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The Great Bophuthatswana Donkey Massacre: Discourse on the Ass and the Politics of Class and Grass

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Donkeys are not indigenous to South Africa. It is appropriate to this story that they arrived through European expansion, for it is fundamentally a history of colonial rule. The animals proved to be very useful to people contending with changes brought by colonialism. Yet their adoption by black South Africans was complicated by the fact that the colonial and segregationist state, not donkey owners, held the authority to determine their value. The state promoted a conservationist discourse that the animals were destructive. Anti-donkey ideology led to an anti-donkey policy whose implementation was predicated on the status of donkey owners as colonial subjects. Furthermore, colonial rule created and empowered an indigenous elite class that did not value donkeys. The story of donkeys, their owners, and the colonial state reached a tragic climax in 1983 when the "independent" Tswana "homeland" of Bophuthatswana destroyed perhaps 20,000 of the animals. The massacre was justified with an argument that cattle were more deserving of the available grass, but killing donkeys had more to do with relations among people than with those between animals and the environment. Although it targeted animals, it was a violent demonstration of the power of the state over poor and disenfranchised people. Consequently, the subject of donkeys became thoroughly politicized, and the killing became a cause against Bophuthatswana and apartheid. Today, in the Kuruman area (the site of my fieldwork in the North-West Province),1 a strong pro-donkey populism extols their moral significance to poor people, Christianity, the environment, and democracy itself.

There is virtually no mention of the donkey massacre in published sources. Most of the slaughtered donkeys were in underpopulated and remote areas that receive little media or scholarly attention.2 Nonetheless, central issues in environmental and colonial African historiography reverberate through this history of donkeys and people, providing good reasons to add it to the narrative about South Africa in the 1980s. Colonial constructions of tribal government and communal tenure made the donkey massacre possible, because these institutions were reinvented without community accountability. This case reveals that even in South Africa an observation made in other parts of the continent holds true: a binary representation of colonizer/colonized, oppressor/resister, and white/black is not appropriate.3 In 1983, the people acting within colonial structures were African. Additionally, this history provides grounds to question ideas of South African exceptionalism. It argues that South African "homelands" such as Bophuthatswana were an outgrowth of the "tribal" institutions central to indirect rule in other parts of British Africa. The subject status imparted by indirect rule made people vulnerable to the injustice of the donkey killing.4 Admittedly, in South Africa, colonial administration

developed into an extreme form. Under the guise of promoting ethnic self-determination for blacks, the segregationist central state developed tribal structures into ten ostensibly self-governing "Bantustans" or "homelands."

Environmental historians have made a major point that non-human forces are actors in human history. This story of donkeys and colonialism reinforces that point, because the explanation for historical processes requires discussion of biological, climatic, and physical characteristics of the biophysical world. At the same time, this case provides a further argument for broadening the scope of the field beyond wild "nature." Africanist environmental history is less focused on wilderness than the North American field is, but interactions between people and domesticated animals deserve deeper consideration.5 Domesticated animals have, of course, inspired non-environmental history. Like Robert Darnton's Great Cat Massacre, this case shows that relations between people and other species are reflective of relations between people. Here, too, class divisions motivated the killing of animals, but, in contrast to Parisian cats, Bophuthatswana donkeys were more than symbols of social position.6 Additionally, this history illustrates a major recent development in Africanist environmental studies. In its discussion of the official assessment of donkeys, it exposes processes in the creation of knowledge and demonstrates the importance of questioning the "received wisdom" about farming practices, degradation, the proper state of the environment, and its best uses.7

A final reason to study the donkey massacre is that people in the Kuruman area perceive it to be extremely important; for many local people, it was the most traumatic experience of apartheid. From September through December 1997, my research assistants and I conducted group interviews using techniques of Rapid Rural Appraisal. RRA, devised to assess priorities for development work, uses open-ended questions and modeling exercises to gauge perceptions and foster discussions. The method encourages unsolicited testimony, and when people told us of their sadness and outrage about the donkey killing, it became clear that the event deserved historical analysis. In July 1998, we conducted semi-structured interviews that provide my most important source about the events of 1983.8 Yet these compelling stories are problematic historical sources. Testimony about donkeys and their environmental impact reveal that the alternative to the received wisdom is also a social production, subject to political forces, in this case, populism.

Cattle must be the starting point for any consideration of domesticated animals in southern Africa. The area around the contemporary town of Kuruman was more suited to pastoralism than cultivation, since it receives only 125 to 250 millimeters of rainfall per year. In the nineteenth century, Tswana-speaking people of Tlhaping and Tlharo chiefdoms had a diet, economy, and political system highly dependent on cattle and a cultural appreciation for their beauty and value. Their lands became part of the Crown Colony of British Bechuanaland in 1885, and colonial annexation brought changes that reduced the significance of cattle. Land alienation restricted Africans to 8 percent of the colony. Very dramatically, rinderpest, a Eurasian cattle plague introduced with colonial rule, killed as many as 95 percent of the cattle in 1897. Exceptional violence, drought, and locust infestation came within five years after rinderpest and forced many people to

sell their labor for subsistence.9 As elsewhere in southern Africa, men were the first to enter the paid work force, as migrant laborers. Over time, taxation and changing patterns of consumption further entrenched dependence on the cash economy, although households relied on locally produced food as a supplement to wage labor.

In the twentieth century, many factors joined to impede cattle raising on African reserves. Poverty and the cash value of cattle caused people to sell animals. High cattle mortality was another problem. In the twentieth century, two endemic diseases, bovine botulism and anthrax, prevented recovery from rinderpest. These diseases pollute the environment itself, and environmental conditions around Kuruman exacerbated their effects. Animals living on the phosphate-deficient grasses that grow in this area ingest bones in order to assuage their cravings for phosphate. This behavior is unhealthy if the bones are contaminated with botulins or anthrax. Clearing pastures of bones and dosing stock with sterile bonemeal are effective preventatives. However, the former requires labor and the latter requires cash. On reserves, therefore, the proportion of small stock, less susceptible than cattle to botulism, remained higher than on white-owned farms.10

A further factor hindering commercial cattle production was bush encroachment. The problem of bush encroachment provides an example of recent developments in African environmental studies, where a paradigm shift is occurring. Traditional mainline thought stresses that Africans are perpetrators or victims of environmental degradation, sometimes of crisis proportions. A new alternative position asserts that this received wisdom is based on alarmist and degradationist assumptions and challenges the evidence and scientific theory underlying it. Since 1990, historians, natural scientists, and social scientists have effectively refuted well-entrenched positions about environmental change in Africa. Drawing on indigenous knowledge, documentary sources, and non-climax ecology, they have disproved assertions that desertification, deforestation, soil erosion, vegetation change, or wildlife eradication are occurring as inexorable linear processes of decline or even occurring at all.11

Regarding bush encroachment, mainstream range ecologists favoring climax theories define the grassland as a natural state and decry bushes as the result of overgrazing. Bushes are said to lower significantly the carrying capacity of the grazing veld. The alternative non-equilibrium range ecology does not deny that bush encroachment happens, but it looks beyond herding as the cause for thicket development. Instead, it explores soil types and moisture levels, the frequency of fires and frosts, the development of artificial water sources, and rising atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide. The reinterpretation is that bushes are not principally a result of mismanagement and that they have not made subsistence herding less viable. Certainly, the people who live there do not describe the bushy environment as a compromised ecology or an economic hardship. They explain that for the browsing goats and donkeys they can afford, a somewhat bushy environment is beneficial. Furthermore, although cattle prefer grass, bushes sustain them when grass withers during the very frequent droughts.12

Disease, bushes, and poverty hampered cattle keeping and promoted the herding of goats and especially of donkeys. These animals were more cheaply purchased than cattle and

reproduced well. Both species have some resistance to stock diseases, and they are not primarily grass-eating grazers but also bush-eating browsers. Goats never concerned experts or the state, so only the place of donkeys in the ecology and economy must be established. The ancestors of domesticated donkeys evolved in arid North Africa; consequently, the species is well adapted to dry environments. In frequent droughts around Kuruman, they were "the hardiest of all four-footed creatures."13 Moreover, donkeys are ecumenical ingesters. In an interview, I was told, "The donkey eats everything, unlike the cattle—the cattle choose."14 As ruminants, cattle and goats have a digestive system that effectively extracts nutrients from a high fiber diet, although digestion slows as food becomes more fibrous. By contrast, non-ruminant equines on a high fiber diet extract fewer nutrients but pass food more quickly through their guts. Thus, by ingesting more of a poor quality diet than ruminants can, equines maintain a sufficient rate of nutrient absorption. A study in Namaqualand, an arid region south of the Orange River on the Atlantic Coast, found that a donkey might eat as much vegetable matter as five goats, but it can live on a diet that goats have difficulty digesting.15 Donkeys and ruminants do compete for food, but their relationship is not a zero-sum equation. Donkeys consume large quantities of low-quality forage that cattle and goats avoid. Hence, in environments where low-quality forage is predominant, the sustainable donkey biomass may outweigh that of cattle and goats. In Kuruman, donkeys even had advantages over their equine cousins, horses, which suffered disease and were expensive; the greatest utility of horses may have been in rounding up donkeys.

