

Elizabeth Rankin and Rolf Michael Schneider
From Memory to Marble



Gerard Moerdyk. Voortrekker Monument, Hall of Heroes. 2012 (courtesy of VTM; photo Russell Scott)

Elizabeth Rankin and Rolf Michael Schneider

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The historical frieze of the Voortrekker Monument

Part II: The Scenes

DE GRUYTER



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(courtesy of VTM; photo Russell Scott)

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For Angela and Peter

From Memory to Marble is an open access monograph in the true sense of the word. Both volumes of the digital version of the book are available in full and free of charge from the date of publication. This approach to publishing democratises access to the latest scholarly publications across the globe. At the same time, a book such as *From Memory to Marble*, with its unique and exquisite photographs of the frieze as well as its wealth of reproduced archival materials, demands reception of a more traditional kind, that is, on the printed page. For this reason, the book is likewise available in print as two separate volumes. The printed and digital books should not be seen as separate incarnations; each brings its own advantages, working together to extend the reach and utility of *From Memory to Marble* to a range of interested readers.

François van Schalkwyk
African Minds

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To undertake the complex research required to investigate the history and making of the Voortrekker Monument frieze, and the events and memories of the nineteenth century that underpinned it, would not have been possible without the help of numerous individuals, too many to name here. Our sincere thanks for individual assistance is recorded in our footnotes at the relevant places, and here we hope only to record our gratitude to those whose assistance was exceptional and ongoing.

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In our research we have read the memories of Voortrekkers from which their history was shaped, but also tapped the memories of living witnesses of the Voortrekker Monument programme. Werner Kirchhoff in Johannesburg recounted his boyhood experiences of the making of the frieze and gave access to the material and photographs related to the work of his father, Peter Kirchhoff, assembled by himself and his wife Anna-Maria. Martso Strydom in Centurion Park shared her recollections of modelling for the frieze, and the late Danie de Jager in Meyerton vividly recalled his own and his stepfather's work as a builder at the Monument and in the installation of the frieze. The Romanelli family, the sculptor Raffaello and his sister Rubina Romanelli, welcomed us to their studio in Florence where the frieze had been carved, and later to the family home. In Florence we also enjoyed contact with Rossella Campana and Paolo de Anna, who have undertaken research on sculpture studios there and in South Africa. Family of Gerard Moerdyk were also helpful, especially Dorette and Gerhard Vermeulen in Pretoria, and Elke Vermeulen in New Zealand.

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The production and publishing of such an unusual study of a monumental frieze, illustrated with many hundreds of photographs, is a costly undertaking, especially when it is also made accessible online, free of charge. We wish to express our profound gratitude for a publishing grant from the Gerda Henkel Foundation, Düsseldorf. Without its outstanding support, this publication would not have been possible.

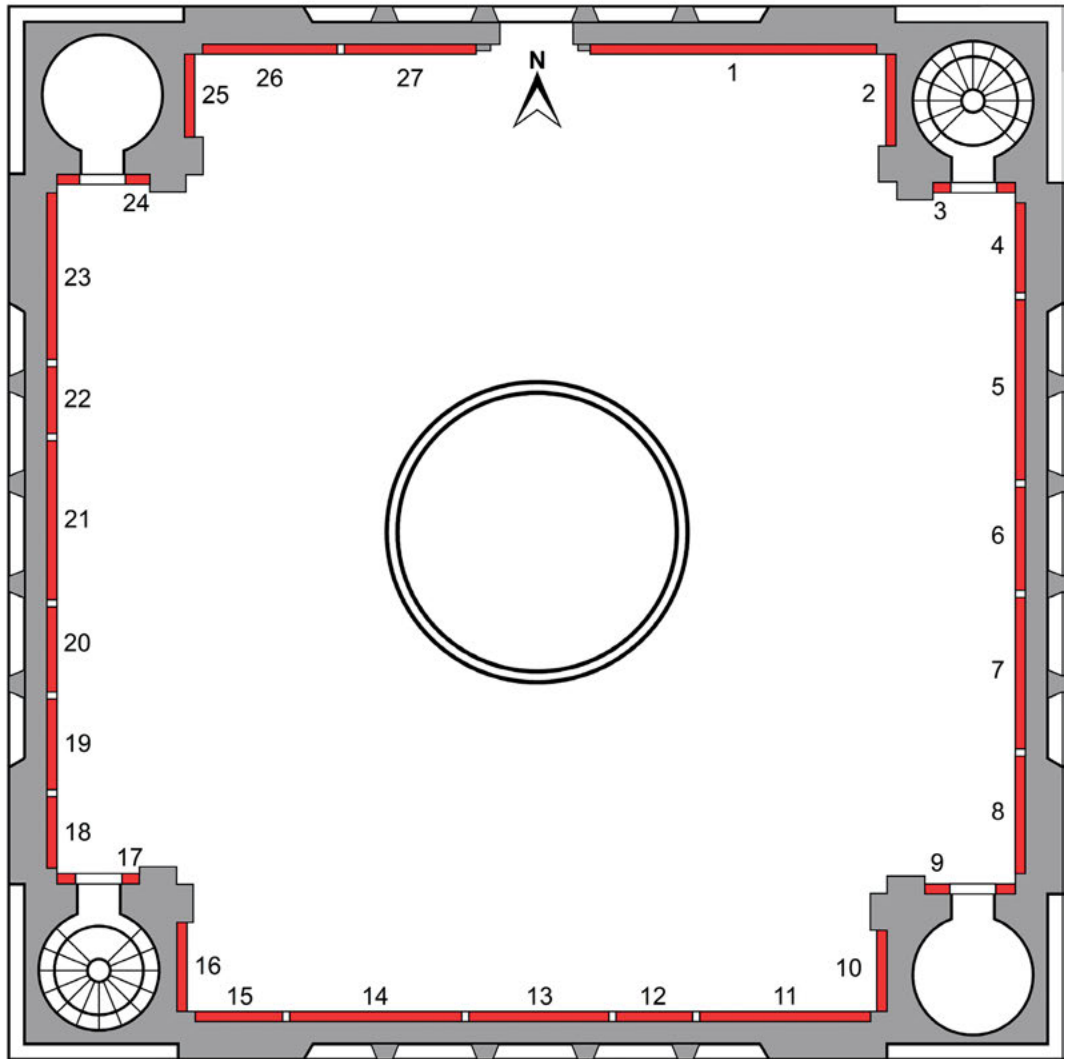
And last, but certainly not least, we thank our families for their patience and unwavering support on our long research journey.

Abbreviations of key archives, documents, names

Akademie	Zuid-Afrikaanse Akademie voor Taal, Letteren en Kunst (South African Academy for Language, Literature and Art)
ANC	African National Congress
ARCA	Archive for Contemporary Affairs, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein
ATKV	Afrikaanse Taal en Kultuurvereniging (Afrikaans Language and Culture Association)
AWB	Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (Afrikaner resistance movement)
Broederbond	Afrikaner Broederbond (Afrikaner Brotherhood)
Dagbestuur	Dagbestuurkomitee (Executive or Management Committee), SVK. Minutes and documents cited are from NARSSA, A141 vols 1–2, unless otherwise referenced
DNMCH	Ditsong National Museum of Cultural History, Pretoria
FAK	Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigings (Federation of Afrikaner Cultural Organisations)
Foldout	Foldout at the end of the book showing the entire frieze as installed in the Hall of Heroes
HF Archives ATP	Heritage Foundation Archives at VTM, Pretoria: Plans and Drawings Collection
HF Archives F	Heritage Foundation Archives at VTM, Pretoria: Photographic Collection
HF Archives HF	Heritage Foundation Archives at VTM, Pretoria: Heritage Foundation Collection
HF Archives VTM	Heritage Foundation Archives at VTM, Pretoria: Voortrekker Monument Collection (subsections include SVK for Sentrale Volksmonumente Komitee papers; BHR for Beheerraad, Board of Control)
Jansen Memorandum	Memorandum from SVK chair Jansen to Minister of Interior about the site and the design of the Voortrekker Monument, including a list of twenty-four scenes for the frieze. NARSSA, BNS 146/73/2, 19.1.1937
Kirchhoff files	Kirchhoff family files, Johannesburg
Moerdyk Layout	Gerard Moerdyk's first layout of the frieze with thirty-one panels. ARCA PV94 1/75/1/8 (Jansen). Undated, but datable between SVK 5.10.1936 and SVK 15.1.1937
uMsunduzi Museum Collection	uMsunduzi Museum Collection (incorporating the Voortrekker Complex), Pietermaritzburg
Museum Africa	Museum Africa (1933–94 'Africana Museum'), Johannesburg
NA Den Haag	Nationaal Archief, The Hague
NA Kew	The National Archives of the United Kingdom, Kew
NARSSA	National Archives and Records Service of South Africa, Pretoria
NARSSA Cape Town	National Archives and Records Service of South Africa, Cape Town
NHKA	Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk in Afrika Argief (Dutch Reformed Church in Africa Archive), Pretoria
<i>Official Guide</i>	<i>The Voortrekker Monument, Official Guide, 1955–76</i> (see Bibliography)
OVS/OFS	Oranje-Vrijstaat (Orange Free State)
Panele	Panels. ARCA PV94 1/75/1/9 (Jansen). Undated proposal of fourteen themes for historical reliefs, c. 1934–36
Romanelli files	Romanelli family files, Florence (Italy)
SUN Africana	Stellenbosch University, Special Collections, Africana
SVK	Sentrale Volksmonumentekomitee (Central People's Monuments Committee). Minutes and documents cited for the SVK and its subcommittees (listed below) are from NARSSA, A141, vols 1–2, unless otherwise referenced
Boukomitee	Building Committee, SVK
Dagbestuur	Dagbestuurkomitee (Executive/Management Committee), SVK
Historiese Komitee	Historical Committee, SVK
Paneelkomitee	Panel Committee, SVK
Vormkomitee	Form Committee, SVK

UCT	University of Cape Town
UCT Thompson	UCT Libraries, Special Collections, BC 643 Joyce Newton Thompson Collection (http://atom.lib.uct.ac.za/index.php/joyce-newton-thompson-collection)
Unisa Archives	University of South Africa, Department of Library Services, Pretoria
UP Archives	University of Pretoria Archives, Art Archives and Gerard Moerdyk Collection
Van Schaik album	Unisa Archives, J.L. van Schaik Publishers, Photographic album 1949, Voortrekker Monument inauguration
Voorstelle	Voorstelle van tonele uit die tyd van die Voortrek wat geskik geag word vir half- en hoogverhewe beeldwerk op the Voortrekkermonument (Suggestions of scenes from the time of the Trek considered appropriate for bas and high relief work on the Voortrekker Monument). NARSSA, 140/3/14 (Engelenburg), pp.112–113; ARCA PV94 1/75/1/9 (Jansen). Undated, probably attachment of SVK 5.12.1934
VTM	Voortrekker Monument Heritage Site, Pretoria
VTM Museum	Voortrekker Monument Heritage Site, Pretoria: Voortrekker Monument Museum collection
Wenke	Wenke i.v.m. historiewe [sic] tonele vir die Voortrekkermonument (Suggestions in relation to historical scenes for the Voortrekker Monument). ARCA PV94 1/75/1/9 (Jansen). Undated list of suggestions from individuals for historical reliefs, c. 1934–36
ZAR	Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (South African Republic; nineteenth century)

Part II: **The Scenes**



- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Departure | 15 Teresa Viglione |
| 2 Presentation | 16 Dirkie Uys |
| 3 Soutpansberg | 17 Marthinus Oosthuizen |
| 4 Delagoa Bay | 18 Women spur men on |
| 5 Vegkop | 19 Arrival |
| 6 Inauguration | 20 The Vow |
| 7 Kapain | 21 Blood River |
| 8 Negotiation | 22 Church of the Vow |
| 9 Blydevooruitsig | 23 Saailaer |
| 10 Debora Retief | 24 Mpande |
| 11 Descent | 25 Death of Dingane |
| 12 Treaty | 26 Return |
| 13 Murder of Retief | 27 Convention |
| 14 Bloukrans | |

Figure 0.1: Hall of Heroes, order of scenes (drawing Tobias Bitterer)

Introduction

As explained in Part I of our book, the richness and diversity of the material we uncovered about the Voortrekker Monument and its frieze led to our decision to divide our study into two parts. While the first, Part I, addresses the background, the process and the interpretation of the historical marble frieze, we decided that each of its twenty-seven scenes required individual treatment. Part II thus offers a series of detailed studies, analysing each narrative in its own right.

Each scene is introduced with its full title – the short version we have used throughout our text singled out in italics – followed by the historical date or period of the portrayed incident in brackets. In each case, we have first processed documentary material to provide tabular information about the stages of production for the particular scene, complemented by thumbnail photographs, where the sequence can be seen at a glance. Early archival references are also provided. For convenience and clarity, we have followed a standard layout for each scene, which is set out in a table overleaf (fig. 0.2).

The next section for each scene provides a ‘Description’, coupled with a photograph, intended to hone our looking at both the composition and the details of the depiction. It offers the reader an initial orientation to overcome the erratic perception of the eye which may pick out only focal points or random particulars. This is followed by an analysis of the ‘Development of the Design’ through its different stages for each scene – all of them illustrated – from sketch (A1–3), to one-third-scale maquette in clay then plaster (B2), to full-scale clay and plaster (C1–3), and ultimately to marble (D). For a number of scenes we were fortunate to find earlier representations of incidents they portray that throw light on the process of shaping the frieze or its interpretation.

In the last and most complex section, ‘Reading the Narrative’, the historical background of individual scenes is investigated, to try to understand when and how records were made and chronicled, finally tying the often conflicting micro-histories back to the choices that formed the images in the frieze. The attention given to ‘Scenes’ has resulted in what often are very long texts for single panels. Since an in-depth analysis had not previously been attempted, it was necessary to consider relevant aspects in full in each case. This approach has helped us to crystallise crucial aspects of the inherent authority of the visual narratives, and to tackle the iconographic strategies and ideologies of the scenes both within and beyond the contingency of written history.

Essential for our discussions are the photographs of the surviving material related to each scene, which we have numbered separately in each case, with the scene number as a prefix (e.g. fig. 1.1 for the first image in *Departure*). The maquettes and the marble frieze were expressly photographed by Russell Scott for our research for this publication, the frieze under special lighting conditions facilitated by after-hours access to the Monument for a night shoot, discussed in the Introduction to Part I. Photographs of the full-scale clay reliefs, from which the plaster replicas were taken for sending to Italy to be carved, were made by Alan Yates (Pretoria) as each scene was completed in the 1940s. Since these no longer survive as a set, they have been acquired from various archives and sometimes reproductions in books (such as Pillman 1984) that may today be the best surviving source. Whereas Museum Africa Johannesburg provided the photographs of the Coetzer drawings, the authors took those of the Gestetner reproductions in the Jansen file of ARCA Bloemfontein. Whenever it was available, we have supplemented each scene with relevant maps and comparative material, and the outline diagrams made by Hennie Potgieter that identify many of the models used for the full-scale reliefs (some names referred to by the familiar but respectful Afrikaans ‘oom’ [uncle] or ‘tannie’ [aunt]). We have gone out of our way to ensure that images are of high quality although, despite our best efforts, in a few cases only low-resolution reproductions were available.

Scene number and short title

Position in Hall of Heroes (panel number out of total of thirty-one; also marked on the groundplan)

Dimensions

Condition

Name of sculptor of the initial clay maquette B1

STAGES OF PRODUCTION

This is the comprehensive list of the different stages followed in the production of the twenty-seven scenes discussed in Part I, Chapter 3; not all have survived in each case. We reference the archive, collection or museum in the caption of each illustration.

A1 W.H. Coetzer, initial pencil drawing (April–June 1937)

A2 Reproduction of A1 with a Gestetner machine (June 1937)

A3 W.H. Coetzer, revised or new pencil drawing, dimensions [image size] (after September 1937)

Annotations

A4 W.H. Coetzer, monochrome oil on hardboard, dimensions (late 1937–38)

No known sketches by the sculptors survive so this stage cannot be documented (1942)

B1 One-third-scale clay maquette, not extant but replicated* in B2, dimensions (1942–43)

B2 One-third-scale plaster maquette, dimensions (1942–43)

If more than one version:

a. Rejected one-third-scale plaster maquette, dimensions (1942–43)

b. Modified one-third-scale plaster maquette, dimensions (1942–47)

C1 Full-scale wooden armature for C2, not extant but occasionally photographed (1943–47)

C2 Full-scale clay relief, not extant but photographed and replicated* in C3 (1943–47)

If more than one version:

a. Initial full-scale clay relief

b. Modified full-scale clay relief

C3 Full-scale plaster relief (1943–47), not extant but sometimes illustrated, and copied* in D

D Marble, carved in Italy (corner panels late 1947–49; other panels 1948–50);

installed in the Monument (1949–50)

**We have used the term 'replicated' to signify the process of casting a replica of a clay model, but 'copied' for the sculpting of the plaster relief into marble, which depends on measurements but is ultimately free-hand. The dates supplied for the different stages are inclusive. Where external sources such as reports and photographs – like those in Die Vaderland 26.4.1945 (Part I, p.244 fig. 183) – provide clues, we offer more specific dates for individual scenes. But as the precise sequence of modelling and later carving of the scenes cannot be established with any certainty, we can often only provide the approximate period within which the work was undertaken.*

EARLY RECORDS

This is a listing of references in key formative documents, which are discussed in general in Part I, Chapter 2 (see table in fig. 69). The acronyms for archival references are explained in 'Abbreviations'.

SVK minutes (date) – item number (quoted in 'Developing the design')

Voorstelle (5.12.1934?) – item number and text (Part I fig. 70)

Panele (c. Dec 1934–36) – item number and text

Wenke (c. 1934–36) – item number and text

Moerdyk Layout (5.10.1936–15.1.1937) – scene number/panel number and caption (Part I fig. 90)

Jansen Memorandum (19.1.1937) – item number and text taken from English version (Part I fig. 92)

Figure 0.2: Table explaining standard documentation of scenes (the authors)

Adjacent to the Monument's ground plan, the foldout at the back of each volume offers an indispensable view of the continuous frieze and the location and context for all the scenes, but we have provided throughout the text as large an image of each one as space allows, as well as the preparatory studies for it. They are thus not reproduced in relation to the actual scale of what they portray but rather to present as much detail as possible to satisfy viewers' curiosity and enhance their visual experience. We acknowledge the agency of images as objects of related realities, both their physical and their visual presence, and their interpretation of the reality they represent.

1 *Departure from the Cape (1835–37)*

A2



A3



B2b i/ii



C2



D



1 Departure

North wall, east of entrance (panels 1–2/31)

h. 2.3 × w. 7.11 m (left panel: 3.8 m; right panel: 3.31 m)

Restored fractures on the vertical edges between the two panels

Sculptor of clay maquettes: Peter Kirchoff

STAGES OF PRODUCTION

A1 W.H. Coetzer, pencil drawing, retained only in A2 (April–June 1937)

A2 Reproduction of A1 (June 1937)

A3 W.H. Coetzer, revised pencil drawing A1, h. 13.3 × w. 61.2 cm (after September 1937)

Annotations: 'Spandau Kop Graaf Reinett' (Spandau Kop Graaff-Reinet) / 'Engelse betaal uit' (English pay out) / 'Trekkeers pak op en verlaat sierlike wonings en boords' (Trekkeers pack and leave attractive houses and orchards) / 'Stillewe groep in voorgrond Boeks, vysel Kers vorms Kandelaar strykster almanac' (Still life group in foreground Books, jack, Candle mould, Candlestick, iron, almanac) / 'Uittog uit Kaapland' (Departure from the Cape) / 'uittog' (departure) / 'Voorgrond. viool, consertine, Blasbalk, reghoek, Broodpan. (snuet eister, aambeeld, Trek saag)' (Foreground. violin, concertina, Bellows, set square, Bread pan, ['snout' iron, anvil, 'pull' saw]) / 'Agergrond. Tafelberge Tarka district' (Background. Table mountains Tarka district)

A4 W.H. Coetzer, *Die Uittog van die Voortrekkers uit Kaapland* (The Departure of the Voortrekkers from the Cape). Monochrome oil on board, h. 26.7 × w. 121.9 cm (late 1937–38?)

B1 Three one-third-scale clay maquettes, not extant but replicated in B2a and b (1942–43)

B2 a. Rejected one-third-scale plaster maquette, 'Vendusie' (1942–43); h. 78 × w. 89.7 × d. 8.2 cm

b. Two one-third-scale plaster maquettes (1942–43)

(i) Left part of scene, h. 77.2 × w. 125 × d. 8.2 cm

(ii) Right part of scene, h. 76.5 × w. 125 × d. 7.5 cm

C1 Full-scale wooden armature, not extant (1943)

C2 Full-scale clay relief, not extant but photographed in two versions; replicated in C3 (1943)

a. Work in progress, Spandaukop with single outcrop (1943)

b. Completed, Spandaukop with double outcrop (1943)

C3 Full-scale plaster relief of C2b (1943), not extant but illustrated (*Die Vaderland*, 26.2.1945); copied in D (1948–50)

D Marble as installed in the Monument (1950)

EARLY RECORDS

SVK minutes (21.9.1935) — item 9b 'Uittrek' (Departure); 4.9.1937 / item 4a (see below, 'Developing the design')

Panele (c. Dec 1934–36) — item 1 'Die uittog uit die Kaapland / Boerewoning, waens, los vee, perderuiters vasberadenheid moet die kenmerk wees' (Departure from the Cape / Boer houses, wagons, free livestock, horsemen must be characterised by determination)

Wenke (c. 1934–36) — item VI. SEN. F.S. MALAN, 3 'Die eerste toneel: Tipiese Voortrekkersgesin neem afskeid van woonplaas in Kaapland' (The first scene: Typical Voortrekker family takes leave of their farm in the Cape)

Moerdyk Layout (5.10.1936–15.1.1937) — scene 1 on panels 1–4/31 'Uittog' (Departure)

Jansen Memorandum (19.1.1937) — item 71 'The exodus from the Cape, reflecting at the same time something of the conditions of life there'

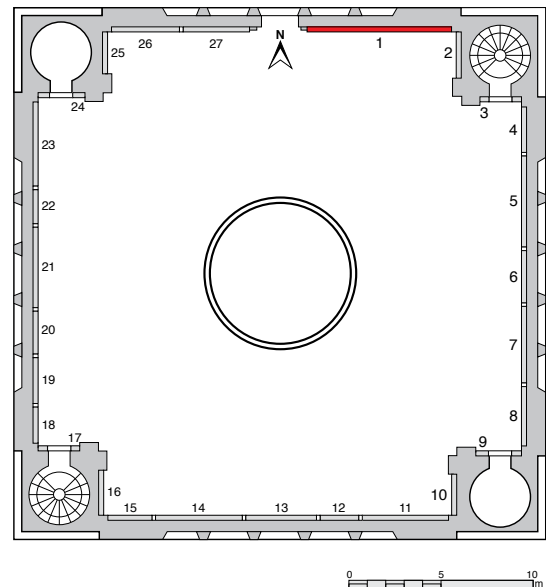




Figure 1.1: D. *Departure*. 1950. Marble, 2.3 × 7.11 m (courtesy of VTM; photo Russell Scott)

Description

Six men – four in jackets and brimmed hats, and two armed with muzzleloaders – and three women in impeccable dress are preparing to depart, yet are curiously still (fig. 1.1). Although the figures are standing, packing or waiting, there seems an intention to move to the right; only two people in the lower foreground face in the other direction. Impressive flocks mustered in orderly lines, accompanied by a shepherdess, are ready to move to the right, goats mingling with young and full-grown merino sheep. In the background are oxen: three pairs are already hitched up to the first of the two ox wagons, also waiting to start out in the same direction. Visible on the right is a small section of a rope that must be attached to a fourth pair of oxen beyond the format of the relief, their absence suggesting that the advance has already begun.

Ready to go also is the woman sitting at the front of the leading wagon and the Voortrekker next to her who skilfully swings his long leather whip. Further to the right a Voortrekker, his muzzleloader over his shoulder, is mounted on a horse that moves forward sedately, accompanied by a dog. The topic is evident: it is a departure, clearly not a brief sojourn as chattels, arms and livestock are included. Many possessions are not yet packed, so that they can be arranged to catch the viewer's eye. At the left of the relief, in front of a tall man holding a muzzleloader and a powder horn, a kneeling woman tranquilly packs personal items into a little chest – scales, a pair of candle-sticks and a small round container. Behind her, household goods are set up on a table – a mould for making candles, a teapot, mortar and pestle, and a flat iron placed on a thick fringed rug. Further back to her left, a sturdy riempie stool supports two muzzleloaders and powder horns, and beyond that two men load goods onto a second ox wagon, the one in shirt sleeves carrying a heavy sack. More goods occupy the right foreground – a guitar, a concertina, the tops of three bulging sacks, and a three-legged pot, as well as bellows lying in a large container for making bread. At the right of the relief, next to an early form of a jack for wheel removal, a man, also without a jacket, strains to tie up a big bundle; he must be standing with his left leg on a lower level though it is obscured.

The scene is staged in a recognisable landscape. The mountain on the left marks the peculiar double 'koppies' of Spandaukop near Graaff-Reinet, a town in the Eastern Cape founded by the Dutch East India Company (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie) in 1786.¹ Annotations on Coetzer's revised drawing for the scene (A3) tell us that the larger 'table' mountains on the right are from the Tarka district, which lies some two-hundred kilometres east of Graaff-Reinet.² There are numerous little plants on the ground, generic in form, although some could represent *Boophane disticha* or *Brunsvigia* sp., based on the distichous leaf arrangement of the former (e.g. below the horse's hind leg) and the broader leaf of the latter (e.g. to the right of the hind leg).³

¹ For Graaff-Reinet, see Henning 1975; Visagie 2011, 17.

² See Coetzer 1947, 29.

³ We are grateful to botanist Neil Crouch for his input, and to Philippa Hobbs who approached him on our behalf.



Figure 1.2: A2. W.H. Coetzer. Reproduction of first sketch for *Departure*. June 1937 (courtesy of ARCA PV94 1/75/5/1; photo the authors)

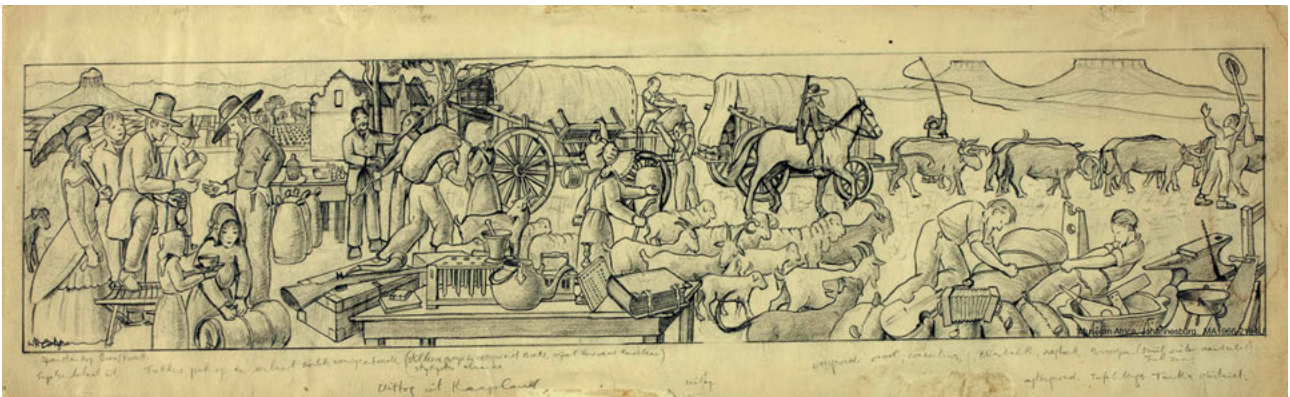


Figure 1.3: A3. W.H. Coetzer. 'Uittog uit Kaapland'. After September 1937. Pencil, 13.3 × 61.2 cm. Revised first sketch (photo courtesy of Museum Africa, no. 66/2194U)



Figure 1.4: A4. W.H. Coetzer. *Die uittog van die Voortrekkers uit Kaapland*. Late 1937-38? Monochrome oil on board, 26.7 × 121.9 cm (courtesy of DNCH, Art Collection, presently on loan to VTM Museum; photo Riana Mulder)

Developing the design

Coetzer's first drawing of *Departure*, retained only in the reproduction (fig. 1.2), is packed with people, animals, furniture, household goods, weapons and landscape, with a number of ox wagons departing or about to depart, all contributing to the main theme. It captures the preparations for the treks, the profusion of detail possible because of the very long format, intended to stretch across four eight-foot marble panels according to the Moerdyk layout (see fig. 88, Part I); finally, however, 23.3 feet (7.11 metres) in length. It was a subject where the SVK's concern about authentic detail could be exercised to the full, and on 4 September 1937 the Historiese Komitee made many demands of the artist, and set out their requests much more fully than in later cases.

The departure from the colony. The house must be more clearly shown; the fields must be shown as blocks so that people can understand what it stands for; an orchard must be shown near the house; the Englishman must pay with metal coins; the second auctioneer must be removed and replaced with a farewell scene of a boer with a whip over his shoulder shaking hands with a friend; a woman must turn around sadly; on the table books including a state bible and a book of psalms and the statute book v d Linde [sic]⁴ must be shown; it is flint guns; the man at the wagon must load a riempie-mattress bed; the equipment must include a 'buspen' [a linchpin; see fig. 1.11],⁵ swing hook, saw, drill and anvil; the chest's attachments as well as the wagonchest's hinges must be clearly visible; the pot must be a flat bread pan.⁶

When Coetzer revised his first drawing, he carefully modified many details to respond to these requests, probably more than in any other of his sketches, except *Soutpansberg*, where he completely redrew the image. Many features of the original design of his initial drawing (fig. 1.2) are still faintly visible in its revised version (fig. 1.3). Here he notably replaced the auction group in the left middle ground to allow for the introduction of a prosperous Cape Dutch farmstead and the cultivated fields surrounding it, and also eliminated other details such as the dog on the left and the African woman carrying a baby on her back disappearing into the distance behind it. But generally he retained the overall composition, and concentrated rather on correcting details, such as amending, replacing or adding the many Voortrekker items making up the still life that is depicted across the foreground.⁷ Drawing closely on this sketch (fig. 1.3), Coetzer developed a less packed and more ordered version of *Departure* in a monochrome, which he probably painted for the centenary of the Battle of Blood River on 16 December 1938 (fig. 1.4).⁸ In all his versions he kept the sense of general drama and the buzzing activity of such an event. It is significant for the complex process of shaping the narrative that almost none of the many alterations demanded by the SVK were to become part of the clay reliefs, let alone the final marble.

⁴ For Van der Linden's book, see *Inauguration*.

⁵ We gratefully acknowledge Zirk van den Berg's help in translating this technical term, confirmed by Philip Willemse: often referred to as a 'platluns' or bent linchpin, it prevented the wagon wheel from sliding off its axle. An object corresponding to it is seen on the right of Coetzer's revised sketch in front of the anvil.

⁶ 'Die uittog uit die kolonie. Die woonhuis moet duideliker aangedui word; die landerye moet met blokkies aangedui word sodat mens kan begryp waarvoor dit staan; by die woonhuis moet 'n boord aangedui word; die Engelsman moet die Boer met klinkende munt betaal; die tweede vandisie-afslaer [sic] moet uitgehaal word, en 'n afskeidstoneel van 'n Boer met 'n sweep oor die skouer wat sy vriend 'n handdruk gee, moet dit vervang; 'n vrou moet bedroef omdraai; op die tafel moet boeke o.a. 'n Statebybel, en 'n psalmboek en die wetboek van v.d. Linde vertoon word; dis vuursteen-gewere; die man by die wa moet 'n riempiematrasbank op die wa laai; onder die gereedskap moet daar 'n buspen, swaaihaak, treksaag, draaiboer en aambeeld vertoon word; die kis se beslag sowel as die wakis se skarniere moet duidelik sigbaar wees; die pot moet 'n plat broodpot wees' (Historiese Komitee 4.9.1937: 4a).

⁷ The monochrome oil painting of this scene (B3), today in the Voortrekker Monument Museum, corresponds in the left side of its composition to this second version of *Departure*, but is modified on the right to include a gesturing woman with a child and a Voortrekker with a wagon wheel.

⁸ Coetzer 1947, 28–29.



Figure 1.5: B2b. Peter Kirchoff. *Departure*. 1942–43. Plaster, 77.2 × 125 × 8.2 cm; 76.5 × 125 × 7.5 cm. Maquettes (courtesy of VTM Museum VTM 2184/1–28; photo Russell Scott)



Figure 1.6: B2a. Peter Kirchoff. *Vendusie*. 1942–43. Plaster, 78 × 89.7 × 8.2 cm. Rejected maquette with detail of fig. 1.3 on which it was based (courtesy of VTM Museum VTM 2184/1–28; photo Russell Scott)



Figure 1.7: C2a. *Departure*. 1943. Clay. Full-scale relief (courtesy of HF Archives F 39.10.7 k, detail of fig. 1.8; photo Alan Yates)

The major shift to the final depiction of the departure of the Voortrekkers happened when Peter Kirchhoff started to change Coetzer's drawings. While no sketches by Kirchhoff survive, his composition for *Departure* appears in his maquettes (fig. 1.5), made as two clay reliefs for the left- and right-hand sections, then replicated in plaster. Their comparison with Coetzer's designs reveals how substantially the narrative shifted, from the dynamics of the lively hustle and bustle in the drawing to an ordered representation in the relief sculpture. The most obvious change was in the omission of the iconic Cape Dutch gabled farmhouse and the more developed rectangular fields and orchard in the background, requested by the committee, as well as the Englishman who makes a purchase from a Boer (figs 1.2, 1.3). They had served to show the prosperity that the Voortrekkers were willing to forgo in seeking their ideal.⁹ The scene of the purchase was developed as an independent maquette (fig. 1.6), however, with an auctioneer beyond as in Coetzer's first sketch; referred to as 'Vendusie' (auction), it was initially planned to continue the theme of the Voortrekker exodus on the short wall next to the longer *Departure* relief on the north wall. After it was cast into plaster in 1942, it was set up in this position along with the other maquettes in Harmony Hall, probably early in the new year, as can be seen to the left of the big clay panel of *Departure* in a 1943 photograph (fig. 1.8). But in the course of the rearrangement of the panel topics on the Monument's east wall, 'Vendusie' was finally rejected.¹⁰ This also led to the loss of the African woman with a baby on her back depicted on the far left, the only depiction of a black female servant in the known early designs. A man in a pointed hat, perhaps a Cape Malay, had already been abandoned in the maquette.

In general the clay maquettes of *Departure* retained most of the basic pictorial elements of the major part of Coetzer's sketch – people, ox wagons, livestock, goods and landscape. Yet while the broad treatment of the topic was much the same, Kirchhoff simplified it, particularly in reducing the objects and 'still life' groups in the foreground. He brought the figures, the animals and the wagons forward, making them larger in scale in relation to the overall proportions of the scene, and arranging them more formally in a way better suited to relief sculpture than Coetzer's more pictorial rendering. In creating a unified composition that unfolds in a sedate manner parallel to the picture plane, Kirchhoff endowed the scene with greater dignity.

⁹ Cloete (1899, 87) records that the 'beginning of the year 1836 was marked by all the farms of those intending emigrants getting into the market. They were readily bought up by numerous speculators at Graham's Town, Somerset, and adjoining places for ridiculously low prices ...'; see also Thom 1947, 80–83.

¹⁰ Letter from Peter Kirchhoff to SVK chair, 27.9.1946; see Part I, Chapter 3 ('Harmony Hall'). Changes to the frieze layout took place in and after 1943, judging by a photograph of Harmony Hall (fig. 1.8), incorrectly dated 1942 in Part I (p.176 fig. 114).

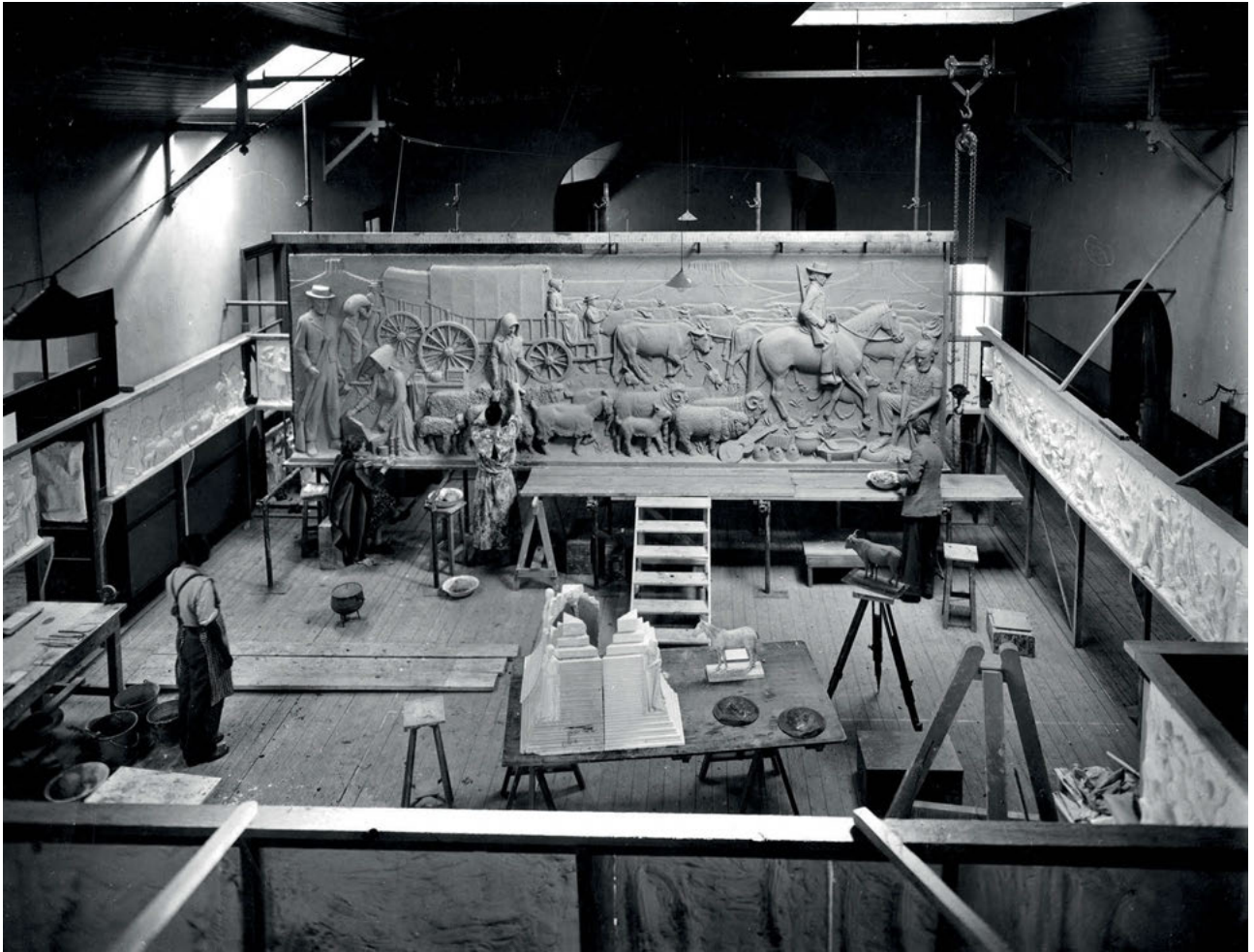


Figure 1.8: Interior of Harmony Hall, Pretoria. Sculptors at work on *Departure*, 1943 (courtesy of HF Archives F 39.10.7 k; photo Alan Yates)



Figure 1.9: C2b. *Departure*. 1943. Clay. Revised full-scale clay relief (courtesy of Kirchhoff files; photo Alan Yates)

While the main features of the maquette were retained, this quality evolved even more strongly when Kirchhoff, with the other three sculptors, created the full-scale clay panel (fig. 1.7). The work in progress is recorded in a few photographs with the sculptors posing in front of or busy modelling the panel, the only records of the full scene of the sculptors' workshop in Harmony Hall (fig. 1.8), invaluable for understanding the process of production. As discussed in Part I,¹¹ it was probably no coincidence that Kirchhoff's big clay panel was tackled first: apart from its being first in the narrative sequence, it must have acted as a prototype to test the technical and artistic challenges linked to such an ambitious project. This panel also had the advantage of being a single unified scene, so that there were no difficulties to be resolved in terms of the relationship to adjacent scenes. Nonetheless, transforming a maquette to the final scale was a task which required specialised skill and practice. As the first completed big clay panel of the frieze, *Departure* must be the one mentioned in the SVK minutes of September 1943: 'One panel is completely finished and another nearly ready.'¹²

The surviving photographs of the large clay panel provide interesting evidence of modifications being made as the sculptors worked on it. In the photographs of work in progress, Spandaukop on the left has a single outcrop at its summit (fig. 1.7), corresponding to the depiction in Coetzer's drawing and the maquette. But in the photograph of the completed clay panel, a double-headed image of the mountain is shown, an even more distinctive profile seen from a different viewpoint in the landscape near Graaff-Reinet (fig. 1.9). We can only guess who might have brought this to the sculptors' attention, but it suggests the ongoing input from committee members during the production of the frieze. It is the form that was carried through to the marble relief. The final marble relief differs from the full-scale clay only in details, such as the slightly changed position of the horse's lifted foreleg, the now full swing of the whip in the background, and the subtly modified stances, poses and movements of people and livestock, small refinements that add to the formality of the scene. Like other scenes which did not arrive in time, *Departure*'s two marble panels were installed only after the inauguration of the Monument on 16 December 1849, discussed in Part I.¹³

¹¹ Chapter 3 ('The full-scale frieze').

¹² 'Een paneel is heeltemal klaar, en 'n volgende is byna gereed' (30.9.1843: 6).

¹³ Chapter 3 ('Homecoming'). That the scene was missing can be seen in fig. 216 in Part I.

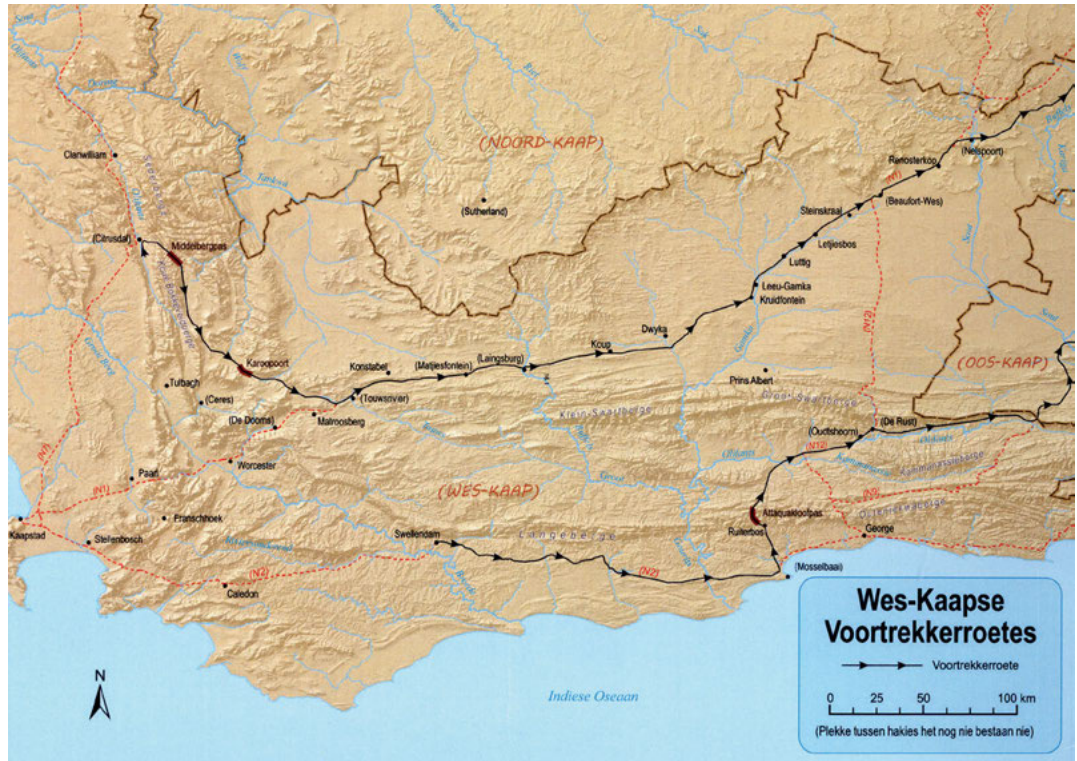


Figure 1.10a: Routes of treks in the Western Cape. 1835–37 (courtesy of Visagie 2014, foldout opp. p.22)



Figure 1.10b: Routes of treks in the Eastern Cape. 1835–37 (courtesy of Visagie 2014, foldout opp. p.16)

Reading the narrative

In picturing the area around Graaff-Reinet together with the Tarka district, this scene condenses the wider territory of the Eastern and Western Cape from where the treks started to the north (figs 1.10 a–c).¹⁴ As such a diversity of places, people and actions cannot be presented straightforwardly in a relief sculpture, the narrative has been transformed into a model of departure characterised by both anecdotal and symbolic representation. Although unified, no single Trek is represented here. The scene is populated by generic Voortrekkers rather than depictions of one or other Trek leader and his followers. As would be the case with the huge unknown Voortrekker on the fourth corner of the Monument, which stood for the Boers in general and leaders who were not celebrated in the other colossi of Retief, Potgieter and Pretorius, this scene serves to encompass the achievements of all. It forms the prolegomena to the more specific stories recounted in many of the succeeding panels of the frieze.

The demand for historical accuracy, emphasised throughout the SVK minutes, and later reiterated in the *Official Guide*, was met by painstaking depictions of a panoply of Voortrekker dress, weapons, animals, goods and ox wagons, as well as specific landscapes, to which the subject lent itself perfectly.¹⁵ The items were portrayed in accord with historical records and artefacts. The ‘kakebeenwa’, as the ox wagon was known, which had been reconstructed for the re-enactment of the Trek in the centenary celebrations of 1938 and which was to appear in so many of the scenes of the frieze, was depicted accurately with its smaller front and larger back wheels, for example, and the correct number of spokes (fig. 1.11). In his later account of the frieze, Hennie Potgieter comments on the sculptors’ careful research, and rebuts any questioning of the veracity of the frieze, clarifying that the items in *Departure* were indeed available to the Voortrekkers, such as the accordion dating from 1813 and merino sheep first imported in 1785 (fig. 1.12).¹⁶ Yet, in contrast to real life, all are shown in a strictly uniform and pristine state. Similarly, the individual Voortrekkers are depicted more like flawless stereotypes than personal portrayals, even though we know that all the main figures are portraits, as recorded by Potgieter in diagrams of the scenes in his 1987 publication (fig. 1.13).¹⁷ Some faces may appear older, like the first Voortrekker on the left and the shepherdess to his right, but they seem devoid of emotion and the distinctive features of their actual sitters. This is evident when we compare contemporary portraits of the three sculptors Peter Kirchhoff, Frikkie Kruger and Hennie Potgieter with the faces of the figures they modelled for, all in the foreground – the standing man, the rider and the man tying a bundle respectively (fig. 1.14). On a micro-historical level there are also personal stories attached to the choice and position of the sitters for this and other scenes of the frieze.¹⁸ Here the first three prominent figures on the left of the frieze portray exclusively members of the Kirchhoff family: the sculptor, his wife and his daughter. It is tempting to ask if this was intended not only to increase the status of Kirchhoff as the sculptor *primus inter pares* and designer of this scene, but also to allude to his family’s departure from Germany, as they all emigrated to South Africa to settle in the hinterland that had been won by the Voortrekkers in the nineteenth century.¹⁹

¹⁴ For causes and departures of the treks, see Cloete 1899, 75–88; Walker 1934, 59–105; Du Toit and Giliomee 1983, 195–217; Etherington 2001, 243–250; Giliomee 2003, 144–162. Visagie (2014, foldout maps opp. pp.16 and 22) provides an excellent compilation of the different departure locations and the individual trek routes, while Smail’s (1968) survey is more in line with nationalistic Afrikaner concepts.

¹⁵ As claimed, for example, in *Official Guide* 1955, 41, 45; Potgieter 1987, 46.

¹⁶ Potgieter 1987, 10, 46. It was timely that Van Rooyen (1938 and 1940) provided a detailed study of the historical inventory of the Great Trek in his two-volume *Kultuurskatte uit die Voortrekker-tydperk* (Cultural treasures from the Voortrekker period), which may have been available to the sculptors.

¹⁷ See Part I, Chapter 3 (‘Models and portraits’).

¹⁸ *Ibid.* also for the notable absence of the fourth sculptor, Laurika Postma.

¹⁹ Kirchhoff 2016, 6–14.



Figure 1.10c: Routes of the main treks. 1835–38 (the authors; drawing Janet Alexander)

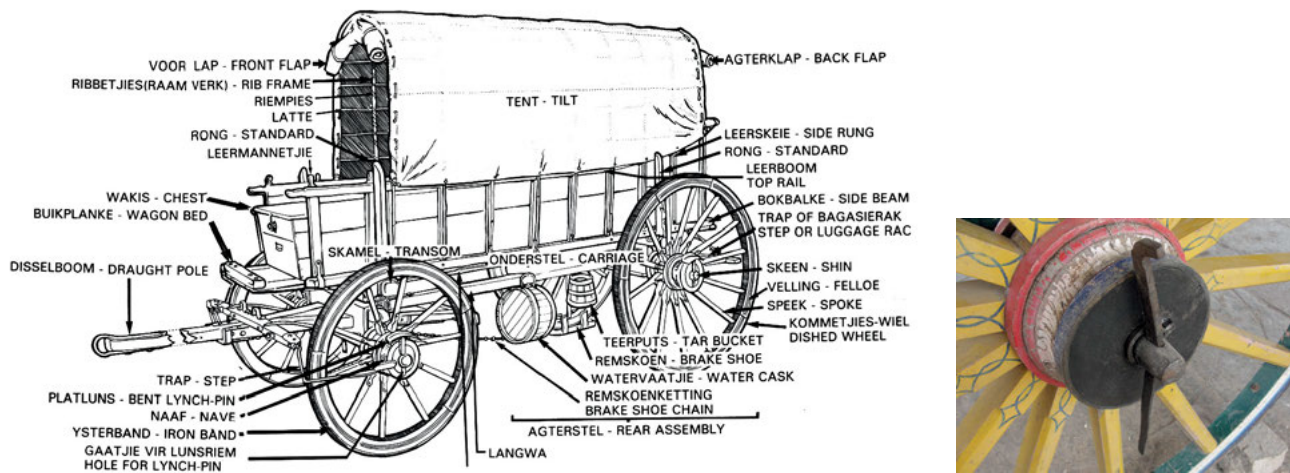
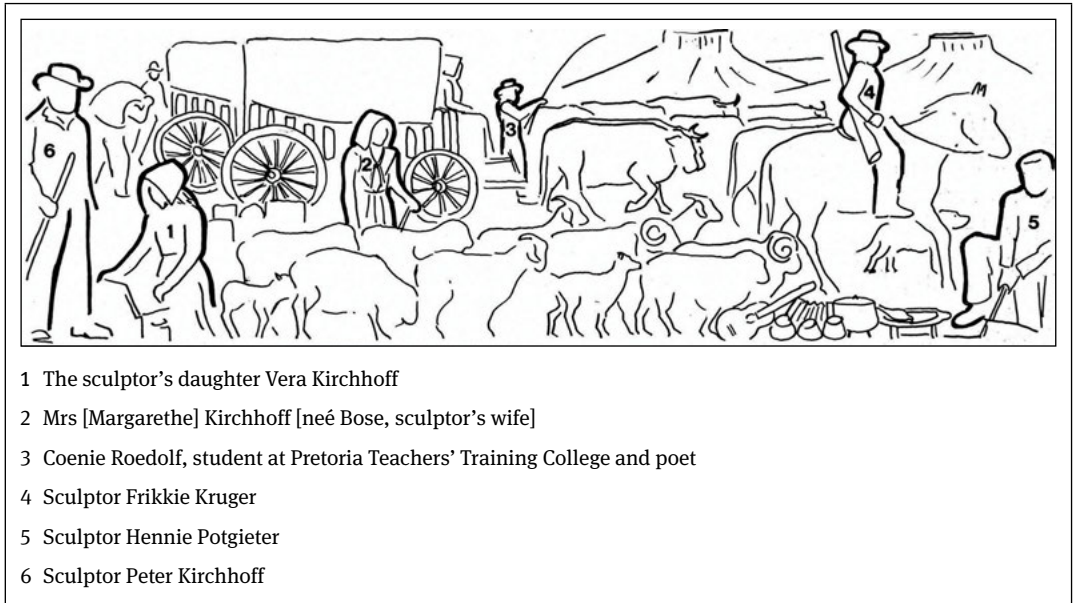


Figure 1.11: Voortrekker wagon and detail of linchpin: Afrikaans 'platluns' or 'buspen'
(https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/ca/A_aesthetic_linchpin.JPG)



Figure 1.12: Sheep and artefacts, including guitar and accordion, in *Departure*. Marble, detail of fig. 1.1
(photo Russell Scott)

Anecdotal yet symbolic are the actions of the Voortrekkers, who are caught in transition, both about to depart and simultaneously still preparing to leave (fig. 1.9). Reading from left to right in customary western fashion, their calm coming and going is marked by three spatial and iconographic juxtapositions: first, in the foreground, the passivity of the standing Voortrekker with his muzzle-loader and powder horn contrasts with the ushering shepherdess and the Voortrekker on his horse, who are ready to depart, although they too are remarkably static; second, in the lower foreground at opposite ends of the relief, the two figures busy packing, the woman quietly immersed, but the man vigorously occupied; third, in the background, two Voortrekkers still loading the second ox wagon whereas the first is ready to start. This measured back and forth between packing and leaving, inertia and action, is given a further edge by the two motionless 'still life' groups of Voortrekker possessions, one staged on the table behind the kneeling female, the other on the ground in front of the male tying a bundle. Another point of subtle dynamics is the relation of the figures to the picture plane. None of them is purely frontal: three are in motionless profile (the woman seated on the ox wagon, the man next to her, and the rider), whereas most of the others are shown in three-quarter view, which suggests a transitory position and the potential for movement in space.



- 1 The sculptor's daughter Vera Kirchhoff
- 2 Mrs [Margarethe] Kirchhoff [née Bose, sculptor's wife]
- 3 Coenie Roedolf, student at Pretoria Teachers' Training College and poet
- 4 Sculptor Frikkie Kruger
- 5 Sculptor Hennie Potgieter
- 6 Sculptor Peter Kirchhoff

Figure 1.13: Models for portraits (Potgieter 1987, 11)



Peter Kirchhoff

Frikkie Kruger

Hennie Potgieter

Figure 1.14: Photographs and carved portraits of the sculptors in *Departure* (photos top left to right courtesy of Kirchhoff files; HF Archives F 39.10.8 k, detail; UP Archives, undated *Dagbreek Spesiale Monument Uitgawe* 1949. Bottom row: photos Russell Scott)

Yet all are contained by the dominant form of the procession which runs parallel to the picture plane across the full width of the relief from left to right. People and animals aim generally in the same direction – as did the actual treks which moved from south to north. This implies a strong unity and potently proclaims the ideology of a unified Great Trek. This is endorsed by the gloss for the first topic in the undated ‘Panele’ list from the mid-1930s, discussed in Part I,²⁰ which added that the departure was to be characterised by ‘determination’ (*vasberadenheid*). This first scene of the frieze sets the standard for the narrative that follows in showing a well-ordered exodus of white people: no haphazard individual ventures, but a unified purposeful event. The subtle dynamics of the interplay between packing and being ready to leave do little to disrupt an overall sense of a static, tableau-like presentation. For Moerdyk the relief ‘is filled with a serene calm’.²¹ It is an intended effect which the composition further endorses. Instead of a focal point around which the narrative is developed, it is spread out with a deliberate evenness, compatible with the coherent surface of the relief. The individual departures are turned into orchestrated conduct, a world apart from the confusion typical of such events. The romanticised narrative of a rich and ordered Voortrekker civilisation also signals the substantial loss that their departure had caused for the British colony in almost all areas of life, in the economy, in the administration, and in the protection of outlying regions.

Here, right at the beginning of the frieze, crucial values of the Afrikaner nation were given a distinct shape, such as the importance of both sexes, model behaviour, immaculate dress, control of livestock, invincible arms, untarnished chattels and ox wagons providing home, defence and transport in one. All endorsed the ideological Afrikaner parameters to which three of the four sculptors had been exposed since childhood. But no ideology is free from inconsistency. Illuminating here is how Hennie Potgieter later justified the depiction of the guitar (fig. 1.12), which some Afrikaners regarded as an instrument played only by ‘coloured’ people:

Then there was the objection that the guitar was a ‘Hotnots-instrument’, but at the farewell party for Andries Pretorius a coloured band performed and at Bloukrans and Weenen several hundred coloured servants were murdered along with the whites. If they accompanied the Trekkers then it is logical that their possessions were also on the wagons. Thus the guitar had a right to be depicted at the determined place in the Monument.²²

However, only a mere object – and one of colonial origin – alluded to the presence of coloured servants. In arguing for the irrefutable accuracy of the detail, Potgieter unintentionally reveals a fundamental flaw in the representation – that this panel, and indeed almost the entire frieze, ignores the estimated six thousand coloured or black servants who accompanied the Voortrekkers.²³

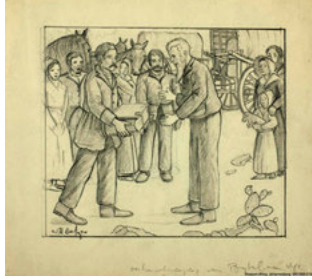
²⁰ Chapter 2 (‘Topics for the Great Trek’).

²¹ *Official Guide* 1955, 41.

²² ‘Toe kom die beswaar dat die kitaar ’n “Hotnots-instrument” is, maar op Andries Pretorius se afskeidsfunksie het ’n Kleurlingorkes opgetree, en by Bloukrans en Wenen is etlike honderde Kleurlingbediendes saam met die Blankes vermoor. As hulle saam met die Trekkers was, dan was dit tog immers logies dat hul besittings ook op die waens was. Dus die kitaar het ’n reg om op die bepaalde plek in die Monument uitgebeeld te wees’ (Potgieter 1987, 46).

²³ For the number of ‘werksmense’ (labourers), see Visagie 2011, 14.

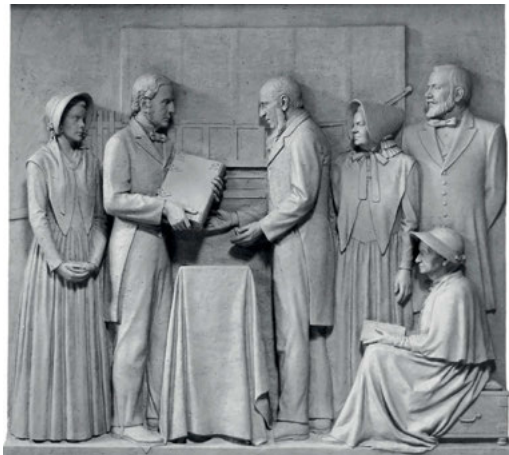
2 *Presentation of the Bible to Jacobus Uys (April 1837)*



A2/A3



B2



C2



D

2 Presentation

East wall, north-east projection (panel 3/31)

h. 2.3 × w. 2.4 m

Sculptor of clay maquette: Hennie Potgieter

STAGES OF PRODUCTION

A1 W.H. Coetzer, pencil drawing, retained only in A2 (April–June 1937)

A2 Reproduction of A1 (June 1937)

A3 W.H. Coetzer, revised pencil drawing A1, h. 13.3 × w. 15.3 cm
(after September 1937)

Annotation: ‘Oorhandiging van Bybel aan Uys’
(Handing over of Bible to Uys)

B1 One-third-scale clay maquette, not extant but replicated in B2 (1942–43)

B2 One-third-scale plaster maquette, h. 79 × w. 76 × d. 10.4 cm (1942–43)

C1 Full-scale wooden armature, not extant (1943–46)

C2 Full-scale clay relief, not extant but recorded in photograph; replicated
in C3 (1943–46)

C3 Full-scale plaster relief (1943–46), not extant but copied in D
(late 1947–49)

D Marble as installed in the Monument (1949)

EARLY RECORDS

SVK minutes (4.9.1937) — item 4b (see below, ‘Developing the design’)

Wenke (c. 1934–36) — item VI. SEN. F.S. MALAN, 3 ‘Tweede toneel: Aanbieding van Bybel te Grahamstad aan
Voortrekker Uys’ (Second scene: Presentation of Bible at Grahamstown to Voortrekker Uys)

Moerdyk Layout (5.10.1936–15.1.1937) — scene 2 on panel 5/31 ‘Bybel en Uys’ (Bible and Uys)

Jansen Memorandum (19.1.1937) — item 7.2 ‘The English inhabitants presenting Uys with a Bible before his
departure’

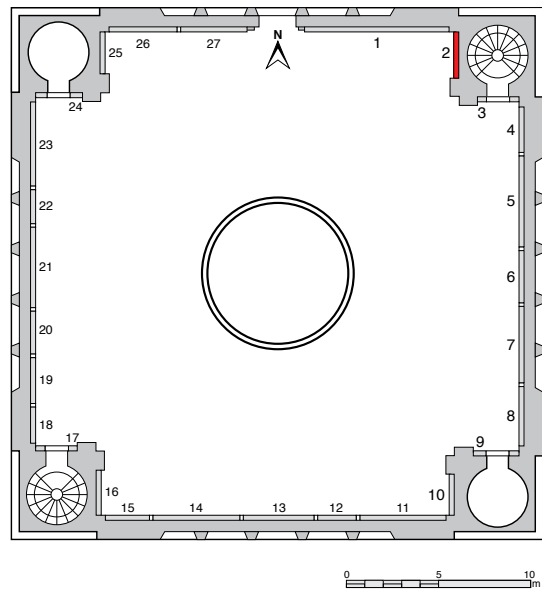




Figure 2.1: D. *Presentation*. 1949. Marble, 2.3 × 2.42 m (courtesy of VTM; photo Russell Scott)

Description

Two parties face each other, a male and female on the left, doubled on the right, on either side of a small table covered with a cloth like an altar (fig. 2.1). The group is united by the decorum of their dress and stance, although they differ slightly in pose, costume and hairstyle. The focus is on the two men at the table, facing each other and dressed in formal tailcoats. The man on the left holds out a large volume, its leather binding and decorative metal corners and clasps distinguishing it as a Bible. The balding older man on the right reaches out to receive it. Standing in a key position almost in the centre of the relief, this patriarchal figure seems to be one of the Trek leaders absent in the more general gathering of *Departure*, and indeed is identified as the elderly Jacobus Uys. Despite his not wearing a short Boer jacket, we realise that he is a Boer chiefly by his distinctive beard, long but trimmed to grow beneath his chin. The nationality of the giver is British, characterised by his clean-shaven face and wig-like coiffure. Behind him, a woman, perhaps his wife and presumably also British, observes the scene passively. While she wears a standard bonnet with a stiff brim, the older woman behind Uys wears a richly embroidered Voortrekker kappie with its deep, softer brim that shades the face. We can see that she is married from the wedding ring visible on her hand.

The national identity of the two figures on the far right is less certain, but their close grouping with the identifiably Voortrekker figures suggests that they too are Boers. The rather conventional beard of the man at the rear may mark him as Boer, but he wears a frock coat and, like the British man, a bowtie. The same uncertainty applies to the seated elderly woman, dressed in a formal hat, gloves and shoulder cape, as though ready for church, also suggested by the small book she holds, an intimate echo of the presentation Bible. Her clothes indicate status rather than nationality, but her position, seated on a small cushion on a wooden trunk with a handle for lifting, suggests that she is about to travel, and hence a Voortrekker. Her old, intensely wrinkled face is the most sensitively rendered portrait in the frieze, and reminds the viewer that all members of the Boer community, old as well as young, took part in the Trek.

We know that the ceremonial handover of the Bible took place at Grahamstown (then Graham's Town), but the setting for the presentation is left ambiguous.²⁴ The draped table suggests an interior, yet this does not accord with the presence of a Voortrekker wagon in the background. However, there are no other indications of the out of doors, and the unnaturally flat outline and position parallel to the picture plane make the wagon look like part of a stage set, and reinforce the tableau effect of the composition. If the first scene made a formal occasion of the disarray of departure, the sense of decorum and order is even more pronounced here.

²⁴ For Grahamstown, see Sellick 1904; Oberholster 1972, 138–146 (opp. p.154 a painting of the settlement in 1823 by an unknown artist); Butler 1974; O'Meara 1995; Marshall 2008; Raper, Möller and Du Plessis 2014, 163.



Figure 2.2: A2. W.H. Coetzer. Reproduction of first sketch for *Presentation*. June 1937 (courtesy of ARCA PV94 1/75/5/1; photo the authors)

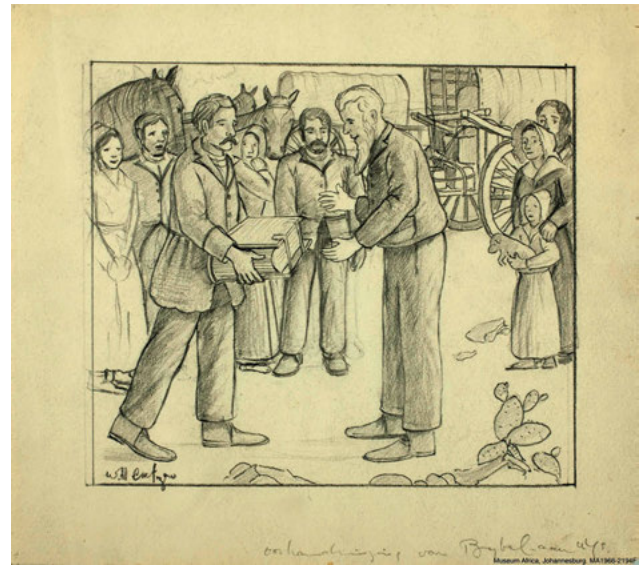


Figure 2.3: A3. W.H. Coetzer. 'Oorhandiging van Bybel aan Uys'. After September 1937. Pencil, 13.3 × 15.3 cm. Revised first sketch (photo courtesy of Museum Africa, no. 66/2194F)



Figure 2.4: J. Juta. *Settlers presenting a Bible to Jacobus Uys*. 1938. Oil on canvas, c. 3.35 × 9.14 m. Pretoria City Hall (courtesy of City of Tshwane; photo Helenus Kruger)

Developing the design

Comparison with the two versions of Coetzer's drawing, the reproduction (fig. 2.2) and the revised sketch (fig. 2.3), makes it obvious how substantially the narrative shifted from paper to clay and marble. He portrayed a historically more plausible and less formal handover of the Bible, given to the Voortrekker patriarch Jacobus Uys by the representative of the English-speaking townsfolk when they called on the Voortrekkers while they 'outspanned' in the vicinity of Grahamstown, early in their long journey. This gives way to a strictly ceremonial image set up on an invented stage, frozen in relief. But let us first consider the alterations demanded by the *Historiese Komitee* on 4 September 1937:

Uys receives the Bible. The English under Thompson came on horses; there were women in riding costume; there were no children with the English; show also horses; the boers' clothing is too poor; the patriarch Uys (80 years) must be more worthy.²⁵

In his revised drawing (fig. 2.3), Coetzer responded to the details of the SVK critique, drawn from anecdotes and oral history, but paid less attention to aspects that set the tone of the scene and characters. He removed the settlers' children as required, eliminated the baby of the couple to the left and the girl in the centre, and moved the man next to her to the left in her place; traces of his original legs can still be seen. The tree and hills in the background of the first sketch give way to the requested horses. There are now two wagons, not just one, and, on the side of Jacobus Uys, there is an additional Voortrekker. But Coetzer ignored the injunction that the Voortrekkers' clothing should be less poor and that patriarch Uys should be portrayed more worthily.

Both features, however, are present in the colossal oil on canvas mural painted by Jan Juta in 1938 for the Council Chamber of Pretoria's new City Hall (fig. 2.4). Juta designed a landscape with Uys as a towering patriarch in the centre, dwarfing the British settler in a tailcoat who presents the Bible to him.²⁶ The ceremony is witnessed by a Voortrekker family on the left and two male settlers on the right. Like Coetzer, Juta chose a rural setting with wagons. But his wide landscape format provided room for labouring Boer figures and two flanking groups that might be interpreted as symbolising key factors in (Voortrekker) conquest: military prowess and procreation. The first is suggested by an armed group of Boers, with a woman attending a wounded man on the right. Procreation, on the other hand, is represented by an English mother with an infant on the left, although an 1820 settler rather than a trekker woman, identified by her dress and a distant scene of the settlers' landing at Algoa Bay. At a time when the fusion politics of Hertzog and Smuts' United Party was fostering a closer relationship between English- and Afrikaans-speaking South Africans, she stands for the importance of women, both British and Boer, in the growth of the nation. Black women, however, have only a marginal role, seen in the shadowy individual with a calabash on her head behind the maternal figure.²⁷

²⁵ 'Uys ontvang die Bybel. Die Engelse onder Thompson het te perd gekom; daar was dames by in rykostuum; daar was geen kinders by die Engelse nie; wys ook perde; die boere se kleredrag is te armoedig; die patriarg Uys (80 jr.) moet baie waardiger wees' (*Historiese Komitee* 4.9.1937: 4b). Born in 1770/71, Uys was in fact sixty-six or sixty-seven years old: the advanced age claimed suggests a patriarch of biblical proportions.

²⁶ A reporter in a *Rand Daily Mail* article remarked that this Bible was at the time kept in Pretoria's 'Transvaal Museum, the building immediately facing the City Hall in which the [Juta] mural will be placed' (Freschi 2006, 103 n 13; the article is without date, but the context suggests that it was published in late 1936).

²⁷ See *ibid.*, 102–106 figs 59–63.



