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by: Robert Thornton

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The Colonial, the Imperial, and the Creation of the 'European' in Southern Africa

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Abstract
This paper examines the Zulu attempt to understand and to exploit the imperial power of Queen Victoria relative to the colonial powers of Natal's earliest colonists, missionaries, and administrators. The study reveals the opening up, and exploitation of a distinction between the interests of the "imperial", represented for the Zulu royalty by Queen Victoria in England, and the "colonial" (or "Colonialist" --a term invented in mid nineteenth century southern Africa) represented by the Shepstone administration in Natal and the Cape Parliament in the Cape Colony. An attempt is made to sketch the 19th century Zulu imagination of power in which the colonial, the imperial, the missionary, the Zulu and the European or "Western" (Occidental) types and sources of power could be comprehended and manipulated. It amounted to the creation of the social category of "The White" by southern African people who were simultaneously cast as "The Black" or "The Natives" by people of European descent in southern Africa. It also led to the creation of the characteristically South African politics which seeks a moral arbitor and guarantee not in its own limited arena, but in the world at large.

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The Colonial, the Imperial, and the Creation of the 'European' in Southern Africa[1]

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South Africa's history has long been characterized as the struggle between an imperial power, England, and indigenous people who have sought to maintain their independence or autonomy. The interests of the imperial power, according to the standard view, were mainly to control the territory of southern Africa and to control access to natural and human resources within it. Far from being a merely historical interpretation, this view was tantamount to policy from the time that Cecil John Rhodes took his seat in the Cape Parliament in 1881 (Rotberg 1988: 128) soon after the crushing defeat at Majuba of the first British attempt to annex the Transvaal. It continued to be the policy of successive British governments and of imperialists within southern Africa up to the instigation of the Anglo-Boer War, which led to the eventual unification of what is today South Africa under British control, and to eventual independence of the Union of South Africa under a White government.

Historians and anthropologists have been aware of the many nuances and ambiguities in actual relations of power within and between European and African actors in this complex political arena (Gluckman 1940; Marks 1986), but for the most part, the relationship has been treated as a categorical one between "Whites" or "Europeans" on the one hand, and on the other "Blacks" or "Africans" (for example, Crapanzano 1985; Freund 1984: 55, 104; Hunter 1936; Macmillan 1963 [1929]; Muller 1981; Omer-Cooper 1987; Wilson and Thompson 1971 and many others). The interests of the indigenous Black African peoples have been understood as efforts to cooperate with, while at the same time to resist, this co-optation (e.g. Comaroff 1985, Marks 1986).

These standard histories (liberal, radical and revisionist alike) focus on the gradual expansion of British territorial claims, the extension of capitalism and

[1] This work is forthcoming in *Occidentalism*, edited by James Carrier, Clarendon at Oxford University Press. I want to thank James Carrier for his extraordinary help in writing this chapter.

racism, and finally the spread of state bureaucratic control over the lives of all southern Africans. This began in 1798 when the British took over the small Cape Colony (in order to keep it from the French, not for its intrinsic interest to the British crown or its empire) and led finally to the violent capture of two independent creole[2] states of the Afrikaners or Boers -- the South African Republic (known as the Transvaal) and the Orange Free State. The two Boer republics were amalgamated with the territories of Transkei (formerly Kaffraria) and Griqualand, and with the colonies of the Cape and Natal, and the whole was ruled directly from Britain until 1910. The subsequent Union of South Africa, created in 1910, metamorphosed into the Republic of South Africa in 1962. The Republic left the Commonwealth soon thereafter and was a pariah state until the beginning of the 1990s.

The country is currently in the process of another metamorphosis. For the most part the struggle is still seen in much the same terms, that is, a struggle between a colonial and settler regime, and a relatively united Black opposition. These characterizations do accurately reflect some of the main trends of southern African history. However, they have missed, or at least partially obscured, two important features in southern African history which have helped to shape the country and which continue to play a role in contemporary politics and culture, both within South Africa itself and within the field of its relations with the rest of the world. These features take the form of tensions between poles or oppositions of the whole southern African polity. The first of these tensions is that between the creole European-derived populations on the one hand, and on the other the representatives of British Imperial power. The second tension, closely related to the first, is between southern Africa as a unified political arena with a common historical pattern and set of problems, and the "outside", represented most strongly by Great Britain and "Europe"[3].

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[2] .I use the term "creole" here in a very broad sense to describe a community of complex and mixed European, African and East-Indian origins that became indigenised in Africa. This is not part of the usual vocabulary of South African history, and I use it to highlight, by the implicit comparison with other creole peoples, an aspect of southern African history that has been difficult to address for many reasons.

[3] "Europe" and "the European" are terms that carry special meanings in southern Africa. They are easily misread by people who are actually recently arrived from Europe and by Europeans and North Americans today. In South Africa from perhaps the last quarter of the nineteenth century through the first three quarters of the twentieth, "European" was used somewhat ambiguously to distinguish European-derived indigenous populations from Black African populations, as well as to refer to recent immigrants. Context usually made the different usages clear. Hendrik Verwoerd, a psychologist and one of the principle architects of Apartheid, however, confused these usages, perhaps deliberately, but certainly to his political advantage. Since he was in fact born and partly raised in Europe (not South Africa), it was necessary for him to fuse these separate connotations in order to acquire the political power he sought. By adapting the European linguistic and cultural nationalism of his day to

This second tension amounts to a form of occidentalism since it reified Europe and exploited this image of the European within the southern African political area.

The more obvious tension between Black and White adds a third dimension to this set of political polarities. While this last polarity has attracted by far the most attention, a closer look at southern African society shows that it does not replace the others or overwhelm them. The historian W. M. Macmillan (1963 [1929]) represented this complexity in terms of a triangulation between three terms, "Bantu", "Boer" and "Briton", but this image emphasized their categorical differences, as if these social categories were fixed and obvious. The nature and frequent ambiguity between boundaries of the social "inside" and the "outside" was analytically ignored primarily because it appeared to be obvious to a colonial historian early in the twentieth century. By dissecting the body of history as if it were composed of these three cultural polarities -- that is, that between indigenous Europeans and Imperial agents, that between south Africa as single political arena and the "outside" represented by a reified Europe, and that between Black and White -- we can achieve an alternative view that exposes new historical trends which are still relevant to our understanding of contemporary South Africa.