London Missionary Society personnel brought donkeys to Tlhaping and Tlharo territory by 1858, to serve as pack animals for a postal service.16 People found little use for them while the cattle economy was strong. After its collapse, several decades passed before people on the reserves owned many, perhaps because of the expense of acquiring a breeding population. In 1906, nine years after the rinderpest plague, there were only 30 donkeys along with 82 horses, 29,923 goats, 7,147 sheep, and 3,548 cattle on Kuruman reserves. A report in 1911 stated that "very few donkeys are owned by Natives," so the great majority of the 4,180 animals reported for the district as a whole in 1912 must have belonged to whites, who used them in asbestos mining as well as for farm work and transport.17 The 1930 census, the first to enumerate the animals on African reserves, reported there were 7,879, compared with 16,272 on white farms.18 After this point, the balance of donkey ownership shifted. With access to credit and state aid, white farmers were able to overcome the handicap of disease, begin water development, and improve bovine stock. They began dairy production in the 1920s and beef production in the 1940s. Moreover, mechanization of traction and transport around mid-century gave whites less need for trek animals.19 Thus, in 1946, there were 9,168 donkeys on white farms; in 1950, 4,250; and in 1960, only 2,145. Because of poverty, the donkey population on black reserves did not follow this trajectory. Perhaps, as whites had less use for them, the animals became cheaper for Africans. The population on reserves continued to rise, to 11,007 in 1946, when it surpassed the cattle population of 10,372.20 (See Graph A.) Even in the context of South Africa, people in the Kalahari thornveld were particularly poor.21 Raising small stock and donkeys could not remedy poverty, but it could mitigate it. Goats were useful primarily for meat and some milk, but donkeys had many uses.22 The first and most obvious was transportation, a requirement of people's subsistence. Bus

service required cash and adapting to the schedule, while donkeys were nearly free and more convenient. The second use was as draft animals. Donkeys pulled plows, but because the semi-aridity of this region limited cultivation, wagon traction was more important. Ox wagons had been numerous in the nineteenth century, when people had used them as transport in the wood trade to diamond mines in Kimberley.23 In the twentieth century, both white and black people came to rely on donkeys rather than oxen for carrying loads. In 1919, a visitor from Arizona recorded that a "typical" wagon team in Kimberley used fifteen "burros."24 Contemporary recollections of when they replaced oxen as the primary draft animals in Kuruman vary from the 1930s to the 1950s, corroborating a 1953 report that "the cattle which are kept in this district consist of 97 percent breeding stock, with the result that donkeys are the only trek animals."25 For people living on the semi-arid lands around Kuruman, donkeys were particularly important in transporting maize grown in more humid areas. By the 1930s, it was common for people to work in maize-growing districts of the western Transvaal during the harvesting season. Entire families joined in the work and were paid in kind, accumulating enough maize to supply household needs through most of the year.26 Those who wanted to save shipping costs of railroad transport used their own carts to bring the maize home. Locally, people invested in specialized carts to carry water, wood, gravel, and sand for brick making, gaining an income delivering these commodities.

GRAPH A: Goats, Sheep, Cattle, and Donkeys in Selected Years

A third benefit of donkeys was that they were slaughtered for meat. They were not a favorite food, but they were eaten. Fourth, dung, mixed with sand, was used in construction. A final dividend was that their milk was considered medicinal for sick children. People did not exchange them for bridewealth, probably because they had no symbolic value and were so common. Unlike cattle, which were associated with men, donkeys were gender neutral and especially helpful in women's work. The fact that donkeys were extremely useful does not, of course, mean they were always well treated. Life in the Kalahari thornveld is difficult, and pack animals bear a heavy load. Government officials recorded concerns about abuse and sometimes intervened.27 Donkeys were literally beasts of burden, and as such, their structural position was very low.

How many donkeys would a household ideally own? People told me that they might have use for thirty, three teams to rotate on a plow, two for pulling a wagon, and a few to spare. Thirty is a considerable number and reveals as much about the assessment of need as about the animals' usefulness. Most years, plowing was an economically marginal activity, but when good rains came, people did not want to be lacking donkeys. A poor household could keep many in hopes of a good year because the costs and risks were low. Donkeys reproduced without intervention from humans and amounted to something close to a free good. People had no reason to maximize their extraction of donkey power, so they acquired more than would be "necessary" in a profit-making enterprise. Although few households achieved a herd of thirty, donkeys—which eat a lot—became numerous.

Scholars who have questioned the received wisdom on the African environment have argued that knowledge about it and its proper uses takes on the authority of a discourse, as understood by Michel Foucault.28 They have shown how assertions of degradation were often based on selective evidence and were usually ignorant of indigenous understandings. Depictions of degradation rested on colonial power relations, on which party had the authority to determine and communicate truth. The power/knowledge dynamic is manifest in this discussion about donkeys because the range-management scientists and government officials with expertise and authority formulated the received wisdom about the destructiveness of donkeys. This process required denying the many ways poor black people found donkeys useful. As in other cases, colonial knowledge justified colonial intervention.

An anti-donkey policy developed without inquiry into their utility or research into their actual environmental impact. The official verdict on donkeys throughout the country was overwhelmingly negative. Their reputation was so dire that one official warned of "the donkey menace."29 A 1932 memorandum details how they were considered a problem, stating that their carcasses went unclaimed and harbored botulins, thus making the environment unhealthy for cattle. They destroyed the veld by digging and trampling the grass; they reproduced quickly and had no marketable value; they were worth less than the crops they damaged; people did not claim them when they did damage; and they consumed large amounts of fodder on overstocked pastures.30 Rather than considering why they were suited to people's needs, the report blamed both donkeys and people for their prevalence. In later years, as motorized transport became common, another issue arose: donkeys are recklessly resolute in the face of oncoming traffic. Indeed, the hazard they posed to traffic was one ostensible cause for the segregationist relocation of Dikgweng, a small settlement on Kuruman municipal property in the 1950s.31 Assertions that the animals were feral and Africans were apathetic established a need for intervention.

The program of "Betterment" gave teeth to anti-donkey talk. Betterment was a policy of agricultural "improvement" for African reserves that began in 1939 and intensified during the 1950s.32 It was grounded in conceptions of degradation and motivated by a desire to increase the economic output of communal lands. In contrast to conservation programs for white areas, Betterment could be coercive. The interventions of Betterment involved resettling people in villages on a platted grid, demarcating different areas for cultivation and grazing, introducing technical improvements such as soil conservation schemes and rotational grazing, and enforcing stock culling, which in most areas involved indigenous "scrub" cattle. The state also assumed rights to limit the number of people who could use the land, although it did not usually enforce such measures. The power of the state to implement conservation programs against the will of the people was contingent on Africans' lack of political rights. Particularly important was the fact that land was held communally. Before colonial takeover, individuals could not dispose of their cultivated land for profit, and animals grazed on common pasture. Colonial governments thus constructed African "customary" tenure as communal and vested in the chief. This definition facilitated state intervention into rural life, for individuals had no space to

produce as they chose.33 Since tenure was not invested in community institutions, there was little safeguard of interests against the state or elite.

