

## The road back to Doornkop: Land purchase, land title and the 1913 Natives Land Act

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### Abstract

The paper revisits the historical agrarian studies of the kind published in *Putting a Plough to the Ground* (1986), using accounts of land purchase in the Transvaal by Morrell, Trapido and others, and combining these with findings from my own anthropological fieldwork between the 1980s and 2000s. It explores the differentiated response to the Land Act-- by tenants and fledgling land-owners, and by those hailing from deep reserve and borderland areas respectively. Similar differentiations are still discernible. Belying any dichotomous views of class and differentiation, however, the paper also makes use of recent insights into the blurred boundaries between social categories, and of approaches that highlight the importance of individual biographies rather than seeing all action as undertaken by those categories. It reiterates a point made in historical studies: that the legislative fiat of the Land Act did not in itself cause dispossession, but that this occurred in the course of subsequent struggles between landowners, cultivators, tenants and users of all kinds. Similar struggles, persisting in the wake of the Restitution Act, have created a border zone of indeterminate status in the Middelburg district.

I should first explain how I came to be one of the ‘usual suspects’ who have written on land (among others here). My first research job was at the SAIRR, in 1981, writing a report on removals. The study documented how a black spot removal – of the inhabitants of a farm called Doornkop - took place amidst, and differentially affected, a variety of other, related but distinct, forms of population displacement; including that of the hordes of people who had formerly lived on white farms as tenants; and of agricultural ‘betterment’. Given the general ethos of the times (protest against forced removals, and against the overpopulating of the Bantustans), the tone was one that emphasised the ‘struggle agenda’; as well as being strongly influenced by the ‘underdevelopment of the peasantry’ thesis as famously put forward by Bundy in his article and book. That is, it showed how a range of people living outside the Bantustan were driven into it in one way or another in the mid to late 1970s; how their cultivation and agriculture options shrank; and how many ended up solely dependent on wage employment or unemployed. It also contained some traces of a discussion on rural differentiation, but with little sense of how urban workplace livelihoods and struggles might have played into that.

About 12 years later, soon after 1994, I started exploring the story of how Doornkop’s owners had sought to reclaim their land; and in my book published in 2008 I broadened this out to include a consideration of land restitution and reform in that area – and beyond. My view was a mostly pessimistic one, it must be said: largely in view of the immense complexity of the process and the wide variety of interests and different class positions involved.

On being invited to this conference (and in the midst of writing up a very different research project) I looked back and started to re-examine my material in the light of the (mostly historical) material that had originally given rise to my own and other research on land and its dispossession: notably the papers collected in *Putting a Plough to the Ground*, an earlier paper by Stanley Trapido, Van Onselen's book on the sharecropper Kas Maine, Timothy Keegan's and Colin Murray's books on the Free State, the list goes on. Apart from Murray, the list consists mostly of historians, though anthropologist colleagues (many of them here) soon joined in.

Several questions occurred to me: what gave impetus to such a large and consistent body of work on related questions; why is it that many of the authors in question have largely moved away to focus instead on different topics? Did those charged with policies of redress pay attention to the nuanced historical materials produced by these authors – and if not, why not? Given the emphasis placed on having history and anthropology learn from each other, with revisionist history as the dominant/elder brother for a long time, is there anything that an anthropologist can bring to this which a historian might have neglected (apart from the very particularistic focus; one which stresses African people's own point of view and perhaps runs into danger of neglecting broader forces, more general issues)? Have historians themselves gone on to subsequently emphasise new themes, which might equally require a modification of their original position? (I think here especially of the new trend in historical biography: which moves away from seeking to group people along broadly class lines: something I myself earlier tended to do, and gives more attention to the nuances of their particular life stories. I was particularly inclined to rethink my approach this when I heard that one of the key people I'd interviewed, Kalushi William Kalushi, one-time chair of the Doornkop Management Committee, died in November; have tried to bring out some aspects of his particular life story here.

A brief timeline. The farm's purchase was initiated in 1905, completed/registered in 1920, black spot removal of Pedi owners occurred in 1974, of Ndebele tenants the following year. From 1974 strenuous efforts made by a series of committees, concluding in 1994 with some titleholders reoccupying – but most stayed away.