Figure 2.5: B2.
Hennie Potgieter.
Presentation.
1942–43. Plaster,
79 × 76 × 10.4 cm.
Maquette (courtesy
of VTM Museum
VTM 2184/1–28;
photo Russell Scott)

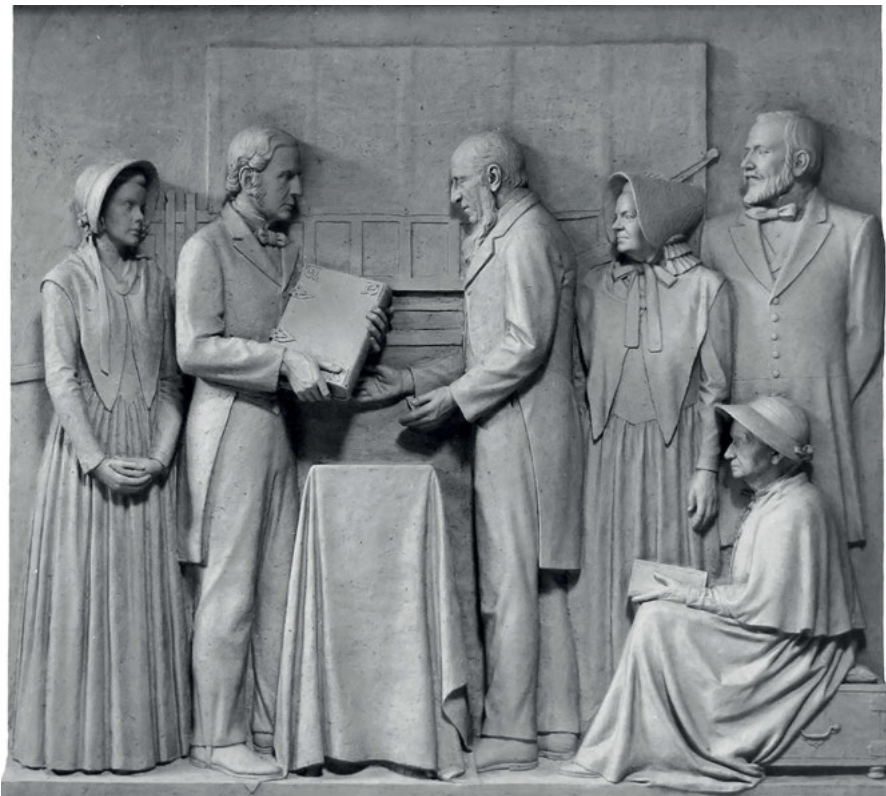


Figure 2.6: C2.
Presentation. 1943–
46. Clay. Full-scale
relief (courtesy
of UCT Thompson
A4.123–39; photo
Alan Yates)

The same topic had been intended as the final oil panel in Juta's historical cycle in South Africa House, London, inaugurated in 1933. Charles Theodore Te Water, South African high commissioner from 1929 to 1939, stated the following year that it would celebrate

that the English Settlers presented to the patriarch Jacobus Uys and his Voortrekkers ... a Bible as a token of their admiration for the religious qualities of the Boers, and as an appreciation of their kindness and hospitality to the 1820 Settlers in those times of trial and need.²⁸

Although this scene never materialised, the early date of this painting suggests that a sketch of its design could have been known to Coetzer. In contrast to the expansive nature of Pretoria's City Hall mural, Te Water's description suggests that Juta's London mural would have focused on the 'religious qualities' and 'racial friendliness between the English and the Dutch races in South Africa',²⁹ an emphasis close to the scene commissioned by the SVK and developed by Coetzer and the sculptors for the Voortrekker Monument.

Superficially, the small plaster maquette for the frieze seems to follow Coetzer's drawing, but upon closer inspection significant changes are evident (fig. 2.5). Now the Voortrekkers are better dressed, although the cropped trouser legs of the Boer men are more homely than the Englishman's. The participants, distributed more pointedly into two groups facing each other, are made more emphatically part of the handover of the Bible. The act is also more articulated as both the Englishman and Jacobus Uys look down at the Bible. The focus on the ceremony is further emphasised by Potgieter following the first Coetzer sketch that omitted horses and had a single wagon, now more formally arranged (fig. 2.3). Yet there are also contrary tendencies. The Bible is considerably smaller, the women wear no hats and the bald old Voortrekker seated conspicuously in the right foreground diverts attention from the presentation, as does the female spectator that appears between the Englishman and Uys. We also note the inclusion of a little girl, contrary to the committee's exclusion of children.

The shift between the maquette and the final relief compositions, achieved when Potgieter and the other sculptors started to work on the full-size clay model (fig. 2.6), is very pronounced. Curiously, the final treatment inverts Coetzer's response to the advice of the committee: it eschews the anecdotal detail which he corrected, but invests the scene with the sense of worthiness required by the committee. One wonders whether the sculptors had access to the minutes of the *Historiese Komitee* of 4.9.1937; Moerdyk would certainly have done so. Whether this was the case or not, what becomes clear in this panel is that the desire to dignify the events related to the Voortrekkers was a key driver in the conceptualisation of the frieze. When the SVK met on 15 and 16 January 1942, it was noted that that members of the SVK would visit Harmony Hall during the process of production, in ample time to allow for suggestions for changes, and no doubt the desire to present the Voortrekkers in a decorous way had not diminished over time. The static quality of the figures adds to the formality, particularly that of the two on the right whose bodies are presented frontally although their heads are turned towards the presentation, which adds to the tableau effect and the planar nature of the relief, and endows the event with a sense of gravitas and profound significance.

²⁸ Te Water 1934, 263; see Freschi 2006, 103–104.

²⁹ Te Water 1934, 263.



Figure 2.7: Eastern Cape treks including the Uys trek beginning in Uitenhage, north-west of Port Elizabeth (courtesy of Visagie 2014, foldout opp. p.16)

Reading the narrative

It was in April 1837 that the trekker party, led by Petrus Lafras (Piet) Uys (1797–1838),³⁰ the second son of the family's patriarch Jacobus Johannes Uys (1770/71–1838),³¹ abandoned their homes in the rural area around Uitenhage. On 20 April 1837, 'a party of 23 wagons and upwards of a hundred souls ...'³² on their way to the far north reached Grahamstown, a fledgling British settlement situated roughly one hundred and thirty kilometres north-east of Uitenhage (fig. 2.7). After their arrival the Boers camped on the northern 'flats above the town, near where the Cradock road passes'.³³ According to the Boer-friendly *Graham's Town Journal* of 27 April 1837, a Bible

was taken out to the encampment by a deputation of gentlemen, accompanied by about 100 inhabitants of Graham's Town, who were received with much respect by the assembled farmers and their families, drawn up in line in front of their wagons.³⁴

In the *Official Programme* published in 1949 for the Monument's inauguration, we are told that the portrait of the English presenter of the Bible on the frieze, 'was obtained from his great-grandson, Mr. Justice C. Newton Thompson, and the representation of this historic personality is therefore completely true to life'.³⁵ Hennie Potgieter confirms the source in his diagram of the models used for the scene (fig. 2.8). He states that W.R. Thompson, who presents the Bible to Uys, was portrayed 'after an old painting' (fig. 2.9),³⁶ while he identifies the live model for Jacobus Uys as Mr Louis van Bergen (fig. 2.10). And indeed characteristics such as the hairstyle, the coiffured sideburns and a few age markers are taken from the 'old painting' for the frieze portrait of the Englishman, though it is thoroughly idealised (fig. 2.11).³⁷ However, Thelma Gutsche clarified on 3 November 1966 in her 'Aide Memoire: Mrs Newton Thompson – Portrait of W.R. Thompson':

The 'portrait' of W.R. Thompson hanging in the Council Chamber of the first floor of the Graham's Town City Hall is in fact a dim enlargement of a photograph which has been heavily over-lined with a charcoal pencil to compensate for its faded appearance. A mount of oval shape has been superimposed upon it and the charcoal touching-up was evidently done after the mounting as the pencil strokes ended on the edge of the mount upon which has been inscribed post hoc – W.R. Thompson Mayor 1837.

... [The photographer,] James Edward Burton ... operated ... at an address in Jetty Street, Port Elizabeth for the period 1848–1873 ...³⁸

This makes it likely that the photograph was taken between 1848 and 1871, the year of Thompson's death.

But there is much more at stake here than the quality of W.R. Thompson's portrait: the identity of the Englishman is in question. When we want to know which Grahamstown notable presented the Bible to the trekker patriarch, Jacobus Uys, we find conflicting identifications: either William Rowland Thompson (1797–1871) or Thomas Philipps (1776–1859).³⁹ The different claims require closer inspection as they show how the assertion of the historical accuracy of the frieze –

³⁰ Visagie 2011, 504–505. For his death at Italeni, see *Dirkie Uys*.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 503. For the Uys family, see Uys 1976; Uys 1988, 33–34.

³² Newton Thompson 1966, 143–144, quoting the *Graham's Town Journal*, 20 April 1837.

³³ Cory, *South Africa* 3, 1919, 401.

³⁴ Chase, *Natal* 1, 1843, 93–94; Harington 1973, 65.

³⁵ *Official Programme* 1949, 49.

³⁶ Newton Thompson 1966, fig. after p.164.

³⁷ If Thompson had been the presenter of the Bible, he would have been forty years old at the time.

³⁸ UCT Thompson A4.219.

³⁹ *DSAB* 2, 1972, 542–543 (T. Philipps), 746–747 (W.R. Thompson). For the latter, see also UCT Thompson.



- 1 Izak Meyer Potgieter, father of the sculptor
- 2 Catharina Helena Potgieter, mother of the sculptor
- 3 Oumatjie Stoffberg, ‘volksmoeder’ and widow of senator Stoffberg [affectionately referred to here as ‘oumatjie’, little grandmother]
- 4 Oom Louis van Bergen for Jacobus Uys, owner of a liquor store in Pretoria [‘Oom’, meaning uncle, does not necessarily signal a blood relationship, but is a genial yet respectful title for an older man, as ‘tannie’ (aunt) is for a woman]
- 5 Martso Terblanche, student at Pretoria Teachers’ Training College [married name Strydom]
- 6 After a photograph of an old painting of the mayor of Grahamstown, [W.R.] Newton Thompson [obtained from his great-grandson, Justice Cyril Newton Thompson]

Figure 2.8: Models for portraits (Potgieter 1987, 12)

incessantly intoned by SVK members, Moerdyk and the sculptors – was handled in practice and modified when appropriate for Afrikaner agendas.

As with many other newspapers of the time, *The Cape Argus* (8.7.1938) stated that it was W.R. Thompson who presented the Bible to Uys. In the article ‘The Hon. Mr. Justice C. Newton Thompson’, published in *The South African Law Journal* in 1946,⁴⁰ it was still claimed that

William Rowland Thompson, the great-grandfather of [Cyril] Newton Thompson, presented a Bible on behalf of the citizens of Graham’s Town to Jacobus Uys and his party of Voortrekkers when they were on their way to the north. In 1938, at the invitation of the head committee of management of the great Symbolic Trek, Newton Thompson, on behalf of the Thompson family, presented another Bible to the leader of the Trek [Henning J. Klopper] at the historic send-off at the foot of Adderley Street, Cape Town.⁴¹

The same Thompson had been mentioned as the presenter when Coetzer’s drawings were criticised by the Historiese Komitee on 4 September 1937. The story is fleshed out in the substantial memorial book published for the centenary that was celebrated on site on 16 December 1938.⁴²

⁴⁰ Newton Thompson 1946, 1.

⁴¹ This seems to be the ‘Klopper-Bybel’, a State Bible, which the Cape Town trek leader Henning J. Klopper (a founder of the nationalistic Afrikaner Broederbond) presented to the SVK to be, together with the other items, placed behind the Monument’s foundation stone (Duvenage, *Gedenktrek* 1988, 202–203; Heunis 2008, 186 s.v. Pretoria). In an undated inventory of these items in the Jansen archive at Bloemfontein, this Bible is referenced as ‘State Bybel, 1729’ (ARCA, Jansen EG PV94 1/75/1/9, numbered ‘.22’ in pencil at the upper right corner). For further (State) Bibles presented on that occasion, see Mostert 1940, 113–114.

⁴² Du Toit and Steenkamp 1938, 44–45. This error was repeated and compounded as late as 2008, when Richard Marshall (2008, 33) recorded that W.R. Thompson was an influential merchant of Grahamstown, who ‘presented a bible to the departing Dirk Uys [sic]’, though it was in fact presented to Jacobus Uys. Dirk Uys could only have referred to either the fourth son of Jacobus Uys (born 1814; Visagie 2011, 502) or Piet Uys’ second son (born 1823; *ibid.*, 503).



Figure 2.9: Undated portrait of W.R. Thompson (Newton Thompson 1966, after p.164)



Figure 2.10: Mr Louis van Bergen, model for Jacobus Uys (Van der Walt 1974, 81)

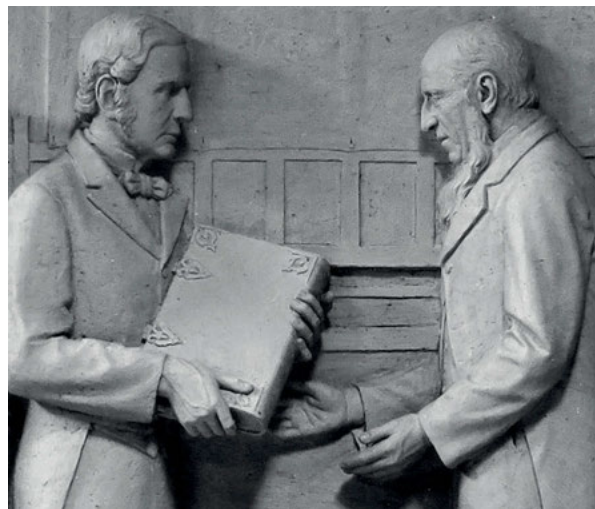


Figure 2.11: ‘Thompson’ handing Bible to Uys in *Presentation*. Full-scale clay relief, detail of fig. 2.6 (photo Alan Yates)

That book mentions the *Graham’s Town Journal* and even includes verbal quotes from both W.R. Thompson and Jacobus Uys, but does not provide a clear reference. A further layer to the story was added by the *Official Programme* published in 1949 for the Monument’s inauguration, when W.R. Thompson is identified not only as the presenter, his likeness taken from a portrait, but as ‘the Mayor of Grahamstown’.⁴³ This needs correction. In 1919 George Cory had explained that in 1837 ‘seven commissioners were appointed [of whom W.R. Thompson is the first named] and

⁴³ *Official Programme* 1949, 49.

formed what may be called the first Town Council of Graham's Town',⁴⁴ so there was no mayoral appointment. But more significant is the constant claim that he was the presenter of the Bible, repeated by Cory himself:

Mr. W.R. Thompson made the presentation, saying that ever since the arrival of the British settlers, seventeen years ago, there had always been the greatest cordiality between themselves and their Dutch neighbours ... Thus in these days were British and Dutch united.⁴⁵

At the Monument's inauguration on 16 December 1949, this identification was reinforced when Justice Cyril Newton Thompson, a great-grandson of W.R. Thompson,⁴⁶ who had previously presented a Bible to Henning Klopper at the outset of the 1938 ossewatrek, was chosen as one of the five key speakers at the Monument's inauguration on 16 December 1949.⁴⁷ According to *The Cape Argus* of 24 December, which published an English translation of his Afrikaans address, he proudly proclaimed that the scene in the Voortrekker frieze 'portrays the presentation of the Bible by my great grandfather to Jacobus Uys'.⁴⁸ In 2001 Jackie Grobler invented another version in stating that 'Judge C Newton Thompson ... was a descendant of the Justice of the Peace, Philipps [sic]'.⁴⁹

The wrongly claimed lineage of Cyril Newton Thompson from Thomas Philipps (1776–1859) is presumably an attempt to reconcile a revised account replacing Thompson as Bible presenter with Philipps. The incorrect citing of Thompson was found in publications for the centenary and inauguration and the first edition of the *Official Guide* in 1955, but had been corrected in later editions, when Thomas Philipps, Justice of Peace in Grahamstown and first master of the Masonic Albany Lodge, founded in 1828,⁵⁰ is named as the person who presented the Bible to Jacobus Uys.⁵¹ Harald Edward Hockly, referring to the contemporary report in the *Graham's Town Journal* of 27 April 1837, confirms this as the correct version of the event:

The climax to a most moving event was reached when, in an impressive silence charged with deep emotion, the Bible was solemnly handed over to Jacobus Uys by the chosen leader of the settlers, the popular and respected Thomas Philipps, J.P., an energetic and successful farmer at Glendour on the

⁴⁴ Cory, *South Africa* 3, 1919, 426. Newton Thompson (1966, 146) adds that the seven commissioners were elected in May 1837 and 'Thompson topped the poll', which made him 'Chairman'.

⁴⁵ Cory 1919, 402. Quoted, for example, in memory of this event in the centenary year, when the foundation stone of the Voortrekker Monument was laid, by *The Cape Argus* 8.11.1938; see UCT Thompson 'Newspaper clippings, 1938–1950'.

⁴⁶ Newton Thompson 1946, 1.

⁴⁷ *Official Guide* 1970, 75. See *Dagbreek*, 30.10.1949 'Engelssprekende sal Afrikaanse rede by inwyding lewer'. His speech is also cited in Botha 1952, 280–282.

⁴⁸ The article's headline reads: 'Two sections of one nation? Stirring appeal to English and Afrikaner'; see UCT Thompson 'Newspaper clippings, 1938–1950'.

⁴⁹ Grobler 2001, 72. The accessible records of Thomas Philipps' family show no links to the Thompsons of Grahamstown. For Philipps, see Hockly 1957, 37 and passim (after p.128: contemporary portrait); Keppel-Jones 1960 and *DSAB* 2, 1972, 542–543.

⁵⁰ Dru Drury 1928, 8–11; Cooper 1980, 96; see also *Murder of Retief* (appendix).

⁵¹ *Official Guide*, first edition 1955, 46: 'The Mayor of Grahamstown, who undertook the presentation, was a forefather of Mr. Justice Newton Thompson, who spoke on behalf of the English-speaking South-Africans during the inauguration ceremony at the Voortrekker Monument in 1949. A photograph of the Mayor was obtained from Mr Justice Thompson and used for the panel so that it can be accepted that the representation on the panel is a faithful one.' Few of the later editions of the *Guide* are dated, which makes it difficult to pinpoint exactly when the correction was made but, using the changeover to decimal coinage of 1961 as a guide, one can deduce that it was in the mid-1960s. An English edition where the price is given in both shillings and cents (6/6; 65c), presumably soon after the change, still has Thompson as the presenter, but undated English editions priced only in cents (65c) have corrected this to Philipps, as has the edition which is dated 1969. Curiously, while the Afrikaans was also corrected (confirmed in an edition dated 1972), the Afrikaans version dated 1976 (a compressed edition in a smaller font) still cites Thompson.

coast. This public-spirited citizen, who had so frequently in the past acted as the settlers' representative and spokesman on important public occasions, well deserved the signal honour of once again playing the principal part at this historic function.⁵²

The *Graham's Town Journal* from 27 April 1837 resolves the apparent contradiction. Here we learn that the Bible 'was presented by Thos. Philipps, Esq., J.P.' but that the 'address ... was read by Mr. W.R. Thompson'.⁵³ Thompson stated in his address: 'My good friends, ... I am deputed, together with the gentlemen who accompany me, now to present it [the Bible] to you ...,' which may have contributed to the confusion, but the ceremonial handing over of the Bible to Jacobus Uys was done by Philipps.⁵⁴ The short address Philipps 'had been asked to present was read on his behalf by one citizen in English and another in Dutch, after which P.[hilipps] presented the Bible to Jacobus Uys'.⁵⁵

Both Thompson and Philipps, representatives of two prominent families of Grahamstown, were later memorialised in these public functions by the Grahamstown Bible Monument, commissioned by the local 'Bible Monument Committee' on 16 December 1957 and erected in the area of the historical Voortrekker encampment.⁵⁶ The monument, two stone walls in the form of an open bible, each decorated by a bronze relief and an inscription (fig. 2.12), was unveiled by President C.R. Swart on 17 December 1962, the day after the anniversary of the Battle of Blood River. The left wall is reserved to represent the British – a settler and Thompson headed by Philipps with the Bible; and the right one for the Boers – a trekker and a woman framing Jacobus Uys with his arms open to receive the gift.⁵⁷ The composition of the small bronze reliefs, made by the Eastern Cape sculptor Ivan Graham Mitford-Barberton (1898–1974),⁵⁸ is not unlike the Monument's *Presentation* of the Bible, no doubt too significant a forerunner to be ignored. The inauguration programme of the Bible Monument confirms:

The presentation [of the Bible] was made by Thomas Philipps, assisted by W.R. Thompson who made the speech ... The Bible Monument marks the spot where this presentation took place and will ever remain as a memory of the spirit of good fellowship which characterised the two White races in South Africa.⁵⁹

The Dutch Bible which Philipps presented in 1837 was 'the most respectable and truly valuable present which could be made to them [the departing Boers], a folio copy of the Sacred Scriptures ..., in massy Russian binding' (fig. 2.13).⁶⁰ It was printed in 1756 in Dordrecht by the well-known Jacob and Hendrick Keur, 'extra-illustrated with 252 Biblical scenes on 126 engraved plates' and based on the text the Dutch Reformed Church presented at the Synod of Dort in 1618/19.⁶¹ 'The cost

⁵² Hockly (1957, 139–41, p.140, quote) is paraphrasing the *Graham's Town Journal*, correct in substance but not word for word. The original text of the *Graham's Town Journal*, 27.4.1837, is reproduced by Chase, *Natal* 1, 1843, 92–95.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 94. See also Newton Thompson 1966, 144 (with marginal divergences from the *Journal's* original text); Butler 1974, 279–280; typed biography of 'William Rowland Thompson. Frontier Merchant' (UCT Thompson A1.1–A2.14, p.8).

⁵⁴ *Graham's Town Journal*, 27.4.1837 (Chase, *Natal* 1, 1843, 94); Newton Thompson 1966, 145.

⁵⁵ *DSAB* 1, 1968, 543.

⁵⁶ UCT Thompson A4.179–A4.222; Muller 1978, 46 fig. 17.

⁵⁷ The inscriptions, in English on the 'British' and Afrikaans on the 'Boer' wall, deserve further attention.

⁵⁸ See Part I, Chapter 2 ('Van Wouw and Moerdyk').

⁵⁹ UCT Thompson A4.179–A4.222.

⁶⁰ *Graham's Town Journal*, 27.4.1837 (Chase, *Natal* 1, 1843, 93).

⁶¹ Quotation from a detailed description of the 1756 edition (<https://www.sotherans.co.uk/2080058>). For Dordt and South Africa, see Coertzen 2012. We owe to Etta Judson valuable information about this Bible which is presently kept in the Voortrekker Monument Museum as a loan from the Ditsong National Museum of Cultural History (formerly Transvaal Museum); she kindly permitted us to study and Russell Scott to photograph it.

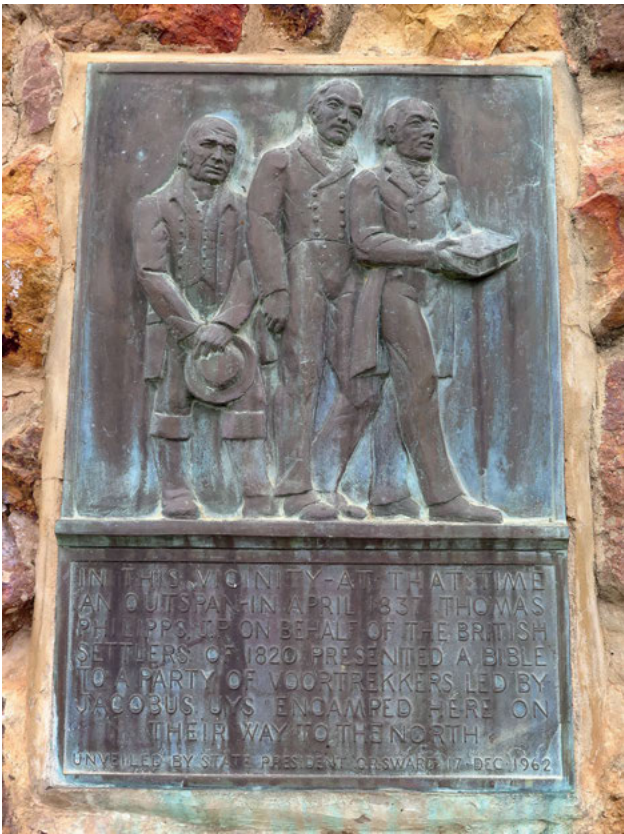


Figure 2.12: Ivan Mitford-Barberton. Bible Monument, Grahamstown. 1962. Bronze panels with English settlers presenting Bible (left side of monument) to Voortrekkers (right side) (photos the authors)

of this handsome volume was one hundred Rijks Dollars, which was raised by a subscription of 1/- [one shilling] each.⁶² On the outside of the front cover is inscribed in Dutch in gold capital letters.⁶³

The Gift
of the
inhabitants of Graham's Town
and its neighbourhood to
Mr. Jacobus Uys
and his emigrating countrymen⁶⁴

Printed on the inside of the cover (on the flyleaf) is the following inscription in Dutch:

This Sacred Volume
Is presented to Mr. Jacobus Uys, and his expatriating Countrymen,
by the Inhabitants of Graham's Town and its vicinity,
as a
farewell token of their esteem and heartfelt regret at their departure.
The anxiety which they have evinced
to endeavour to obtain a Minister of Religion,
and their strict observance of its ordinances,
are evident proofs, that in their wanderings in search of another land
they will be guided by the precepts contained in this Holy Book,
and steadfastly adhere to its solemn dictates – the stern decrees of
the Creator of the Universe,
The God of all Nations and Tribes!⁶⁵

The gift of a richly illustrated Dordrecht Bible dedicated with Christian sympathy to the Voortrekkers by the British people of Grahamstown bears testimony to the social interaction between the settlers and the emigrants. It is likely that the British settlers felt a particular empathy with the Voortrekkers as they had themselves so recently been emigrants. Jacobus Johannes Uys, the recipient of the Bible, was given the nickname 'Koos Bybel' in honour of 'his deep religious convictions which he instilled into his family',⁶⁶ which may explain why the Bible itself, today on display in the Voortrekker Monument Museum, came to be known as the Koos Bybel.

Looking again at the panel at the Monument, the weighty solemnity of the representation in marble is increased by the fact that the participants are portrayed formally in town dress as though

⁶² Newton Thompson (1966, 144), who quotes further from the *Graham's Town Journal*, 20 April 1837: 'We understand that a subscription has been opened in this town for the purchase of a splendid edition of the Sacred Volume in the Dutch language to be presented to our expatriating fellow colonists ...'

⁶³ The English translation of the two following dedications is from the *Graham's Town Journal*, 274.1837 (Chase, *Natal* 1, 1843, 93).

⁶⁴ 'Geschenk van de / inwoonders van Grahams Stad / en / nabyheid / aan den Heer / Jacobus Uys / en zyne weggetrokkene / landgenooten.'

⁶⁵ 'Dit Heilig Boek / is gepresenteerd aan / Den Heer Jacobus Uys, / en Zyn Vertrokkene Landgenoten, door de Inwoonders van Graham's Stad en omtrek, / tot een / Vaarwel Gedenkteeken / Van hun Hoogachting, en hartelyke Leedwezen op / hun Vertrek. / De angstvalligheid welke zylieden betoond hebben om te tracten een Prediker te / verkrygen, en hunne stiptelyke na z[two illegible letters]ling der Heilige Instellingen, zyn duidelyke / bewyzen dat in hunne wandelingen om een ander Land te zoeken, zy zich zullen laten / geleiden door de Bevelen in dit Heilig Boek begrepen, en standvastiglyk aankleven / aan deszelfs Heilige Wetten – de strenge Besluiten van den Schepper van het Heelal – / Den God van alle Natien en Volkeren.' For the text see also Newton Thompson 1966, 144 (with marginal mistakes); Butler 1974, 279–280. The Dutch translation has been credited to Louis Henri Meurant (alias Klaas Waarzegger), who founded the *Graham's Town Journal* in 1831 (see *Murder of Retief*).

⁶⁶ Uys 1976, 2; Visagie 2011, 503.



Figure 2.13: Uys Bible. 1756. Printed in Dordrecht by Jacob and Hendrik Keur (courtesy of HF VTM Collection B1; photos Russell Scott left, the authors right)

the Voortrekkers were not yet on their way, but gathered ceremonially in Grahamstown, in a way perhaps not dissimilar to the white dignitaries gathered at the Voortrekker Monument's inauguration. For our study three aspects are crucial. First, *Presentation* underlines the acknowledgement of the historical importance given to the treks not only by the Boers but also by British people, and the recognition of the fundamental role of Christianity in the treks. Second, the Bible ceremony is a vivid demonstration of the British settlers' sympathy with Piet Retief's manifesto published only two months before, on 2 February 1837 in the same *Graham's Town Journal*, which Etherington characterised as a 'cheering squad for the trekking movement' (see *Inauguration*).⁶⁷ Third, beyond the intentional meanings inscribed in the relief, this case shows that the key interest of the SVK and the *Official Guide* was not to scrutinise available historical records and avoid factual contradiction, but to reinforce commonly held beliefs. The myth was being (re)invented even as it was set in stone.

The commitment to and mission of Dutch Reformed Church Christianity is the principal theme of this second scene of the frieze. As stated in the *Official Guide*, 'The presentation of the Bible is inserted at the beginning of the frieze because the Bible was to the Voortrekkers a shining light on their path.'⁶⁸ Moerdyk comments that it 'was left to the Voortrekkers – the descendants of the Dutch colonists and Huguenots – to force, at a great price, an entry into the interior and establish a white civilisation';⁶⁹ a civilisation which is constantly associated with the Protestant beliefs instituted

⁶⁷ Etherington 2001, 257–259 (quote p.257), who discusses the manifesto in the wider political context of the time.

⁶⁸ *Official Guide* 1955, 46.

⁶⁹ *Official Guide* 1970, 31. The apartheid emphasis on establishing 'a white civilisation' here contrasts with the wording of the earliest edition that simply said, 'which had been unconquered unto then' (1955, 32).

early in European settlement, which Afrikaners later claimed the Voortrekkers had maintained and nurtured. The ritual of handing over the Bible legitimated the historical mandate and dynamic character of this assertion, further upheld by the ongoing use of the *Koos Bybel* by the trekkers.⁷⁰

When, between 1934 and 1936, the public and SVK members were asked to contribute ideas for the narrative of the Great Trek, they proposed inter alia the depiction of religious services – held in a tent with the coloured servants amongst those listening, or catechism lessons on the Trek – although these were not included in the final narrative.⁷¹ *Presentation* reinforces a religious message of a similar kind, and imbues it with a ceremonial quality suited to this special occasion, while avoiding the inclusion of any black servants. But there is more to the choice of this particular scene. The literature about the Monument stresses that the event was evidence that British settlers supported the Voortrekkers. Yet, while the marble recognises the mutual respect of British and Boer in the narrative of the Great Trek, as did Jan Juta's painting for Pretoria's City Hall, it does not acknowledge British rule. Rather, the support of English-speaking townfolk for the emigrant Voortrekkers underlines that these recent settlers also took exception to the policies of the British authorities, acknowledging the Boer cause.

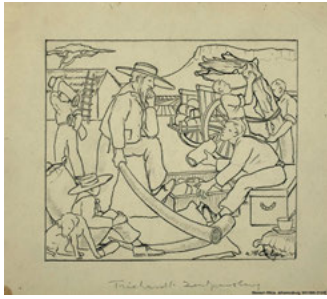
Through the collective focus on the Dordrecht Bible, supported by the arrangement of participants turning towards it, the relief creates a strong sense of solidarity. However, it is still dominated by the Boer majority, two of them in expansive frontal positions that further strengthen their primacy in the narrative. Further distinctions are created for them by another iconographic choice. Whereas all participants are depicted with clear portrait features, the Boers are distinguished by their seniority, all showing signs of maturity if not old age. One wonders whether this was meant as a subtle substantiation of the Boers' longer establishment on South Africa's soil.⁷²

⁷⁰ This is confirmed by an entry in Erasmus Smit's diary on 11 June 1938 that describes a meeting presided over by Jacobus Nicolaas Boshof jr (1808–81; see Visagie 2011, 65–66), a leading Boer and later state president of the Orange Free State (1855–59), who read a text from 'the Octavo Bible presented in Grahamstown' (Smit trans. Mears 1972, 116; Dutch text: Smit ed. Scholtz 1988, 142).

⁷¹ 'Wenke', item II Dr L. Steenkamp, M. Basson, A.J. du Plessis, A.I. 'Godsdienstig' (Religious); item VI.8 SEN. F.S. MALAN 'Ander toneel: Gewone godsdiensoefening onder 'n tent, met gekleurde bediens onder die gehoor' (Further scenes: Regular church service inside a tent with coloured servants in the congregation).

⁷² See *Official Guide* 1955, 33.

3 Trichardt at *Soutpansberg* (summer 1836 to autumn 1837)



A1/A2/A3



B2a/b



C2



D

3 Soutpansberg

North wall, north-east projection, above door (panel 4/31)

h. 2.3 × w. 2.4 m

Restored fractures on vertical edges

Sculptor of clay maquettes: Hennie Potgieter

STAGES OF PRODUCTION

A1 W.H. Coetzer, first pencil drawing, h. 13.4 × w. 15.3 cm (April–June 1937)

Annotation: ‘Trichardt Zoutpansberg’ (Trichardt Soutpansberg)

A2 Reproduction of A1 (June 1937)

A3 W.H. Coetzer, new pencil drawing, h. 13.4 × w. 15.3 cm

(after September 1937)

Annotations: ‘Onderwyser Pfeffer neem Kinders skool toe’ (Teacher Pfeffer takes children to school) / ‘vrouens pluk mielies’ (women pick mealies) / ‘n man herstell ’n wiel’ (a man repairs a wheel)

A4 W.H. Coetzer, *Trigardt by die Souijtpansberg*

(Trichardt at the Soutpansberg). Oil, h. 25.4 × w. 30.5 cm (late 1937–38)

B1 One-third-scale clay maquettes, not extant but replicated

in B2a/b (1942–43)

B2 a. Rejected one-third-scale plaster maquette, h. 76.5 × w. 89.8 m × d. 8.6 cm (1942–43)

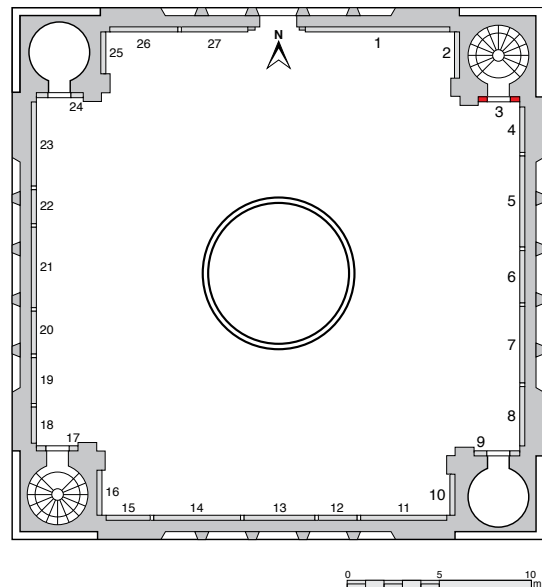
b. New unfinished one-third-scale plaster maquette, h. 78.3 × w. 86.6 m × d. 8 cm (1942–43)

C1 Full-scale armature, not extant (1943–46)

C2 Full-scale clay relief, not extant but recorded in photograph; replicated in C3 (1943–46)

C3 Full-scale plaster relief (1943–46), not extant but copied in D (late 1947–49)

D Marble as installed in the Monument (1949)



EARLY RECORDS

SVK minutes (4.9.1937) — item 4c (see below, ‘Developing the design’)

Voorstelle (5.12.1934?) — item 1 ‘Trichardt-Trek: Trichardt-trek onder Soutpansberg: waens, hartebeeshuisie, skerm en Daniel Pfeffer se skooltjie (laasgenoemde, soos hartebeest huisievierkantig.) Trichardt hou sy Dagboek by: boek op agter buikplank, ens’ (Trichardt Trek: Trichardt-trek at Soutpansberg: wagons, little reed house, view and Daniel Pfeffer’s school [the latter rectangular like the house.] Trichardt keeps his diary: book on wagon’s rear floorboard, etc.)

Panele (c. Dec 1934–36) — item 4 ‘Die Boer het BESKAWING gebring / die skooltjie van ’n man soos Pfeffer’ (The Boers brought CIVILISATION / the little school of a man like Pfeffer)

Moerdyk Layout (5.10.1936–15.1.1937) — scene 3 on panel 6/31 ‘Trichardt Z.P.Berg’ (Trichardt [in] Soutpansberg)

Jansen Memorandum (19.1.1937) — item 73 ‘Trichardt at the foot of the Zoutpansberg Mountains’



Figure 3.1: D. *Soutpansberg*. 1949. Marble, 2.3 × 2.4 m (courtesy of VTM; photo Russell Scott)

Description

As also with *Blydevooruitsig*, *Marthinus Oosthuizen* and *Mpande*, the composition is determined by the odd shape of the relief panel, as a triangular section to accommodate the gable-shaped door frame is cut out off-centre (fig. 3.1). The remaining space is shared by five people, a woman and four men – three of them in the short buttoned-up jackets typically worn by the Voortrekkers on the frieze. Although cut off by the door frame, the older man in the centre is clearly the main figure, his importance emphasised by his height, formal frontal pose, and the grouping of two figures on either side of him. His dress and beard, the latter like a ruffle under his cheeks and chin, tell us he is a Voortrekker, identified as the leader, Louis Trichardt. He holds an elephant tusk, point uppermost, while the beardless Boer in profile on the far left holds another in reverse position. In front of him is a youth, kneeling in a three-quarter view. He is holding a book upright, supported on other volumes piled rather precariously on the sloping edge of the door frame.

On the right two persons are depicted almost back to back, a mature woman and a younger man. She is seated on the other slope of the door frame in a complex pose, with legs to her right, but profile head facing left towards Trichardt. Her hair is neatly combed and drawn tightly into a bun, and she wears a long-sleeved dress, its skirt gathered into a fitted bodice with a shawl collar, fastened with a brooch. The ring on her left hand, which holds her folded kappie, suggests she is Trichardt's wife. The broad-shouldered man behind her in a long travelling coat (based on an amateur wrestler model, Potgieter tells us) is seen from the back as he carries a bundle of hides to a wagon. He is the only person both looking and moving away from the centre, his pose no doubt introduced by the sculptor to enliven a rather static scene, and to act as a link to the succeeding panel. Although there are two figures on either side of the central one, this diversity, in part a response to the difficult format, breaks the symmetry by setting off immobility on the left against more complex movement on the right. And there the two figures, back to back, are themselves characterised by oppositions such as female and male, seated and standing, staying and departing, and facing left and right.

The limited space behind the figures is filled with objects right up to the panel's top margin. For lack of space the Voortrekker wagon behind the group is, uniquely, uncovered. Hard against it on the left is a building meant to represent a schoolhouse, and further away, on the right, a massive flat-topped mountain.



Figure 3.2: A1. W.H. Coetzer. 'Trichardt Zoutpansberg'. Before June 1937. Pencil, 13.4 × 15.3 cm. First sketch (photo courtesy of Museum Africa, no. 66/2194E)



Figure 3.3: A2. W.H. Coetzer. Reproduction of first sketch for *Soutpansberg*. June 1937 (courtesy of ARCA PV94 1/75/5/1; photo the authors)



Figure 3.4: A3. W.H. Coetzer. 'Trichardt Zoutpansberg'. After September 1937. Pencil, 13.4 × 15.3 cm. New sketch (Museum Africa, no. 66/2194A; photo courtesy of Museum Africa)



Figure 3.5: A4. W.H. Coetzer. *Trigardt by die Souijtpansberg*. Late 1937–38? Oil, 25.4 × 30.5 cm (Coetzer 1947, 73)

Developing the design

The pencil drawing of this scene which Coetzer presented to the SVK (26.6.1937) exists identically in linear form in both the Museum Africa (A1: original; fig. 3.2) and the ARCA collections (A2: reproduction; fig. 3.3), and there is also a different drawing, more developed with shading, in Museum Africa (A3; fig. 3.4), fully revised in response to the demands of the *Historiese Komitee*. This sequence of designs in relation to the committee's critique is crucial to our argument that Coetzer made the more developed pencil drawings after the purely linear drawings of the reproductions.

The first design that was rejected (figs 3.2, 3.3) emphasised trading, with men loading animal skins behind, and ivory tusks in the foreground presided over by Louis Trichardt in a large hat. A boy with a dog on the left and a cup and saucer on a sack on the right rather arbitrarily fill the foreground corners. Beyond the figures is a small thatched building and ploughed fields, with a distinctive thorn tree and a grand flat-topped mountain locating the scene in the far north. At the review meeting on 4 September 1937, the *Historiese Komitee* requested a complete redrawing, the only case we know of when a Coetzer sketch was wholly rejected:

Trichardt in Soutpansberg. This must be redone entirely. Read Trichardt's diary and show among other things scenes where Botha mends a wagon wheel or does something similar; women pick green mielies; the boers drank out of round bowls; the school must be in the foreground; show old Daniel Pfeffer and children that are walking to school; remember some of them were already fairly big.⁷³

The second drawing (fig. 3.4), produced after the review meeting sometime before March 1938, is entirely different. As demanded, it focuses on Voortrekker Botha (in shirt sleeves) mending a wheel,⁷⁴ women picking mealies,⁷⁵ the corner of a (school) structure in the foreground (with an animal hide as a mat next to the door), and old Daniel Pfeffer accompanied by two girls and an older youth, each dressed with propriety. All that remains from the first drawing is a modified version of the tree and the mountain in the background. Coetzer's monochrome oil on canvas of the subject (fig. 3.5) largely follows the design of the second drawing but creates a more visible structure in the background (appropriately with a thatched roof), shows Botha more actively engaged in his carpentry, and distinguishes Pfeffer as a taller more patriarchal figure. In his book *My Kwas Vertel*, Coetzer stated that 'this panel is a sketch in the series intended for the Voortrekker Monument',⁷⁶ although we have no evidence that this painting was seen by the sculptors.

As in many other cases, the demands of the *Historiese Komitee* were disregarded: it was not the redrawn but the rejected first drawing (figs 3.2, 3.3) which served as a blueprint for the sculptors, when, some five years later, they started making the small clay models from which the extant plaster maquettes were taken. It seems the old arguments had been forgotten, yet some additions in the second maquette design that has survived do reflect ideas similar to some of those expressed by the *Historiese Komitee*, as discussed in Part I.⁷⁷

As in the drawing, where six figures comfortably occupied the square format (fig. 3.2), six figures are clustered around the challenging format in the earlier plaster maquette (fig. 3.6).

⁷³ Trichardt in Soutpansberg. Die toneel moet heeltemal oorgedoen word. Lees die Dagboek van Trichardt, en wys o.a. tonele waar Botha 'n wawiel herstel of iets dergeliks doen; vrouens pluk groen mielies; die Boere het uit ronde kommetjies gedrink; die skool moet op die voorgrond kom; wys ou Daniel Pfeffer en kinders wat skool-toe loop; ont-hou party van hulle was al taamlik groot' (*Historiese Komitee* 4.9.1937: 2c).

⁷⁴ Himself a wainwright with personal knowledge of wagon building, Coetzer also developed a nuanced pencil drawing of 'Old Botha repairs a wheel' in its own right, illustrated in Muller 1978, 40 fig. 34. The motif of the wagon wheel is synonymous with the treks, used by Coetzer in the design of commemorative stamps and other items for the Monument, and still common in Afrikaner popular culture.

⁷⁵ Mealies are mentioned, for example, in Trichardt ed. Preller 1938, 51.

⁷⁶ Coetzer 1947, 72–73: 'Die paneel is 'n skets in die reeks wat vir die Voortrekker-Monument bedoel is.'

⁷⁷ Chapter 2 ('Coetzer and the frieze').



Figure 3.6: B2a. Hennie Potgieter. *Soutpansberg*. 1942–43. Plaster, 76.5 × 89.8 × 8.5 cm. Rejected maquette (courtesy of VTM Museum VTM 2184/1–28; photo Russell Scott)



Figure 3.7: B2b. Hennie Potgieter. *Soutpansberg*. 1942–43. Plaster, 78.3 × 86.6 × 8 cm. New maquette (courtesy of VTM Museum VTM 2184/1–28; photo Russell Scott)

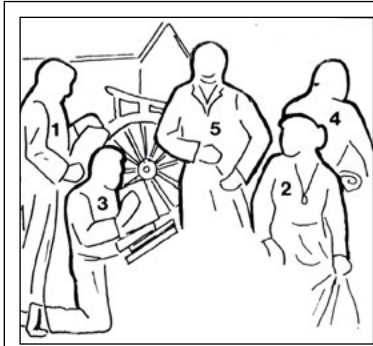


Figure 3.8: C2. *Soutpansberg*. 1943–46. Clay. Full-scale relief (courtesy of UP Archives; photo Alan Yates)

Trichardt, the main person in the centre with a long beard and a hat, holds an elephant tusk; he is flanked by five men, all, like him, in shirt sleeves. Standing figures to the rear, two in back view, carry goods for loading in the large open wagon behind the group. In the foreground, two bearded men handle large chests balanced on either side of the sloping door frame; to reach the chests in their low placement, the man on the left kneels, while his counterpart leans forward awkwardly as though climbing steps. The seventh figure, tucked between the men on the right, is a young woman, perhaps Trichardt's wife. The scene is crowded, which makes the basic problem of the multifaceted subject obvious: in a restricted space the sculptor tried to represent various aspects of the settlement at Soutpansberg, its hunting and its trade, and possibly the education Trichardt introduced, suggested by the books in one of the chests and the building in the background, which might represent the school.

Unavoidably, a second design was needed (fig. 3.7). It is only roughed out in the second small plaster, the blobs of clay demonstrating the sculptor's technique. It presents a more balanced composition, reduced to five figures, and close to the final design. A key point is the taller intrusion of the door frame, presumably required by the architect to match the correct proportions of the doorway, which forces greater engagement of the side figures with the panel's shape. They provide a counterpoint to the previous emphasis on trade, with the female figure brought into the foreground on the right, and the kneeling male figure opposite now more clearly shown with books. And the men now wear more formal jackets.

The full-scale clay panel (fig. 3.8) elaborates and refines the form and composition of the second small plaster, and endows the figures with individuality. As already suggested by the second maquette, dress is more formal, and the woman, modelled on Mrs Ackerman, one of the three Voortrekker descendants chosen to lay the foundation stone for the 1938 centenary, is shown in the actual dress she wore on that occasion. The final marble (fig. 3.1) follows the blueprint of the full-scale clay prototype, as was usually the case. However, two differences in finishing details are striking. In the final clay the portraits of Trichardt and his wife appear less aged, and the folds of



- 1 Sakkie Buys
- 2 Mev C.F. Ackerman [probably for Trichardt's wife], one of the three women who laid the foundation stone of the Monument on 16 December 1938 and [great] granddaughter of Voortrekker Andries Hendrik Potgieter
- 3 Wynand Smit, an architect
- 4 Martin Jooste, amateur wrestler and later physical training instructor at the University of Pretoria
- 5 Louis Trichardt, after an old drawing said to have been made in his lifetime [Venter 1985, 34 fig. top left]

Figure 3.9: Models for portraits (Potgieter 1987, 13)



Figure 3.10: Mrs C.F. Ackerman, photographed at the centenary in 1938, model for Trichardt's wife in *Soutpansberg*. Marble (photos left courtesy of Unisa; right Russell Scott)

the kneeling man's trousers and the woman's dress next to the door frame correspond more closely to the character of fabric, whereas the Florentine sculptors carved them rather clumsily. Both deviations highlight an occasionally less refined stylistic quality at the Romanelli workshop. And, as is obvious in all the scenes of the frieze, modelling in clay allowed for greater plasticity and liveliness than did sculpting in marble, and could produce a more dynamic effect.

Reading the narrative

The five people are self-absorbed and do not interact. As a result, the entire image feels decidedly staged. Louis Trichardt (1783–1838),⁷⁸ as the leader of the first trek, is centrally placed, and the mature woman seated next to him probably represents his wife Martha (the same model is used for her depiction in *Delagoa Bay*), although this identity has never been confirmed. In contrast to the other three people, the couple is predominantly frontal in presentation, even though she twists to look towards him. The couple's importance is further underlined by the models' links to the historical narrative. Trichardt's portrait was modelled after an old drawing said to have been made in his lifetime.⁷⁹ The sitter for the woman, here identified as his wife, was Mrs Katharina Fredrika Ackerman,⁸⁰ an important figure in the Monument's centenary celebrations, and the great-granddaughter of Voortrekker leader Andries Hendrik Potgieter, who had visited Trichardt in June 1836. Apart from being identified by Hennie Potgieter in his 1987 publication (fig. 3.9), Mrs Ackerman is easily recognisable from contemporary photographs (fig. 3.10).⁸¹

Trichardt led the first 'voortrek' to leave the Colony permanently in September 1835.⁸² About a year before, then Lieutenant Colonel Harry Smith had already framed the British view on Trichardt in a scathing sentence: 'That villain of a Boer is notorious, as well as his family, I understand, for their hereditary animosity towards the British.'⁸³ Against the explanation of Trichardt's departure in Afrikaner accounts – that he was 'driven out of Cape Colony by despair at the hesitant British frontier policy' – Oliver Ransford argued that 'a good deal of evidence' suggests instead that the Boer left because he had 'shown overt hostility' to British authorities and was 'even accused ... of having enticed the Xhosa to begin the frontier war of 1834–5 ...'⁸⁴ It was a small trek 'composed of seven Boer farmers, together with their wives and thirty-four children', and the aged wagonmaker Daniel Pfeffer, discussed below, as well as 'several Bushman slaves' and 'Bantu servants';⁸⁵ only nine men altogether seem to have been 'capable of handling guns'.⁸⁶ Starting out from the Indwe River in the Eastern Cape, Trichardt was to lead his group as far from British rule as possible, travelling to the high ground of the Soutpansberg,⁸⁷ a mountain range near the Limpopo River, one of the northernmost points of the treks (fig. 3.11). The party arrived there in the summer of 1836, and established a little settlement.⁸⁸ His pioneering advance later became an Afrikaner symbol of the scale of the Voortrekkers' annexation of land in southern Africa. In Afrikaans narratives Trichardt

⁷⁸ Trichardt ed. Preller 1938, ix–cv (first ed. 1917); Cory, *South Africa* 3, 1926, 3–7, 11–19; Fuller, *Trigardt's Trek* 1932, 9–17; Walker 1934, 107–113; *DSAB* 1, 1968, 802–805; Ransford 1972, 33–57; Etherington 2001, 246–247; Visagie 2011, 500.

⁷⁹ Venter 1985, 34 fig. top left; Visagie 2011, 500.

⁸⁰ There is confusion about Mrs Ackerman's first names and lineage. Hennie Potgieter (1987, 13) incorrectly identifies her as the granddaughter of the trek leader Andries Hendrik Potgieter, instead of his great-granddaughter; he gives her the initials C.F., which we have quoted above in our synopsis identifying the models. This seems to be an Anglicisation of K.F., sometimes given in full in other sources as Katharina Fredrika (Mostert 1940, 777 with photograph, 780). However, elsewhere she is referred to as Mrs D.P. Ackerman, the more formal use of the initials of her husband, Dominee D.P. Ackerman (see *Pretoria News*, 13.12.1938; Mostert 1940, 577–578; Ferreira 1975, 80, 117). We are grateful to Etta Judson for clarifying this in the correspondence with Mrs Ackerman in the VM Archives: when the SVK invited her to take part in the foundation stone ceremony, they wrote to her as Mrs D.P. Ackerman (2.11.1938), although her reply was signed K. Ackerman (10.11.1938).

⁸¹ See Part I, Chapter 1 ('The centenary').

⁸² Various dates have been suggested. We follow Giliomee (2003, 162) and Visagie (2011, 500, 'Vertrekdatum: September 1835').

⁸³ Trichardt ed. Preller (1938, lviii with n 74), quoting Smith from *D'Urban Papers*, bl. 35 (today in UCT library, special collections, 575, C59).

⁸⁴ Ransford 1972, 33–34.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 35. For the composition of the trek, see also Fuller, *Trigardt's Trek* 1932, 162–164.

⁸⁶ Ransford 1972, 38.

⁸⁷ Raper, Möller and Du Plessis 2014, 200 (Indwe River), 473–474 (Soutpansberg).

⁸⁸ For the date, see Trichardt ed. Preller 1938, 7 with n 10 and 12. For the trek, see *ibid.*, lxxiv–lxxvii; Fuller, *Trigardt's Trek* 1932, 22–27; Ransford 1972, 34–44.

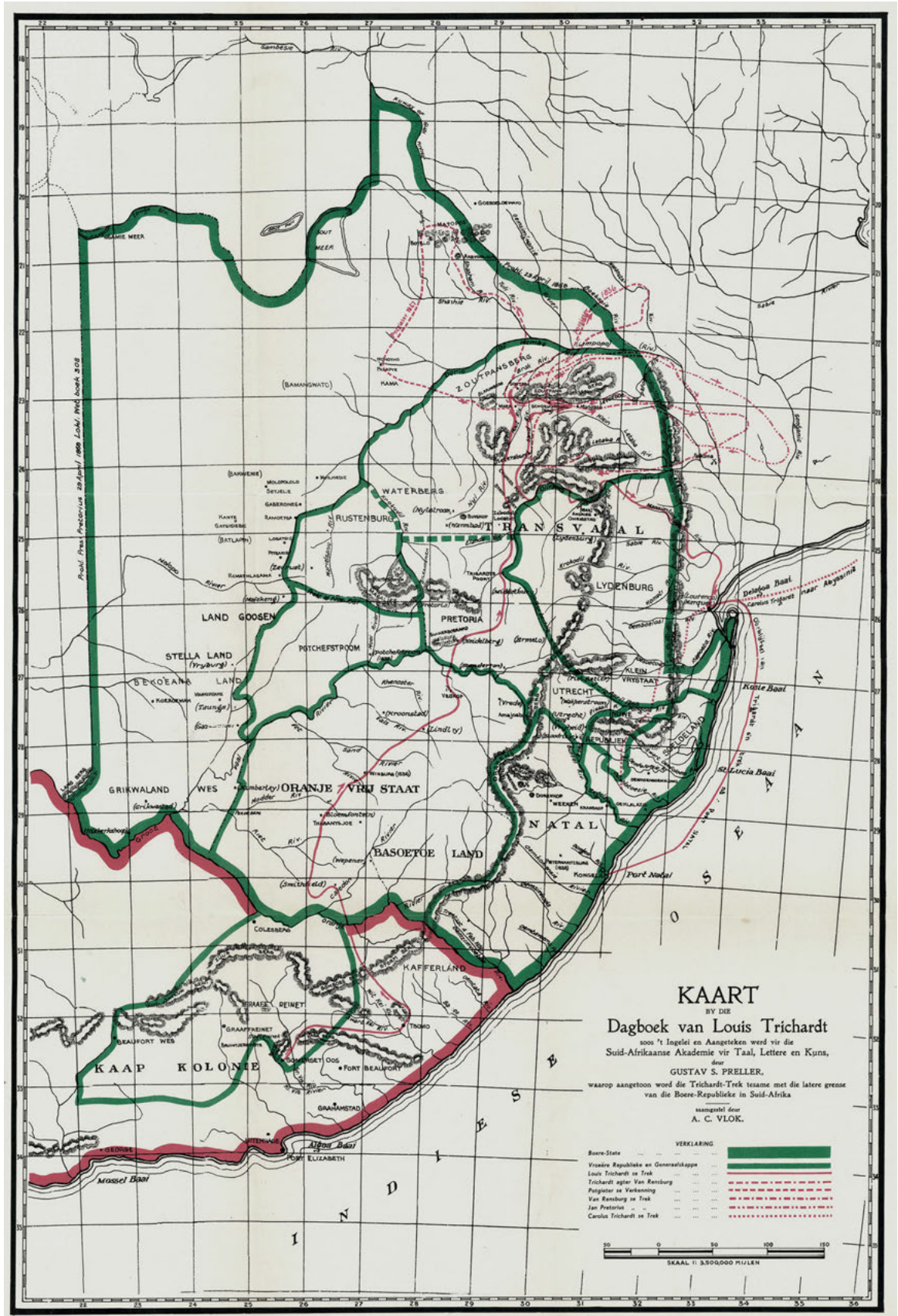


Figure 3.11: A.C. Vlok. Kaart by die Dagboek van Louis Trichardt. Coloured map (Trichardt ed. Preller 1938, foldout after last page)



Figure 3.12: *Soutpansberg*. Background showing schoolhouse, open wagon for trading and Soutpansberg mountains. Full-scale clay relief, detail of fig. 3.8 (photo Alan Yates)

stood out among the Voortrekker leaders for his defiance of British authority, his determination, his tragic death and his compelling diary,⁸⁹ all fitting him to become an Afrikaner hero. Less admirable aspects of his life, such as his likely links to slave trading, are seldom mentioned.⁹⁰

Trichardt's importance is reflected in the relief by the distinct habitus of his position in the centre and his people around him. They and the accompanying objects are chosen to address a wide array of Voortrekker virtues. Trichardt and his wife Martha embody the all-important institution of the white Christian family as the backbone of Voortrekker life. Its character is endorsed by the immaculate clothing of the five people, which demonstrates the superiority of white civilisation in the most remote wilderness, given an even sharper focus by the absence of any black or coloured people. Yet they were not only part of his trek as indentured servants,⁹¹ but also key to his trading in the area that is represented in the panel. Valuable commodities, represented by a pair of tusks and a bundle of hides, highlight the enterprise of these Voortrekkers, who sustained their community by hunting and trading. The perfectly manufactured wagon in the background exemplifies the essence of the Voortrekker existence, providing home, defence and transport in one, though here lacking its tented cover as it is pressed into service for trade (fig. 3.12). It comes as no surprise that in the majority of scenes in the frieze the presence of the wagon is indispensable, a symbol of the Trek itself. Here the wagon also stands in for the skilled wagonmaker, Pieter Johannes Hendrik Botha (1794–1838),⁹² who was represented in Coetzer's second sketch at the behest of the *Historiese Komitee*.

⁸⁹ Trichardt ed. Preller 1938. See also Fuller, *Trigardt's Trek* 1932, who provides a painstaking reconstruction of Trichardt's trek across the Drakensberg to Delagoa Bay, including 'many extracts from the Diary, in a somewhat free rendering of the original' (*ibid.*, xviii).

⁹⁰ Etherington 2001, 247. Trichardt ed. Preller (1938, lxxvii) himself was master of ten African herdsmen and servants ('veewagters en ander bediendes'), namely 'Danster, Adonis, Renosterarm, Gert (Boesman), Katos, Keiser, Windvoël, April, Poemlana en Ou-Jong' (see also Giliomee 2003, 147). When, on 13 April 1838, the Portuguese governor at Lourenço Marques (Delagoa Bay) asked Trichardt why he had left his home country, the Boer stated three reasons, of which the second was 'that the Government puts all slaves on a free footing' (Fuller, *Trigardt's Trek* 1932, 154). Dutch text: 'dat die Goevernement alle slaven op vrije voeten steld' (Trichardt ed. Preller 1938, 304).

⁹¹ See Giliomee 2003, 163.

⁹² Visagie 2011, 82.

Of special importance in this panel is the large house in the background. Meant to represent the first school built by the trekkers, it is rather too well-built a structure to convincingly depict the rudimentary ‘hartebeeshuisie’ architecture of Trichardt’s settlement,⁹³ described in the suggestions for topics in *Voorstelle*. The school was run by Daniel Pfeffer (Pfeiffer; 1760–1838), who acted as teacher to the children (fig. 3.12).⁹⁴ There were apparently twenty-one aged under sixteen, but occasionally he also taught people more advanced in years, such as ‘Breggie Pretorius, Jan’s better half, who herself had two children in school’.⁹⁵ However, neither a child nor a mother but rather a sleek youth is placed purposefully in the foreground, already literate enough to be preoccupied with a pile of books, to represent the virtues of Voortrekker education, associated with Christian values, as Moerdyk stressed when he wrote of this panel for the *Official Guide*:

Two extremely important aspects of the Voortrekkers’ existence are emphasized, viz. their material projects, as revealed in their trading ivory and skins with Portuguese traders, and the efforts made to meet their spiritual needs, for a little school – the first in the Transvaal – is shown being built.⁹⁶

Leonard Thompson analysed the extent to which school education was used by Afrikaner institutions, especially the Afrikaner Broederbond, to promote Afrikaner values through Christian National Education at the same time that the narrative of the frieze was being conceived.⁹⁷ In 1943 a school inspector explained the crucial role of Afrikaner teachers to inculcate this spirit in the children:

The Afrikaner teachers will ... demonstrate to Afrikanerdom what a power they possess in their teacher’s organisations for building up the youth for the future republic. I know of no more powerful instrument. They handle the children for five or more hours daily, for five days each week ... A nation is made through its youth being taught and influenced at school in the tradition, customs, habits and ultimate destination of its *volk*.⁹⁸

It was a purpose not dissimilar to that of the frieze itself.

⁹³ See Van Rooyen, 1940, 170–171.

⁹⁴ Visagie 2011, 353.

⁹⁵ Trichardt ed. Preller 1928, lxxvii: ‘Daniel Pfeffer se leerlinge het bestaan uit 21 kinders onder die 16 jaar, maar sy lesse werd af en toe ook bygewoon deur meer bejaardes soos Breggie Pretorius, Jan se wederhelf, wat self twee kinders in die skool had, Hendrina Botha e.a.’ For Jan (Johannes Petrus jr) and Breggie (Gerbrecht Elizabeth Maria Pretorius, née Alberts), see Visagie 2011, 387–388.

⁹⁶ *Official Guide* 1955, 46. It is an example of Moerdyk’s carelessness in describing detail in the frieze that he writes of the school ‘being built’ when there is no evidence of ongoing building here, though there was in Coetzer’s first drawing.

⁹⁷ Thompson 1985, esp. 46–68.

⁹⁸ Quote *ibid.*, 49–50, with reference to Wilkins and Strydom 1978, 258–259. It is not irrelevant to remember that J.J. Scheepers, who played such an important part as secretary of the SVK, was himself a schoolteacher.

4 Trichardt in *Delagoa Bay* (April 1838)



A2



B2a/b



C2



D

4 Delagoa Bay

East wall (panels 5–6/31)

h. 2.3 × w. 2.88 m (full width of panel 5 and 0.36 m of panel 6)

Restored fractures on vertical edges between panels 5 and 6

Sculptor of clay maquettes: Hennie Potgieter

STAGES OF PRODUCTION

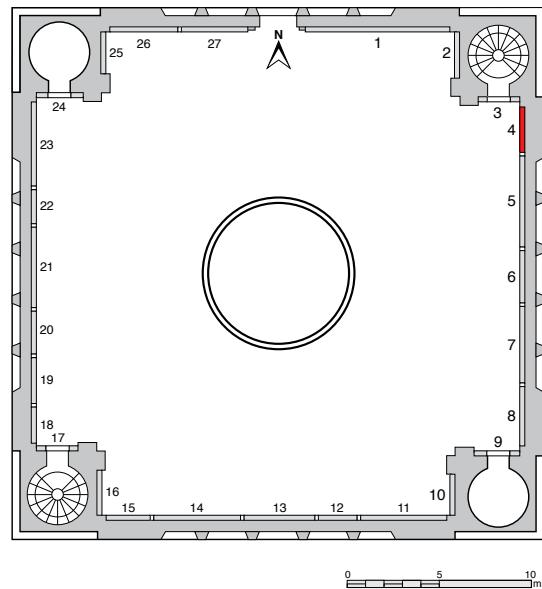
- A1 W.H. Coetzer, pencil drawing, retained only in A2 (April–June 1937)
- A2 W.H. Coetzer, reproduction of A1, h. 13.3 × w. 15.3 cm (June 1937)
- B1 Clay maquettes, not extant but replicated in B2a and b (1942–43)
- B2 a. Rejected one-third-scale plaster maquette, h. 77 × w. 76.5 × d. 8 cm (1942–43)
- b. New one-third-scale plaster maquette, h. 76 × w. 76.6 × d. 8 cm (1942–43)
- C1 Full-scale wooden armature, not extant (1943–46)
- C2 Full-scale clay relief, not extant but recorded in photograph; replicated in C3 (1943–46)
- C3 Full-scale plaster relief (1943–46), not extant but copied in D (1948–50)
- D Marble as installed in the Monument (1950)

EARLIER RECORDS

SVK minutes (4.9.1937) – item 4d (see below, ‘Developing the design’)

Moerdyk Layout (5.10.1936–15.1.1937) – scene 4 on panel 7/31 ‘T. in Del. Baai’ (Trichardt in Delagoa Bay)

Jansen Memorandum (19.1.1937) – item 74 ‘Trichardt at Delagoa Bay’



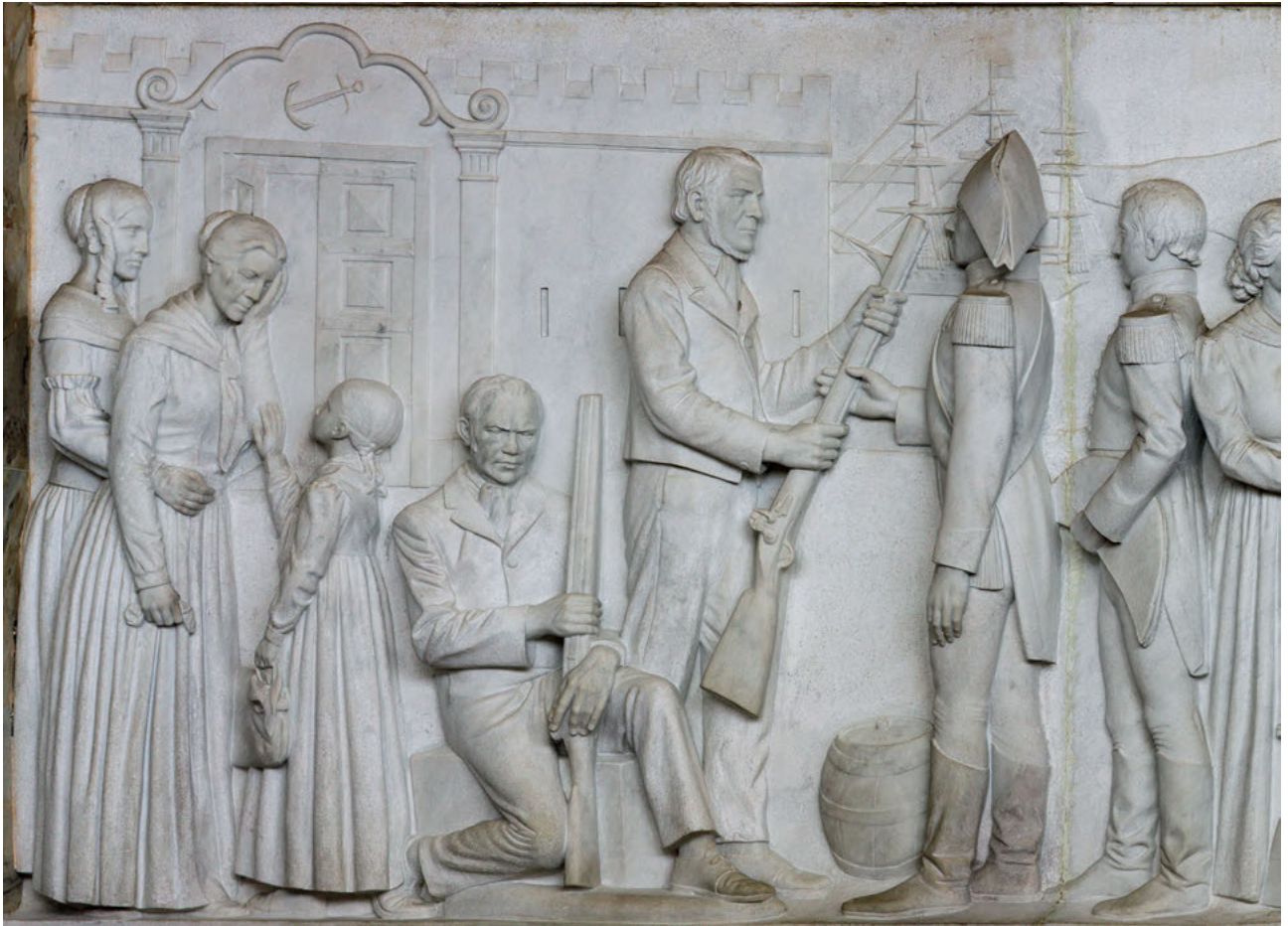


Figure 4.1: D. *Delagoa Bay*. 1950. Marble, 2.3 × 2.88 m (courtesy of VTM; photo Russell Scott)

Description

Seven people of varying age and national dress are spread across the relief (fig. 4.1). The main narrative is positioned to right of centre: two men facing each other in profile view and taller than the rest. The mature bearded man on the left, picked out by his superior stature and the space around him, is the Voortrekker leader Louis Trichardt. He hands over his muzzleloader to Captain Gamitto, the Portuguese governor of Delagoa Bay. Gamitto wears a uniform of the type of a nineteenth-century naval commander, decorated with epaulettes, shoulder insignia, two medals and a sash, with fitted trousers and a Napoleonic hat.⁹⁹ Behind him stands another officer of smaller stature, who wears the same uniform as his superior, but without medals and sash, and keeps his hat folded in his left hand. A gunpowder keg next to the governor can be identified by its size, the bung on the top, and the narrative context.

A second, beardless and older Voortrekker, Daniel Pfeffer, sits, self-absorbed, on a chest behind Trichardt, his passivity complementing the leader's alert pose. He holds his muzzleloader close to him, between his extended legs, which rest on what appears to be a deformed elephant tusk.

To the left of the two Boers who occupy the centre of the composition is a group of three female figures, well dressed but without hats. Furthest left, a tall woman, distinguished by her elegant European dress, earrings and elaborate coiffeur with ringlets, represents Gamitto's wife. She has her arm reassuringly around the waist of a Boer woman, Martha Trichardt, who seems about to faint. Her body is bent forward, her eyes half-closed, with her lowered head supported on her left hand; the other dangles listlessly at her side and holds a handkerchief. Her little daughter Anna, who keeps her mother's kappie for her, looks up at her with parted lips, as though about to speak, and reaches out to lay a hand solicitously on her elbow.

Most of the background is filled by a crenellated building with slit windows, and a mighty double door, which stands ajar. It is framed, rather incongruously, by two pilasters supporting a curved Dutch gable, adorned with an anchor. On the far right a three-masted vessel with furled sails and gunports is moored in a natural harbour, protected by a man-made sea wall.

⁹⁹ See Crawford and Hughes 1995, 35 (for a drawing of naval officers around 1800, in this case of the US).



