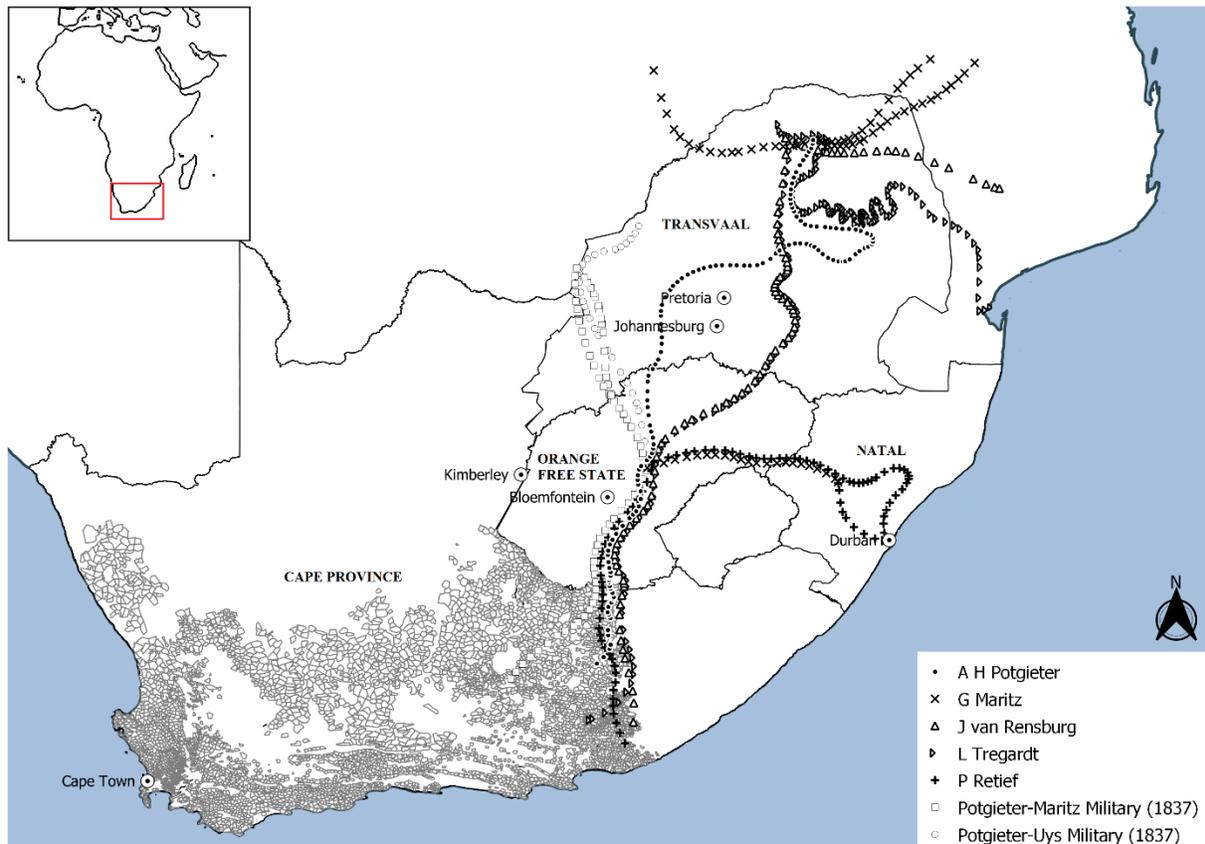
⁵⁶ Manning defined *colonization* as involving the replication of a community. De Haas and Frankema explain in Chapter 1: ‘Perhaps confusingly, this type of migration had little to do with European colonialism, as even European settlers required the presence of an African work force so had no incentive to expel previous inhabitants.’

⁵⁷ David Stephanus Fourie was not the only Fourie who joined the Great Trek. In the most authoritative study of Voortrekker families to date, Visagie records the names of 2313 male and 2183 female migrants who left the Cape Colony between 1834 and 1845. Thirty of these men (or 1.3%) and 26 of the women (or 1.2%) have the surname Fourie. Visagie. 2000.