Some aspects of the story are unique, particularistic and difficult to generalise from. Yet they certainly point to an enduring set of themes over time, supporting my claim about a 'hundred year' Land Act. The eventual ethnic clash between Pedi and Ndebele at the time of the move (and later at the time of the return), and the way these Pedi ended up in an anomalous situation surrounded; all this was the result of an initial set of conquests by different polities; of the Pedi Lutherans' desire to move away from their polity (but not too far); this is how they ended up on a piece of land surrounded by whites who housed Ndebeles. In the swirl of arrangements, people settled like sediments as the tide of expansion of polities swelled and as their defeat then caused an ebb, as waters swished this way and that within the region: leaving a legacy of people critically divided from one another along ethnic

lines because they have been washed up side by side. Further, was it just accident, happenstance, that the places where farm purchasers ended up (eg Doornkop), originally picked because of relative proximity to (but being sited just beyond) the heartland of their polity, were also to be sited right next to areas that became not only agriculturally rich some 30 years later, but also, even later, became new hubs of industrial development? Whatever the case, it ended up being the case that demand for a convenient place to live nearby to these hubs, much closer than those spaces offered by residence in the Bantustan (in the classic ‘cheap labour’ story we all imbibed when we read Wolpe), would become paramount. This remained the case 20 years on: many who decided to return to the farm from the Bantustan dumping grounds did so because of its relative proximity to industry and development, rather than from any more abstract/noble ideas about identity. Given these peculiar and particular circumstances, Doornkop – set within the regional economy - ended up playing a succession of roles. Having served briefly as a setting for a very small scale version of Bundy’s familiar story about a successful peasantry, it soon also became a springboard for a proletariat whose members worked in Middleburg, Witbank, Pretoria, and Johannesburg (unlike most country dwellers nearby who worked on farms), and as time went by, the springboard for a new black lower- middle to middle class (one such person is Kalushi Kalushi, of whom more below). (In my original account, I was unduly attentive to Murray’s account of the Barolong notables, and asserted too strongly that DK’s owners were ‘middle class’.)

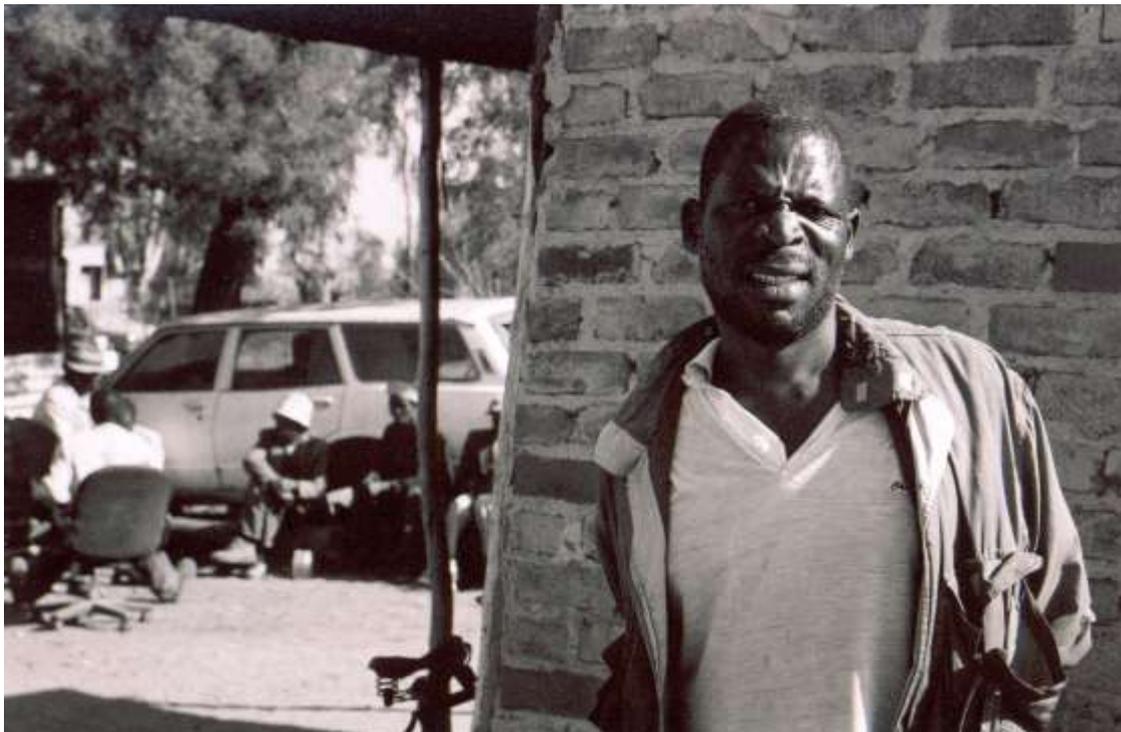
Alongside all this, DK’s perhaps most significant ‘function’ from the point of view of the economy, and the regional authorities, was that it harboured a large group of tenants. Punt Janson, Deputy Minister of Bantu Administration, asserted that the population had grown by 322 percent in two or three years, due to the influx of ‘illegal squatters’. Estimates varied: just before the removal, in 1974, the boldest stated a population of 25,000 of whom 23,000 were tenants. A more modest one stated 12,000 residents in total (James 1983:8). The resulting slum-like conditions provided a new pretext for the removal that had long been mooted. Quotes from different farmers at the time – one calling it a vortex into which farm labourers disappeared (‘Once they went in there you could not get them back’), another calling it a useful ‘reservoir’ of farm labour – illustrate a wide divergence between rates of pay and conditions of service. That is, competition between different types of farmers continued to prevail, just as it had done before the South African War almost a century earlier. Bowing to farmers’ wish to ‘reclaim’ their labour, Janson offered to ‘allow some of the 12 000 people who are being removed from DK, back onto white farms in the area’, but none took up his offer (James 1983:9).