Figure 4.2: A2. W.H. Coetzer. Reproduction of first sketch for *Delagoa Bay*. June 1937 (courtesy of ARCA PV94 1/75/5/1; photo the authors)



Figure 4.3: B2a. Hennie Potgieter. *Delagoa Bay*. 1942–43. Plaster, 77 × 76.5 × 8 cm. Rejected maquette (courtesy of VTM Museum VTM 2184/1–28; photo Russell Scott)



Figure 4.4: B2b. Hennie Potgieter. *Delagoa Bay*. 1942–43. Plaster, 76 × 76.6 × 8 cm. New maquette (courtesy of VTM Museum VTM 2184/1–28; photo Russell Scott)

Developing the design

For *Delagoa Bay* we only have Coetzer's reproduction (fig. 4.2), presented to the SVK on 26.6.1937. The basic elements of the narrative are already outlined here: the Portuguese governor (with sabre and moustache), in full regalia, stands next to a building; two Voortrekkers hand over their weapons, Trichardt standing and his comrade kneeling; the governor's wife supports Martha Trichardt, who is accompanied by her daughter (both of them wearing kappies); the sea and a sailing ship are in the background. More closely aligned to the actual occasion than the eventual marble relief, Coetzer's Voortrekkers are shown disconsolate at having to hand over their weapons, while Gamitto, presented in frontal view and showing no welcoming traits, dominates the scene. He holds a document and points authoritatively to where the Boers must surrender their guns. Two additional figures are depicted, one offering Martha Trichardt a drink on a tray and, further away and in back view, a Voortrekker looking out to sea.

In the Historiese Komitee meeting on 4.9.1937, the following changes were required:

Trichardt in Delagoa Bay. This scene must be changed. Show how the Trekkers arrived there and were welcomed by the Portuguese governor; the sea view with the man at the beach must stay the same.¹⁰⁰

The lack of a revised drawing means that we cannot tell to what extent these alterations were undertaken. Nor do we know whether a second drawing was available to the sculptors but, as is the case with other panels, the initial drawing was influential.

In his first small plaster maquette (fig. 4.3), Hennie Potgieter rearranged the figures, and increased their number to ten, but retained the abject mood of the surviving design. Here Gamitto is shown in profile on the far right, near his final position. While he still holds a document in his left hand, his other takes the muzzleloader from Trichardt, whose head is bowed submissively. Another Voortrekker crouches unconventionally at Gamitto's feet (perhaps he is fatally ill with malaria), and a third, based on Coetzer's kneeling figure, almost genuflects obsequiously towards the Portuguese commander. The group of women on the left now face towards the men, Martha Trichardt's distress more visible, as she is supported by Gamitto's wife, who is distinguished by her long drop earring. Between the two groups are two boys, back-to-back, one bringing a cup to the women. They add to the overcrowding of the scene, which also has an elaborate background with two ships at sea and, although the figure on the beach has disappeared, there is a distant onlooker in the arcade of a colonial-style building.

The second maquette (fig. 4.4) reduces the figures to seven, eliminating the two boys and the crouching Voortrekker, and tidies up the composition. The Boers are also depicted in a less submissive way: Trichardt is more erect, and the formerly crawling man now sits upright on a chest, holding a gun between his legs and placing his left foot on a tusk on the ground, as though he is a hunter. The governor and his wife are little changed, though her arm supporting Martha Trichardt is now clearer. Despite these changes, the two maquettes are so similar in composition and in many details that we surmise that Potgieter probably reused the design of his initial clay maquette (replicated in plaster in B2a) to develop the second version (B2b).

The full-scale clay panel (fig. 4.5) brought changes in the pose, composition and style, for the most part closely transferred into the marble. The general grouping remained broadly the same, but the wider format of the large panel permitted a more generous arrangement, with breathing space between the figures and the addition of a second Portuguese officer on the right, which creates a more balanced composition overall. Notable is Trichardt's more dominating presentation,

¹⁰⁰ 'Trichardt in Delagoabaai. Hierdie toneel moet verander word. Wys hoe die Trekkers daar aankom en deur die Portugese Goewerneur verwelkom word; die seetoneel met die man by die strand moet so bly' (Historiese Komitee 4.9.1937: 4d).

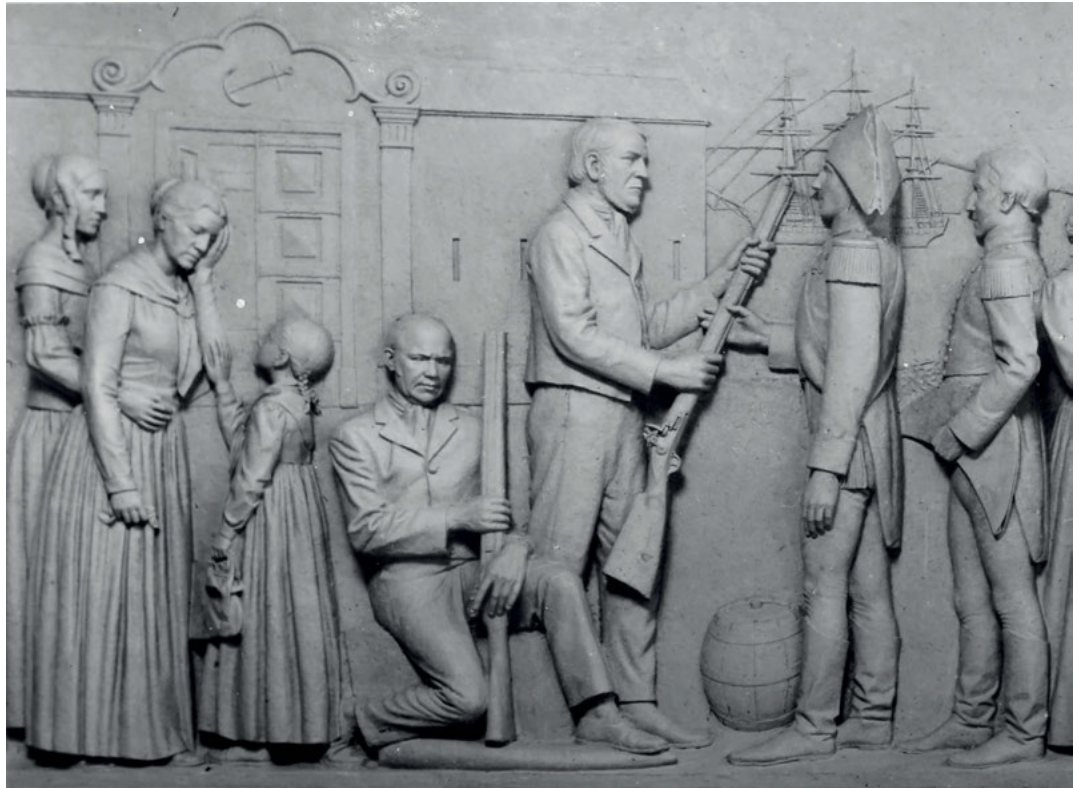


Figure 4.5: C2. *Delagoa Bay*. 1943–46. Clay. Full-scale relief (courtesy of Kirchhoff files; photo Alan Yates)

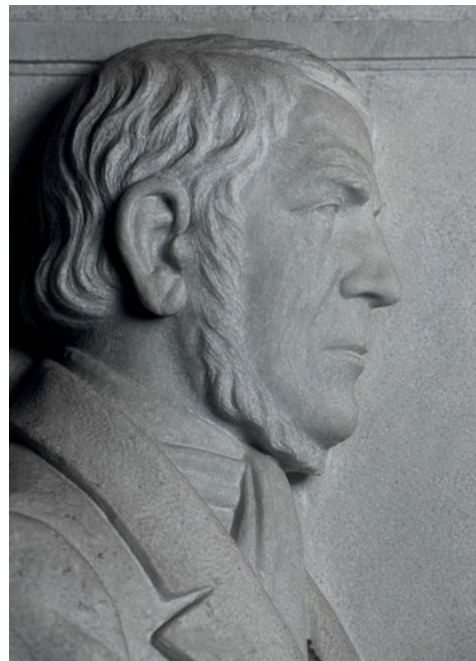
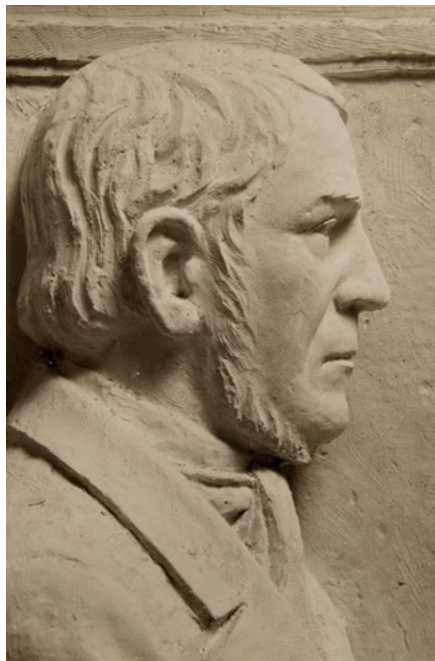


Figure 4.6: Portrait of Louis Trichardt in *Delagoa Bay*. Full-scale clay relief (left) and marble (right), details of figs 4.5, 4.1 (photos Alan Yates; Russell Scott)

now fully upright and taller than the governor. There are also changes in the detail, such as the governor acquiring a hat and his wife ringlets. Facial features are more individualised, which reflects the sculptors' use of models, particularly clear in the foreground figure, identified as Pfeffer, who, with a fuller head of hair, looks considerably younger than his seventy-eight years. A rare photographic detail of Trichardt's head in the full-scale clay panel allows us to appreciate not only the way the portraits were treated by the South African artists, but also, when we compare it with the final marble, the skill with which the Florentine sculptors copied his features, discussed in Part I (fig. 4.6).¹⁰¹

A remarkable change is the transformation of the small distant building into a stronghold with slit windows and a Dutch gable that fills the left background of the full-scale clay panel, and seems to have been invented for sham historical accuracy, although it now leaves little space for the harbour scene, necessitating the reduction of the ships to one. Once the full-scale clay composition was cast in plaster a further change must have been requested, as the simple roof line was replaced by crenellations, evidently to emphasise the defensive purpose of the concocted edifice to protect the port of Delagoa Bay.

As with *Departure*, the completion of *Delagoa Bay* in Florence was delayed, and could only be installed in the frieze after the inauguration of the Monument on 16 December 1949.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Chapter 4 ('From plaster to marble').

¹⁰² See Part I, Chapter 3 ('Homecoming').

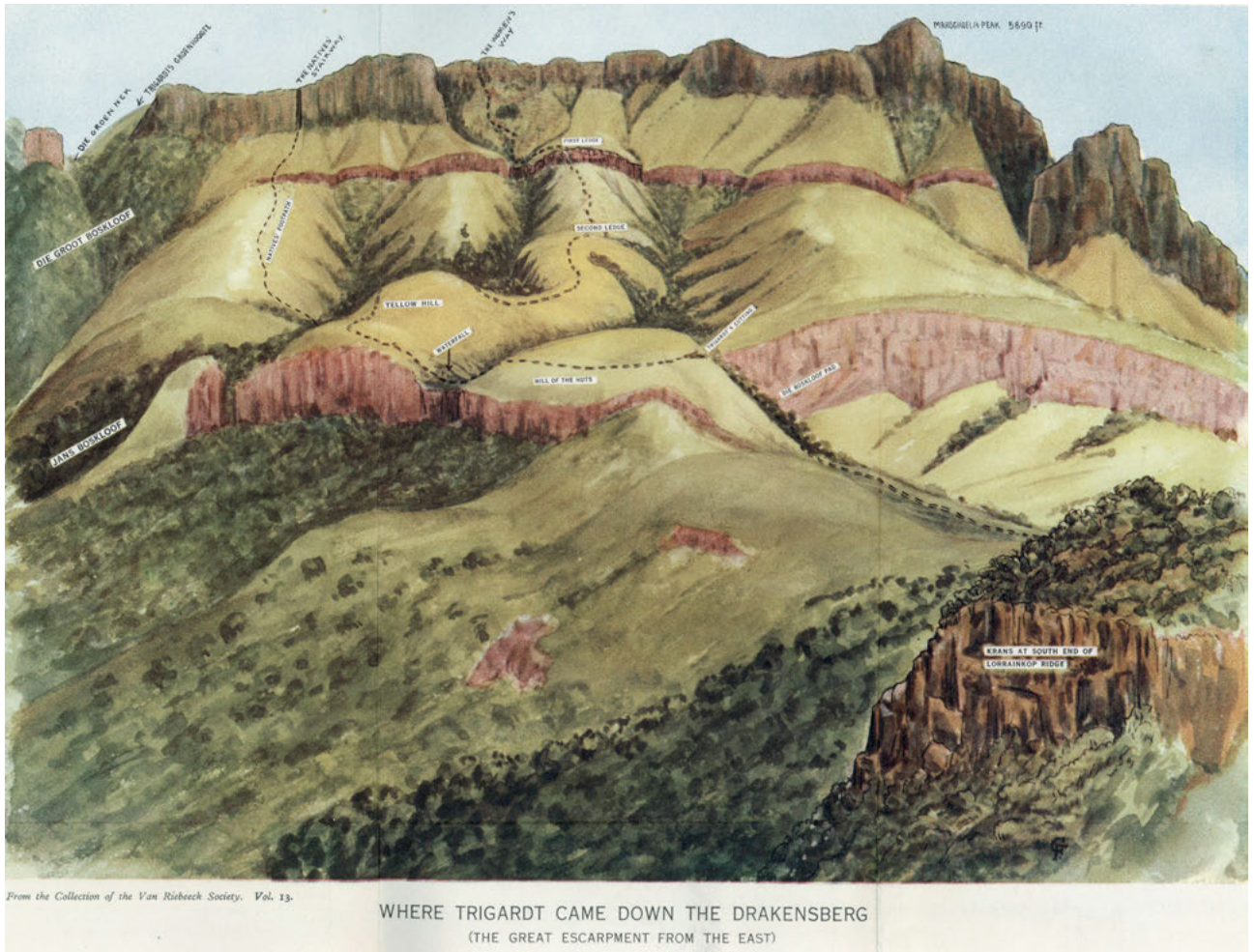


Figure 4.7: Claude Fuller. Pre 1927. Watercolour (Fuller, *Trichardt's Trek* 1932, foldout opp. title page)

Reading the narrative

Although the little settlement in the remote region of Soutpansberg had been reasonably successful, as represented in the previous panel, there were problems, not least of which was the difficulty of getting supplies: Trichardt's diary records letters to the Portuguese in Delagoa Bay requesting necessities.¹⁰³ After Trichardt had waited a year for Hendrik Potgieter's promised return, he decided to leave on 23 August 1937 for the Portuguese port.¹⁰⁴ The routes to the coast for travellers on foot, which he had learned about from Africans he was trading with, proved unsuitable for wagons and herds. Hence it took Trichardt's party an inordinate time to traverse the precipices of the northern Drakensberg, then the Bombo Hills and the Incomati River, a trek of incredible hardship, extreme heat, and deadly illness.¹⁰⁵ Claude Fuller's beautiful watercolour maps, published in 1932, provide a rare reconstruction of the meandering and forbidding journey mastered by the Trichardt party, condensed into a single frontispiece (fig. 4.7), and then a sequence of images showing the different stages of the trek (fig. 4.8). The later scenes *Descent* and *Return* give form to some of the drama of crossing this treacherous mountain range, but the route Trichardt followed was particularly difficult, and at times impassable, so that it was nearly eight months before his party reached the Indian Ocean. Trichardt recorded in his diary that the remaining oxen were so weak by the time they neared the fort at Delagoa Bay that they could barely pull the wagons, and he solicited a boat on the river to assist with their heavy goods.¹⁰⁶

The marble relief represents the arrival of Louis Trichardt's party at the Portuguese stronghold of Lourenço Marques (today Maputo) at Delagoa Bay on 13 April 1838,¹⁰⁷ where they were received by the Portuguese writer and governor, Captain Antonio Candido Pedroso Gamitto (1806–66).¹⁰⁸ Gamitto's status is highlighted by his well-turned-out uniform, based on that of a nineteenth-century naval officer, and the Portuguese officer behind him, probably meant to represent his personal adjutant. Both are in upright soldierly stance, contrasting with Trichardt's less formal pose as he presents his muzzleloader, although he stands taller.¹⁰⁹ There is also a distinction between the Portuguese and Voortrekker women, as the former shows the elegance of a settled and civilised existence, while the suffering Martha Trichardt's simpler dress is more appropriate for the hard life of the trek, although it shows no signs of wear and tear. She is echoed in miniature in her daughter Anna, who is nonetheless big for a five-year-old, perhaps suggesting her robustness as she was the only Trichardt daughter to survive.¹¹⁰

Six days after his arrival in Delagoa Bay, on 19 April 1838, Trichardt furnished Gamitto, at his request, with a census of his party. In summary, he listed five married couples; two widowers;

103 Trichardt was in contact with Delagoa Bay as early as 7 March 1837 when he tried to set up a trade contact (Trichardt ed. Preller 1938, 40–41). He wrote again on 10 April 1837 requesting cloth and sewing supplies (*ibid.*, 58) and yet again on 11 May 1837, when he added ammunition to his request, and tea, coffee and sugar needed by his wife (*ibid.*, 81–82). There is no record of any replies (unsurprising since he wrote in Dutch).

104 For Louis Trichardt, see *Soutpansberg*, and for Hendrik Potgieter *Vegkop* and *Kapain*.

105 Fuller (*Trigardt's Trek* 1932, 29–153) provides a minute reconstruction of the trek's route on the basis of Trichardt's diary (Trichardt ed. Preller 1938, xvii; see also 2–3), intensive geographical surveys and interviews with the 'Sikororo natives'; see also Ransford 1972, 48–57.

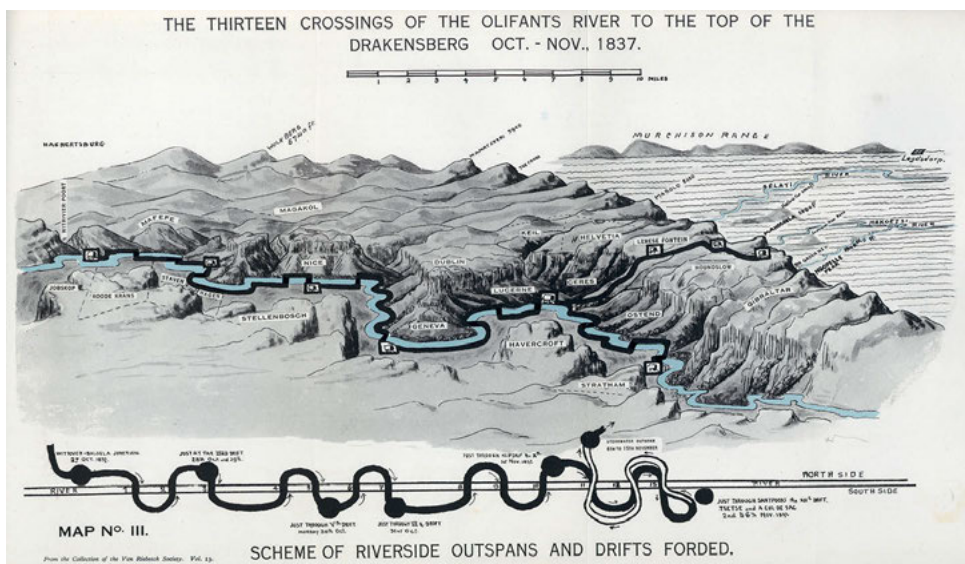
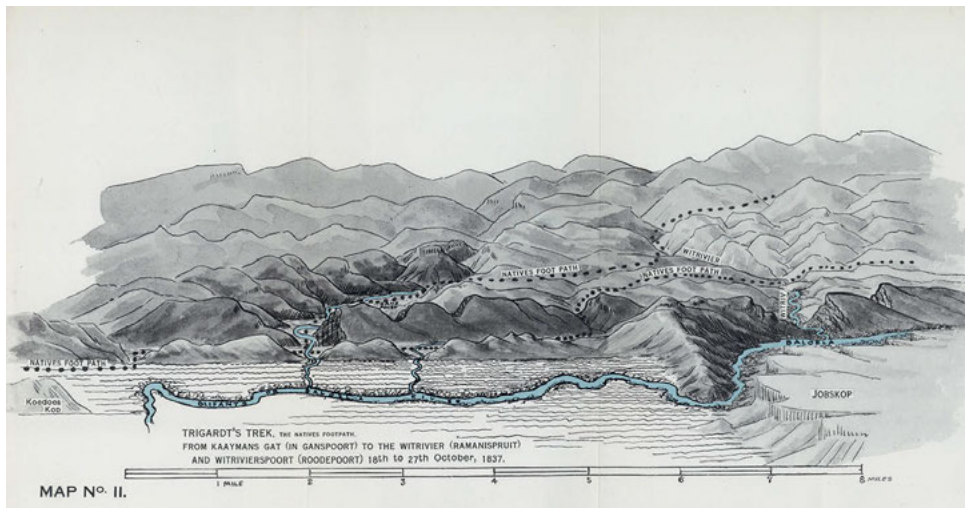
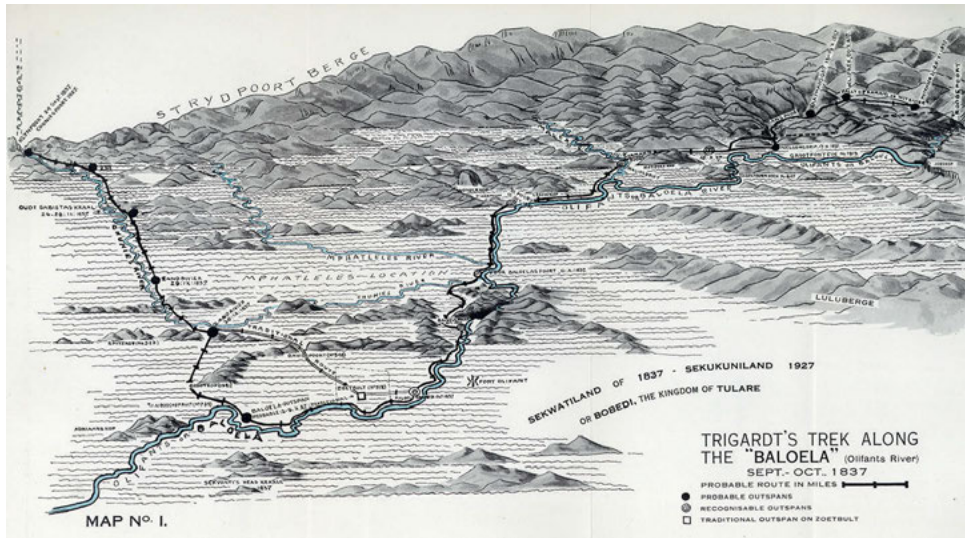
106 Entry for Thursday 10 April, Fuller, *Trigardt's Trek* 1932, 151–152; Trichardt ed. Preller 1938, 302.

107 Here and what follows, Chase, *Natal* 1, 1843, 70–71; Trichardt ed. Preller 1938, 303–324; Fuller, *Trigardt's Trek* 1932, 153–159; Walker 1934, 111–113; Nathan 1937, 101–127; Etherington 2001, 247.

108 For Gamitto, see Trichardt ed. Preller 1938, lxxxix–xc with n 129, xcvi–xcviii; Almeida de Eça 1950 (as governor of Lourenço Marques / Delagoa Bay, see *ibid.*, 97). We identify Gamitto, following Trichardt in his diary (ed. Preller 1938, 301 and *passim*), as 'Goeverneur' (governor).

109 The conventional story has it that the Voortrekkers fired salutes on their arrival at Delagoa Bay, misunderstood by the Portuguese, who then confiscated the Voortrekker guns (Grobler 2001, 78). This, however, is not backed by Trichardt's diary; see Trichardt ed. Preller 1938, 303–307; Fuller, *Trigardt's Trek* 1932, 154–157.

110 Anna was born in November 1832. For Trichardt's family, see Trichardt ed. Preller 1938, xlii–lxii; Fuller, *Trigardt's Trek* 1932, 163; Venter 1985, 34 fig. top right; Visagie 2011, 498–500.



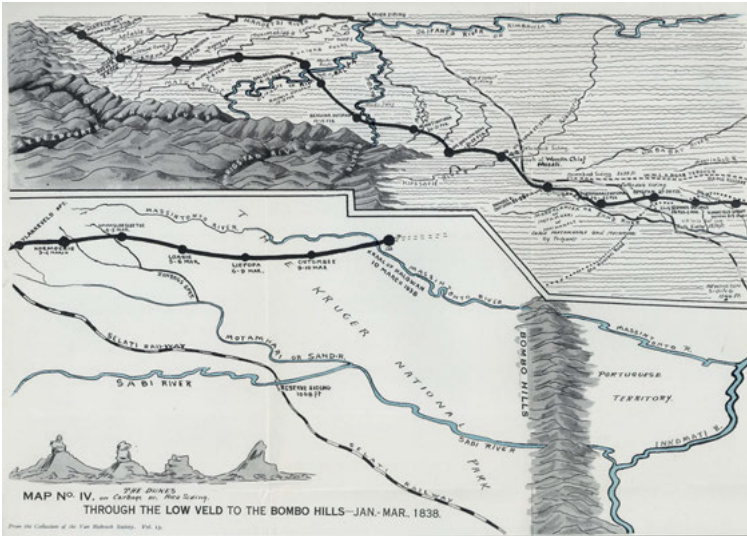


Figure 4.8: Claude Fuller. Pre 1927. Watercolour. Five maps showing different stages of Trichardt's trek from Soutpansberg to Delagoa Bay (Fuller, *Trichardt's Trek* 1932, foldout opp. pp.40, 56, 72, 128, 160)



Figure 4.9: Portuguese–Boer relations in *Delagoa Bay* – Trichardt handing gun to Gamitto; Gamitto’s wife supporting stricken Martha Trichardt. Marble, details of fig. 4.1 (photos Russell Scott)

one widow; eight sons over sixteen years; fourteen sons under sixteen years; four daughters over sixteen years; seven daughters under sixteen years; in total, forty-six ‘Christians, including the four half-caste children of Albagh’. He also specified one Mantatee over sixteen, three Bushmen over sixteen, and three Bushmen under sixteen, which gives a total of fifty-three. He concluded: ‘Two Mantatee (BaSuto) women are not included as they escaped a few days after we arrived at the Fort. (Sgd.) L. Trichardt.’¹¹¹

At Delagoa Bay Trichardt’s trek came to a disastrous end.¹¹² Many children had died on the journey, and many of the fifty-three trekkers who reached their goal had contracted malaria and perished miserably, including seventy-eight-year-old Daniel Pfeffer on 21 April, Trichardt’s wife Martha on 1 May, and Trichardt himself on 25 October 1838. He ended his diary on the day his wife died, adding only a single poignant entry on 10 August: ‘I had a quiet birthday, but will remember it.’¹¹³ According to Claude Fuller, a mere twenty-six Voortrekkers in Delagoa Bay survived, mostly women and children.¹¹⁴ It took a whole year before ‘Twenty-five [sic] Afrianders and three coloured

¹¹¹ Fuller, *Trigardt’s Trek* 1932, 162.

¹¹² Trichardt ed. Preller 1938, 312–313. Fuller (*Trigardt’s Trek* 1932, 162–164) provides additional information about the individuals, which of them survived, and the composition of the trekkers’ families, but the most detailed study is by Thom (1949, 59–76).

¹¹³ ‘1838, Aougust den 10de, had ik een stille verjaarsdag, dog zal daaraan gedenken’ (Trichardt ed. Preller 1938, 324).

¹¹⁴ Fuller (*Trigardt’s Trek* 1932, 164) breaks down the numbers as follows: ‘Total accounted for, 40. Unaccounted for, 6 boys. Survivors, 26.’ Of the adult males only Louis Trichardt’s son, Carolus Johannes (*DSAB* 1, 1968, 799–802; Visagie 2011, 498–499), seems to have survived. About a month before Trichardt’s death, he left the party in Delagoa Bay, on his father’s suggestion, according to Preller in his introduction to Trichardt (1938, xciii), to explore areas further north. It has been claimed (Nathan 1937, 126, 129–134) that he discovered the Victoria Falls (before Livingstone), doubted, however, in *DSAB* (1, 1968, 800). A few weeks after the survivors of Trichardt’s trek had left for Port Natal, Carolus stayed again with the governor at Delagoa Bay (*ibid.*, 801).



- 1 Madam Maria Eunia Da Fon-secca [sic], wife of the Portuguese Ambassador in Pretoria. She represents the wife of Portuguese governor of those times [João de Barros Ferreira da Fonseca]
- 2 Mrs Ackerman of the S.A. Women's Federation [for Martha Trichardt; see *Soutpansberg*]
- 3 Mr Jack Pauw, secretary of Transvaal Education Department. He represents Pfeiffer [Pfeffer]
- 4 Manuel da Silva Pereira, secretary of the Portuguese ambassador [for Portuguese governor]
- 5 A doctor from Mozambique who was in Pretoria for a special study course
- 6 After an old drawing of Louis Trichardt made in his lifetime [see *Soutpansberg*]

Figure 4.10: Models for portraits (Potgieter 1987, 16)

people embarked on the *Mazeppa* and arrived in Port Natal on July 20th [1839]. Their passage had cost £180'.¹¹⁵

The catastrophic calamities of Trichardt's trek were transformed in the relief into a representation of Afrikanerdom that celebrates imperturbable Voortrekker virtues. Even after the great adversity of their journey, the stoic Voortrekkers are depicted immaculately dressed and courteous in their behaviour. The Voortrekker leader and Portuguese governor conduct civil transactions as a stately act between white people. On the first day of his arrival in Delagoa Bay, when Governor Gamitto had sent for all the trekking men and women of Trichardt's party, Trichardt wrote:

After I had dressed, we all went together – Jan, Botha, Carolus, Albagh and Pieta.¹¹⁶ After formal greeting had been exchanged, the Governor ... asked me for a truthful statement of my reasons for leaving my native country. I replied to His Honour as follows: – 1st. That the boundary of two Colonies has been ruined by the Black nation; 2nd. That the [British] Government has put all slaves on a free footing; 3rd. That the Government has demanded that the Afrikanders be soldiers.¹¹⁷ Thereupon I said that I would go to the Portuguese coast. The Governor said that he would have to report to the Governor of Mozambique – which is the chief place of the East Coast of Africa, belonging to the Crown of Portugal. I told him that nine more wagons had accompanied me, as I had written to him, and that I understood that those people all had been murdered – 49 in number, not counting servants. Thereupon the Governor said he would give us a place where we could live as we liked. This concluded the interview.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Cory, *South Africa* 3, 1926, 20–21, 97 with n 1 (quote); see also Chase, *Natal* 2, 1843, 92 (the presented figures do not match). The *Mazeppa* was a trading schooner belonging to Mr J.O. Smith of Port Elizabeth, which also played a role in later conflicts between the British and the Voortrekkers; see Cory, *South Africa* 3, 1926, 141–149; Muller 1978, 80 fig. 4. The schooner and the Trichardt trek survivors are also mentioned in 'Voorstelle', item 4 (SVK, 5.12.1934), and the copy in ARCA PV94 1/95/1/7 has 'vir Pendentives' (for Pendentives) inscribed next to it.

¹¹⁶ Daniel Pfeffer and Hans Strydom are not mentioned, and the women did not attend either.

¹¹⁷ We adjusted Fuller's odd translation 'That the Government asks the Afrikander as soldier'.

¹¹⁸ Fuller, *Trigardt's Trek* 1932, 154–155 (Dutch text: Trichardt ed. Preller 1938, 304–305).

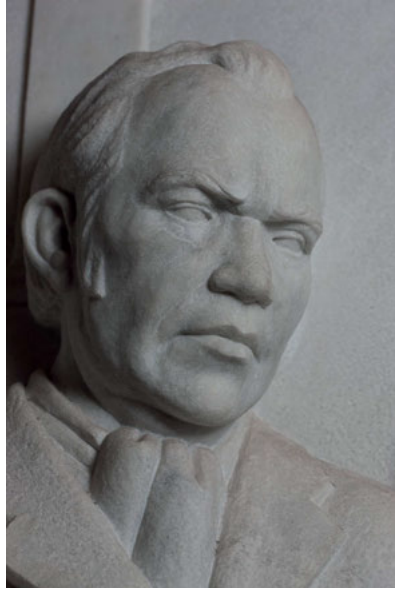


Figure 4.11: Portrait of school inspector Jack Pauw as Pfeffer in *Delagoa Bay*. Marble, detail of fig. 4.1 (photo Russell Scott)

In the cause of good relations, the Voortrekker men entrusted their weapons to the Portuguese, although we know from Trichardt's diary that they were extremely unhappy doing so.¹¹⁹ In the frieze the three women represent another example of admirable mutual rapport, in this case through the feminine solicitude of Gamitto's wife (fig. 4.9). The door of their residence stands open to receive Martha Trichardt in her suffering, although, for the sake of exemplary behaviour, her dire state is noticeably underplayed. To construct this scene as a model of civility and white solidarity, showing the support of the Portuguese (and by implication the lack of understanding on the part of the British), separate events have been conflated, as Trichardt recorded his wife's illness on 17 April, a week after their arrival, and she was only invited to stay by the governor's wife on 21 April.¹²⁰

Hennie Potgieter records that he modelled the portraits of Trichardt and his wife Martha after the same image and sitter as in *Soutpansberg* (fig. 4.10), yet portrayed them differently. In *Delagoa Bay* Louis Trichardt's lips are smaller and his features sharper than in *Soutpansberg*, in part because of the profile view. Was this meant to underline Trichardt's authority and determination? Or does it suggest the hardship of the trek, as is certainly the case with Martha Trichardt? In contrast to *Soutpansberg* where she is shown with a fleshy face and a double chin, her features in *Delagoa Bay* are more angular, her cheeks hollow and her eyes half closed. It is evident that these alterations were made to mark her fatal illness, even though in a rather measured manner. For Daniel Pfeffer, where there was no known portrait or suitable descendant, the best that could be done was to use an elderly model, even if not anywhere near the age of seventy-eight (fig. 4.11). What mattered was not the presentation of actual physiognomy but of distinction within the narrative or, in other words, to portray a model Afrikaner teacher – and we learn from Potgieter that the sitter was aptly the secretary of the Transvaal Teachers Department.

The symbolic dimension of *Delagoa Bay* is supported by the composition which, despite or because of the tragic end, underlines the special significance of Trichardt and his people for the nationalistic saga of the Great Trek. The main narrative with the Portuguese governor receiving the trek leader's muzzleloader and gunpowder keg¹²¹ is placed to the right so that Trichardt and the old pioneer Daniel Pfeffer are centre stage: both are credited with having established Afrikaner education in the northern hinterland of South Africa. Trichardt's wife and daughter underpin, as in *Soutpansberg*, the fundamental value of the Voortrekker family. The solidarity of the four Voortrekkers is strengthened by the way they are grouped together and framed by three Portuguese.

How much past narratives were modelled or remodelled in favour of Afrikaner ideologies is also manifest in the unique depiction of the sea. *Delagoa Bay* is the only image of the frieze where the narrative could be staged next to the sea, depicting a fortified harbour and a warship. Already in the 1930s the undated document 'Panele' listed 'the sea which will bring freedom' as tenth among

¹¹⁹ The Voortrekkers were dependent on their weapons for both hunting and protection, about which Trichardt made representations to the governor, who fairly soon returned them (*ibid.*, 305 and *passim*).

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 311, 314.

¹²¹ Not mentioned in Trichardt's diary.

fourteen possible topics for the frieze.¹²² This concept could be presented, it suggested, by the ship *Brasile*, on which the Natal trekkers had pinned their hopes of support from the Netherlands; and indeed a depiction of a ship was planned for one of the four pendentives of the Monument's Hall of Heroes, although never realised.¹²³ Links to Natal were also implicit in *Delagoa Bay* because the few survivors of the Trichardt trek were finally rescued and taken to Port Natal on board the *Mazeppa*. Such Voortrekker stories were sustained by the ongoing need for access to the sea, which had also been important for the ZAR, to maintain its independence from British ports. In 1872, President Burgers proposed to the Volksraad to have a railway line built from Pretoria to Delagoa Bay, which was finally opened by President Kruger on 8 July 1895.¹²⁴

122 'Die see wat vryheid sal aanbring', specified by 'die Brasilie. Ons soek kontak met Nederland' (the *Brasilie*. We seek contact with the Netherlands). For this ship, see Bird, *Natal* 1, 1888, 727, '1839–42. Narrative of Mr. George Christopher Cato', and Bird, *Natal* 2, 1888, 169–172, exchange of letters in May 1843 about the ship's status. For further references, see *ibid.*, 495, 'Ships, Brazilia'.

123 See Part I, Chapter 2 ('Topics for the Great Trek').

124 Berlage 1895.

5 The Battle of *Vegkop* (October 1836)



A3



B2



C2



D

5 Vegkop

East wall (panels 6–7/31)

h. 2.3 × w. 4.56 m (2 m of panel 6, full width of panel 7)

Restored fractures on vertical edges between panels 5 to 8

Sculptor of clay maquette: Hennie Potgieter

STAGES OF PRODUCTION

A1 W.H. Coetzer, pencil drawing (April–June 1937)

A2 Reproduction of A1 (June 1937)

A3 W.H. Coetzer, pencil drawing A1, h. 13.2 × w. 22.9 cm (after September 1937)

Annotations: ‘nog nie klaar’ (not yet finished) / ‘waens vasgemaak aan pale’ (wagons tied to poles) / ‘vrouens giet Kooels’ (women cast bullets) / ‘Vegtkop’ (Vegkop) / ‘Trekkeers Trek ’n boom in tussen die twee waens’ (Trekkeers pull in a tree between the two wagons)

B1 One-third-scale clay maquette, not extant but replicated in B2 (1942–43)

B2 One-third-scale plaster maquette, h. 77 × w. 123.2 × d. 8 cm (1942–43)

C1 Full-scale wooden armature, not extant (1943–46)

C2 Full-scale clay relief, not extant but recorded in photograph; replicated in C3 (1943–46)

C3 Full-scale plaster relief (1943–46), not extant but copied in D (1948–50)

D Marble as installed in the Monument (1950)

EARLY RECORDS

SVK minutes (4.9.1937) — item 4e (see below, ‘Developing the design’)

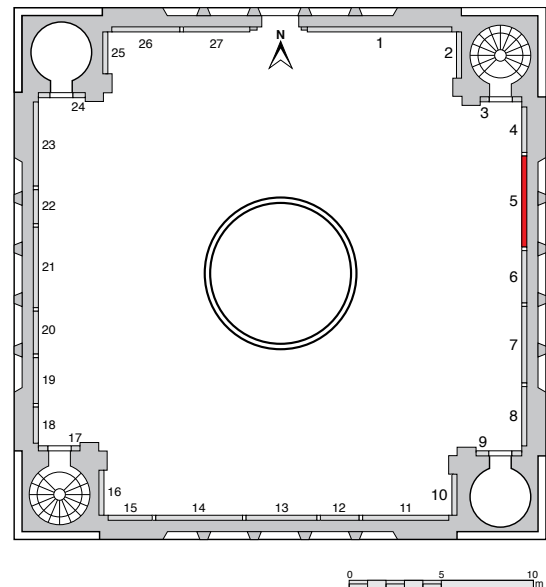
Voorstelle (5.12.1934?) — item 9 ‘Die slag van Vegkop, na die voorstelling van Egersdörfer’ (The Battle of Vegkop, following the representation by Egersdörfer)¹²⁵

Panele (c. 1934–36) — item 3 ‘Moelikhede om mee te kamp; b. die inboorling. B. Gevegte teen Kaffers / Vegkop of Bloedrivier. Die metode van verdediging: die rol wat vrou gespeel het indien dit kan’ (Difficulties the Voortrekkers faced; b. the natives; B. Battles against Kaffirs / Vegkop or Bloedrivier. The system of defence: the role that woman played, if this is possible)

Wenke (c. 1934–36) — item II. Dr. L. Steenkamp, mnre. A.J. du Plessis en M. Basson, A. ‘MAATSKAPLIK’ (SOCIAL), 3. ‘Verhouding met ander volksgroepe’ (Relationship with other ethnic groups), b. ‘Vegkop; botsing met die Matabele’ (Vegkop; clash with the Matabele)

Moerdyk Layout (5.10.1936–15.1.1937) — scene 5 on panel 8/31 ‘Vegkop’

Jansen Memorandum (19.1.1937) — item 7.5 ‘The battle of Vegkop (O.F.S.)’



¹²⁵ In the Jansen files copy of ‘Voorstelle’ (ARCA PV94 1/75/1/7) the reference to Egersdörfer is scored out.



Figure 5.1: D. Vegkop. 1950. Marble, 2.3 × 4.56 m (courtesy of VTM; photo Russell Scott)

Description

The Battle of Vegkop is presented from inside a laager of covered wagons (fig. 5.1).¹²⁶ Twenty-two Voortrekker men and women, all in formal dress, fight off, endure or succumb to an outside attack. The narrative is divided into three layers receding in space: eleven larger figures dominate the foreground; an equal number of smaller size defend the laager from directly behind the wagons; in the distance an army of half-naked Africans attacks the laager. With the exception of one who has been killed after forcing his way inside, only the heads and upper bodies of the attackers with their assegais, shields and clubs (knobkieries) are visible through the gaps on either side of the middle wagon. These are the attacking Ndebele, popularly referred to as Matabele at the time the Monument was being designed, if indeed they were awarded a specific name at all.¹²⁷

Larger even than the foreground groups, two figures stand, one on either side, facing inward to frame the *Vegkop* narrative, a woman on the left loading a muzzleloader, and a man on the right holding his gun, the Voortrekker leader Hendrik Potgieter. Seven women provide support for those fighting. On the left are two young women wearing kappies; one kneels to cast bullets, while the other reloads a gun with the newly made ammunition. The four assegais on the ground around them indicate their dangerous situation, although these weapons, like the others that strew the ground, appear more still life than life-threatening. In the centre two more young women care for a wounded man slumped on the ground; one kneels to bandage the ankle of his left leg, the other, wearing a richly adorned kappie, crouches behind him, the fabric of her skirt stretched across her thigh and buttocks, and her face turned away as though in grief. Her unusual pose, as she leans against the wounded man and cradles his left arm, creates an intimate closeness that suggests that he is a loved one.

Just behind them in the centre another group of three people is staged. Two young bareheaded women holding guns frame a boy standing between them, identified as the young Paul Kruger. Although all three are engaged in reloading guns using powder horns, his importance is marked by his central position and frontal pose, as well as the big wagon wheel in the background which acts like a surrogate halo. Yet another woman strides swiftly towards the combat, her action and the deep brim of her kappie directing our gaze onto the battle that takes place in the background.

Sheltered by three wagons positioned closely next to each other, the gaps thickly packed with thorn bushes, nine men and two women fight the Ndebele. To see over the wagons and fire on the attackers, they stand on a rough scaffold of planks supported on purpose-cut branches. At the left wagon, one Voortrekker shoots down attackers, another supports a falling comrade, wounded by a spear, and below them on the ground a youth crouches ready to fire on any intruders that might crawl through under the wagon, a dead black warrior already lying in front of him. Four more men fight from behind the centre wagon. On the left, one of them is precariously positioned between the two wagons to fire directly into the charging mass of attackers. In a brief moment of personal connection amidst the fighting, the second receives a reloaded muzzleloader from a young woman. The third man fires over the edge of the wagon cover, while the fourth uses his muzzleloader like a giant club, their guns in parallel as if to emphasise the Voortrekkers' deadly firepower that will overcome such terrible odds. Behind the third wagon a man and a woman are both firing into the attackers.

¹²⁶ For the place, see Raper, Möller and Du Plessis 2014, 526.

¹²⁷ Many contemporary documents speak only of 'kaffirs'. Following Laband (1995, 79–81) and others (e.g. Giliomee 2003, 162–163), we use the Zulu form 'Ndebele' when discussing the 'Matabele' people. Etherington (2001, xv–xvi, 256) sheds new light on the historical relationship of the two names: 'When he [Mzilikazi] first appeared on the highveld Tswana-speaking people called him king of the aliens – the "Matabele." By the time he had relocated to Zimbabwe, some may have begun to use the Zulu form of that word, Ndebele. On the map sketched by ... Adulphe Delegorgue [and published] in 1845, his name appears by the Limpopo River with the title "Roy des Ama Débelés", the earliest approximation to King of the Ndebele appearing on any printed page.'



Figure 5.2: A2. W.H. Coetzer. Reproduction of first sketch for *Vegkop*. June 1937 (courtesy of ARCA PV94 1/75/5/1; photo the authors)

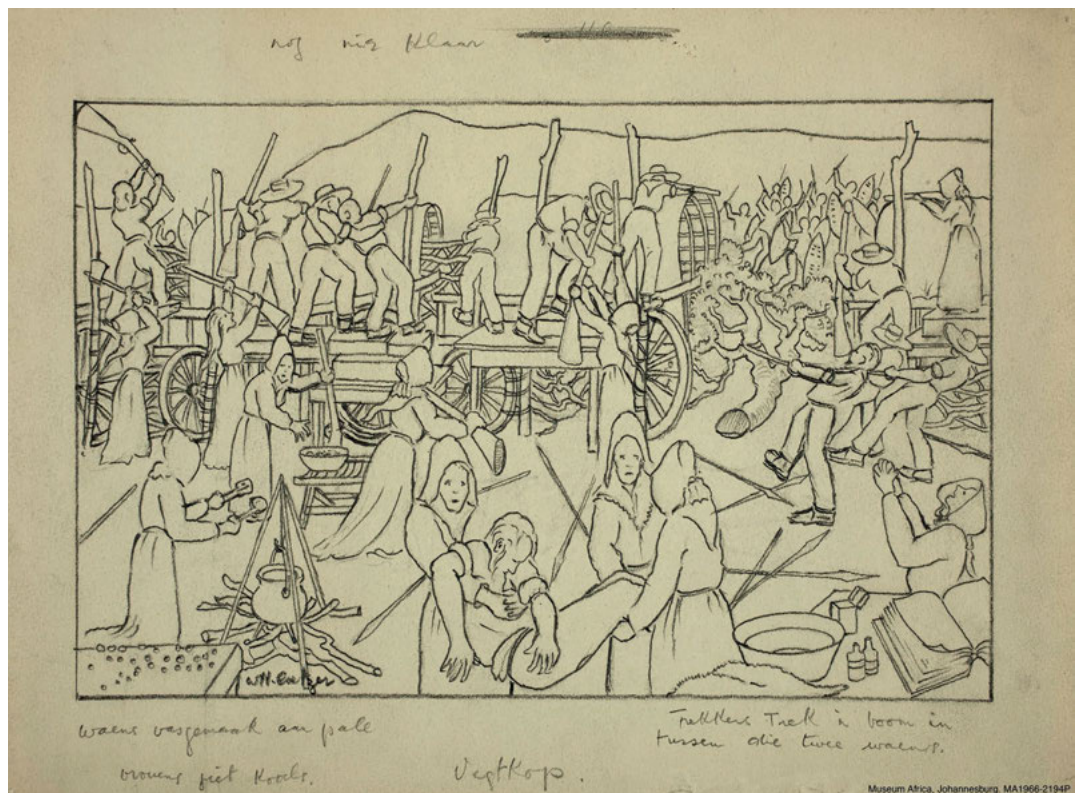


Figure 5.3: A3. W.H. Coetzer. 'Vegkop'. September 1937. Pencil, 13.2 x 22.9 cm. Annotated first sketch (photo courtesy of Museum Africa, no. 66/2194P)

Developing the design



Figure 5.4: W.H. Coetzer. *Vegkop – 16 Oktober 1836. 16 Oktober 1936*. Pencil drawing, 25.4 × 38.1 cm (Coetzer 1947, 106)

Coetzer's early interest in the conflict at Vegkop – and possibly also in the upcoming project of the Voortrekker Monument and its visual narrative – is shown in a drawing made on 16 October 1936 for the hundred-year anniversary of the battle (fig. 5.4). His close-up view inside the Voortrekker laager focuses on a woman tending a wounded man with two distressed girls nearby, while another reloads a gun with bullets she has been making for a man who takes aim at the invisible Ndebele enemy beyond the wagons. In his sketches for the frieze, Coetzer extended the view to embrace a wider scene of the laager interior. We have two identical Coetzer designs for *Vegkop*, the reproduction of the pencil drawing (fig. 5.2) and the same sketch annotated on or after 9 September 1937 (fig. 5.3), both almost purely linear, in contrast to his centenary drawing mentioned above (fig. 5.4). In the Historiese Komitee meeting on 4.9.1937 the following comment was offered:

Vegkop. Rework this scene according to existing paintings. See amongst others, one of Vegkop.¹²⁸

The painting referred to is most likely 'Vechtkop' by Heinrich Egersdörfer, made around 1900, which is also recommended as a model for this battle in *Voorstelle*, an early proposal (c. 1934) of historical scenes for the frieze (fig. 5.5).¹²⁹ Born in Germany, Egersdörfer (1853–1915) spent two decades

¹²⁸ 'Vegkop. Herontwerp hierdie toneel volgens bestaande skilderye. Sien o.a. een te Vegkop' (Historiese Komitee 4.9.1937: 4e).

¹²⁹ *Voorstelle*: 5.12.1934(?), item 9 (see above, 'Early records'). Muller (1978, 11 fig. 2), who illustrated the Vegkop painting, explained: 'Some 60 years later ... Heinrich Egersdörfer depicted the scene, evidently using information published a little earlier by G.M. Theal in his history of the Trek'; see also Venter 1985, 40–41, and Coetzee 1988, 179.



Figure 5.5: Heinrich Egersdörfer. *Zulus attacking a Boer laager*. c. 1896 (Museum Africa; Muller 1978, 11)

in South Africa where he became known as an illustrator and cartoonist of past and present incidents.¹³⁰ Of ‘far higher standard’ was his painting series “‘The Voortrekkers’”, with longbeards of the veld, the muzzle-loaders and velskoen shoes, in peace and in war’.¹³¹ Why, however, the *Historiese Komitee* demanded that Coetzer rework his drawing (A1), apparently according to Egersdörfer’s painting of Vegkop, is not easy to understand as the two are already very similar. Both share the basic composition of the final marble scene, with its focus on the inside of the laager and the array of different actions performed by men and women. In detail, however, the painting has a number of differences, notably the inclusion of children and Africans inside the laager. In accord with the dramatic battle fought in the heat of the day, Coetzer’s Voortrekker men, like Egersdörfer’s, are in shirt sleeves and broad-brimmed hats, even though the women, all but one in their kappies, are more formally dressed. But there are no children or African servants in his drawing. The three Voortrekkers who drag a tree to block the gap between two wagons in front of the charging Ndebele in the drawing must refer to the very beginning of the battle,¹³² not represented in the painting. Yet Coetzer’s Ndebele, though also restricted to the background, are somewhat more visible. Egersdörfer’s painting is distinct in having the dramatis personae clearly arranged in a semicircle, as if they act on a stage, while Coetzer shows them dispersed all over the laager. And in the background on the far left, Egersdörfer shows Ndebele driving away the Voortrekkers’ cattle, thus marking a crucial outcome of the battle discussed below. It may have been such differences the *Historiese Komitee* had in mind when requesting Coetzer to adapt his drawing in accord with the painting.

¹³⁰ Rosenthal 1960, 7–22 (bilingual edition).

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 12. See also ‘Series II The Voortrekkers’: https://www.joburgculture.co.za/museums_galleries/museum-africa/africana_notes/467_egersdoerfers_coloured_postcards/index.html.

¹³² Walker 1934, 124; Ransford 1972, 73; Etherington 2001, 250–251. Coetzer may be following the account of J.H. Hattingh (Preller, *Voortrekkermense* 1, 1918, 126–130), who describes such an opening blocked by a large thorn tree.



Figure 5.6: B2. Hennie Potgieter. *Vegkop*. 1942–43. Plaster, 77 × 123.2 × 8 cm. Maquette (courtesy of VTM Museum VTM 2184/1–28; photo Russell Scott)

As discussed in Part I,¹³³ Hennie Potgieter claimed that Coetzer’s drawings were inappropriate for sculpture,¹³⁴ yet, in the now lost new drawings that they made, the sculptors must also have utilised some pictorial conventions, since they find their way into the maquette for *Vegkop*. In this scene spatial recession and shifts of scale were needed to depict the scene, but figures cut off by the frame, which are common in Coetzer’s sketches, are studiously avoided. The composition of the small maquette (fig. 5.6) follows the concept of depicting the scene from inside the laager, a device used in all the known images of *Vegkop*. But, as regards the figures, it depends only broadly on Coetzer’s drawing. People and action are more clearly allocated to fore- and background. Entirely new are the two tall figures that were to frame the scene in its final form, which help to focus attention inwards onto the narrative, although the man is more actively posed than in the final form. The purpose of framing the scene is also somewhat disrupted in the maquette by the partial back view of a female figure standing behind the man, her skirt visible between his legs. Unclear in function, she would not survive in the full-scale relief.

The pose and arrangement of most of the Voortrekkers in the fore- and background of the maquette correspond generally with the final marble, although all the men were still shown in shirt sleeves à la Coetzer in the maquette, unlike the formally buttoned jackets of the final version. The charging Ndebele visible in the gaps on both sides of the centre wagon are also similar in concept. Two Ndebele figures were added in the maquette: one with assegai and shield peers over the central wagon and his dead kinsman lies, hardly visible, in the background next to the left wagon – he is the only Ndebele shown inside the laager and the only one of the two to survive in

¹³³ Chapter 3 ('Harmony Hall').

¹³⁴ Potgieter 1987, 41.

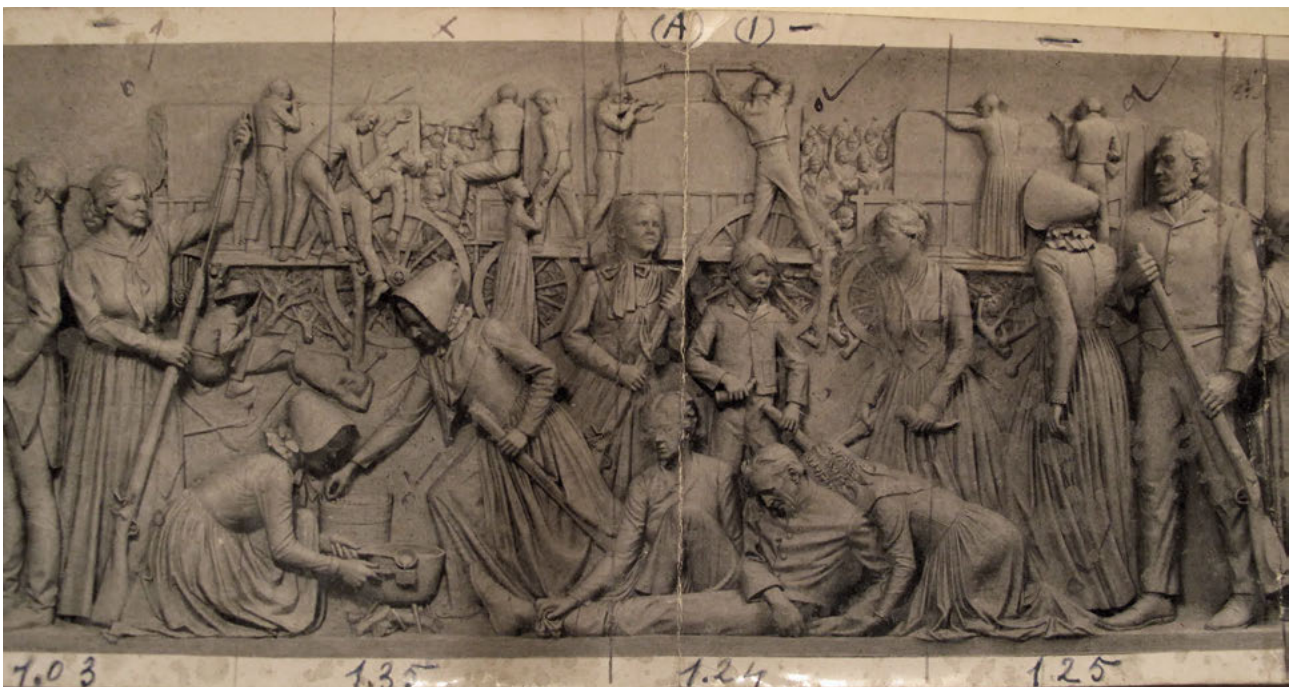


Figure 5.7: C2. *Vegkop*. 1943–46. Clay. Full-scale relief (above, courtesy of Kirchhoff files; below, courtesy of Romanelli files with pencil lines and measurements added for copy process; photos Alan Yates)

the final relief.¹³⁵ The Voortrekkers within the laager have been resolved into three main groups: women making bullets on the left, women tending a wounded boy in the centre, and two women with guns and a man striding towards the wagons behind them.

The most significant changes introduced into the full-scale clay panel (fig. 5.7) relate to the considerably wider proportions allocated to the marble panel. This allowed the sculptors to spread the composition laterally, to create more space for individual figures and to generate further clarity, even though the relief lacks the deeper pictorial space of paintings like Egersdörfer's. The framing figures, larger than those in the maquette, are now strictly separated from the narrative and delimit *Vegkop* from the two bordering scenes, *Delagoa Bay* and *Inauguration*. A unifying aspect is that all the men wear jackets, which, together with the women's immaculate attire, gives the battle a staged character. The two foreground groups are retained, but behind the wounded male, now a mature man not a boy, the centre is completely redesigned, and accommodates four figures instead of three. New is the prominent position of the boy Paul Kruger, and the introduction of two women positioned like guards on either side of him. The one on the left is a mirror image of the one on the right in the maquette, while the other is repositioned facing the opposite direction on the right. Yet another woman is seen in back view further to the right as she moves towards the fighting – perhaps a version of the woman crushed behind the framing male figure in the maquette, now released into the space supplied by the wider panel. The poses of the Voortrekkers fighting from behind the wagons, on the other hand, largely follow the ones in the maquette but add more detail. With the Ndebele peering over the wagon in the maquette gone, the Voortrekkers fully control the zone above the wagons' covers. To reinforce their superiority, the additional breadth of the panel permits yet another Voortrekker to join the woman who fires over the right-hand wagon.

¹³⁵ According to Etherington (2001, 251), 'not a single man managed to break into the ring of wagons'. But Willem Jurgen Pretorius recalled that the Ndebele 'rushed on the wagons, and tried to penetrate the thorny boughs that filled the interstices of the enclosure. Some succeeded in creeping through, but before they could rise to their feet they were killed by the women with hatchets and knives' (Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 232).

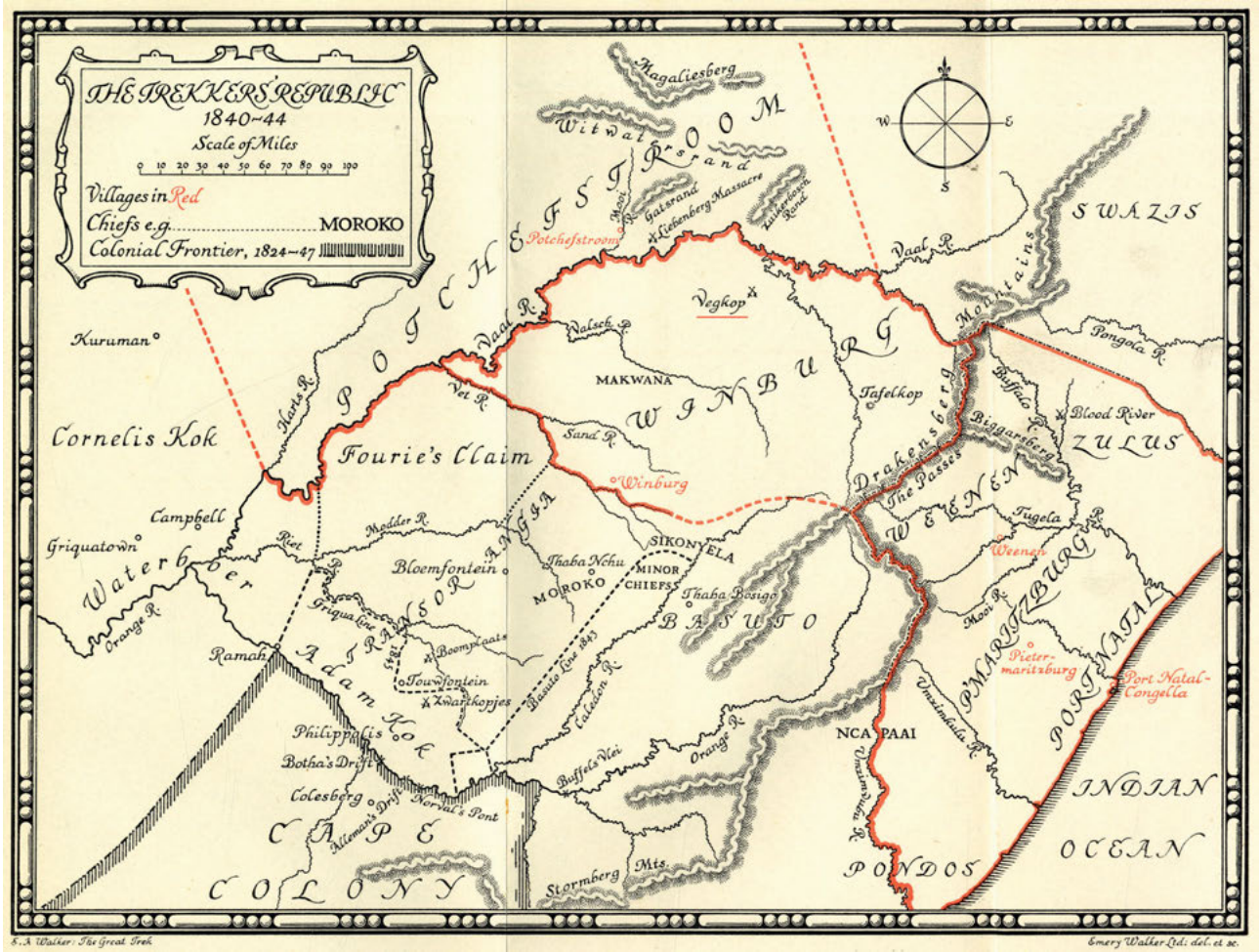


Figure 5.8: 'The Trekkers' Republic 1840-44', showing Vegkop (Walker 1934, foldout opp. p.226)

Reading the narrative

The inclusion of the Battle of Vegkop in the frieze rested on its being the first victory of the Voortrekkers over Africans they encountered in the interior (fig. 5.8).¹³⁶ The reasons for the battle were manifold, and we can only touch on the complex interests of the two opposing parties, the Ndebele and the Boers. Part of the many peoples in transit in southern Africa, the Ndebele, kinsmen of the Zulu, under King Mzilikazi kaMashobane (also called Umsilikazi), began to move into the Transvaal area in the 1820s. Here they started to settle around the upper end of the Marico River, claiming a vast territory, and Mzilikazi's kingdom 'grew rapidly as it absorbed conquered peoples and other Nguni refugees'.¹³⁷ Around February 1836, about six months after the Trichardt trek began, the Voortrekker commander Andries Hendrik Potgieter (1792–1852),¹³⁸ and one of the Boers' spiritual leaders, Sarel Cilliers (see *The Vow*), whose treks had left the Cape Colony separately, united their groups and began to trek north together.¹³⁹ It was an impressive convoy of about sixty families, a total of at least two hundred people, certainly more if servants are included.¹⁴⁰ When eventually this party was approaching the new territory of the Ndebele, looking for suitable land to settle, conflict between them was inevitable. On '3 March 1836, Mzilikazi's envoy, Mncumbathe, had concluded a treaty of friendship with Governor D'Urban in Cape Town' but, seeming to contravene that, 'out of the blue, without asking anyone's permission, white people came with wagons, women, children. Bags and baggage. Herds and slaves'.¹⁴¹ For obvious reasons, the Ndebele went on the warpath, and there were deadly attacks on groups of trekkers who had moved beyond the Vaal River, especially the small Liebenberg party and other Boers in their vicinity,¹⁴² while Potgieter was further north visiting Soutpansberg.

Once he had returned, in early September 1836 a Voortrekker party of up to forty men, seven boys, over sixty women and children, and an unknown number of black servants, with around forty to fifty wagons,¹⁴³ arrived in the area of Vegkop (occasionally called Doornkop), some twenty kilometres south of present-day Heilbron in the Free State (fig. 5.8). Apparently under the command of Potgieter,¹⁴⁴ the Boers did not leave confrontation with the Ndebele to chance as they had advance warning of the approaching enemy, a force of perhaps three to five thousand strong, led by the 'induna' (headman) Kaliphi.¹⁴⁵ A commando of more than thirty mounted trekkers rode to meet the Ndebele army, perhaps in an attempt to negotiate peace, as later represented by Isa Steynberg.¹⁴⁶ However, a Boer participant of the commando later testified that, before any negotiations could commence, one of the trekkers got 'nervous ... [and] fired his gun into the Ndebele ranks',

¹³⁶ The importance of Vegkop is underlined in the suggested topics of 'Panele', which propose that *either* Vegkop or Blood River should be represented, implying that the two have equal status.

¹³⁷ Rasmussen 1978, 3 (quote, p.6 with map), 7–132. See also Etherington 2001, 159–169, 172–173, 192–194, 196–201.

¹³⁸ Visagie (2011, 360–361), who also provides a list of Boer commanders (15).

¹³⁹ They probably joined near Boesmansberg, some one hundred and thirty kilometres south-west of Thaba Nchu (Visagie 2014, 44–45, 71, map opp. p.68). Etherington (2001, 249–250) adds, but without reference, that the 'sixty-five armed men in the [joint] party voted that Potgieter should be their commandant and Cilliers the deputy'.

¹⁴⁰ These figures are given by Rasmussen (1978, 118) and Giliomee (2003, 163).

¹⁴¹ Etherington 2001, 250. For Mncumbathe's delegation, see Rasmussen 1978, 113–114.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 118–120. See also Chase, *Natal* 1, 1843, 74 (report of J.G.S. Bronkhorst, 2.9.1837); Van der Merwe 1986, 3–44; Doucakis 2000, 505–506.

¹⁴³ The numbers vary. Charl Cilliers recalled in 1871 that 'the number ... of all capable of firing a shot was forty' (Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 240); Rasmussen (1978, 120) states there were about 35 adult men with about 50 ox wagons; Van der Merwe (1986, 53), probably 36 men and 50 wagons; Doucakis (2000, 506), 'about 40 wagons and 40 able-bodied men'; and Etherington (2001, 250), about 45 wagons, less than 40 trekker men.

¹⁴⁴ For the dispute about who was actually in command, Cilliers or Potgieter, see the analysis by Van der Merwe (1986, 90–96) and our further discussion of Vegkop monuments below.

¹⁴⁵ Van der Merwe's (*ibid.*, 51) deduction, after weighing all in the balance, with the Voortrekker estimates generally too high.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 62–63. See fig. 5.15a panel 1.

which caused Kaliphi to order his troops to attack.¹⁴⁷ The trekkers retreated and ‘fought as generations of commandos had fought before: dismounting, firing volleys, and then riding away to reload again’,¹⁴⁸ until reaching their laager that had been prepared for the attack.¹⁴⁹ The site chosen

on which to fight stood immediately below one of the few elevations that stand out of the plain separating Vaal and Sand rivers. It is a low koppie ..., a strangely unimpressive hill ..., afterwards to be known as Vegkop – fight hill. An active man can climb Vegkop within five minutes and from the top he will see the undulating veld stretching for many miles into the distance, and a scout standing there would be able to give long warning of the approach of a Matabele [Ndebele] impi. From its base on the south the ground falls gently away to a shallow spruit and is so devoid of cover as to provide a perfect killing ground to marksmen like the Boers.¹⁵⁰

Here, the trekkers had positioned their wagons and developed their laager into a strong fortress, ‘with the tongue of one wagon running under the wagon which stood next to it ... [and] all chained together’.¹⁵¹ The actual form of the laager is unclear as we have two opposing descriptions. Some time after 1841 Willem Jurgen Pretorius (1808–91),¹⁵² who was not part of the Potgieter party, stated that the trekkers had ‘hastily formed a fortified encampment (“laager”) – wagons drawn up in a square, thorn bushes (mimosa) being placed under and between the wagons, and interlaced between the spokes of the wheels’.¹⁵³ Johannes Gerhardus Stephanus Bronkhorst (1798/99–1848),¹⁵⁴ however, who himself took part in the battle, reported that the Ndebele could not enter the laager ‘as the wagons were drawn into a circle, and the openings closed with thorn branches; – between the wagon wheels and above the coverings we were obliged to shoot them, to prevent their entering’.¹⁵⁵ We follow Bronkhorst as he was an eyewitness and his account is endorsed by others.¹⁵⁶ It was a key episode in the Voortrekker story, with *Vegkop* providing an instructive example of the laager battle strategy so often employed by the Boers.¹⁵⁷ In accord with Bronkhorst, and following what became the standard form that would be repeated in the laager wall around the Monument itself, the Vegkop laager was represented in the frieze in the typical curved form, with the outermost of the three wagons each slightly turned to suggest that they are part of a larger circle. In the cause of creating a clear composition and showing fully the contribution of the women to the battle, descriptions of a ‘skuilplek’ (hiding place) of a few wagons in the middle of the laager to provide protection for women and children, described by a number of writers including Sarel Cil-liers,¹⁵⁸ were ignored.

147 Rasmussen 1978, 121 (quote), 222–223 n 160 (‘D.F. Kruger, in *Bloemhof*, 218, names John Robbertse as the offender’ – perhaps identical with Johannes Francois Robbertse; see Visagie 2011, 420–421).

148 Rasmussen 1978, 251.

149 In stressing the ‘military importance of the laager-system’ in the *Official Guide* (1955, 46–47), Moerdyk implies that the Vegkop laager was purely defensive, set up ‘in anticipation of attack’, but it could be deduced that, when the Boers adopted commando tactics after confronting the Ndebele, it was to deliberately draw them to the laager.

150 Ransford 1972, 69–70. For the battle site, see also Walker 1934, 121–123; Nathan 1937, 146–150 (opp. p.146 with sketch); Oberholster 1972, 225–226; Raper, Möller and Du Plessis 2014, 526.

151 Ransford 1971, 70.

152 Visagie 2011, 395.

153 Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 231–232.

154 Visagie 2011, 95–96.

155 Chase, *Natal* 1, 1843, 75 (report of J.G.S. Bronkhorst, 29.10.1837).

156 Montgomery ed. Giffard 1981, 119 (‘The space encircled by the wagons was but small ...’, when visiting the site on 3 October 1837). Van der Merwe (1986, 52–55), who discusses all the accounts, ultimately supports the circular description by Bronkhorst as eyewitness. He also provides a detailed description of the way the laager was set up (*ibid.*, 57–59).

157 Giliomee 2003, 163: ‘In the intellectual baggage of the Voortekkers were ... fighting techniques like ... the laager, a circle of wagons with thorn bushes jammed under and between the wheels [that] had probably first been used by frontiersmen in the First Frontier War of 1779–1781.’