One immediate consequence was that the Boers – as they would become known – established the Republic of Natalia in 1839, although this proved to be short-lived as Britain annexed it in 1843, making it the Colony of Natal. Many Boers, frustrated with the continual political intervention by Britain, moved north, into the highveld, and founded several independent Boer republics, the two most prominent being the South African Republic (the ZAR, *Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek*, later the Transvaal) in 1852 and the Orange Free State in 1854. Smaller republics, like the Republic of Utrecht and the Republic of Lydenburg, joined the ZAR in 1860.

The establishment of independent Boer republics did not mean an abrupt end to trekking within and beyond the borders of the new territories. From at least the early eighteenth century, the search for minerals and better living conditions drew migrants towards the deserts and semi-deserts of South West Africa, today's Namaqualand, and into the former German South West Africa, now Namibia. Gustav Preller describes, for example, the trek of Hendrik Smith of Piquetberg, who in 1890 began to trek northwards, a trek that would last four years and end in German South West Africa's Swakopmund.⁵⁸

Figure 2: Cape settler farms in 1850 with Voortrekker routes and 1910 South African provinces



Source: Von Fintel and Fourie (2019)

One of the most notorious, and arguably the best-known, trek beyond South Africa's borders, was the Thirstland Trek of 1874. Several scholars have studied this ill-fated trek, but it is Nicol Stassen's monumental study, *The Thirstland Trek*, that gives us a full picture of the miseries these migrants endured.⁵⁹ The immediate reason for trekking seems to have been a religious dispute. The ZAR president, Thomas

⁵⁸ Preller. 1941.

⁵⁹ Stassen. 2016.

François Burgers, was perceived by many Boers belonging to the Dopper or Reformed Church, a more conservative faction of Afrikaner Calvinism, as 'too liberal'. But although these Boers may have left to escape the 'false religious perceptions' of the president and in quest of 'an earthly paradise or New Jerusalem', there were probably other reasons too: the lack of freely available land, fear of equalisation with black Africans, and fear of new forms of taxation.⁶⁰ These echo the economic motivations of earlier trekkers.

Terrible tragedy befell the Thirstland trekkers. Leaving Pretoria in May 1874, the migrants slowly moved in the direction of the Kalahari desert, collecting more families along the way. The trek, eventually consisting of 480 trekkers in 128 wagons, halted at Rietfontein, bordering the Kalahari. A tale of torment and near catastrophe then befell them, as drinkable water here was so scarce it 'had to be given by the spoonful'. Fever and eating poisonous fruit killed nearly half their cattle. Thirty-seven trekkers succumbed to the harsh conditions.

While some decided to return to the Transvaal, others diverted to Damaraland and the Okavango River, where at Rustplaas in the Etosha Pan they found abundantly flowing springs. Here the trek halted temporarily, providing relief for the tired trekkers. Some built houses and cultivated gardens. Those who returned to the Transvaal pleaded for funds to be raised to aid the trekkers. Nonetheless, because of their desire to be self-reliant, some continued to trek further north, into Angola, establishing a new settlement at Humpata. Although their relationship with the local Portuguese settlers was amicable, the Portuguese authorities never recognised their citizenship and in 1928 many were repatriated to South West Africa. Stassen notes that on repatriation the descendants of the trekkers were praised for 'almost a century-long stay in Angola' that 'played a decisive role in the road network development in southern Angola'.⁶¹

As the encounter with the Portuguese settlers in Angola makes obvious, the Boer settlers were not the only settlers of European descent in southern Africa. As the zeitgeist of imperialism swept through Africa, the British embarked on a more organised and coordinated series of annexations in an attempt to build an empire from the Cape to Cairo. Much of this interest in the southern African interior was kindled by the discovery of minerals – first diamonds, in 1867, and then the much more lucrative gold, in 1886, on the Witwatersrand. These discoveries transformed the interior, bringing in a feeding frenzy of prospectors in a diamond and gold rush. The growth of these mining towns was spectacular. By 1891, for example, Kimberley was the second-largest city in the Cape Colony, with 40,231 inhabitants; 17.8% of its population was foreign-born compared to 3.4% for the entire Colony.