In Kuruman, unlike other areas of South Africa, Betterment planners were not concerned about cattle numbers; instead, they acted against donkeys. Betterment was oriented toward efficient, modern, and market-oriented production by a few; in contrast, donkeys were useful because they helped the many with supplementary subsistence. Officials reported an extremely high donkey population, noting that 40 percent of all animals on reserves in the Kuruman district were horses or donkeys and that there were 3.7 donkeys per person in Vlakfontein, a small populous reserve in the southeastern corner of the district.34 The first cull in the district was in 1949, and it involved sale, not slaughter. In 1950, officials arranged for sellers in Vlakfontein to receive 10 shillings per animal from the National Bonemeal Factory, but that price did not draw sellers. When Vlakfontein residents did agree to limit donkeys voluntarily, they set the number at eight per household, with an extra eight allowed for wagon owners, an offer that officials disparaged as no reduction at all. In 1953, a proclamation declared all reserves in the district to be areas of donkey limitation. The first major cull after the proclamation claimed 177 horses and 969 donkeys. The culling procedure was to brand animals deemed valuable and to arrange for sale or slaughter of the surplus.35 Perhaps because a paternalist ethos endured from Cape Colony administrative traditions, these donkey controls sought consensus from owners. Paternalism was not free of violence and coercion, but imagining the colonial endeavor as a civilizing mission mitigated some extreme tendencies. Paternalism was not in accordance with the ideology of segregation, self-determination, and cultural protection, however, and it did not survive long, after the implementation of apartheid in 1948.36

Although there was no overt opposition, a common response to culling programs was non-cooperation. Officials believed that people hid their animals during culls and asked chiefs to work to reduce the population in their villages, resulting in more frustration in government offices than action on the reserves.37 Auctioning surplus animals could have been helpful for cash-poor households, but people did not always come forward to sell. For example, in three auctions in 1967, only sixteen donkeys were offered, suggesting there were not many surplus or feral animals.38 These responses underscore the value of donkeys. Officials threatened more drastic measures, but after 1953 there was little culling. The donkey population on reserves dropped after the 1940s—but not as drastically as on white farms—from 11,007 in 1946 to 5,891 in 1960.39 The drop was probably due in part to Betterment intervention and in part to an increase in motorized transport and a decrease in cultivation.

Some rare popular commentary on donkey limitation is preserved in the minutes of official district "Meetings of Chiefs, Headmen and People." Some men defended the animal, complaining that the number of permitted donkeys was too low.40 Yet participants at these meetings were not unanimous defenders of donkeys. The group voted sixty-six to six in support of the 1953 donkey limitation proclamation. Minutes from meetings in 1951 and 1952 record strong criticism of donkeys:

A donkey is no good. It is only of use if you use it for draught purposes. If the donkeys are decreased, it will be better for the cattle in this area;

> Donkeys are useless and are despised;
>
> There are more than 1,000 donkeys in my area which have no owners. When a donkey does damage we cannot find the owner;
>
> Donkeys are ruining the Kuruman District. This law is just the right thing to decrease the number of donkeys. We will be allowed a number of donkeys each. The donkeys in my area are roaming about and have no owner. It will be a good thing if all donkeys are branded;
>
> The donkeys use all the water and nothing is left for our other stock. These donkeys cause a lot of trouble amongst us.41

In later meetings, some men complained about donkey limitation, but there were more statements about the harm donkeys did. There are several possible reasons why men in these meetings took a stand with the colonial state against donkeys. Tswana culture had a high regard for cattle, while ownership of donkeys, the poor person's animal, carried no prestige. If donkeys were perceived to be in competition with cattle, there could have been sentiment against them. Moreover, women, who found donkeys useful and were barred by custom from owning cattle, did not participate in the meetings. Of course, government officials and apartheid structures cowed dissent. Most important, later developments imply that the anti-donkey sentiment was rooted in the interests of the nascent class of commercial beef producers, who would have been the chiefs, headmen, and leading men participating in these meetings. This group was made up of the "progressive farmers" who could benefit from Betterment and accumulate cattle, and they would have been sympathetic to the idea that the veld be used to support cattle rather than donkeys. Interested in maximizing commercial production and profit, they were more likely to see donkeys as underutilized, surplus, or wild. The class divisions over donkeys and cattle are not explicit in the documentary record of this period, but it may be inferred that aspirant beef producers were among those speaking against donkeys.

There is another possible reason why the meeting agreed to donkey limitation: even those people who used the animals also believed that too many of them could cause damage. Certainly, it would be an overcorrection to the received wisdom to deny that humans and domesticated animals can damage the environment. People had the motivation and ability to accumulate large numbers of donkeys, and it is possible that as numbers grew, a toll on the land became clear even to subsistence herders. Two recent South African studies differ on whether rural black people who use donkeys also perceive that they can be destructive. In interviews for the Namaqualand study, people reported that they eat more than goats do, waste fodder, and have a higher impact on the remaining vegetation. Informants expressed concern that donkeys, particularly feral ones, impaired subsistence goat keeping. But a countrywide survey in 1994 of over 500 respondents by the South African Network of Animal Traction contradicts this finding. It found no negative

assessments of donkeys among rural people.42 Unfortunately, it is now probably impossible to determine to what extent people in the 1950s believed that donkeys were capable of environmental degradation. Colonial control over the documentary record and the politicization of memory after the donkey killing in 1983 have obscured voices from that period.

The South African "homelands" remind us that an actor's position in colonial structures often carries stronger explanatory power than does his or her race. The most drastic action against donkeys, the 1983 Bophuthatswana donkey massacre, occurred after the anti-donkey position transcended race. Ironically, apartheid promoted this development by giving powers of government to the indigenous elite. The policy of Separate Development, a refinement of apartheid, emphasized self-determination by ethnic groups. The Bantu Authorities Act of 1951 and the Promotion of Bantu Self Government Act of 1959 inaugurated three levels of government for black South Africans and invested them with power of self-government.43 On the lowest level was the basic building block of indirect rule: tribal authorities, councils appointed by local chiefs. In 1955 and 1956, the Tlhaping and Tlharo tribal authorities were created and given some responsibilities of local government in Kuruman. At the next level were regional authorities that had power to administrate education, public works, health care, and agricultural extension for tribal clusters. The Seokama Dichaba Regional Authority was created in 1958 for Tlhaping and Tlharo people around Kuruman and Vryburg. All Tswana-speaking groups were united in 1962 at the highest level by the Tswana Territorial Authority, which took over many of the responsibilities of the regional authorities.44

Separate Development in South Africa departed from indirect rule elsewhere when it invested tribal structures with the trappings of a modern state. In 1968, the territorial authority received a bureaucracy, including an agricultural department, whose white officials provided continuity with the previous administration. An appearance of political modernization came through elections in 1971, but chiefs retained reserved seats in parliament, and in 1972 Bophuthatswana received self-governing status with Lucas Mangope, chief of the Bahurutse ba Manyane, as president. Bophuthatswana became the second homeland to receive "independence" in 1977. These homelands were not independent of the administrative capital, Pretoria, but the South African government did devolve some control. There were elections, but less than half the seats in parliament were open to popular contest, and the voting was frequently fraudulent.45 Thus the trappings of a modern state, a well-endowed bureaucracy, and a weak parliament were superimposed on colonial institutions. Indirect rule and communal tenure had long since exposed people to intervention by the state. However, at this point, state intervention was unfettered through the ideology of self-determination in an ethnically based state. The state was undemocratic, and the governing elite competed directly with the governed for resources. Thereafter, donkey control under Bophuthatswana became extremely virulent.