I will examine the emergence and significance the first two of these social-cultural tensions in the nineteenth century, especially that between the inside and the outside, in the context of southeastern South Africa, in the imbricated regions of Natal and KwaZulu.[4] This is most relevant to the nature of occidentalism in the region, but is also of broader importance for understanding the emergence of the political culture of modern South Africa. Equally, however, this discussion reveals the complexities that can exist within an abstract notion like occidentalism as a "conception of the West". In partial

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the African context, he was able to unify an Afrikaans -- that is, "African" -- political party of African-born Whites who spoke the indigenous dialect of Dutch, by appealing to their common "European heritage" and supposed common interest. It obscured an important difference in local usage, however, and thus has muddled scholarship to this day.

[4] Natal is the name given to this coast by the Portuguese explorer Vasco Da Gama around Christmas in 1488. The first European trading settlement on the coast was called Port Natal in 1824, and the Boers named their settlement in the region the Republic of Natal in 1838. This was annexed by the British in 1843 as the Natal Colony. KwaZulu or Zululand, more or less equivalent terms, refers to lands inhabited by the Zulu, a congeries of peoples unified under Shaka, a war-leader from the small "Zulu" clan, who became king and gave this name to the areas of his conquest by the beginning of the 1820s. The history of settlement, conflict, and administrative laws created a region in which the border of these two political entities became jigsaw-puzzle like.

contrast to the "reaction to conquest" model (e.g. Hunter 1936) or "resistance" model (e.g. Comaroff 1985; Comaroff and Comaroff 1992), I argue that the occidentalisms that appeared in southern Africa during the nineteenth century did not emerge in the neatly-dichotomized field of intruding colonial power and indigenous residents. This is especially true in the Natal and KwaZulu region, but it is also true of the Western Cape region. It is clearly less true of the Transvaal and the eastern Cape region, where White Boer *voortrekkers* ("pioneers") met Black Africans directly in bloody conflict over distinct mutual borders or came into bi-polar conflict over resources such as cattle or water.

In Natal-KwaZulu especially, indigenous people did not fix their gaze on a uniform body of intruders and, by a complex cultural process, highlight and essentialize its distinguishing features. Accounts of European survivors of shipwrecks from 1552 show clearly that the region was already complex, and had been absorbing people of European, Indian, Khoikhoi and San origin from at least that time onwards (Morris 1992; Wilson and Thompson 1971: 78-86). Equally, Westerners in southern Africa did not see themselves as a homogeneous group uniformly representative of self-evident European power and culture. The field was not so neatly structured and the ways that cultural understandings emerged were not so orderly. The reality of southern African history and the identities and attributes of the contending parties were much too messy to sustain any neat tale of White vs. Black, Intruder vs. Indigene, The West vs. Africa. In one of the most insightful discussions of the regions yet written, based on field research in 1936-1938 in the central regions of the old Zulu Kingdom, Max Gluckman wrote in his "Analysis of a Social Situation in Modern Zululand" that the Zulu and the European

> form together a community with specific modes of behaviour to one another. Only by insisting on this point can one begin to understand the behaviour of the people [during the opening ceremony of a new bridge in the Nongoma District near Ceza] as I have described it. ... [H]ere I note only that the existence of single Black-White community in Zululand must be the starting point of my analysis (Gluckman 1940: 10-11).

It is clear that a cultural and social dichotomy of White and Black, European and African/Zulu did emerge and became essentialized, most especially during the period of "colour-bar" segregation during the period of the Union government, and most cruelly exacerbated during the period of Apartheid legislation from 1948 until the beginning of the 1990s. But, to argue that this happened as a consequence of a "reaction to conquest", or that it represented a direct form of resistance on the part of the Zulu would be unjustified simplification, since it did not come about through any clear and original

confidence in the superiority of the "European" in their contest with the Zulu. There were military successes, defeats and standoffs on all sides; culturally, each community was internally divided in many ways. These essentialisms took time to develop: they have a history. Moreover, the Zulu essentialization of the European -- their indigenous occidentalism -- took two quite divergent forms: that of rapacious White racism on the one hand, and on the other that of the ultimate source of justice and power. White essentialization of the Zulu was similarly divided between the view that considered them to be a war-like and aggressive nation, and one that cast the Zulu as the best, most docile kitchen boys and most reliable boss-boys of Black labour in the mines.

In my description of some of the history that shaped the emergence of these essentialisms, and particularly Zulu occidentalism, three issues concern me especially. One is the development of southern Africa as a distinct political entity rather than just a dependency of Great Britain. With this development there emerged two distinct, and even opposed, sorts of white power in the area, one local and the other Imperial. The second issue is Zulu and European conceptions of legitimate power. These conceptions differed greatly, which affected more than the ways that Zulus and whites understood and acted toward each other. Each sought to accommodate to and incorporate the powers of the other, but because of their different conceptions of power they sought to do so in different ways. The third issue, one I have mentioned already, runs through the two I have described. It is the complexity and contingency of the historical field at the time these essentialisms were emerging, which made it difficult for whites and Zulus to develop simple essential renderings of each other.

Emerging South Africa

Some of this ambiguity is apparent in political developments in the middle of the nineteenth century that coalesced to make southern Africa a common political arena, and therefore a unified object of social action and historical interest that was distinct from European identity. For example, the foundation of the Boer Republics in 1852 and 1854 consolidated a distinct self-conception for their inhabitants, as creolized Dutch-speaking Europeans in Africa increasingly came to be called "Afrikaners" (that is "Africans" in their own language) or Boers ("farmers", and thus indigenous relative to the traders, miners and colonial officials). Likewise, when the Cape Legislative Assembly was created in 1858 by Sir George Grey, the British Pro-Consul and High Commissioner of the Cape and Natal Colonies, and granted local autonomy in 1872 as the responsible government, it was under the leadership of farmers, hunters, traders and light-manufacturers who mostly were English speakers but who also were born in Africa. Theophilus Shepstone was one such person, the locally-born son of a rural Wesleyan missionary who was a native speaker of Zulu (Colenso n.d. [c.1854]: 13). He was first appointed Diplomatic Agent to

the Native Tribes (that is, the Zulu) in 1845, and was Secretary of Native Affairs for Natal from 1853 to 1875. A local public press had begun to produce literary magazines (such as *The Cape Monthly Magazine*), church gazettes, almanacs, business guides, and newspapers, and these began to create and to express a local culture that gradually diverged from the (cultural-geographic) European, even though most English speakers continued to think of themselves as "European" (Thornton 1983*a*, 1983*b*).