British migrants came to capitalize on not only the minerals but also the souls ripe for conversion. Hunting and trading expeditions paved the way towards the Zambezi and missionaries followed. Following in the footsteps of men like David Livingstone, the Reverend Francois Coillard set out on a missionary expedition in 1877 beyond the Limpopo river, settling eventually on the banks of the Zambezi.⁶² Others followed. The Hully-Cawood trek of 1896 was the largest missionary trek into Rhodesia, and one that, much like the Thirstland trekkers, underwent intense suffering.⁶³ Missionary activities like these actively contributed to bringing southern African territories under Britain's sphere of influence, making them into protectorates, like Nyasaland in 1907 (the present-day Malawi).

It was Rhodesia, in particular, that would become a popular destination for settlers moving beyond South Africa's borders. In 1890, after protracted negotiations with Chief Lobengula, Cecil John Rhodes, diamond magnate and Prime Minister of the Cape Colony, and his British South Africa Company (BSAC) prepared the Pioneer Column for settlement in the lands beyond the Limpopo. This was to be 'a selection

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Stassen. 2016. 460.

⁶² Mackintosh. 1950.

⁶³ Boggie. 1962.

of one in ten from the 2000 applicants who were deliberately designated to constitute a cross-section of Cape Colonial society, with a strong emphasis on the English side'.⁶⁴ As Rhodes envisaged a long-term occupation of the northern territories, his Pioneer Column was to 'attract plenty of men from good families with a love of adventure'.⁶⁵

On 12 September 1890, in 65 heavily laden wagons, the pioneers embarked on their journey of 400 miles towards Mashonaland. After two and a half months of trekking, they arrived at their destination, Fort Hampton (which became the capital, Salisbury, renamed Harare in 1982). There they raised the Union Jack flag in Cecil Square – marking the formal annexation of Rhodesia.

The imperial ambition that drove the annexation of Rhodesia was, of course, closely tied to the prospect of profits from extracting mineral resources. Rumours soon spread of the discovery of a rich copper reef across the Zambezi, which attracted the interests of the British South Africa Company. Brelsford argues that Rhodes believed the Royal Charter extended to Northern Rhodesia and so he instructed the pioneers to 'just go in and take the place'.⁶⁶ To that end, the BSAC police extended their influence to north-eastern Rhodesia, and some of them were enlisted in the North-Eastern Rhodesia Police.

In 1901, the last formal trekking movement, the Northern Rhodesia Expedition under the leadership of George Grey, set off. Grey planned not only to prospect for copper but also to develop the area of Kansanshi. The expedition comprised 15 European settlers chosen from more than 400 applicants.⁶⁷

The opening up of the territories north of the Limpopo for settlers spurred on what has been described as a 'Second Great Trek'. Boer commissions preceded the treks to evaluate the feasibility of agricultural production. The Paarl Mashonaland Commission negotiated with Rhodes for a possible permanent settlement within the newly colonised territories. Rhodes, regarding the Afrikaners as pioneers in agricultural development, longed for their presence in Rhodesia, though not merely for economic reasons but also to strengthen the number of Europeans under British rule in the Manica and Gazaland areas in Southern Rhodesia as a buffer against possible Portuguese infiltration from Mozambique.

As an economic incentive, Rhodes initiated the Land Settlement Scheme in Gazaland. The scheme stipulated an advance payment, none of the farms were larger than 3000 morgen, and all mining and mineral rights belonged to the BSAC, but this was nevertheless an attractive proposition for many Boers.⁶⁸ Despite the obvious economic motives, the rhetoric of the time was of a revived *trekgees* ('trek spirit'). Some of the leaders spoke of the 'drywende gees van trek in ons harte' ('undying trek spirit in our hearts').⁶⁹ Newspapers echoed this sentiment. *Die Afrikaanse Patriot* of 3 May 1894 said: 'Trekken moet en trekken zal men dus weder. Er is een trekgeest ontwaakt' ('Men must and shall trek again. A trek spirit has awoken.').⁷⁰

But this spirit may have been partly a front for the economic motive. The Boers considered poverty a great embarrassment. Trekking was in one sense an 'escape mechanism', a way to relieve the pressures felt by inhabitants of the Cape Colony and the Boer republics.⁷¹ But it was more than just a way to escape poverty. It was also a search for a promised land of prosperity, a land where the labour systems and agricultural technologies that had yielded a high standard of living in the eighteenth-century Cape Colony

⁶⁴ Blake. 1973. 4.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Brelsford. 1965. 43.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Olivier. 1943.