To reiterate what Delius and Beinart said in their talk at this conference, the case of Doornkop (alongside the other evictions I was documenting in the 1980s) shows how the Land Act did not have its effect all at once. To borrow a phrase from Stanley Trapido, the story of Doornkop is thus ‘the hundred year story of the Land Act’. Of those hundred years, for only twenty of them were its owners

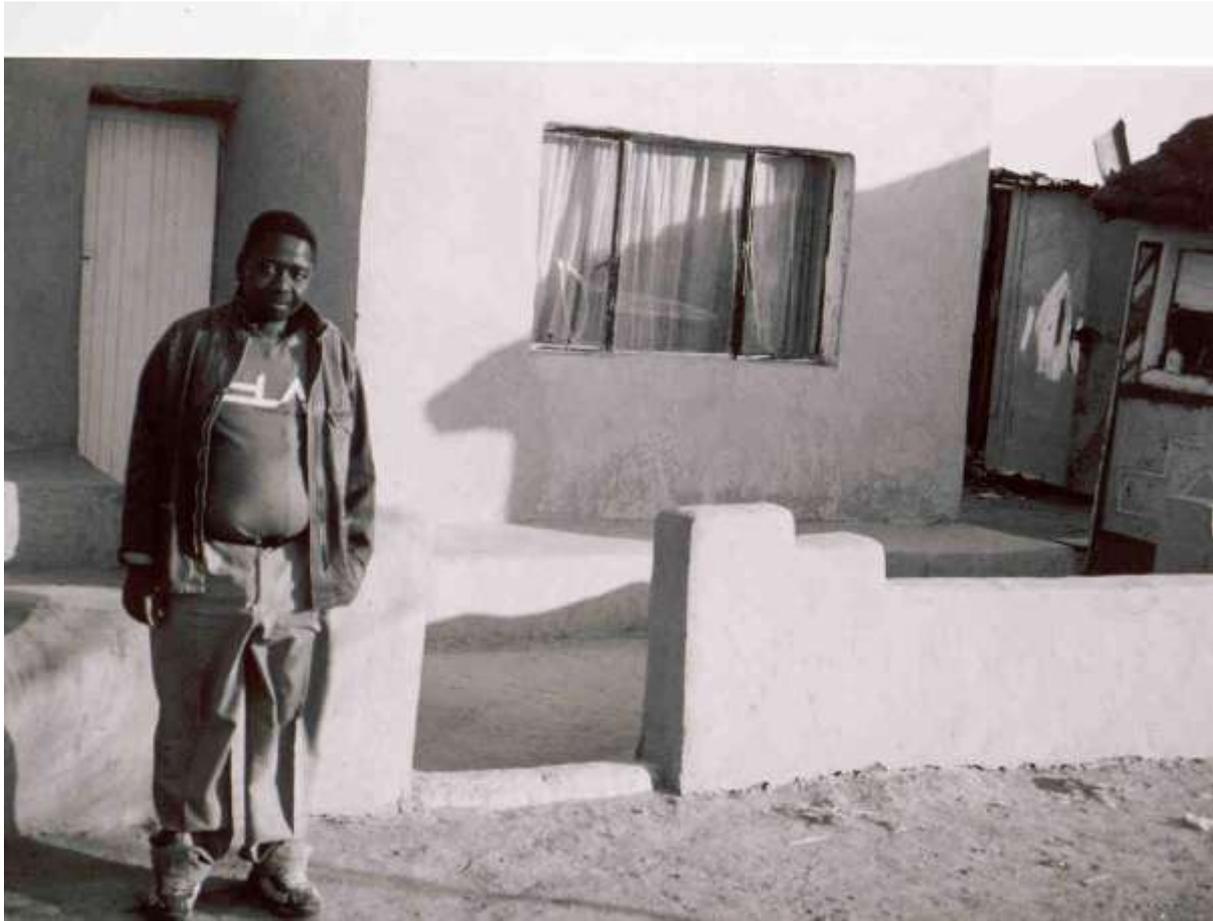
actually dispossessed of the farm. The (attempted) removal lasted until 1974 – that is, for 60 of those years. It took this long to put the Land Act into effect on this particular farm. The Land Act did enable the prevention of future purchases--like Pixley ka Seme’s of the nearby farm Mooifontein (Morrell)--but was not retroactive in the case of purchases that had already occurred (like Ramaube of Doornkop). Not only this African owned farm, but also the removals going on round about of labour tenants, took as long to effect: most of the ‘surplus people’ that I found in the 3 reserve areas in question moved during the 1970s as well. They, however, have proved even more difficult to reverse.