158 See Van der Merwe 1986, 55–57.

The Battle of Vegkop commenced on a day in the second half of October 1836 and was decided quickly, perhaps in only '15 to 30 minutes'.¹⁵⁹ On the Voortrekker side, locked in their laager fortress, some one hundred people, less than forty of them trekker men, faced an army of up to five thousand experienced Ndebele warriors who, under the command of Kaliphi, attacked from all sides.¹⁶⁰ 'Clad in their battle dress of monkey- and cat-tail kilts, their arms adorned with braided ox-tails, they presented a splendid and terrifying spectacle.'¹⁶¹ But the Voortrekkers' defence system and deadly gun power, aided by the tactical munitions support of the women, children and servants, enabled the Boers to drive their attackers away.¹⁶² Sarel Cilliers, who does not mention Potgieter, implying that he himself was in command,¹⁶³ recalled in 1871:

Fearful violence was used by the enemy in their efforts to wrench away the thorn-boughs, but these had been well secured in the nicks of the drag-chains [brakes for wagon wheels]. The wagons were wrenched more than six inches beyond the outer line. When the fight was over, two men had been killed on our side, and fourteen wounded, of whom I was one. Round the camp, 430 of the enemy lay dead.¹⁶⁴ 1,172 assegais had been thrown into the camp.¹⁶⁵ Two horses were killed, and one wounded. The enemy then carried off all our means of sustenance.¹⁶⁶

It was something of a Pyrrhic victory, as the Ndebele drove off some five to six thousand cattle and forty-one thousand sheep and goats, leaving the Boers stranded (see *Negotiation*).¹⁶⁷

In the marble relief the battle is presented from a Voortrekker vantage point, similar to that chosen by Egersdörfer in the painting recommended by the Historiese Komitee, discussed earlier (fig. 5.4). The pen and wash depiction *Interior of Nel's camp during attack. 2 June 1846* by the Scottish artist Charles Davidson Bell (1813–82), a surveyor of the Cape Colony, also portrays trekker families fighting against invisible attackers, in this case from inside a rectangular laager (fig. 5.9).¹⁶⁸ The exclusive focus on the inside of the laager in the frieze means that the visual narrative of *Vegkop* is entirely dominated by the smaller number of Voortrekkers, while the spectacular army of the Ndebele is reduced to near invisibility, as their attack takes place in the distant background, beyond the protective wall of wagons. The foreground shows the collective achievements of Boer

¹⁵⁹ Doucakis (2006, 506, quote) is following Van der Merwe 1986, 77–78. While contemporary accounts of 1836 state that the battle 'lasted about fifteen minutes' (Rasmussen 1978, 122; Van der Merwe 1986, 77), Delagorgue (1997, 55) reports that 'the attack went on for an hour and a half' (perhaps including the action of the commando). For the debated date of the battle, see Etherington (2001, 269 n 26), who clarifies: 'The dates of the battle vary in different accounts, though all agree it took place in the second half of October 1836.' Despite further investigation, no consensus has been reached: see Kotzé 1950, 153 n 5; Rasmussen 1978, 222 n 154; Van der Merwe 1986, 96–100; Doucakis 2000, 504–505.

¹⁶⁰ For the numbers, see Van der Merwe 1986, 50–51; Doucakis 2000, 506. Delegorgue (*Travels* 2, 1997, 55) wrote in his diary (published 1845) that Mzilikazi, to avoid settlement of the trekkers in his country and 'to make off with many beautiful herds ... and white women and white houses (tents), ... decided to send ten thousand of his warriors against the Boers'.

¹⁶¹ Etherington 2001, 251.

¹⁶² John Montgomery (ed. Giffard 1981, 119), a British trader, who travelled past Vegkop a year later in the company of the trekker parties of Gert Maritz and Hendrik Potgieter, reported (3 October 1837), apparently based on what they told him, that '... when some of the Kafirs tried to get under the wagons ... [the] wives of the Boers were forced to defend themselves with their hatchets, cutting off the hands of their swarthy foes, and splitting their heads open'. For Montgomery's further narrative, see *Negotiation*.

¹⁶³ See Van der Merwe 1986, 90–96.

¹⁶⁴ Van der Merwe (*ibid.*, 87–90) thinks this was likely the total of those killed in the first skirmishes, the laager defence and the follow up, as contemporary accounts report about 150 dead around the laager.

¹⁶⁵ For the varying number of assegais in the laager, see *ibid.*, 75–77.

¹⁶⁶ Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 240 ('Journal of the late Charl Celliers, 1871').

¹⁶⁷ Chase, *Natal* 1, 1843, 75 (report of J.G.S. Bronkhorst, 29.10.1837); accepted by Van der Merwe 1986, 87. See also Smit trans. Mears 1972, 3 (20.11.1837; Dutch text: Smit ed. Scholtz 1988, 41), who, however, accounts only for Potgieter's losses.

¹⁶⁸ Simons (1998, 82 with fig.) remarks that 'Bell was certainly not present on this occasion during the War of the Axe', in which Xhosa, Khoikhoi, San, Boers and British clashed intermittently.



Figure 5.9: Charles Bell. *Interior of Nel's camp during attack. 2 June 1846*. Pen and wash, 17.5 × 24 cm (Bell Heritage Trust collection; Brooke Simons 1998, 82)

society in war: it highlights the advanced strategy of the fortified laager and the superior combat tactics of the men with the women and children who help, fight, prepare ammunition and reload rifles, and care for the wounded – the only set battle where women and children took part.¹⁶⁹ It was a singular demonstration of Voortrekker military planning and firepower that they overwhelmed the fighting tactics of the Ndebele warriors despite their enormous numbers.

The two large figures on either side, the Boer woman loading and the man holding a muzzle-loader, fuel this ideology further (fig. 5.10). Deliberately isolated from the narrative, they act as models of Voortrekker civilisation, and their statuesque stance prompts associations with figures of war memorials. The man on the right represents the commander Hendrik Potgieter. That he has a female partner opposite him stresses the important role women played during the Trek, and particularly in this battle. She may well be his wife of the time, Elizabeth Helena Botha, which would underline the importance of trekkers' families.¹⁷⁰ This connotation is heightened by the choice of Potgieter's great-grandchildren as sitters, Carel Potgieter and his sister Ella, identified by Hennie Potgieter (figs 5.11, 5.12). This iconic portrayal was no doubt intended to enhance the glory and memory of this Boer commander, who is, uniquely amongst the Voortrekker leaders of the frieze, presented in this way rather than as a participant in the narrative. And it seems that Sarel Cilliers is not portrayed at all, bringing Potgieter even more into the limelight, although Gustav Gerdener in 1919 named Cilliers the true 'Hero of Vegkop'.¹⁷¹ The exclusion of Cilliers and the obvious favouring of Potgieter may have been developed here by the sculptor Hennie Potgieter. He had been

¹⁶⁹ Already in 'Panele', a focus on 'the system of defence' and 'the role that women played' was suggested.

¹⁷⁰ Potgieter was to have four wives, Elizabeth Botha being the first, and seventeen children.

¹⁷¹ Gerdener (1925, 31–41; first edition, 1919), 'Die Held van Vegkop'. Duvenage (*Vegkop* 1986, 90–92), however, after detailing different views on the leadership at Vegkop, concludes, as does Van der Merwe (1986), that Potgieter was indeed the commander for the battle.



Figure 5.10: Large framing figures in *Vegkop*, posed for by great-grandchildren of Hendrik Potgieter, Carl Potgieter and Ella Stofberg, his sister. Marble, details of fig. 5.1 (photo Russell Scott)



Figure 5.11: Mrs J.H.M. (Ella) Stofberg, model for framing woman in fig. 5.10 (Van der Walt 1974, 80)

given the biography *Kommandant-Generaal Potgieter* by his great-grandson, who co-wrote the book, which has the Voortrekker leader as the victorious commander at Vegkop¹⁷² – and also at Kapain, which the sculptor proposed as an additional topic for the frieze. This would have been approved by the Historiese Komitee as it matches an overall choice of Potgieter as one of the key Voortrekker leaders, if we judge by the election of Retief, Pretorius and Potgieter (along with the Unknown Voortrekker) for the gigantic figures on the corners of the Monument – and that three of their female descendants were chosen to lay the foundation stone of the Monument. Gerdener, on the other hand, omitted Potgieter from his ‘voortrekker hagiography, listing: “Pieter Retief, the Martyr of the Great Trek, Andries Pretorius, the Warrior of the Great Trek, and Sarel Cilliers, the Prophet of the Great Trek”’.¹⁷³

In the frieze Hendrik Potgieter as sole victorious leader at Vegkop is undisputed. Yet his position in the scene, adjacent to the battle rather than part of, might suggest some ambivalence. Given Cilliers’ statement about himself being among those injured, the informed viewer might wonder whether the reclining Boer in the foreground recalls him – apparently wounded like Cilliers in the leg – a figure distinguished by his suffering posture and central placement between the two flanking women who care for him. Yet in the account by Hennie Potgieter, the prominent wounded man remains anonymous. Whether by accident or intention, the Boer’s pose echoes the famous statue of the Dying Gaul, a Roman copy after a Hellenistic sculpture designed for a war memorial in

¹⁷² The gift is recorded in Potgieter 1978, 42. The account in Potgieter and Theunissen (1938, 61, 62, 65) does mention Sarel Cilliers’ presence, taking part in the preliminary patrol, and particularly as leading prayers in the laager.

¹⁷³ Thompson 1985, 181 (quote; Afrikaans text: Gerdener 1925, 11). For Gerdener’s ‘Afrikaner nationalist mythology’, see *The Vow*.



- 7 Dr Carel Potgieter, lawyer and [great] grandson of trek leader A.H. Potgieter, also brother of Mrs C.F. Ackerman [and Mrs Stofberg]. H.J.P. Duvenage was the model for the body
- 8 Mrs Ella Stofberg, sister of Mrs C.F. Ackerman and Dr Carel Potgieter, wife of the Rev. Jan Stofberg, mission secretary of the Dutch Reformed Church [see Van der Walt 1974, 80]
- 9 Dr [W.J. du Plooy] Erlank, the poet Eitemal
- 10 Natalie de Villiers, Superintendent of the Harmonie Girls' Hostel [see Van der Walt 1974, 82]
- 11 Bettie Scholtz Potgieter, wife-to-be of the sculptor Hennie Potgieter
- 12 Babette Vaandrager, friend of the sculptor Laurika Postma [the model for her body and that of the back-view walking woman to the right was Martso Strydom, née Terblanche]
- 13 Miss Stander, student
- 14 Miss Kriel, student
- 15 Louis Jacobs, great-grandson of President Paul Kruger. Here he represents Paul Kruger as a twelve-year-old [in fact eleven-year-old] boy. The gun in his hand was a double-barrelled gun with grooved barrel that had belonged to Andries Pretorius [see Van der Walt 1974, 80. Werner Kirchhoff posed for the body]
- 16 Elsie van Dyk, a student

Figure 5.12: Models for portraits (Potgieter 1987, 16)



Figure 5.13: Young Paul Kruger in *Vegkop* (marble, detail of fig. 5.1), posed for by his great-grandson Louis Jacobs, pictured on right (photos Russell Scott; Van der Walt 1974, 80)



Figure 5.14: Coert Steynberg. Colossal bronze statue of a trekker. Vegkop Monument, inaugurated 10 October 1984 (photo courtesy of www.boerenbrit.com/dsc07011)

Pergamon, commissioned by King Attalus I to mark his victory over the Gauls in the third century BCE.¹⁷⁴ Although a ‘barbarian’, the Dying Gaul became an archetypal image of a noble wounded warrior.

Another key figure of the narrative is the prominently staged boy representing Stephanus Johannes Paulus Kruger, the future president of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (1883–1900), who took part in the Battle of Vegkop at the age of eleven (fig. 5.13).¹⁷⁵ He is portrayed with a double-barrelled muzzleloader modelled on one that had belonged to the Voortrekker leader Andries Pretorius.¹⁷⁶ The sitter for his portrait was again a family member, Louis Jacobs, one of Paul Kruger’s great-grandsons, thus referencing the future leader, anticipating the successful establishment of an Afrikaner state once independence had been won, and embodying the president’s ongoing legacy over a hundred years later.

As Vegkop represented the first occasion when the Voortrekkers defeated an army of African inhabitants in the hinterland, its representation could be understood to look forward to future triumphs, and the significance of the event is given weight by the way it is portrayed. While, in contrast to the previous scenes, *Vegkop* depicts a scene of action, the staged quality of the figures is maintained, and the formal solemnity of their presentation lends the scene status and dignity.

The site of Vegkop has been lavishly endowed with Afrikaner memorials, but they do nothing to resolve the conflicting accounts of the leadership in the famous battle.¹⁷⁷ The Dutch inscription of an early monument, erected on 2 October 1883, venerates Sarel Cilliers as the only victor

¹⁷⁴ Stewart 2014, 75–76 fig. 41, 79 fig. 43.

¹⁷⁵ *DSAB* 1, 1968, 445; Visagie 2011, 259 (Kruger’s father, Casper Jan Hendrik). Paul Kruger was among those who later named Cilliers as the leader at Vegkop (Van der Merwe 1986, 91).

¹⁷⁶ Potgieter (1987, 47) recounts that, while posing, Louis Jacobs spotted the inscription ‘A.W.J. Pretorius’ on the gun and thus identified the previous owner. The model for his body, however, was Peter Kirchhoff’s twelve-year-old son Werner, who was also a friend of Louis Jacobs.

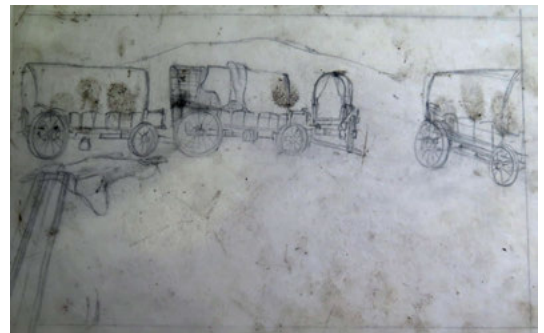
¹⁷⁷ For photographs of most of the Vegkop monuments, see <https://tekkies.wordpress.com/2009/05/04/die-slag-van-vegkop/#jp-carousel-1953> and <http://www.boerenbrit.com/archives/1351>. We gratefully acknowledge the help of Quarta Pretorius who published the first guide to the Vegkop monuments (2011), which she kindly sent to us (for the 1984 monument, see 22–29). We further thank her, Nicolene Pretorius and Corne van der Merwe for a set of new photographs, provided by André Pretorius Photography.



1 Meeting with the Ndebele



2 Preparations before the attack



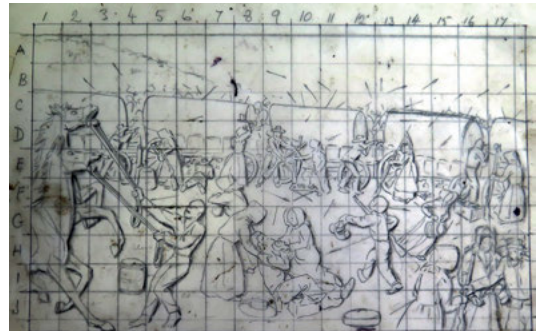
3 Prayers for rescue



Figure 5.15a (1–6): Isa Steynberg. The reliefs of Vegkop Monument. Bronze, each 90 × 139 cm. Inaugurated 1984 (courtesy of Vegkop Monument; photos André Pretorius Photography)



4 The attack



5 Ndebele flee



6 Help from the Rolong

Figure 5.15b: Isa Steynberg. Four drawings (UP Archives, Postma Folder 12; photos the authors)

of Vegkop.¹⁷⁸ For the 1936 centenary, some fifty years later, the site was proclaimed a national monument, commemorated in a bilingual (Afrikaans/English) bronze plaque now referring to two leaders, Sarel Cilliers and Hendrik Potgieter. On 1 November 1938, during the nationwide re-enactments of the historical treks for the centenary of Blood River, the Free State ossewa trek visited Vegkop in six wagons,¹⁷⁹ and the wheels of the one christened *Sarel Cilliers* were driven through wet cement as a record of the event, and the type of gun that Cilliers used at Vegkop was also imprinted, so that the focus was again on him. To commemorate the occasion, participants gathered stones for a cairn ('klipstapel'), one of a number that have been cemented together over the years, a tradition that has continued at the site:¹⁸⁰ this one incorporated a stone from Cilliers' farm Doornkop.

When the foundation stone of the Voortrekker Monument was laid during the 1938 ceremonies, Henning J. Klopper, a founder of the Afrikaner Broederbond and the leader of the 1938 trek, praised Cilliers as 'the great evangelist and spiritual Paul of the Great Trek' (die groot evangelis en geestelike Paulus van die Groot Trek).¹⁸¹ Nearly half a century later, now under the apartheid regime, the Board of National Monuments of South Africa commissioned a new Voortrekker victory monument for the site from a favoured Afrikaner sculptor, Coert Steynberg (1905–82).¹⁸² He created a twice-life-size bronze statue of a trekker installed on a very high base of stones (fig. 5.14),¹⁸³ a monumental variant of the earlier 'klipstapels' on the site. It was to be his final commission, and one that embodied the perpetuation of concepts celebrated in earlier memorials there and in the Voortrekker Monument some forty years before. The inauguration on 10 October 1984, believed to be the 148th anniversary of the Battle of Vegkop,¹⁸⁴ celebrated with a torch relay of young Voortrekkers and a large gathering, was reminiscent of the events at the Monument in 1938 and 1949. Echoing the same national sentiments, the narrative of the Monument's frieze was extended here in a series of six bronze reliefs mounted on the curved walls that frame the free-standing sculpture. Each measuring 0.9 m in height and 1.39 m in width, the reliefs were made under Steynberg's tutelage by his daughter, Isa (married name Wiechers), and all but one cast before his death.¹⁸⁵

Remembering Hennie Potgieter's claim that Coetzer's drawings were inappropriate for sculpture, it is interesting that here we have a series of hitherto unknown sketches by a sculptor for the bronze reliefs. Isa Steynberg's unsigned drawings are housed in the Special Collections of the University of Pretoria, in the Laurika Postma Collection Folder 12 – hence erroneously suggesting that they were made by Postma or one of the frieze sculptors. But they in fact match four of the six bronze reliefs at Vegkop, detailed below, excluding only the first and the last. Like Coetzer's drawings for the Monument frieze, they are quite pictorial in approach, with a strong sense of recession, suited to the outdoor settings of the events associated with the story of Vegkop – a style in the tradition

178 Nathan 1937, figs opp. p.150. Nathan's early photographs (by South African Railways) show only the original inscription we mention, in a detail of the framed bottom panel of the three-tiered monument. More recent photographs, however, show the memorial with a second inscription panel with the date 1883, which refers to both Cilliers and Potgieter.

179 According to Pretorius (2011, 16), the wagons that called on Vegkop were *Louis Trichardt*, *Piet Retief*, *Hendrik Potgieter*, *Andries Pretorius*, *Vrou en Moeder* (Wife and mother) and *Sarel Cilliers*.

180 *Ibid.*, 44.

181 Mostert 1940, 453–458 (memorial and quote *ibid.*, 455–456).

182 For the sculptor and this monument, see *Blood River*.

183 The huge bronze figure was installed using a helicopter, which also brought the architect, with Mrs Betsie Steynberg and Isa, to the inauguration (Pretorius 2011, 26).

184 As stated above, the exact date of the battle which took place in the second half of October 1836 is unknown. The date of 10 October might have been chosen as it was the 159th anniversary of the birthday of the later ZAR president, Paul Kruger.

185 Our thanks to Isa Steynberg, who supplied this information (email 23.5.2017), and modestly writes of being her father's 'leerjonge' (apprentice) at the time, although she is an artist in her own right. She recalls that the main figure and five of the panels were cast by Hendrik Joubert, who undertook much of Steynberg's casting, and the remaining one by Jo Roos.

of Van Wouw's relief panels and those of her father.¹⁸⁶ The chronological sequence of the reliefs designed by the Steynbergs (fig. 5.15) unfolds a narrative developed within the Afrikaner account of the Great Trek, and expands on the two scenes at the Voortrekker Monument, *Vegkop* and *Negotiation*. The titles are included on the Vegkop panels: 'Ontmoeting met impi' (Meeting with the Ndebele), 'Voorbereiding teen aanval' (Preparations for the attack), 'Smeekbede om redding' (Prayers for rescue), 'Die aanslag' (The attack), 'Matabeles vlug' (Ndebele flee), which includes a charge on horseback not unlike *Blood River*, and 'Hulp van Barolong' (Help from Rolong). Like the marble frieze, the bronze reliefs celebrate exemplary virtues developed within the Afrikaner concept of the Voortrekkers, regarding not only their Christian faith, their willingness to negotiate with African people, and the eagerness of the latter to comply, but also their right to rule the land they conquered.

The bilingual inscription (Afrikaans/English) with the headline 'Symbolism of the Monument' (purposefully?) picks out neither Potgieter nor Cilliers by name. Focusing on the free-standing sculpture, not the reliefs, it reads like a late subtext to the Voortrekker Monument:

The stacked stones of the base symbolize the encompassing threat to the past and to the present – the total onslaught against Christian civilisation. From this hostile situation there arises the powerful figure of a leader [Coert Steynberg's bronze statue]. Although one foot is rooted in conflict, he has unflinching faith in victory. In his left arm he holds the Holy Bible and in his right hand a fire-arm, which in noble submission to God points downwards and against which hostile assegais break and snap.

The sculptor has embodied in the monument the words Ephesians 6:16: 'Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.' With this inspiring Word of God in our hearts and through responsible resilience victory is guaranteed for us.¹⁸⁷

This Christian rhetoric, appropriated in favour of the Afrikaner cause of the day, refers as much to its own time as it did to the historical event. It is a reprise four decades later of the efforts to affirm Afrikanerdom in the building of the Voortrekker Monument in the 1930s and 1940s, leading up to the victory of the National Party, even as the principles of the party were gradually disintegrating.

186 It is beyond the scope of our book to tackle the further implications of the discovery of these Steynberg drawings though they, as also the Vegkop Monument, require more attention.

187 Quote after a photograph of the Monument's inscription. It seems extraordinary that this 1984 wording is repeated in the more recent official pamphlet 'Symbolism of Vegkop Monument (Vegkop 1836–2011)', in a slightly different form but with little modification of sentiment, despite the changed political dispensation in South Africa.

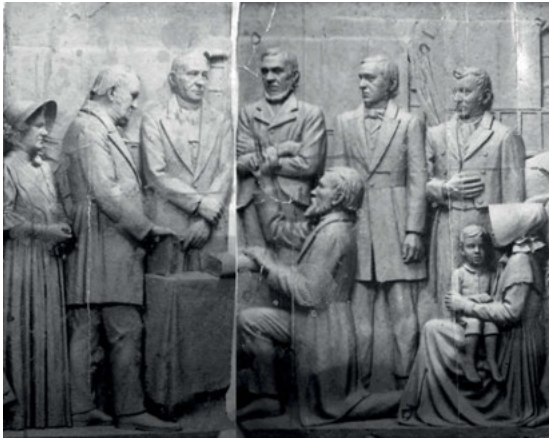
6 *Inauguration* of Retief as governor (6 and 11 June 1837)



A2/A3



B2



C2



D

6 Inauguration

East wall, central image (panel 8/31)

h. 2.3 × w. 2.82 m (c. 10 cm overlap with panel 7)

Restored chipped and uneven vertical edges between *Vegkop* and *Kapain*

Sculptor of the clay model: Hennie Potgieter

STAGES OF PRODUCTION

A1 W.H. Coetzer, pencil drawing, retained only in A2 (April–June 1937)

A2 Reproduction of A1 (June 1937)

A3 W.H. Coetzer, revised pencil drawing A1, h. 13.4 × w. 15.2 cm
(after September 1937)

Annotations: ‘Erasmus Smit. Maritz / Inswearing van Retief’
(Swearing in of Retief)

B1 One-third-scale clay maquette, not extant but replicated in B2 (1942–43)

B2 One-third-scale plaster maquette, h. 77 × w. 76 × d. 8.5 cm (1942–43)

C1* Full-scale wooden armature, not extant (1943–46)

C2* Full-scale clay relief, not extant but recorded in photograph; replicated
in C3 (1943–46)

C3* Full-scale plaster relief (1943–46), not extant but right part of the scene
illustrated (*Die Vaderland*, 26.2.1945);
copied in D (1948–49)

*were developed in two halves, the right half before 1945, the left half later

D Marble relief as installed in Monument (1949)

EARLY RECORDS

SVK minutes (4.9.1937) — item 4g (see below, ‘Developing the design’)

Voorstelle (5.12.1934?) — item 8 ‘Groot Trek te Winburg. Retief se inswering en wetgewing (insonderheid indien
moontlik om dit te laat uitkom: afgekondigde verhouding tot inboorlinge, wet teen grasbrand en vir wil[de]-
beskerming) Laertoneel (miskien soos in “Voortrekkerrolprent” gesien.) Voortrekkervlag, voormanne rondom
tafel gegroeppeer, ens.’ (Great Trek at Winburg. Retief’s inauguration and law-giving [especially, if possible to
bring it to light: proclaimed relationship with natives, law against veld fires and for game protection.] Scene in
laager [perhaps as seen in the Voortrekker film.] Voortrekker flag, leaders grouped around table, etc.)

Panele (c. 1934–36) — item 2 ‘Inswering van Piet Retief. Boere was ordeliwende mense. Erasmus Smit’ (Inauguration
of Piet Retief. Boers were law-abiding people. Erasmus Smit)

Wenke (c. 1934–36) — item II. Dr. L. Steenkamp, mnre. A.J. du Plessis en M. Basson, B. ‘KONSTITUSIONEEL’ (CON-
STITUTIONAL), 1. ‘Inauguration van Piet Retief, Gert Marits en ander amptenare deur Erasmus Smit op 6 Junie,
1837’ (Swearing in of Piet Retief, Gert Maritz and other officials by Erasmus Smit on 6 June 1837)

Moerdyk Layout (5.10.1936–15.1.1937) — scene 7 on panels 10–11/31 ‘Winburg Inswering Retief’ (Winberg Inaugura-
tion Retief)

Jansen Memorandum (19.1.1937) — item 7.7 ‘The Voortrekkers at Winburg. Taking of oath by Piet Retief’

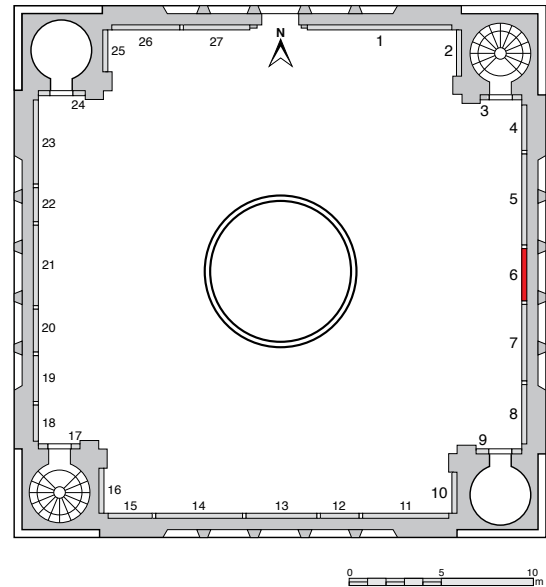




Figure 6.1: D. Inauguration. 1949. Marble, 2.3 × 2.82 m (courtesy of VTM; photo Russell Scott)

Description

Seven Voortrekker adults and a baby witness the swearing-in ceremony for Piet Retief (fig. 6.1). Shown in strict profile and with a full beard, Retief kneels on one knee next to a cloth-covered table. It supports a large volume on which Retief's left hand rests: he is swearing on the Bible. His other arm is raised and his hand with two fingers extended is reminiscent of a religious blessing. Gerrit Maritz, the portly man who stands in profile opposite him, has his right hand on a smaller book. The two men look at each other intently: they form the focal point of the composition.

Four formally dressed men in frontal view stand behind them, their eyes fixed on the ceremony. Two of them have cravats and one a bowtie, but the man to the left of the table wears a clerical collar, though obscured by folds, which identifies him as the Reverend Erasmus Smit. The figure in the middle wears a short Voortrekker jacket, and is, apart from Retief, the only man with a beard, Voortrekker style around his chin. His folded arms intersect with the raised arm of Retief and form a cross. The heads of the three figures in the centre are at the same level, but those of the outer figures are slightly lower, suggesting a semi-circle, which enfolds the two main characters, Retief and Maritz.

The ceremonial event is 'men's business' but women are present as witnesses, diminutive compared to the men, and on the outer edges of the central group. The one on the left is a mature woman in a formal dress with three-quarter-length sleeves, and has a narrow shawl fastened with a brooch, a bracelet, and a bonnet tied under her chin. The other wears a Voortrekker kappie and is shown in profile, seated on a low stool hidden by her skirt, her head below Retief's although he is kneeling. She holds a well-wrapped baby on her lap with only the face visible.

The three overlapping wagons in the background are stepped in height to suggest recession. Although parallel to the picture plane, they also show their back views, with their flaps neatly rolled or covering the opening. They are aligned exactly on the right margin, but the left-hand one overlaps slightly into the preceding panel of *Vegkop*.



Figure 6.2: A2. W.H. Coetzer. Reproduction of the first sketch for *Inauguration*. June 1937 (courtesy of ARCA PV94 1/75/5/1; photo the authors)

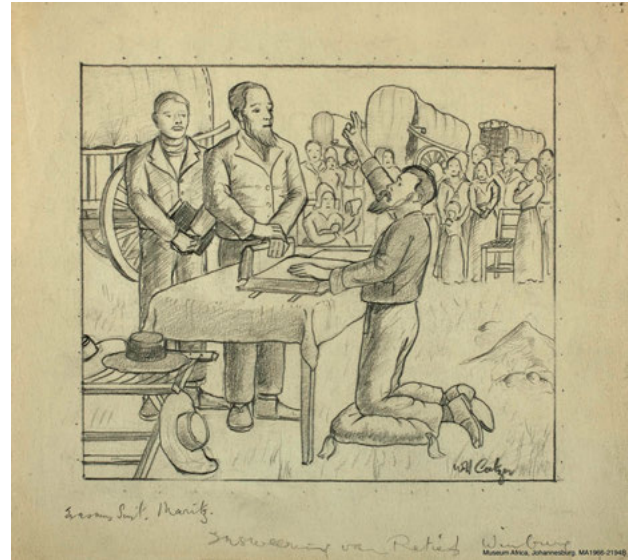


Figure 6.3: A3. W.H. Coetzer. 'Insweering van Retief Winburg'. After September 1937. Pencil, 13.4 × 15.2 cm. Revised first sketch (photo courtesy of Museum Africa, no. 66/2194B)

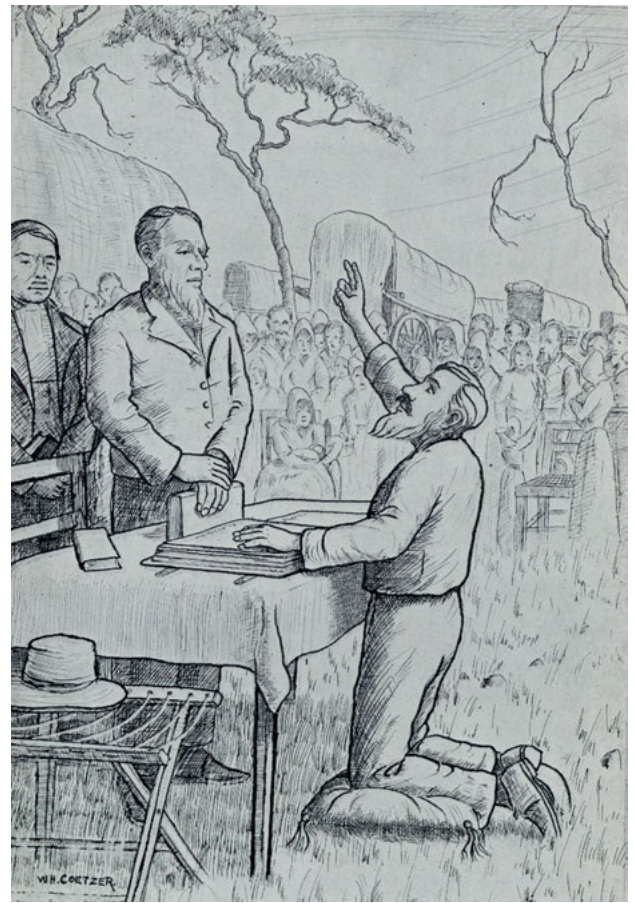


Figure 6.4: W.H. Coetzer. 'Retief sworn in as governor of the Voortrekkers' (Nathan 1937, fig. opp. p.164)

Developing the design

We have two almost identical Coetzer sketches, the reproduction (fig. 6.2) of the first pencil drawing and its revised version (fig. 6.3). In this case it appears that Coetzer used the original drawing and merely modelled the figures in light and shade. Points at regular intervals along the margins appear to be for squaring up the sketch for enlargement. Here we have a rare case of a direct precedent for Coetzer's designs. The sketches relate very closely to an almost unknown Coetzer, a finer and more detailed drawing, possibly in ink, which was published by Manfred Nathan in 1937 in a portrait format suited to his book (fig. 6.4).¹⁸⁸ We have no date for the drawing but, given the customary delays in publishing, even if it was produced especially for the book it is likely that it was made well before the SVK request for designs for the frieze in mid-1937. While this drawing and the other reproductions in Nathan's book emphasise Coetzer's intense personal interest in Voortrekker history, it might be speculated that, knowing of the major project for the Monument, he had experimented with appropriate subjects before any official commission was offered.

In Coetzer's sketches for the Monument, Retief, kneeling in front of the table, and Maritz, standing behind it, are the most prominent figures, arranged as they are in the earlier drawing in Nathan. They face each other, while Retief, his left hand placed on the open Bible, is sworn into his new offices. Maritz too places his hand on a book, closed in this case.

In the Historiese Komitee meeting on 4.9.1937 the following change was required:

Inauguration of Retief. Show the statute book of Van der Linde [sic].¹⁸⁹

The committee's request to 'show' the legal handbook by Van der Linden, which we discuss below, is revealing, as it highlights the limited understanding of sculpture among its members. The SVK probably wanted Van der Linden included as a way of identifying the civic aspect of the occasion, but did not recognise the difficulty of portraying the book in a way that makes it recognisable to the uninformed viewer. Understandably Coetzer paid little attention to the requirement to include another or a different book in his sketch, and made few changes overall.

Again Coetzer provided the basic ingredients of the composition for the frieze. The swearing-in ceremony is already set up showing Retief and Maritz, with Smit, who has a moustache but no sideburns, standing behind Maritz. Three hats resting on a riempie stool in the left foreground, as opposed to only one in the drawing in Nathan, emphasise that the men have removed them for this important occasion. The ceremony is witnessed by men, women and children some distance behind them. A mother with a baby is placed rather unexpectedly in the gap between Retief and Maritz, part of the far group but more prominent than in the Nathan drawing. Further away four irregularly positioned wagons refer to the combined laagers in the vicinity of today's Winburg, although only the vertical drawing in Nathan is filled with thorn trees against the sky.

The design in the small plaster maquette (fig. 6.5) changed the drawing substantially and is close to the composition in marble. In the main group, the figure of Maritz on the left steps forward and faces Retief, who kneels on one knee, not two. Instead of the distracting views of distant bystanders, the Reverend Erasmus Smit, recognisable by his plain clerical collar, takes up a position to fill the gap between Maritz and Retief, together with another male figure, keeping the viewer's attention in the foreground. The arrangement of Maritz' hands in the drawing has been transferred to Smit in the maquette, his right hand clasping his left wrist, particularly noticeable because they are rather clumsily enlarged and out of proportion, as are other hands in the relief.

¹⁸⁸ Nathan 1937, fig. after p.164. The preface (ibid., iii–iv) is dated 'Johannesburg. August, 1936 – March, 1937', without mentioning the project of the Voortrekker Monument: 'I am indebted to Mr. W.H. Coetzer, the well-known artist, who has largely devoted himself to Voortrekker subjects, for permission to reproduce two of his paintings and three sketches relating to the period.'

¹⁸⁹ 'Inswering van Retief. Wys die wetboek van v.d. Linde' (Historiese Komitee 4.1.1937: 4g).



Figure 6.5: B2.
Hennie Potgieter.
Inauguration.
1942–43. Plaster,
77 × 76 × 8.5 cm.
Maquette (courtesy
of VTM Museum
VTM 2184/1–28;
photo Russell Scott)

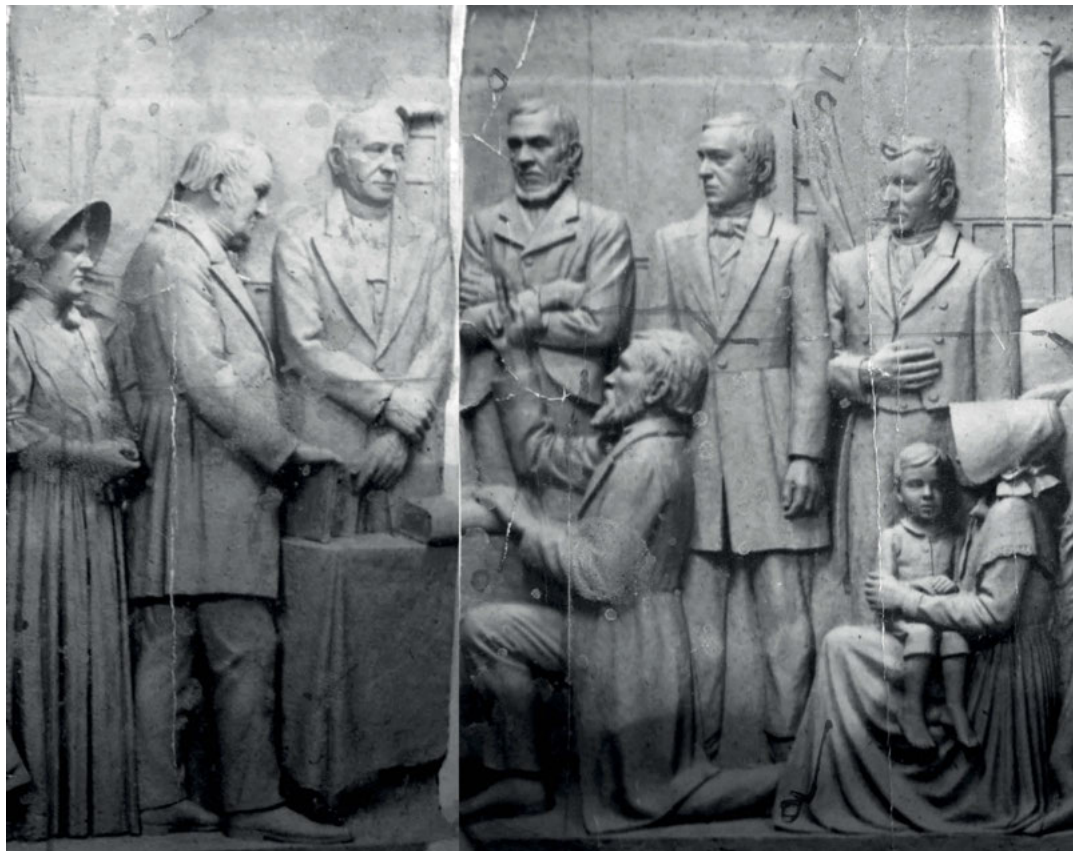


Figure 6.6: C2.
Inauguration.
1943–46. Clay.
Full-scale relief, the
right half developed
before 1945, the left
half later (courtesy
of Romanelli files;
photo Alan Yates,
stitched)



- 1 Mrs Tienie Holloway, wife of the Secretary of State
- 2 Oom Jan Coetzee [for Gerrit Maritz], school headmaster from East Lynne
- 3 Oom Hennie van Rensburg, chairman of the Afrikaans Culture Council
- 4 Oom Steven Eyssen, school headmaster from Heidelberg, Transvaal, and singer and composer
- 5 Oom Hendrik Ploeger, carpenter for the sculptors and old Hollander
- 6 Erasmus Smit after a photograph of him

Figure 6.7: Models for portraits (Potgieter 1987, 17)

Two further men are shown to the right, possibly to make up the number of the male figures to represent the three justices of the peace who took part in the swearing-in ceremony. The consolidated group stands closely around the table, which is set at a different angle, its legs no longer visible under the altar-like cloth. The dress and pose of all six men set the broad parameters of the way they would be portrayed in the final relief although they are less formal and more animated. Also present but less prominent because of their reduced height and marginal positions are two women in kappies who flank the male group, one standing to the left behind Maritz and the other, a mother with a doll-like infant, sitting at the right behind Retief. Three overlapping wagons in the background are staged parallel to the picture plane.

The sculptors were faced with a tricky task when they enlarged the maquette. Because the backboards Kirchhoff had devised as supports for the full-scale clay reliefs at Harmony Hall (fig. 1.8) were only large enough to accommodate half the length of the long friezes for the Monument, the central panel of *Inauguration* on the east wall had to be divided in half, as was also the case with *Murder of Retief* on the south wall. As discussed in Part I,¹⁹⁰ this is verified by Yates' photographs of the full-scale clay reliefs which represent these scenes in split form (fig. 6.6). In the case of *Inauguration* a slightly wider format than the maquette made possible a larger right-hand section that avoided having to segment the kneeling figure of Retief. But it must nonetheless have been a challenge to visualise the overall composition and spatial arrangement when the scene had to be made in two parts, which might account for some awkwardness in its design. Ultimately there does not seem to be sufficient space for Retief to kneel in front of the table. This had been more convincingly accommodated in the maquette by deploying a slightly higher eye level so that the floor space as well as the table-top was more visible.

As with *Vegkop*, the wider format of the full-scale clay relief made it possible to space the figures more generously and to position them parallel to the picture plane to enhance their formality. The table, now enlarged, allows more space for Maritz' law book, with a gap between it and the now closed Bible. Dress and poses are adjusted to a more solemn habitus. The woman on the left wears a bonnet instead of a kappie. Maritz and the other men are clean shaven, with the only two remaining

¹⁹⁰ Chapter 3 ('The full-scale frieze').



Figure 6.8: Mother and child in *Inauguration*. Plaster maquette, full-scale clay relief and marble, details of figs 6.5, 6.6, 6.1 (photos left to right Russell Scott, Alan Yates, Russell Scott)

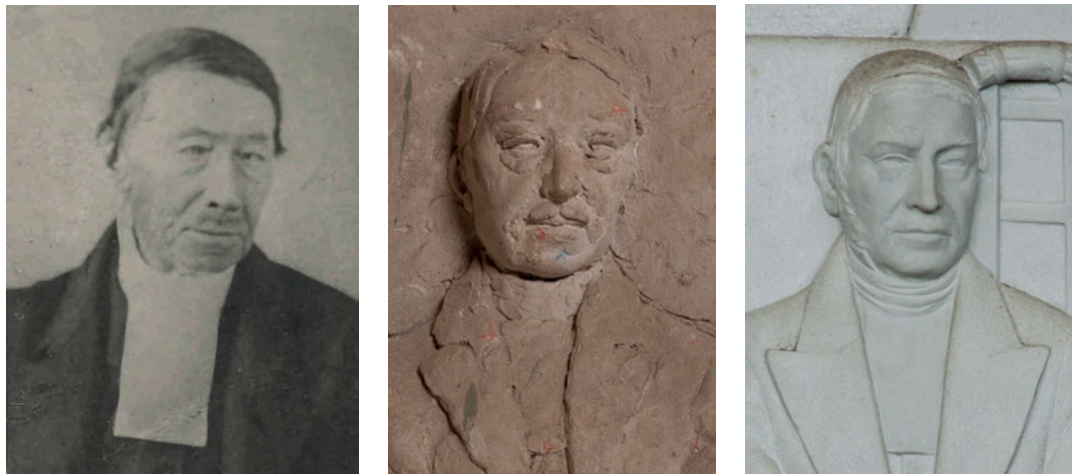


Figure 6.9: Portraits of Erasmus Smit. Left to right: a photograph taken before 1863 (courtesy of uMsunduzi Museum), and details of plaster maquette and marble in *Inauguration*, figs 6.5, 6.1 (photos Russell Scott).

beards worn by Retief and the justice of the peace behind him. Mature men were chosen to represent the participants, including two headmasters and the chairman of the Afrikaans Culture Council, as well as the carpenter Hendrik Ploeger who built the wooden armatures for the full-scale clay reliefs. An old photograph was used for the likeness of Erasmus Smit (fig. 6.9). Except for the seated mother whose deep kappie hides her face, all the faces show distinct portrait features, although Retief's were invented and not based on a historical portrait or a contemporary model as the others were, as discussed in more detail in Part I, Chapters 3 and 4.¹⁹¹

The folds over the knees of the seated woman are unconvincing as they do not fall according to the laws of gravity but create an effect of artificially draped fabric that adds to the ceremonial quality. Another adjustment is more eye-catching. Instead of the rather indeterminate infant of the small plaster maquette, the young Voortrekker mother holds on her lap a more fully defined and dressed boy who sits upright in frontal view. In the development of this pair of mother and child, *Inauguration* is one of the few full-scale panels where we can trace a change from the preliminary full-scale form (fig. 6.6) and the final plaster and marble (fig. 6.1). The handwritten comment about this panel in the Postma file, 'the child also not at all convincing',¹⁹² confirms that the boy was still present when the plaster was first installed in the Monument, and that the change was carried out at this late stage. For the final frieze the boy was remodelled into a wrapped, non-gendered baby, the biggest change between the preliminary and final full-scale forms (fig. 6.8).¹⁹³ Why irregular folds were added to Smit's plain clerical collar, which is clear in the maquette (fig. 6.9) and the large clay version, remains a mystery: perhaps the Italian sculptors did not recognise the form and remodelled it as draped cloth.

191 Potgieter (1987, 48) writes, 'For Retief I unfortunately had to work from Frikkie's representation that he made from his imagination' (Retief moes ek ongelukkig volgens die voorstelling wat Frikkie uit sy kop gemaak het, skeep), which must have been either *Treaty* or *Murder of Retief*, scenes of the south frieze made before this.

192 Postma Folder 14, Art Archives, UP.

193 Discussed in Part I, Chapter 3 ('The plaster casts').

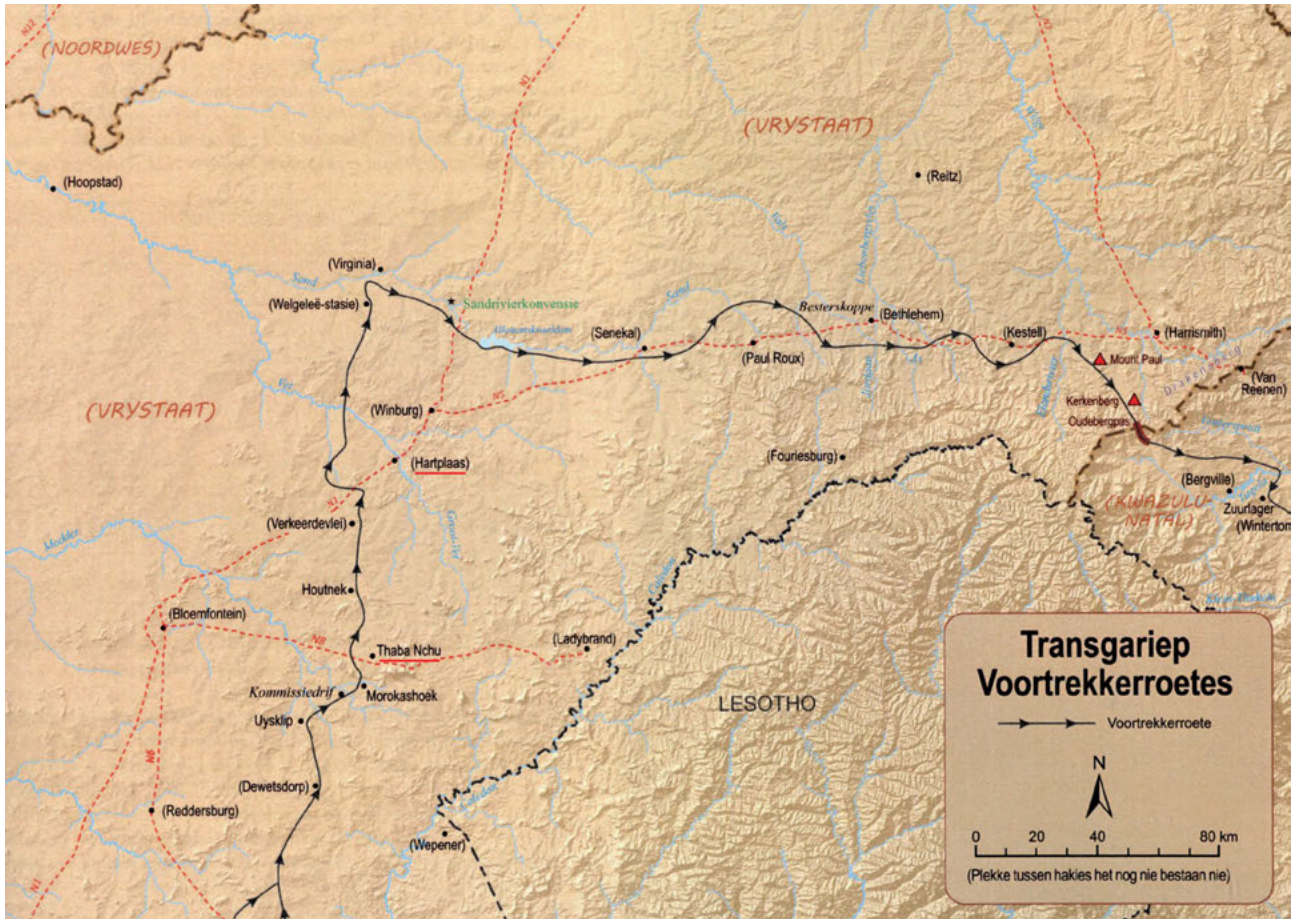


Figure 6.10: From Thaba Nchu to Hartplaas. Sites of the two inaugurations of Retief as Voortrekker governor (courtesy of Visagie 2014, foldout opp. p.64)

Reading the narrative

Inauguration sets the stage for the celebrated yet not uncontroversial appointment of the Voortrekker leader, Pieter Retief (1780–1838), as governor and commander-in-chief of the Voortrekkers.¹⁹⁴ In contrast to most of the Eastern Cape trekkers, he was well educated. He had served as a field-commandant and provisional field-cornet in the Colony, worked with both success and disaster as a farmer, builder, real estate agent and merchant, and developed connections with British and Boer authorities.¹⁹⁵ And he was a skilled writer who knew well how to address political, legal and diplomatic matters to represent the Boers' cause. Equipped with this capital, Retief was the first of the Boers leaving the Colony to 'go public'. On 2 February 1837 he published a programmatic 'Manifesto of the Emigrant Farmers' in the Boer-friendly *Graham's Town Journal* to the acclaim of most of the local white settlers.¹⁹⁶ Retief's manifesto outlined long-held grievances of the Boers against the British government, and the grave shortcomings of policies decreed in London that affected all settlers, whether Boer or British. From his point of view the conclusion was as logical as it was final:

We quit this Colony under the full assurance that the English government has nothing more to require of us, and will allow us to govern ourselves without its interference in future.¹⁹⁷

A few days later he and his large party left the Eastern Cape. With the manifesto's prestige in his baggage, he joined the other trekkers in the north.¹⁹⁸

On 8 April 1837 Gerrit 'Maritz and one of his Heemraden' (justices of the peace) welcomed him, some hundred wagons and four hundred people, and accompanied the newcomers to the trekkers' main camps, situated some seven to eight kilometres south of Thaba Nchu (Black Mountain, but Blesberg for the Boers),¹⁹⁹ near the residence of the Rolong king Moroka II (fig. 6.10). The colonist Bernhard Roedolf (Rudolph), a nephew of Erasmus Smit, who visited the Maritz and Retief parties from 7 to 19 May, remarked:

There are now upwards of *one thousand wagons* with the emigrant farmers, – and it is said that they can muster 1 600 armed men.²⁰⁰

On 17 April 1837, in the camp of Maritz, a 'general meeting was to be held. Decided: the honourable Mr P. Retief becomes governor; the honourable Mr. G.M. Maritz remains in his post as Magistrate',²⁰¹ heading the Council of Justice. Retief's public activities had stood him in good stead,

¹⁹⁴ DSAB 2, 1972, 585–589 and Visagie 2011, 415.

¹⁹⁵ Franken 1949 (the seminal work on Retief in the Colony); Gledhill and Gledhill 1980.

¹⁹⁶ Reprinted by Chase, *Natal* 1, 1843, 83–84; Nathan 1937, 16–18; Franken 1949, 432–441 (with the Afrikaans text); Du Toit and Giliomee 1983, 213–214 no. 5.5a. For the disgust of many settlers with the British government and their positive reception of Retief's manifesto, see Hockly 1957, 137–141; Etherington 2001, 257–259. Gledhill and Gledhill (1980, 143) argue that, from 'the style [of the English translation], there can be little doubt that [Louis Henri] Meurant, and probably [Robert] Godlonton also [both friends of Retief and editors of the *Graham's Town Journal*], played a large part in its composition'. For Meurant and Godlonton, see appendix to *Murder of Retief*.

¹⁹⁷ Chase, *Natal* 1, 1843, 84 item 9.

¹⁹⁸ For the trek and its route, see Gledhill and Gledhill (1980, 152) with map and itinerary, revised by Visagie 2014, 78–80.

¹⁹⁹ Oberholster 1972, 218–219; Visagie 2011, 360–361 with fig. of the mountain 'Blesberg'. Visagie (2014, 78–80) located 'the laagers of Potgieter, Maritz and Retief about 7–8 kilometres south of the present town Thaba Nchu in the area between the Kgabanyane River and Morokashoek' (ibid., 80 with n 8), which is situated some fifty miles east-south-east of Bloemfontein. See also Raper, Möller and Du Plessis 2014, 37 (Blesberg), 492 (Thaba Nchu).

²⁰⁰ Chase, *Natal* 1, 1843, 91. See also ibid., 89: 'An old colonist, of the name of Bernhard Roedolf, who had emigrated to Natal, enlightened his brother colonists by the publication of the following Diary of their Proceedings, Government, and Discoveries', published in the *Graham's Town Journal*, 13 July 1837. For the Roedolf (Rudolph) family, see Smit trans. Mears 1972, 27 (15 May 1837); Visagie 2011, 431–433.

²⁰¹ Smit trans. Mears 1972, 24. (Smit ed. Scholtz 1988, 61: 'Maandag, 17 April, ...'n algemene volksvergadering stond gehouden te worden. Besloten: De Ed. heer P. Retief wordt Goeverneur; de Ed. heer G.M. Maritz blijft in zijn post als Magistraat'); see also Chase, *Natal* 1, 1843, 87.

and his dubious financial dealings in the past seemed forgotten.²⁰² His official inauguration was to follow in June. Before this could happen, however, he had to attend to urgent matters. One of them was the quarrel which had ‘blazed up on that most inflammable of all issues, religion’.²⁰³ In the absence of a qualified pastor, Erasmus Smit,²⁰⁴ a respected elder, had been proposed to take that role. However, trek leader Hendrik Potgieter and many of his party, recently victors at Vegkop, opposed his appointment as the trekkers’ spiritual leader because he was not an ordained minister.²⁰⁵ Only on Sunday 21 May, after intensive negotiations, was he presented by Piet Retief to the congregation who, in Smit’s own words, appointed ‘Rev Mr Erasmus Smit as the first Minister of the congregation of the Reformed Church ...’²⁰⁶ His appointment paved the way for Retief’s official inauguration, which required a pastor to administer the oath. But first, in late May, the Voor-trekkers began to move further north in the direction of what would eventually become Winburg (fig. 6.10). On 3 June, some twenty kilometres south-west of the present town, their trek paused again, near the farmstead Hartplaas ‘on the northern side of the Vet River, where the camp of the Governor is also now situated’.²⁰⁷

It was here that the official inauguration of the new governor took place. Its details have not been addressed in the documents of the SVK or the Monument’s guides, nor by most historians, which has led to some confusion. The formal act had in fact to be done in two sequential ceremonies, one constitutional on 6 June, and one ecclesiastical on 11 June 1837 after Smit was in office and able to officiate,²⁰⁸ as is recorded in Smit’s own diary. To clarify the double ceremony it needs to be tackled in some detail. Erasmus Smit reports about Retief’s inauguration on Tuesday 6 June:

This day was the very solemn day for the taking of the oath by the Governor and the other officials, and by all the people of the united camps ... At nine o’clock the church bell was rung in the camp to call together the people of the camp at the field tent of His Excellency the Governor. After about 140 people had gathered in deep, solemn and respectful silence under the open sky in front of the tent, His Excellency entered with the Minister of Religion and Mr Scholtz as reader into the middle of the assembled crowd, and the proceedings began. His Excellency bared his head and in this was followed by all. As the Governor and Commander-in-Chief²⁰⁹ elected by their votes, he made a short introductory address to the Assembly ... with reference to the purpose of this ceremonial general gathering of the people. After this His Excellency requested the Minister of Religion, the Rev. E. Smit to ask in prayer God for His blessing and peace during the official work of the day. This was done in an impressive way with the Minister kneeling. Then the Governor requested Mr J. Scholtz to read aloud the Resolution with nine clauses made and delivered in the name of the people²¹⁰ ... Straight-away we proceeded to the proposals for the formularies of the officials and ceremonial oaths to be sworn on this day. Mr J. Scholtz requested the Minister to agree to help in this matter; thus it was done; one wording for His Excellency; one for Mr G. Maritz, president of the Council of Justice, and for the other members of the Council mentioned; one for the Minister of the Reformed Church, the Rev E. Smit; one for the Justices of the Peace (at present three in number) ... On the completion of these formularies each person swore an oath according to his position: the Governor before the President of the Council of Justice, and all the others before His Honour the Governor.²¹¹

202 For Retief’s disastrous financial engagements, see appendix to *Murder of Retief*.

203 Walker 1934, 129.

204 For Smit, see Chase, *Natal 2*, 1843, 34–35; Thom 1947, 184–192; *DSAB 1*, 1968, 728–730; Smit trans. Mears 1972, 169–173; Smit ed. Scholtz 1988, 3–18.

205 Chase, *Natal 2*, 1843, 35.

206 Smit trans. Mears 1972, 28 (Smit ed. Scholtz 1988, 64: ‘WelEerw. heer Erasmus Smit als de eerste leraar voor de reizende gemeente der Gereformeerde Kerk ...’).

207 Smit trans. Mears 1972, 30 (Smit ed. Scholtz 1988, 66: ‘3 Juni. ... aan de noordzijde der spruit Vetrivier, waar ’t leger van de Goeverneur nu ook gelegen is’). For the trek route to Hartplaas, see Visagie 2014, 83–84.

208 Nathan (1937, 164–167) and Gledhill and Gledhill (1980, 162–164) are among the few who record both ceremonies.

209 Smit (trans. Mears 1972, 25) calls Retief ‘chief commander’ first on 23 April (Dutch text: Smit ed. Scholtz 1988, 61).

210 For this resolution, see Du Toit and Giliomee 1983, 282–283.

211 Smit trans. Mears 1972, 30–31 (Dutch text: Smit ed. Scholtz 1988, 66–67).

It is within this crucial constitutional context and its early definition of Afrikaner ideology that *Inauguration* was conceived. Eily and Jack Gledhill emphasise that only an ‘estimated 140 of the 3,000 or more emigrants seem to have attended, but since no quorum was laid down, no one could question the validity of the proceedings’.²¹² The diary of Erasmus Smit acted as the blueprint, for Coetzer’s drawing as well as for the frieze. The two main participants are particularly staged in their presentation: the governor, Piet Retief, who takes the oath with his left hand on the Bible and his right raised – not described as kneeling; and the president of the Council of Justice, Gerrit Maritz, who is swearing Retief into office. The volume on which Maritz rests his right hand is probably his own copy of Johannes van der Linden’s legal handbook, recommended for inclusion by the Histories Komitee, and the appropriate reference for a man in charge of Court and Volksraad.²¹³ It also chimes with item seven of Retief’s manifesto: ‘... when we shall have framed a code of laws for our future guidance, copies shall be forwarded to the colony for general information ...’²¹⁴ As inaugurated governor and supreme commander, Retief was then able to undertake the swearing in of the other appointed members to their offices, each with an agreed formula: first Maritz as second in command; second Erasmus Smit as the minister of religion; and third the three justices of the peace (heemraden),²¹⁵ all portrayed in the relief. The solemn ceremony, the two leaders facing each other in the centre foreground, and the orchestrated row of dignitaries waiting to be sworn in by Retief, create a strongly ritual atmosphere which underlines the unanimous consent of the Voortrekkers to the constitution. It is striking that Hendrik Potgieter, the former commandant of the combined treks and chairman of the war council (‘Krygsraad’), was not among the new officials.

The second inauguration, at the Sunday service on 11 June 1837, which took place in a different location, now on ‘the south side of the Vet river’,²¹⁶ focused, in contrast to the first, primarily on Piet Retief and the power of Christian principles. Aspects of this ceremony, which was conducted by the now sworn-in Erasmus Smit, were woven into the visual fabric of the *Inauguration* panel, which thus merges the two events. The details of this act as reported in Smit’s diary are revealing:

Next the Minister turned himself to His Excellency the Governor Piet Retief, and invited His Excellency now, near or in our church, to take the solemn oath. His Excellency knelt down on a cushion before the preaching place, this being a table which served as a pulpit. The Minister opened the Bible at the place where the Heidelberg Catechism begins, or the instruction in the Christian Doctrine which is used in the Nederduitse Gereformeerde churches and schools together with the Confession of belief contained in the 37 Articles and the Liturgy of the same Church, and made the Governor lay one hand on it while he held up the fingers of the right hand during the swearing of the oath of which a copy follows here:

‘I, Pieter Retief, lawfully elected by the vote of the people as their Governor and supreme Head of the General United Camps now solemnly swear before God Almighty that I as the Governor elected by the people, (and all the Governors in time who after me shall come to govern this united community) shall protect and defend the Christian Confession of belief according to the substance of Article 36, together with whatever is connected with it in the Catechism and the Liturgy of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk; and that I in my Government shall admit no Official to the administration of Church or State, unless they are members of the before mentioned Gereformeerde Church and are provided with good testimonials. May Almighty God help me in this.’

(Signed) P. Retief, Governor, etc.

‘Sworn before the congregation, 11 June 1837.’

(Witness) E. Smit, Minister.

²¹² Gledhill and Gledhill 1980, 162.

²¹³ *Regtsgeleerd, practicaal en koopmans handboek*, published 1806; see Thom 1947, 116–117 (Maritz’ personal copy); Wallinga 2010, 566–574.

²¹⁴ Chase, *Natal* 1, 1843, 84.

²¹⁵ For the office of the heemraden, a court of judges (literally: homestead councillors), see Wessels 1908, 152–153.

²¹⁶ Smit trans. Mears 1972, 33 (10 June 1837); Dutch text: Smit ed. Scholtz 1988, 69. For the topography, see Visagie 2014, 84.

Now the Minister took the Bible and held this over and above the head of the Governor and addressed His Excellency in this way:

‘Worshipful and Honoured Citizen Father! The congregation of people of the United Camp, by their election of you as their lawful Governor ... Your Excellency laid your left hand on the Catechism and the Confession of Faith of our Christian Gereformeerde Nederduitsche Kerk, while you Honour with two fingers of the right hand raised, solemnly swore an oath in our Church before God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost ... and before the Congregation of the Gereformeerde Kerk of our Lord Jesus meeting together in the wilderness ... Your Excellency then placed your hand on our Confession of Faith; a Confession which your Honour has professed to be the true teaching of blessedness; a confession which has been taken from the Bible; a Confession which has its foundation and security in the Bible. By means of this ceremony your head [hoofd] now rests on this Bible ... May the Bible be to Your Excellency the great foundation on which all the laws and decisions in time to be made by Your Excellency must rest and be in agreement with. So shall Your Excellency with the blessing of Almighty God enjoy success in Your Excellency’s rule. Be strong and do it because the Lord has promised that He will be with the good ruler. May the Bible be as the sword of the Holy Spirit at your side, and may abundant praise of God, who has called you, by means of the vote of the people and through the religious Church induction, to be our Governor and Supreme Commander ...’

Next the Minister laid the Bible down again at the preaching place, and spread his hands, with wish and prayer, over the head of the Governor, on his own behalf and in the name of the congregation, wished the Governor in his Rule, and in addition all the other officials who had been elected by the vote of the people on the 6th of the month, sincerely ...:

‘Long live the Governor and the Supreme Commander of our United Camp. May God grant to His Honour the President and to all members of the Council in all matters of wisdom of the Spirit. May the Lord strengthen His Honour and all the Honourable Members of the Council in all their important official duties. May He appoint our Governor as a Moses over our camp, and the judges that are appointed as Ehuds, Gideons and Samuels. Your Excellency and all the Honourable Judges!²¹⁷ Give care to what you do for you have Judgement not from men but from God. Now then, may the fear of the Lord be upon you. Attend then, Gentlemen, to your duties and do them, because there is no injustice with the Lord our God, neither respect of persons nor taking of presents, but righteous and just is He the Lord will be with the good and the honest ... Amen. Yes, Amen.’

Basic elements of Smit’s description of the second ceremony were transferred into the marble, thus endowing it with religious as well as civic meaning (fig. 6.11). Most significantly, though lacking the cushion in the Coetzer drawings, Retief is kneeling down before the preaching place, a table which served as a pulpit. In all the earlier designs the minister has the Bible opened as described by Smit although it is closed in the final full-scale versions, but they still follow Smit’s description in which Retief lays his left hand on it while he holds up the fingers of his right. The inclusion of these details in the final narrative is at least to some degree responsible for the confusion of the two swearing-in ceremonies. It explains also why some accounts date the inauguration as 6 and others as 11 June, while yet others more cautiously avoid a specific date and simply say early June.²¹⁸ Another important matter, the origin of the books used at the ceremony, was clarified by Hendrik Thom, who identified the Bible with the Heidelberg Catechism by Zacharias Ursinus, and Van der Linden’s legal handbook as coming from Maritz’ private trek library, which included a number of other legal works as well.²¹⁹ Giliomee, who mentions the Boer’s books, names especially the famous 1631 study ‘Inleydinge tot de Hollantsche rechtsgeleertheit’ (Introduction to the Dutch jurisprudence) by Hugo

²¹⁷ Smit trans. Mears 1972, 33–36 (Dutch text: Smit ed. Scholtz 1988, 69–72).

²¹⁸ June 6: Cory, *South Africa* 4, 1926, 27–28; Jansen 1939, 4. June 11: *Official Guide* 1955, 47. Early in June: Walker 1934, 136–137.

²¹⁹ Thom 1947, 116–118.

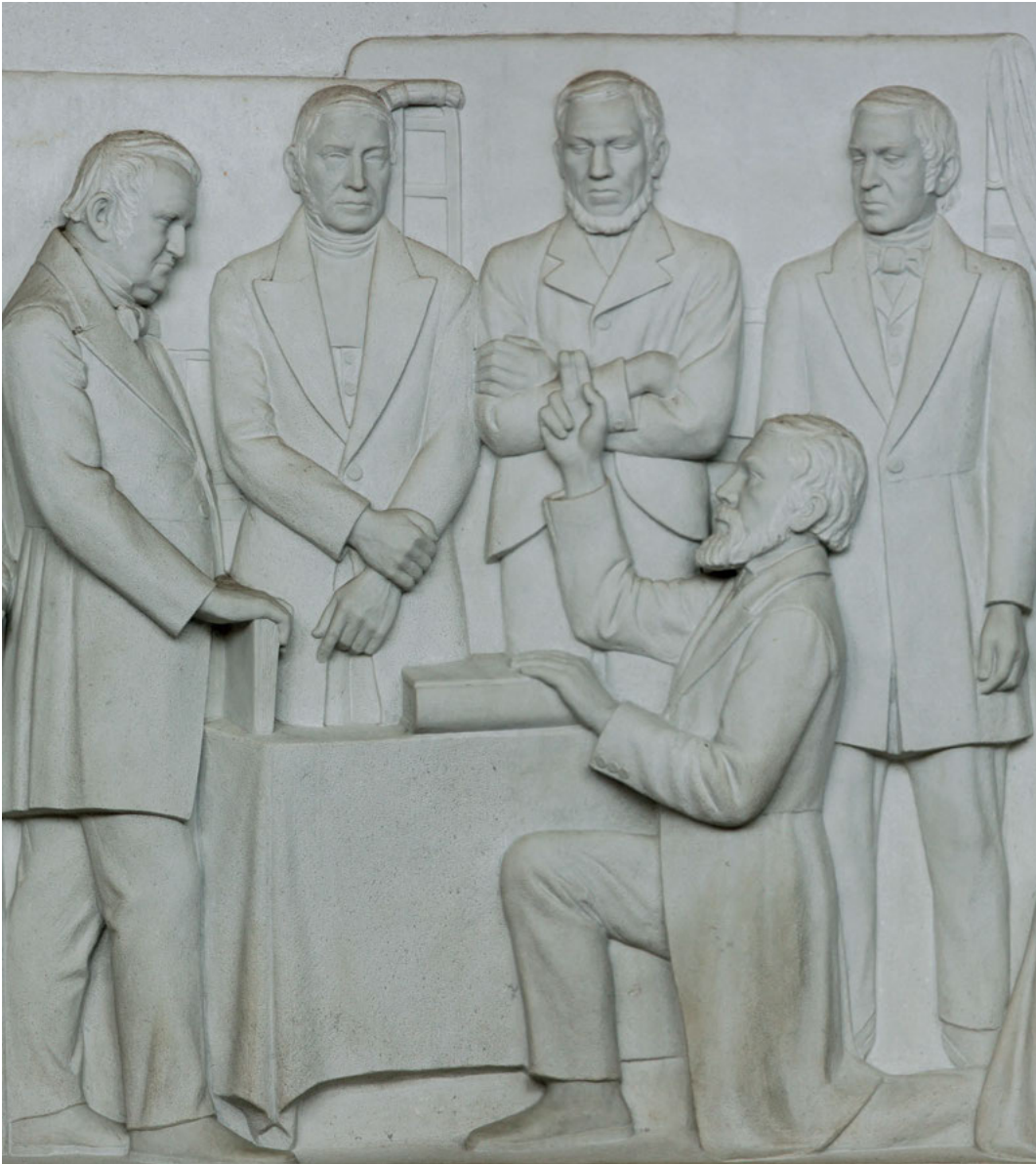


Figure 6.11: Central group with Retief being sworn in by Gerrit Maritz in *Inauguration*. Marble, detail of fig. 6.1 (photo Russell Scott)

‘Grotius and a cannon – a great legal work and an instrument of violence: the two means of asserting white supremacy’.²²⁰

To understand this in relation to the frieze, we need to look at the different stages of *Inauguration*’s design. The conflation of the two ceremonies was already introduced by Coetzer who concentrated his drawings on three main persons only, Retief, Maritz and Smit (figs 6.2, 6.3, 6.4). While he illustrated Smit’s report of Retief’s pose and the preaching table with the opened Bible for the second ceremony on 11 June almost literally, it is not Erasmus Smit but Gerrit Maritz who swears Retief into his offices as happened on 6 June. Whether the conflation was intentional or not, the Historiese Komitee implicitly confirmed it when the committee members did not require Coetzer

²²⁰ Giliomee 2003, 162.