The creation of southern Africa as a distinct entity, and hence as a basis for a distinct self-conception, was facilitated during the 1850s when, with very few exceptions, South Africa assumed the geographical form that it has today.[5] By the end of the following decade virtually all of the borders of the regions of contemporary South Africa had been either formally negotiated or practically acknowledged, or were defined by natural features such as rivers and mountains. Within this arena a distinctive politics and culture emerged, and the region largely ceased to be a European outpost in terms of its practical identity. Instead, it acquired a local identity, even though this was not always explicit or part of the awareness of the time. Thus, long before an Afrikaans-dominated government removed South Africa from the Commonwealth, it differed significantly from the other states that originated as British colonies. For example, the complex and formal patchwork of borders, languages and identities among various version of "the local" that characterized South Africa did not emerge in New Zealand because of the relatively small size of the islands and homogeneity of the indigenous population, as it did not emerge in Australia because of the political simplicity and demographic sparsity of its population. Southern Africa was perhaps most like Canada, where traders and some officials spoke Native American languages and where regions of relative autonomy emerged (Quebec, Northwest Territories). However, in terms of the sheer diversity contained in a single polity, South Africa is probably unique among the Commonwealth nations.

Internal Sources of White Power

The development of a southern Africa with its own political organizations and productive activities and with its own distinct, indigenous colonial or creole identity raised important issues then and now. By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, southern Africa ceased to be merely a bit of England (or

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[5] While the main outlines of the Cape, Natal, the Free State, Transvaal and Transkei were all defined by the end of the 1850s, the exceptions included Basutoland (later Lesotho), declared a protectorate in 1868; Bechuanaland (Botswana), annexed as a protectorate in 1885 (Rotberg 1988: 172-179); and Swaziland, whose borders had been defined in 1874 by the Transvaal government and ratified by conventions in 1884 (Laband 1992: 6; Wilson and Thompson 1971: 275-278).

even Europe) transplanted far to the south, wholly dependent on and reflecting British power. Instead, it became possible, even necessary, to distinguish between internal and external sources and uses of power. Like the American colonies, a distinctly colonial identity and culture emerged, with its own forms of political power and its own grounds for establishing the legitimacy of its exercise.

The external source of power, the intruding West of standard South African history, was imperial Britain. However, distinct from it were internal sources of White political power. Among the Boers in the Cape Colony, these included the institution of the commando, originally a self-defense levy led by a *veldkornete* or "field lieutenant", and the local "magistrate" or *drosdty*. Missionaries and wealthy tradesmen and farmer-landowners also constituted relatively-independent centers of local power. In particular, the efficient and mobile military organization of the Boer commandos, especially when coupled with the judicial and administrative institution of the local magistrates, constituted effective organizations for territorial expansion. The commandos were loosely-organized fighting forces composed of free Boer farmers, trans-humant pastoralists and hunters. They provided their own mounts and arms and were available either to defend their own land or to fight on behalf of others, including Black African kings and chiefs. In fact, as I describe later, its was such a commando group that played a significant role in Zulu politics when it came to the aid of Mpande, the Zulu King, in his successful consolidation of power. More formally, the Cape Parliament that was organized during the 1850s and the missionary organizations also constituted relatively independent groups of political actors, and hence internal sources of power during this period.

Through the 1850s the British Pro-consul, Sir George Grey, was unambiguous about his support for "home rule" in the Cape, an important step for articulating local, as distinct from Imperial, interests. His radically left-liberal position and his earlier experience in Ireland, where he favoured both home rule and the British Empire, led him to value moves that would reinforce the colonial element both as a balance to the Imperial and as a reserve on which Imperial interests might draw. This had been his previous strategy as a successful governor of South Australia and New Zealand, and he applied it zealously in the Cape Colony and Natal. In fact, he applied it too zealously, for when the Liberal government of Gladstone was replaced in 1858 by the Conservative government of Palmerston, Grey was immediately recalled on the grounds of fostering colonial interests that threatened the Imperial interests that he was charged to guarantee. The division of interests, however, was by then well established, and Grey's recall had little effect in southern Africa.

The institutions of local government, whether of the independent Boer states or the Cape Parliament, had ideologies of power that were distinctly different from those of the missionaries, who were autonomous in practice and frequently acted on behalf of African interests and against both Imperial agents and colonialists. One observer, Wilhelm Bleek, who was traveling in the Mahlabatini district in the heart of the Zulu Kingdom in 1856, noted that "the Zulu believe that the Bafundisi ['missionaries', literally 'teachers'] are a species of their own" (Bleek 1965: 68). The legitimacy of power for the governing institutions was based on the local settler "democracy" of the Cape Legislative Assembly or of the Boer *volksraad* ("people's council"), while the legitimacy of the missionaries was based on the concept of a universal Christianity. Both were powerfully underwritten by the authority of texts and, especially with respect to claims to land, by the authority of maps, deeds of registration and an emergent bureaucracy established to guarantee precisely these claims.

Internal and External Politics

Under Grey, however, the polarity between Empire and Colony became one that other indigenous peoples could exploit to good advantage. Those who were best able to exploit it were those who, like the Zulu, possessed relatively developed and centralized political organizations. The Kings Dingane, Mpande and Cetshwayo, even in the process of losing their autonomy, could claim to be like the British in their possession of royalty. Others, including the Griqua, the Nama, the Fingo, and the Gcaleka, although much more loosely organised, also attempted to exploit this polarity. Some, like the Nama and Fingo, were relatively successful in that they received guarantees from the Imperial center in the form of Crown Lands that were formally and legally beyond reach of the colonialists. However, others, such as the Xhosa tribes after the Great Cattle Killing, were not able to exploit this polarity. Differing success in identifying with the British Crown in opposition to the White colonialists and their allies, moreover, drove wedges between these peoples that remain today: Xhosa oppose Zulu, Fingo oppose Xhosa and Gcaleka, and the Nama -- today fully assimilated to a Coloured identity and Afrikaans-speaking -- stand opposed to the Blacks and the "Africans".