In my book, I laid out a central conundrum. People descended from those who had bought the farm announced their passionate commitment to the ‘land back’ movement, but were split by various schisms, and this failure to act with unanimity (plus alleged delays by the government, themselves possibly exacerbated by this lack of unanimity, in ‘bringing development’ and turning the place into something more urban in character) created a vacuum. Into this vacuum moved a large land occupation: some of the occupiers related, but others more loosely connected by common ethnic ties, to a community of mostly Ndebele speaking tenants that had been paying rent to live on the farm at the time of its removal.

Here is the chief of the squatters, Jan Masina.



Here is a second (rival) squatter leader, Hendrik Mathebula.



My focus in all this was on three things. One was the mismatches between the egalitarian and universalistic aims of the human rights activists who had charged themselves with helping to restore the land (with their often romanticized notions of African communality) and the rather more particularistic, exclusivist, and often traditionalist/hierarchical African approach of the dispossessed community itself. A second was on the class-differentiated character of the communities involved, as well as other conflicts that emerged in the course of attempting to reclaim the land (this gave the lie to their own claims about the undivided solidarity that characterised them; but also to the idea that these were undifferentiated rural folk living in harmony on the land until the moment they were removed by a brutal state). A large proportion of the people involved did not live on the farm at all. A third was on the contradictory character of the leadership that emerged, especially once the bitter conflict over removal had actually taken root, with many insisting that as Christians they had no chief (this appeared as a post-hoc rejection of the chief for having ‘collaborated’) but this flew in the face of the fact that the man in whose name the farm had been bought was in fact a chiefly relative, and that they *had* paid him forms of customary obeisance.

All this was commensurate with a scholarly commitment to viewing the contemporary ‘landback’ in a ‘critical scholarship’ perspective. But was I missing something that might be gained from being more attentive to how people spoke, what they emphasised? And is there something that historians, then

working in a paradigm which emphasised ‘accumulation and dispossession’, in a paradigm influenced (though not dominated) by Marxism with a slight Althusserian slant, might subsequently have brought to the debate?