⁶⁹ Preller. 1941.

⁷⁰ *Die Afrikaanse Patriot*, 3 May 1894.

⁷¹ Hendrich. 2010.

could be preserved. Just as the vision of empty land beyond the Orange attracted frontier farmers in the 1830s, farmers that were unhappy with the institutional changes that the British had introduced, threatening their economic livelihoods, so the vision of open land beyond the Limpopo in the 1890s sparked the interest of people who could not or did not want to adjust to the social, economic and political change brought about by the mineral revolution. Uneven spatial opportunities, then, partly explain the waves of migration that simultaneously pulled and pushed settlers deeper into the African interior.

Again, the migrants travelled in groups. The first Boer trek, the Adendorff trek to establish a Republic of Banjaland in Matabeleland, was short-lived. On 24 June 1891 this trek, with some 2000 to 3000 trekkers, departed towards Florisdrift on the Limpopo River. Again, the ‘trek spirit’ was given as the reason: it appeared to be a repeat of the Great Trek – the circumstances were different, but the call to trek was apparent everywhere.⁷² Despite the optimism, the Adendorff trek ended prematurely when President Kruger and his Volksraad, or People’s Council, at the last minute urged the trekkers to return in order to avoid any direct confrontation with Rhodes.

Others soon followed: the Van der Byl trek in 1891, the Moodie trek in 1892, the Moolman-Webster trek in 1893, the Gifford-Edenburg trek and Mynhardt-Utrecht trek of 1894, the Du Plessis treks of 1894 and 1895, and the Kruger-Bekker trek and Hans-Steyn trek of 1895.⁷³ The size of these treks varied from ten to a hundred families. When Marthinus Jacobus Martin, a Member of Parliament of the Orange Free State, heard that he would receive eight farms as a prize for bringing settlers to Rhodesia, he hastily organised a trek that would become the largest of all the Boer treks into Rhodesia.⁷⁴ On 19 April 1894 the Martin trek, consisting of 104 men with fully laden ox-wagons, departed from Fouriesburg, a town in the eastern Free State named after Christoffel Fourie, a sixth-generation Fourie and nephew of Louis Johannes Fourie.

Migration to the cities

Fouriesburg served as a temporary capital for the Orange Free State during the Second Boer War (1899 – 1902) and, given its strategic importance, was almost completely destroyed. So, too, were many of the farms in the former Boer republics, with many families being forced to move to the temporary internment camps set up by the British. The numbers of people interned were not inconsequential. Well over 100,000 Afrikaner men, women and children were moved to the camps.⁷⁵ An estimated 26,000 of them died. Of the 114,315 individuals in a dataset that Elizabeth van Heyningen has meticulously reconstructed from camp records, 1453 (1.3%) had a Fourie surname; 295 of them died in the camps.⁷⁶

One consequence of the devastation caused by the war was increasing white urbanisation. The goldmines of the Witwatersrand and the industries that developed around them required labour, both white and black. Many white *bywoners*, landless farmworkers, were displaced by the war and had little alternative but to move to these industrial centres. As Figure 3 shows, it was especially the eastern districts of the Cape Province and the western districts of the Orange Free State that depopulated between 1911, the year of the Union of South Africa’s first population census, and 1936. Almost all of South Africa’s major cities, bar Kimberley, were destination regions for these rural migrants. The Witwatersrand region, with Johannesburg at its centre, was the most popular.

Although it was at first mostly men who moved, women soon followed. From the beginning of the twentieth century, white English female immigration and settlement in Cape Town was encouraged and the

⁷² Blok. 1928. 42.