Thus, the emergence of these distinct internal sources of power are crucial to the understanding of the formation of a distinctly South African (and Zulu) occidentalism that continues to be relevant. This is because the interests and activities of the indigenized European peoples of southern Africa were distinct from the interests and activities of the Imperial British. "Europeans", "Whites" (*Blankes*), "Westerners" were not unitary and homogeneous entities. This became clear-cut and obvious, even though it has not attracted commensurate attention from historians. Moreover, the meaning of these terms shifted subtly from one context to the other. Sometimes opposed -- as for instance non-Afrikaans-speaking "foreigners" from Europe, or *uitlanders*, were opposed to

Afrikaners in the Transvaal Republic before and until well after the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902 -- and sometimes united in opposition to Black Africans, the various terms for the European-derived population in southern Africa always referred to ambiguous and overlapping categories.

All, however, began to recognize the difference between the powers and potentials that existed within the arena of southern Africa and those that existed outside of it. This was the pre-condition for the development of two southern African politics: the politics of the inside and the politics of the outside. South Africa is unusual in the world today in the extent to which its politics has become trans-national. While there are many examples that could be cited, the Commonwealth Mission to South Africa of 1986 provides a good illustration. As the Secretary General of the Commonwealth, Shridath Ramphal, wrote in his foreword to the report of the seven "Eminent Persons":

> Over the last six months a remarkable thing happened in one of the saddest corners of our small world. A group of seven people from five continents, black and white and brown, gave everything they had to -- holding back a darkening storm. For a brief moment -- South Africans of all races glimpsed a path of negotiation to a more worthy future (Commonwealth Secretariat 1986: 13).

South Africa's many and contradictory political goals and its methods for achieving them -- recently especially Apartheid, but before that the international furore over the British attack on the Boer republics, the South Africa "Native Question", the Zulu War, David Livingstone's castigation of the Boers, the outlawing of slavery and the subsequent Great Trek in 1838 -- all have been part of the politics of other nations and of internationalism *per se* to a much greater degree than is the case for any other African country. In comparison with the atrocities in the twentieth-century European wars of nationalism (called "World Wars"), or of such wars elsewhere in Africa, in South America and in South Asia, it is not at all obvious that South Africa's policies and political actions have, in themselves, been more brutal or more outrageous than many others. South Africa has nevertheless taken on the role of a sort of generic political passion play that could be equally useful to capitalists or communists, socialists or democrats. South Africa's politics have been part of debate far beyond the borders of South Africa itself, and for far longer than any particular event would seem to warrant. Political actors within South Africa have long been aware of this. There has developed a strong dichotomy between the politics of "home" and the politics of external representation which have involved the rest of the world. Moreover, these divergent politics -- one internal, one external -- have been used by all sides in the political struggles that have characterized southern African society for the last 150 years.

One corollary of this polarity has been the construction of "The West" as a unique source of power and as a coherent political entity to which appeals could be addressed and which could be imagined as a single moral actor. This construction has been crucial to the development of a politics *of* southern Africa and a politics *for* southern Africa. The European and the African were constructed as separate and opposed categories, not only in Europe, but in Africa, and a politics *within* South Africa became separated from a politics *on behalf of* South Africa. The emergence of these categories of Europe and Africa, and of and for South Africa, shaped and was shaped by concepts of the sources of power, legitimate or otherwise.

Concepts of Power and Southern African Essentialisms

It was not just divergent sources of power that shaped the history of southern Africa. Also important were divergent concepts of power and how it was distributed. In particular, people in southern Africa did not, as Westerners commonly did, limit "power" to mere administrative power or the ability to effect real changes in some thing or person. Instead, often they had a more diffuse understanding of power as a fundamental quality of life or status. In southern Africa this was expressed in notions of witchcraft, the errant sexuality of witches and their familiars, powers to make or withhold rain, and differing concepts of the relative status and powers of different genders. Such powers were combined in complex ways with political powers of Zulu (and other African) chiefs. While a chief's or king's administrative powers were essential to the maintenance of the polity, they were not essential to his moral status as a chief. In was otherwise for the Europeans, however, since moral and administrative powers were closely linked in their own political cultures. While the organization of the Boer commandos and the British settlers were significantly different, they depended on commonly-held notions of legitimacy, legality, and community. Consequently, the relationship between and among leaders and their subjects had different cultural bases for the Zulus and the Europeans.

Certainly the economic interests of the Imperial government, the colonists and the Africans were certainly involved in shaping the emergence of the specific and perhaps unique politics of southern Africa. However, interests that are in every way similar to those that existed in South Africa have existed elsewhere without creating a politics that was driven as much by the moral and political interests of the world community as by its own internal dynamics. The peculiarity of southern Africa springs in part from the developing occidentalist construction of the West, a development in which conceptions of power played an important part. The complex and diffuse understanding of the nature of power that I have mentioned, an understanding that fuses spiritual and other forms of non-material power with the Western understandings of instrumental and administrative power, made it possible to create "The West" as not merely

an ethnic, national or geographical category, but as a source of a special sort of power.

Under both British and Zulu customary legal norms, the powers of royalty stand outside of and above the powers of ordinary government. In both cases, individuals are subjects of the monarch, but equally are members of the political community. That is, they are citizens of legally-constituted territories or polities ruled by governments. But while British and Zulu norms were similar in terms of their form, they differed in terms of their content.

In the case of the Zulu Kingdom, African individuals were subject to the king, who formally controlled aspects of their person, while each was also a member of a smaller polity. The types of power that were available to the leader of these smaller polities -- the headman (*induna*) or regiment leader -- were restricted to control over individuals' labour, their access to land and pasturage, and to other economic resources such as trade goods and, later, education. The king, in theory and at least since the time of Shaka and until the conquest of the Zulu State in 1879, controlled life, death and the expression of sexuality -- especially the right to marry. In the case of the British, royalty commanded political allegiance but did not claim to control the person. In general, the church did that through its control of the rituals of life's passings and its strictures on expression of sexuality, its regulation of gender roles, marriage, rules of descent and inheritance. Local leaders of various kinds could control labour, but individuals' sexuality was controlled only by their immediate senior kin (that is, parents) and by those individuals themselves in terms of their relation with God as mediated by the church. This British concept of sexual regulation characterized all of the European-derived populations in southern Africa, and contrasted sharply with the African concepts and divisions of these rights and powers over the person. In other words, Zulus and Europeans saw the rights to exercise control over person, life and death, property and sexuality as being quite differently distributed.