### **Property, rental, credit**

Given the focus of so many of the scholars mentioned, summarised very astutely in a review paper by Fred Cooper, why did so much of what happened at Doornkop – and also on the farms roundabout - hinge, not on agriculture/cultivation/ production in its broadest sense, but on landlordism and tenancy? A clue can be found in statements by Doornkop people: their focus on property ownership and its modalities (title deeds, purchase, etc.), and the way they repudiated and condemned rental/tenancy. A trawl through my interviews brings these themes to light. Those in the community were called *bareki* (those who bought). The farm was ‘bought, above and below the ground’. ‘We bought it from a Boer, now we don’t know why the Boers wanted it back again.’ ‘Our law said we were not allowed to rent our land to others. Our forefathers, the buyers, said ‘you *must* stay here, you and your children, and your children’s children’. Many, when asked why they would return after having built houses elsewhere, gave this obedience to the injunction of the buyers as their key answer: ‘the word of the deceased must not be undermined’. ‘*Marupi go a boelwa*’ (that which you abandoned will summons you again). ‘The fact that we let out land to tenants/ Ndebeles is what made the government decide to remove us. Because Doornkop had turned into a location; a slum; this gave them an excuse.’ ‘The people who were letting out plots to Ndebeles were lazy, they should have farmed themselves’ rather than having foreigners, non-relatives, come in and do so. These people were ‘greedy for money’ – and this was ultimately the undoing of the place. On the other hand, those opposing this position complained about being condemned for being landlords: for ‘wanting to earn money’.

What underlay this insistence on the ownership of property and its use by its owners rather than by renters? The obvious answer is that the obsession with ‘not letting land to tenants’ was a reaction against negative experiences of tenantry in the first place. What were these, and why was this model of landholding so prevalent?

Trapido in particular directs our attention to the period before the South African war, of the Boer republics: other writers elaborate for the later period. ‘Relations of exploitation and profit-taking were pressed on settlers and African inhabitants’ by mercantile capital. Tenancy of one kind or another – either for rental or for labour – became the only game in town on the Highveld at the time, often with tenants (both white, but especially black) holding the upper hand; at the same time legal frameworks such as the endlessly pursued anti-squatting laws, aimed at abolishing these forms of tenancy, were put in place but were able to be legislated only once that war had ended: it was only after 1910 that landlord/tenant relations got locked in such a way as to favour the landlord. After this, the scene was

set for growing landlessness on one side (on the part of the black tenantry) fostering growing accumulation on the other; and with the increasingly high rents demanded helping to cream off surplus. During the 1930s, state-provided credit began to loosen the stranglehold that commercial credit-providers had previously had on landlords. This depressed prices thus making it much more difficult for black farmers to compete. But even then, with the full backing of the state with its credit provision, subsidies and marketing boards, it took years for a fully-fledged transition to white capitalist agriculture to occur. Morrell's work on the Middelburg district, in the post-war period, takes up the story, documenting the gradual process (beset with problems and divisions between white farmers) through which white capitalist farming became a success – but only for some. They could not agree on how best to get labour, but they did eventually co-operate around the marketing of their produce: these kinds of local procedures were what set the scene for the strongly subsidized farming model that then prevailed for the next 30 or 40 years.

Going back to the period just after the South African war: the scene had been set whereby letting land to tenants was the prevailing modality of land occupation, intersecting often uneasily with frameworks in which chiefs were considered to hold sovereignty over land and land allocation. For the few black groups intent on buying land, one of the only ways to break free of this seemed to be that of land purchase. Trapido shows how many such purchases were made in the name of missionaries; this sometimes involved a community sending its men out to work, selling produce, or in other ways gathering the wherewithal to pay for the purchase.<sup>1</sup> Just as commonly, taking in tenants was a way to pay the mortgage. This was inevitable, given that buying land was often too expensive, as Morrell shows, taking on tenants either helped borrowers pay the mortgage (Cobley and Crankshaw illustrate how this worked in urban areas; Murray in the Free State) or made it possible in other ways to make for viable farming operations. One attempt to buy a farm in the district – Mooifontein - was made by Pixley ka Seme, SANNC president, who had already been renting the farm and letting it out to tenants in a practice known as 'kaffir farming'; officials eventually blocked him from buying the farm, using the Land Act to do so. Indeed, Karis and Carter assert that it was his successful purchase of the farms Driefontein and Daggakraal, near Wakkerstroom, that had been one key factor prompting the passing of the Land Act in the first place (Morrell 1987:fn 89.). The *bareki* who bought Doornkop managed, in contrast, to do it on the sly, dodging all attempts by the then rather unstable Native Affairs Department to prevent or advise them, operating through the intermediary of 'law agents and others', and paying over the odds to an Afrikaner farmer, Joubert, whose heavily indebted position and whose being on the losing side in the war had combined to make his farming enterprise unsustainable.