⁷³ Burrows. 1954. & Scheepers, Krüger and Trümpelmann. 1976.

⁷⁴ Groenewald. 1978.

⁷⁵ du Plessis and Fourie. 2016.

⁷⁶ Van Heyningen. 2009.

British Women's Emigration Association was established with the specific aim of increasing this demographic.⁷⁷ In the 1920s white Afrikaner women from agricultural areas moved into jobs in the emerging textile, clothing and food industries in Johannesburg and Cape Town,⁷⁸ bolstering the suffragette movement as they did so.⁷⁹ In the wake of the Great Depression, young women arriving in the cities were happy to seize any employment opportunity.⁸⁰ Women had generally been outnumbered by men but this began to change around the middle of the century. In Cape Town, coloured and white women outnumbered men by the time of the 1946 census.⁸¹ The women's migration to the cities is an example of what Manning would classify as *home-community migration*.

Not all migration was to the cities, though. As is clear from Figure 3, many rural areas of the Transvaal attracted white settlement too. One reason for this was the 1913 Land Act that dispossessed black farmers and sharecroppers of their land and tenure. This was not a new phenomenon: eighteenth- and nineteenth-century settler expansion in the Cape Colony and beyond had inevitably involved land dispossession and exclusion. The Land Act of 1913 (and its later amendments) was different in being the first country-wide piece of legislation to designate regions where only white residents could own land. In fact, the Land Act allocated less than 7% of the country for black ownership.

In twentieth-century South Africa, legislative segregation shaped the migration of the whites, and later the blacks, who sought to take advantage of the increasing prosperity of South Africa's rapidly industrialising cities. The laws introduced by the National Party, after its narrow victory in the 1948 all-white elections, further segregated all aspects of South African public life on the basis of race. But it was the Groups Areas Act of 1950 that most effectively enforced spatial segregation. The Act split towns and cities into areas for whites, coloureds, Indians and blacks. One implication of these laws was that black ownership was circumscribed, a decision that affected migration and settlement. The repercussions are evident in South Africa today: leafy, suburban, formerly white neighbourhoods stand in sharp contrast to the miserable living conditions in black 'townships' on the periphery of cities.

⁷⁷ Bickford-Smith, E. Van Heyningen, and N. Worden. 1999.

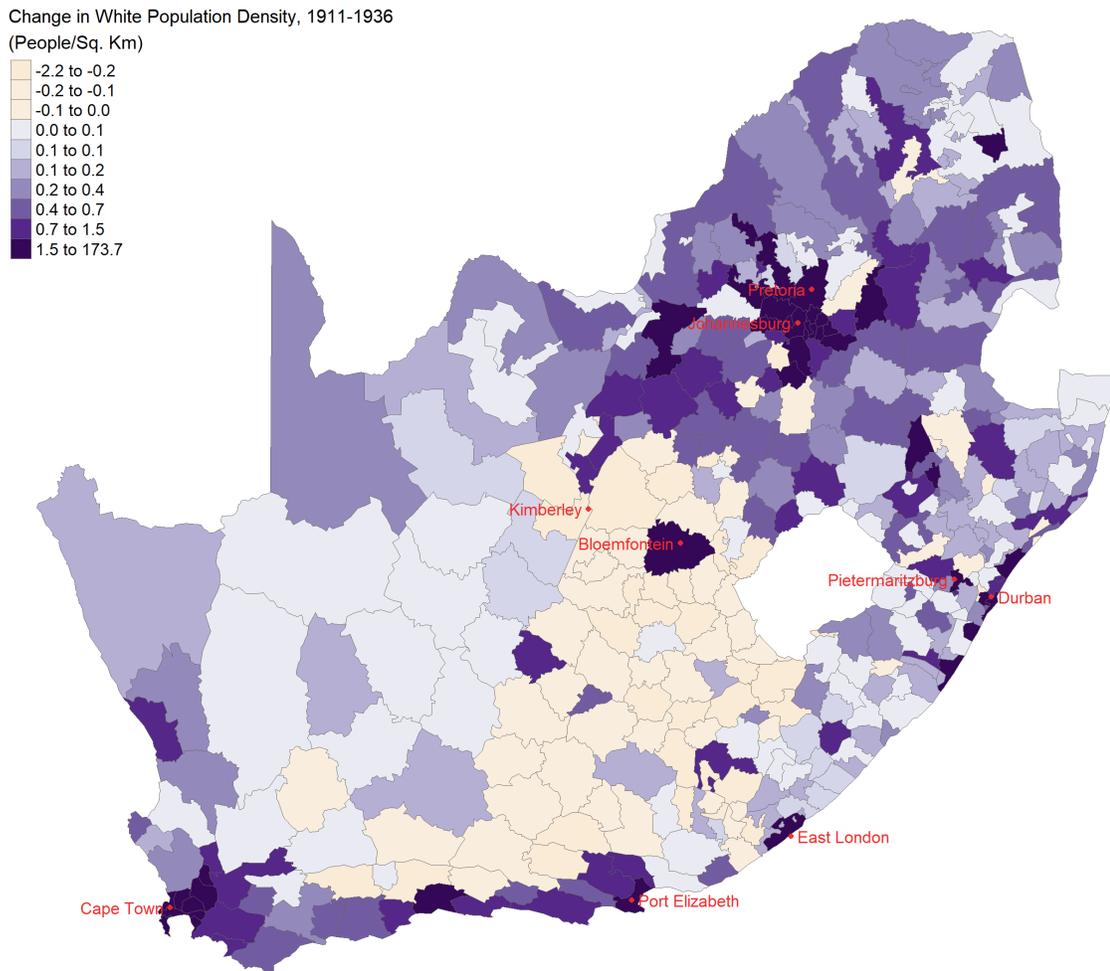
⁷⁸ Feinstein, et al. 2005.