This cultural difference was to prove critical, since the Zulu kings' claims to control the sexuality of their subjects was flatly contradicted by the European views. During Mpande's reign, this led many Zulu men to leave the regiments and wander south into the regions of the Natal Colony, where the monarch and government did not claim rights to control when and whom they could marry. In order to marry in Zulu terms, however, men had to exchange cattle for wives according to the practice of *lobola*. But under European concepts of the differences between power over property and power over persons, *lobola* implied that women were being sold in marriage, a form of transaction specifically forbidden by English morality and by British Law, and was specifically disallowed.

The result of this mismatch of categories of person and property and of concepts of power was the creation of an enduring mystery, as well as significant demographic shifts and new negotiated loyalties. Indeed, to this day these differing concepts of person, power and sexuality bedevil understanding and politics in the Natal and KwaZulu region, but in the middle of the nineteenth century these were entirely implicit in the form of practical accommodations and understandings. Like other cultural accommodations, this one was resolved through the reification of powers and categories. For the Zulu, this meant the reification of "The West" and the emergence of the category of Whites, conceptions that function quite differently in South African politics than do other, similar constructions that emerged at roughly the same time, such as Indians or Coloured. For European settlers and Imperial agents, this meant the reification of the Zulu. Because Westerners saw the Zulus as having a state-like polity with a recognizable centre, they could reify and essentialize the Zulu in ways that were impossible for most other African societies they encountered (Martin 1984). The result was that "Zulu" became the name for a special kind of African-ness, a primordial and powerful autochthony and strength, that did not attach to similar categories, such as "Sotho" or "Tswana", "Hottentot" or "Kaffir".

While Westerners tended to see the Zulu as a unitary entity, the situation for the Zulus was different. They confronted missionaries, teachers, traders and agents of institutional "powers" (in the European sense), each of whom represented, deliberately and explicitly, some different form of essentialized spiritual, gendered or sexual, material and organizational powers. The culture of the Zulu, like the culture of southern African societies more generally, already possessed concepts and terms for many types and sources of power. White power quickly became another of these, and "White" became a name for particular kinds of power that required particular kinds of access. Consequently, it was possible for the Zulu to essentialize the West as wholly powerful, as a source of complex powers that, in Zulu terms, were capable of being manipulated and hence were available to be appropriated. During the middle of the nineteenth century the Zulus refined their conception of this welter of powers into a polarity between the White power of the "outside", generalized as a form of occidentalism, and the White power of inside, generalized as a form of racism.

These two forms of a single reification of the European -- on the one hand as a generalized source of goods and moral authority, and, on the other as a form of virulent other-ness and violent exclusiveness -- continue to shape the political culture of southern Africa. I have already noted that it is customary to speak of southern African history in terms of a more or less "black-and-white" struggle, with the phrase echoing a moral dichotomy of good and evil as well as a perceptual dichotomy between people who are relatively dark-skinned and

relatively light-skinned. However, it is perhaps more accurate to speak of these dichotomies in ways that allow us to conceive more readily the cultural and historical complexity that they gloss.

The categories of White and Black in southern Africa are not simple structural oppositions except insofar as they serve to structure complex semantic fields, any more than they are merely labels for perceptual colors of skin, hair and eyes. These terms have functioned in the twentieth century to name a particular form of cultural and economic struggle between groups and political communities whose social constitutions have changed over historical time. Most importantly, because the colour terms imply a simple oppositional politics, they have obscured the ethnographic detail of real social relations in actual contexts of daily life. These are important in themselves, but they are also important for understanding the complexities and contingencies of the historical development of social arrangements and accommodations by different sets of people within the region, arrangements that have been shaped by the emergence of cultural concepts and categories that are held in common, or shared as opposed terms in polarities that are constructed out of a common historical experience.

Historical Contingency and southern African Essentialisms

I said that the story of Natal and the early colonial encounter is perhaps unique, and certainly unusual, in comparison with other histories of colonial encounters. Partly this is because the colonization of Natal was quite late in historical terms. It began only in the third decade of the nineteenth century. Only some fifty years later it ended, in the sense that the main features of social and cultural reference and the main features of political structure came to exist more or less as they continue to exist today. With experience of the Americas, Asia, Australia, New Zealand, West Africa, the Cape Colony, and India already behind them (Laband 1992: 7; Thornton 1983*a*), the British traders and tradesmen, missionaries, soldiers and governors knew what they were doing, so to speak. They were implementing a script for domination that had played well to countless audiences around the world, audiences who -- often in spite of themselves -- accepted the broad principles of a colonial social order that was imposed sometimes by force of persuasion and sometimes by force of arms, but usually by a sophisticated combination of both that was made possible by clocks, maps and books, and occasionally enforced by the less certain technology of firearms.

In the region of Natal or KwaZulu, the force of arms was not decisive until the defeat of the Zulu Kingdom at the hands of the British army around 1880. This defeat brought an end to Zulu independence and established the broad principles of territorial and political order that continue to exist today. Before that, while there were many local engagements, there was no general, regional

warfare or concerted military engagement. Some of these local engagements were extremely bloody, such as the Zulu King Dingane's attack on the Boer that killed some 200 families in 1838, and the subsequent battle at Blood River that caused the death of 2000 Zulu soldiers. These, however, remained "events" in a larger process, both in the eyes of participants and in the eyes of subsequent historians.[6] It was not until the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879 that large-scale military involvement occurred. By then, all of the fundamental structures of domination and accommodation were already in place. The war was almost completely unnecessary. It simply confirmed, with the loss of many lives, an arrangement that already existed.

The history of Africa is frequently told in term of broad sweeps of peoples and tribes and armies across large, seemingly-empty territories. However, the history of the foundation of Zululand and the Colony of Natal cannot be easily or accurately told without constant reference to one or another of a handful of individuals whose personal actions and decisions directly shaped the subsequent history of this part of Africa. One of the reasons they could do so was that both the colonial and the Imperial presence was so complex and uncertain that no renderings of the West or the Whites seemed predetermined or self-evident. Equally, though I devote less attention to it in this chapter, the diversity within what came to be known as the Zulu Kingdom has been radically underestimated or misconceived. This is partly because the rapid conquests of the Zulu state presented to the first European observers what seemed to be a unified front, behind which real social, cultural and linguistic diversity was simply suppressed by the violence and wartime exigencies of the period. Also this is partly because historians have, until recently, failed to inquire into the nature of this diversity (Cobbing 1988; Hamilton 1992; Wright 1989).