Figure 6.12: Mother and baby seated behind Retief in *Inauguration*. Marble, detail of fig. 6.1 (photo Russell Scott)

to change Retief's kneeling pose of 11 June and asked the artist to include Van der Linden's legal work that would have been part of the ceremony of 6 June. It was a clever visual move to confirm the legal and religious aspects of Retief's appointment in a single image, although it ignored the official claim of historical accuracy. In the small plaster the three justices of the peace who had been sworn in on 6 June after Retief, Maritz and Smit, join their company, and two women, one with a child, were added to represent the congregation. Retief is now portrayed in the more formal pose of genuflection, instead of kneeling on both knees on a cushion as in Coetzer's portrayal. But the basic conflation of the two ceremonies remains.

In merging the first ceremony with the second, the relief is conceptually loaded with the implications of both. Although the constitutional ceremony may seem to prevail, *Inauguration* is permeated with Christian symbols. The altar-like table and the Holy Scripture mark, in a way not unlike *Presentation*, the reiterated theme of Christian civilisation in the frieze, here positioned in the centre of the east wall narrative. Complementing this theme, Retief's raised hand, superimposed on the folded arms of the Voortrekker, evokes the form of a cross, aptly placed above the 'altar' and the Bible. In his Sunday service of 11 June 1937, Smit refers to Retief as Moses and to the three justices of the peace as Old Testament judges,²²¹ who were chosen by God to rescue the Israelites from their enemies, to establish justice and to practise worship. He names Ehud who rallied them to a bloody victory over the Moabites; Gideon, 'the Destroyer', who led them to overcome the Midianites; and Samuel, literally meaning 'Name of God', who anointed the first of their kings, Saul

²²¹ Smit trans. Mears 1972, 36 (Dutch text: Smit ed. Scholtz 1988, 71–72).

and David. It seems as if Retief's ambitions for future Boer policies were given biblical blessing.²²² Such rhetoric was not only significant at the time of the treks but, later in the nineteenth century, was picked up by the nationalistic Afrikaner movement under Kruger to (re)invent Afrikaners as 'God's modern Chosen People'.²²³

A curious addition to the topic of *Inauguration* is a mother holding her baby, who at a pragmatic level indicates the presence of the diversity of Voortrekker witnesses. Both figures are formally presented, she in strict profile, the baby frontal and, while the baby is large, the mother is unnaturally small and her facial features are hidden (fig. 6.12). She lacks a direct connection to the ceremony and is strangely detached from the official act. In its formality and idealisation, her image refers to the essential role of the mother, which ensured the continuity of the white civilisation the Voortrekkers were bringing to the interior. The reduced size, the idealised style and the statuesque pose distance the pair from the other figures, and make it seem more than an ordinary depiction of a Voortrekker mother and child: she is the 'volksmoeder' (mother of the volk), the female icon of Afrikanerdom,²²⁴ emblematically complementing the governor whom Smit described as 'Honoured Citizen Father'. Though the concept of the volksmoeder had its roots in the nineteenth century, the print media of the following century endowed the volksmoeder with a new nationalist profile – for example, through *Die boervrouw, moeder van haar volk* (The Boer woman, mother of her nation) by O'Kulis, printed in 1918;²²⁵ or *Die Boerevrou*, the first women's monthly magazine published in Afrikaans, from March 1919 to December 1931.²²⁶ O'Kulis is of particular interest for the frieze, as this is the pen name of the Reverend Dr Willem Postma, father of the sculptor Laurika Postma.²²⁷

In the 1930s, at the time when the topics of the frieze were conceived, the motif of the seated volksmoeder holding a baby appeared in contemporary Voortrekker murals, especially in Pretoria's recently rebuilt City Hall situated near Harmony Hall, the sculptors' workshop. In 1937 J.H. Amshewitz was commissioned to paint the oil *Onward*, with Voortrekkers breaking a laager in the background, and in the foreground an approximately life-size group of four Boers (fig. 6.13) who, according to Frederico Freschi, conflate concepts of the treks with the Anglo-Boer war.²²⁸ The multi-layered composition, enhanced by virtuoso light and colour, with its three main figures, is unique: a man who stands on top of a rock with the flag of the ZAR and points heroically onwards; a matron who sits in front of him and holds a baby to her breast, while she proffers a pistol to a youth kneeling in front of her; finally, on the right, a young woman armed with a rifle. Only a year later Jan Juta (1895–1990) was asked to paint a series of colossal Voortrekker narratives for the City Hall, two of which, designed as counterparts for the Council Chamber, include a seated mother with a baby. The first is on the left in *Settlers presenting a Bible to Jacobus Uys*, a work discussed earlier in *Presentation* (fig. 6.14). A maternal figure is also depicted in the other, *The development of the Transvaal* (fig. 6.15).²²⁹ Freschi has argued that the group with the mother is

clearly a quotation from a Renaissance scene of the Adoration of the Magi, 'Joseph' in form of a Boer patriarch (who bears a marked similarity to the 'Uys' of the opposite panel) looks fondly down at 'Mary and the Holy Infant' in form of a volksmoeder cradling a baby at her breast while the 'Magi' [here a stooped Black and Boer] bring their gifts [field crops] from both sides.²³⁰

²²² Retief outlines his new mission as governor and supreme commander of the Boers in a letter to the Griqua chiefs, written to them at Sand River on 18 July 1837; see Chase, *Natal 2*, 1843, 113–116; Du Toit and Giliomee 1985, 171–173 no. 4.14b (with some omissions in the text).

²²³ Thompson 1985, 170–171. See also Du Toit 1983.

²²⁴ Brink 1990; Van der Watt 1996, 45–56; Freschi 2006, 97–98, 101–102, 105–108; Swart 2007.

²²⁵ O'Kulis 1918.

²²⁶ For *Die Boerevrou*, see Van Rensburg 2012.

²²⁷ Nienaber 1950; *DSAB 2*, 1972, 554–556; Van der Watt 1996, 48; Swart and Van der Watt 2008, 140–141; https://af.wikipedia.org/wiki/Willem_Postma.

²²⁸ Foyer, oil on canvas (3.5 × 3 m): Freschi 2006, 94–99 figs 45, 47–48 (with different measurement, 3.66 × 2.64 m).

²²⁹ Council Chamber, oil on canvas: *ibid.*, 106–109 figs 64–67, 70–71.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 108.



Figure 6.13: J.H. Amshewitz. *Voorwaarts* (Onward). 1937. Oil, 3.5 × 3 m. Pretoria City Hall (courtesy of City of Tshwane; photo Helenus Kruger)



Figure 6.14: Jan Juta. *Mother and child in Settlers presenting a Bible to Jacobus Uys*. 1938. Oil on canvas, detail of fig. 2.4. Pretoria City Hall (courtesy of City of Tshwane; photo Helenus Kruger)



Figure 6.15: Jan Juta. *The development of the Transvaal*, with central group of mother and child. 1938. Oil on canvas, c. 3.35 × 9.14 m. Pretoria City Hall (courtesy of City of Tshwane; photo Helenus Kruger)

The motif of the volksmoeder with a baby shares similar values with *Inauguration*, and with the other mothers who carry babies or small children in such scenes of the frieze as *Descent*, *Bloukrans* and *Teresa Viglione*. In *Debora Retief*, a scene that focuses on gendered role models for Afrikaner children, the charming little girl with a doll in her lap anticipates her later status as volksmoeder. The concept behind Amshewitz' volksmoeder, however, is more diverse as she unites the feminine role of nurturing her infant with tough readiness for armed combat. While in the frieze both the intimacy of nursing a child and the overt aggression of handling a weapon are strictly avoided in maternal figures, their hardiness in trekking through the wilderness and protecting their children is omnipresent. The icon of the volksmoeder with a baby is related to nationalist agendas such as reproduction, vigour and, if necessary, aggression in order to protect, and hence links to the survival of the Afrikaner volk. The figure adds further layers of meaning to *Inauguration*, but her scale and position also emphasise patriarchal hierarchy, with the small volksmoeder at the periphery

and the new governor and supreme commander and supporting men in the centre. Likewise, the second female figure is a diminutive presence on the far left, another witness to the inauguration but one whose view is limited to Maritz' back.

Of the first six images of the frieze there are two, *Presentation* and *Inauguration*, which bestow in a most solemn iconography the crucial meaning of religion and Christianity in the Afrikaner understanding of the Voortrekkers.²³¹ In the rhetoric of the frieze, the Voortrekkers are characterised as law-abiding and blessed by God and the Holy Scriptures. Walker endorses such Afrikaner credos when he states in 1933 that the trekkers believed that in Retief 'they had found their Moses'.²³² The three Voortrekker wagons in the background of the relief, which form a backdrop to the ceremonial character of Retief's inauguration and his sanctified constitutional and military powers, also emphasise the context of the Trek and his key role in the exodus of his people. It was the overall importance that Piet Retief was awarded by later Afrikaners that secured him twice over a central position within the Monument's relief narrative, in *Inauguration* on the east wall and *Murder of Retief* on the south wall, which echo the centrality of his cenotaph in the hall below.

²³¹ For specific Afrikaner interests in and rereadings of the Voortrekkers' Christianity, see the excellent analysis by Thompson 1985, 144–188; see further O'Meara 1983, 67–77.

²³² Walker 1934, 104 (without referencing the diary of Erasmus Smit).

7 The Battle of *Kapain* (28–30 November 1837)



B2



C2



D

7 *Kapain*

East wall (panel 9/31)

h. 2.3 × w. 4.32 m (small overlaps with *Inauguration* and *Negotiation*)

Restored fractures on vertical edges between panels 8 to 10

Sculptor of clay maquette: Hennie Potgieter

STAGES OF PRODUCTION

B1 One-third-scale clay maquette, not extant but replicated in B2 (1942–43)

B2 One-third-scale plaster maquette, h. 77 × w. 152.7 × d. 9 cm (1942–43)

C1 Full-scale wooden armature, not extant (1943–45)

C2 Full-scale clay relief, not extant but recorded in photograph; replicated in C3 (1943–45)

C3 Full-scale plaster relief (1943–45), not extant but illustrated (*Die Vaderland*, 26.2.1945 / 10.9.1946); copied in D (1948–49)

D Marble as installed in the Monument (1949)

EARLY RECORDS

None

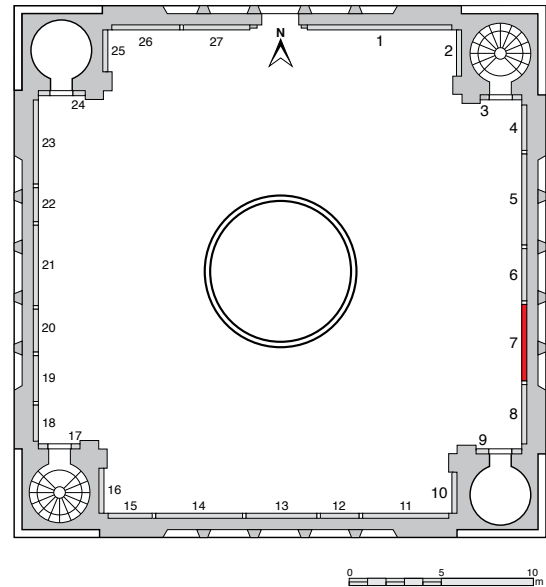




Figure 7.1: D. *Kapain*. 1949. Marble, 2.3 × 4.32 m (courtesy of VTM; photo Russell Scott)

Description

A most unusual battle is portrayed: four Voortrekkers on saddled horses fight against nine half-naked Ndebele²³³ riding bare-backed on oxen (fig. 7.1). The Voortrekkers are dressed in their conventional jackets and trousers, while the Ndebele wear the traditional dress of Nguni warriors, a knee-length back apron made of skin ('ibeshu'), a bunch of skin tassels ('umcedo') sewn together to cover the genitals, a long, bulky skin tassel which may be part of the front apron ('isinene'), and the tuft of a cow's tail on a band around the upper arms and below the knees ('amashoba').²³⁴ The two groups fill the marble panel edge to edge, positioned close to the picture plane with very little spatial depth to accommodate them. The space is further curtailed by three Zulu shields, horizontally arranged, that form a screen behind the collapsing figures on the left.

Whereas the small group of Voortrekkers ride almost effortlessly towards the right, most of the Ndebele are enmeshed in terrible turmoil. Only two of them are still advancing on their mounts, while the rest, like several of their oxen, are either collapsing or already dead. To the rear, the Voortrekker who leads their charge fires at the two Ndebele in front of him, while the rider behind him loads his gun. A third holds his rifle upright as though newly arrived, the bag over his shoulder and his loose kerchief streaming behind him; he still wears his hat, which the others seem to have abandoned in the melee. The fourth rider in the foreground is none other than their leader Hendrik Potgieter, who has thick wavy hair, longer than that of his companions, and a moustache and beard. His head rests on his horse's neck, so that his beard mingles with its mane, as he leans down to seize a dismounted Ndebele from behind by the neck. His adversary is half-kneeling and half-falling, his left leg strangely elongated. The aggressive horse, with mouth agape and ears laid back, tramples another collapsing Ndebele, its right hoof on the man's chest, the left thrusting into his crotch. A dynamic counterpart to this figure is another on the right who is pitching headlong to the ground from his collapsing mount. Two further Ndebele, their faces turned towards the viewer, lie dead in the foreground, one supine, yet with his far leg bent in a mannered fashion, the other lying on his right side. Above the collapsing ox in the foreground, the heads of three further beasts, one behind the other, portray their agitation, particularly one that roars in distress. The volume of the Ndebele force is also suggested by the rumps of oxen, receding one behind the other on the far right. Above, in the background, only four Ndebele remain to face the Voortrekker riders: the first topples backwards fatally, as does the last, prefiguring the fate of their mounted kinsmen, who are held at lethal gunpoint by the foremost Voortrekker. Although the Ndebele are armed with spears and shields, only one of them, distinguished by an uprising coil of hair,²³⁵ holds his spear as though ready to attack.

²³³ For Ndebele, see *Vegkop*.

²³⁴ For (high-ranking) Zulu clothing, see Krige 1981, 370–382, esp. 374–375; and *Treaty* ('Description').

²³⁵ It seems to be a reduced version of the much larger Zulu headgear shown in Coetzer's drawing and Kruger's subsequent clay maquettes for *Treaty*.



Figure 7.2: B2. Hennie Potgieter. *Kapain*. 1942–43. Plaster, 77 × 152.7 × 9 cm. Maquette (courtesy of VTM Museum VTM 2184/1–28; photo Russell Scott)



Figure 7.3: C2. *Kapain*. 1943–45. Clay. Full-scale relief (courtesy of Romanelli files; photo Alan Yates, with pencil lines added for copy process)

Developing the design

In Part I Chapters 3 and 4 we argued that the late addition of *Kapain* was influenced by personal, formal and political considerations. Two reasons were crucial. First, by the introduction of the new panel, the key ideological issues of the visual narrative on the east wall were given a clear symmetrical order: the centre piece, *Inauguration* (with Retief but without Potgieter), was now framed by two battles, *Vegkop* and *Kapain*, and then two scenes of negotiations, *Delagoa Bay* and *Negotiation*. Second, in contrast to earlier designs of the frieze, the increased focus on the achievements of Hendrik Potgieter, the victor in both battle scenes, meant that his representation was on a par with those of the other three main Trek leaders, Trichardt, Retief and Pretorius. Hendrik Potgieter owed his upgraded status to Hennie Potgieter, who proposed *Kapain*, encouraged by the gift of a book by Potgieter's grandson, although the sculptor was quick to point out that he was not himself related to the Voortrekker leader. As the scene was first conceived by him, we have no drawing by Coetzer. But fortunately we have the small clay maquette cast in plaster (fig. 7.2), and a photograph of the full-scale model made in clay (fig. 7.3).

The composition is for the most part already developed in the small plaster maquette, although there is more breathing space for the figures at the top than in the full-scale clay relief and the marble. But there are also significant alterations in the detail when the small plaster was remodelled on a large scale. For example, Potgieter is shown with a jacket (not in his shirt sleeves), and is sitting in the saddle instead of half-standing in the stirrups, two changes that may diminish the drama of his intrepid action. In the full-scale panel he is also endowed with unusually long and wavy hair. There is also an increase in the very packed nature of the composition, as in the addition of yet another beast to the three oxen whose hindquarters appear on the far right of the maquette. And most heads, bodies and accessories of the Ndebele are more dramatically staged, with a more refined finish.



Figure 7.4: Routes of the main treks with Kapain in the north. 1835–38 (the authors; drawing Janet Alexander)

Reading the narrative

Thanks to studies by R. Kent Rasmussen, Pieter J. van der Merwe and Alkis Doucakis, it is possible to achieve a better understanding of the credibility and diversity of the historical sources that relate to the confrontations between the Voortrekkers and the Ndebele.²³⁶ Three months after Hendrik Potgieter's small party had put to flight a major army of Mzilikazi's Ndebele at Vegkop in October 1836 (fig. 7.4), a commando of one hundred and seven Boers, and about thirty-five Griqua, four Koranna and sixty Rolong, led by Potgieter and Gerrit Maritz, defeated him again on 17 January 1837. This time they massacred up to four hundred of the inhabitants of Mosega and destroyed thirteen to fifteen kraals of this major Ndebele settlement built in the valley of the Marico River.²³⁷ The Voortrekkers captured about six to eight thousand cattle, more than they had lost at Vegkop.²³⁸ Hearing about Mzilikazi's misfortune, Dingane aimed to take advantage of it and sent a Zulu army in June against his old adversary but with limited success. When the Zulu returned home in September, however, they were able to drive with them 'considerable numbers of captured ... cattle and sheep', some of which 'had originally belonged to the Boers, who continued to lay claim on it'.²³⁹

At the time that Retief set out for Natal, a new and larger Boer commando was formed from Hendrik Potgieter's party, reinforced by the recently arrived trekkers of Petrus Lafras (Piet) Uys,²⁴⁰ as both these leaders wanted to regain stolen livestock and take control of the northern Highveld. Hence a last and decisive battle was fought against the Ndebele, as far north as the royal headquarters of Mzilikazi at Kapain (eGabeni), situated some sixty-four kilometres north of Mosega and close to Silkaatskop (fig. 7.4).²⁴¹ As at Mosega, the Voortrekkers did not use the laager with its superior defensive strategy that is associated with Boer battles, but were proactive aggressors, who fought a decisive running battle on horseback. This did not, however, last the legendary nine days from 4 to 11 November recorded in scholarship since the writings of George McCall Theal, but three, from 28–30 November, uncovered by a careful reading of source texts by Van der Merwe in 1986 and new primary evidence provided by Doucakis in 2000.²⁴²

At sunrise on 26 November 1837, having ridden north towards Kapain, more than three hundred Voortrekkers and Rolong auxiliaries²⁴³ under the command of Potgieter and Uys became 'masters of the position', as recalled by John Montgomery (1803–71), a British settler and travelling trader, who accompanied the Boers and was present at the battle.²⁴⁴ The Boers challenged a vast army of

236 Rasmussen 1978; Van der Merwe 1986; Doucakis 2000, who discussed in this context the importance of John Montgomery's diary (ed. Giffard 1981, esp. 117–132).

237 Eyewitness report of the American missionary, the Rev. David Lindley, in Kotzé 1950, 168–170 (p.162 no. 41 'Joint letter to Anderson, Grahamstown, 2nd May, 1837'); Lindley reports further that immediately after the massacre the missionaries – he, the Rev. Henry Venable and Dr Alexander Wilson (ibid., 13–14) – decided to forsake Mosega and set out 'in company with white men [Boers] and black men [Rolong], footmen and horsemen ... and ... 6,000 head of cattle' to Thaba Nchu, where they arrived on 31 January 1838 at the Wesleyan missionary station of the Rev. James Archbell (ibid., 170–171). For the massacre at Mosega, see Chase, *Natal* 1, 1843, 85; Thom 1947, 131–136; Rasmussen 1978, 123–128; Van der Merwe 1986, 137–177; Laband 1995, 81; Doucakis 2000, 507. A scene showing this attack was proposed in 'Voorstelle', item 21: 'Potgieter se aanval op Mosega, en verdrywing van Mzilagazie. Hiervoor bestaan verskeie uitvoerige beskrywings van die Amerikaanse sendelinge, e.a.' (Potgieter's attack on Mosega and expulsion of Mzilikazi, of which the American missionaries provide various comprehensive descriptions). For the location, ca. twelve kilometres south-south-east of today's Zeerust, see Raper, Möller and Du Plessis 2014, 342.

238 For the variant numbers, see Smit trans. Mears 1972, 20 (26 January 1837: '6,000 horned cattle'; 28 January 1837: '7,838 horned stock'. Dutch text Smit ed. Scholtz 1988, 57–58); Thom 1947, 134; Van der Merwe 1986, 165–166. Potgieter (1987, 43) claims there were two thousand battle oxen: 'tweeuisend vegosse'.

239 Laband 1995, 81.

240 Visagie 2011, 504–505.

241 For the background story, see Doucakis 2000, 507–511.

242 Montgomery ed. Giffard 1981, 127–128. See Van der Merwe 1986, 206–207; Doucakis 2000, 510–513 (28 to 30 November). For the location, see Ransford 1972, map p.185; Van der Merwe 1986, 207–210.

243 For the number, see Van der Merwe 1986, 205–206; Doucakis 2000, 511 ('about 300 able-bodied men').

244 Montgomery ed. Giffard 1981, 127–128. See Doucakis 2000, 510 (on Montgomery, see 504 n 8).

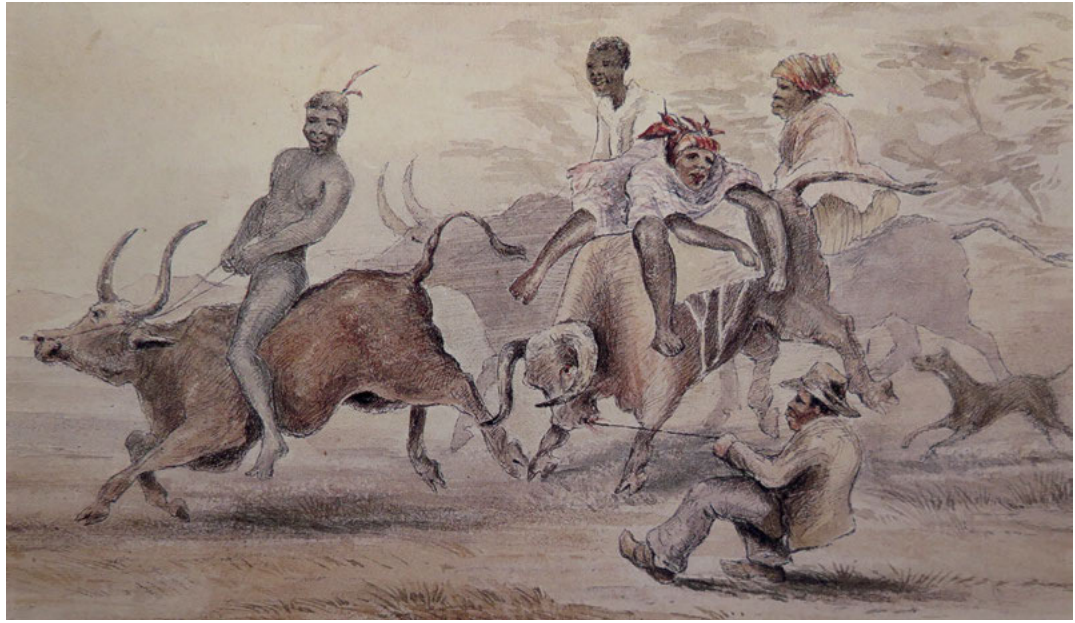


Figure 7.5: Charles Bell. *Koranna Pack-oxen*. Watercolour. Undated, 11 × 17.5 cm (collection Dr Frank Bradlow; Brooke Simons 1998, 60)

Ndebele including, as asserted in the 1938 account by Potgieter and Theunissen, even riders on battle beasts, oxen with sharpened horns ('vegbeeste bestaan uit osse met skerp-gemaakte horings').²⁴⁵ The account emphasised that the trekkers were fortunate, because the deafening noise of their guns and the smell of the blood of numerous fallen Ndebele and animals made the battle oxen run wild.²⁴⁶ It was undoubtedly this exotic aspect of the battle that caused Hennie Potgieter to pick it out as a subject for the frieze, and he boasts that this is 'the only panel in the world where oxen and horses were portrayed in a battle against each other', and purports that 'this was the only occasion when blacks used oxen as mounts in a battle'.²⁴⁷

His statement is questionable, however. Such a use of oxen was not unique in South Africa. We know from Theal that the Khoikhoi had 'great skill in training oxen to obey certain calls, as well as to carry burdens, and bulls were taught not only to assist in guarding the herds from robbers and beasts of prey, but also to aid in war by charging the enemy on the field of battle'.²⁴⁸ The painter Charles Davidson Bell (1813–82) even produced a charming watercolour, *Koranna Pack-oxen*, showing Koranna mounted bareback on oxen, including a naked rider who 'appears to be enjoying the fun' (fig. 7.5) – and Koranna were also part of the Potgieter and Uys commando.²⁴⁹ And later in the 1890s the artist Heinrich Egersdörfer sketched two black people mounted on oxen alongside a mail coach crossing a river in Rhodesia.²⁵⁰ But undermining Hennie Potgieter's claim more seriously are accounts that diverge from the Potgieter–Theunissen text of 1938 that the sculptor relied on.²⁵¹

²⁴⁵ Potgieter and Theunissen 1938, 79–95 (p.90, quote); see also Ransford 1972, 99–101; Potgieter 1987, 42–43.

²⁴⁶ Potgieter and Theunissen 1938, 90–91.

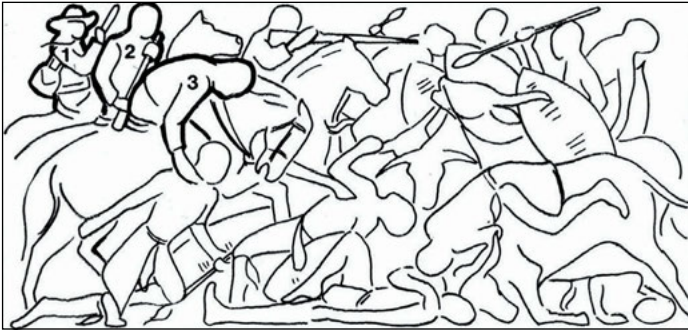
²⁴⁷ 'Dit is ook die enigste paneel ter wêreld waar bees en perd in 'n veldslag teen mekaar uitgebeeld is, en die enigste keer waar die Swartes van beeste as rydiere in 'n veldslag gebruik gemaak het' (Potgieter 1987, 18). He does speak of Hottentots and Griekwas riding oxen, but possibly did not consider them blacks.

²⁴⁸ Theal 1902, 21 (Hottentots); McGill 1977, 50.

²⁴⁹ Chapman 1868, drawing opp. p.128 (*Koranna pack-oxen*); Simons 1998, 60 with quote and fig. (undated; 11 × 17.5 cm; coll. Dr Frank Bradlow). See also the seventeenth-century sketch 'of Khoekhoen with their cattle' in Parsons 2017, 7 fig. 2–2.

²⁵⁰ Rosenthal 1960 (no fig. and page number).

²⁵¹ For a critical review of Potgieter and Theunissen 1938, see Van der Merwe 1986, 224–226.



- 1 Jan van Wyk, bus driver
- 2 Mathys Gerhardus Human Potgieter, brother of the sculptor
- 3 Dr Carel Potgieter [great-grandson of trek leader, for Hendrik Potgieter]

Figure 7.6: Models for portraits (Potgieter 1987, 18)



Figure 7.7: Hendrik Potgieter on horseback killing Ndebele in *Kapain*. Marble, detail of fig. 7.1 (photo Russell Scott)



Figure 7.8: Roman sarcophagus with Amazonomachy, Rome, c. AD 140–150. Marble, 65 × 247 cm (photo courtesy of the Musei Capitolini 726)



Figure 7.9: Roman battle sarcophagus 'Ammendola', Rome, c. AD 160–180. Marble, 78 × 211 cm (courtesy of the Musei Capitolini S 213; photo www.arachne.uni-koeln.de, Mal1683-01)

For example, in discussing Piet Uys' role in the battle in publications in 1976 and 1988, Ian Uys recounts that the Ndebele 'put up a spirited defence, which included driving [not riding] maddened oxen against the mounted Trekkers',²⁵² though the Boers 'managed to disperse the animals with well-placed volleys and drove them back on the enemy'.²⁵³ Accounts written so long after the event may be questioned, particularly when they are contradictory; but the total omission of the beasts in the contemporary reports of the campaign at Kapain makes the very presence of the oxen dubious.

It took the Boers three days to beat the Ndebele, killing up to four hundred of their men, but themselves suffering no losses at all.²⁵⁴ Though the Boers were not able to follow the retreating enemy further, as they were running out of ammunition and supplies, Mzilikazi and his Ndebele decided to migrate to beyond the Limpopo River and left the Highveld to them. The Boers pulled back as well and, in early December, stopped at what was later the farm Deelkraal in the Gatsrand, about thirty-three kilometres north-east of Potchefstroom. Here they finally distributed the booty of livestock, after a strong dispute between the leaders,²⁵⁵ as Potgieter was determined that those who had lost theirs at Vegkop should be recompensed first. Montgomery reports that of the four thousand six hundred head of cattle, 'each warrior, on division of the spoil, after deducting the expenses, received from five to seven head'.²⁵⁶ When this was done, Hendrik Potgieter, according to Potgieter and Theunissen, issued a bold proclamation taking possession of Mzilikazi's former territory by right of conquest in a just cause ('regverdige saak'), namely the areas that would become the northern Free State and most of the ZAR, as well as eastern Bechuanaland.²⁵⁷

Carel Potgieter, grandson of the trek leader, who had gifted the biography to Hennie Potgieter, was the sculptor's model for his great-grandfather, portrayed as the most prominent horseman in *Kapain*, as the sculptor records (figs 7.6, 7.7). He is the only Voortrekker shown with thick, long and wavy hair that seems to echo the mane of ancient heroes and medieval knights. On the register of iconography, however, the moustache and shaggy beard under his chin, characteristic of a trekboer, are at odds with the heroic hairstyle, and Potgieter's calm facial expression and strange pose, bent over his steed's neck, are distinctly non-heroic. Similar links yet divergences from historical 'prototypes' drive the iconography of the collapsing or dead bodies of the Ndebele, where some poses are reminiscent of dying barbarians and Amazons on Roman sarcophagi (fig. 7.8).²⁵⁸ The same is true of the way in which Potgieter's horse is trampling a fallen Ndebele, yet another classical motif adopted and deformed. Although different in style and detail, the Ammendola sarcophagus carved around AD 160–180 is a telling example of the compact layout and drama characteristic of Roman iconography (fig. 7.9),²⁵⁹ which is both reflected yet contradicted by *Kapain*. This peculiar clash of visual traditions, ranging from ancient concepts to the naïve, almost literal realism of the day, makes this relief both fascinating and somewhat perplexing.

The curious pose of the Voortrekker leader in the panel needs explanation. The sculptor Hennie Potgieter, who claimed that he had conceived *Kapain* on his own, derived this motif from a minor incident that he had read about in the Potgieter–Theunissen biography. It recounted that, on 8 November 1837, after an Ndebele had attacked Hendrik Potgieter with a spear, the latter 'spurred

²⁵² Uys 1988, 36. As there are no other accounts corresponding to this, it does seem possible that he misread the Potgieter–Theunissen statement about the oxen becoming maddened by the smell of blood ('die reuk van bloed het hulle mal gemaak') (Uys 1938, 90).

²⁵³ Uys 1976, 5.

²⁵⁴ Montgomery ed. Giffard 1981, 127–128; Doucakis 2000, 510. Highly inflated figures are provided by Potgieter and Theunissen (1938, 93), who reference Sarel Cilliers' extravagant claim that at least three thousand Ndebele fighters lay dead between Mosega and Kapain ('Cilliers skat dat daar tussen Tweedepoort en Enzelberg [i.e. Mosega and Kapain] tenminste 3,000 vegkaffers doodgelê het'). See the critique by Van der Merwe 1986, 217, 224.

²⁵⁵ Montgomery ed. Giffard 1981, 128; Doucakis 2000, 511.

²⁵⁶ Montgomery ed. Giffard 1981, 128. This is within the margins of the calculated three to six thousand head of captured cattle provided by Van der Merwe 1986, 217–218.

²⁵⁷ Potgieter and Theunissen 1938, 92.

²⁵⁸ Russenberger 2014, 465 n 1, 478 pl. 1 (Amazonomachy; Rome, Museo Capitolino 726; c. AD 140–150).

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 156 fig. 74; see also Grummond and Ridgway 2010, 210–211 fig. 78; Faust 2012, 177–182 pl. 69.



Figure 7.10: Dying Ndebele and oxen in *Kapain*. Marble, detail of fig. 7.1 (photo Russell Scott)

his horse after the kaffir, who had turned to flee, grabbed him with his strong hand behind the neck, lifted him from the ground and flung him down unconscious'.²⁶⁰ Regardless of whether this actually happened, it is obvious that, while inspired by this adulating narrative, the bold action is noticeably muted (fig. 7.6). Potgieter is neither lifting nor flinging down the Ndebele, but releasing him as he pitches forward to the ground.

This diluted representation probably relates to the sculptor's limited skill in meeting the challenge of translating such complex action into the shallow confines of a relief. In attempting to represent the anecdote of Hendrik Potgieter's great strength in overcoming an Ndebele soldier with his bare hands, the sculptor also introduced a historical inconsistency. According to his source, Potgieter and Theunissen, that incident took place the day before the pitched battle with oxen. It is an example of the desire for dramatic pictorial motifs taking precedence over veracity, the histrionic preferred to the historic. It is also intriguing that, despite its importance in the Voortrekker story, the Battle of Kapain has received scholarly attention only more recently, and often goes unmentioned in the primary and secondary sources on the treks.²⁶¹ In the minutes of the SVK it does not seem to have been brought up at all, although the Mosega conflict is addressed in 'Voorstelle'.²⁶²

²⁶⁰ 'Potgieter spoor sy perd op die kaffer wat omspring om to vlug, pak hom met sy sterk hand agter die nek, lig hom van die grond en smyt hom bewusteloos neer' (Potgieter and Theunissen 1938, 90).

²⁶¹ Rasmussen 1978, 131–132; Van der Merwe 1986, 190–226; Doucakis 2000, 507–513.

²⁶² Van der Merwe (1986, 214–216) points out that a number of accounts fuse the Mosega commando with the second commando to Kapain, but he is convinced that there were two campaigns.

Moreover, the purpose-made maps of the *Official Guide*, designed to show the main routes and sites of the treks, mark several battlefields but fail to show Kapain.²⁶³ It is the relief itself that brings *Kapain* back onto the map of southern African history and claims a position for it as an essential part of the Afrikaner narrative of the Great Trek.

Despite Kapain having been a rather peripheral episode in the received history of the treks, however, this military narrative plays a significant role in the conceptualisation of the frieze. In focus, style and composition *Kapain* is the converse of *Vegkop*, just as the real battles were in strategic terms. Whereas *Vegkop* offers a view into the internal organisation of the laager defence system, where the enemy is almost invisible and restricted to the margins, *Kapain* is a model image of conflict set in the thick of head-to-head battle, combining victory with extreme pathos, drama and death. The forward motion and aggressively set back ears of the two leading horses reflect the Voortrekkers' force and determination in battle, as the four Boer victors ride with ease against a superior number of Ndebele and their beasts (fig. 7.7). In vivid contrast, the men and oxen of the enemy seem to collapse in on themselves (fig. 7.10). The heads of the oxen and those of the three collapsing Ndebele concentrated in the relief's lower centre act as a visual metonym of Mzilikazi's disaster. The rather irksome focus on battle oxen, not acknowledged by most historians but foregrounded by the sculptor, makes *Kapain* a racial manifesto of white superiority over black primitivism. Was this one of the reasons why Moerdyk and the SVK gave their blessing so readily to Potgieter's choice? This intention seems supported by a disparaging remark Moerdyk made in the *Official Guide*: 'Although this type of attack may have been effective against primitive weapons, it failed against the flint-locks of the Voortrekkers.'²⁶⁴

Kapain highlights perhaps more than any other scene that the process of conceiving and making the narratives selected for the frieze was based on a constantly shifting relationship between the intentions of the SVK and officialdom, personal ideas of the sculptors, and incidental occurrences, all affecting the final portrayal. It is this complex negotiation which, rather unexpectedly, has given *Kapain* a distinct visual profile of lasting – and challenging – relevance.

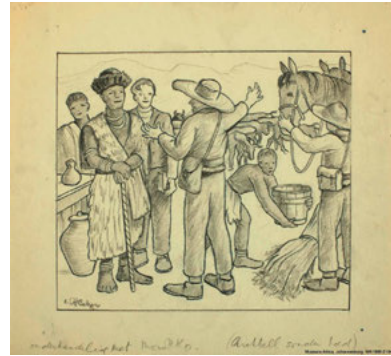
²⁶³ *Official Guide* 1955, 16, which marks only Mosega, while the map in the 1970 edition (p.16) omits both Mosega and Kapain; the latter is also not indicated on the maps in Giliomee and Mbenga 2007, 114; Heymans and Theart-Pedde 2009, 2; and Legassick and Ross 2010, 287 fig. 6.2; nor in the explanatory maps provided at the Voortrekker Monument today. Kapain (Gabeni) is included, however, on the maps in Walker 1934, opp. p.378; Ransford 1972, 185; Muller 1978, 9; Ramussen 1978, 99; Heymans 1986, opp. the title page.

²⁶⁴ *Official Guide* 1955, 48.

8 *Negotiation with Moroka* (October/November 1836)



A2/A3



B2



C2



D

8 Negotiation

East wall (10/31)

h. 2.3 × w. 2.73 m

Restored fractures on vertical edge

Sculptor of the clay maquette: Frikkie Kruger

STAGES OF PRODUCTION

A1 W.H. Coetzer, pencil drawing, retained only in A2 (April–June 1937)

A2 Reproduction of A1 (June 1937)

A3 W.H. Coetzer, revised pencil drawing A1, h. 13.4 × w. 15.4 cm
(after September 1937)

Annotations: 'Onderhandeling met Morokko' (Negotiations with Moroka) /
'Archbell sonder hoed' (Archbell without hat)

B1 One-third-scale clay maquette, not extant, but replicated in B2 (1942–43)

B2 One-third-scale plaster maquette, h. 77 × w. 77 × d. 8.5 cm (1942–43)

C1 Full-scale wooden armature, not extant (1943–45)

C2 Full-scale clay relief, not extant but recorded in photograph; replicated
in C3 (1943–45)

C3 Full-scale plaster relief (1943–45), not extant but illustrated (*Die Vader-
land*, 26.2.1945 / 10.9.1947); copied in D (1948–49)

D Marble as installed in the Monument (1949)

EARLY RECORDS

SVK minutes (4.9.1937) — item 4f (see below, 'Developing the design')

Wenke (c. 1934–36) — item II. Dr. L. Steenkamp, mnre. A.J. du Plessis in M. Basson, A. 'MAATSKAPLIK' (SOCIAL), 3.
'Verhouding met ander volksgroepe' (Relationship with other ethnic groups), a. 'Verdrag met Moroko' (Treaty
with Moroka) / item VI. SEN. F.S. MALAN, 5. 'Ander toneel: Onderhoud tussen Voortrekkers en Moroko te
Thabantsjoe' (Other scene: Negotiations between Voortrekkers and Moroka at Thaba Nchu)

Moerdyk Layout (5.10.1936–15.1.1937 — scene 6 on panel 9/31 'Thaban Chu' (Thaba Nchu).

Jansen Memorandum (19.1.1937) — item 7.6 'The Voortrekkers at Thaba Nchu with Moroka and Archbell who
rendered them assistance'

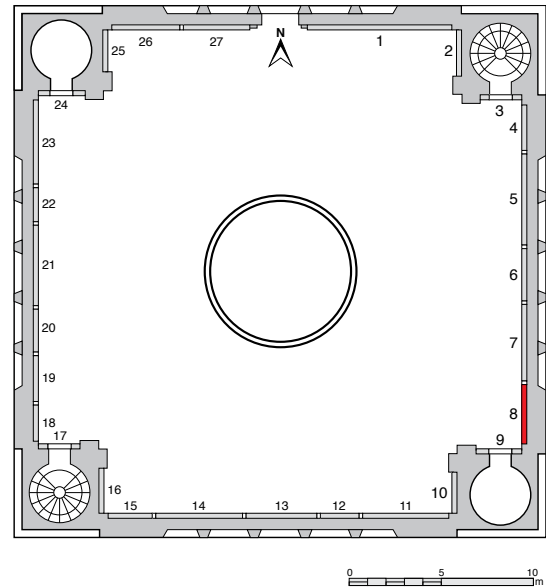




Figure 8.1: D. *Negotiation*. 1949. Marble, 2.3 × 2.73 m (courtesy of VTM; photo Russell Scott)

Description

There are two unequal parties facing each other: on the left three black men are crowded together whereas the rest of the panel is given to three stereotypically dressed Voortrekkers with wide-brimmed hats (fig. 8.1). The first of them has a beard, Voortrekker-style around his chin; a powder horn hangs at his waist and he holds a muzzleloader, its butt resting on the ground in front of him. His gesturing right hand suggests that he addresses the black man in front of him, who faces him silently, his hands resting on a staff. It is Moroka, the leader of the Rolong.²⁶⁵ Portrayed in a more mature way than his companions, the bearded Rolong chief wears a pouch covering his genitals, and a cape of buck skin with the legs knotted and the hooves dangling decoratively over his right shoulder. His two companions behind him wear similar garb, although their capes are draped less formally, and they lack ceremonial staffs. All three African figures with their distinctive profile portraits are shown in three-quarter view, and the one furthest left, holding a traditional knobkierie, stands with his weight on his left leg, the only figure in the frieze that is depicted in a classicising contrapposto stance. The large lidded container standing between them is possibly a milk pail.

A well-trained dog sits behind the first Voortrekker, looking up at the young Boer, perhaps its master, who stands facing the animal, a muzzleloader slung over his shoulder. Behind him in the background, a bearded Voortrekker sits observantly on a statue-like horse, which is poised curiously above the grass, its hooves not touching firm ground. Still further away, in the gap between the rider and Potgieter, a herd of cattle grazes. The massive mountain behind is a compressed depiction of the Black Mountain (in Tswana ‘Thaba Nchu’; known to the Boers as Blesberg, ‘meaning blazed or bald mountain’²⁶⁶), a landmark of the Highveld in this area and closely associated with Moroka’s Rolong.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁵ In accord with modern scholarship (e.g. Etherington 2001; *The Cambridge History of South Africa*, vol. 1, 2010) we use the simple form ‘Rolong’, without the prefix ‘ba/Ba’ meaning ‘people of’; see Landau 2010, 1 n 1.

²⁶⁶ Raper, Möller and Du Plessis 2014, 37.

²⁶⁷ Landau 2010, 112; Raper, Möller and Du Plessis 2014, 492.



Figure 8.2: A2. W.H. Coetzer. Reproduction of first sketch for *Negotiation*. June 1937 (courtesy of ARCA PV94 1/75/5/1; photo the authors)

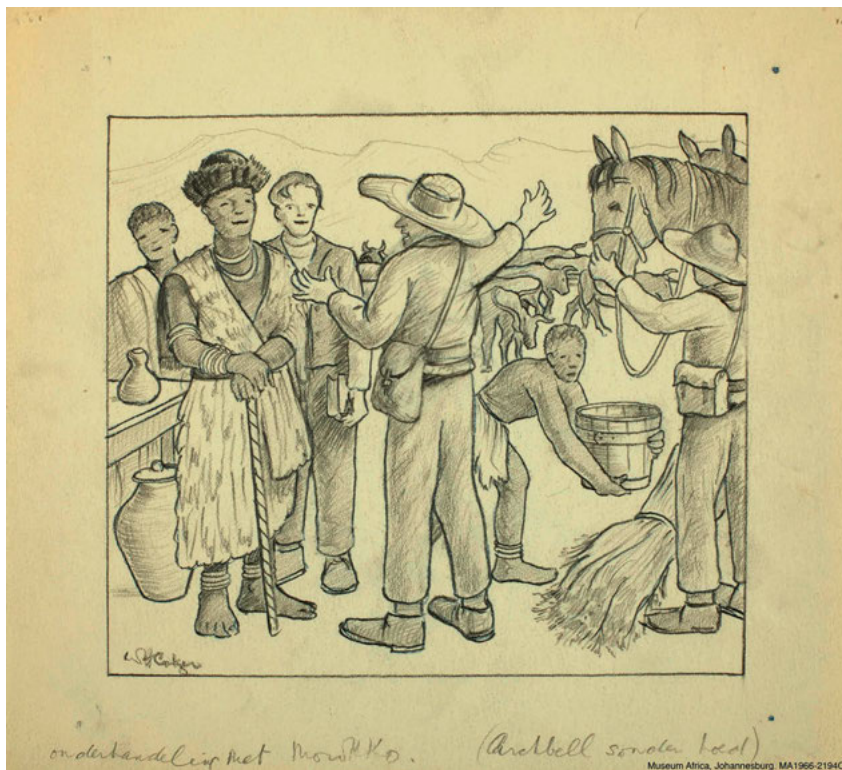


Figure 8.3: A3. W.H. Coetzer. 'Onderhandeling met Morokko'. After September 1937. Pencil, 13.4 x 15.4 cm. Revised first sketch (photo courtesy of Museum Africa, no. 66/2194C)

Developing the design

The reproduction shows us Coetzer's first pencil drawing that represents the negotiations between the Voortrekkers and the Rolong (fig. 8.2). A Boer, who as we will argue must be Jacobus Johannes Potgieter, with broad-brimmed hat, jacket, belt and knapsack, is placed prominently in the centre, seen almost from the back as he addresses Moroka with open mouth and flourishing hands. The chief is depicted frontally, not half-naked but in full garb, his hands resting calmly on a staff with spiral decoration. He is framed by two figures standing behind him, a young Rolong on the left, and on the right the Rev. Archbell, distinguished by a clerical collar and a book in his left hand, presumably the Bible. On the left, cut off by the frame, is a table with a calabash on top and a large urn-like container underneath. Another Rolong brings water to a bridled horse, its head visible on the right, being held by a second Boer with a satchel. In front of him on the ground is a bundle of hay for this horse and another whose cocked ears appear behind the first. In the background are oxen, and further away a range of rather nondescript mountains.

In the Historiese Komitee meeting on 4.9.1937 the following changes were required:

Boers negotiate with Maroka. The skin around the middle of his body should be fastened. There should be a skin hanging from his shoulders; the little bag behind the man's back should be altered to a satchel at his side.²⁶⁸

There are minor differences between the first composition and the revised pencil drawing (fig. 8.3), which respond in part to the criticism made by members of the committee. The corrected pencil drawing shows Moroka with a belt (as also the two Voortrekkers) and a fringed skin hanging down behind his right shoulder and over his left arm. Potgieter has a satchel as required, although faint traces of the obliterated knapsack can still be seen.

Coetzer's drawing provides the basic composition for the relief sculpture: the Rolong with Moroka on the left, the Voortrekkers with a horse on the right and oxen behind, with a very sketchy indication of a mountainous backdrop. The small plaster maquette rearranges and separates the two parties distinctly (fig. 8.4). Moroka and another Rolong, faintly indicated in the background, stand compressed on the extreme left while most of the panel is given to three bearded Voortrekkers. None of the Boers is now cut off by the frame; two of them are armed, and the third, further back, is mounted, with the horse more fully in view. Rev. Archbell has been omitted in favour of a dog in the foreground. The main Boer and Moroka face each other closely. The Boer, however, has a more active pose than Moroka's passive stance, striding forward and addressing him with a gesture of his right hand, although his mouth is no longer open. He has a knapsack on his back as in Coetzer's first sketch, but also has a powder horn like that depicted in the revised drawing. Moroka now wears a loincloth of skin tassels on a plaited cord, and an irregularly edged back apron, his status suggested by a headdress, upper body decoration and a staff, although he has a rather unprepossessing stocky build. The full-scale clay relief follows the maquette quite closely in overall design (fig. 8.5), as does the marble, but they endow it with greater gravitas. A wider format means that there is a more balanced allocation of space between the two parties, so that Moroka is now supported by two of his men, and the horse is fully represented, standing in profile parallel to the picture plane. Other small details are also modified: the main Boer no longer has a knapsack, the trekker on the right is now a youthful, unbearded figure, and the seated dog was apparently bred by Moerdyk to represent an appropriate Voortrekker animal. Moroka, with simpler clothing, is made far more impressive and the semi-naked bodies of all three Rolong men have a distinctly classical presence. Yet they are still given a lesser role, because the Boers are privileged by more space, and only they command firearms, a horse and a dog. Although Moroka's cattle are pictured, they are shown further away in much smaller scale.

²⁶⁸ 'Boere onderhandel met Marokko. Die velle om die middel van sy lyf moet vas wees; daar moet 'n vel skuins oor sy skouer hang; die tassie agter die man se rug moet in 'n bladsak aan sy veran[der] word' (Historiese Komitee 4.9.1937: 4f).



Figure 8.4: B2. Frikkie Kruger. *Negotiation*. 1942–43. Plaster, 77 × 77 × 8.5 cm. Maquette (courtesy of VTM Museum VTM 2184/1–28; photo Russell Scott)



Figure 8.5: C2. *Negotiation*. 1943–45. Clay. Full-scale relief (courtesy of Romanelli files; photo Alan Yates, with pencil lines added for copy process)

Reading the narrative

The trekkers successfully warded off a major attack of the Ndebele at Vegkop, but the retreating Ndebele drove away virtually all their livestock. Johannes Gerhardus Stephanus (known as Gerrit or Gert) Bronkhorst (1798/99–1848),²⁶⁹ who took part in the battle and wrote about the victory fairly soon afterwards, before 1843, recounted the scale of the loss of cattle:²⁷⁰

This [the battle] took place on the 29th October, 1836, when we lost 6000 head of cattle, and 41,000 sheep and goats. Our horses we retained from having been in the camp.²⁷¹ Three days after this we followed them [the Ndebele] to try whether we could retake any of our cattle, but all we found were killed and skinned (about 1000 head), and were obliged to return unsatisfied. What I have here related are facts, and I am willing, if required, to confirm the same on oath. (Signed) J.G.S. Bronkhorst.²⁷²

Bronkhorst makes no reference to the consequences of this dire loss,²⁷³ and nor do the accounts of a number of other Boer men who took part in that battle, such as those recorded in an entry in the diary of Erasmus Smit on 20 November 1836, based on the current reports of commandant Hendrik Potgieter and his fellow trekker, Nikolaas Christiaan Smit.²⁷⁴ However, Potgieter did mention the situation in a letter to Governor D'Urban of 3.12.1838, in the context of justifying his subsequent actions against the Ndebele. After initial attacks on trekkers by 'the bloodthirsty tyrant Musilicaats', he wrote, 'we retreated to Doorenkop [Vegkop] at the Renoster River; there he fell on us a second time with a countless horde, and again killed two people and took away our last cattle so that we must starve to death'.²⁷⁵

Another participant, Sarel Cilliers, who seems to have played a leading role in the battle (see *Vegkop*), gave a dramatic account thirty years later of what had happened in the aftermath:

When the fight was over two men had been killed on our side, and fourteen wounded, of whom I was one ... The enemy then carried off all our means of sustenance. I had a wife and seven children, and was without corn or millet, besides being incapacitated for hunting. I had to taste the cup of bitterness. My children cried from hunger, and I did the same, and nothing to give them. Then fifteen days passed by, and we had to remain in the encampment. Then we received some oxen from Mr. Andswill, and from our brethren who had gone to Moroko, when they had received the report from us. Then by God's mercy we were delivered ... Arriving at Moroko and at the abode of the Rev. Mr. Archbell, he and his lady provided us in our great need with corn and millet.²⁷⁶

'Our brethren who had gone to Moroko' most likely refers to those Boers from the Potgieter party who had earlier departed for Thaba Nchu, as discussed below.

²⁶⁹ Visagie 2011, 95–96.

²⁷⁰ Chase, *Natal* 1, 1843, 75 (report of J.G.S. Bronkhorst, 29.10.1837); accepted by Van der Merwe 1986, 87. See also Smit trans. Mears 1972, 3 (20.11.1837; Dutch text in Smit ed. Scholtz 1988, 41) who, however, accounts only for Potgieter's losses.

²⁷¹ According to Cilliers, 'Two horses were killed, and one wounded' (Bird, *Natal* 1, 1888, 240).

²⁷² Chase, *Natal* 1, 1843, 75 (undated and unspecified, qualified by Chase laconically as 'Bronkhorst's own relation'); see also Delegorgue, *Travels* 2, 1997, 55–56; Preller, *Voortrekermense* 1, 1818, 4–5 (A.H. and W.J. Potgieter), 15–21 (Andries Hendrik Potgieter jr), 126–130 (J.H. Hattingh).

²⁷³ Also not mentioned in Doucakis (2000, 505–507), one of the most recent discussions of the Battle of Vegkop.

²⁷⁴ According to Visagie (2011, 452–453), Christiaan (Jacobus) is the only known Smit who possibly trekked with Sarel Cilliers and A.H. Potgieter in 1836.

²⁷⁵ Du Toit and Giliomee 1983, 216 no. 5.5c. The Dutch text is provided in *Voortrekker argiefstukke* (1937, 30 R20/38 'Artikel 5'): '... de bloetdorstige tyran Musilicaats ... ben wy teruggetrokken tot aan de [Do]orenkop aan Renosterrivier; daar is hy de tweede maal op ons aangevallen met een talloos hyr en weder twee mensen vermoort en de laatste vee weggenomen dat wy van honger moeste sterven ...'

²⁷⁶ Bird, *Natal* 1, 1888, 240.

John Montgomery, a British trader, who travelled with the parties of Gert Maritz and Hendrik Potgieter to Kapain roughly a year later,²⁷⁷ reported, apparently on the basis of what he was told by the accompanying trekkers, when they passed Vegkop on 3 October 1837:

... the farmers succeeded in driving them [the Ndebele] off, but the enemy took all their sheep, cattle, and horses, so that they could not pursue and recapture their stock. In this dilemma, the Boers sent to the chief Moroko of Thaba 'Nchu for assistance, and he was so kind as to send oxen to bring them out. ... On walking about among the dead it could be seen where the balls had penetrated the head or the ribs; some had *looper* holes in the side; others had their thighs broken. The skeletons were still entire, but the flesh was torn off by wolves and jackals. The place was called Moordkop. It was a hard fought battle.²⁷⁸

There are few Voortrekker reports about the difficult conditions after the battle, and interestingly, more are by women, whose accounts were later collected in Preller's *Voortrekkermense*. Perhaps the men preferred to remember the victorious aspect of the encounter. In 1894 Anna S. Coetzee (née Botha) recorded that they had no livestock to use as food, or to pull their wagons,²⁷⁹ and that they feared the spread of disease from the putrefying bodies of the dead Ndebele, which also polluted the nearest water supply.²⁸⁰ Later, in 1915, Maria Jacoba Minnaar, the daughter of J.G.S. Bronkhorst,²⁸¹ present during the battle as a nine-year-old, recalled similar hardships afterwards, and described it as a period of unforgettable suffering ('n tyd van onvergeetlike lyding'),²⁸² although her father – cited earlier – did not mention it. Like Cilliers, she stated that this situation lasted for fifteen days. The trekkers dragged their wagons some distance away to escape the stench and find fresh water, possibly using their horses. In their vulnerable state, the fear that the Ndebele might return to the attack undoubtedly added to their distress.²⁸³ Whether these recollections had been coloured by the powerful narrative of Cilliers, which was published in 1876, is difficult to judge.²⁸⁴

It is extraordinary that Erasmus Smit did not learn about (or did not choose to record) such a dire situation from Hendrik Potgieter and Nikolaas Smit, and that J.G.S. Bronkhorst gives no indication that Vegkop was a death trap for the stranded and starving Boers, as opposed to the harrowing accounts of Montgomery, Cilliers, Coetzee and Minnaar. In the face of these inconsistent accounts, a number of questions remain unanswered. For example, if the trekkers still had their stallions and pursued the Ndebele on horseback to attempt to regain their cattle, though without success, why were they not able to hunt for food?²⁸⁵ And were these experienced stock farmers really unable to find any strays from the looted six thousand head of cattle and forty-one thousand sheep and goats? The depleted strength of the trekkers, with two men dead and fourteen wounded, and the

²⁷⁷ Montgomery (ed. Giffard 1981, 118) joined the parties of Maritz and Potgieter, whose trek formed 'one continuous string of wagons stretched as far as the eye could reach, for miles', at the Sand River in 1837.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 119; his claim that the Ndebele took all the Boer horses is contradicted by the eyewitness reports by Bronkhorst and Cilliers. Potgieter and Theunissen (1938, 65) write of a hundred horses being taken.

²⁷⁹ Preller, *Voortrekkermense* 4, 1925, 29. See also Van der Merwe 1986, 110.

²⁸⁰ Preller, *Voortrekkermense* 4, 1925, 32. Although she was not an eyewitness at Vegkop, she supplies specific detail that is so vivid, such as dogs dragging the limbs of the dead into the laager, that it seems as though she had heard it directly from someone who was there.

²⁸¹ Van der Merwe (1986, 95) clarifies that she was Bronkhorst's daughter and present at Vegkop, but that she only gave her account seventy-eight years later. Visagie (2011, 315) confirms her marriage to Philippus Carel Minnaar in 1842 in Potchefstroom.

²⁸² Preller, *Voortrekkermense* 4, 1925, 136.

²⁸³ Van der Merwe 1986, 101–102.

²⁸⁴ Hofstede 1876, 50–66. Van der Merwe (1986, 101) accepts that the trekkers were in a bad way after the Ndebele retreated, and writes that in their weakened state 'the Boers were staring death by starvation in the face' (die Boere daar in hulle verarmde toestand 'n hongerdood in die gesig gestaar het).

²⁸⁵ Potgieter and Theunissen (1938, 66) mention that although some young men went out hunting they did not dare go far and could not bring back enough to feed a hundred and fifty people. Van der Merwe (1986, 106) adds that hunting would have been rather unsuccessful in the open veld like that around Vegkop without a sizeable party, which the under-strength Boers could not muster. Cilliers emphasises being unable to hunt because he was wounded.



Figure 8.6: Area of Thaba Nchu/Blesberg (Landau 2010, 111)

danger of small groups leaving the laager are the most likely explanations, although such issues are hardly discussed in the surviving accounts of the dramatic ordeal. It is relevant for the frieze that a century after the battle the story was repeated and embellished by Potgieter and Theunissen, whose glorifying Afrikaner biography of Hendrik Potgieter would have been known to the sculptors since Hennie Potgieter consulted the book for his panel of *Kapain*.²⁸⁶

It was the narratives around Vegkop and the need to call for assistance recorded in a number of Voortrekker writings that formed the subtext for *Negotiation*, even though it does not directly follow *Vegkop* in the frieze. The topic was first suggested for the frieze by respondents in the ‘Wenke’ document, and was included in Jansen’s definitive list in 1937. Potgieter and Theunissen claim that Commandant Hendrik Potgieter, after his victory over the Ndebele at Vegkop, sent his older brother Hermanus (Philippus; 1797–1854)²⁸⁷ to seek help for his starving trekkers from the Boers who had earlier left their party and were now in the area of Thaba Nchu, some two hundred kilometres south-west of Vegkop (figs 7.4, 8.6),²⁸⁸ near the Rev. Archbell and the Rolong chief Moroka – and that all of them sent trek oxen to assist.²⁸⁹ But earlier reports consistently name a younger brother of Hendrik Potgieter, Jacobus Johannes (1800–73),²⁹⁰ and make the point that help was also sought from Moroka, chief of the Rolong, who had a friendly relationship with the Voortrekkers. This is

²⁸⁶ Potgieter and Theunissen 1938, 65–66. For a critical review of their often unreliable account, see Van der Merwe 1986, 224–226.

²⁸⁷ Visagie 2011, 365.

²⁸⁸ Oberholster 1972, 218–219; Raper, Möller and Du Plessis 2014, 492.

²⁸⁹ Potgieter and Theunissen 1938, 66.

²⁹⁰ Visagie 2011, 368. Jacobus Johannes was sent, not his son, Hermanus Jacobus, as erroneously stated in Part I, chapter 4, p.362.



Wesleyan Miss. Station amongst the Barolongs at Thaba Nchu 1839

Figure 8.7: 'Wesleyan Miss. Station amongst the Barolongs at Thaba Nchu 1839', Black Mountain as backdrop. View from north-west. Drawing (Backhouse 1844, opp. p.411)

spelled out by Hermanus Jacobus (1821–99),²⁹¹ the commandant's son, who would have been a teenager at the time of the battle, in his recollections recorded by the 'State Historian' (Staatshistorikus) G.A. Odé.²⁹² At his destination, Jacobus Johannes probably first met the Wesleyan missionary, the Rev. James Archbell (1798–1866),²⁹³ who was settled next to the Rolong on the northern side of the Black Mountain, while most Boer parties were encamped further south of the mountain (fig. 8.7).²⁹⁴ Archbell charitably offered to supply Potgieter's trekkers with his own cattle, and also took him to Moroka.²⁹⁵ Moroka's response was equally generous and he too sent oxen. Hermanus Jacobus' recollections confirm that the oxen obtained to assist the Boers stranded at Vegkop, 'were in part kindly lent by Moroka, ... but also in part from the Boers at Blesberg'²⁹⁶ – as already indicated in Cilliers' account quoted above. With some fifty wagons to move, the Boers needed help

²⁹¹ Ibid., 364–365.

²⁹² Preller, *Voortrekker* 3, 1922, 41. Hermanus Jacobus' recollections further elucidate that Jacobus Johannes was indeed part of Hendrik Potgieter's trekker group. See Visagie (2011, 368), who stated about Jacobus Johannes: 'Trekker group: probably A.H. Potgieter, his brother' (Trekgeselskap: Waarskynlik A.H. Potgieter, sy broer).

²⁹³ DSAB 2, 1972, 12–16.

²⁹⁴ See Smit trans. Mears 1972, 2 (19.11.1936; Dutch text: Smit ed. Scholtz 1988, 40): 'We ... unyoked on the south side of Blesberg (Thaba Nchu) ... [while] on the northern side the Institution of the Wesleyan Missionary is situated where Mr J. Archibald [Rev. J. Archbell] lived.' Visagie (2014, 80) confirms that the laagers of Potgieter, Maritz and Retief must have been about seven or eight kilometres south of today's Thaba Nchu.

²⁹⁵ For a first-hand record of Moroka's residence and people, see Backhouse 1844, 412–417, including a drawing showing both the mission and settlement (fig. opp. p.411), reproduced in Oberholster 1972, 219. For Moroka, see Molema 1951; DSAB 1, 1968, 559–560 (Moroka II); Landau 2010, 108–161.

²⁹⁶ 'Gedeeltelik werd het trekvee ... hun welwillend door Maroko geleend ... gedeeltelik ook door de Boeren die te Blesberg stonden' (Preller, *Voortrekker* 3, 1922, 41–42).



Figure 8.8: Isa Steynberg. *Hulp van Barolong* (Help from the Rolong). Before 1984. Bronze relief, 90 × 139 cm (courtesy of Vegkop Monument; photo André Pretorius Photography)

from a number of sources.²⁹⁷ Voortrekker accounts often emphasise the assistance of Archbell and Moroka, perhaps because it was less expected. Their support was also foregrounded when the Vegkop trekkers arrived in Thaba Nchu, where, Van der Merwe infers from various reports, Archbell and the Rolong gave them ‘a very friendly welcome’.²⁹⁸

This dual assistance formed the basis of Coetzer’s first sketch (fig. 8.2) which showed both Archbell and Moroka, although not the Boers from Thaba Nchu who supplied oxen too. The decision to also exclude Archbell in the frieze and to show only the Rolong as the crucial contact suggests a deliberate agenda. The focus on two parties alone, the Boers from Vegkop and Moroka with his men, seems to have been selected to bring the act of negotiation between whites and blacks into prominence. The scene was intended to affirm the oft-repeated claim that the Boers more readily negotiated with than opposed African people they came across on their treks, an agenda underscored by Moerdyk: ‘The episode also serves to emphasize the peaceful intentions of the Voortrekkers.’²⁹⁹ This treatment of the aftermath of Vegkop also avoids showing the humiliating helplessness of the trekkers and offers no clue about the laager’s wretched situation. It makes for an interesting comparison with Isa Steynberg’s representation for a bronze panel at the Vegkop Monument (inaugurated 1984; see *Vegkop*), which shows the Rolong leading a lavish supply of oxen into the Voortrekker camp to assist the starving yet not needily portrayed Boers (fig. 8.8). Although different in composition, locale and time, it follows the Voortrekker Monument frieze in focusing on Boers and Rolong only.

The style and composition of *Negotiation* further masks the omission of the seriousness of the situation, as it represents the party of Voortrekkers advantageously, not only because they

²⁹⁷ Van der Merwe (1986, 101–107) gives a full account of the various reports on the situation, including the possibility that the stranded Voortrekkers left Vegkop in two successive parties.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 106–107: ‘Terug op Thaba Nchu is die trek baie vriendelik ontvang deur eerw. Archbell en die Barolongs’ (Back in Thaba Nchu the trek was given a very friendly welcome by Rev. Archbell and the Rolong).

²⁹⁹ *Official Guide* 1950, 48.



Figure 8.9: Potgieter negotiating with Rolong chief Moroka in *Negotiation*. Marble, detail of fig. 8.1 (photo Russell Scott)

are armed, but also because they occupy two-thirds of the panel, and the commanding figure of Jacobus Johannes Potgieter appears to gesture rather condescendingly to the Rolong (fig. 8.9). They stand listening in an inert group, subordinate to the Boers – despite the fact that the milk container and oxen in the background are evidence of Rolong wealth, and of their contribution to the Boers' survival. The entire scene is staged as if the Voortrekkers negotiated with Moroka as superiors, not as supplicants in a life-threatening situation. Equally revealing is the omission of Archbell who was vital in mediating the Voortrekkers' request for aid, so that the Boers are represented as managing their affairs with black people without assistance. In the absence of any other parties involved, this scene might even recall the initial negotiations between Moroka and the Boers when they first arrived in the area. Trekker Johannes Hendrik Hattingh recounted that conflict with Mzilikazi had left the Rolong in dire straits, and they had welcomed the arrival of the Boers, who shot game to save them from starvation.³⁰⁰

In the *Official Guide* Moerdyk acknowledges that the Boers needed assistance, although he avoids any mention of suffering and uses the occasion to suggest the magnanimity of their gratitude, a reflection, he suggests, of their benign dealings with African people:

After the battle of Vegkop, when the Voortrekkers were left without means of locomotion, Moroka ... sent them assistance. With his help Potgieter and his people were taken to Thaba Nchu where they were given kaffir corn and milk. Tradition has it that Potgieter never forgot this act of grace and up to the time of his death he regularly sent presents to Moroka. ... The episode also serves to emphasize

³⁰⁰ Preller, *Voortrekermense* 1, 1918, 121–122.



Figure 8.10: Moerdyk's dog Leeu in *Negotiation*. Plaster maquette and marble, details of figs 8.4, 8.1 (photos Russell Scott)

the peaceful intentions of the Voortrekkers. They constantly tried to obtain land from the natives by means of negotiation and not by force of arms. There were no conquerors among the Voortrekkers, no Cortez, no Napoleon, no Genghis Khan no Tamburlaine.³⁰¹

It did not matter to Moerdyk that his claim directly contradicted Potgieter's proclamation of the trekkers' right to the land by conquest after *Kapain*, all the more paradoxical when that battle is depicted right next to *Negotiation*.³⁰² Rather, Moerdyk presents the Voortrekkers' desperate appeal for help as an affirmation of their peaceful intentions and lawful conduct when obtaining land 'from the natives'. It might then be asked why it was placed immediately after the victorious battle of *Kapain*, and against the chronological order of the narrative in marble. We cannot know whether *Negotiation* was positioned merely to create a compositional balance, or consciously to ameliorate the aggressiveness of *Kapain*, or both. But the tensions set up between Moerdyk's implication that the main Boer is Hendrik Potgieter,³⁰³ a benevolent negotiator here, and that leader's securing of the Transvaal by force in the preceding scene certainly stimulate conflicting readings, whether intended or not.

It could additionally be asked why *Negotiation* was placed ahead of the arrival in Natal and two of the most distressing scenes of the frieze, *Murder of Retief* and *Bloukrans*. When the predominant treatment of black people in the frieze is as vicious enemies to be overcome, the Rolong provided a rare opportunity to acknowledge their willingness to accept the superiority of the Boers – and to demonstrate that the Voortrekkers were well intentioned in their relations with Africans. It also renders the barbarism of the Zulu all the more potent. A further anomaly complicating our reading of *Negotiation* is the visual presentation of the Rolong in contrast to the Boers in their western dress. While their nakedness might have been understood in the context of the Voortrekker story by those who designed the frieze as an indicator of a lack of civilised values, it also conjures up the classical icon of the nude body. The exemplary associations, which we discuss in Part I,³⁰⁴

³⁰¹ *Official Guide* 1955, 48.

³⁰² Potgieter and Theunissen 1938, 99.

³⁰³ Moerdyk assigns this act to Hendrik Potgieter by default in not naming his brother.

³⁰⁴ Chapter 4 ('The problem of form'). For the 'classical black', see Glenn 2007.