Although it transcended race, the anti-donkey tendency remained embedded in class. Compared with the colonial elite elsewhere in Africa, officials who acted against donkeys had relatively great power and material benefits. Corruption and patronage characterized

Bophuthatswana governance. In July 1998, Mangope was convicted of 102 counts of theft totaling over 3.5 million rands and three counts of fraud involving 1.2 million rands.46 Mining and maize production fueled the Bophuthatswana economy, but in the driest, western reaches around Kuruman, cattle ranching provided the greatest wealth, and the state funneled much of this wealth to the elite. In the 1970s, there were accusations that government cattle-breeding projects in Kuruman favored rich and well-connected purchasers by selling stock directly to them rather than at public auction. Furthermore, in preparation for "independence," Bophuthatswana acquired additional land that was not included in communal territory but was made available as private farms. Leases for these farms frequently went to chiefs, cabinet members, or the president and his circle, and most commercial beef production took place on these farms rather than on communal pastures near villages. Beef producers received assistance through funds provided by Pretoria to the Bantu Investment Corporation (BIC). After 1973, the BIC guaranteed a floor price for every animal sold at auction in Bophuthatswana. In 1975–1976, 22 percent of them were purchased with its funds.47 Additionally, the BIC provided commercial farm loans through the Bophuthatswana National Development Corporation and, after 1981, through the Agricultural Bank of Bophuthatswana. The Department of Agriculture gave increased assistance with marketing through Agricor, its extension program founded in 1979. Concerned about "proper" cultivation in more humid areas of Bophuthatswana, the government imported 200 tractors from Austria in 1982. Agricor was rewarded for its efforts to commercialize in 1983 when a trade adviser to President Ronald Reagan visited and complimented its agricultural development work, promising to seek markets for Bophuthatswana produce.48

The majority of rural people engaged in supplementary subsistence production and did not participate in commercial cattle raising or cultivation with tractors. Certainly, many people owned both donkeys and cattle, and small farmers could benefit from some of the new programs, but Agricor aimed to help commercial farmers, as acknowledged in a 1986 Agricor report: "The land can support only a small portion of the population through involvement in farming."49

The cattle population rose steeply after Bophuthatswana became self-governing: it was 43,607 in 1972 in the Tlhaping-Tlharo district (comprised of land formerly in the districts of Kuruman and Vryburg); by 1981, it had reached 109,894. (See Graph B.) In the year ending in September 1982, Tlhaping-Tlharo producers earned 80,795 rands in stock sales, a large proportion of the Bophuthatswana total of 103,769 rands earned in this sector.50 Government meetings continued to discuss donkey numbers in the 1970s, agreeing to limit untaxed animals to six per owner, but subsequent enforcement is not recorded. After "independence," warnings about the high donkey population continued, with Tlhaping-Tlharo cited as having the greatest problem.51 However, there were no scientific studies on the impact of donkeys. Unfortunately, the early 1980s saw a devastating drought, and, as usual, bovines were most vulnerable to shortages of fodder and water. Under this pressure, Bophuthatswana acted to ensure that grazing went to them.

GRAPH B: Cattle and Donkeys in Tlhaping-Tlharo

In May 1983, a governmental decree announced that all "surplus" donkeys were to be exterminated, but people who proved their animals were "necessary" could keep four. What followed grew out of the precedent of earlier donkey control, but it had an astounding and unparalleled vehemence. The contingencies that transformed this cull into a near-extermination campaign are not clear. Bophuthatswana Department of Agriculture and Agricor reports from 1983 do not mention the donkey massacre. An official explanation came in a speech to the Bophuthatswana National Assembly by E. M. Mokgoko, the minister of agriculture. He echoed the received wisdom on the destructiveness of donkeys, claimed that since 1978 the state had attempted to reduce numbers, and referred to the seriousness of the drought.52 The word on the street, recalled W. J. Seremane, a Bophuthatswana dissident, was that President Mangope had nearly collided with donkeys on the highway, and this turned him against the entire species.53 Increasing repression by the central government must have given the Bophuthatswana regime confidence to act brutally. Perhaps the savageness of the massacre was politically motivated, intended to terrorize people and preempt opposition. Government records for this year are not yet open, so the role of Pretoria cannot be determined; white soldiers did participate in other parts of Bophuthatswana, although no one told me of their presence around Kuruman.54 Whatever the immediate cause, the difference between donkey control in 1983 and earlier years was not due to a change in the donkey population or their environmental impact; it was due to changes in the state and economy.

Based on interviews in Ncweng, Ga-Mopedi, Kagung, and Seodin, villages near Kuruman, I have reconstructed the donkey killing in that area.55 Sometimes, accounts are contradictory, as they were regarding the warning people received. Some people reported that the cull had begun like earlier ones, with their chief calling meetings on reducing the population. People then tried to sell but found no buyers. Others recalled hearing on the radio about the plan to reduce donkeys, or from others who had already experienced the culling. Some people had enough warning to send their donkeys to villages that were never removed from "white" South Africa and hence were not under Bophuthatswana jurisdiction. Others sent animals to relatives who worked on white-owned farms.56 In each village, some people were taken by surprise.

Members of the Bophuthatswana Police Force and Bophuthatswana Defence Force arrived in trucks or in "Hippos," the troop carriers that would become infamous patrolling black urban townships during the 1980s. At the small village of Ncweng, people remember that they gathered their animals in preparation for counting, as in previous culls. They hardly expected the immediate shooting of most donkeys. They soon learned their error, because soldiers shot donkeys from their vehicles. When soldiers arrived, they did not explain the procedure or count the assembled animals but simply opened fire. Some people expected only females, or jennies, to be culled, but soldiers shot jacks and jennies alike. After shooting the gathered donkeys, soldiers fanned out across the veld. Searching the streets, the river valley, and grazing areas, they shot the donkeys they saw. A few people, realizing the danger, hid donkeys in their houses. This worked if neighbors did not tip off soldiers to search the house, as they sometimes did. In Seodin, the

headman reported that an intervention temporarily halted the shootings. Thereafter, soldiers and police proceeded less randomly, paying greater attention to how many donkeys were permitted per household.57

Although no people were killed, the violence of the shootings was extremely traumatic for witnesses. The last armed clash between people and the state in this region had occurred in 1897. Before 1983, most Kuruman people had never seen troop carriers or heard gunfire. Moreover, the soldiers explicitly threatened people who complained about the shooting. There is strong consistency in the interviews about the brutality of the shootings and how it provoked revulsion: "The soldiers did not take aim, but shot animals anywhere, as often as it took to kill them."58 Every interview indicated that these were inhumane killings. "We were very disturbed about the actual way in which the donkeys were killed, because they were not put to death—they were savaged. Others were shot in the eye, different parts of the body, and the feet, and this made the actual killing gruesome because they had to suffer too much pain, unlike if they were shot once in the head."59 People told me that the soldiers were not local men, who might have been sympathetic, but from other parts of Bophuthatswana. One man reported that his cousin had participated, but he later suffered nightmares and left the army.60

Many, many donkeys were lost. Some people reported losing their entire herd of donkeys, up to eighteen animals. Even donkeys in harness were not safe from shooting. One man was using his donkeys when they were shot:

> When the soldiers came in, I was riding in my cart, on my way to fetch building soil. They met me on my way, and never asked where I was going, or how many should they kill. They just mowed down the whole four, and I had to ask people to come and help me take the cart home and take the other two carcasses home, and the other two I left them for people who wanted their meat. I was very heartbroken. What was surprising about the soldiers is that they never asked how far I was staying in order that I could maybe take the cart home, but they just shot the donkeys.61

A woman explained her feelings at seeing the blood and carcasses lying on top of each other: "the way the donkeys were killed, it was like they were people."62 Donkeys were worth about 15 rands per animal,63 but no compensation was offered. Dead donkeys had value as meat, and the shock of the killings did not prevent people from taking advantage of the opportunity for a substantial meal. "What did you do after the soldiers left?" I asked one group. "We ate," they shrugged.64 The government made no provisions to move the carcasses, and eventually many donkeys rotted in the field and stank. The shootings stopped without explanation, but Seremane believes that pressure from the government in Pretoria, possibly motivated by fear of an outcry by white animal lovers, stopped the donkey killings.65 It is impossible to say how many donkeys were killed, but the Bophuthatswana agricultural census reports show a steep decline in the population. The number for Bophuthatswana as a whole dropped from 47,927 in 1982 to 28,835 in 1983. Over half the missing donkeys were from the small Tlhaping-Tlharo district, where the count of 19,047 plummeted to 8,599.66 Conceivably, not all of these animals died;

presumably, many people would have been wary of census takers and hidden their surviving donkeys from government eyes.