The diversity the Zulus confronted is illustrated, first of all, by the fact that there were three distinct European-derived communities in the area. These communities had distinct histories and confronted the Zulu in different ways. They were the Portuguese of Delagoa Bay to the north east, the English traders and frontiersmen of Port Natal (later D'Urban, or Durban) on the coast to the southeast, and the Boers on the western and southwestern flank of the Zulu Kingdom. Second, there was already considerable diversity within these

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[6] Indeed, Zulu and Natal history does seem to have a special kind of "event-ness" rather than structure, trends, or even a *longue durée*. Shula Marks comments, for instance, that in contrast to a "tendency ... in some social history to discount 'events', the essays [in her *Ambiguities of Dependence*] unashamedly center around events." Citing Max Gluckman's (1940) "Analysis of a Social Situation in Modern Zululand", she notes that her history focuses on "the kind of 'specific, bounded happening' usually associated with anthropology" (Marks 1986: 9).

communities and a surprising degree of flexibility and mobility among them: English, Black and White Americans (Bleek 1965: 70), Dutch and Central-European Jews, and other Europeans, "Hottentots", Indians and Malays (Bleek 1965: 68) and other Africans. Itinerant tradesmen, cattle herders, hunters, free-booters, transport riders and scouts added to the more stable groups of farmers, missionaries, Imperial agents, a few professionals such as doctors and surveyors (the latter especially important for appropriating land and legitimating land claims), and the officers of a local colonial government still in its infancy. In the Port Natal settlement from the 1830s were people from most of northern Europe, the British Isles and America, as well as some Indians and Malays. In the Portuguese settlements were tradesmen, artisans, slaves, hunters, adventurers from Portugal, India and the Indonesian archipelago, as well as agents of the Portuguese crown. Circulating among these were escaped and freed slaves, refugees from conflicts that continued to be fierce and destructive long after Shaka's death, as well as escaped prisoners, both white and black. There were, finally, African work-seekers, traders, farmers, herdsmen and labourers from the interior and from along the coasts to the north and south.

Under these complex and even confused conditions, it was by no means a foregone conclusion that there should emerge any particular reification of Western identity. There was then, as there is today, no obvious single polarity of power, colour, nationality or regional identity. Moreover, the incorporation of European frontiersmen as chiefs among the Zulu, such as John Dunn and Theophilus Shepstone, as well as the early use of Zulu-speaking catechists and teachers by missionaries, further blunted many polarities that might seem obvious today. As one might expect in such a variegated setting, from the early 1830s through the 1850s racial and ethnic categories in Natal had not yet formed conclusively, and the differences in powers between persons, it appears, always seemed larger than the differences in powers between groups and settlements.

This ambiguity is apparent in assessments of the military power of the many forms of organizations that existed at the time, such as the Boer commando, the Zulu regiments (*impis*), British garrisons, chiefly retinues and private means of defense. The relative strength of commandos and small British garrisons had been tested, but without conclusive results.[7] Military power became, of course, increasingly significant as it became increasingly unbalanced, but the outcome of battles was by no means certain as late as the last quarter of the century. The annihilation of the British regiment at Isandlwana in 1879 by the Zulu

[7] Compare the similar case, discussed by Bronwen Douglas, of the uncertainty of French military dominance in their Pacific colony of New Caledonia (Douglas 1992).

regiments (Laband 1992: 3, 98), like the convincing defeat of the British column that had been sent to enforce the annexation of the South African Republic (the Transvaal) at Laing's Nek and Majuba Hill in 1880, made it apparent that the balance of military power between the British Imperial forces and the forces of the Zulus and the Boer republics was still very much an open question.

This military uncertainty had important consequences for the Zulus. They were not roundly defeated and forced to capitulate. Instead, they managed to "surrender" to the British with a degree of honour (Laband 1992: 247-252). This made it possible for them to continue a strategy aimed at incorporating some aspects of British powers even while they themselves were being incorporated into the British administrative structures of Empire. Similar, but in a kind of inversion of the Zulu accommodation with the British, was the alliance between the Boer commandos of the *voortrekker*'s short-lived Republic of Natal, and Mpande, Dingane's brother and claimant to the Zulu paramountcy.

In 1857, the *voortrekker* column under the leadership of Piet Retief had reached the western marches of Zulu land and attempted to settle there. Dingane evidently agreed to a treaty -- or so Retief believed -- that ceded land to the Boers. Dingane, however, repented of this action before Retief reached his wagons, and Retief was killed in an act that is memorialized as a special moment of treachery in the formation of Afrikaner identity. The Boers rallied after this event and under a new leader, Andries Pretorius (after whom the capital of contemporary South Africa is named), defended themselves against the Zulu armies that had been sent to annihilate them. Against apparently insuperable odds, the Boer defenses held at the Ncome River, with a tremendous cost to the Zulu attackers. Again, these events at what came to be known as Blood River ("Ncome" was the previous Zulu name) were incorporated as formative elements of Afrikaner foundation myths and helped to solidify an Afrikaner identity and self-confidence. Ironically, this confidence made them available as military allies of Mpande, who used the alliance to overthrow Dingane.

The relative balance of military forces meant that outcomes were always uncertain, and this provided the motive for attempts to form alliances with Boer forces rather than merely to resist them or to accept subjugation to them. In 1828, Shaka, the founder of the Zulu Kingdom, was killed by his half-brothers Dingane and Mhlangana. After he secured his position, Dingane began to relax the strict military discipline of the *amabutho*, the age-grades on which the military regiments were based. Unlike Shaka, however, he permitted two of his brothers to survive his own consolidation of power. One, Mpande, seemed too ineffectual to present a serious threat, but it was he who eventually

overthrew his elder brother Dingane. While his motives were complex, his means were simple. In 1839, Mpande fled to escape the dangers of living within striking distance of his brother the king. Subsequently he allied with the Boer commandos on the borders of the Zulu realm, and with their assistance mounted a force that defeated his brother. Mpande was recognized as king by the Boers, and later "crowned" by the British Native Affairs agent, Theophilus Shepstone.

The events of the thirty years from 1830s to the 1860s illustrate the fragmented nature of the emerging political arena and reveal a strategy of attempts at mutual incorporation as often as they do attempts at outright domination. The Boers believed that they had ample reason to seek to punish the Zulu. The fact that they did so in alliance with another Zulu chief demonstrates the strategies of mutual incorporation that all sides attempted.