⁷⁹ Walker. 1990.

⁸⁰ Brink. 1990.

⁸¹ Bickford-Smith, E. Van Heyningen, and N. Worden. 1999.

Figure 3: Change in white population density, 1911 to 1936



Source: South African censuses, 1911 and 1936

Segregation turned into ‘self-development’. The Promotion of Black Self-Government Act of 1959 was intended to turn the traditional areas allocated to black farmers by the various Land Acts into independent countries, a scheme that became known as ‘grand apartheid’. More than three million black residents of ‘white South Africa’ were forcibly resettled in the under-resourced ‘homelands’. Pass laws were introduced to regulate the system of temporary labour migration into white South Africa, a policy known as ‘influx control’. Although costly to the economy, the system persisted until 1986 for reasons of political economy: it protected unskilled and semi-skilled white workers (voters) against competition from black workers (who were not allowed to vote). Of those white voters who were registered on the voters’ roll in 1984, 0.7% had the surname Fourie.⁸²

The abolition of influx control opened up opportunities for black South Africans to settle permanently in former white areas. Their rights to free movement and residence were enshrined in the country’s new constitution after its first democratic elections in 1994. The expectation was that the temporary labour migration would be replaced by permanent settlement. Yet the evidence suggests that temporary internal

⁸² 21,682 of the 2,944,105 white voters.

labour migration did not decline and may have actually increased.⁸³ The reason for this was the rapid rise in female labour migration. In contrast to the white migrants who moved during the early twentieth century, black migrants to the cities retain their ties with their original households and continue to return to their original homes. In Manning's taxonomy, they could be classified as a mix between *sojourners* and *itinerants* within *cross-community migration*. Whether these cultural norms are a consequence of land dispossession, economic insecurity and exclusion under apartheid or a phenomenon deeply embedded in histories of pastoral life and seasonal migration is an intriguing question that invites future research.

Trekking on

Despite rapid white urbanisation during the twentieth century, the trekking spirit has never entirely disappeared. Whereas southern Africa was a destination for white immigration until the mid-twentieth century, the situation has now been reversed. Deteriorating economic and physical security have been important push factors. The disruptions and conflict of the independence movements across southern Africa caused many settler descendants to emigrate to Europe or to offshoots of the former British Empire. After Zimbabwe's Land Reform Programme of 2000, large numbers of white farmers left that country for South Africa, England or Australia.