As for the cattle, killing donkeys did not improve conditions enough to save them. These species existed in overlapping but different biological and geographical niches. The patterns of land ownership determined that donkeys and cattle raised for market had not been in direct competition for the same pastures. Donkeys grazed near villages, on highly populated communal lands, where more animals competed for grazing, and theft was a greater risk. With or without donkeys, these were not ideal areas for commercial beef production. Furthermore, donkeys were adapted to a wider range of possible fodder than cattle, including drought-resistant bushes. True, donkeys did eat the grass that survived the drought, and they ate proportionately more than cattle or goats did. Nevertheless, killing them did not equip cattle to survive in a bushy, diseased, and dry environment. Statistics show that the Tlhaping-Tlharo district was not able to sustain the high cattle numbers of the early 1980s. The numbers dropped from 102,253 in 1983 to 92,763 in 1984 and 84,971 in 1988. (See Graph B.) As a means of enhancing beef production, the donkey killing was a failure.

Maintaining that donkeys were destructive required suppressing an alternative discourse on their value. This was never entirely successful; even some white officials of the Union Government recognized the practicality of donkeys. One wrote about Kuruman in 1937, "The prevailing conditions in the Native areas are such that there is no room for cattle and sheep but possibilities for developing the humble donkey and goats."67 A report the next year stated, "Donkeys and goats do well and are the only stock seen to increase."68 Similarly, a report from 1950 stated: "As Kuruman is essentially stock country, it is surprising how few cattle the natives own and how many donkeys (approximately 10,000) there are. It would appear that cattle . . . are a risky proposition and need attention e.g. food and water regularly. The donkey on the other hand requires no attention, is a useful draught animal and if he dies, his meat would be eaten as readily as in the case of an ox."69 I found no other positive assessments of donkeys by white officials.

Unfortunately, few statements about donkeys by people who benefited from them have been preserved from previous decades. As mentioned above, the documentary record contains some pro-donkey testimony at the "Meetings of Chiefs, Headmen and People" in the early 1950s. Clearly, people who protected their animals during culls refuted the received wisdom. Some members of the Bophuthatswana National Assembly spoke in favor of donkeys before 1983, and despite the autocratic government, there were vehement objections during the cull.70 However, because of the traumatic implementation of the donkey massacre and the consequent politicization of the subject, 1983 must be regarded as a critical point in the development of an alternative discourse. Although the alternative to the received wisdom existed before that point, the events of that year must have greatly affected it.

As killing donkeys became identified with Bophuthatswana and apartheid, the pro-donkey discourse strengthened. Today, donkeys carry an important load in the way

people speak about the world, and the alternative position on donkeys has developed into donkey populism with an uncompromising opinion on their virtues. People maintained in our interviews that donkeys caused virtually no trouble or environmental damage, and they refuted each reason given for killing the donkeys. They denied that there were any feral donkeys or that the grass shortage was particularly severe before the massacre. Furthermore, they disagreed that donkeys eat a large amount of fodder. They recalled another justification used by the Bophuthatswana government—that donkeys had especially toxic urine that destroyed grass—and also denied this. Moreover, they rejected the most moderate reasons to control donkeys; one man dismissed a concern that would be familiar to anyone who has driven a car in the region. Emphasizing the responsibility of drivers, he mused, "You need a license to drive; a donkey doesn't get a license."71

People refuted the donkey killing on moral as well as practical grounds. The populist donkey position puts great emphasis on class-based injustice. As one member of the National Assembly said in 1983, "People now think the donkeys are being killed because the Government is rich. It is the rich people who have decided that the donkeys should be killed."72 The interviews showed the class analysis to be ubiquitous. One man theorized that donkey and cattle ownership defined classes:

> The situation of our people in the Kudumane area is like this: we have different peoples who lived differently. People who own cattle, you find that most do not own donkeys. They only farm cattle. These people who own donkeys are the people who live a very low life. They do not even have a motor car—a donkey to them means a lot. With it they do most of their work, transport for water, bricks, gravel, sand, wood . . . mostly for building. Since we have such a high rate of unemployment, some with these donkeys, they can help the others who do not have donkeys to draw water for them and bring them wood when they built their houses, and in return they got paid and that is how they create life. So these are the two different types of people we have in our area.73

Others supported him in blaming the class of cattle owners for the event: "What actually disturbed me most was that the people who made the decision do not have donkeys. Although they know the importance of donkeys in our lives, they themselves have cows and sheep."74 "I started not to trust anybody who is a wealthy cattle owner, because they could take any decision that would affect even the lives of ordinary donkeys."75 One informant asserted that ungrateful, "faceless" people motivated the government to shoot donkeys: "Even though those faceless people used donkeys to reach the standard where they are having cows and horses, they have actually forgotten that."76 One informant contrasted the way capitalizing white and black farmers treated donkeys. "I was once asked at work by a white man why it was that when the white men became rich he gave his donkeys to blacks, but why when blacks were rich, they did not give the donkeys to people who are poor, but they decided to kill them?"77 They emphasize that donkey killing brought great disadvantages to poor people. Many people claimed that they had earned an income from transporting goods with their donkey carts, or that the death of donkeys forced them to pay cash for services they could previously provide for themselves. The death of the draft animals made it more difficult to plow. An older

woman believed that the killing was especially disadvantageous for women: "Widows and divorcees who had donkeys, those donkeys acted as their husbands . . . Since then their suffering was exacerbated, and they are still suffering even now."78 It was expensive to replace donkeys after the shootings, because their prices rose.

In the populist discourse, the donkey killing is a serious moral transgression, because donkeys have a special significance to Christians and the environment. A very high proportion of the population identifies itself as Christian, and my informants often asserted that the donkey killing was especially immoral because of a biblical endorsement of donkeys. Referring to Jesus on Palm Sunday, a man explained, "We must understand that God wanted us to use the donkeys, because there is a quote in the Bible which states that you would find the donkey tied to a pole and bring it to me."79 It is significant that in 1981, even before the donkey massacre, a member of the National Assembly mentioned Jesus' selection of a donkey. "Our Lord Jesus Christ had to make use of the services of a donkey because he was not used to riding a horse, even then if he had a horse, he could have been thrown by the horse and could also have been forced to train this horse to be ridden."80 With reference to the environment, people regularly claimed that the drought became severe only after the donkeys were killed. Some asserted that the drought finally lessened only after many cattle succumbed, a clear statement on the moral weight of killing donkeys. In a variation on the theme of retribution, one man recounted, to gales of laughter, that a police officer who had been particularly brutal had suffered a condition that caused his skin to peel off.81

Discussion of the donkey massacre also brought up the issue of good government and democracy. Many people stated that they had no ability to protest this or other actions of the Bophuthatswana government. The significance of the donkey killing was not lost on the political opposition, weak as it was, in Bophuthatswana. After the killings, J. B. Toto, the chief of the Tlharo people near Kuruman and a member of the opposition Seoposengwe Party, made the donkey killing an issue and thus became known as "Rra-Ditonki" or "Mr. Donkeys."