However, it was not only the Whites who presented a complex and ambiguous appearance. The same was true of the Zulus. From the 1830s, British settlers had established a trading settlement at Port Natal on the coast. Zulu people, or those people who had recently been incorporated into a kingdom that came to be known as Zulu only a few years earlier, were already seeking to escape Dingane's demands for labour and for warriors. Sometimes whole regiments, sometimes smaller groups or individuals, fled to the south to seek more peaceful lands, trade goods and protection along the margins of European and Boer settlements. Eventually, Theophilus Shepstone was established as Paramount chief of the "Exiled Zulus" and prepared to lead them south into the Colony of Natal. By 1848, Shepstone, as one of several Zulu-speaking white people who were fully integrated into the Zulu political structure, was recognized by the colonial government as chief of those Zulu who lived outside of the "kingdom" under Mpande.

Thus, by the beginning of the 1850s the region was divided into a southern tract and a northern Zulu Kingdom. The former was annexed by the British Imperial government acting from Cape Town, and the Zulu living in it were placed under the chiefship of a White Zulu-speaker. Although formally designated a Native Agent, Shepstone understood his role in African terms, and was accepted by many Zulu as a chief in the indigenous idiom. In fact, each had captured aspects of the powers of the other's polity. This capture involved consolidation and some redefinition of categories and roles such as "chief", "king", "native agent" and so on. But the choices open to the actors in this context were limited. Unable to establish unambiguous domination in any sphere, it was necessary to reify peoples and to pursue strategies of alliance and accommodation with them and with the powers that they were taken to possess.

Occidentalizing England and the West

Such a reification is the concept that I will call the "Imperium", a construction of the West, and more particularly England, that allowed the Zulus symbolic access to Western powers in their struggles with encroaching Westerners. Reflecting both the contingent nature of the way occidentalisms emerge and the importance of individuals in southern Africa, this concept of an authoritative, external Western power did not spring from the Zulu themselves. Instead, it was provided largely by the British missionary John William Colenso. Colenso represented himself as coming to the Zulu directly from the Queen herself, not from the Cape or Natal Colony. He spelled this out explicitly in letters written back to English congregations:

> [The Zulu] welcomed [me] in the most friendly manner as one sent by the Queen of England "who loved her black people as well as her white", to see their condition, and devise plans for their improvement. ... The kafir names ... given to their Bishop, ... *Sobantu*, "Father of the People", names which are entirely of their own invention [are] constructed out of the notion which they have formed of the Bishop's duties from what they have been told about them. A powerful chief, Langalibalele, in reply to my question, "Would he like his children to be taught?", replied "We are the children; we wish to be taught. We came here to save our lives from our enemy [Mpande], and now we wish to know what our protectors know."

Colenso had been a Biblical scholar, a mathematician and a Christian-Socialist follower of the teaching of Frederick Dennison Maurice. He arrived in the Natal as Bishop of the Anglican Church in 1854 together with his wife, other British missionaries and assistants, and a young Prussian student of African languages, Wilhelm Bleek. Bleek was the son of a prominent German Biblical scholar, one of those whom Matthew Arnold later called the "Higher Critics", and intended to serve as the Bishop's linguist. In the next two decades, Bleek did indeed define the grammars of several South African languages, including the Bantu languages (Bleek chose the name of this family, which included Zulu), and the Khoi (Hottentot) and San (Bushman) languages. But his role in Colenso's party was to act as what we would today recognize as an anthropological linguist. He proceeded immediately to live with Mpande in his own home *umuzi*, or kraal, to learn Zulu and construct its grammar. Bleek's success in this endeavor, and Colenso's success in learning Zulu, permitted early and direct communication between Colenso and the Zulu. It also contributed to the reification of the Zulu as a single linguistic unit. In the preface to the second edition to Colenso's *Zulu Grammar*, published in 1872 and based on Bleek's early linguistic work, Colenso acknowledged that the "dialect" that was represented by the dictionary was only that of a

> small tribe, the amaZulu, who under their famous chief *uTshaka* (Chaka) [Shaka], and his brothers and successors *uDingane* (Dingane) and *umPande* (Panda) [Mpande], have acquired and maintained ... the supremacy over the natives along the S.E. coast of Africa, excepting, of course, those who have been living under British protection since Natal came under our government... . On this account it has a right to be considered the standard dialect of this part of Africa (Colenso 1872: 2).

Colenso was the most important catalyst in the formation of the occidentalism of the Zulu, which is precisely what he set out to do: create an image of "The West" as an abstract power of justice and light. Indeed, Colenso believed that the missionaries were "bound to teach" the Zulu all of the benefits of European science, law, and industry and not just those of religion.

> We are bound to teach him, as God shall give us opportunity for so doing, what we [that is, Englishmen] ourselves have learned, not only what we have been enabled to acquire by our own exertions and industry, but what we have *inherited*, and received through the hands of others, from the Father of all, the Father of lights, the "giver of every good and perfect gift." Most of all are we bound to impart that highest knowledge . . . of God himself. (Colenso 1865:16; emphasis as in original)

Naming his Bishop's manse "the place of light", he bypassed the colonial structures, which he feared would interfere with his efforts to communicate the gospel as directly as possible to the Zulu. This aim was shaped by his broad-church Protestantism and was made possible by the rapid progress that he and Bleek made with the Zulu language. This occidentalism, this reification of the West, was deliberately planned and set into action as an educational strategy by a man of pedagogical training. During a recruitment drive in England in 1857, Colenso argued that the Zulu actually had a "claim" on England that required their education since they had already been "heavily taxed" and governed without their consent, received "as subjects", and given a partial taste of religion. "Happily," he claimed to those prospective missionaries who listened to him,

> "The present moment is full of encouragement. The light is beginning to break at length out of the thick clouds . . . [The] appointment of his Excellency Sir George Grey . . . [as] our new Governor in Africa . . . [will] aid the efforts of Christian teachers, while publishing the Name of God and the wonders of His Love among them, and to direct the energies of this spirited and

> intelligent people [that is, the Zulu] into the channels of peaceful industry!" . . . [T]he Church of England has the work now in her own hands . . . . (Colenso n.d.:19-20)

Colenso had been a Master of a house at Harrow School under the headmastership of Thomas Arnold, a man who had once remarked that the Empire was won on the playing fields of Eton and Harrow. But the content of the Zulu occidentalism was specifically religious and owes its form to the institutions of the Anglican Church and the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge.