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<sup>1</sup> Trapido points out that; these – being men of their time - either took advantage of the lack of paperwork to sell the ground out from under its occupiers, or tried to deny their property rights in other ways.

Let me give some details from the historical record. Kgalema Ramaube's followers had been in dispute with Merensky over ownership of the land on which the Botshabelo mission station was situated. According to the Secretary for Native Affairs they had 'disregarded' his advice and instead acted 'on that of lawyers', in taking the case to the Supreme Court. The court ordered that he and his followers be evicted from Botshabelo, effective 31<sup>st</sup> July 1905, and that 'what little property they possessed' be 'seized by the sheriff and sold'. There were court costs still outstanding of over £900, and they had been threatened with 'civil imprisonment' if they failed to pay these costs. Meanwhile, 'Klein Seth', son of Kgalema, again acting on the advice of a 'local law agent', entered into negotiations with Joubert, undertaking that he and his followers would buy the farm for £3500. £1500 was deposited towards the purchase price. The deed of sale entered into by Seth Ramaube stated that the farm was to be bought 'on behalf of himself and his followers', who were named in an attached list. In the same year, given that a recent decision in the case of Tshu had ruled that 'natives could purchase land', Seth applied to the Sub Native Commissioner for permission to buy the farm 'as a location'. The payment was to be made in instalments: as is shown by the log book recording the individual subscriptions contributed by members of the buyer community, so that these instalments could be made.



Both the seller and the buyers demanded that the Government take transfer, in trust, since the buyers' taking transfer individually would incur massive costs of survey and transfer, and thus 'would swallow up the purchase price'. The Minister agreed, but insisted that the Squatters Law would be applied, whereby occupancy would be restricted to five families. The understanding was that the purchase was merely a speculative move and that 'the natives ... would sell as soon as possible'. But when it became clear 'that the natives had no intention of selling the property', the Minister refused to take transfer in trust. Despite the government's 'unfavourable attitude', Seth and his followers tried to arrange 'for transfer to be passed to some 40 or 60 specific persons of definite portions, so as to avoid the Squatters Law'; this would enable about 500 families to settle there. After much further correspondence, 'nothing definite' resulted, and it was reported in 1915 that 'the natives are still on the farm'. At that date, the full price of £3500 had been paid, but since transfer had not yet been settled, the Public Debt Commissioners were unable to redeem the bond that Joubert had originally incurred on the property – of £1000. The danger was that Joubert might go insolvent, the property still registered in his name would be sold to defray expenses and clear the bond, and 'the natives will then lose everything'.<sup>2</sup> There were further problems. Succinctly summarised in an earlier letter, these were as follows:

A piece of ground has been procured for them at a very high figure over which certain servitudes exist which may in time render it impossible for them to reside upon their own property, and are more than likely to bring them into conflict with the European owners of the other portions of the farm, and thus force them indirectly to purchase other such portions at an abnormal price.<sup>3</sup>

It was again proposed that only if the NAD took transfer would this mortgage bond be able to be 'disposed of'. The deadlock was said to be 'the fault of the natives who persisted in carrying through the transaction with Joubert against official advice'; this in turn was put down to the fact that they had a 'sentimental attachment to the neighbourhood'. As it happens, the proposal was not pursued; instead, a title deed *was* finally issued in 1920, authorised by the registrar of deeds, transferring the land to 'Klein Seth Ramauba and the other natives hereinfore described'.

Additional problems noted in this letter proved to be prescient: pointing to sources of conflict that were, albeit in altered form, still dogging Doornkop people some 80 years down the line. They spoke of the fact that 'indiscriminate occupation by outsiders' was occurring. There were conflicts over whether or not to allow such 'outsiders' to plough according to the sharecropper system; with some buyers resolving to allow this at a meeting but others threatening 'to shed blood' if this should

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<sup>2</sup> These points come from a letter from Department of Native Affairs to Minister of Native Affairs, 7 December 1915.