In addition, an African National Congress (ANC) partisan and protest singer, Blondie Makhene, wrote a song about the donkey killings. It describes ghosts of donkeys haunting Mangope and goes on to urge people to join Umkhonto we Sizwe, the military wing of the ANC. The song was written and sung publicly shortly after the donkey massacre but not recorded until 1991 or 1992. It was sung at opposition rallies in Bophuthatswana during the transition to majority rule, and people sang it to me in interviews.83

The contrast between donkey-killing Bophuthatswana and a democratic ANC government is not lost on those who spoke with me. Prompted by the subject of the donkey killing, a young woman spoke with great emotion when she contrasted Bophuthatswana rule with that of the ANC:

> We were very happy in 1994 that we voted in the government of the people by the people, a democratic government in which if a person has something that affects

> him or her, he or she is in a position to raise the concern. Unlike if you have something that does not satisfy you, then you are not in a position to say it. During Mangope's reign, there was no cooperation. Even though they called themselves democrats, they did not practice democracy. The only thing they knew was to oppress people, as they were pawns of the apartheid government which used him to oppress other people.84

An older woman who had one surviving donkey was still fearful: "The small donkey that survived has reproduced and I am so afraid that I do not even trust the present government. I am always afraid that it will do the same."85 Probably, donkey reduction is now a political impossibility. Not everyone ascribes to the tenets of donkey populism. Mangope is still politically active, leading the United Christian Democratic Party, which has some supporters in this corner of former Bophuthatswana territory. In the 1999 elections, the UCDP received 18 percent of the vote there,86 but I did not hear his supporters defending his donkey policy. In earlier interviews on less politicized aspects of environmental history, people in the groups expressed a variety of opinions, but on the subject of donkeys there was great conformity with the populist position. We witnessed the pressures for conformity in Seodin, where we held our interviews after a community meeting. When the assembled group heard that we wanted to discuss the donkey massacre, there was a public discussion of whether we should be allowed to hold interviews on such a sensitive subject. To address their concerns, I met with the headman and a few leading men to explain my purpose and hear their statements. Thereafter, we were allowed to proceed, and it was resolved that people should talk freely. All the same, I noticed one Mangope supporter fleeing the scene. I was not successful in my attempts to interview this man or officials; their continued reticence and my impending return to the United States made it prohibitively difficult.

Writing the history of the donkey massacre exposes some limitations to recovering the history of domesticated animals, colonized subjects, and environmental crises. Like other domesticated animals, donkeys are dominated and represented by humans. Yet, to their owners, they are also fellow living beings. The challenge to historians is to treat them not just as material objects but also as historical subjects.87 Also evident are the difficulties in basing history on politicized memories. It is standard practice to read colonial documents "against the grain," but it is equally important to treat an alternative populist discourse critically, even one decrying injustice to poor black people and lowly hard-working animals. Because they convey personal experiences, testimonies on the events of the massacre seem authentic. Commentary on the environmental implications of donkey keeping and killing is more problematic. Christian meanings and resentment about colonial control and class privilege have created an extreme loyalty to donkeys that refutes any negative allegation. In this discourse, donkeys are valorized, and thus the transgression of the massacre is magnified.

Donkey populism appears to exist even in areas of South Africa that were not included in Bophuthatswana, as the South African Network of Animal Traction Survey in 1994 reveals. The report of the 1994 survey gives a vigorous defense of donkeys and attributes all anti-donkey thinking to government officials and urban people. It argues that donkeys

are not destructive or wasteful and transmits popular refutations of anti-donkey "myths."88 However, like the received wisdom, tenets of donkey populism cannot be taken as a neutral assessment of their environmental impact, especially the impact in previous decades. People in Namaqualand in the 1990s believed that large numbers of donkeys impaired goat keeping, and perhaps the same was true among subsistence herders in Bophuthatswana in 1983. In subsequent years, the powerful populist discourse could have filtered out memories of their negative environmental impact. An assessment of their current environmental impact and economic costs and benefits would be possible through experimental investigation by researchers who understand that both the received wisdom and the alternative populism are historical productions.

Like the anti-donkey received wisdom, the pro-donkey populism has transcended race in South Africa. In fact, during the same decade as the massacre in Bophuthatswana, two white municipalities erected monuments to the animals.89 In 1984, the Municipality of Upington erected a bronze statue of a donkey attached to a pump, a perfectly life-like animal that stands frozen in its step on a circular path around the machine. In 1986, the Pietersburg District Agricultural Union erected a statue of a donkey at repose. In Upington, donkey-powered machines allowed white farmers to pump water for commercial fruit production, while in Pietersburg donkeys carried rock during the late nineteenth-century gold rush. Both statues have inscriptions acknowledging donkeys' hard work and contribution to the human economy. The recognition by these white communities of donkeys (and not black workers!) at about the same time that Bophuthatswana massacred donkeys is a remarkable expression of the pervasive irony of South African history. The great discrepancy in these treatments of South African donkeys results from divisions of both race and class among humans. In Upington and Pietersburg, donkeys grazed on privately held farms, where owners had rights over the land and its use. A white owner had the right to decide whether a donkey destroyed, or should be put out to, pasture. Furthermore, donkeys in Upington and Pietersburg contributed to capitalization, while donkeys in Bophuthatswana supported those who could not capitalize. The memorialized donkeys aided those who had power, and did so on terms set by the powerful. Therefore, in these two cities, donkeys inspired monuments, while only a song of revolution commemorates their history in Bophuthatswana.

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Notes

1 Officially, Kuruman is a town and a magisterial district. After 1970, the "Kuruman" district was limited to the town and white-owned farms, and the Tlhaping-Tlharo district of Bophuthatswana was created for black areas. Yet people still conceive of the region as "Kuruman" or "Kudumane" in Tswana.

2 I have found mention of this event in Carole Cooper, et al., Survey of Race Relations in South Africa, 1983 (Johannesburg, 1984), 376–77; and Paul Starkey, ed., Animal Traction in South Africa: Empowering Rural Communities (Gauteng, S.A., 1995), 90, 143–44. The only media reports I found were The Argus, June 23, 1983; The Cape Times, June 24, 1983; The Star, July 5, 1983; City Press, September 18, 1983; and Maleho Mosiamane, "What Lies Behind the Glittering Bophuthatswana Façade?" Pace (October 1983): 19–23. The donkey killing is not mentioned in the exhaustive biography of a farmer in eastern Bophuthatswana, suggesting that even within the homeland, the event was localized. See Charles van Onselen, The Seed Is Mine: The Life of Kas Maine, a South African Sharecropper, 1894–1985 (New York, 1996).

3 Frederick Cooper, "Conflict and Connection: Rethinking Colonial African History," AHR 99 (December 1994): 1517.

4 For a recent discussion of these issues, see Mahmood Mamdani, Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism (Princeton, N.J., 1996). I use the word "tribe" with reference to the institutions created by colonial governance. See essays in Leroy Vail, ed., The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa (Berkeley, Calif., 1989).

5 On the wilderness bias in environmental history, see William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness, or Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," Environmental History 1 (1996): 8–28. For an introduction to issues in African environmental history, see James Giblin and Gregory Maddox, "Introduction," in Custodians of the Land: Ecology and Culture in the History of Tanzania (Athens, Ohio, 1996), 1–14.

6 Robert Darnton, The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History (New York, 1984). See also Molly H. Mullin, "Mirrors and Windows: Sociocultural Studies of Human-Animal Relationships," Annual Review of Anthropology 28 (1999): 201–24.

7 Melissa Leach and Robin Mearns, eds., The Lie of the Land: Challenging Received Wisdom on the African Environment (London, 1996), 1–33.

8 My research assistants and interpreters were Kopano Chirwa, Steven Kotoloane, Bhangi Mosala, Kristin Russell, Kgomotso Tshetlho, and Megan Waples. I am deeply grateful to this research team, to Peter Heywood, and others who helped in this research, especially the people who talked to us. An open invitation was given for people to participate in group interviews, conducted both in English and Tswana with interpreters. Some groups were divided by gender; a large percentage of active participants were over fifty years old. We also interviewed individuals. Notes and transcripts are available in Nancy Jacobs, et al., "Interviews on the Environmental History of Kuruman," Moffat Mission Library, Kuruman. Group interviews are indexed by village name with alphabetical designators. Individual interviews are indexed by name of informant.

9 Kevin Shillington, The Colonisation of the Southern Tswana, 1870–1900 (Johannesburg, 1985).

10 M. W. Henning, Animal Diseases in South Africa, 2d edn. (Pretoria, 1949), on anthrax, see 3–13, on botulism, see 324–53; H. T. B. Hall, Diseases and Parasites of Livestock in the Tropics (London, 1977), on anthrax, see 129–31, on botulism, see 131–33. For the only historical discussion of bovine botulism in the rural economy, see P. H. R. Snyman, "Die Bydrae van Droogtes en Veesiektes tot die Verarming van die Landboubevolking in Noord-Kaapland," Tydskrif vir Geestewetenskappe 29 (1989): 32–49.