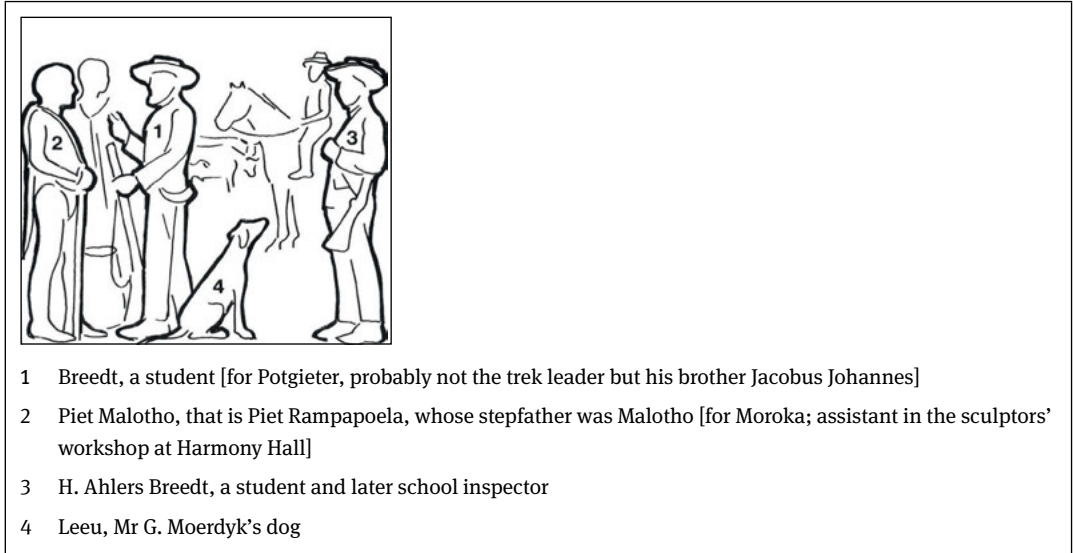


Figure 8.11: Models for portraits (Potgieter 1987, 19)

mark – significantly even if unintentionally – a profound conflict in the imagery that aimed to create a clear-cut hierarchy between white Boers and black people in the frieze.

Given the hermeneutic complexity of *Negotiation*, the prominence of the dog in the foreground is a banal detail (fig. 8.10). Yet Hennie Potgieter includes the dog amongst the names of the models for the scene (fig. 8.11) and Moerdyk, who supplied his dog Leeu as a model for the full-scale relief, awards it a substantial entry in the *Official Guide*:

The panel is also noteworthy in that a dog is depicted on it. In all their writings the Voortrekkers only twice referred to dogs. During the massacre of Bloukrans people were awakened by the barking of dogs. In his diary Louis Trichardt mentions that 'the bitch caught a buck this morning.' The well-known Boerbull type of dog had at that time not yet been bred and to avert criticism of the dog depicted a special dog was bred by crossing a watchdog (Dobermann Pinscher) and a hunting dog (greyhound).³⁰⁵

That Leeu has a whole paragraph devoted to him in the *Official Guide* simply because he is (claimed to be) an authentic 'Voortrekker' dog underlines the constant efforts to justify the historical accuracy of the frieze. That Leeu's presence, no doubt intended to symbolise the faithful support of all Voortrekker dogs, was felt to merit more attention in the *Official Guide* than the Rolong – whose vital intervention saved so many Voortrekker lives – demonstrates how even relatively insignificant details have contributed to the dense fabric of Afrikaner ideology in the frieze.

³⁰⁵ *Official Guide* 1955, 48.

9 Report from Retief at *Blydevooruitsig* (11 November 1837)



A2/A3



B2a/b



C2



D

9 Blydevooruitsig

East wall, south-east projection, above door (panel 11/31)

h. 2.3 × w. 2.4 m

Horizontally broken in two parts; fracture running across knees of background figure on left, over top of door frame, through neck of woman on right; water stains top right corner

Sculptor of the clay maquettes: Hennie Potgieter

STAGES OF PRODUCTION

A1 W.H. Coetzer, pencil drawing, retained only in A2 (April–June 1937)

A2 Reproduction of A1 (June 1937)

A3 W.H. Coetzer, revised pencil drawing A1, h. 13.5 × w. 15.3 cm (after September 1937)

Annotations: 'Brief van Retief oorhandig aan Voortrekkers bo op Drakensberg / Blyde Vooruitsig' (Letter from Retief handed over to the Voortrekkers on top of the Drakensberg / 'Blydevooruitsig' (name of location meaning 'joyful prospect')

B1 One-third-scale clay maquettes, not extant but replicated in B2a/b (1942–43)

B2 a. Rejected one-third-scale plaster maquette, h. 77 × w. 89.7 × d. 10.3 cm (1942–43)

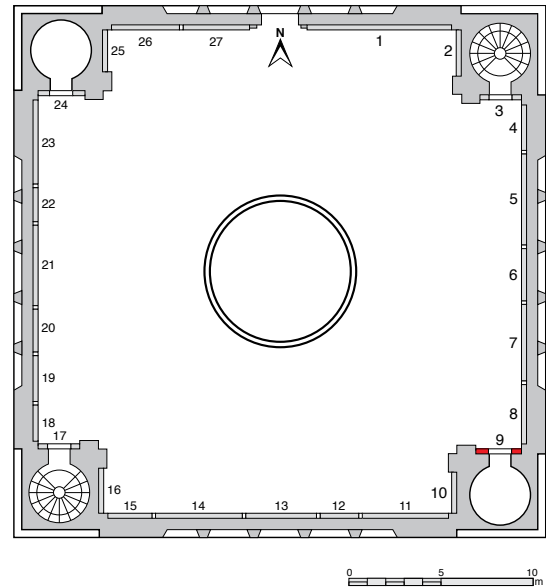
b. New unfinished one-third-scale plaster maquette, h. 76 × w. 92.2 × d. 8 cm (1942–43)

C1 Full-scale wooden armature, not extant (1943–46)

C2 Full-scale clay relief, not extant but recorded in photograph; replicated in C3 (1943–46)

C3 Full-scale plaster relief (1943–46), not extant but copied in D (late 1947–49)

D Marble as installed in the Monument (1949)



EARLY RECORDS

SVK minutes (29.5.1937) – item 4a 'Brief van mnr. F. Steytler (Harrismith) waarin hy daarop wys dat Piet Retief nie teruggekeer het na Blyde Vooruitzicht nie, en dat as daar in die reeks taferele 'n paneel verskyn van Blyde Vooruitzicht dan moet dit nie die terugkoms van Retief voorstel nie. Besluit: Die Sekretaris sal aan mnr. Steytler berig dat die tafelere histories korrek uitgewerk sal word' (Letter from Mr F. Steytler [Harrismith] in which he indicates that Piet Retief never returned to Blydevooruitsig and that, if a panel of Blydevooruitsig is shown in the series of scenes, Retief's return must not be portrayed. Decision: The Secretary will report to Mr Steytler that the scenes will be correctly developed historically)

SVK minutes (4.9.1937) – item 4h (see below, 'Developing the design')

Wenke (c. 1934–36) – item I. F.A. STEYTLER, b. 'Trekkerwaens teen die hange van Drakensberg; dogertjie as touleier, Blyde Vooruitzicht' (Trek wagons on the cliffs of the Drakensberg; little girl as team-leader, Blydevooruitsig) / item VI. 'SEN. F.S. MALAN, 7. 'Ander toneel: Terugkeer van Piet Retief van besoek by Dingaan, op Drakensberge, by Blyde Vooruitzicht' (Other scene: Return of Piet Retief from visit to Dingane, over the Drakensberg, at Blydevooruitsig)

Moerdyk Layout (5.10.1936–15.1.1937) – scene 8 on panel 12/31 'Blydevooruitsig'

Jansen Memorandum (19.1.1937) – item 7.8 'The Voortrekkers on the Drakensberg (Blydevooruitsig) near Retiefklip [Retief stone]. Here the camp life will be portrayed as also receipt of the news of land being obtainable from Dingaan'



Figure 9.1: D. Blydevooruitsig. 1949. Marble, 2.3 × 2.4 m (courtesy of VTM; photo Russell Scott)

Description

As for *Soutpansberg*, *Marthinus Oosthuizen* and *Mpande*, the composition is determined by the odd shape of the relief, as a large section of the rectangle is cut out, slightly off-centre, to accommodate the gable-shaped door frame (fig. 9.1). The dominating figure is the young rider with a brimmed hat who arrives on a stallion. Like the other male Voortrekkers in this panel, he wears the short Voortrekker jacket, and is beardless. He leans forward to present a piece of paper to a boy with combed-back hair, who stretches out his right hand eagerly to receive the message. The boy's legs and the forelegs of the horse are partly obscured by the door frame. From the far right comes another, more mature Boer carrying a small animal over his shoulders. The sculptor, Hennie Potgieter, implies that he represents a hunter,³⁰⁶ but it does not appear to be a typical buck as the ear is small and rounded and the head rather compact, like the lamb in the centre of *Departure*.³⁰⁷ To the right of the door frame sits a young woman in a long-sleeved dress with her hair drawn back in a plaited bun, visible because her head is turned to look towards the message bearer. She is busy with needlework, with fabric and scissors placed on the sloping incline of the door frame. Her counterpart, a young man with a quiff hairstyle, also facing inwards, is squashed into the lower section on the left, either sitting or crouching. He is doing cobbler's work, his shoemaker's last and saddle hammer resting on the other incline.

An exceptional figure in the frieze is the black man in the left background, seen back view and distinguished from the Voortrekkers by his hair, bare torso and the arduous work he undertakes. He is stretching long leather thongs fixed on a sturdy frame made of a horizontal branch supported on vertical cut-off branches, one of which is visible. Hennie Potgieter explains:

The person in the background inserts a long stick through the arc of wood to which a stone weight is attached that stretches the thongs from the crossbar. The worker walks in a circle to wind up the thongs, then pulls out the stick so that the weight rolls back and winds up in the opposite direction. In this way the thongs are stretched.³⁰⁸

306 Potgieter 1987, 20. He does not identify figures specifically, but rather their occupations, stating that the scene portrays 'die normal bedrywighede in 'n laer soos jag, rieme brei, skoene versool en naaiwerk' (the normal activities in a laager, such as hunting, stretching thongs, resoling shoes and needlework).

307 Heymans and Theart-Peddle 2009, 23 ('the Voortrekkers ... hunted'); Grobler 2001, 94 ('The man ... is returning from a hunt with a buck on his shoulders').

308 Potgieter 1987, 20: 'Die persoon op die agtergrond steek die lang stok deur die houtboog waaraan 'n klipgewig geheg is, wat die rieme van die dwarsbalk af span. Die werker loop in 'n sirkel om sodoende die rieme op te wen, dan trek hy die stok uit om die gewig na benede te laat rol om weer na die teenoorgestelde kant op te wen. Op hierdie wyse word die rieme gebrei.' Rooyen (1938, 58–65) provides a thorough description of braiding thongs.



Figure 9.2: A2. W.H. Coetzer. Reproduction of first sketch for *Blydevooruitsig*. June 1937 (courtesy of ARCA PV94 1/75/5/1; photo the authors)

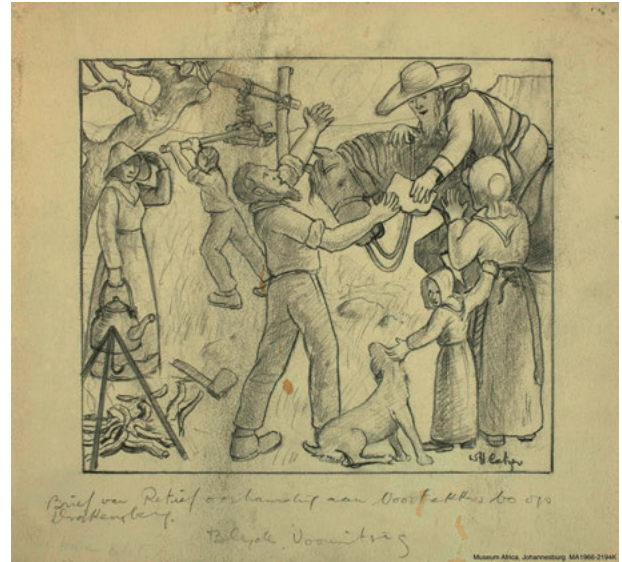


Figure 9.3: A3. W.H. Coetzer. 'Blyde Vooruitsig'. After September 1937. Pencil, 13.5 x 15.3 cm. Revised first sketch (photo courtesy of Museum Africa, no. 66/2194K)



Figure 9.4: B2a. Hennie Potgieter. *Blydevooruitsig*. 1942-43. Plaster, 77 x 89.7 x 10.3 cm. Rejected maquette (courtesy of VTM Museum VTM 2184/1-28; photo Russell Scott)



Figure 9.5: B2b. Hennie Potgieter. *Blydevooruitsig*. 1942-43. Plaster, 76 x 92.2 x 8 cm. New maquette (courtesy of VTM Museum VTM 2184/1-28; photo Russell Scott)

Developing the design

A comparison of Coetzer's designs reveals significant changes between the reproduction of the first pencil drawing (fig. 9.2) presented to the SVK on 26 June 1837 and its revised version (fig. 9.3) after the Historiese Komitee meeting on 4 September 1937 when the following alterations were required:

Blydevooruitsig [Joyful Prospect]. The milk jug is incorrect; the people did not bring a letter; it must be a bowl instead of a cup; the thongs that are being stretched must be thicker.³⁰⁹

In the revised pencil drawing, the key group of the rider delivering a letter to a bearded Boer, with a woman, girl and dog forming part of the welcoming group remains. But while Coetzer ignored the Historiese Komitee's claim that there was no letter, he made numerous changes. Not all of them were listed in the minutes, which suggests that there may have been more informal discussions also. The erasure of altered items left numerous faint traces under the final pencil surface, showing particularly well how Coetzer went about revising his first pencil sketches. For the second sketch, from left to right, he 1) obliterated the three-legged pot over the fire; 2) reduced the height of the tripod; 3) introduced an axe; 4) erased the table; 5) changed the position, pose and action of the woman on the left, who is now shown with a kappie and a kettle; 6) deleted the man holding up a book behind her; 7) moved the tree further to the left; 8) fastened the fluttering kerchief of the man in the centre and removed the hat he held up in greeting; and 9) rubbed out the riempie stool next to him. There are also traces of an earlier but unclear object in the space between the axe, the left leg of the central trekker and the left foot of the Boer who is stretching thongs. As requested by the Historiese Komitee, Coetzer eliminated the milk jug and the cup but ignored the instruction to thicken the thongs.

The basic composition for the relief designs is already laid out, with a Voortrekker who rides in from the right to present what looks like a letter to his comrade in the centre. Coetzer's sketches also establish the concept of using this scene to illustrate some of the daily activities in a Voortrekker camp, in the way described by Jansen in his letter to the government of 19.1.1937. But in the subsequent maquettes Coetzer's surrounding figures were significantly modified, probably in response to the tricky issue of composing over the cut-out of the door frame, and only the position of the figure in shirt sleeves braiding thongs fixed on a frame of support is retained.

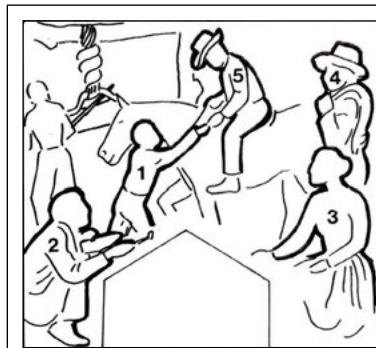
Two different small clay maquettes cast in plaster survive. The gable-shaped door frame is, as for *Soutpansberg*, too low in the first (fig. 9.4), but suggests a provisional response to the door design which, probably at some point in 1942, was changed to the final form. In this maquette the beardless man on horseback is moved to the centre and leans down to give the letter to a little girl, a change that may be explained by the lack of sufficient space for an adult. The horse is represented more fully than in the drawing, with one raised foreleg, and a drooping head on a long arched neck, perhaps to indicate weariness after a long journey. At the far right a trekker in shirt sleeves and with a powder horn walks into the image, carrying a rather nondescript young animal on his shoulders, suggesting that he is a hunter.

In the small space to the right of the door frame a moustached trekker in shirt sleeves kneels to use part of the awkward door frame as a support for repairing a shoe. A young woman, who reads a book held in her right hand, reclines along the slope on the other side of the door in an extravagantly elaborate pose, her near leg bent at a sharp angle and her elongated left arm extended along the opposite incline. On the far left stands a woman holding a tray with three bowls (perhaps a belated response to the Historiese Komitee request that these replace cups), a three-legged pot at her feet, taken from the first Coetzer design (fig. 9.2), although not on a fire. Crammed behind her

³⁰⁹ 'Blyde Vooruitzicht. Die melkkan is verkeerd; die mense het geen brief gebring nie; dit moet 'n kommetjie i. p. v. 'n koppie wees; die rieme wat gebrei word, moet dikker wees' (Historiese Komitee 4.9.1937: 4h).



Figure 9.6: C2. *Blydevooruitsig*. 1943–46. Clay. Full-scale relief (Potgieter 1987, 20; photo Alan Yates)



- 1 Stephan Joubert
- 2 Dr G.D. Roos, brother-in-law of the sculptor
- 3 Janny Roos (Mrs G.D.), sister-in-law of the sculptor
- 4 Oom Nollie Bosman, businessman
- 5 Hannes Pretorius, businessman

Figure 9.7: Models for portraits (Potgieter 1987, 20)

in back view a Voortrekker stretches thongs, with a very reduced tree as a scaffold. As a whole the composition is rather crowded and distracting as it has no clear focus.

The second composition (fig. 9.5) is modelled only roughly to revise the composition: while it retains the rider in the centre, it is considerably rethought. The mounted Boer, now positioned lower down so that he can sit upright, presents his message not to a girl but a boy: the pair defines the panel's main focus, emphasised by all the other Voortrekkers looking in their direction bar the one in the background stretching thongs. Although smaller, that figure is now more visible as the standing woman on the far left has been removed, and the cobbler has changed sides, and is squeezed into a seated position to fill the foreground space. The reclining girl gives way to a larger female figure opposite who fills her space more comfortably, and has given up her book though we cannot yet see what she is doing. She partly obscures the trekker with an animal on his shoulders who now stands upright behind the horse.

The full-scale clay panel (fig. 9.6) resolves the poses and tidies up detail, such as raising the head of the horse, which now looks more alert, while the rider leans forward to deliver his letter. Cobbler's equipment is supplied to the man on the left and sewing material to the woman on the right; it furnishes her with a useful task rather than leisured reading, an unlikely daily activity on the treks. Both these flanking figures are rather more cramped than in the second maquette that allowed more space at the sides of the door opening, and the left leg of the seamstress is bent sharply backwards under her skirt. The most significant change from the small plaster maquettes, and indeed Coetzer's drawings, is the ethnic revision of the man given the arduous task of stretching thongs: he is transformed from a white trekker into a black man, a modification discussed below. Seen from behind, he required no specific sitter, although the portraits of the other figures were taken from models, including members of the sculptor's family (fig. 9.7).³¹⁰

310 The relationship between Potgieter and the foreground figures, Dr and Mrs G.D. Roos, whom he refers to as his brother- and sister-in-law, is puzzling as a husband and wife cannot both be 'in-laws'. Perhaps the term is loosely used to indicate relationships in an extended family group.

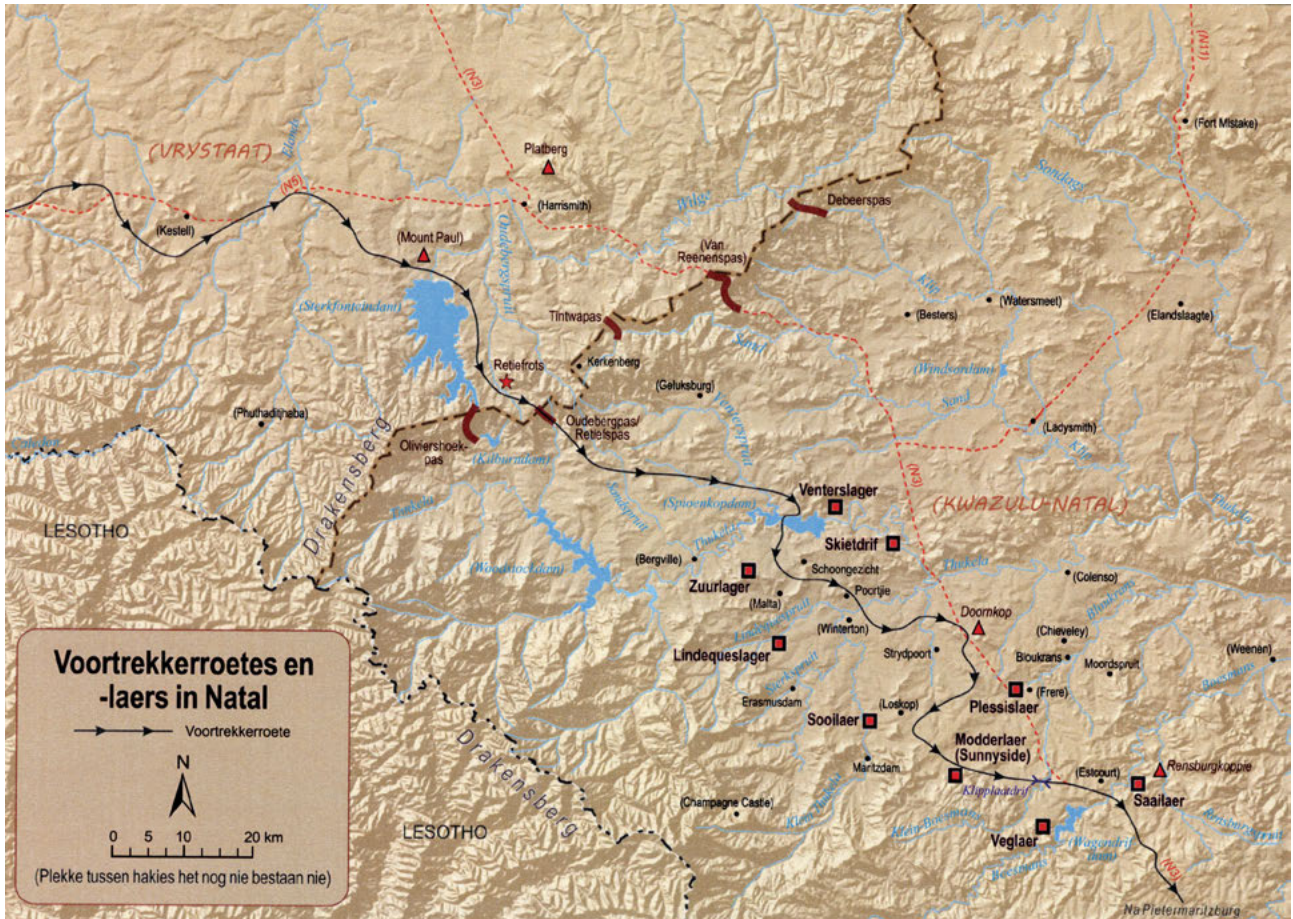


Figure 9.8: Routes, mountain passes and laagers of Voortrekkers in the Drakensberg and Zulu Natal. Late 1837 and early 1838 (courtesy of Visagie 2014, foldout opp. p.98).

Reading the narrative

Blydevooruitsig presents a placid scene of industry and domesticity in an unspecified outdoor setting, but the historical context it embraces is complex. The main actors in this area, Zulu, British and Boers, represented opposing cultures that pursued conflicting political and economic interests.³¹¹ The land-hungry Boers were split in different treks with different aims. While Potgieter's party preferred the land across the Vaal River, those trekkers led by Piet Retief, and also Gerrit Maritz and later Piet Uys, were keen to settle in Natal, and 'wended their separate ways over the mountains into Dingane's kingdom' (fig. 9.8).³¹² The British settlers and traders at Port Natal, again, were divided into two factions, one supporting the Colony's policy, while the other was eagerly waiting 'to form an internal government' with the Boers, 'free from the false measures and wavering policy' of the Crown.³¹³ Meanwhile, the Zulu King Dingane³¹⁴ was concerned about the security of his kingdom in Natal, especially when faced with the massive invasion of the approaching trekkers already known for their military success. In response he had been trying, though not effectively, to arm his warriors with guns and instruct them in the use of gun powder.³¹⁵

We know rather well what happened to Retief and his party between September and November 1837, the time when the name 'Blydevooruitsig' was coined. The main sources are the diary of Erasmus Smit, the appointed Voortrekker minister of religion (see *Inauguration*), the diary of Rev. Francis Owen, the English missionary at uMgungundlovu, and a selection of letters exchanged between Retief and Dingane and British residents at Port Natal.³¹⁶ Retief was able to assemble a party of fifty-four wagons which, after mid-September 1837, travelled eastwards, from the area of Virginia (OFS) to beyond the region of Kestell, where they turned south and followed a route roughly corresponding to the modern R74 towards the Oliviershoek Pass near Kerkenberg,³¹⁷ also called 'Retiefspas'. On their way they saw several ruined kraals, said to have been destroyed by Mzilikazi's Ndebele.³¹⁸ On 5 October Retief sent a small party of four wagons and fourteen men over the Drakensberg to Port Natal, following the next day with his son-in-law, Pieter (Lucas Petrus Johannes) Meyer (1811–38),³¹⁹ who was married to Retief's eldest daughter, Debora. Retief's goal was to negotiate the trekkers' future, first with the British settlers at Port Natal (19 to 27 October)

311 Laband 1995, 81–82; Etherington 2001, 261–265.

312 *Ibid.*, 262. Visagie (2014, 96–98) debates the possible pass routes over the Drakensberg, apart from the one used by Retief, and marks them on his map (*ibid.*, opp. p.98).

313 Chase, *Natal 1*, 1843, 86–87: Letter of the British settlers to Mr. B. Norden (see appendix to *Murder of Retief*), dated 2 May 1837 and published in the *Graham's Town Journal* on 22 June that year.

314 For Dingane, see *Treaty*.

315 Etherington 2001, 262–263.

316 The diaries: Smit trans. Mears 1972, 53–70 (18.9.–30.11.1837; Dutch text: Smit ed. Scholtz 1988, 86–101); Owen ed. Cory 1926, 55–78 (26.10.–29.11.1837). A selection of letters, all in 1837: Chase, *Natal 1*, 1943, 123–124 (19.10: Retief arrives in Port Natal), 124–126 (23.10: British residents at Port Natal address Retief and his response), 129–134 (31.10–18.11: exchange of letters by Retief and Dingane); Delegorgue, *Travels 2*, 1997, 57–63 (19.10–8.11: exchange of selected letters by Retief and Dingane); Bird, *Natal 1*, 1888, 333–334 (5–7.11: report of Rev. Francis Owen on Retief's visit to Dingane), 359–365 (19.10.–18.11: exchange of letters by Retief and Dingane). For the letters, Delegorgue (*Travels 2*, 1997, 57) specifies: 'I have in my possession the whole of this curious correspondence, with all the principal documents concerning the events of the time; ... I ... confine myself to the most important.' Further documents are kept in NA Kew, CO48/199/v1 and CO48/200/v2.

317 For the route, see Gledhill and Gledhill (1980, 171–176) and Visagie (2011, 85, 87–95, maps, opp. pp.64 and 98). In September 1837 John Montgomery (ed. Giffard 1981, 118), a British trader, travelling with the Maritz and Potgieter trekkers, met Piet Retief ('an acquaintance of mine since 1821') at Sand River, who told him that he was on his way to Natal. Montgomery, however, warned Retief not to cross the Drakensberg towards the Zulu country, because Dingane 'would fall upon him'.

318 See the entries, all in 1837, in Smit trans. Mears 1972, 53 (19.09), 54 (23.09), 55 (30.09). For the Dutch text, see Smit ed. Scholtz 1988, 86–88.

319 Visagie 2011, 312.

and then with Dingane at uMgungundlovu, the king's residential and military city (5 to 8 November).³²⁰ While the development of Retief's upcoming negotiations with the Zulu king is discussed in *Treaty*, we begin here with the first letter he wrote to Dingane on 19 October when he had reached Port Natal, in which he confronted the Zulu king with the expansive interests of the trekkers in Natal and the superior power of the Boers:

To the Chief of the Zulus. – I embrace this opportunity of your messengers' return to inform you, that it is my ardent wish to have a personal interview, in order to prevent any vague reports that may reach you respecting the intentions of the party who have left the colony, and wish to settle in the uninhabited country adjoining the Zoola territories.

It is our fervent desire to live at peace with the Zoola nation. Reports no doubt have reached you of your [our]³²¹ late rapture [sic] with Matselikatse [Mzilikazi], arising from the frequent and daring plunders of that tribe, and in consequence of which it became absolutely necessary to declare war, having tried in every possible way to adjust differences, but without avail. I leave in a few days for the Zoola country, in order to arrange with you our future relations.

Hoping for ever to live at peace and good understanding with the Zoola nation is the sincere wish of

Your true Friend,
(Signed) P. Retief, Governor, &c.

P.S. – Our party having parted, should any or all of them arrive in the Zoola country before me, it is my wish you will allow them a free pass to join us.³²²

On 23 October, in a letter without addressee but apparently written to his fellow trekkers, he reports about Natal and his intended visit of Dingane:

I have now, from all accounts, travelled through the worst parts of the Natal country, and which I have found tolerably well suited for cattle and agricultural purposes. On this subject, however, I will write you at length on my return from Dingaan.

I am extremely desirous to see and to speak to Dingaan; it is much feared here that I shall not succeed in obtaining an interview. I, however, fear not, as my conscience tells me that I go, not to do harm, but good. It is possible that I shall not succeed in my object, without a great deal of difficulty, and which I must patiently endure, as I consider it one of the most important matters for us to see him speedily. I also believe that the chief Sinkajala [Sekonyela, Tlokwa chief] has committed a daring robbery [of cattle] upon Dingaan, and which the latter may lay to our charge ... [see *Treaty*].³²³

This letter would have reached his people near Kerkenberg near the beginning of November. In the meantime, around 20 October 1837, while Retief was absent, the full trek party, led by Abraham Greyling, one of Retief's stepsons, arrived on the plateau at Kerkenberg where they set up their camp in the agreeable setting to which *Blydevooruitsig* (in Dutch 'Blijde Vooruitzicht') refers:³²⁴ meaning literally joyful prospect, the name alluded to the beautiful surroundings nearby, bright with summer flowers, and more generally to a positive view of the Voortrekkers' future in Natal.

³²⁰ For the party, see Smit trans. Mears 1972, 57–58 (5–6.10.1837; Dutch text: Smit ed. Scholtz 1988, 90); Bird, *Natal* 1, 1888, 367–368 (narrative by Daniel Pieter Bezuidenhout, 1879). For topics and chronology, all in 1837, see also Nathan 1937, 172–176, 187–191; Gledhill and Gledhill 1980, 178–182; Laband 1995, 81–83.

³²¹ Corrected in Bird, *Natal* 1, 1888, 360.

³²² Chase (*Natal* 1, 1843, 124) dated the letter 12 October, possibly a misreading of 19 October (Bird, *Natal* 1, 1888, 359) as this was the date given for Retief's arrival in Port Natal where he wrote the letter. Bird (*Natal* 1, 1888, 359–360) published the same letter, in a more elegant translation, but without the post scriptum.

³²³ Chase, *Natal* 1, 1843, 126.

³²⁴ Smit trans. Mears 1972, 60 (21.10.1837; Dutch text: Smit ed. Scholtz 1988, 92).

On 11 and 12 November 1837 the party received two further letters from Retief with heartening news. Erasmus Smit notes in his diary about the first:

Today we received encouraging news from our worthy Governor in a letter written on the Tugela river, dated 2 November 1837, and another letter from D. [sic] Liebenberg which compelled us all to shout: Praise and thanks be to the name of the Lord for the great kindness shown to us all on our journey undertaken to Nieuw Holland. Also two fellow travellers, Coenraad Meyer and Piet Meyer, in a 5 day journey on horseback, have also brought to our camp the delicious fruits of Port Natal. Today while still on my visit to the beautiful valley [near Kerkenberg] I received the letter of the Governor from Mrs Retief, and now, after having read the Governor's letter, named this valley Blijde Vooruitzicht.³²⁵

It may seem obvious to relate the 'encouraging news' from Retief, which caused Smit to name the beautiful valley 'Joyful Prospect', to the trekkers' key concern – whether the Zulu king would agree to the Boer plan to occupy the land in his neighbourhood. But on 2 November when he wrote, Retief had not yet met Dingane. The content of Retief's letter is unknown, but it may have conveyed no more than Dingane's apparently friendly sentiments which, as emphasised by Manfred Nathan,³²⁶ can be extrapolated from a recorded letter the Zulu king sent to the Boer leader on 31 October 1837.³²⁷ In this response 'he approves very much' of Retief's earlier letter, presumably of 19 October, although he does not specify its date and contents,³²⁸ and then reports only that he had captured many sheep from his adversary, the Ndebele king Mzilikazi (see *Kapain*). Dingane explains that he would be 'anxious to return them to their own masters', but that all the Boer sheep taken by the Ndebele at Vegkop a year ago were by that time either dead or with Mzilikazi's people, who were on the run. And he concludes, in a post scriptum, that he is sending today one hundred and ten sheepskins to the Tugela River ready for Retief to collect after arrival. There is no mention of any request for a grant of land, let alone Dingane's willingness to comply. The chronology of events, as attested by the surviving letters, does not support the idea that any authorised information about such complex issues as new territorial allocations could have reached the Boer leader before he met the Zulu king in person (5 to 8 November).³²⁹ Since Dingane's letter, which might have reached Retief as early as 2 November when he wrote to his wife, Magdalena,³³⁰ made no mention of land, the governor was in no position to have given her any substantiated news about land for settlement. But Moerdyk in the *Official Guide*, based on misconceptions of the chronology, links *Blydevooruitsig* to the prospect of a major land grant:

After Piet Retief's first visit to Dingaan he returned to his laagers via Port Natal. In order to reassure his trek of his safety, he sent messengers back from the Tugela River with the news that Dingaan had consented to a preliminary grant of land and that the Trekkers could begin crossing the Drakensberg into Natal. Erasmus Smit refers to this very welcome news in his diary on 11th November, 1837. He writes as follows ... [see quote above].³³¹

Moerdyk conveniently collapses two successive events into each other, thus endowing the naming of the vista as 'Joyful Prospect' with an added significance in the Voortrekker story. This designation

325 *Ibid.*, 64 (quote), has erroneously D. instead of B(arend Johannes) Liebenberg sr (see De Jongh 1977, 144; Smit ed. Scholtz 1988, 95 [11.11.1837]), who was among those accompanying Retief to Natal and uMgungundlovu (see Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 367–368 [narrative by Daniel Pieter Bezuidenhout, 1879]). The content of both letters is unknown.

326 Nathan 1937, 176.

327 Chase, *Natal* 1, 1843, 130–131 (quote p.131; based on the 1847 French edition by Delegorgue, *Travels* 2, 1997, 60).

328 We know of two letters Retief had sent to Dingane in October; see *ibid.*, 57–58 (19.10.1837), 60 (24.10.1937: mentioned in the letter of 8.11.1837 sent by Dingane to Retief).

329 For the date, see Owen ed. Cory 1926, 61–64.

330 For Retief's wife, Magdalena ('Lenie') Johanna Greyling, born De Wit and the widow of Jan Greyling, see Gledhill and Gledhill 1980, 50–51, 218–220; Visagie 2011, 415.

331 *Official Guide* 1955, 48.

for the beautiful valley was a response to some unknown ‘encouraging news’ Retief conveyed to the trekkers but, as argued above, not a promise of land. It was possibly no more than his reception in Port Natal and his planned visit to Dingane, and perhaps the latter’s seeming affability. It is ironic that Smit may in fact have had news of Retief’s visit to Dingane the very next day, a Sunday (12 November), when a second letter arrived at the laager at Kerkenberg, after his return from Blydevooruitsig. Although we know of its existence from Smit’s diary, it is also lost and we do not know its date or content, but the chronology and the distance from uMgungundlovu does make it possible that this missive was written after Retief’s negotiations with Dingane about land,³³² prompting another joyful response, again described by Smit:

Several of the congregation, excited by the happy return of the 2 emigrants and the letter of the Governor concerning our joyful prospect, showed themselves desirous that I should hold a Service of thanks on this day of thanks.³³³

Moerdyk’s misinterpretation was common. Jansen conveyed a similar scenario in his communication that outlined the frieze topics to the government on 19.1.1937. Senator Malan even had Retief delivering the news personally at Blydevooruitsig, a more serious mistake, pointed out by F. Steytler (cited in the documentation above).³³⁴ Yet paradoxically – although probably unwittingly – the sculptors seem to have corrected the error that news about Retief’s land grant was received at Blydevooruitsig. In striking contrast to most of the other scenes whose topics are linked to distinct landscapes, the backdrop of this panel is entirely bare. Hence, although the title *Blydevooruitsig* was retained, the sculptors omitted any reference to the delightful locale, so that the place where the message was being delivered in the relief could as easily have been Kerkenberg the following day. We argue, however, that this was not a result of an amendment in the cause of historical correctness (in which case the title would probably have been amended too), but had another purpose. The curious bareness promotes a different reading of *Blydevooruitsig*, which is not an alluring topography but an emblematic ‘Joyful Prospect’, focusing entirely on Boer culture – ‘camp life’ as Jansen described it in his 19.1.1937 list. Instead of Voortrekkers and wagons in a landscape, we see Boer industry and craftsmanship elevated beyond the anecdotal: various tasks necessary to support the civilised way of life they would take with them into Natal. The calm behaviour, disciplined conduct and impeccable dress of the trekkers are stereotypes invented for the frieze that might be found in a well-ordered household but were hardly likely in a camp in a mountainous wilderness after months of hard travelling. *Blydevooruitsig* is a picture-book rendering of Voortrekker civilisation. The name, chosen by Erasmus Smit in late 1837 to describe the lovely valley in terms of the Boers’ good prospects, here addresses not a particular location but its symbolic capital, at a time when the SVK was concerned with giving the Great Trek permanent form in marble. Again it was Afrikaner ideology rather than documented history which dictated the representation of *Blydevooruitsig*.

Another aspect of current ideology is manifest in the inclusion of a black servant. The Voortrekkers did not question their right to use people of other races as indentured labourers, and they took an estimated six thousand servants with them on their treks.³³⁵ Since the servant in *Blydevooruitsig*, apart from the groom in *Arrival*, is the only one represented in the frieze,³³⁶ we want

³³² The first written reference to land that we have from Dingane is a letter dated 8 November; see *Treaty* (‘Land issues, Seykonyela and the cattle’).

³³³ Smit trans. Mears 1972, 64–65 (Dutch text: Smit ed. Scholtz 1988, 96). For further discussion, see *Treaty* (‘Land issues, Seykonyela and the cattle’).

³³⁴ See also the discussion of the centenary plaques at Retiefrots in *Debora Retief*.

³³⁵ Visagie 2011, 14.

³³⁶ The African woman (also in back view) which Kirchhoff had taken from Coetzer’s drawing for the maquette for the Vendusie scene (see *Departure*, Stages of production, B2a) was, as we have seen, eventually eliminated from the frieze.



Figure 9.9: Black 'breier' in *Blydevooruitsig*. Marble, detail of fig. 9.1 (photo Russell Scott)



Figure 9.10: Thomas Baines. Detail of African 'breier' in *Bloemfontein*. 1851. Oil, 38.5 × 61 cm (William Fehr Collection; Carruthers and Arnold 1995, 143 fig. 20)

to understand why such a concession was made, and why in this form. Blacks are never shown sharing in battles, although we know they were indispensable in providing essential support for Voortrekker fighters in the field. And nor do they share in the suffering, although we know they were slaughtered alongside Retief's men at uMgungundlovu and the trekkers at Bloukrans. It is as though both victory and sacrifice were reserved for the trekkers alone, as evidence of their right to the land, and to authority over its peoples.

While the representation in *Blydevooruitsig* may provide some (minimal) acknowledgement of the presence of the many black servants that accompanied the trekkers, it also reflects the belief that undertaking physical labour was the allotted – one might say preordained – task of Africans. In marked contrast to the Boers in *Blydevooruitsig*, who do not undertake heavy manual work, the servant does the hard labour to stretch the riempies used for whips,³³⁷ for binding and for simple furniture (fig. 9. 9). Already in Thomas Baines' oil *Bloemfontein* painted in 1851 the 'labour of the black people making riempies is accorded focal prominence but paradoxically the control of labour and social life is exercised by the middle distance European community' (fig. 9.10).³³⁸ In 1938, when explaining the making of riempies, G.H. van Rooyen glossed the Afrikaans name for a person stretching thongs, 'die breier', with '(n kaffer)', revealing that this task was thought of as work appropriate for black people only.³³⁹ The chores performed by the black 'breier' and the Voortrekker hunter, cobbler and seamstress in *Blydevooruitsig* suggest the hierarchy between black labourers and skilled white workers that was to be legislated policy under apartheid.

The Voortrekker Monument itself provides an example of differentiated labour: contractors sent in two quotations, the more expensive for white builders.³⁴⁰ And for this well-nigh sacred task, only whites were to be employed. Even when the scarcity of labour during the war years forced the contractor to take on some black workers, against the wishes of the SVK, they were limited to ignoble unskilled jobs such as mixing cement and cleaning the site, physical labour not unlike that of the 'breier' in *Blydevooruitsig*.

³³⁷ As discussed in Part I, Chapter 4 ('The visual narrative, *Blydevooruitsig*'), the use of the riempies for making whips to control trek oxen suggests also the possibility of the harsh control of black servants.

³³⁸ Carruthers and Arnold 1995, 135 (quote), 143 colour fig. 20 (William Fehr Collection).

³³⁹ Rooyen 1938, 60: 'word deur die breier (n kaffer).'

³⁴⁰ See Part I, Chapter 1 ('The centenary').

**10 *Debora Retief* records her father's birthday
(12 November 1837)**



B2



C2



D

10 *Debora Retief*

South wall, south-east projection (panel 12/31)

h 2.3 × w. 2.4 m

Parts of left and top edge chipped off; vertical fractures near left edge

Sculptor of the clay panel: Laurika Postma

STAGES OF PRODUCTION

B1 One-third-scale clay maquette, not extant but replicated in B2 (1942–43)

B2 One-third-scale plaster maquette, h. 77 × w. 89 × d. 8 cm (1942–43)

C1 Full-scale wooden armature, not extant (1943–46)

C2 Full-scale clay relief, not extant but photographed; replicated in C3 (1943–46)

C3 Full-scale plaster relief (1943–46), not extant but copied in D (late 1947–49)

D Marble as installed in the Monument (1949)

EARLY RECORDS

Jansen Memorandum (19.1.1937) — item 8 ‘The Voortrekkers on the Drakensberg (Blydevooruitsig) near Retiefklip’ [Retief stone]. Here the camp life will be portrayed as also receipt of the news of land being obtained from Dingaan.’

Voortrekker Monument (early 1937?) — p.5 ‘Here will be represented the exodus from the Cape, Thaba N’Chu, Vechtkop, Kerkeberg [sic; the locale of Blydevooruitsig], the descent from the Drakensberg, the massacre, the vow, retribution, the founding of the republics’ (bilingual SVK attachment, ‘The Voortrekker Monument / Die Voortrekkermonument’, possibly written by Moerdyk, offers a rare inclusion of Kerkenberg; NARSSA, BNS 146/73/2)

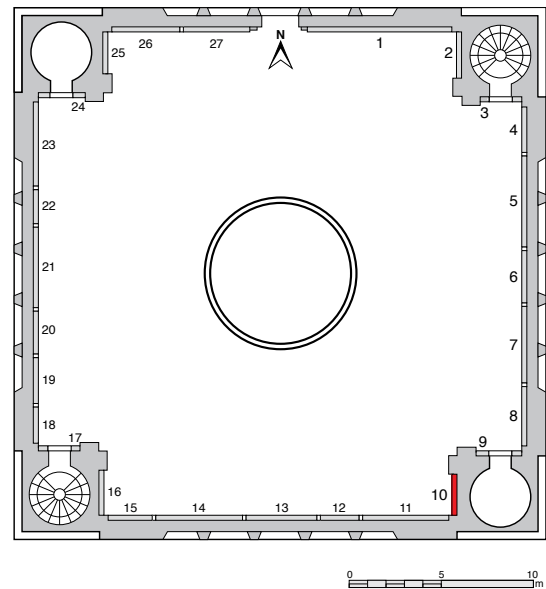




Figure 10.1: D. Debora Retief. 1949. Marble, 2.3 × 2.39 m (courtesy of VTM; photo Russell Scott)

Description

This is the sole image of the frieze presenting only youthful Boers, chiefly children (fig. 10.1). The main figure is Debora Retief, the eldest daughter of Piet Retief and a young adult of twenty-two, who stands off-centre in profile turned to the left. She is represented as a full-grown woman, her hair in a neat bun and a shawl over her long-sleeved dress with fitted bodice and full-length skirt. The heavy statuesque folds hide her lower body and limbs. She is in an elevated position without visible feet or support, hence hovering strangely on the picture plane. Holding a small brush in her right hand, she has ‘just’ painted the last stroke of an inscription on a specially smoothed surface of the Retiefklip at top centre, ‘P Retief / Den 12 Nov / 1837’, the birthday of the governor and commandant-general of the Voortrekkers. In the marble the painted letters of the Dutch words had to be chiselled and they are additionally emphasised by her left hand, which rests immediately below the inscription. Postma must have been shown an image of the actual inscription in the cause of historical accuracy, as she has followed the layout and the form of the letters and numbers that can be seen at Kerkenberg today (fig. 10.8). The uneven face of the rock is also suggested by the roughly worked surface of the upper panel that hints at the height of the overhanging cliff face at Kerkenberg (fig. 10.3).

In front of her, a standing boy assists by holding up a small paint pot. He seems to have outgrown his suit, which mimics adult Voortrekker attire, as the jacket is tight and the trousers too short. The central group, unobscured by overlapping figures, is framed by two impassive girls. The smaller girl in profile on the right looks up to watch Debora’s task, holding her kappie with both hands behind her back. The taller one on the left who wears a dress with a fitted bodice and long skirt like Debora, holds the ribbons of her bonnet with her right hand, as she looks down at two children who play on the ground, a boy and a girl with a dog. While all the girls wear long dresses, the bodices of the younger ones are looser, with wide sashes around their waists, and their hair is neatly plaited and tied with ribbons.

In the foreground below on the far left, the small girl is seated on the ground, legs bent and supporting herself on her right arm. With a little doll on her lap she echoes the mother and child group in *Inauguration*, as though readying herself for an adult role. The boy that she watches is equally engrossed in imitating a grown-up occupation, dressed in a miniature suit. His game mimics a Voortrekker wagon on the move: small ‘dolosse’ (knucklebones) of sheep or cattle act as imaginary oxen, while a jawbone represents the ‘kakebeen’ wagon (fig. 10.9), and the boy is in the driver’s position.³⁴¹ Half obscured by the girl, a dog intently watches the knucklebones that are carefully laid out along the narrow space in front of its forelegs.

³⁴¹ For the ‘kakebeenwa’, see *Departure*; and for the arrangement of a typical team of oxen, Van Rooyen 1938, 52–57.



Figure 10.2: B2. Laurika Postma. *Debora Retief*. 1942–43. Plaster, 77 × 89 × 8 cm. Left, maquette photographed in storeroom in 2012; right, in raking light as installed in 2017 exhibition (courtesy of VTM Museum VTM 2184/1–28; photos Russell Scott; the authors)



Figure 10.3: C2. *Debora Retief*. 1943–46. Clay. Full-scale relief (photo Alan Yates; Pillman 1984, 48)

Developing the design

As in the case of other panels where there was no Coetzer design, *Debora Retief* would have started with drawings by the artist, here Laurika Postma, in preparation for modelling the small clay panel (fig. 10.2), but none are known.³⁴² While the general composition of the maquette is near to the full-scale clay relief (fig. 10.3), there are substantial differences in detail, style and overall mood. In particular, all the figures are less staged, younger and more childlike, and the texture of a rocky environment is more visible. Debora Retief also seems more spontaneous. Her kappie is pushed back so that it hangs around her neck by its ribbons, and she stands on a chair to reach a high place for her inscription, a believable way to place her in an elevated position. She holds her brush rather awkwardly, and steadies herself with her left hand. A little girl, instead of the boy in the marble relief, holds up the small paint pot with one hand, while the other holds onto the back of the chair, perhaps to steady it. The two framing girls focus attention on Debora Retief. The one on the left is almost the same as in the marble, but younger and less formal. The opposite girl has the chubbiness and shorter dress of a child, and is more directly involved as she watches Debora, her head tilted to suggest her curiosity and concentration. The two children on the ground are also livelier, and we see their dog more fully. The little boy focuses passionately on his game although, despite the little whip in his hand, he is not presented in the driver's position, as the order of the knucklebones and wagon is reversed when compared to the full-scale clay.

This foreground group is reminiscent of the delightful and amusing sketches of children and animals made by a younger Laurika Postma as a very involved older sister in a large and lively family.³⁴³ The animation of the figures may also reflect the youthful sitters, identified by Hennie Potgieter (fig. 10.4), who gives relatively extensive documentation of them. The architect's daughter Irma Moerdyk modelled Debora Retief (although Martso Strydom was the body model), and her sister Sylva Moerdyk the girl opposite her. Models for the younger children (fig. 10.5) were Lea Botha for the standing girl,³⁴⁴ Stephan Joubert for the boy with the paint pot and his sister Stephanie for the girl with the doll who sits next to the family dog, while Billie Kleinhäns was busy with an improvised kakebeenwa.

The narrative in the full-scale clay relief (fig. 10.3) endows Debora Retief with her appropriate years so that she is a young adult, as though the sculptors had been alerted to the fact that she was not a child in 1937, but in fact a young married woman. This change is matched by an upscaling of the ages of all the figures as their poses and attire are formalised, and the bigger participants take up more of the free space around them than is the case in the maquette. In addition, the small girl with the paint pot in the centre is replaced by a taller boy, perhaps to alleviate the predominance of female figures. The scene has lost its spontaneous touch and become more frozen, and in the process of enlarging the figures the chair on which Debora stood disappeared so that she lacks support and appears to levitate. The final marble (fig. 10.1) is a fine copy of the full-scale clay panel

342 At the time the 2017 exhibition was being installed, two plaster maquettes of *Debora Retief* were to be seen amongst the maquettes waiting to be installed, so close in form that they would have to have been cast from the same mould. But Werner Kirchhoff, who was living with his family at Harmony Hall and was constantly in the studio, is adamant that the one-third-scale maquettes, made on easels set up on the veranda (see fig. 26.5), were cast in the same way as the full-scale clay reliefs, although in a single piece, destroying the clay original and allowing the clay to be reused. Unable to resolve the puzzle, we postulate that the second in fact dated from the conservation of the maquettes from 2014–16 when duplicate copies were made.

343 See, for example, Pillman 1984, 9–11.

344 Van der Walt 1974, who provides photographs of many of the models, names her Leah Botha from Rietfontein. Note that in Part I we confused Gert van der Walt's article, 'Die onbekende voortrekker', with the consecutive one by Chris Barnard ('Die storie van 'n monument ...'), both published in the same 1974 issue of *Die Huisgenoot*.

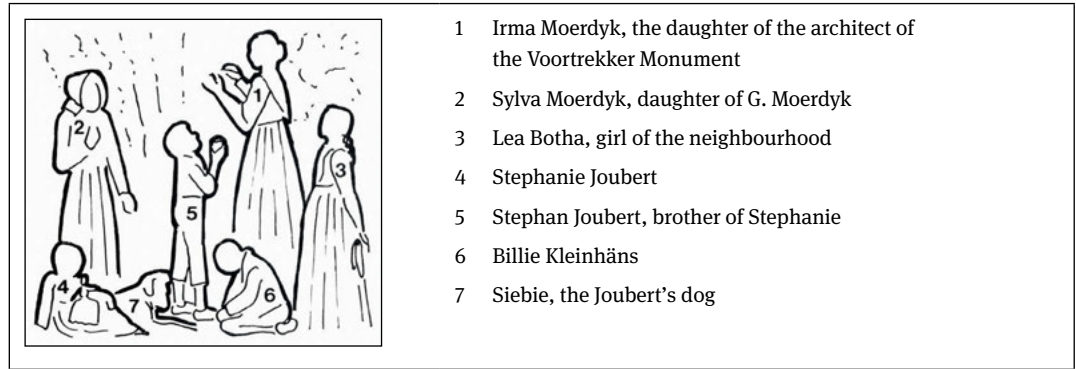


Figure 10.4: Models for portraits (Potgieter 1987, 21)

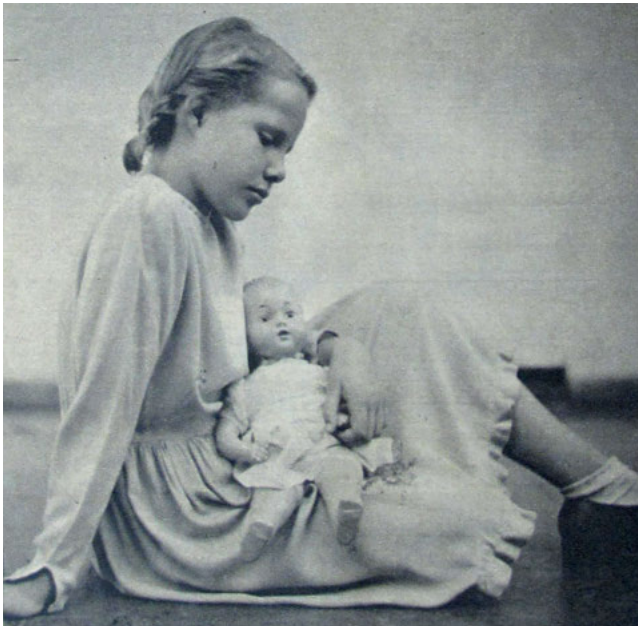


Figure 10.5: Models for younger children in *Debora Retief*. Stephanie and Stephan Joubert, Leah (Lea) Botha (Van der Walt 1974, 80–82)

except for one difference which exemplifies the different visual qualities of the two materials. In clay, the vertical rocky structures and general formations of the Retiefklip are crisp and recognisable, while in marble the relief's picture plane appears flattened to an almost uniform mass by the diffused light in the Hall. The reduced visibility of the rock surface means that the lower hand of the girl on the left seems to dangle in its own space, rather than holding onto a protruding piece of stone.

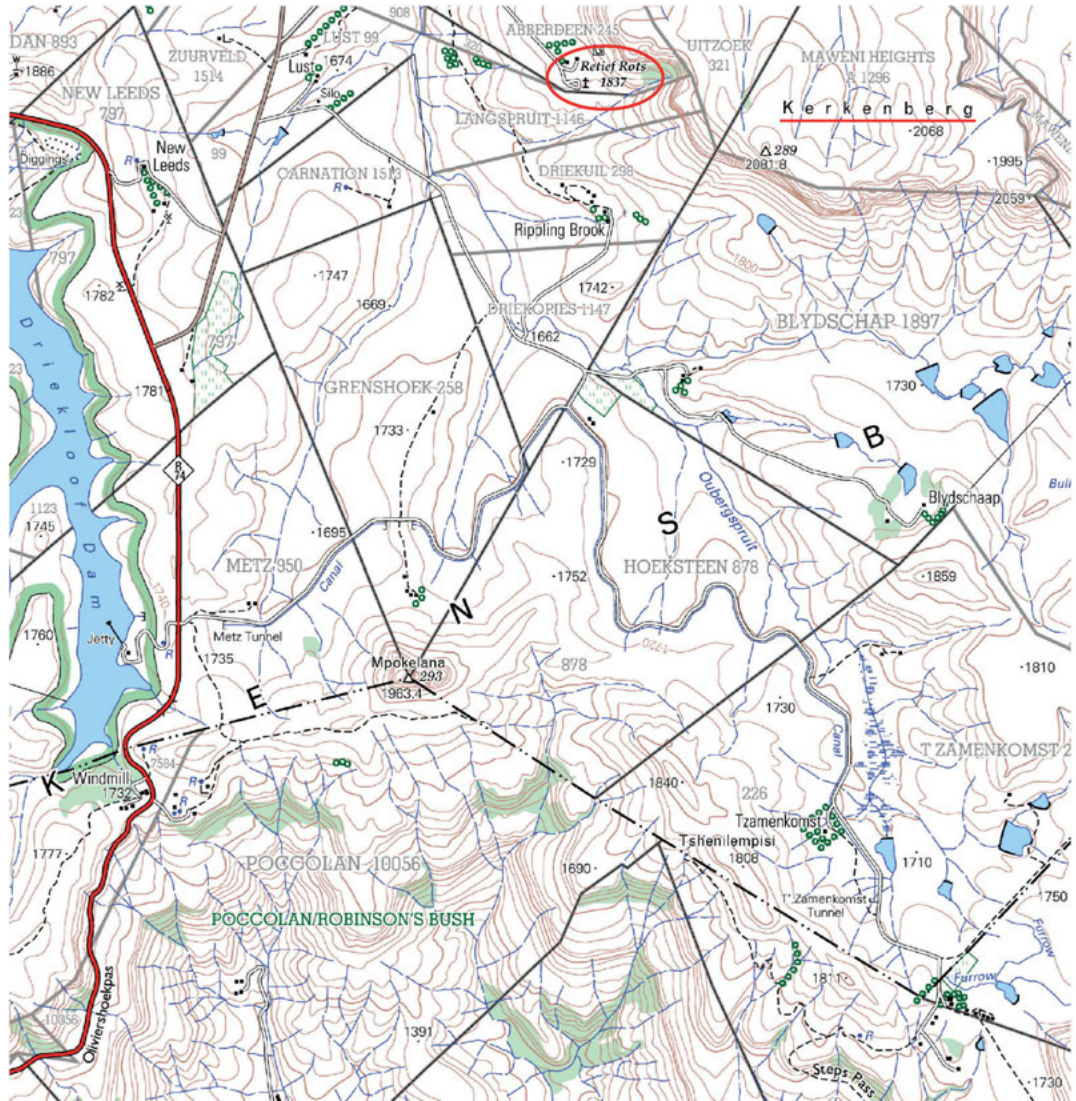


Figure 10.6: Topographic Sheets of South Africa (1:50 000). December 2006. Detail, showing Kerkenberg with Retief Rots, upper right, and trek route over Oliviershoek Pass into Natal (roughly following today's R74 on left of map). 2002 (map 2829CA)



Figure 10.7: Entrance to rock formation of Retief Rots with Kerkenberg massif as backdrop (photo courtesy of alamy.com MF8BG7)

Reading the narrative

The narrative of this panel refers to a personal event recorded as having taken place one or two days after the arrival of a letter from Retief at his party's camp near Kerkenberg with news from Natal, depicted in *Blydevooruitsig* (fig. 9.1). The incident was reported by Erasmus Smit, who wrote on 13 November 1837 in his diary:

My wife, C. Liebenberg, and I went up Kerkenberg to view the beautiful formation of the rocks. Three neighbouring spaces which, if we had remained here longer, could have been used as a church or a place of Worship. See now the reasons why we have named this camping site the Kerkenberg. The name of our worthy Governor, on His Excellency's 57th birthday, has been written in green oil paint inside on the rocks by His Excellency's daughter, Debora, and because this rock hangs over to the inside like a vault, it will not easily be washed out by rain or knocked out by hail.³⁴⁵

Strictly speaking, Kerkenberg in Smit's account is not the enormous flat-topped mountain (2 067 metres high) situated east of the south end of the Sterkfontein dam, beyond the Oliviershoek Pass when travelling from Natal (fig. 10.6), as his naming refers specifically to 'the beautiful formation' of three individual rocks near the mountain's north-western foot (fig. 10.7).³⁴⁶ Eventually one of them would be called Retief Rots or Retiefklip, meaning 'Retief rock', after Debora Jacoba Retief (1815–1900)³⁴⁷ had painted her father's name and birthdate on it (fig. 10.8). Between the vaulted rock with the inscription and the two adjoining cliffs, as Eily and Jack Gledhill explain, is 'a space large enough to hold 50 to 100 people, and well protected from the elements'.³⁴⁸ Smit does not mention Debora Retief's inscription in his diary entry for her father's actual birthday on Sunday, 12 November, but only the next day, as he was preaching at Blydevooruitsig on the Sunday and returned to the Kerkenberg camp only 'after sunset'.³⁴⁹ The marking of the birthday was perhaps an intimate situation with only youngsters, possibly family members, participating, which did not necessarily make it into the camp's daily headlines, and may have been discovered only the next day.

More important for the Afrikaner narrative of the Great Trek, however, is how this very personal incident became part of the frieze, and was used to celebrate Retief as governor within the private sphere of Boer family values, here with a particular emphasis on youth. Only relatively late, in 1937, were 'Retiefklip' and 'Kerkeberg' (sic) mentioned as topics for the frieze, but not Debora Retief, although the dedication of a memorial inscription to her in 1937, discussed below, may have prompted the idea. While this scene was undoubtedly an addition to meet the problem of extra panels being required for the corner walls, as discussed in Part I,³⁵⁰ the choice was hardly immaterial. The site at Kerkenberg, where the lofty overhanging rock faces reminded the Voortrekkers of a vaulted church, hints at the Christian values so often reiterated in the frieze, and this is supported by the composition.³⁵¹ Whether accidental or not, the way Debora Retief floats in mid-air while

³⁴⁵ Smit trans. Mears 1972, 65 (Dutch text: Smit ed. Scholtz 1988, 96). A restored inscription, protected by a little glazed case, is still to be seen on site (Visagie 2014, 92 fig. 19). Members of the Bethlehem commando that occupied the Oliviershoek Pass on 10 October 1899 (outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War) painted their names next to the Retief inscription.

³⁴⁶ Gledhill and Gledhill (1980, 177) provide a helpful description: 'The Kerkenberg is an enormous mass of rock, split by some cataclysm into three pieces.'

³⁴⁷ *DSAB* 4, 1981, 496–497; Visagie 2011, 415. Although she was since 1832 by marriage Debora Jacoba Meyer (see below), we follow the *Official Guide* and call her here by her maiden name, Retief, to signal her connection to Piet Retief.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 177.

³⁴⁹ Smit trans. Mears 1972, 65 (Dutch text: Smit ed. Scholtz 1988, 96).

³⁵⁰ Chapter 3 ('Harmony Hall')

³⁵¹ For Kerkenberg, see Oberholster 1972, 226–227 no. 25; Raper, Möller and Du Plessis 2014, 231; Visagie 2014, 91–95. A set of detailed photographs is provided at <http://www.51countriesandcounting.com/single-post/2017/01/09/Retracing-the-steps-of-the-Voortrekkers---Drakensberg>.

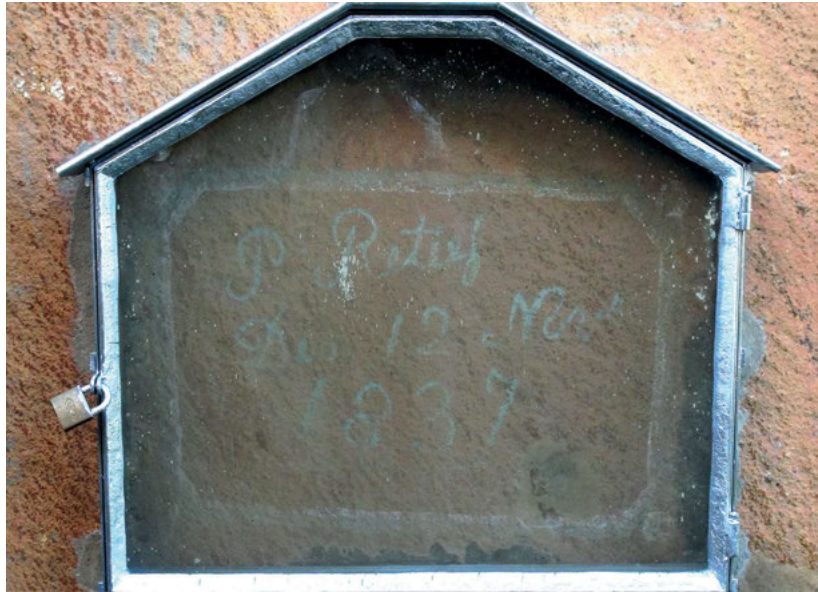


Figure 10.8: ‘Retiefklip’. Restored Debora Retief inscription in glazed case (photo courtesy of www.boerenbrit.com/archives/1708/dsc07913#main)

recording her father’s birthday takes away from the personal and anecdotal character of her act. The motif evokes the classical prototype Victory, depicted as either inscribing a virtue or victory on a shield, or crowning a victor to herald in a new era of peace, well known from Roman imperial and early Christian art.³⁵² In addition, the mannered stance with which the boy presents the small paint pot, reminiscent of a lay-helper in church, lends a ritualistic flavour. This and the solemn effect of the two framing figures elevate the graffiti-like birthday message into a ceremonial event. With hindsight and the knowledge of Retief’s imminent death, the inscription is endowed with the status of a memorial, and the original did indeed become such at its centenary in 1937.³⁵³

If the panel can be read as a memorial, then one wonders whether Retief’s youngest son, Pieter Cornelis (1823–38),³⁵⁴ might also be referenced, because of the mode in which the central boy is singled out by his placement and the space around him – although Pieter at fourteen was considerably older than the boy in the relief, and was not present on this occasion since he had already left with his father for the fatal visit to uMgungundlovu. Children who could have been present to witness the event might tentatively be identified as other members of the extended Retief family, offspring of the adopted Greylings, for example, or Debora Retief’s own children. Married since 1832 to Lucas Petrus Johannes Meyer (1811–38),³⁵⁵ by late 1837 she had already borne three children. Although her two boys, born in 1835 and 1837, died in infancy, her daughter Magdalena, born in 1833, was an appropriate age for the little girl in the foreground of the relief, who with her doll in her lap echoes her mother’s constant role of child rearing. Indeed, although it is not represented in the relief, Debora must have been pregnant at the time she celebrated her father’s birthday, as

³⁵² Hölscher 1967, 98–131 pls. 11–14 (1st–3rd century AD); Kent, Overbeck and Von Stylow 1973, 169 no. 690 pl. 148 and passim (Late Antiquity); Buranelli, Dietrick, Bussagli, Sica and Bernabei 2007, 52–53 with fig. (Trajan’s Column).

³⁵³ The site has also been used to memorialise a broader concept of the Trek; for example, commemorative celebrations for the Day of the Vow were arranged there in 2017, as noted in the Voortrekker Monument newsletter for December 2017.

³⁵⁴ Visagie 2011, 415 (Retief, Pieter Cornelis).

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 312.

another Meyer daughter was born sometime in 1838, probably after the death of the baby's father, who had also accompanied Retief to uMgungundlovu. Since the boys and girls in the panel are never identified in the literature about the frieze, nor the Retief family discussed, any intention to represent specific children seems unlikely. But whether or not such references were intended, the youthfulness of the children has a twofold purpose: it reinforces the generational continuity of Retief's family in particular and the Voortrekkers in general, and also acts as a reminder of the innocence and vulnerability of children. It was they who became victims in brutal confrontations between the Voortrekkers and their foes, such as those depicted later in the narrative of the frieze at *Bloukrans*, and who also, in less dramatic but equally tragic ways, so often died in infancy on the treks.

In idealising Debora Retief and her act through the formality of the marble relief, the scene was also designed to address Afrikaner virtues of the day woven into the narrative of the Great Trek. As with Debora, the children are endowed with faultless behaviour and immaculate appearance, even in the most inaccessible wilderness. Different sexes and age groups interact with each other in unquestioned harmony and hierarchy, the older children elevated above the younger ones with Debora at the top, all of them in orderly assembly. Remoteness did not even impede their literacy, as the Voortrekkers did not neglect education, already represented in *Soutpansberg*. That a microcosm of Afrikaner ideals was an intended goal is confirmed in Moerdyk's description:

The happy childhood scene which is also depicted on this panel symbolises the peaceful intentions of the Voortrekkers, a community in search of a new home who laid emphasis upon the family and its ties.³⁵⁶

Even as they play on our empathy, Debora Retief and the children are related to gendered role models that embody Afrikaner principles, even the youngest. In the foreground, as we have seen, the children prefigure their forthcoming roles (fig. 10.9), the girl with the doll as a 'volksmoeder', a mother of the Afrikaner nation (see *Inauguration*), while the boy with his kakebeenwa playfully yet seriously anticipates his future in charge of an ox wagon (fig. 10.10). It is obvious that all the children in this panel play their part as the ideal adults of the future.

More specifically, beginning with *Blydevooruitsig*, this image and those that follow are arranged to prepare for the drama depicted in the central scene of the Hall's south wall, the murder of Retief and his men. *Debora Retief* is the most personal scene of the frieze, a kind of ideal family portrait of the upcoming generation, embodied in the Retiefs' lineage. On 4 July 1814, Piet Retief had married Magdalena Johanna de Wet (1782–1855), who was the widow of Field-Cornet Jan Greyling (killed December 1811), and not only adopted their six surviving children into his new family but had four more: Debora Jacoba (1815–1900), Jacobus François (1816, time of death unknown), Magdalena Margaretha (1820, time of death unknown) and Pieter Cornelis, mentioned above, who died with his father in 1838.³⁵⁷ Debora Retief followed the example of her parents' large family, and bore twelve children altogether. Because of the untimely death of her first husband, who perished with Retief, she married again in 1839, and after her second husband's death yet again in 1843. It is a reminder of just how often women were widowed on the treks, but frequently remarried to bear yet more children. The Retiefs were a fine example of the extensive families that would ensure the survival of the Voortrekkers and their values, even in the face of the loss of Retief, his eldest stepson Abraham Greyling, his son Pieter and his son-in-law Lucas Meyer at uMgungundlovu on 6 February 1838 (see *Murder of Retief*).

The Retiefs also exemplify the family networks that shaped the succeeding chapters of Afrikaner history. After her husband's death at uMgungundlovu in February 1838 (see *Murder of*

³⁵⁶ *Official Guide* 1970, 46.

³⁵⁷ Gledhill and Gledhill 1980, 50 (marriage with M.J. de Wet), 54 (birth of Debora), 56 (birth of Jacobus), 65 (birth of Magdalena), 86 (birth of Pieter); Visagie 2011, 414–415.



Figure 10.9: Preparing for adult roles in *Debora Retief* – girl with doll and boy with kakebeenwa. Marble, detail of fig. 10.1 (photo Russell Scott)



Figure 10.10: Kakebeenwa in front of wagon of the Voortrekker Monument laager (photo courtesy of HF Archives F 40.1.10 k)

Retief), Debora Retief remarried with Willem Adolph Landman in 1839 (they had one daughter),³⁵⁸ and then in 1843 with Marthinus Wessel (Swart Martiens) Pretorius (1822–64; they had seven children). He was the nephew of another Voortrekker leader, Andries Pretorius (see *Pretorius, Blood River, Mpande and Convention*), and apparently trekked in 1838 with his famous uncle.³⁵⁹ It was appropriately one of their granddaughters, Johanna Christina Pretorius (1878–1975), who unveiled a memorial plaque at Kerkenberg at its 1937 centenary,³⁶⁰ which commemorated both her famous great-grandfather Piet and, as scribe, her grandmother Debora. The next year she would lay the Monument's foundation stone with two other women descendants of trekkers. In yet another link to the story of the Monument, Johanna Pretorius was married to Gustav Preller, the admired researcher and recorder of Voortrekker history,³⁶¹ who played an important part in the *Historiese Komitee* which guided the selection of topics for the frieze.