<sup>3</sup> Letter from Sub Native Commissioner, Middelburg, to Secretary for Native Affairs, 15 May 1906.

happen. The danger that certain individuals might take the land and use it for private gain was also a very real one. Not only (as stated by Trapido) had this been done elsewhere by missionaries in order to usurp residents, as had happened at Botshabelo: it was also done here by one resident in order to usurp others. In this case, the chief, Klein Seth, had secretly registered the transfer for a certain portion of the ground in his own name, using it as surety to take out a loan, and then – in order to meet his debts - selling it ‘to two men’, one ‘with the right of grazing over the farm Doornkop’. In outrage, the group in question elected an alternative leader; but unsuccessfully so. By the time of my fieldwork, Seth and his wife and son had been endorsed as the customary leaders in the government’s view – and roundly rejected by the community because of their complicity with the forced removal.

In short, the influence of merchant/traders, unscrupulous law agents, and a developed financial system with no compunction about selling lands in order to recoup debts and mortgage bonds was considerable at this point. What emerges especially is the practice of taking out mortgages to buy property, and of having property attached in order to pay debts. Colin Murray’s work on land purchase in the OFS. *Black Mountain*, shows an extreme version of the vulnerabilities that this could involve. It is my contention that a certain mind-set must have followed; expressing a keen awareness of the nature and potential of property relationships, of the dangers of unpaid debts they might entail on the one hand, but of the equally problematic nature of rental as an alternative: it might serve as a way to help pay the mortgage, but it could bring other problems – of which more later. Awareness of the dangers entailed in entry into an untrammelled property market, exploitation by ‘law agents’ (of the kind well documented by Murray), without the system of paternalistic control (and possible protection) of the Native Affairs Dept, (however much of a double-edged sword this was) must have implanted an ambivalent attitude among the buyers. By the time they drew up a constitution in 1933, it included the insistence that ‘should there be one member of the buyers insolvent, his or her portion of the stand shall not be sold to anybody who is not a legal purchase except to the buyers’; and that no-one ‘who is not a legal purchaser of the farm’ (or a descendant thereof) may ‘dwell or settle’ there.

As time went by, and particularly once the buyers were ‘in exile from the promised land’ the sense of an inviolable ownership had hardened into something particularly forceful; almost ‘set in stone’, as the quotes I showed earlier demonstrate. And yet the archetypal property relation of the time – that between landlord and tenant in its various modalities – had remarkable tenacity ability to endure, not only into the period of Union and Pact governments, but into the apartheid era as well. This ideology of private ownership, and non-allowance of rental, however insistent, had *not* in the end withstood the inexorable pressures: it was in 1970 that a flood of Ndebele tenants flocked onto the farm, leading in turn, according to some, to the black spot removal itself. (It did not end there: when I did my later fieldwork in 2004, numbers of tenants were still being evicted or moving off farms, or moving from farm to farm: many of them settling on the newly-returned Doornkop.) Giving closer attention to the nature of this relationship and its prevalence might make us question our assumptions about the

‘transition to capitalist agriculture’, and might give us a whole new take on Wolpe’s ‘cheap labour’ thesis – one premised not upon the ‘communal/chiefly’ system in the homelands, but upon the landlord-tenant system in white south Africa – in a landscape where the Natives Land Act had yet to be enforced and where enforcement eventually took about 80 years.

These kinds of property relations would certainly have been set in stone because of the massive influence of merchants/traders, and mercantilism in general. When apartheid introduced its own particular and unique version of corporate state-led capitalism, restricting both business opportunities and the chance of taking out credit for black people, credit arrangements diverged strongly, bringing protections (or restrictions, depending on how you viewed it) by introducing a ‘dual economy of credit’. What this meant for Doornkop was that its buyers were neither able any longer to use the land for loan security, but nor were they vulnerable to the risks inherent in that strategy. Instead certain among the residents were able to run a circumscribed ‘tenancy’ scheme: originating years before, it was now built in alongside the system of state capitalism and protectionist policies for farmers, and the system of separated reserves for natives. Doornkop sat uneasily amidst all this, as a strange anomaly.

A related theme that comes through is that of fierce independence: of how being Christian, and property owners, separated people utterly from those round about (while nonetheless driving them into tenancy relations with them).

### **Problematizing class, and privileging individual biography**

To get to my point about dissolving category- and class-based analysis to seek for idiosyncracies and particularities that lie behind this; I will tell you about two different ‘sons of Doornkop’ who could hardly have been more different. One – representing the majority view - was implacably opposed to letting out the land to tenants. The other, acting as a sort of maverick, was not only not opposed to it, but by 2004 was the chief culprit: he was a land seller.