11 See articles in Leach and Mearns, Lie of the Land. See also M. T. Hoffman and R. M. Cowling, "Vegetation Change in the Semi-arid Eastern Karoo over the Last 200 Years: An Expanding Karoo—Fact or Fiction?" South African Journal of Science 86 (1990): 86–294; Mary Tiffen, Michael Mortimore, and Francis Gichuki, More People, Less Erosion: Environmental Recovery in Kenya (New York, 1994); James Fairhead and Melissa Leach, Misreading the African Landscape: Society and Ecology in a Forest-Savanna Mosaic (Cambridge, 1996); James McCann, "The Plow and the Forest: Narratives of Deforestation in Ethiopia, 1840–1992," Environmental History 2 (1997): 138–59.

12 Roy H. Behnke and Ian Scoones, "Rethinking Range Ecology: Implications for Rangeland Management in Africa," in Range Ecology at Disequilibrium: New Models of Natural Variability and Pastoral Adaptation in African Savannas, Behnke, Scoones, and Carol Kerven, eds. (London, 1993), 1–30. On the history of bush encroachment in Kuruman, see Nancy Jacobs, "Grasslands and Thickets: Bush Encroachment and Herding in the Kalahari Thornveld," Environment and History 6 (2000): 289–316.

13 This is a reference to animals dying of thirst during the drought of 1932. Humphrey C. Thompson, Distant Horizons: An Autobiography of One Man's Forty Years of Missionary Service in and around Kuruman, South Africa (Kimberley, 1976), 65. On domestication, see Juliet Clutton-Brock, Horse Power: A History of the Horse and the Donkey in Human Societies (Cambridge, Mass., 1982), 62–66.

14 Interview with Peace Mabilo, October 15, 1998, Moffat Mission Library, Kuruman.

15 Suzanne Vetter, "Investigating the Impact of Donkeys on a Communal Range in Namaqualand: How Much Does a Donkey 'Cost' in Goat Units?" (Honors thesis, University of Cape Town, 1996); Montague Demment and Peter Van Soest, "A

Nutritional Explanation for Body-Size Patterns of Ruminant and Nonruminant Herbivores," American Naturalist 125 (1985): 641–72.

16 Mora Dickson, Beloved Partner, Mary Moffat of Kuruman: A Biography Based on Her Letters ([Gaborone and Kuruman], 1974), 189.

17 Cape Parliamentary Papers G. 36 1907, Blue Book for Native Affairs, 1906, 29; Union Government Publication U. 17, Blue Book for Native Affairs, 1911, 160; U.G. 32–1912, Census of the Union of South Africa. On donkeys in mining, see Anthony Hocking, Kaias and Cocopans: The Story of Mining in South Africa's Northern Cape (Johannesburg, 1983), esp. 52–54, 81.

18 U.G. 12–1932, Agricultural Census, No. 13, 1930. Early census data is unreliable, particularly for African reserves. For some years, there is a discrepancy of 20–30 percent between the published census reports and data in archival records. Therefore, I am using these numbers advisedly, only to illustrate broad, long-term trends.

19 P. H. R. Snyman, Kuruman: Vervloë Pad na Afrika (Pretoria, 1991), 114, 120, 146. On mechanization of cultivation on white farms at this time, see van Onselen, Seed Is Mine, 276–78.

20 U.G. 77–1948, Agricultural Census No. 20, 1945–46; Special Report Series Nos. 1–24, Agricultural Census No. 24, 1949–50; R. 10 '64, Agricultural Census No. 34, 1959–60 (livestock).

21 See Charles Simkins, "Agricultural Production in the African Reserves of South Africa, 1918–1969," Journal of Southern African Studies 8 (1981): 267–68. Simkins estimates that people on Kuruman reserves produced less than 25 percent of their subsistence requirements between 1927 and 1960.

22 The following discussion of the usefulness of donkeys is drawn from my fieldwork. See also van Onselen, Seed Is Mine, 137, 141, 323; and Peta A. Jones, Donkeys for Development (Harare, Zimbabwe, 1997).

23 On wood sales, see Shillington, Colonisation of the Southern Tswana, 102–06, 137–38.

24 Homer Shantz Collection, Special Collections in the Main Library, University of Arizona, Tucson. I am grateful to Barry Morton for visiting this collection. For photographs of donkey teams, see 248, 259.

25 National Archives Repository, Pretoria (hereafter, NAR), Native Affairs Series (hereafter, NTS) 6577 918/327, October 23, 1953. Interview with Olebile Mabahanyane, October 23, 1997; interview G at Batlharos, October 26, 1997; interview F at Ncweng, October 27, 1997, Moffat Mission Library.

26 NAR NTS 7351 176/327, June 1936. On seasonal labor in the harvest, see P.-L. Breutz, The Tribes of the Kuruman and Postmasburg District, Republic of South Africa, Department of Bantu Administration and Development Ethnological Publications, no. 49 (Pretoria, 1963), 63. Michael De Klerk, "Seasons That Will Never Return: The Impact of Farm Mechanization on Employment, Incomes and Population Distribution in the Western Transvaal," Journal of Southern African Studies 11 (1984): 84–105.

27 Cape Town Archives Repository (hereafter, CTAR), 2/KMN, Kuruman Native Affairs Commissioner Correspondence Series, 39 N 5/1/2, part 2, January 26, 1950, and CTAR, 2/KMN, 20 N 1/15/4, part 1, March 29, 1950. Interview F at Ncweng, October 27, 1997, Moffat Mission Library.

28 See Leach and Mearns, "Introduction," in Lie of the Land, 8–9.

29 CTAR, 2/KMN, 48 N 8/5/2, part 1, June 30, 1947.
30 NAR, NTS 9352 19/380, August 24, 1932.
31 CTAR, 1/KMN, Kuruman Magistrate Correspondence Series, 13/43 N 9/15/3(2). See correspondence in this file from late 1944 and early 1945.
32 On the politics and sociological effects of Betterment, see Joanne Yawitch, Betterment: The Myth of Homeland Agriculture (Johannesburg, 1981); C. J. De Wet, Moving Together, Drifting Apart: Betterment Planning and Villagisation in a South African Homeland (Johannesburg, 1995).
33 On communal tenure, see Martin Chanock, "Shaping the Imperial Legal Regime: A Review of the Customary Law of Tenure," in Kristin Mann and Richard Roberts, eds., Law in Colonial Africa (Portsmouth, 1991), 62–84; and Mamdani, Citizen and Subject, 138–41.
34 CTAR, 2/KMN, 20 N 1/15/4, part 1, minutes of meeting, July 27, 1949; NAR, NTS 6577 918/327, October 23, 1953, March 13, 1956; Breutz, Tribes of the Kuruman, 66.
35 The donkey limitation proclamation was CTAR, 2/KMN, 48 8/5/2 256 of February 6, 1953. On stock reduction, see correspondence in this file. The numbers of culled animals were given in part 1, a report dated October 23, 1953.
36 Ivan Thomas Evans, Bureaucracy and Race: Native Administration in South Africa (Berkeley, Calif., 1997), 9–13, 164–76, 282–83.
37 CTAR, 2/KMN, 20 N 1/15/4, part 4, minutes of meetings, July 1, 1959, March 29, 1966, March 23, 1967, June 29, 1967, March 28, 1968, June 27, 1968, September 26, 1968.
38 CTAR, 2/KMN, 20 N 1/15/4, part 4, minutes of meeting, June 29, 1967. Starkey claims that voluntary selling was also unsuccessful in Kwa-Zulu. See Animal Traction in South Africa, 22.
39 U.G. 77–1948, Agricultural Census No. 20, 1945–46.
40 CTAR, 2/KMN, 20 N 1/15/4, part 2, September 25, 1953.
41 CTAR, 2/KMN, 20 N 1/15/4, part 2, minutes of meetings, May 28, 1951, and September 19, 1952. See also CTAR, 2/KMN, 20 N 1/15/4, part 1, April 13, 1943.
42 See Vetter, "Investigating the Impact of Donkeys"; and Starkey, Animal Traction in South Africa, 142.
43 On the apartheid policy of segregated administration, see Mamdani, Citizen and Subject; Deborah Posel, The Making of Apartheid 1948–1961: Conflict and Compromise (Oxford, 1991); Paul B. Rich, State Power and Black Politics in South Africa, 1912–51 (New York, 1996); and Evans, Bureaucracy and Race.
44 Tribal and regional authorities in this area were created by Government Notice 806 of 1955, Government Notice 1932 of 1956, and Government Notice 358 of March 7, 1958. Breutz, Tribes of the Kuruman, 10, 102, 170. On their responsibilities, see Jeffrey Butler, Robert I. Rotberg, and John Adams, The Black Homelands of South Africa: The Political and Economic Development of Bophuthatswana and KwaZulu (Berkeley, Calif., 1977), 28, 33–34, 157–78. On the Bophuthatswana bureaucracy, see D. A. Kotze, Bibliography of Official Publications of the Black South African Homelands, 2d edn. (Pretoria, 1983), xvi–xvii.
45 Butler, Rotberg, and Adams, Black Homelands of South Africa, 36–37, 50–55; John Seiler, "Bophuthatswana: A State of Politics," in Transforming Mangope's

Bophuthatswana, Seiler, ed., electronic publication by Daily Mail and Guardian, 1999, on the World Wide Web at www.mg.co.za/mg/projects/bop/ch_one.html.