Fittingly, Retief's centenary inscription acknowledged that it was 'erected by thankful descendants' (opgerig deur 'n dankbare nageslag), who in 1937 attached it to the rock facing the one with the Debora Retief inscription. The central part of the text repeats the incorrect, but by then well-established story, that the trekkers heard of Dingane's grant of land in Natal on the day before the actual birthday of Retief (see *Blydevooruitsig*):

On 11 November Coenraad and Piet Meyer returned with good news that Natal could be occupied and settled in peace. The following day, Retief's 57th birthday, his daughter Deborah wrote her father's name on this rock in commemoration of this achievement.³⁶²

Debora Retief's inscription, given her strong links with past and present Afrikaner history, reinforced Retief's status as the Great Trek's most celebrated martyr and hero. The very personal yet formal way in which Retief's birthday is celebrated in the frieze transforms his daughter's affectionate private memento of 1837 into a public memorial for the frieze in the Hall of Heroes. Ever since, *Debora Retief* has underpinned the strong interrelationship between family history and the Afrikaner narrative of the Trek.

³⁵⁸ According to Visagie (2011, 275), he had probably joined the trek in the party of the Voortrekker leader Karel (Carel) Pieter Landman (see *ibid.*, 274). An explanation for why this marriage lasted such a short time is supplied by Debora's mother, when she wrote to her brother-in-law Gideon Retief on 7 July 1840, and mentioned that 'the measles have again robbed me of grandchildren and an upright son in law, my Debora's husband' (Gledhill and Gledhill 1980, 218–219). Schoeman (1995, 140) mistakenly assumes that Mrs Retief's letter refers to Debora's first husband, Lucas Meyer, who was in fact not a victim of the measles but of Zulu assault in the murder of Retief's party in 1838.

³⁵⁹ *DSAB* 4, 1981, 497; Visagie 2011, 389–390. This Pretorius has often been confused with his brother, Marthinus Wessel Pretorius (1819–1901), who was the son of Andries Pretorius, and first president (1857–60) of the ZAR.

³⁶⁰ <https://www.bloedrivier.org/gelofte/index.php/databasis/ander-monumente/kerkenberg/retiefklip#agtergrond>. A photograph of the inscription is provided at <http://www.boerenbrit.com/archives/1708/dsc07918>. It is probably not by chance that 'Retiefklip' seemed to have been first mentioned in the *Jansen Memorandum* (1937) and then 'Kerkeberg' in Moerdyk's *Voortrekker Monument* in the centenary year in 1938.

³⁶¹ See Part I, Chapter 1 ('The Monument Committee').

³⁶² 'Op 11 November het Coenraad en Piet Meyer teruggekeer met die blyde tyding, dat Natal in vrede besit en bewoon mag word. Die volgende dag – Retief se 57se verjaardag – het sy dogter, Deborah uit dankbaarheid vir wat haar vader verkry het, sy naam op hierdie rots geskryf.' Our English quotation follows the English inscription, donated by students of the Technicon Pretoria and Terraz, and set up in 1986 next to its Afrikaans forerunner. A photograph of the inscription is provided at <http://www.boerenbrit.com/archives/1708/dsc07919>.

11 *Descent* from the Drakensberg (late 1837)



A3



B2



C1



C2



D

11 Descent

South wall (panels 13–14/31)

h. 2.3 × w. 4.76 m (panel 13: 2.29 m; panel 14: 2.47 m; overlap with *Treaty*)

Restored fractures on vertical edges; split-offs from top of panel 14

Sculptor of the clay maquette: Frikkie Kruger

STAGES OF PRODUCTION

A1 W.H. Coetzer, pencil drawing, retained only in A2 (April–June 1937)

A2 Reproduction of A1 (June 1937)

A3 W.H. Coetzer, revised pencil drawing A1, h. 13.5 × w. 30.5 cm
(after September 1937)

Annotation: ‘Drakensberge af’ (Down the Drakensberg)

B1 One-third-scale clay maquette, not extant but replicated in B2 (1942–43)

B2 One-third-scale plaster maquette, h. 78 × w. 165 × d. 9.5 cm (1942–43)

C1 Full-scale wooden armature for C2, not extant but photographed
(1943–45)

C2 Full-scale clay relief, not extant but photographed; replicated in C3
(1943–45)

C3 Full-scale plaster relief (1943–45), not extant but illustrated
(*Die Vaderland*, 26.2.1945); copied in D (1948–49)

D Marble as installed in the Monument (1949)

EARLY RECORDS

SVK minutes (4.9.1937 – item 4i (see below, ‘Developing the design’)

Voorstelle (5.12.1934?) – item 2 ‘Trichardt-trek oor Drakensberg: om byna bowemenselike inspanning van trek te laat begryp. Fuller se sketse kan hier tot leidraad dien. Miskien die oomblik waarop ’n waviel, of ander stuk daarvan, langs die kranse afgelaat word met rieme’ (Trichardt trek over Drakensberg: to create understanding of the almost superhuman effort of the trek. Fuller’s sketches [see *Delagoa Bay*] can give guidance here. Perhaps the moment when the wheel of a wagon, or other part of it, is lowered down the cliffs with thongs)

Panele (c. 1934–36) – item 3 ‘Moeilikhede om mee te kamp, a. natuur, A. Wys waens wat die berge oorgaan soos o.a. deur die Trichardt-trek’ (Difficulties to cope with, a. nature, A. Show wagons which go over the mountains such as, among others, those of the Trichardt trek)

Wenke (c. 1934–36) – item I. F.A. STEYTLER, b. ‘Trekkerwaens teen die hange van Drakensberg, dogtertjie as touleier’ (Trek wagons on the cliffs of the Drakensberg, little girl as team leader)

Moerdyk Layout (5.10.1936–15.1.1937) – scene 9 on panels 13–14/31 ‘Aftog’ (Descent)

Jansen Memorandum (19.1.1937) – item 79 ‘The descent from the Drakensberg Mountains’

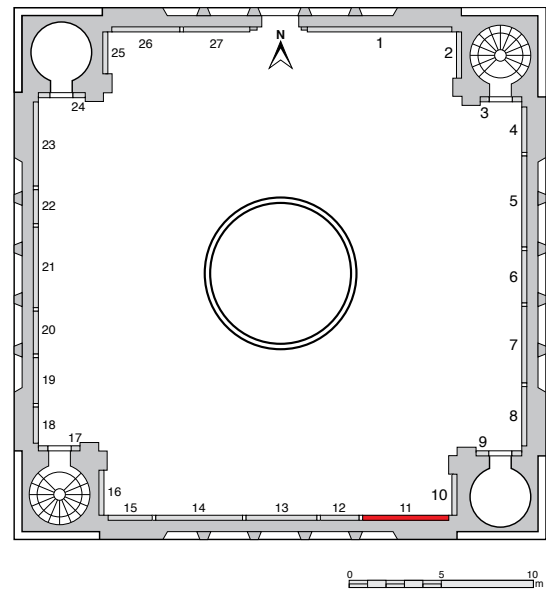




Figure 11.1: D. *Descent*. 1949. Marble, 2.3 × 4.76 m (courtesy of VTM; photo Russell Scott)

Description

Descent is dominated by its backdrop of the Drakensberg, the only image of the frieze that makes a landscape such a pronounced focus (fig. 11.1). From a rocky foreground, the scene recedes to several generalised lines of hills, then two flat-topped mountains of different size towering in the far distance, recognisable as those near Kerkenberg and the Oliviershoekpas.³⁶³ Instead of a specific event, it is this prospect that is framed by the couple on the left and the tall woman on the right, all three facing inwards, while only smaller figures are placed in the central area as though not to disturb the grand vista.

The woman on the right stands like a statue on top of a flattened stone outcrop. She shades her eyes with her right hand, emphasising her role as surveyor of the scene, further directed by the deep brim of her embroidered kappie. Her gaze guides the viewer to look with her towards the couple coming from the left, a bearded trekker with a wide-brimmed hat and a muzzleloader over his shoulder, and his wife who holds a swaddled baby in her arms. That the couple are apparently strolling down a shallow slope is scarcely reflected in their upright posture, and indicated only in the man's feet, while the left foot of the woman is not visible. They seem to overcome the task of traversing the craggy Drakensberg with ease, also implied by the flawless dress of the two women.

Behind the couple the rocky landscape slants sharply towards the right, presenting a greater challenge. Yet on the steep incline the ox wagon that appears is as immaculate as the figures, with unblemished canvas cover, its front flap tidily rolled. The detail of the wagon exemplifies how accuracy is a major concern of the artists; Hennie Potgieter draws attention to the correct 'number of spokes in the wheels – ten front and fourteen back'.³⁶⁴ But in this case the back wheels are replaced by branches, tied onto the rear of the wagon, a strategy to slow it down on the precipitous descent. For better control only one pair of oxen is yoked to it, and they forcefully dig in their hooves on the rocks underfoot as they resist its weight on the steep incline. Beyond them, rather too small in scale, three trekkers, all wearing jackets and hats, are engaged in the arduous task of bringing the huge ox wagon down safely: one steadies the descent by holding a branch tied to the wagon as a braking lever, another guides the oxen, and the third holds a long whip. Next to the woman on the far right and behind slabs of rock in the foreground, two trekkers roll one of the dismantled back wheels slowly downhill. Both work without a jacket, but the one in back view wears a hat, which interferes awkwardly with the woman's raised arm that is at an unnaturally extended angle. His bareheaded companion is the sole figure here showing pronounced portrait features, although no sitter is recorded for him.

³⁶³ See Ferreira 1975, 62.

³⁶⁴ '(Let weer eens op die) getal speke in die wiele – voor tien an agter veertien' (Potgieter 1987, 22).



Figure 11.2: A2. W.H. Coetzer. Reproduction of the first sketch for *Descent*. June 1937 (courtesy of ARCA PV94 1/75/5/1; photo the authors)



Figure 11.3: A3. W.H. Coetzer. 'Drakensberge af'. After September 1937. Pencil, 13.5 x 30.5 cm. Revised first sketch (photo courtesy of Museum Africa, no. 66/2194N)

Developing the design

Coetzer's designs are known from a reproduction of his initial pencil drawing (fig. 11.2) and the revised version (fig. 11.3), which has marks on the lower margins, presumably for squaring up. The reproduction in a distinctive Drakensberg setting is a lively scene of trekkers involved in getting an ox wagon safely down the steep mountain side, which shows Coetzer's appreciation of the challenge.³⁶⁵ Two men guide the wagon which has had its back wheels replaced by branches lashed to the wagon to slow its descent; one man on high ground on the right directs the process, while another grapples with one of the removed wheels, and two more carry a heavy trunk, no doubt to lighten the wagon's load. Further figures on the left represent a man with a shovel and women and children from the wagon who make their way down the hill, and a single encroaching foot on the far left suggests that there are more coming behind them.

In the Historiese Komitee meeting on 4 September 1937 the following alterations were stipulated:

Crossing the Drakensberg. There should be a brake with a chain under the wheels; the chest that is being carried should show lock, hinges and metal fittings more clearly.³⁶⁶

Coetzer responded in his revised pencil drawing to the changes requested by the SVK, but made a number of other modifications as well, which implies that there was more discussion than what was actually minuted by the committee. Although the general composition remains close to the reproduction, Coetzer altered significant details (from left to right): 1) he replaced the trekker with the spade (and a stray male foot) on the far left with a tree; 2) he depicted the back wheels on the wagon with manufactured brake-shoes connected to chains and fastened underneath the back wheels, as requested; 3) he introduced a little water barrel hanging on a hook at the side of the wagon and the rolled-up front flap of the wagon's canvas cover; 4) he furnished the chest in the foreground with a lock and corner reinforcements, again as specified; 5) he tidied away the little snake on the outcrop in the foreground; 6) he omitted the man and the stray back wheel, since the wagon had not been dismantled; 7) he added five more men in the background, two carrying goods, and three who lean back at an angle to manoeuvre a second wagon downhill in dramatic foreshortening. The same motif is at centre-stage in one of Coetzer's numerous Drakensberg depictions, namely an undated large oil, *Voortrekkers bo-op die Drakensberg* (fig. 11.11).³⁶⁷ To increase the effect of this scene he staged on the far right two figures as onlookers, a mother with her young daughter. The idea of a prominent female onlooker is found in the frieze too, although in Coetzer's drawings it is a male figure who directs operations. However, the composition of his sketches sets the standard for the later design, namely the ox wagon that arrives from the left and the two distinct mountains that dominate the background, which also reflect Coetzer's personal knowledge of the landscapes traversed by the Voortrekkers.

Despite Coetzer's efforts to make the required revisions, the small plaster maquette is generally guided by the composition of the first drawing (fig. 11.4); it reverts to the use of branches to slow the wagon's descent, and reduces the number of figures to give more attention to the landscape. Yet, emphasising the difficulty of the crossing, in the maquette more figures take part in guiding the wagon compared to the first sketch that was the source of the relief (fig. 11.2). The Voortrekker at the head of the oxen pushes against them to assist in slowing down the descent of the wagon, which is not cut off but depicted in full. The Voortrekker with a whip in the foreground has moved behind the oxen to become more directly involved. The men, including two in the left foreground

³⁶⁵ Dramatic scenes of Voortrekkers crossing the Drakensberg with their wagons is one of the painter's favourite trek topics; see, for example, the four oils in Coetzer 1947, 58–65, and a fine drawing in Muller 1978, 41 fig. 41.

³⁶⁶ 'Aftog van die Drakensberge. Daar moet 'n remskoen met 'n remketting onder die wiele wees; die kis wat gedra word, moet duidelik slot, skarnier en beslag wys' (Historiese Komitee 4.9.1937: 4i).

³⁶⁷ Coetzer 1947, 64.



Figure 11.4: B2. Frikkie Kruger. *Descent*. 1942–43. Plaster, 78 × 165 × 9.5 cm. Maquette (courtesy of VTM Museum VTM 2184/1–28; photo Russell Scott)



Figure 11.5: C2. *Descent*. 1943–45. Clay. Full-scale relief (Potgieter 1987, 22; photo Alan Yates)

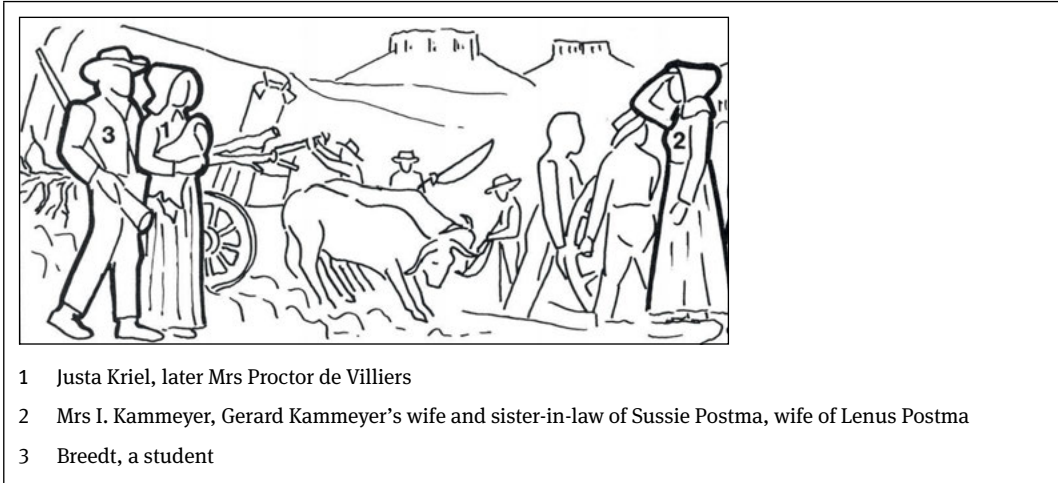


Figure 11.6: Models for portraits (Potgieter 1987, 22–23)



Figure 11.7: Model for left Boer in *Descent* (photo courtesy of Kirchhoff files)

who grapple with a dismantled wagon wheel, have their sleeves rolled up to undertake their work, as they do in the Coetzer sketch, stressing its laboriousness. An exception is the man who accompanies his wife and baby in the left foreground, who wears a jacket and carries a gun. And on the right, in place of the man directing operations, stands a more contemplative woman who gazes to the left, partly obscured by the two men with the wagon wheel. The arrangement of the figures and their general poses, actions and gender are retained in the full-scale clay relief (fig. 11.5) and the subsequent marble (fig. 11.1). In these reliefs, the descent of the wagon and the busy group is reduced and takes second place to the foreground figures who frame the activity, and only they have their models identified by Hennie Potgieter (fig. 11.6). The man and woman descend sedately on the left, his general posture prefigured by a live model shown in a photograph in the Kirchhoff collection (fig. 11.7). And the woman on the right is now in the foreground and no longer obscured by the men with the wheel. All lend a staged quality to the final scene.



Figure 11.8: Hendrik Ploeger applying clay to full-scale wooden armature for *Descent*, 1943–45 (courtesy of Kirchhoff files; photo Alan Yates)



Figure 11.9: C1. Hendrik Ploeger. Wooden armature for full-scale clay relief of *Descent*, 1943–45 (courtesy of Kirchhoff files; photo Alan Yates)

It is tempting to relate the refinement of the full-scale work at least in part to the process of making the large clay panels, when the basic compositions of the maquettes were scaled up and captured in the wooden armature made by Ploeger on the backboard to support the clay relief.³⁶⁸ In the case of *Descent* we have a rare photograph of the carpenter at work (fig. 11.8) and of the armature where ovoid heads and vestigial limbs of wood indicate no more than the general lines of the composition, reducing it to its essentials (fig. 11.9). But there are changes too in the detail and demeanour of the figures that suggest a deliberate intention to lend the scene gravitas, and endow it with historical significance.

³⁶⁸ See Part I, Chapter 3 ('Harmony Hall').

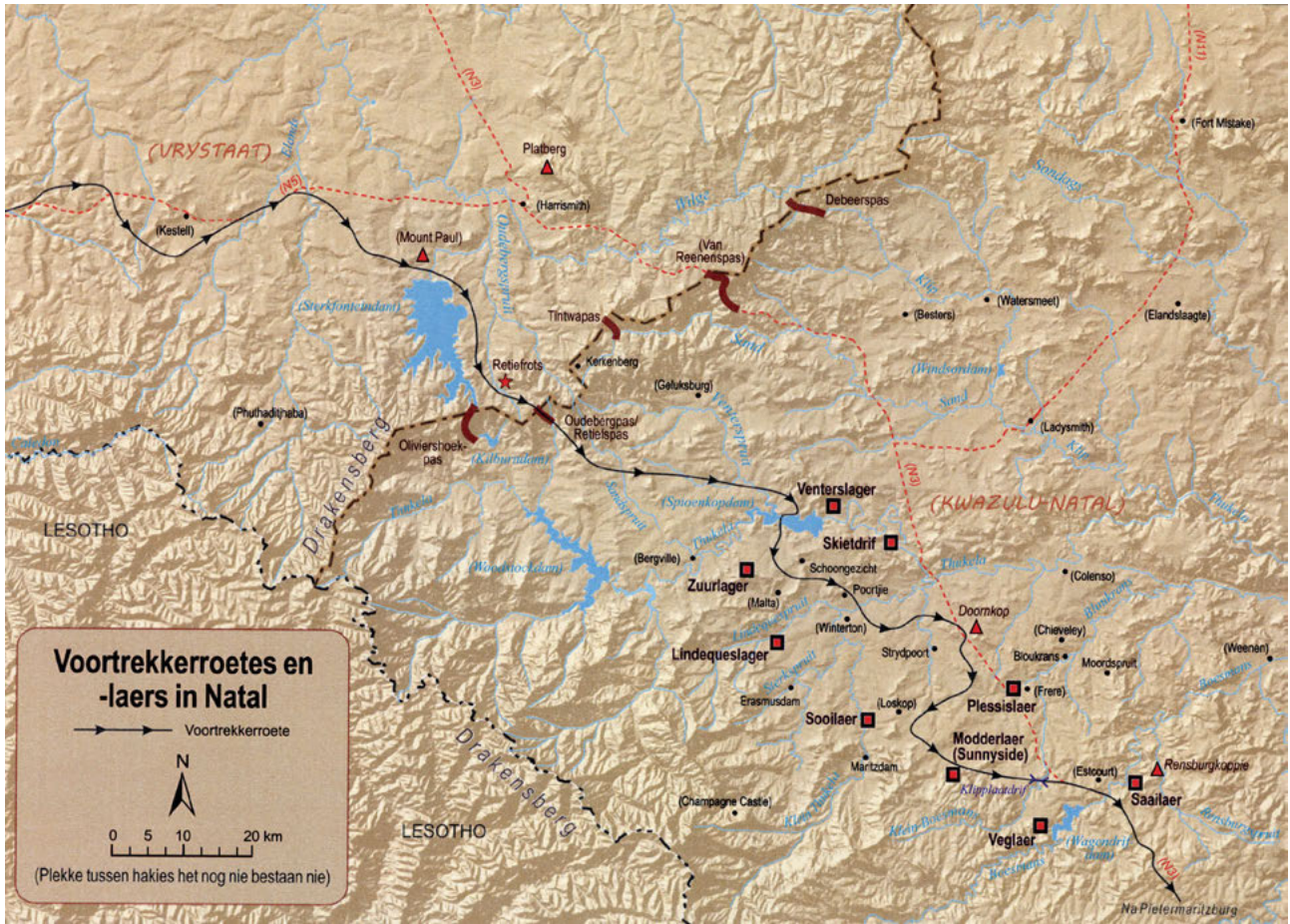


Figure 11.10: Routes, mountain passes and laagers of Voortrekkers in the Drakensberg and Zulu Natal. Late 1837 and early 1838 (courtesy of Visagie 2014, foldout opp. p.98)

Reading the narrative

While iconographically related to *Return*, also designed by Frikkie Kruger and mounted diagonally opposite in the same position on the north wall of the Hall of Heroes, *Descent* continues the story introduced in *Blydevooruitsig* and *Debora Retief*. Although topic proposals for the frieze, quoted above, cited Trichardt's trek as an appropriate example to show the extreme challenge of traversing the Drakensberg, the crossing depicted in the frieze is firmly tied to Retief's story. In late 1837, after Retief's trekkers had received his news from Natal in their camp at Kerkenberg, they began to descend from the south-eastern edge of the Drakensberg down into Natal, despite Retief's earlier injunction that they should await his return before they moved (fig. 11.10). His party crossed by the Oliviershoek Pass (also called Retief Pass), while others came over the Tintwas Pass, Van Reenen's Pass and De Beer's Pass from south to north.³⁶⁹ In a letter that Retief wrote on 23 October 1837, he reported some of the complications his party had faced on their way to the British at Port Natal, which gives an idea of what the main trek groups now faced:

During the whole of my journey of six months, I have not experienced so much difficulty as in the last tour of 90 hours. From Drakensberg to Port Natal I have crossed five nearly perpendicular acclivities, – the first took us six hours with the wagons, the others less; in some places we greatly fatigued our horses in riding right and left to find a path to descend, – as also in crossing large rivers and valleys ...³⁷⁰

In the early 1840s Adulphe Delegorgue called the Boers 'the finest wagon drivers in the world ... [who] frequently drive their teams along a ridge bordering on a precipitous drop of perhaps 1200 feet, where a single unexpected stone could send wagon and oxen crashing to destruction in the depths below'.³⁷¹ And Erasmus Smit addressed the specific challenges his trek was exposed to when descending from the Drakensberg into Natal on 14 November 1837:

In the morning at 8 o'clock we yoked the oxen in the 32 waggons [sic] to descend the very high Drakensberg Mts. After great difficulties in taking the waggons down more than 20 steep heights that necessitated braking (some braked with two chains fastened to a front and a back wheel of the waggon)³⁷² we arrived with 18 waggons towards sunset at the low level at the foot of the great Drakensberg Mts. where we unyoked near water and very good grass. We had, God be thanked, few accidents. Only a waggon of our good fellow traveller, W. Prinsloo, capsized at the beginning of the descent from the first dangerous height and a beautiful set of chairs was broken, but there was no damage to man and beast.³⁷³ Five waggons remained behind.³⁷⁴

Numerous treks were to follow. Chase reports that the numbers of wagons between the Orange River and the Drakensberg in late 1837 were estimated 'at 1,500, and certainly the number of souls could not have been less than Fifteen Thousand'.³⁷⁵ To Dingane, whose spies were everywhere to report on what was taking place in his kingdom, it must have seemed like a massive invasion.

Descent illustrates many of the aspects of the crossing described in SVK documents and various writers such as those quoted above, but frames them in a way that might have been taken from a historical diorama. It is almost the opposite of what was suggested in an early 'Voorstelle' proposal

³⁶⁹ Visagie (2014, 96–98) includes a helpful map (opp. p.98) which shows the passes and the laagers of the trekkers in Natal (see fig. 11.10).

³⁷⁰ Chase, *Natal 1*, 1843, 126 (apparently written to his fellow trekkers, although there is no addressee).

³⁷¹ Delegorgue, *Travels 2*, 1997, 174.

³⁷² For the robust and purposely designed Voortrekker wagons, see *Departure*.

³⁷³ For two depictions of capsized wagons by Thomas Baines in rough territory, see Carruthers and Arnold 1995, 78 fig. 2 (*Overtuned wagon*, 1848), 128 fig. 5 (*Our wagon capsized on climbing out from Hout Bosch Raand, Natal*, 1869).

³⁷⁴ Smit trans. Mears 1972, 65 (Dutch text: Smit ed. Scholtz 1988, 97).

³⁷⁵ Chase, *Natal 1*, 1843, 128.



Figure 11.11: W.H. Coetzer. *Voortrekkers bo-op die Drakensberg* (Voortrekkers atop the Drakensberg). Undated. Oil, c. 120 × 180 cm (courtesy of DNMCH DHK 5533; photo Helenus Kruger, City of Tshwane)

for topics for the frieze, which recommended including Louis Trichardt's trek over the Drakensberg, 'to create understanding of the almost superhuman effort of the trek ...'³⁷⁶ *Descent* does not depict the grimy and exhausting task of a very dangerous descent, but an idealistic reconstruction in which everyone is posed as though in a tableau on stage: trekkers and women in Sunday dress and a versatile all-terrain wagon without the slightest trace of hard use parade in front of an equally flawless, almost abstractly ordered landscape. In this sense, although the landscape includes recognisable features of the area, the panel acts as a symbolic scene to remind viewers of all the testing treks across the mountains, including that of Louis Trichardt and his party who traversed the Drakensberg further north.

The landscape forms an exemplary backdrop to a scene addressing Boer virtues, with the Voortrekkers portrayed as picture-book pioneers able to overcome all difficulties with ease, in contrast to Coetzer's greater emphasis on the difficulties of crossing the Drakensberg, seen in the larger scale and more acute angle of the wagon in his sketches (figs 11.2, 11.3), and particularly in his paintings of the Trek (fig. 11.11). Yet there is some contradiction in this approach, as it was also intended that

³⁷⁶ Quoted above (p.189), 'Voorstelle'.

the frieze would capture the challenges the Voortrekkers faced, and their extraordinary effort and endurance to overcome them. The mountains in the background are dauntingly impenetrable, yet they are sufficiently distant not to cast doubt on the Voortrekkers' success. With a stilted grace, the travellers make their way to their new home in Natal. It is, following on *Departure*, a second exodus that leads the trekkers, like the Israelites in the Old Testament, to the 'promised' land.³⁷⁷ And it is in this spirit that Retief, on 23 October 1837, closed the report on his earlier descent from the Drakensberg into Natal with a devout acknowledgement:

The merciful kindness and protection of Almighty God, hitherto extended to us, we must ever most gratefully acknowledge.³⁷⁸

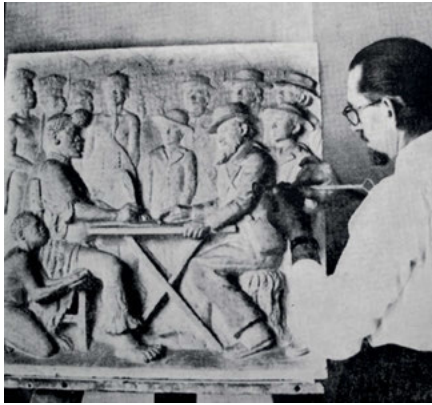
³⁷⁷ Delegorgue (*Travels* 2, 1997, 54), who spent much time with the Boers, reports: 'Together they read the Bible and their strength was reinforced, because they believed that they were God's chosen people, before whom lay the promised land far beyond the deserts, its gateway marked out by great columns placed there by the hand of the Creator. This was in 1836.' Delegorgue's 'great columns' seem to allude to the Drakensberg. As his editors (*Travels* 1, 1990, 342 s.v. Draaken's Berg also Quathlambène mountains) explain, 'Kahlamba, the Zulu name for the [Natal] range [of the Drakensberg], means, variously, a rough bony object such as a skeleton, a tall thin person, or a row of upward pointing spears.'

³⁷⁸ Chase, *Natal* 1, 1843, 126.

12 The *Treaty* with Dingane (4 or 6 February 1838)



A1a/A3



B1a/B2



C1/C2



D

12 Treaty

South wall (panel 15/31)

h. 2.3 × w. 2.14 m (overlap with panels 14 and 16)

Large piece of top right corner broken off diagonally (from centre top to upper left arm of boy behind Retief)

Sculptor of the clay maquette: Frikkie Kruger

STAGES OF PRODUCTION

A1 a. W.H. Coetzer, pencil drawing, same image as A1b but reversed and discarded, h. 13.4 × w. 15.4 cm (April–June 1937)

b. W.H. Coetzer, pencil drawing, h. 13.4 × 15.3 (April–June 1937)

A2 Reproduction of A1b (June 1937)

A3 Coetzer, revised pencil drawing A1b, h. 13.4 × w. 15.3 cm (after September 1937)

Annotations: 'nog nie klaar nie' (not yet finished) / 'Owen moet nie daar wees nie en tafel moet verander word in blok hout' (Owen must not be there and the table must be altered into block of wood.) / '... ~~Owen~~ weg' (... delete Owen) / 'Traktaat met Dingaen' (Treaty with Dingane)

A4 W.H. Coetzer, *Die Dingaen-Retief Traktaat* (The Dingane-Retief Treaty); monochrome oil on board, h. 27.3 × w. 31 cm (late 1937–38?)

B1 a. One-third-scale clay maquette, not extant but photographed (1942–43)

b. One-third-scale clay maquette, not extant but replicated in B2 (1942–43)

B2 One-third-scale plaster maquette, h. 77.5 × w. 76.7 × d. 8.5 cm (1942–43)

C1 Full-scale wooden armature for C2, not extant but photographed (1943–45)

C2 Full-scale clay relief, not extant but photographed; replicated in C3 (1943–45)

C3 Full-scale plaster relief (1943–45), not extant but illustrated (*Die Vaderland*, 26.2.1945); copied in D (1948–49)

D Marble as installed in the Monument (1949)

EARLY RECORDS

SVK minutes (4.9.1937) — item 4j (see below, 'Development of the design')

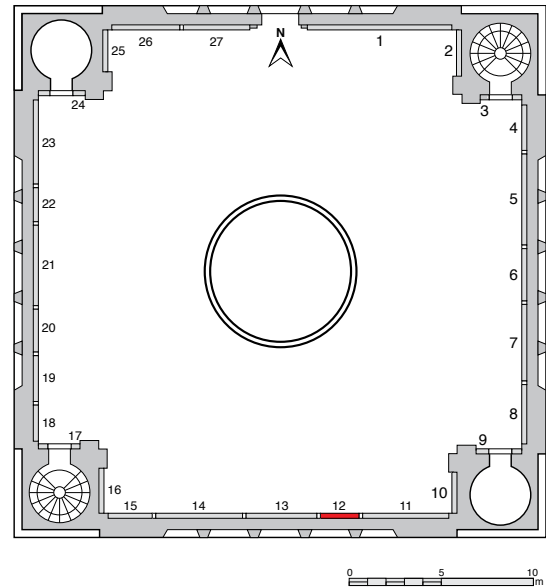
Voorstelle (5.12.1935?) — item 10 'Ondertekening Dingaen-traktaat. Suggestie: soos voorgestel in "Voortrekker-rolprent"³⁷⁹ (Signing of Dingane treaty. Suggestion: as shown in Voortrekker film)

Panele (c. Dec. 1934–36) — item 6 'Ondertekening v. traktaat' (Signing of treaty)

Wenke (c. 1934–36) — item II. Dr. L. Steenkamp, mnre. A.J. du Plessis en M. Basson, A. 'MAATSKAPLIK' (SOCIAL), 3. 'Verhouding met ander volksgroepe' (Attitude to other ethnic groups), d. 'Dingaen' (Dingane), v. 'Votrekking van verdrag' (Execution of contract)

Moerdyk Layout (5.10.1936–15.1.1937) — scene 10 on panel 15 'Traktaat' (Treaty)

Jansen Memorandum (19.1.1937) — 7.10 'Signing of the Treaty with Dingaen'



³⁷⁹ In the Jansen files copy of 'Voorstelle' (ARCA PV94 1/75/1/7) the reference to the Voortrekker film is scored out.



Figure 12.1: *D. Treaty*. 1949. Marble, 2.3 × 2.14 m (courtesy of VTM; photo Russell Scott)



Figure 12.2: Portrait of Dingane in *Treaty*. Marble, detail of fig. 12.1 (photo Russell Scott)

Description

In the centre of *Treaty* (fig. 12.1) two quite different men sit facing each other: the Zulu king Dingane in full regalia,³⁸⁰ and across the table the Voortrekker governor Piet Retief in trekker clothing. The corpulent king, his beard and moustache short-trimmed, is the only person who sits on a proper chair. He has the royal head ring ('isicoco') with a large central attachment in the form of a ball delicately formed of lourie feathers ('isiqova' or 'ilihuna') and a single crane feather at the back; earplugs ('iziqhaza')³⁸¹ and a large stylised necklace, perhaps meant to depict curved lion or leopard claws (fig 12.2).³⁸² He wears a purpose-cut skin covering his back and the midline of the chest ('amambata'), more clearly visible for the Zulu in frontal view on the king's left, and bandoliers in the form of a double-cord over his shoulder like a sash.³⁸³ There is further a knee-length back or rear apron made of skin ('ibheshu'),³⁸⁴ of which the forked flap protrudes under the king's thigh; the 'izinjobo' – i.e. the tails of genets ('ilidlaka') dangling between the 'ibheshu' and the 'isinene' (loin cover);³⁸⁵ the tuft of cow tails on a band around the upper arms and below the knees ('amashoba');³⁸⁶ and above each ankle a pair of beadwork rings ('amadavathi'). It is pertinent to the general goal of historical accuracy that so much detail was lavished on Dingane's attire. In the case of the Voortrekkers, the form of dress was already established in earlier panels. The Boer leader, his full beard coiffured, is distinguished, however, with a longer jacket than the customary trekker attire, and a top hat, suggesting the formality of the occasion, and he has a satchel over his shoulder, a key element in the narrative. It is notable that he and his party do not remove their hats in the king's presence.

Dingane uses a quill to mark a document on the table, but Retief is in control of the transaction, his pointing index finger directing where to sign. Two groups of people, densely arranged and ceremonially staged, frame their leaders in a semicircle. Behind Dingane, his advisors and confidants kneel or crouch, and next to Retief stands a group of trekkers. While the Zulu outnumber the Boers, the Boers appear dominant because they are upright. The seniority of five Zulu near the king is indicated by their head rings, earplugs and chest coverings, while the royal cuspidor ('inceku'), Tununu ka Nonjiya, kneels with cupped hands at his side. The 'isinene' of his apron falls over the lower frame, as do the skins covering the tree trunk that acts as Retief's seat, details that add to the tangible presence of the scene. The trekkers are shown in their traditional suits and wide-brimmed hats; the men in the front row have full beards, except for one with neither beard nor hat, who represents the English interpreter Thomas Halstead (1811–38).³⁸⁷ Only on the Boer side are there children, two boys who frame their leader like small guards, the one behind Retief holding a coiled riempie-rope.

Beyond the heads of the Zulu a kraal is seen from a high vantage point that shows a section of Dingane's extensive capital, uMgungundlovu.³⁸⁸ The huts are depicted as perfect hemispheres, enclosed by tall palisades, with strong horizontal supports, in a rectilinear layout with a central entrance. The larger scale and different layout from the view in *Murder of Retief* are presumably intended to show that the signing takes place at the king's residence, while several lines of hills on the horizon indicate its locale.

380 For (high-ranking) Zulu clothing, see Krige 1981, 370–382, esp. 374–375. We are indebted to Sandra Klopper for her guidance on Dingane and his regalia.

381 See Frank Jolles, 'Zulu earplugs', in *Zulu treasures* 1996, 171–181.

382 For a royal lion claw necklace, see *Zulu treasures* 1996, 65 no. K19.

383 Bandoliers were, according to Jolly (2005, 88), 'usually symbolically charged and associated with high ritual status or potency'.

384 For a man's rear apron made of leopard skin, see *Zulu treasures* 1996, 216 no. A47.

385 See *Zulu treasures* 1996, 215 nos A42 ('isinene', man's loin cover) and A42a ('izinjobo', loin hanging).

386 In *Zulu treasures* (1996, 215 no. A37) they are called 'umklezo (imiklezo)', meaning 'cattle tailbrush shoulder ornament'.

387 *DSAB* 3, 1977, 367–368.

388 See *Murder of Retief*.

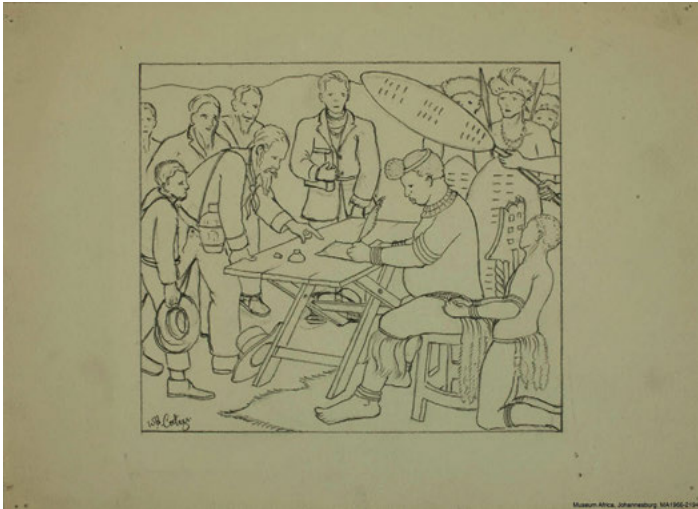


Figure 12.3: A1a. W.H. Coetzer. April–June 1937. Pencil, 13.4 × 15.4 cm. Mirror version of A1b/A3 (photo courtesy of Museum Africa, no. 66/2194)



Figure 12.4: A2. W.H. Coetzer. Reproduction of the first sketch for *Treaty*. June 1937 (courtesy of ARCA PV94 1/75/5/1; photo the authors)



Figure 12.5: A3. W.H. Coetzer. 'Traktaat met Dingaan'. After September 1937. Pencil, 13.4 × 15.3 cm. Revised version of A1b (photo courtesy of Museum Africa, no. 66/2194)



Figure 12.6: A4. W.H. Coetzer. *Die Dingaan-Retief traktaat*. Late 1937–38? Monochrome oil on board, 27.3 × 31 cm (courtesy of DNMCH, OHG 897; photo the authors)

Developing the design

For this scene we have the unusual circumstance of two initial drawings, mirror images of each other. Presumably Coetzer was trialling which way the scene would read best in the preliminary drawings and then discarded the one showing Dingane on the right and Retief on the left (fig. 12.3). It is the reversed reproduction with Dingane on the left and Retief on the right (fig. 12.4), labelled 'j', which corresponds with no. 10 on Jansen's 1937 Memorandum, which must have been shown to the committee, and it is the same as the pencil drawing on which Coetzer made annotations for corrections (fig. 12.5).

At the Historiese Komitee meeting on 4 September 1937 the following alterations were required:

Signing of contract. The inkwell was a little bottle with a rim around the neck that people carried on their belts; Dingaan writes on a block; he should look far more clumsy, that is to say, hold the pen almost straight-backwards; the skin shields should be held flat over his head; the 'kaffer' that holds out his hands for the spit should hold a hide shield; Dingaan's head is shaved smooth with a ring around it. Dingaan sits on a block. (Compare the Voortrekker movie.)³⁸⁹

A handwritten note in pencil on Coetzer's drawing repeats the point that the table should be replaced by a block, and adds that Francis Owen (1802–54),³⁹⁰ – the English missionary at uMgungundlovu – was not present ('Owen was nie daar nie'). It strongly suggests that Coetzer was jotting down notes during the discussion and that not everything was minuted for the committee.

As was so often the case, the Coetzer drawing provides the basic plot for the reliefs. It shows the Zulu with distinctive headgear, assegais and shields on the left and the trekkers on the other side in the right-reading version of the drawing. The latter are all depicted bareheaded as if paying respect to Dingane. Between the two parties stands a table at an angle, with the Zulu king in regalia on the left, marking the document with a quill. He is seated on 'Dingane's chair', then regarded as an authentic artefact (see below), which the committee was evidently unaware of when it required its removal. From the right Retief, with a bottle on a strap over his shoulder (see *Murder of Retief*), points to the document, but approaches the king rather obsequiously with lowered head. Apart from the Zulu king and his cuspidor, all are standing, orderly Zulu clustered on the left, with a shield held aloft above Dingane, the Boers more casually spread out on the right. A little apart, marking the liminal zone between Zulu and trekkers, stands the English missionary, the Rev. Francis Owen, identified by his clerical collar and Bible. The entire scene is depicted from a fairly high viewpoint, which makes the drawing relatively informal.

The drawing we have has not been worked up, and is inscribed as unfinished, with none of the changes requested by the Historiese Komitee, despite Coetzer's annotations. However, Coetzer's monochrome oil of the scene (fig. 12.6) omits Owen, and exchanges the table for a more primitive support, perhaps a tree trunk, while Dingane, with a rather fanciful headdress made of long feathers, sits on a low stool instead of a chair, which suggests that Coetzer might have taken cognisance of some of the points made by the committee in this work. Yet a curious difference in the painting is that, while the attendant Zulu warrior still stands, the Boers are seated, a hierarchy that was to be reversed in all but the earliest of the subsequent reliefs including the final marble (fig. 12.1). The painting also introduces a distant view of a rectilinear kraal in the background.

For *Treaty* we have two maquettes, a photograph of an earlier version in clay (fig. 12.7) and a later one cast in plaster (fig. 12.8) in the Voortrekker Monument Museum. The earlier version is a

³⁸⁹ 'Tekening van traktaat. Die inkkoker was 'n botteltjie met 'n riem om die nek wat die mense aan hul gordel gedra het; Dingaan skryf op 'n blok; hy moet baie meer onbeholpe lyk d.w.s. die pen amper agteroor-reguit hou; die skildvelle moet plat oor sy kop gehou word; die kaffer wat sy hande vir die spuug hou, moet 'n skildvel vashou; Dingaan se kop is glad geskeer met 'n ring daarom; Dingaan sit op 'n blok. (Vergelyk die Voortrekker-rolprent.)' (Historiese Komitee 4.9.1937: 4j).

³⁹⁰ Owen ed. Cory 1926, 1–2; DSAB 2, 1972, 527–528.

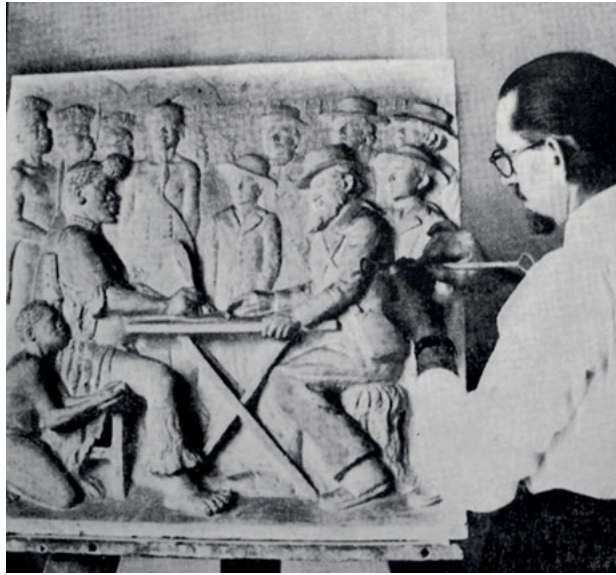


Figure 12.7: B1a. Frikkie Kruger working on *Treaty*. 1942–43. Clay maquette (courtesy of VTM Museum; photo the authors)



Figure 12.8: B2. Frikkie Kruger. *Treaty*. 1942–43. Plaster, 77.5 × 76.7 × 8.5 cm. Maquette (courtesy of VTM Museum VTM 2184/1–28; photo Russell Scott)



Figure 12.9: C1. Hendrik Ploeger. *Treaty*. 1943–45. Wood, full-scale armature for C2 (courtesy of Kirchhoff files; photo Alan Yates)

rare record of a maquette in the original clay, known through a photograph of Frikkie Kruger at work on it; it was evidently never cast in plaster.³⁹¹ It changes the view used in Coetzer's drawing to eye level, formalising the composition and showing the table parallel and close to the picture plane, so that one can barely see its upper surface. The Zulu with headgear and lowered shields stand behind Dingane, as in the drawing, hence with their heads higher than the king's; only the royal cuspidor is kneeling. Dingane is portrayed in his ornate regalia but is more upright and stately than in the drawing (not 'far more clumsy' as required by the *Historiese Komitee*), and is seated on a conventional European chair. Again Retief points to the document, looking down towards it, while Dingane faces him directly. Retief is seated on a low stump or stool with an animal skin over it, although, with his left hand on the edge of the table and his near leg bent, he is about to rise. He has a satchel in place of a bottle and wears a hat, as do his men, now no longer with their heads uncovered. The Boers and the two boys standing behind Retief are equal to the Zulu in number. Retief's son Pieter in the middle replaces the Rev. Owen who, as was pencilled on the drawing, had to be removed since he was not present at this ceremony. The figures of both parties in frontal view in the background form a shallow circle that frames the main group. A small part of Dingane's city uMgungundlovu is just visible as a backdrop.

The most significant innovation of the second maquette (fig. 12.8) is that the Zulu, now without weapons, are no longer standing, so that their heads are lower than Dingane's – a correction suggested by a certain Mr Faye who pointed out that none of the king's generals would have been permitted to stand while he was seated.³⁹² This adjustment caused major changes in the

³⁹¹ See Part I, Chapter 3 ('Harmony Hall').

³⁹² 'Mnr. Faye [or Feye: the typescript has been amended and is not clear] het hom ook baie goeie raad gegee o.a., ... (ii.) dat die generale van Dingaan nie sou gestaan het terwyl Dingaan self gesit het nie' (Dagbestuur 30.9.1943: 3).



Figure 12.10: C2. *Treaty*. 1943–45. Clay. Full-scale relief (Potgieter 1987, 23; photo Alan Yates)

composition. As a result of the modified position of the Zulu, the heads of the standing Boers are above theirs, placing them in a superior position additionally emphasised by the trekkers' hats. But two further changes stress Zulu strength. Zulu numbers have been increased so that they completely outstrip the Boers. There is also more space to show the king's capital in the background, and it extends right across the panel, with a woven palisade surrounding the beehive dwellings. Dingane and Retief face each other directly, but the king is less upright, while Retief's erect demeanour is reinforced by a more static profile pose and a formal top hat. Coetzer's view of the inside of a broad-brimmed hat (a frequent motif in his sketches), held by the boy behind Retief, is replaced by a coiled rope, since the hat is on the boy's head. The English interpreter, Thomas Halstead, who has now been included, is bare-headed and clean-shaven, which picks him out amongst the Boer party.

Preceded by a wooden armature (fig. 12.9), the translation to the full-scale clay relief (fig. 12.10) continues the process of solemnising the event, seen in details such as Retief's longer jacket, the increased number of witnessing figures on both sides, and the more impressive outline of uMgungundlovu. Although the capital no longer extends behind the Boers, the lower heads of the Zulu allow it to be portrayed more fully, with two rectangular sides of the surrounding palisade visible. The compositional tension created by the counterpoise of Dingane and Retief, facing each other across the table to embody the subject of the panel, is vividly captured in the reductive form of the armature made for the full-size clay relief, of which we have a rare photograph (fig. 12.9). It clarifies how the broad composition of the small maquettes was transferred to the larger relief, which left the sculptors room to make some modifications and develop detail, which we see in the very full depiction of Dingane's regalia, for example, characteristics retained in the final marble relief (fig. 12.1).

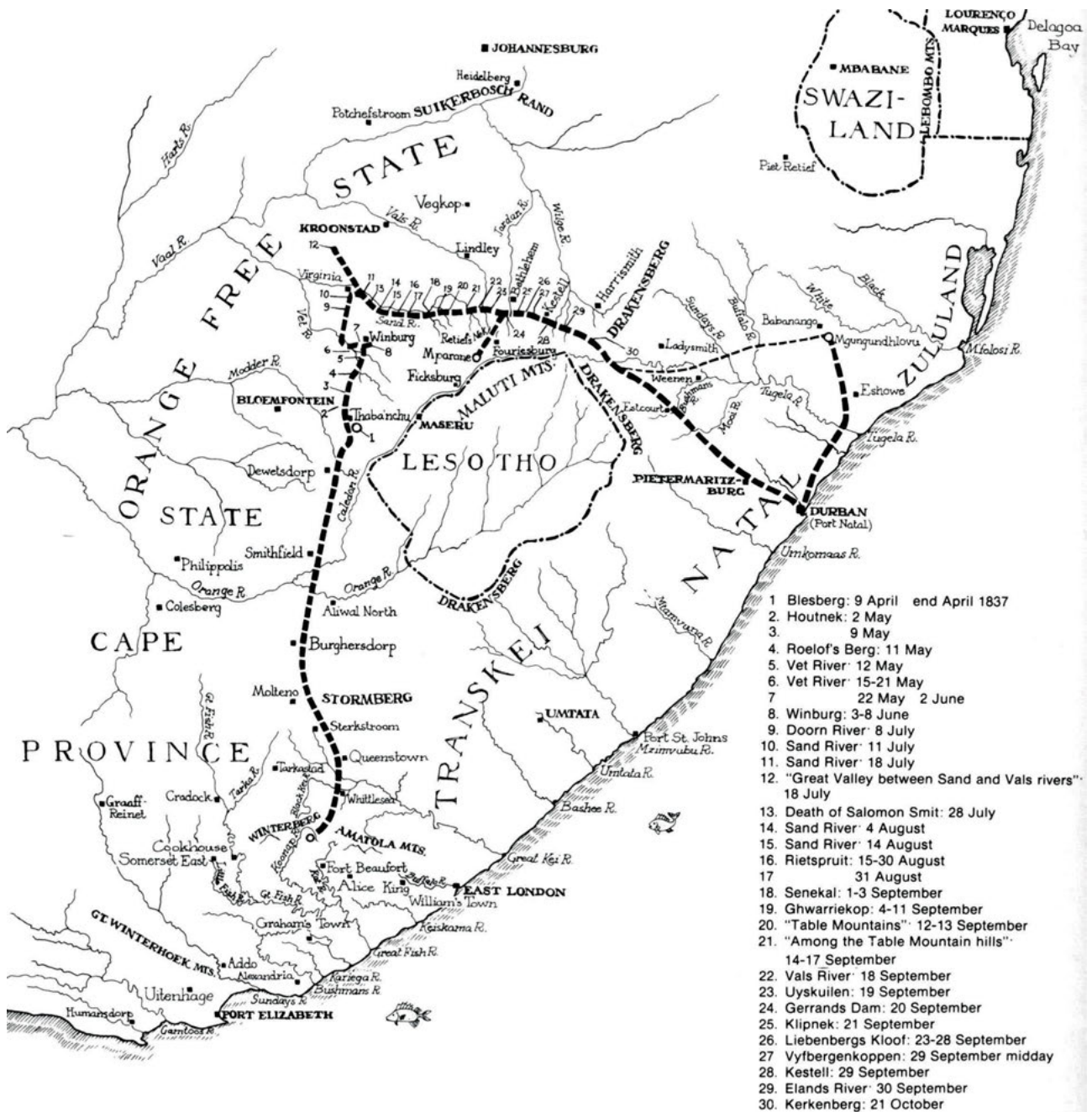


Figure 12.11: Retief's itinerary, Thaba Nchu/Blesberg, Port Natal and uMgungundlovu. April 1837 to 6 February 1838 (Gledhill and Gledhill 1980, 152)

Reading the narrative

The scene depicts the signing of the deed granting land, commonly referred to as the treaty, by Dingane (c. 1795–1840)³⁹³ in favour of Piet Retief (1780/81–1838)³⁹⁴ and his fellow trekkers on 4 or 6 February 1838. This treaty and the crucial question of whether it is a Voortrekker invention or not is one of the most controversial topics of the Great Trek. It is embedded in a history of claims and counter-claims by Boers, Zulu, and historians of sundry persuasions, which are impossible to disentangle.³⁹⁵ For our purpose we focus on incidents and problems that played a part in the process of transforming Afrikaner accounts of the land treaty into marble as a key event in their grand narrative of the Trek. To fully understand the wider context we need to return to Retief's first visit to Dingane discussed in *Blydevooruitsig*.

Land issues, Sekonyela and the cattle³⁹⁶

The first visit of Retief to uMgungundlovu took place from 5 to 8 November 1837 to negotiate a grant of land from King Dingane for the trekkers planning to settle in Natal (fig. 12.11). Retief reported back to the *Graham's Town Journal* about this first encounter on 18 November 1837 from Port Natal:³⁹⁷

Dingaan received me with much kindness, but has at the same time imposed a difficult task upon me, as you will see from the copy of his letter [below]. He finally told me with a smile on his countenance – 'you do not yet know me, nor I you, and, therefore, we must become better acquainted.' The king did not give me an audience, on the subject of my mission, till the third day after my arrival. He said I must not be hasty, and that as I had come from a great distance to see him, I must have rest, and partake in some amusement ... I must now return with my work unaccomplished, which will cause me a great deal of anxiety and fatigue ...; and although the duty which now devolves upon me through the misconduct of Sinkanyala [Sekonyela] is by me particularly regretted, yet my hope is in God, who will not forsake those who put their trust in him.³⁹⁸

Dingane's letter, to which Retief refers, was written in uMgungundlovu on 8 November, the very day when Retief had been granted the royal audience. Immediately afterwards Owen provides telling information on how this letter was conceived.

Dingarn sent very early for me, and in great haste to meet the Dutch on business. Mr. Retief the Gouverneur [sic] had written a letter to himself as from the king who dictated it. This letter being in Dutch was first interpreted to me, and then read over to the king for his approval. I was requested both by the king and Mr. Retief to write the letter in English.³⁹⁹

³⁹³ DSAB 2, 1972, 194–196; Laband 1995, 49–121; Ndlovo 2017.

³⁹⁴ See *Inauguration*.

³⁹⁵ An overview, dependent on the period, knowledge and historical interest of each writer, is provided by Boyce 1839, 148, 152–155; Chase, *Natal* 2, 1843, 3–9; Delegorgue, *Travels* 2, 1997 (first published 1847), 57–65; Moodie 1888, 421–430; Cloete 1899, 98–100; Cory, Preller and Blommaert 1924; Preller, *Sketse* 1928, 166–219; Cory, *South Africa* 4, 1926, 36–48; Walker 1933, 150–164; Becker 1979, 244–251; Naidoo 1985; Cubbin 1988; Laband 1995, 82–88; Etherington 2001, 261–268.

³⁹⁶ For the importance, variety and beauty of Zulu cattle, see Poland, Hammond-Tooke and Voigt (2003); Glover (2019) has argued more generally for the South African significance of a cattle-centred history.

³⁹⁷ According to Chase (*Natal* 1, 1843, 124), Retief had requested this meeting in a letter written in Port Natal 'To the Chief of the Zoolas' on 12 October 1837, in which he informed Dingane of his wish for an interview regarding the Boers settling in Natal, and of his desire to live in peace with the Zulu. For the full text of the letter and the likely misreading of its date of 'Oct. 12' for 19 October (Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 359–360), see *Blydevooruitsig*. For the date of Retief's visit, see Owen ed. Cory 1926, 61–64.

³⁹⁸ Chase, *Natal* 1, 1843, 129; Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 364–365.

³⁹⁹ Owen ed. Cory 1926, 62–63.

The letter that Retief had devised for the king reads in its English form:

Sir, – This is an answer to your letter of the 24th Oct., and the conversation which has now taken place ...

To go on now with the request you have made for the land, I am quite willing to grant it; but I first wish to explain that a great many cattle have been stolen from me from the outskirts of my country, by people with clothing, horses, and guns. These people told the Zoolas that they were boers, and that one party was gone to Port Natal, and that they (the Zoolas) would see now what would come upon them. It is my wish now, that you should shew that you are not guilty of the charge which has been laid against you, as I now believe you to be. It is my request that you should retake my cattle and bring them to me; and if possible, send me the thief, and that will take all suspicion away from me, and I will cause you to know that I am your friend. I will then grant you your request [of land]. I will give you some men, enough to drive the cattle which you retake to me, which will remove the suspicion that the stolen cattle are in the hands of the Dutch; and I will also give you men whom you may send to make reports to me. If any cattle should be taken besides mine, I request that you will send them to me.

The mark X of the Chief Dingaan.

Witness, F. Owen.

To Pieter Retief, Esq., Governor of the Dutch Emigrants.⁴⁰⁰

Before this letter was finalised, however, Owen

had a long conversation with Retief on the inconsistency of Dingane's conduct, and the vain hopes he was holding out for him. I [Owen] told him of the grant of country to the English Government, and asked him whether supposing the settlers at Port Natal objected to their occupying the country of Victoria, except on condition of their becoming subjects again to the British Government, they would occupy it on these terms? He plainly said No.⁴⁰¹

The crucial issue here was Dingane's misleading strategy of promising land that was not clearly specified to Retief, and apparently including territory that he had already granted to the English. After a prior promise to 'Allen Gardiner, a retired Captain of the Royal Navy turned missionary',⁴⁰² on 6 May 1835 'to waive all claim to the persons and property of every individual now residing at Port Natal',⁴⁰³ Dingane, with the assistance of the interpreter Thomas Verity, had signed a 'Cession of Natal territory to the King of England, in which the Zulu declares in conjunction with his own expectations' on 21 June 1837:

All the ground on which the White people live about Port Natal I give to the King of England – I give him the whole country between the Umgāni river & the territory occupied by Fāku & Napai, from the sea coast to the Quathlamba mountains with the exception of a district on the Umgāni belonging to me which commences at the mountain called Issicālla Sonyōka.⁴⁰⁴

It is this concession of land situated south of the Umgeni River at Port Natal to the king of England (William IV died on 20 June that year; hence Owen's reference to 'the country of Victoria') which Owen had in mind, and he again tried to warn Retief when the two of them visited Dingane later with the letter Retief had drafted. Owen's diary continued:

⁴⁰⁰ Chase, *Natal* 1, 1843, 131–132; see also Delegorgue, *Travels* 2, 1997, 60–61; Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 361–362; Owen ed. Cory 1926, 63 (8.11.1937); Breytenbach c. 1958, 405–406 E.38 no. 1.

⁴⁰¹ Owen ed. Cory 1926, 63.

⁴⁰² Laband 1995, 76.

⁴⁰³ A copy of the treaty with the English is provided in Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 307, and Eybers 1918, 143 no. 91.

⁴⁰⁴ Eybers 1918, 149 no. 96 (a reproduction is in Muller 1978, 57 fig. 22). For the context, see Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 322–323; Owen ed. Cory 1926, 63 (9 November 1837).

We went to the king to have his signature. Having read the letter to him [Dingane] I asked him in the presence of the Dutch [Retief], whether he had not already given the land which the Boers had been requesting of him to the British Government! He paused for a few moments, and then said, 'I will speak to Mr. Retief on that subject when he returns with the cattle.' Either he or his Indoona afterwards said, he had not yet stated *what* country he should give to the Dutch.⁴⁰⁵

On the following day Dingane specified his intent in more detail to Owen:

Had he not told him [Gardiner] in his letters, that he did not wish to give land about Port Natal to the Dutch, but that he had rather they should occupy the country from which he had lately driven Umselekaz [Mzilikazi] and which was now his? This was what he intended to give them and not what he had already given to the king [actually Queen Victoria] of England! He had not told the Dutch *what* country he should give them!⁴⁰⁶

Owen's interpreter, Richard Hulley, who was surely more privy to what Dingane said than any other white person present, stated in 1880, however, that the king had said that, if his condition of Retief retrieving the cattle stolen by Sekonyela 'was fulfilled he would give them the country lying between the Tugela and Umzimvubu rivers, and between the Drakensberg and the sea'.⁴⁰⁷ Owen, writing at the time, implies that Dingane had not been so explicit, and comments in his diary that 'He knows full well what part of the country they *wish* to possess ..., but he has not expressively promised to transfer any part of it to them'. He then ponders on Dingane's duplicity:

He has merely said, 'Go and get my cattle, and then I will give you land *somewhere*,' he *means* Umselekaz late country, but he has been leading then [sic] to imagine it is Port Natal. Aware of this I thought it right yesterday to expose Dingane's subtlety to Mr. Retief, and to put Dingane himself, in presence of Mr. Retief who understands English and the other Dutch, the plain question whether he had not already alienated the land, which question he evaded as already mentioned.⁴⁰⁸

Dingane's prevarication must have been known to Retief, if not from Gardiner at Port Natal, then certainly from Owen. He too avoided addressing the issue of the requested land directly when he replied, allegedly on the same day 'To Dingane, King of the Zoolas. Port Natal, Nov. 8th, 1837'.⁴⁰⁹ The date was more likely 18 November, as the American missionary, Rev. Daniel Lindley, reported on 1 December 1838 that Retief 'was with us for several days', and Lindley was able to translate Retief's Dutch letter into English (fig. 12.12).⁴¹⁰ After thanking Dingane for his 'friendliness and justice' regarding the Boers' 3 726 cattle the Zulu had taken from Mzilikazi,⁴¹¹ Retief outlined the Boers' position in what the Gledhills call an 'undiplomatic letter',⁴¹² while Peter Becker more aptly calls it 'astoundingly tactless'.⁴¹³

Matselikatse [Mzilikazi], I have no doubt, has fled; for he cannot but think and feel that I shall punish his very bad conduct. Already I am grieved that I have been compelled to kill so many of

⁴⁰⁵ Owen ed. Cory 1926, 64.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., 65.

⁴⁰⁷ Hulley 1880, 6.

⁴⁰⁸ Owen ed. Cory 1926, 65–66.

⁴⁰⁹ Retief's return to Port Natal on the same day as he left uMgungundlovu would have been impossible. Preller (1930, 181 n 1) dates the letter to 18 November on this basis and because a further Retief letter from Port Natal has that date. Nathan (1937, 190) too suggests that the letter was written on 18 November 1837 because 'Owen [ed. Cory 1926, 81–82] mentions it as having been received [by Dingane] only on December 7th'; 18 November was also the day when Retief reported back from Port Natal to the *Graham's Town Journal* about his first visit at Dingane (see above). Kotzé (1950, 233 n 5) also gives this date.

⁴¹⁰ Kotzé 1950, 233 (note* in the text; recorded also in Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 212 n*). Lindley's account is quoted below.

⁴¹¹ Chase, *Natal* 1, 1843, 132.

⁴¹² Gledhill and Gledhill 1980, 191.

⁴¹³ Becker 1979, 213.

his people, who only executed his cruel and wicked orders. What has now happened to Matselikatse [sic] makes me believe that the Almighty and All-knowing God will not permit him much longer to live. From God's great Book we learn, that kings who do such things as Matselikatse has done are severely punished, and not suffered long to live and reign; and if you wish to hear more fully how God treats such wicked kings, you can enquire of all the missionaries in your country ... In regard to these things I must advise you frequently to speak with those gentlemen, who wish to teach you God's Word; for they will inform you with what great power has governed and still governs all earthly kings ...

I now heartily thank the King for his kind and favorable answer to my requests; and I hope the king will remember his word and promise till I return. You may rest satisfied that I will do the same. I think it probable that before my return you will be troubled on account of the request I have made of you, and the promise you have given me; ... My wish is, that you will not please, before my return, to [sic] hearken to any one who may trouble you about the land in which I wish to live.

In regard to the thieves who stole your cattle, what they said, viz. – that they were boers, was a cunning device, to make you think that I was the thief, in order that they might themselves escape unpunished.

I am confident that I shall prove to the King that I and my people are innocent of this crime. Knowing my innocency [sic] I feel that you have imposed on me a severe task, which I must perform, in order to shew that I am not guilty ... I now go, trusting in God, that I shall be able to execute this business in such a manner as that I shall have it in my power to give to all a satisfactory answer. This done, I shall then expect to be convinced that I have to do with a king who will keep his word.⁴¹⁴

Retief unwisely emphasised how he had had to punish Mzilikazi, as though the Boers were enacting God's power to visit retribution on kings whose conduct was 'very bad', and wrote that it was 'a good thing for you that you have allowed teachers [missionaries] to settle in your country' to promote God's word. Surprisingly, Owen, who read the letter to the king, seems not to have perceived the peril of the veiled threat to Dingane and praised it in his diary as 'excellent reflections and advice on the conduct of wicked kings'.⁴¹⁵ That missionaries too interpret things in terms of their own self-interest is confirmed in the equally positive account from Lindley, who had translated the letter into English for Retief:

He [Retief] has, unasked, taken pains to impress Dingaan favorably towards the missionaries. He wrote the Zulu chief a letter, and as he writes in the Dutch language, found it necessary to have it translated into English. This service I performed, at his request, and was much pleased with the entire spirit of the communication.⁴¹⁶

Despite Retief's taking the moral high ground, however, he had little choice but to meet the king's stipulations: despite Owen's warnings and Dingane's vagueness, he hoped that successful compliance would achieve the desired grant of land. Possibly the king's demand was not entirely unexpected as, only a few weeks earlier, Retief had mentioned in a letter that Sekonyela⁴¹⁷

⁴¹⁴ Chase, *Natal* 1, 1843, 132–134. Reproduced also in Delegorgue (*Travels* 2, 1997, 61–63), Bird (*Annals* 1, 1888, 362–364) and *Voortrekker argiefstukke* (1937, 21–23 with n 1). The word 'innocency' is a verbatim quote from Rev. Lindley's English translation.

⁴¹⁵ On 7 December 1837, Owen (ed. Cory 1926, 81–82) describes his own and Dingane's reaction to this letter: 'In allusion to the ruin of the chief Umselekez [Mzilikazi], the common enemy of your Boers and Dingarn, Mr. Retief observed that his punishment had been brought upon him by the righteous Providence of God, because he had not kept God's word, but had made war when he ought not. He referred him to the Missionaries to tell him what God had said in his word respecting kings who did not favor or obey his word ... His attention was certainly awakened at the religious part of the letter, but the convenient season for consulting me on the important subject did not arrive.'

⁴¹⁶ Kotzé 1950, 233.

⁴¹⁷ For Sekonyela (1804–56), see *DSAB* 3, 1977, 647–649.

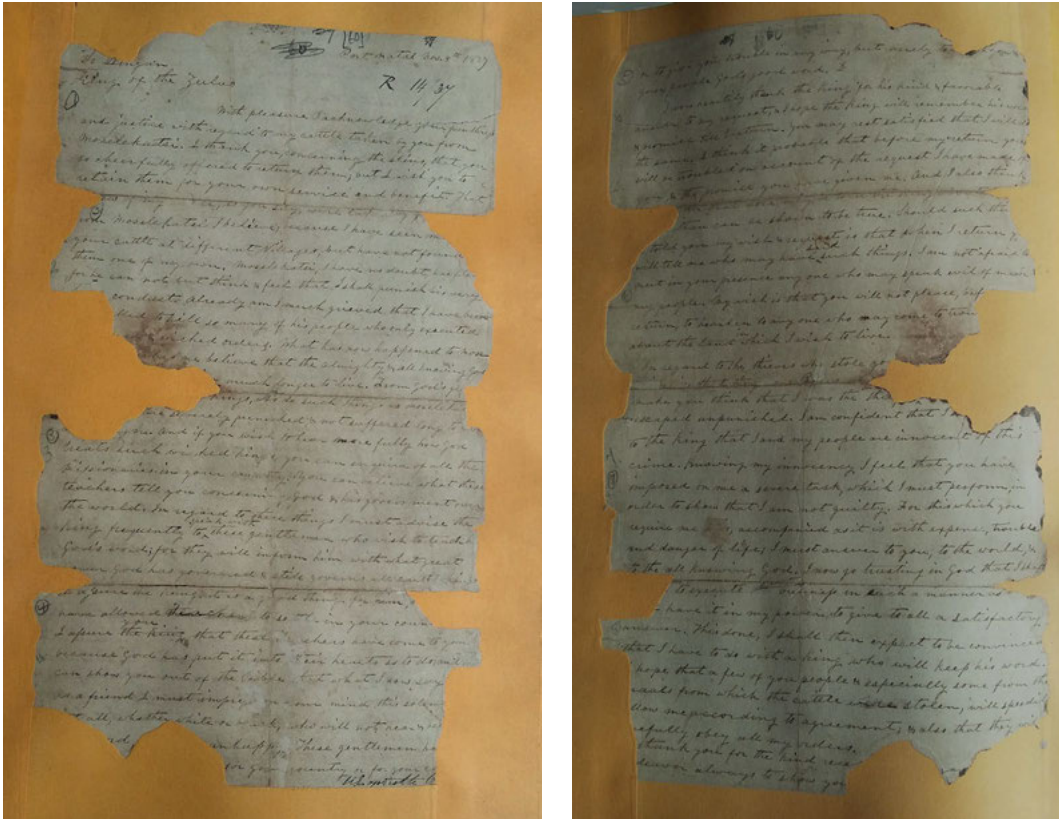


Figure 12.12: Rev. Daniel Lindley. English translation of Retief's Dutch letter to Dingane. 8 or 18.11.1837 (NARSSA S.S. 1829–1840 1A/R14/37; photo courtesy of Zabeth Botha)

had 'committed a daring robbery upon Dingaan, and which the latter may lay on our charge – as the rascal went out with a commando on horseback'.⁴¹⁸

The episode becomes more complicated when we read that Erasmus Smit, in his diary entry on 4 October 1837, reported:

Today I reflected on the news that I heard from Barend Liebenberg: that the supreme Kaffir chief, Sekonyela, on the 3rd of this month passed by in this vicinity with 50 men, 200 head of cattle, sheep and horses, and that they here recovered the booty stolen from them by Dingaan. That this incident is of grave importance, the future will indeed teach us.⁴¹⁹

Whatever the case, Retief organised a punitive action against Sekonyela at the turn of the year 1837, despite his previous amicable relationship with this chief.⁴²⁰ He 'bound his former "friend and ally" Sekonyela in irons and made him confess to the theft of 300 cattle. Retief then demanded delivery of those 300 along with an additional penalty of 400 cattle, 70 horses and 30 guns'.⁴²¹

⁴¹⁸ Chase, *Natal* 1, 1843, 126.