Kalushi William Kalushi, the chair of the Doornkop Management Committee, was a university librarian with a Unisa degree. He identified as a sophisticated townee but with a difference: he felt that having been able to live with his grandparents, and go to primary school, at Doornkop gave him a leg-up, allowing him to escape from the ‘delinquency’ that afflicted the town youth he met when he came to Soweto to attend high school there. He had been born in 1944 in Orlando East, during a time when his parents, both born and raised at Doornkop, were staying with my aunt in Soweto. In 1948 his parents got their own house in White City. His father had sent all the children to do primary schooling in Doornkop ‘to get to know the customs, history, language’. Showing that the historians’ questions about rural ‘accumulation and dispossession’ – and whether or not there was a Prussian path - also needed to take account of more fullblown Marxist theory about factory worker struggles,

Kalushi's style of consciousness and his ideas about resistance were connected to the fact of his urban-based employment. He became active in union politics during his period in the library, but resisted joining COSATU, feeling that their style of unionism was coercive. He and others elected to join NACTU instead, and via this route he came, unlike the vast majority of other Doornkop people who were ANC, to affiliate to the PAC. Because Doornkop was the place that he regarded 'as home', he agreed to take on the mantle of leadership at a time when an older group of leaders, more traditional/patriarchal in style, were retiring from such roles. He was determined that party political affiliation would not come into it (if it had, he'd have been split inexorably from the very people who had asked him to lead them).

When it came to his own children, however, circumstances had changed considerably. He had not followed suit: his mother, having been moved to Denillton during the removals, was not in a position to look after children there. Besides, given that 'black education was falling apart', his children were at a Model C school in the white suburb of Sandringham. He had a feeling that his children were not going to be keen to spend any time in Doornkop, much less go back to live there.

The other biographical sketch, of a man I call Jack Mtsweni in the book and the articles I have published on this, had a very different life. He was born 6 years later, at Doornkop. Although christened and confirmed in the Bapedi Lutheran church, like most others in the *bareki* community, he found himself attracted to the Ndebele tenants with their *koma* (initiation), and decided to become initiated himself. His parents, angry, refused to pay, and disowned him; his initiation was sponsored by a neighbour, who later pleaded with his parents to let him back. He later quit the Bapedi Lutheran Church, joined the ZCC, and travelled to Richards Bay to learn bricklaying and carpentry. When he returned to live in Doornkop, he became one of those who argued that the tenants ought also to be allowed to return. But those opposed to this accuse him of opportunism and of masking his economic interests in ideology.

### **Opportunism**

This introduces a third and final theme: in the 100 year history of DK, there have always been multiple suspicions of those who are 'out to make a fast buck'. These range from the original seller, Joubert, who clearly 'saw them coming' (it backfired though – they managed to muddle through); all the way through the 'lazy' people who sold land to the Ndebele rather than 'ploughing for themselves'; to Mr Mtsweni and others. The white storekeeper, Roswald Linnenkamp, had made a comfortable living from the farm's occupants: when he set himself up as a spokesman, people like Kalushi and other leaders objected to his paternalistic 'I know

the black man's kind of attitude. They were particularly suspicious of the way the attempted return of the community signalled a feeding frenzy for all round about: not only Mr Linnenkamp, but also various government groups, tendering agencies, and private companies. Even where the motives might not have been those of a feeding frenzy, they were assumed to be motivated by greed.

## **Conclusion**

In studies of class and status in South African urban areas, there was an emphasis on Weberian modalities: black people in town attempting to prove their middle class credentials distinguished themselves from others, all the more so as the actual possible differences lessened. In rural studies, there has been less such emphasis, or at least not much after the '*kholwa/non kholwa*' distinctions mentioned by some of the early Natal historians. What present-day people in Doornkop emphasise is distinction above all else. Distinction of themselves from others was what, perhaps, their ancestors sought for when splitting from the missionary Merensky; distinction of themselves from others was certainly what their children and children's children emphasised, at the same time as laying an almost obsessive emphasis on *not* allowing any internal differentiations to split them from each other. If we look into this Weberian discourse of distinction, and connect it with the quasi-religious idea about Doornkop's 'children'—like those of other 'black spots'—as being like Israelites returning to the promised land, perhaps we use these to add some nuance to the prevalently Marxist tone of these earlier studies.

## **Bibliography (to follow)**