46 Daily Mail and Guardian, July 24, 1998, http://web.sn.apc.org/wmail/issues/980724/NEWS19.html; John Seiler, "The North West Province from 1996 to 1999," in Transforming Mangope's Bophuthatswana, www.mg.co.za/mg/projects/bop/update.html. See also Michael Lawrence and Andrew Manson, "The Dog of the Boers: The Rise and Fall of Mangope in Bophuthatswana," Journal of Southern African Studies 20 (1994): 447–61. The rand suffered serious devaluation between the foundation of Bophuthatswana and 1998, but it averaged around 3 or 4 to the dollar.

47 On auctions, see NAR, Commissioner General Mafeking (hereafter, KGM), 35 4/2/4/8, minutes of regional authority meetings in 1974 and 1975. On land, see Seiler, "Bophuthatswana: A State of Politics"; and interview with W. J. Seremane, July 31, 1998, Moffat Mission Library. On the BIC, see Butler, Rotberg, and Adams, Black Homelands of South Africa, 179–218; Bophuthatswana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, Annual Report, 1973, 12, Annual Report, 1976, 41.

48 Loraine Gordon, et al., Survey of Race Relations in South Africa, 1978 (Johannesburg, 1979), 307; Gordon, et al., Survey of Race Relations in South Africa, 1980 (Johannesburg, 1981), 433; Peter Randall, et al., Survey of Race Relations in South Africa, 1982 (Johannesburg, 1983), 416; C. Cooper, Survey of Race Relations, 1983, 376.

49 Agricor, Annual Report, 1985–86, 4. On planning land use for "middle-class farmers," see Gordon, Survey of Race Relations, 1978, 432–33.

50 Statistics on cattle and donkeys in the Tlhaping-Tlharo district are from Bophuthatswana Department of Agriculture and Forestry Annual Reports, 1972–1988. The Tlhaping-Tlharo district included communal areas previously in the Kuruman and Vryburg districts, and therefore these statistics cannot be correlated with pre-1970 data for the Kuruman district.

51 NAR, KGM, 39 5/4/6, minutes of meetings, July 14, 1977, and September 8, 1977. Donkeys were debated in the National Assembly in 1981 but not in 1982. See Republic of Bophuthatswana, Debates of the Fourth Session of the First National Assembly, May 6, 1981–June 17, 1981, 1: 368–412; and Debates of the Fifth Session of the First Bophuthatswana National Assembly, April 27, 1982–June 9, 1982. On control efforts before 1983, see also Debates of the First Session of the Second Bophuthatswana National Assembly, June 16–July 28, 1983, 2: 773, 783.

52 Debates of the First Session of the Second Bophuthatswana National Assembly (1983), 2: 743–49.

53 Interview with W. J. Seremane, Moffat Mission Library. In 1998, Mr. Seremane was the chief land claims commissioner for the Commission of Restitution of Land Rights. On donkeys as a traffic hazard, see the Debates of the Fourth Session of the First National Assembly (1981), 1: 379, 386, 398.

54 In the course of my research, I learned of a white South African Defence Force soldier who participated in the donkey killing, but I was not able to interview him.

55 The interviews on the donkey killings were F at Kagung, July 21, 1998; G at Kagung, July 21, 1998; J at Ga-Mopedi, July 23, 1998; K at Ga-Mopedi, July 23, 1998; K at

Ncweng, July 24, 1998; L at Ncweng, July 24, 1998; C at Seodin, July 27, 1998; D at Seodin, July 27, 1998.

56 Interview C at Seodin; and with Gert Olivier, September 28, 1991. Personal communication to the author from Alan Butler, May 19, 1998.

57 Interview with Agisanang David Setlhodi, July 27, 1998. On abuses of the Bophuthatswana police, see Colin Murray, Black Mountain: Land, Class and Power in the Eastern Orange Free State, 1880s to 1980s (Washington, D.C., 1992), 221–27.

58 Interview L at Ncweng.

59 Interview C at Seodin.

60 Interview L at Ncweng; interview J at Ga-Mopedi.

61 Interview C at Seodin.

62 Interview L at Ncweng.

63 Randall, Survey of Race Relations, 1982, 376.

64 Interview J at Ga-Mopedi.

65 Interview with W. J. Seremane.

66 Bophuthatswana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, Annual Report, 1982; Annual Report, 1983.

67 NAR, NTS 3007 368/305, memorandum, n.d. [probably October 1937].

68 NAR, NTS 1948 256/278 (3), October 13, 1938.

69 NAR, NTS 7387 305/327, Deputy Director of Native Agriculture Trip Report no. 44, Western Areas (Winter 1950).

70 Debates of the Fourth Session of the First National Assembly (1981), 1: 391, 401; Debates of the First Session of the Second Bophuthatswana National Assembly (1983), 2: 750–99.

71 Interview C at Seodin.

72 Debates of the First Session of the Second Bophuthatswana National Assembly (1983), 2: 770–71.

73 Interview D at Seodin.

74 Interview L at Ncweng.

75 Interview C at Seodin.

76 Interview C at Seodin.

77 Interview C at Seodin.

78 Interview L at Ncweng.

79 Interview C at Seodin. On Christianity among southern Tswana people, see Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, Of Revelation and Revolution, Vol. 1: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa (Chicago, 1991); Vol. 2: The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier (Chicago, 1997).

80 Debates of the Fourth Session of the First National Assembly (1981), 1: 401.

81 Interview C at Seodin.

82 Mosiamane, "What Lies Behind the Glittering Bophuthatswana Façade," 19–23.

83 Telephone interview by the author with Blondie Makhene, November 27, 1998. I thank Angela Impey for locating Mr. Makhene for me.

84 Interview C at Seodin.

85 Interview L at Ncweng.

86 On the 1999 election in North-West Province, see Andrew Reynolds, ed., Election '99 South Africa: From Mandela to Mbeki (New York, 1999), 134–36, 189, 194. I thank

John Seiler for the Kuruman voting results. Information was also available on the Independent Electoral Commission web site: www.elections.org.za.

88 Starkey, Animal Traction in South Africa, 21–22, 139–51.

89 On the material and cultural value of donkeys for white South Africans, see Brian du Toit, People of the Valley: Life in an Isolated Afrikaner Community in South Africa (Cape Town, 1974), 36, 45–46, 75–77. On the donkey monuments, see photographs in James Walton, A Tribute to the Donkey (n.p., 1999), 24–25; and Starkey, Animal Traction in South Africa, color photograph insert, 4. There is also a donkey statue in Brazil; see Frank Brookshier, The Burro (Norman, Okla., 1974), 223.

87 This challenge is similar to those faced—and often overcome—by historians, such as those of the Subaltern Studies group, who have worked on restoring to history the experiences of underprivileged people. To frame the situation in an admittedly provocative way, it may be useful to think of domesticated animals as especially disadvantaged subaltern subjects. This would require us to view the donkey massacre as an act of injustice against not only the owners but also the animals themselves.

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