Although there is some evidence to suggest that white South Africans have emigrated in large numbers, it is difficult to verify any estimates because Statistics South Africa does not record emigration statistics. One estimate is that between 2001 and 2015 almost 400,000 South Africans emigrated, most of them white.⁸⁴ What we do know is that in 2011, the most recent census year, the census found that South Africa was home to 4.5 million white residents, 8.9% of the total population. That figure is larger than the 1996 census figure of 4.4 million and the 2001 census figure of 4.3 million, although both those figures are disputed. With the numbers in doubt, it is even more difficult to discern the motivations for leaving.

Of relevance to the early migrant story this paper has narrated is the fact that, of the 4.5 million whites in 2011, 2.7 million, or 61%, recorded Afrikaans as their first language, a rough proxy for the ancestors of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century settlers. For most, the trekker spirit lives on only in popular culture. One of the most popular lifestyle magazines in Afrikaans is 'Weg!' (also published as 'Go!'), focusing on the outdoors. In his 2009 album *Afrikanerhart* ('Heart of an Afrikaner'), Afrikaans artist Bok van Blerk recalls the Afrikaner's trekker spirit in his love song: *Tyd om te Trek?* – 'Time to Trek?' Totius, one of the first Afrikaner poets, who often used the trek as a metaphor for life, would have been proud.

Some, though, have rekindled the trekking spirit of their ancestors more literally. In August 1997, *The Economist* reported on a 'second Great Trek':

Some 150 years after Afrikaners left the Cape to set off on their Great Trek north, their descendants are embarking on another odyssey. This time they are not travelling in canvas-covered ox-wagons. They go by scheduled flight from Johannesburg, their pick-up trucks and motorbikes following by container ship. Over the past two years, several dozen Afrikaner farming families have set off from South Africa for Congo-Brazzaville and Mozambique. Battered by years of drought, they pack up their belongings and leave for the promise of more fertile lands north of the Limpopo. 'It was amazing,' recalls Jan Tromp of his first impressions of Congo-Brazzaville. 'The country had a beautiful climate, yet this kind of land was still lying in Africa without anybody using it.'⁸⁵

⁸³ Posel. 2004.

⁸⁴ Kaplan and Höppli. 2017.

⁸⁵ *The Economist*. 28 August 1997. <https://www.economist.com/international/1997/08/28/afrikaners-on-a-second-great-trek>

What is most striking about *The Economist* news report is the shift in motivation: the religious rhetoric of yesteryear and the nationalistic fervour of historians past have been replaced with an overt economic motive. Perhaps it is more accurate to refer to two economic motives – the push of poverty (‘years of drought’) and the pull of prosperity (‘promise of more fertile lands’) – much like their eighteenth and nineteenth-century ancestors.

The 2019 Afrobarometer, a pan-African survey, confirms these economic motives for all South Africans. Of those interviewed in South Africa who said they had considered emigrating (31% of the sample), 40% said their main motivation was to find work. Only 8% cited mainly concerns with peace and security. When Wynand Fourie moved to Amsterdam in 2018, it was to take up a lucrative new job and career prospects, much as his ancestor Louis Fourie did ten generations ago when he moved in the opposite direction.⁸⁶

South Africa is a country of immigrants. As this paper has shown, the European settlers who arrived during the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries joined a society in flux, one where migration was a way of life rather than an aberration. These settlers sometimes followed but often caused the migrations of the people they encountered. Rather than pursuing a deliberate goal to subjugate and conquer (even though that was often the outcome), settler migration was, more often than not, a way to survive the harsh conditions of the South African landscape; a way, real or perceived, to improve their standard of living.

This quest reverberates across Africa today. Millions of immigrants from other African countries have arrived in South Africa during the past three decades, repelled by the harsh economic realities of their countries of origin and drawn by the bright lights of Jozi and dreams of a better life.⁸⁷ Just as past expanding frontiers caused disruption and dislocation, so, too, will these African settlers steer their destination country in a new direction.

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⁸⁶ Wynand Fourie is the brother of the author.

⁸⁷ Jozi is a colloquial term for Johannesburg.

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