Thus, this occidentalism was not an all-encompassing construction of the West formed in opposition to a unified Zulu identity. It was not the consequence of a conflict between a Black and a White ("creole") African identity, or the reflex of resistance to domination, or the reification of the "oppressor" by the "weak". It was not, in other words, generated in the process of a struggle between the Zulus and the forces of Imperialism, the British Crown and its pursuit of Empire. Instead, it was specifically designed for the purpose of teaching, rather like the reifications of Ancient Greece and Rome that emerged first during the later Middle Ages, when the methods adopted for teaching Greek and Latin as keys to knowledge led inevitably to the reification of the Classic civilizations associated with them.

To pursue his plan to teach the Zulu the knowledge of the West, Colenso self-consciously invented an occidentalized West, just as the earlier European teachers invented classicized Greece and Rome. In other words, the teaching practices of the missionaries led to the creation of a particular format of Western Civilization and its codification in a form in which it could be taught. (It is still taught thus today.) Colenso's occidentalism was the result of a specific knowledge practice.

> I had brought to me, for instance, a number of native boys who were given up by their fathers after considerable hesitation for five years education. At the end of that time I was obliged to allow them to return to their homes, according to our agreement . . . [But], like many a working man in England, [these boys] would desire that that their own children should receive a better education than themselves. (Colenso 1864:18)

The Zulu, perceiving these knowledge practices as powerful, accepted them as access to power. As Colenso reported it, one chief, Ngoza, who brought his children to be educated by Colenso at Ekukanyeni, "the place of light", declared "I should like to be the last fool of my race!" (Colenso 1864: 18)

Teaching not only served to communicate knowledge, but became in itself an emblem of being "European", hence the occidentalism of the Zulu. But since the knowledge that was communicated, together with the means of its communication, was from outside, from beyond, from the other (as the Zulus saw it), this occidentalism represented an external recourse to power that could be used in the real struggle that existed between the Zulus and the colonialists, the "creolised" settlers who were in direct competition with them. The occidentalism represented by religion, by the Queen (especially Queen Victoria) and the British royal family, and by the "outside" as an abstract and moral source of power, thus became consolidated as a cultural reality. The nature of this early occidentalism explains in part why South African internal politics has so often sought a resort to forms of moral coercion from the outside, when a delicate balance of violent coercion and its limited potentials for real change restricted recourse to attempts at military domination.

This occidentalism has played an important role in the international condemnation of South African racism. This is because, in its stress on an idealized justice residing in external moral authority, it enabled a politics of an appeal to moral justice that is clearly seen in Colenso's own direct appeals to the Queen, or, later, in the Anglican Zulu lawyer Pixley Seme's addresses to the newly organized African National Congress in 1926 (Rive and Couzens 1991), as well as in Ghandi's formulations of "protest politics", and up to the present, in the world spread of the Anti-Apartheid movement. It has had a vast impact far beyond KwaZulu.

Conclusions

The occidentalism of Natal and KwaZulu thus took a number of forms, and was founded in the complexity of a few decades of intense but confusing conflict among a variegated collection of groups and individuals of diverse cultural backgrounds in a broad but relatively sparsely-populated landscape. Military force and violence, while more or less continually present, were almost always inconclusive. Out of this emerged a dual occidentalism that served to order a cultural landscape within a confused political and social reality.

The essential European of the occident could stand for the virulent racism of colonial farmers who found themselves in intense conflict with black Africans, or of the British regiments that punished Zululand severely in the aftermath of the Zulu War of 1878-79 by burning many of the homesteads and grain-stores of central Zululand. Since the outcomes of these violent struggles were usually ambiguous, leaving a complexly interwoven landscape of Zulus and Whites, the emergence of absolute categorical racism that fully excluded the participation of each in the other's polities never emerged. As Gluckman commented in 1940:

> The schism between the two colour groups is itself the pattern of their main integration into one community. They do not separate into groups of equal status: the Europeans are dominant. ... The two groups are distinguished in their interrelationships in the social structure of the South African community of which Zulu land is a part, and in this inter-relationship one can trace separation and conflict, and co-operation, in socially defined modes of behaviour (Gluckman 1940: 14).

In the middle of this century, and in the middle of the last century, Europeans and Zulus knew something about the codes and expectation of each other's cultures, and used what they knew -- or thought they knew -- to attempt a cultural accommodation that maintained the cultural distinction, but permitted practical interaction within the local arena.

On the other hand, in the international arena in which southern African politics have long played a role, the essential European was represented by the missionaries as a source of external justice and of power that could be appropriated and used in the local arena. Today, this occidentalism of external recourse may be represented— somewhat ironically, since they are neither White nor European by now — by the Group of Eminent Persons of the Commonwealth that toured South Africa in 1986. They represented the power of the outside in South African politics, a source of external justice and a locus of ultimate appeal, much as appeals to Queen Victoria were made by chiefs and bishops in the nineteenth century, and much as Colenso insisted that he was sent by the Queen herself, not by the colonial government or even by Whitehall. "I thank God," he wrote in 1864, "that I *am* commissioned by the Queen of England, in the name of our national Church, to be a 'preacher and a teacher'" (Colenso 1864: 16). What he preached, of course, was a form of occidentalism. The reification of the West as both villain and saviour was perhaps already present in the combination of lust for wealth and land among one segment of the European population, and the equally forceful lust for salvation and light that drove the missionaries whom, Bleek said, the Zulu believed were "another species". As Bishop Colenso stated in 1864, the European had a "duty" to "strive to impart the blessings as they assuredly will impart the evils of civilization" (Colenso 1864: 16).

In the light of the real uncertainty of violence as the instrument of domination in Natal and KwaZulu, it would seem too simple to account for the construction of the occidental out of a process of resistance or reaction. Similarly, the notion that the reification of either the Zulu or the European was both thematically unified and unproblematic deserves at least to be seriously questioned. This chapter has not exhausted the full impact of the polarities and complexities that I have sketched, but it does show that the indigenous

occidentalism of this part of South Africa was a complex historical product, with ample cultural life yet to drive a new politics in a new South Africa after Apartheid.

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