⁴¹⁹ Smit trans. Mears 1972, 57 (Dutch text in Smit ed. Scholtz 1988, 89).

⁴²⁰ Chase (*Natal* 1, 1843, 87–88) provides the following statement 'by an eye-witness of the most credible authority' after Retief had 'arrived among his expatriated countrymen in April [1837]': 'Three powerful chiefs have already united with him [Retief] in friendship, viz. – Maroko [Moroka], Towaana [Tawana a Thutlwa] and Sinkjala [Sekonyela], – and it appears that these treaties mentioned have been most gladly received by these tribes.'

⁴²¹ Etherington 2001, 264 (quote). See also the reports from Owen ed. Cory 1926, 100 (22 January 1838) and Jacobus Boshof in the Cape newspaper *De Zuid-Afrikaan* (17 August 1838), translated and published by Chase, *Natal* 2, 1843, 2; Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 399–401.

Owen notes in his diary that it was around 22 January 1838 when the Zulu king received a further letter from Retief, which he read to the king. In it Retief stated that the affair with Sekonyela ‘... had happily been settled without bloodshed’. Owen continues,

... Mr. Retief then released him, after he [Sekonyela] had made many humble confessions of his wickedness in not having attended to the advice of his Missionary. He [Retief] endeavoured to impress Dingarn with the obligation of God’s Law, which required him to release the prisoner, and in a separate letter requested me also to press this point. To punish Sinkoyella [Sekonyela] he made him deliver up 700 head of cattle and also 63 horses and 11 guns, for without these he could not have accomplished the theft. The cattle were to be sent to Dingarn, but the horses and guns were distributed amongst Mr. Retief’s own people ... Dingarn made no observation to the letter, but by *his manner* gave me strong reason to suppose that he was disappointed at the relief of Sinkoyella, and that the guns were to be given to *him*.⁴²²

Because of what for Dingane were Retief’s selfish dealings with Sekonyela, a further level of complexity and uncertainty was added to the upcoming negotiations about land. Early the following day (23 January), the king ordered Owen to reply to the letter, in a way that had Owen note in his diary that

my suspicions of Dingarn’s cruelty were but too fully confirmed; for he requested me to write to Mr. Retief to say that he had told a lie in *promising* to send Sinkoyella a prisoner, if he should succeed in taking him, for he had seized him, bound him and then let him go again. The best way to avoid writing such matter as this, I thought, was mildly to remonstrate and tell him that I was sure Mr. Retief would be displeased with him, if he sent him such a message and that I did not wish to be in any way the means of creating dissatisfaction between them. I said that I knew Mr. R’s reason for not delivering the prisoner up, meaning that it was against the law of God, but he interrupted me, saying ‘And I know it too: it is because he thought I should have put him to death: but no such thing: I only intended to talk to him and then I should have let him go[’], but as he evidently was afraid of displeasing the Dutch, he changed the tone of his language and said that *he* was not angry, *he* did not say that they had told a lie, but he could not stop his people’s mouths, who would be sure to say so, therefore in order to satisfy them it was necessary that Mr. Retief should send *him* the guns and horses along with the cattle. I said that Mr. R. had distributed these amongst his own people, and he could not take them away again. But Dingarn said that Mr. R. had told *his* people that if he [Dingane] wished to have them they should be sent. When the cattle, guns and horses arrived he promised to assign the Dutch some land. The whole communication was indicative of the cruelty, artfulness, trickery and ambition of the Zoolu chief ... I knew not in what way to avoid writing the letter; it needed no remarks from me to convince Mr. Retief of the character, duplicity and designs of the king of the Zoolus.⁴²³

Whether this letter reached its addressee we do not know. However, either with Dingane’s cattle, or possibly after he had sent them in advance with the Zulu herders to uMgungundlovu,⁴²⁴ Retief resolved on a second visit to the king to finalise the land treaty that the trekkers eagerly awaited.

More warnings about Dingane

The Boer took with him some seventy armed men, among them several youths, including his own fourteen-year-old son Pieter; in addition, he was accompanied by the English Thomas Halstead as interpreter, ‘about thirty-eight achter-ryders (grooms) and servants’, and ‘about two hundred

⁴²² Owen ed. Cory 1926, 100 (italics in original).

⁴²³ Ibid., 100–101 (italics in original).

⁴²⁴ The accounts are conflicting. See Owen ed. Cory 1926, 104 (2.2.1938); Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 369 (Daniel Pieter Bezuidenhout, 1879), 379 (William Wood, 1840); Nathan 1937, 193, 196, 198.

horses'.⁴²⁵ Retief clearly had in mind a show of strength – this despite severe warnings from the British trader John Montgomery and Alexander Biggar from Port Natal,⁴²⁶ and several missionaries in addition to Owen, particularly the American Rev. George Champion, as reported by his interpreter, Joseph Kirkman.⁴²⁷ The editor of Kirkman's report, George E. Cory, sums up that Retief 'was entirely and blissfully ignorant ... that it was Dingaan's intention to murder him', and Kirkman himself stated:

Retief called [at Ginani],⁴²⁸ on his return from his visit to Dingaan [5–8 November], gave a full statement of all matters affecting his interview with the Zulu king, stating how kindly he had been received, and that the king had conceded to all his demands, and further, that he, Retief intended to make a second visit to the Zulu king accompanied by sixty or more men well armed.⁴²⁹ Mr. Champion did and said all he could to dissuade him from so dangerous an undertaking, and Mr. Retief told Mr. Champion to be under no fear on his account, for it took a Dutchman, not an Englishman, to understand a Kaffir. Mr. Champion reminded Mr. Retief that he was an American, Mr. Retief replied that the difference was so small, that it was not worth alluding to. Mr. Champion told Mr. Retief that he had now had two years practical knowledge of the Zulu king, and begged to warn Mr. Retief against taking any such step for that as sure as Mr. Retief paid a second visit to Dingaan accompanied by sixty or more men, so sure would the king have them all put to death. He further assured Mr. Retief that the step he contemplated was fraught with the gravest consequences to him and all his people, and that God would hold him responsible for the lives of all the men Mr. Retief intended to sacrifice so uselessly. All was to no purpose, neither Mr. C. nor I could dissuade him from his mad enterprize ... What took place on Mr. Retief's return to the Zulu king is a matter of History.⁴³⁰

If Retief spoke so freely of his plans, it is likely that Dingane got to know about the intended show of strength in advance, which could only have added to his concern about the incursions of the Voortrekkers and his determination to oppose them.

Retief also received warnings from his own people against the deployment of a large delegation, and the likely effect on the unpredictable Zulu king; Gerrit Maritz had even offered 'to go himself, attended by only two or three men, observing that if they were destroyed it would be quite enough'.⁴³¹ So concerned was Maritz about the dangers for Retief and his party, and for the trekkers left behind with poor defences, that he not only attempted to dissuade Retief from his venture, but when that failed tried to persuade trekkers both directly and through their leaders not to join him.⁴³² In a last-ditch plea he even wrote Retief a letter and had it delivered during the night before Retief's departure. While Retief continued to hold that his strategy was the right way to achieve the Voortrekkers' goal, he no longer took a full force of 200 men with him as originally planned, but

⁴²⁵ Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 401–402 (letter of Jacobus Boshof to the editor of the *Graham's Town Journal*, Graaff-Reinet, 2 July 1838).

⁴²⁶ Montgomery (ed. Giffard 1981, esp. 118) told Retief, whom he met (around September 1837) at the Sand River, that Dingane 'would lead him on until he [Retief] was completely in his power; ... was aware of the projected "trek"; ... would deceive him, would agree to sell him land, and when an opportunity offered, would fall upon him. [Retief] answered, "Montgomery, Dingaan's people are not spoiled by the English as the frontier kafirs are".' See also Cory, *South Africa* 4, 1926, 56, letter from Alexander Biggar to Captain Evatt, at Port Elizabeth, March 17th, 1838: 'I wrote to Retief to caution him to be on his guard, and he had warnings from other quarters not to place too much confidence [in Dingane].' See also Boyce 1839, 148; Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 380 (William Wood, Owen's interpreter to Dingane, stated later [1840] that, on 6 February 1838, he warned some of the Boers 'to be on their guard').

⁴²⁷ Joseph Kirkman, 'the son of a frontier trader who lived near the Brownlees' mission station' (Kotzé 1950, 81 n 2); Champion ed. Booth 1967, 139 n 57.

⁴²⁸ It was at the mission station called (N)Ginani, 'across the Tugela, on the Umsinduzi River' (Kotzé 1950, 14), situated some 'ten miles beyond the [former] river' (Hulley 1880, 4); see also Champion ed. Booth 1967, xiii.

⁴²⁹ Since this was written after Retief's death, the number of sixty may reflect hindsight, as it seems Retief was initially planning to take two hundred men (see below).

⁴³⁰ Owen ed. Cory 1926, 157.

⁴³¹ Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 401 (letter of Jacobus Boshof to the editor of the *Graham's Town Journal*, Graaff-Reinet, 2 July 1838).

⁴³² Thom 1947, 195–198.

relied on volunteers. Whether some of these warnings were exaggerated with hindsight, after the catastrophic failure of Retief's mission was revealed, we cannot know, but so many reports demonstrate a clear and widespread concern about what Retief and his people should expect from the Zulu king: no grant of land in Natal and, more gravely, certain death. Ignoring all these warnings, Retief arrived with his party at Dingane's city on 3 February 1838,⁴³³ most likely with a draft of a treaty in his baggage,⁴³⁴ just as he had taken a draft of a letter for the king to sign on his previous visit.

In uMgungundlovu, Retief with his 'show of strength' met again a king who had from his own perspective been pondering problems in the dealings between black and white. Dingane knew that in the past, regardless of previous partnerships or contracts, large numbers of black people had been killed by the Boers: indeed, as we have seen, Retief himself had referred to victories against the Ndebele in his letter dated 8 November to Dingane. And more and more parties of Boers were pouring over the Drakensberg, constituting a considerably more serious threat than the small number of English settlers at Port Natal, with whom Dingane had already concluded two treaties, one as recently as June 1837, that ceded, as we have seen, a large tract of Natal 'to the King of England',⁴³⁵ which was clearly at odds with any negotiations with the trekkers. It was in this convoluted situation, dominated by conflicting interests and clashing cultures, that the Boers, naïvely, considered it possible to have Dingane sign a binding land treaty.

In his biography of Retief, Preller persuasively describes how, on the date of 4 February inscribed on the treaty, the Boer leader met with Dingane, and Owen was called in with pen and paper to draw up the document which was duly signed by the king and witnesses, three trekkers and three of Dingane's izinduna. It is an account that has been repeated often enough to lend it seeming credibility.⁴³⁶ But there is no trace of this event in Owen's diary although he had written at length about the earlier negotiations, and no evidence that Owen had been involved in drawing up the treaty in any way (even Coetzer and presumably the SVK were aware of this, as noted in Coetzer's annotations to his sketch, 'Owen must not be there'). In fact, Owen and one of his interpreters, William Wood, both in uMgungundlovu at the time, report almost nothing about the main objective of the Boers' visit. What they do recount is its disastrous ending. As we discuss in *Murder of Retief*, on 6 February, Retief's entire party was wiped out by Dingane's Zulu. Whether a treaty was concluded before this massacre or not has remained unclear ever since. Ten months later, on 21 December, after the ground-breaking victory over the Zulu at Blood River (16.12.1838), when Pretorius' commando found the skeletons of Retief and his companions on top of the hillock kwaMatiwane, Dingane's dreaded execution site at uMgungundlovu, they reported that they had identified Retief and his leather bag and discovered a treaty inside it. What document was found will be discussed in more detail below.

Finding the document

What do we learn from the eyewitness reports of the context in which the document was found? We begin with the well-known accounts of several Boers which were published – mostly in English – in *De Zuid-Afrikaan* and later recorded by John Centlivres Chase (1843) and John Bird (1880). The first is from Pretorius, said to have been written in uMgungundlovu on 22 December, the day

⁴³³ Owen ed. Cory 1926, 104–105.

⁴³⁴ Delegorgue reported that 'so great was his [Retief's] trust [in Dingane] that he had even prepared in advance the deed of cession which Dingane had only to sign' (*Travels* 2, 1997, 63; first published 1847); repeated in *DSAB* 1, 1968, 51 ('This treaty had been drawn up by Retief prior to his second visit to Dingane in 1838 ...'), where the penmanship is attributed to Jan Bantjes.

⁴³⁵ Eybers 1918, 149.

⁴³⁶ Preller, *Retief* 1930, 254. It is noteworthy that his transcript of the treaty follows the Pretoria copy and the Weinthal facsimiles (255–256) discussed below.

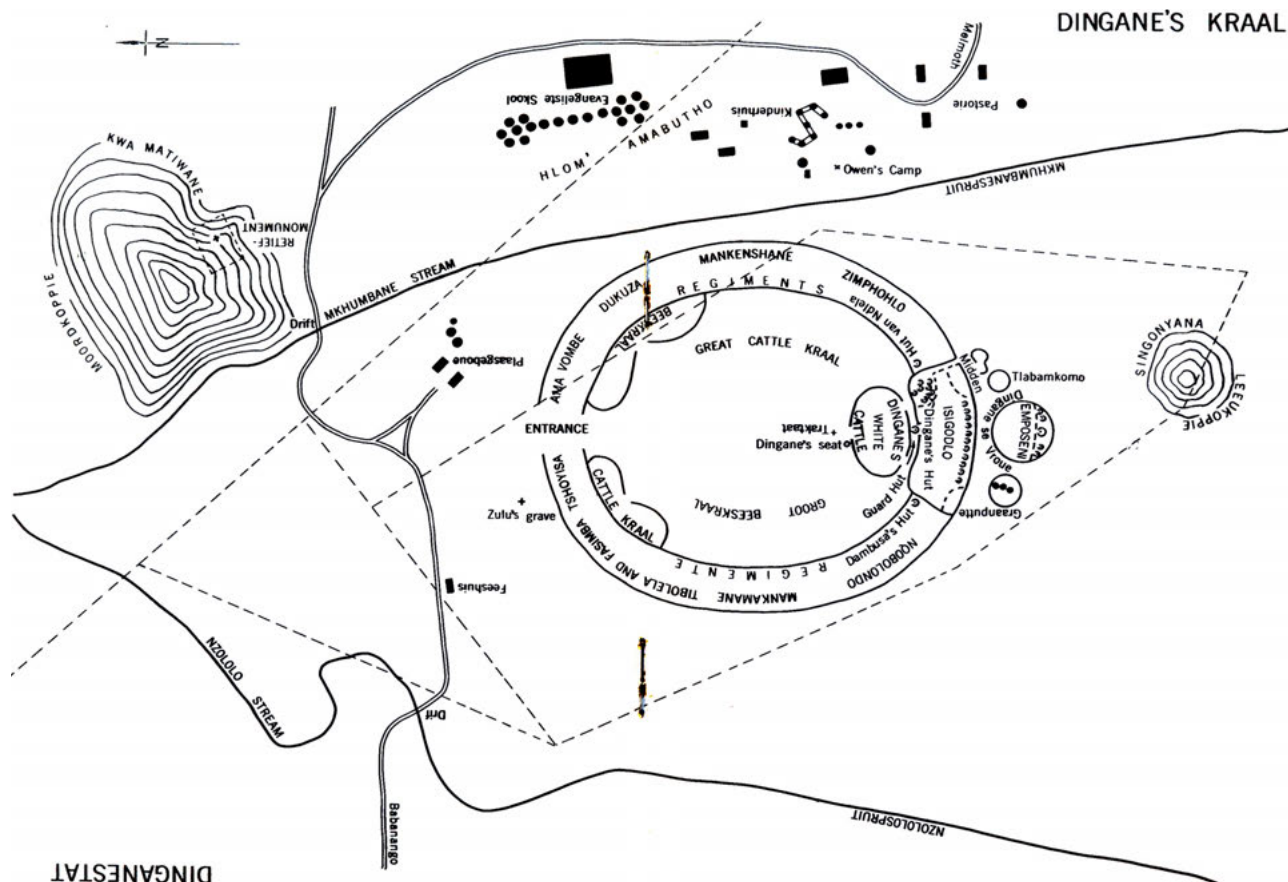


Figure 12.13: James Walton. 'Sketch plan of Dingane's kraal', showing kwaMatiwane and Owen's camp, not to scale (Oberholster and Walton 1963, centre double page)

following the discovery of the treaty. He released this letter, however, only on 9 January 1839 – then accompanied by another letter of the same date (both addressed to 'Sir') and a copy of the treaty, evidently all sent to the editor of *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, P.A. Brand (succeeded by his brother Christoffel Jacobus in 1839),⁴³⁷ who published it in a 'gratis' edition on 16 February 1839.⁴³⁸ Preceded by his story of the Battle of Blood River, Pretorius' account of 22 December 1838 continues:

You will no doubt be surprised that we have been able to collect at this murderous den [on top of kwaMatiwane near uMgungundlovu; fig. 12.13], or Golgatha, the bones of the worthy Retief and his followers, after having been so long exposed in the open field, a prey to all, and the sneer of mockers. We interred them as well as we could, they must have been terribly butchered, as the view which the localities of the spot furnish proofs, that even the most flinty heart could not remain untouched; on viewing these scenes tears overflowed our eyes. Agreeable to the account of some Zulu prisoners, they were seized in the residence, but defended themselves so gallantly, that the two first divisions of the Zoolas, by whom they were attacked, could not master them before the third division came to their assistance [see *Murder of Retief*]. The prisoners likewise declare, that the farmers had no guns with them, but that they defended themselves with their knives, and with the sticks which they had wrenched from the Zoolas; so that twenty of the latter were killed, and many wounded, and that there are still many among them who bear the scars on their body, but that being at last

⁴³⁷ See *Church of the Vow*.

⁴³⁸ *De Zuid-Afrikaan* began its special gratis edition with a Dutch translation of the treaty and the two letters, the earlier of them here dated 23 December, while the January–February 1839 *Zuid-afrikaansche kronyk* (156) has a Dutch translation of the treaty alone.

overpowered, beaten with sticks, and their hands and feet bound with raw riems, they were dragged outside the residence to the place of martyrdom, where we found their bones with the parched riems sticking thereon. Among a number of handspikes and sticks, which we still found laying [sic] from the residence to that place, were some from 8 to 9 feet long, and of the thickness of an arm; no head was found unbroken; on the bones were still found parched rags of clothes; – knives, snuffboxes, tinder boxes, and all they had on them, were left untouched; and what surprised me the most, is, that of the papers and documents which the late Mr. Retief had with him, and which we found in his port manteau, the outsides were only damaged, the inside papers, as also the Document signed by Dingaan, is still as good as were it written to-day. I enclose you a copy of that Document [see below]. The last page of this letter I wrote on blank paper, which were found with the others, to let you see how good it still is.⁴³⁹

Pretorius offers an extensive description of the gruesome finds on top of kwaMatiwane to explain the circumstances in which the treaty was found. His last sentence provides a particularly curious verification, when all the addressee would have been able to see, in place of physical evidence of the treaty, was a sheet of paper claimed to have been found alongside it and in equally good condition.

In line with the Pretorius report is the account of Jan Gerritze Bantjes (1817–87),⁴⁴⁰ secretary to Pretorius during the Boers' expedition to uMgungundlovu, and later clerk of the Voortrekkers' Volksraad. On 21 December 1838, he noted the discovery of the murdered Boers in his journal covering the events of Pretorius' Wenkommando in November and December 1838, which was published half a year later in *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 14 June 1839.⁴⁴¹ It is unnecessary to reproduce it here, as Bantjes' account is so very close to that of Pretorius: it seems unquestionable that one of them had read the report of the other, and used it as the basis of his own report.

Much later is the account given by another eyewitness Sarel Cilliers (1801–71), who shortly before his death recollected:⁴⁴²

We found the corpses about 1,200 yards from Dingaan's dwelling. They had been dragged in one direction. Their hands and feet were still bound with thongs of untanned hide, and in nearly all the corpses a spike as thick as one's arm had been forced into the anus, so that the point of the spike was in the chest! They lay with their clothes still on their bodies. No beast of prey or bird had disturbed them. Those who had known him recognized Mr. Retief. A glossy waistcoat was part of his apparel; and he had a leather bag on his shoulder containing his papers, amongst them the treaty concluded by him and with Dingaan, and the description of the territory. It was matter of wonder to us all that the bodies had lain there so long, and that the papers had remained free from corruption, and were as little soiled as if they had been kept in a close box.⁴⁴³

Cilliers' account is particularly dramatic, as is often the case in his recollections, and is questionable in its details. His surprising claim, that no 'beast of prey or bird had disturbed' the Boers' corpses (not to mention that Retief still wore a 'glossy waistcoat'), is challenged not only by other Boer accounts,⁴⁴⁴ but by the statements of two others who were within visual range of kwaMatiwane,

⁴³⁹ *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 16 February 1839. The Dutch text, a free translation of the English, is reproduced in Breytenbach c. 1958, 272 (Bylaag 10, 1938). The newspaper states that this copy of the treaty, together with an additional letter of 9 January, was received on 15 February from Graaff-Reinet, unfortunately without details of the recipient or the person who forwarded it (Breytenbach c. 1958, 273 n 16).

⁴⁴⁰ *DSAB* 1, 1968, 50–52; Visagie 2011, 48.

⁴⁴¹ English translation in Chase, *Natal* 2, 1843, 67; Breytenbach c. 1958, 281, gives the text in the original Dutch.

⁴⁴² Visagie 2011, 102–103 (see *The Vow*).

⁴⁴³ Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 247–248 ('Journal of the late Charl Celliers', 1871). For the accuracy of Cilliers' recollections, see also *The Vow*.

⁴⁴⁴ Pretorius himself emphasised in a letter of 19.3.1839, sent to the commanding officer at Port Natal (discussed below), that 'the decayed corpse of our heroic countrymen ... were ... prey to the birds of the air and to wild beasts ... (NA Kew CO48/201/v3 p.217).

the hillock on which the slaughter took place. One was the American missionary Rev. Henry Isaac Venable, who happened to arrive at uMgungundlovu just a few hours after the murder, intending to speak to Dingane. When Dingane's induna, Ndlela kaSompisi, informed him about the killing of the Boers, he realised to his horror that 'in full view the vultures were hovering over their lifeless bodies'.⁴⁴⁵ The second eyewitness is Jane Bird (née Williams), a servant who had accompanied the Rev. Owen from England to South Africa and subsequently to uMgungundlovu. Bird recounted in her 'Personal recollection of Dingaan, and his massacre of Retief and his party' in 1877: 'Scarcely had the Zulus left the place of slaughter when the vultures swooped down on to the bodies of the victims.'⁴⁴⁶ In another later account, Owen's interpreter Richard Hulley, who had been absent on the day of the murder, recounts how on his return on 9 February he 'observed a large flock of vultures hovering over the place of the dead'.⁴⁴⁷

Finally, as late as 1879, Daniel Pieter Bezuidenhout provided his narrative of the finding of the dead Boers, when as part of the Pretorius commando, he had witnessed that

there, on a hillock decked with thorn trees, lay all the skeletons of the murdered Boers; and on one corpse we found a pocket-book, by which we recognised that the skeleton was that of Retief! And in the pocket-book was the treaty concluded between Dingaan and Retief; and although the pocket-book had lain there so long in wind and weather, the paper on which the treaty was written was still white and uninjured, and the writing distinctly legible. General Andries Pretorius took the paper. I believe that Marthinus Wessel Pretorius [son of Andries Pretorius and later president of the ZAR] must still have it in his possession.⁴⁴⁸

How the Boers were in the first place able to identify the about one hundred skeletons of their fellow countrymen and servants amidst the numerous other slaughtered corpses of men and women sentenced to death by Dingane before and since 6 February 1838 is hard to imagine. While all proclaimed the extraordinary survival of a legible treaty amidst the inconceivable carnage on kwaMatiwane, the first-hand reports of the Boers who were at the site do not agree on the state of decay of the mutilated corpses, their clothes, or the kind of leather container in which the treaty was said to be found⁴⁴⁹ – evidently still on Retief's person despite the violence of the Boers' deaths and particularly Retief's disembowelment (discussed in *Murder of Retief*), not to mention having been exposed for over three hundred days to sun, rain, wind, birds and beasts.⁴⁵⁰ That all accounts take care to mention the survival of the treaty and its good or legible condition almost smacks of an agreement having been reached about it.⁴⁵¹

Less detailed about the finding of the treaty than the previous accounts is a series of mostly unpublished letters exchanged between Boers and British officials in the National Archives of the

⁴⁴⁵ Kotzé 1950, 237; for Ndlela kaSompisi see Laband 1995, esp. 54–55, 86, 95, 111, 116–118.

⁴⁴⁶ Moodie 1888, 427.

⁴⁴⁷ Hulley 1880, 7.

⁴⁴⁸ Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 370.

⁴⁴⁹ The leather container is described as a 'portmanteau' (Bantjes; Pretorius); 'leathern bag' and 'leathern shooting bag' (Pretorius); 'leather hunting-pouch' (Potgieter); 'leather bag' (Cilliers); 'pocket-book' (Bezuidenhout).

⁴⁵⁰ Telling here is the report by Allen Gardiner (1836, 44–45), which demonstrates how rapidly corpses degenerated. When, in February 1835, he had witnessed the execution of two Zulu servants at kwaMatiwane, he recounted: 'The following afternoon I took an opportunity of visiting the spot, but so effectually had the hyenas and the vultures performed their office, that the skeletons only remained to add to the number of skulls and bones with which the whole slope of the hill was strewed.' See also Naidoo 1985, 208 n 45.

⁴⁵¹ Even the makers of the c. 1950 film *Die bou van 'n nasie*, who accept the discovery of the treaty without question, seem to find the description of its unblemished state improbable; after the episode with the murder of Retief and his men, the film shows a discoloured document, with the voice-over that later the blood-stained treaty was found ('die bloedbevlekte traktaat is later gevind').

United Kingdom at Kew, recorded in English in a paginated leather-bound volume with the heading ‘Cape of Good Hope 1839’, ‘Vol: 2 March to June, Sir George Napier Nos 23 to 55’.⁴⁵² They help us to relate the reports to the conflicting Boer and British interests of the day – to clarify not only when, how and by whom the treaty was found, but when its first copies were released to the public and why. We begin with a letter of the Volksraad addressed ‘To The Commanding Officer of Port Natal’ (at the time Major Samuel Charters⁴⁵³), written at the ‘Source of the Togala [Tugela], 9th January 1839’, delivered by Landman on 14 January, and translated into English:⁴⁵⁴

Sir,

We have already informed you that we are disposed to submit our case [Boer ammunition seized by the British⁴⁵⁵] to an impartial enquiry the measures therefore already taken by us and those which we may still adopt, we are convinced are just, and we shall never be afraid to have them enquired into.

We have also told you that we shall by convincing you of the justice of our demands, enable you to return our property to us.

We have in consequence to enclose herewith a Copy of the Document found with the Corpses of Mr. Retief and his Comrades, from which you will perceive [p.94r] the nature of our right to the Bay of Natal and other land – although the clothing of the murdered men was so much destroyed that some of the unfortunate people could only be recognised by their Knives, Tinderboxes, Snuffboxes, etc. yet the papers have been so wonderfully preserved as to be almost uninjured.

You have said that you have come here with the intention of preventing us from proceeding against the Zoolas – the Government being afraid of the destruction of that portion of Africa. However blood-thirsty we may be considered to be, yet we on three different occasions sent messengers to Dingaan by Zoolas taken by us, before we commenced our attack, stating that if he gave up the plundered property of [p.95] the ruined among us, we would desist from further proceeding against him and would conclude peace with him.

Being only three days distance from Dingaan’s residence the Commando was surrounded one morning by great multitudes who fired [sic] on our Camp – which compelled us to defend ourselves.

We went out with the same object with which you state to have come here – namely to make peace, but we desire to have our property restored but, at the same time, in order that we may provide food for those among our people who had all their property stolen from them and are entirely destitute.

We [p.95r] are induced to think you will be convinced of the justice of our case, and we have therefore authorized Mr. Carel Pieter Landman to receive the seized Ammunition from you which we request you will be pleased to deliver to him.

We have the honor to be, Sir, Your obed. Servants in the name of the Council of the People

Signed J.S. Maritz / P.J. van Staden / P.H. Opperman / W.P. Prinsloo.⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵² As this volume contains essentially duplications, it seems that the original documents were usually kept in the Cape, pertinent to dealings with the Boers in our case, while copies were submitted to the Colonial Office in London. We gratefully acknowledge the help of Neil Corbett at NA Kew.

⁴⁵³ *DSAB* 3, 1977, 144–145.

⁴⁵⁴ NA Kew CO48/200/v2 pp.94–95, ‘Translation’. A.W. Pretorius knew of the Volksraad’s letter (see *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 16 February 1839), but does not mention the treaty in his own letter of the same date (a reply to Charters’ letter of 6.12.1838), which he addressed to ‘Major Charters, Officer Commanding at Port Natal’ in person (NA Kew CO48/200/v2 pp.96–97).

⁴⁵⁵ Letter of Major Charters to Sir George Napier, 12.12.1838 (Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 431), and a letter of the Volksraad to Charters, 15.12.1838 (NA Kew CO48/199/v1, pp.213–214, ‘Translation’).

⁴⁵⁶ For the names of the signatories, see Breytenbach c. 1958, 292 (here not P.J. but P.T. van Staden), and index of persons.

Thus it was that the Volksraad released the earliest known treaty copy (which we name according to its archive the Cape Volksraad copy⁴⁵⁷), and presented the official version of how the treaty was found and what this meant for the Boers – even if none of the signatories are recorded to have been present when this happened – not for its own sake but in support of their appeal for the release of their ammunition. In contrast to the eyewitness reports quoted above, the Volksraad connects the discovery of the treaty – mentioning only briefly that it was found with the bones of Retief – to issues of justice and property, related not only to the recovery of their ammunition seized by the British, but also their cattle stolen by Dingane, the righteousness of their conflict with the Zulu king and their entitlement to the land of Natal.

On the same day the Volksraad, confident of their cause, had provided a set of ‘Instructions for the Commandant Carel Pieter Landman, from the Council of representatives of the people’:⁴⁵⁸

1. Immediately on his arrival at Port Natal, the Commandant shall repair to Major Charters, commanding the Detachment of Her Britannic Majesty’s Troops at that place, which has been taken possession of by orders of Her said Majesty, and shall deliver to that Officer all the packets which have been sent off addressed to him [see below], together with all the documents enclosed therein.
2. The said Carel Pieter Landman shall, if required, afford all necessary information and explanation [98 recto] to the said Officer, according to the contents of said packets, and anything connected therewith.
3. He shall also claim and receive from the said Officer the Ammunition which has been taken possession of by him, and retain the same in his charge until further provision shall be made with respect thereto.
4. He shall further, immediately after he has acted in the matters with which he is hereby charged, transmit to the Council of the people in writing a detailed account of his proceedings.

Thus done and passed under my hand, in the presence of the Members of the afore said Council, this 9th day of January 1838 [correct is 1839].

Signed J.S. Maritz / G.K.V.Z.

The announced meeting of Landman ‘accompanied by several other Boers’ and Charters, which took place at Port Natal on 14 January 1839, clarifies the political differences between the Boers and the British. From the ‘Substance’ of this conversation, recorded by the major on the same day, we quote the passages relevant to the treaty:⁴⁵⁹

[90r] ... I [Charters] endeavoured to convince him [Landman] that British Subjects could never, under any circumstances throw off their allegiance to their Sovereign, and that they were here making war upon people who were at peace with England.

He [Landman] seemed to maintain his opinion but expressly [expressed?] himself undecidedly – thus ‘It is an opinion – we think that the British Government have no authority over us’ he said ‘we wish to live in harmony and peace with the B. Government!’

Me [Charters]. When it shall be known in England that 3 000 Zulus were slain in an action, and only three Boers slightly wounded [p.91], it will produce a great sensation and I cannot answer what steps may be taken.

⁴⁵⁷ NARSSA Cape Town GH 28/14, literally transcribed by the British in the Kew Volksraad copy (NA Kew CO48/200/v2 pp.100–101, ‘A True Copy’, which we discuss below).

⁴⁵⁸ NA Kew CO48/200/v2 pp.98–99, ‘Translation’.

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.90–93 (‘Substance of a conversation between Carl Pieter Landman and Major Charters held at Port Natal on the 14th January 1839’; as the aide-mémoire is not labelled ‘a copy’ it is possibly written in the major’s own hand).

Landman. Dingaen formally ceded to Retief, on behalf of the Emigrant Boers, all the Territories lying between the Togala and Umsumvubu rivers, in consideration of Cattle which Retief had recovered for him – This Deed of Cession has been found lately in Dingaen's Kraal – it is well known how Dingaen behaved to us since – and we have a right to endeavour to recover the property [cattle] he has taken from us, at different times not less than 30.000 head –

Me. Dingaen has no right to the Country in question, further than [p.91r] having over-run and depopulated it and then abandoned it – this is no title and he could not give what did not belong to him. I wish now to know if the Boers will pledge themselves to remain on the defensive on this side of the Togala river and not again invade or molest Dingaen, until the determination of the B. Government be known.

Landman. If Dingaen will give us up all the Cattle he has at different times taken from us, we will agree to this – we would then be happy to make peace with him ...

Me. Can you ask Dingaen for these Cattle now, after having so recently destroyed 3 000 of his men and captured 4 000 head of Cattle, which you found on this side of the Togala river.

Landman. Here are so many poor people amongst us, who have no other means of existence, that we must have the Cattle back, – when we were three days march from Dingaen's Kraal, we sent to offer him peace on these conditions but he did not answer us.

[p.92] ... Me. Is it true that the Boers forced the English Settlers, whom they found at Natal to join in the Commando against [p.92r] Dingaen if so, by what authority?

Landman. We did so by our own authority and [as] possessors of the Country.

Me. Did you order Mr Parker on the Comando[sic]?

Landman. We did – I myself gave him the order.

As Charters regarded the treaty as worthless, the conversation was mainly about all the cattle the Boers claimed back from Dingane as the condition to negotiate peace with him, and their relationship to British rule. On the following day Charters reaffirmed the British position when he wrote to the Volksraad:⁴⁶⁰

Gentlemen,

I yesterday received from the hands of Mr Carel Peter Landman the following documents.⁴⁶¹

1. A letter from Mr A. Pretorius dated Togala Spruit 9th January 1839 (– by mistake, put – 1838.)⁴⁶²
2. A letter from yourselves same date [see above⁴⁶³]
3. Copy of document respecting cession of territory – dated Umkumkinglove, 4th February 1837. [Kew Volksraad copy, see below]
4. Instructions to P.C. Landman [p.102r], dated 9th January 1839 (by mistake 1838) [see above⁴⁶⁴]

The only subject in these documents, to which an answer from me seems to be required, is respecting the seized ammunition, and on this head I beg to refer you to my communication of the 2nd January 1839 [in which he refused to do so].

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., pp.102–103, 'Copy ... English Camp, Port Natal, 15th January 1839'.

⁴⁶¹ Noted on 22 January 1839 also in Smit trans. Mears 1972, 164 (Dutch text: Smit ed. Scholtz 1988, 185).

⁴⁶² NA Kew CO48/200/v2, pp.96–97.

⁴⁶³ Ibid., pp.94–95.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid., pp.98–99.

[p.103] ... I have impressed upon the Gentlemen above mentioned, ... that until further Instructions shall be received from H.M's Government in England, you will remain exclusively on the defensive, on this side of the Togala River [p.103r], and under no pretence carry the war into Dingaan's Country.

After Pretorius had joined his fellow countrymen in Pietermaritzburg the chief commandant sent a letter to 'the Officer Commanding Her Majesty's Troops at Port Natal / Pieter Mauritz Burg, 19th March 1839'. Here he not only cemented the Boer position in this matter but also threatened to take the seized ammunition by force:⁴⁶⁵

Sir,

Whereas on my joining the Emigrants I had the notification to find that the powder and lead purchased by us, and consequently our lawful property, had been seized, and is still detained, illegally, nay inhumanely, upon our territory – our right to which has been proved to you by the invaluable contract, which was found undamaged to the surprise of all, with the decayed corpses of our heroic Countrymen, who were murdered in cold blood by that infernal Tyrant and so cut off from their useful career, innocently on their part, and given a prey to the birds of the air and to wild beasts, – besides those you must be well aware, of the great number who were murdered afterwards.

I [p.217r] therefore trust you will comply with with [sic] our request that our powder and lead may be restored to us, lest we be obliged to come and take them, for they are as indispensable to us as our lives.

I have at the same time to inform you, that we left our native soil without causing any disturbance, being well aware that we are a free born people to whom liberty cannot be denied, and I entertain the hope that neither yourself nor the Government will imagine that we are British Subjects still or that we wish to be considered so. We are no longer British Subjects and have no wish to be such, being desirous to be free and to be considered so according to the System of the British Government.

We left the Territories of Her Majesty with a great number of South Africans and having found here a country to our liking, we felt desirous to remain here and obtained possession of the land by fair means – we [p.218] are therefore at a loss to guess upon what principle of justice our property can be taken from us without our receiving an equivalent for the same, and ourselves sacrificed to the murderers.

Have we not suffered the greatest grievances without a murmur – given up our property with loss – abandoned our possessions? Have we deserved after all our sufferings and the resignation shown under them, to be deprived of our ammunition which is our lawful property? I hope not that you desire to see the lives of our dear wives and children also sacrificed to the cruel murderers; we console ourselves with the belief of there being an all ruling power who will take vengeance some time or other for the innocent blood which has been shed.

We repeat that we have no wish to be considered British Subjects but have no feeling against the Government – We have no objection to trade [p.218r] with the Colony as we have stated in writing from time to time; – we only wish to be considered a free and independent people entitled to the possession of the land which we obtained by fair and lawful means.

In the hope that you will comply with my desire which is also the wish of all I subscribe myself in the name and by Command of the Council of the People.

Sir, Your Most Obed. Servant
Signed AW. Pretorius, Chief Commandant

⁴⁶⁵ NA Kew CO48/201/v3 pp.217–218, 'Copy / Translation'.

The answer of 'Henry Jervis Capt. 72nd Regt. Comdt. to Mr. A. Pretorius and Volks-Raad Pieter Mauritz Burg / Port Natal 3rd April 1839' was short and to the point and demonstrates that he fully understood Pretorius' threat:⁴⁶⁶

Sir,

In reply to your letter dated 19th ultimo, received this morning, I have now to acquaint you, for the information of your Volks-Raad, that it is absolutely out of my power, to deliver up any part of the seized ammunition, until Instructions are received from His Excellency the Governor of the Cape of Good Hope – more especially at the present moment, when the whole line of Country remains unmolested, a peace in progress with Dingaan, and that you are not without the means for your defence. With respect to the following expression, contained in your letter relative to the said ammunition '(by weigering deselve te moeten nemen)' [if refused we will have to take it ourselves], I trust you have more sense than to advise any such proceeding [p.219r] as (however painful to my feelings) you would leave me no alternative but to repel force by force, whatever might be the result.

As to the indepeny [sic] of the Emigrant Colonists – I shall merely refer you to the proclamation dated 14th November 1830 – which shows plainly the light in which they are viewed by the Colonial[?], and so will, and must be, by every civilized Government, in unity with Great Britain.

Still hoping that nothing will occur, to break up the good understanding that has hitherto subsisted.

I remain etc, signed Henry Jervis, Capt. 72nd Regt., Comd.

Again the British not only refused to release the seized ammunition but also ignored the land treaty with Dingane because for them it had no legal relevance.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid., p.219, 'Copy'.

The treaty

Our main focus, like that of the scene on the frieze, is on this contested land treaty, alleged to have been signed on either 4 or 6 February 1838 – a dispute so well known that Moerdyk felt obliged to acknowledge it in the *Official Guide*:

THE SIGNING OF THE TREATY BETWEEN RETIEF AND DINGANE:

Particular emphasis is laid upon this episode of the Trek because doubt has been expressed in some quarters about the existence of a treaty.⁴⁶⁷

Although omitted here, Moerdyk had disingenuously qualified this in the *Official Programme* in 1949, saying that there had been questions about the treaty's existence, 'until the original was found'.⁴⁶⁸ But in fact no original document can be located, and the treaty is known only in the form of a number of certified copies disseminated widely, after their initial despatch to Charters and *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, where it was published in Dutch and English on 16 February 1839, and in Dutch alone in the January–February 1839 *Kronyk* of the *Nederduitsch Zuid-Afrikaansch Tijdschrift* (p.156). From early 1839 its existence had been believed by most to be an indisputable matter of fact. It was on 10 July 1923 when doubts about the treaty's survival ignited a debate ongoing to the present day. While at a conference of the South African Association for the Advancement of Science, 'the object of which is the advancement and dissemination of knowledge', the historian George Cory 'was advised to give some account' of his recent research, editing the diary of the Rev. Francis Owen.⁴⁶⁹ Therefore, 'unpreparedly and without any notes', he delivered, as it turned out, a ground-breaking address, in which he questioned whether the treaty was ever signed, and whether it had existed at all.⁴⁷⁰ Because of its profound historical and political implications, this question has remained one of the most hotly debated issues of the Great Trek.

We cannot unfold in full the convoluted history of the treaty here, as it requires a study in its own right, but we will base our argument on the controversy that resulted from Cory's enquiries. Apart from primary documents, we draw especially on *Die Retief-Dingane-Ooreenkoms* (The Retief-Dingane-Agreement) by George Cory, Gustav Preller and Willem Blommaert (Stellenbosch, 1924); 'Die Retief-Dingane-traktaat. Historiese agtergrond' (The Retief-Dingane Treaty. Historical background), published in Preller's *Sketse en opstelle* (Pretoria, 1928); *A pictorial history of the Great Trek: Visual documents illustrating the Great Trek* by Christoffel Muller (Cape Town, 1978); and Jay Naidoo's article 'Was the Retief-Dingane treaty a fake?' (*History in Africa* 12, 1985). However, two hermeneutic issues we regard to be essential for this debate have not been consistently tackled, when no coherent contemporary description of the actual condition and the handwriting(s) of the 'original' exists, let alone a clear record of what archive(s) it has been kept in. So we ask two crucial questions. First, who in the long history of this document would have been able to distinguish any of the (contemporary) copies from the original treaty, when any documents of the time would have been handwritten 'originals' – and when only a few were able to see with their own eyes the land grant at the moment of its discovery on kwaMatiwane? Further, what do we know about the certifiers and the content of the certifications of the treaty, in particular their specific physical and historical relationship and the people who had produced and certified them?

One of the few facts about which scholars have unanimously agreed is that the treaty was written in English, also independently attested to have been the language of the original.⁴⁷¹ In 1924, however, Cory posed the question that, 'considering that the negotiation was between Dutch and Zulus' and that 'the Boers were very bitter against the British Government in consequence of

⁴⁶⁷ *Official Guide* 1955, 49.

⁴⁶⁸ *Official Programme* 1949, 52.

⁴⁶⁹ Cory, Preller and Blommaert 1924, 1 (S.F.N. Gie).

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*; see the *Cape Times*, 12 July 1923; Naidoo 1985, 189–190.

⁴⁷¹ *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 16.2.1839; Delegorgue, *Travels* 2, 1847, 73; Cory 1924, 10.

Table of significant treaty copies (1838–91)				
COPY	DATE	CERTIFICATION	ARCHIVE	REFERENCE
Cape Volksraad Written in calligraphic manner Model for Kew Volksraad copy	22.12.1838– 9.1.1839	a) True copy of original: A.W.J. Pretorius / C.P. Landman b) Discovery: E. Ward Parker	NARSSA Cape Town GH 28/14 Occasionally indecipherable; blotted	Eybers 1918, 148–9 no. 95; Muller 1978, 58–59 (figs 26–27) (figs 12.15a–b)
Kew Volksraad Written in professional hand Copy of Cape Volksraad copy	22.12.1838– 9.1.1839	a) True copy of original: A.W.J. Pretorius / C.P. Landman b) Discovery: E. Ward Parker	NA Kew CO48/200/ v2 pp.100–101	Unpublished (figs 12.16a–c)
De Zuid-Afrikaan Printed	22.12.1838– 9.1.1839	a) True copy of original: A.W.J. Pretorius / C.P. Landman b) Discovery: H. Pretorius / P.D. du Preez / E.T. [E.F.] Potgieter	Location unknown Dutch copies: <i>De Zuid-Afrikaan</i> , 16.2.1839; NZAT Feb/ Apr 1839; Hofstede 1876, 38	<i>De Zuid-Afrikaan</i> , 16.2.1839; Chase, <i>Natal</i> 2, 1843, 71 (fig. 12.17)
Den Haag Written in calligraphic manner	1839–42	a) True copy: J.J. Burger b) Discovery: E.F. Potgieter / H. Pretorius / P.D.J. du Preez	NA Den Haag	Breytenbach c. 1958, 406 E.38, R.N., No. 2 (with fig. of copy of Weinthal facsimile); Muller 1978, 59 fig. 30 (fig. 12.18)
Jeppe Printed	Likely no later than early 1840	a) True copy: J.G. Bantjes and J.B. Roedeloff' (Rudolph) b) Discovery: E.F. Potgieter	NARSSA Pretoria	Bird, <i>Annals</i> 1, 1888, 366
Fiji Copy of Weinthal facsimile	16.5.1891	Discovery: E.F. Potgieter	pre 1961 in Suva, Fiji Museum post 1910 in NARSSA Pretoria	Unpublished Email Gerrit Wagener (NARSSA Pretoria), 27.6.2018 (fig. 12.19)
Weinthal Facsimile Reproduction of Pretoria copy?	16.5.1891	Discovery: E.F. Potgieter	Location of original facsimile unknown	Leyds 1906, opp. p.46; Preller 1924, 62–63 pls 9–10 (fig. 12.20a–b)
Pretoria Written in calligraphic manner; same as Weinthal facsimile Model for Weinthal copy?	1839–91	No certification	NARSSA Pretoria Damaged and stained	Unpublished Possibly mentioned in <i>The Press Weekly Edition</i> 16.5.1891 (Preller 1924, 61 pl. 8) (fig. 12.21)

Figure 12.14: Synopsis of treaty copies. 1839–91 (table the authors)

the treatment they had received so long in the Eastern Province, why was this treaty in the hated English language?⁴⁷² There are two possible reasons for this. On the one hand, documents prepared for Dingane were invariably in English, as at the time he relied on Owen or other Englishmen to read them to him.⁴⁷³ On the other hand, it could be argued that English was probably used because this treaty was aimed primarily at getting the British government to acknowledge the Boers' right, sealed by King Dingane, to settle forever in Natal. To fully understand the contested document, we need to attempt to clarify, as far as is possible, the reliability of the known copies that have been handed down. Since we cannot compare them with an original that may or may not have existed, but has in any event been believed to have been lost circa 1900, the best we can do is to investigate the relationship between these duplications.⁴⁷⁴

After reviewing each of the known treaty copies closely (fig. 12.14) to understand the relationship between them and their earliest duplications, we argue, in contrast to former scholarship, that two copies issued by the Boer Volksraad clearly stand out: a copy in the National Archives Repository in Cape Town (figs 12.15a–b),⁴⁷⁵ illustrated in Muller's 1978 *Pictorial history of the Great Trek*, which we call the Cape Volksraad copy; and the copy that is preserved together with the interchange between the British and the Boer Volksraad discussed above, now in the National Archives of the United Kingdom in Kew, to which we refer as the Kew Volksraad copy (figs 12.16a–c).⁴⁷⁶ Their factual relationship is manifest in that both are word for word identical and share the incomprehensible 1837 date on the treaty. The Cape Volksraad copy has a number of discrete features, however, namely that the calligraphic writing style lacks the consistency typical of a professional scribe, and that the signatures of Landman and Pretorius are distinctive and very likely genuine (see below). These features intimate that the Cape Volksraad copy must have been the model for the Kew Volksraad transcript made for the British records, and hence the one delivered with other documents on Monday 14 January 1839 to Major Charters, the commanding officer at Port Natal, by Commandant Karel Pieter Landman (who had, it so happens, been present when the treaty was found).⁴⁷⁷ Some six weeks later, on 27 February 1839, Charters forwarded this treaty copy with its attached documents to Major General Sir George Napier, governor of the Colony,⁴⁷⁸ in Cape Town, where it is kept to the present day. These two verbatim copies and the copy published in *De Zuid-Afrikaan* (fig. 12.17) are the earliest treaty duplications we know, securely dated between 22 December 1838 and 9 January 1839 by the chain of letters we discussed above.

It is a fortunate historical incident that another almost verbatim text of the Cape Volksraad copy, apart from a number of omissions, was transmitted by the French traveller and naturalist, Louis Adulphe Delegorgue (1814–50), not an eyewitness, but in contact with the Voortrekkers and the Zulu at different times between 1838 and 1840. In the second volume of his *Voyage dans l'Afrique Australe*, published in 1847, he reported on the treaty, paraphrasing the account of the discovery of 'a paper written in English' (un papier écrit en anglais).⁴⁷⁹ Delegorgue then copied the treaty (without mentioning a certification) from a handwritten document owned by

⁴⁷² Cory 1924, 3.

⁴⁷³ Two examples are Retief's letter of 8 November 1838, written on behalf of Dingane, which Owen was required to rewrite in English after it had been translated, and his subsequent letter to Dingane (dated 8 [18?] November), which he had Lindley translate for him (Kotzé 1950, 233).

⁴⁷⁴ Preller (1924, 43–46) has developed a complex stemma of the then known copies in relation to the original with four branches and several subdivisions, by making connections between the historical circumstances and a hypothetical chronological sequence. Rather than arguing point by point, our revision offers a clear string of copies.

⁴⁷⁵ 1978, 58 figs 26–27.

⁴⁷⁶ NA Kew CO48/200/v2 pp.100–101; the text is transcribed in Eybers 1918, 148–149.

⁴⁷⁷ NA Kew CO48/200/v2 p.101r.

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.83r–84.

⁴⁷⁹ Delegorgue, *Voyage* 2, 1847, 135.

Edward Parker,⁴⁸⁰ an English adventurer generally documented as E. or E[dward] Parker.⁴⁸¹ He was not only travelling with the Frenchman in Natal between 1838 and 1840 but had also been part of the Pretorius commando to uMgungundlovu, under orders of the Boer commandant K.P. Landman, as recounted above.⁴⁸² Major Charters condemned this engagement in a letter to Parker dated 14 January 1839 when he stated that the Englishman was ‘acting in direct opposition to the English Government, and the English Law’.⁴⁸³ It is obscure how exactly Parker came by his copy, likely to be a reproduction of the Cape Volksraad copy, which he had certified with his own hand as true (see below). In Delegorgue’s words, he

revealed by this simple memorial the right of the Boers to the country of Natal. This clear and concise document has about it something so sacred that I reproduced it here in English as I copied it from the original.⁴⁸⁴

Inadvertently, Delegorgue points to the problem of nomenclature we raised above, that each handwritten copy is equally an original, when he claims that, in transcribing Parker’s treaty copy, he considered he had ‘copied it from the original’.⁴⁸⁵

The identical text of the Cape and Kew Volksraad copies of the treaty (figs 12.15a–b; 12.16a–c) is given in full below.⁴⁸⁶ For convenient comparison, the few major differences in other copies – excluding irregularities in spelling and punctuation – are provided in the footnotes.

A True Copy

Unkuginsloave 4th February
1837.⁴⁸⁷

Know all men by this.

That whereas Pieter
Retief Governor of the dutch Emigrant
South Afrikans⁴⁸⁸ has retaken my Cattle
which Sinkonyella had stolen⁴⁸⁹ which
Cattle he the said Retief now delivered
unto me, – I Dingaan, King of the
Soolas, do hereby certify and declare that
I thought fit to resign unto him the
said Retief⁴⁹⁰ and his Countrymen⁴⁹¹ the place
called Port Natal, together with all the
Land annexed, That is to say from

⁴⁸⁰ Curiously, the English text of the treaty in *ibid.*, 136 differs significantly from that in the 1997 English translation (*Travels* 2, 73), which adjusted some ‘obvious’ discrepancies, as it closely follows (though without gloss) *De Zuid-Afrikaan* copy transcribed in Chase, *Natal* 2, 1843, 71–72.

⁴⁸¹ ‘E. Parker’ in Bird (*Annals* 1, 1888, 443), *Voortrekker argiefstukke* (1937, 38 [twice], 42) and Breytenbach (c. 1958, 36 no. 1 item 2, 276); further, ‘Edward Parker’ in Bird (*Annals* 1, 1888, 563; Muller 1978, 73 figs 12–14); ‘Edw. Parker’ in *Voortrekker argiefstukke* (1937, 36) and ‘Eduard Parker’ in *ibid.* (32 no. 36).

⁴⁸² Parker also participated in the auction of booty at uMgungundlovu on 24 December 1838 as his name is mentioned several times in the relevant lists (*Voortrekker argiefstukke* 1937, 32 no. 36, and pp.36, 38 [twice], 42).

⁴⁸³ NA Kew CO48/200/v2 p.106r.

⁴⁸⁴ Delegorgue, *Travels* 2, 1997, 73.

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁶ We are particularly grateful to François van Schalkwyk and Matthew Snyman for the photographs of the Cape Volksraad copy: Cape Town Archive Repository GH 28/14, pp.508–509 (see Muller 1978, 58 figs 26–27). Kew Volksraad copy: NA Kew CO48/200/v2 pp.100–101 (transcribed in Eybers 1918, 148–149).

⁴⁸⁷ The number seven is smeared.

⁴⁸⁸ *De Zuid-Afrikaan* copy (16.3.1839; transcribed in Chase, *Natal* 2, 1843, 71–72) alone has ‘Dutch Emigrant Farmers’.

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.* alone has ‘had stolen *from me*’ (our italics).

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.* alone has ‘resign unto him, *Retief*’ (our italics).

⁴⁹¹ The interpolated clause ‘(in reward of the Case hereabove mentioned)’, added after ‘Countrymen’, seems to be first attested in the Jeppe (likely 1839) and the Den Haag copies (1842).

the Togela⁴⁹² to the omsaboobo River,
and from the Sea to the north as far
as the Land may be useful and in my
Possession

Which I did by this and give
unto them for their everlasting Property.

(Signd) De merkin van
di Koning Dingaan
As Witness M Oosthuizen⁴⁹⁴
AC Greyling⁴⁹⁶
BJ Liebenberg⁴⁹⁷

As Witness
Signd)⁴⁹³
Nwara. G Raadn[?]
Julianus Do.
Manondu Do.⁴⁹⁵

The content of the land treaty is as simple as it is surprising. Because Retief had returned Dingane's cattle stolen by his enemy Sekonyela (discussed above), the Zulu king granted the Boer governor and his countrymen the British post of Port Natal and the whole of southern Natal, stretching from the Tugela to the Umzimvubu (Mzimvubu) rivers, and from the Indian Ocean to the Drakensberg. Dingane resigned this territory 'as far as the Land may be useful and in my Possession' to the Boers as 'their everlasting Property'. Considering the preceding negotiations between Retief, the Rev. Owen and the Zulu king, when Owen had reminded them of the prior grant of Natal to the British, it is indeed startling that Dingane rewarded the Boers with major parts of the area, and apparently for no other reason than that they had returned his cattle thieved by Sekonyela. It is particularly perplexing that the Boers became claimants to Port Natal, which seems tantamount to a declaration of war against the British currently occupying it. Most bewildering, however, is the incorrect year of the treaty, which dates the deed back to 1837, thus invalidating it on formal grounds. How this profound error could have happened is unfathomable and places either the original model or the scribe of the Cape Volksraad copy in a bad light. However, the date was of no interest to Charters (though he drily corrected it) as he rejected the treaty outright, arguing that Dingane was in no legal position to resign southern Natal let alone Port Natal over to the 'dutch Emigrant South Afrikans'. So any expectation that the treaty would legalise the Boers' right to settle in Natal and discourage the British from pursuing their own interests in this area – or underwrite the Boer demand for the return of their impounded ammunition – had failed from the very beginning.

⁴⁹² The Kew Volksraad copy has 'Togala'.

⁴⁹³ The 'mark' of Dingane and the signatures of the Zulu and Boer witnesses are by the same hand as the text of the treaty itself.

⁴⁹⁴ Marthinus Oosthuizen, 1791–1858 (Visagie 2011, 346), not to be confused with Marthinus Jacobus Oosthuizen (1818–97), who famously assisted the Van Rensburgs at Bloukrans, and may have been his son, as they both came from the farm Olifantshoek in Uitenhage and trekked in March 1837 (ibid.).

⁴⁹⁵ Naidoo (1985, 192–194) provides a helpful discussion about the difficulties with the names and signatures of the three Zulu witnesses.

⁴⁹⁶ Visagie 2011, 198.

⁴⁹⁷ Barend Johannes jr (ibid., 278–279).

10
[508]
Batavia 4th February
1837
A true
Copy

Know all men by this

That whereas Peter
Rietz Governor of the Dutch Emigrants
South Africans has retained my cattle
which Sinkonyella had stolen which
pathe he the said Rietz now delivers
unto me — I Dingaan King of the
Tobas do hereby certify and declare that
I thought fit to resign unto him the
said Rietz and his countrymen the place
called Port Natal together with all the
Land annexed, that is to say from
the Tugel to the Umsaboober River
and from the sea to the north as far
as the Land may be usefull and in my
opinion

which I did by this and give
unto them for their everlasting Pro-
perty.

(Sign) De Meester van
de Koning Dingaan
As witness
13 December 37
(Sign) As witness
Mwara L. Rietz
Julianus van
Mananda

[509]

*the certificate
 the first
 going in
 the day
 special was
 founded
 as by the
 bones of the
 late Mr.
 Retief in
 Dugaa's
 country.*

Certifieere dat deete vorrenskand
 een waare kopi is van het geen door ons
 gevonden is bij de gebente, van den
 overleedene heer Retief in Dugaa's
 Land

A. M. Pretorius
 hoof officier

J. P. Landman
 Commandant

G. D.

*I hereby certify that the above document
 is a true copy of the original made
 by Dugaa to the Imperial Farming and
 located on the mountain side of the Lake
 Retief in my presence by David Parker
 on the or about the 23 day of Decemr 1838*

D. Parker

Figure 12.15a–b: Cape Volksraad copy of Retief–Dingane treaty text and Pretorius, Landman and Parker certifications. 22.12.1838–9.1.1839. Model for Kew Volksraad copy, figs 12.16a–c (courtesy of NARSSA Cape Town GH 28/14 pp.508–509; photos Matthew Snyman)

Armesime No 5

100

A True Copy

Unkugiusloave 4. February
1837.

Know all men by this.

That whereas Pieter Retief
Gouverneur of the Dutch Emigrant
South Africans has retaken my
Cattle which Sinkonyella had
stolen which Cattle he the said
Retief now delivered unto me.
I Durgaan, King of the Soolas,
do hereby certify and declare that
I thought fit to resign unto
him the said Retief and his
Countrymen the place called
Post Natal, together with all the
Land annexed, - That is to say
from the Togala to the Oursaboo
River, and from the sea to the
North as far as the Land may
be useful and in my Possession.

Dated

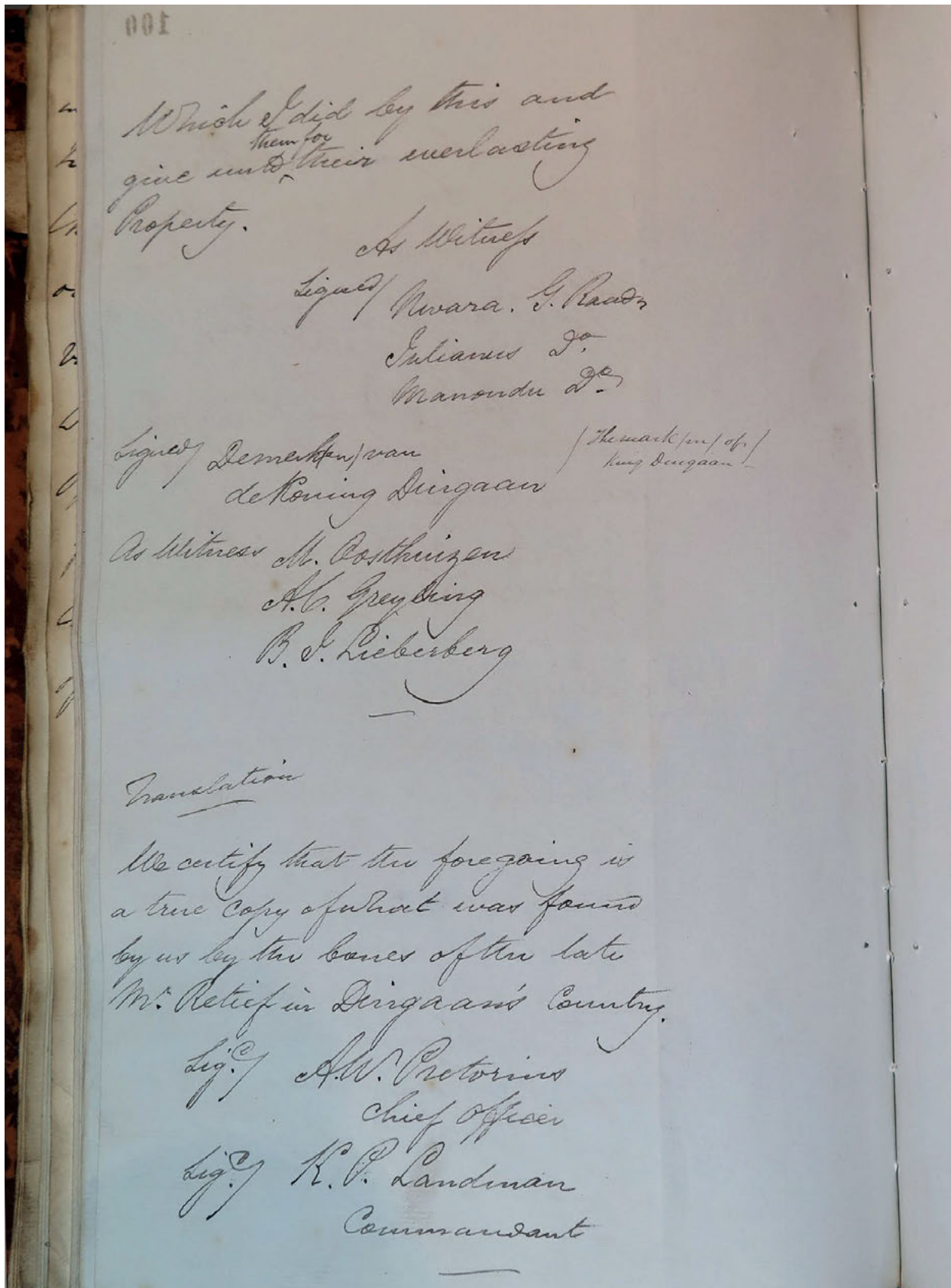


Figure 12.16a–b: Kew Volksraad copy of Retief–Dingane treaty text and Pretorius and Landman certifications. 22.12.1838–9.1.1839. Copy of Cape Volksraad copy (courtesy of NA Kew CO48/200/v2 pp.100–100r; photos the authors)

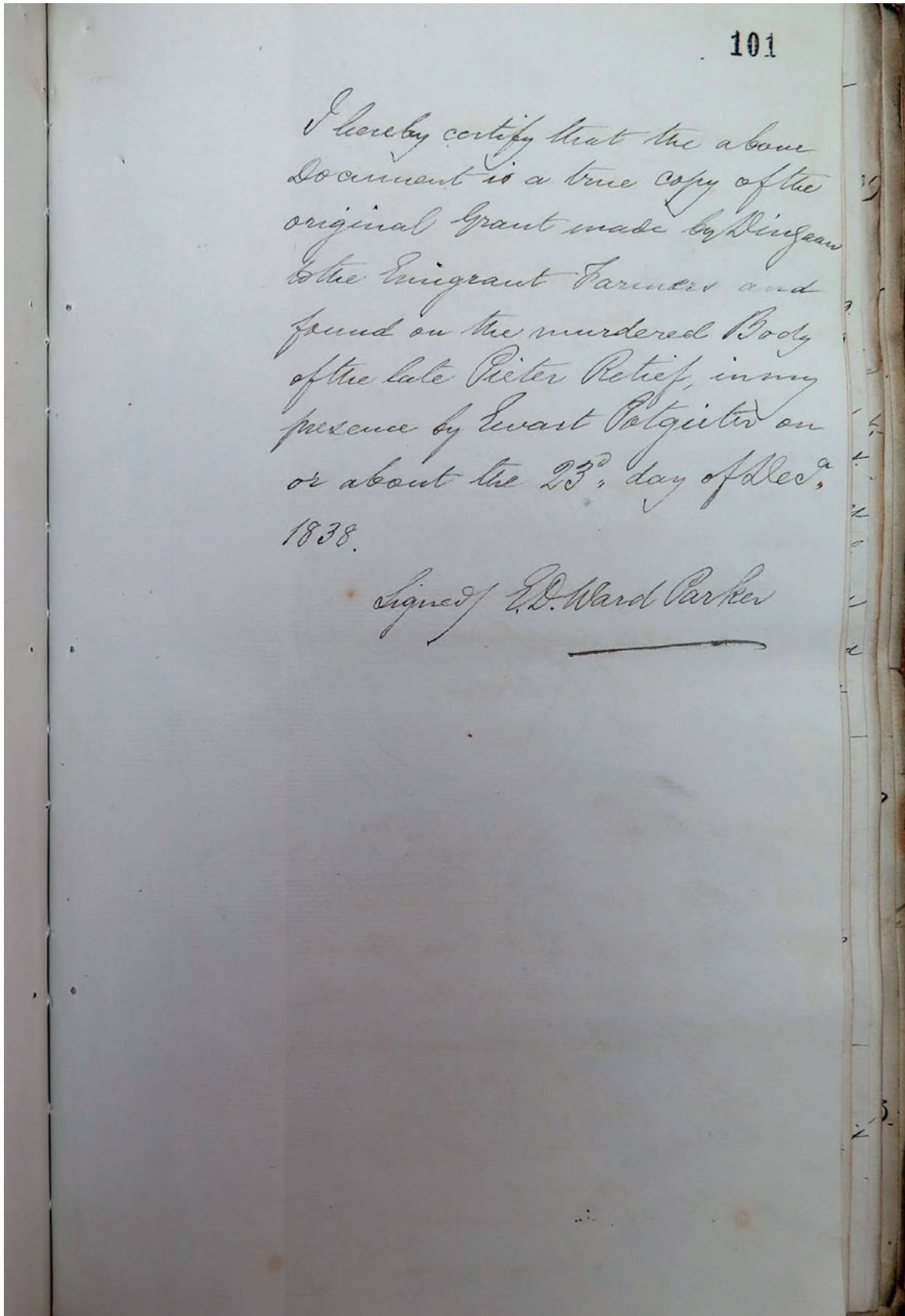


Figure 12.16c: Kew Volksraad copy of Retief–Dingane treaty text and Edward Parker certification. 22.12.1838–9.1.1839.
 Copy of Cape Volksraad copy (courtesy of NA Kew CO48/200/v2 p.101; photos the authors)

The certifications

As important as the treaty duplications are their certifications, usually added on the same page to emphasise their significance as evidence that they are true copies of the original treaty found at the bones of Retief, which has remained ever since curiously invisible and was never photographed.⁴⁹⁸ We are informed by the certification of *De Zuid-Afrikaan* copy (fig. 12.17) published on 16 February 1839 (see below) that those who discovered the papers alongside Retief's body handed them over directly to their chief-commandant Pretorius. He was probably the one who realised the significance of the document, and certainly the one who had it copied. It is an indication of how crucial the document was thought to be that two certifiers, not only Pretorius but also Commandant Landman, verified the duplications of the recently surfaced deed as 'literal copies', and asserted that the treaty was found with Retief's remains. Moreover, no fewer than three of their men signed *De Zuid-Afrikaan* document to certify that they had discovered it in Retief's leathern bag. In the case of the Kew and Cape Volksraad copies (figs 12.15a–b; 12.16a–c), only E.D. Ward Parker attests to its discovery by Swart Potgieter in his presence (and to the accuracy of the copy, which suggests that those present at the discovery may have read it). The main certification (figs 12.15b; 12.16b–c) is:

[Cape Volksraad copy]
 Certiveseere dat deeze voorenstaandaan [contract]
 een waare Copi is van het geen den door ons
 gevonden is by de gebeente van den
 overleedene heer retief in dingaans land.
 AW Pretorius / hoof offesier
 K.P. Landman / C D [Commandant]

This is translated in the left margin of the Cape Volksraad copy as follows, and transcribed in the Kew Volksraad copy.

We certify that the foregoing is a true Copy of what was found by us by the bones of the late Mr. Retief in Dingaan's country.
 ?d/ [signed⁴⁹⁹] A.W. Pretorius / Chief Officer
 ?d/ K.P. Landman / Commandant⁵⁰⁰

Pretorius and Landman, together with the Volksraad, were the main representatives who from 9 January 1839 used Dingane's land grant to promote the interests of the Voortrekkers in various negotiations with British officials. As further contemporary documents signed by K.P. Landman provide proof that his signature on the certification of the Cape Volksraad copy is genuine,⁵⁰¹ this probably also applies to the quite different signature of A.W. Pretorius, apparently a rare sample, as we could not find another one. The authentic signatures of both mark the outstanding importance of the Cape Volksraad copy.

Soon afterwards both commandants issued a much longer certification published in *De Zuid-Afrikaan* on 16 February 1839 (fig. 12.17), as the earlier one was obviously not considered sufficient for a public audience. It reads:⁵⁰²

⁴⁹⁸ See below, 'The Weinthal facsimile'.

⁴⁹⁹ The abbreviation is more clearly Sig.d/ in the transcription in the Kew Volksraad copy.

⁵⁰⁰ That the translation in the Cape Volksraad copy (Cape Town Archive Repository GH 28/14 p.509; Muller 1978, 58 fig. 27) is transcribed in the Kew Volksraad copy (NA Kew CO48/200/v2 p.100r; Eybers 1918, 148–149) provides further evidence of the first being the model for the second.

⁵⁰¹ Muller 1978, 74 fig. 22, 97 fig. 20.

⁵⁰² Dutch translation of the following (*De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 16.2.1839): 'Wy de Ondergeteekenden A.W.J. PRETORIUS en CAREL PIETER LANDMAN, certificeeren en verklaren mits dezen, dat het vorenstaande een letterlyk afschrift is van het origineele gevonden op den 21sten December II. [laatste], by de stad van DINGAAN, in een lederen zakje, tusschen andere papieren, by de beenderen van wylen RETIEF gelegd hebbende; – wy mede Ondergeteekenden HERCULES PRE-

We, the Undersigned, A.W. Pretorius and Carel Pieter Landman, hereby certify and declare, that the foregoing is a literal Copy from the Original, found, among other papers,⁵⁰³ on the 21st December last at the residence of Dingaan, in a leathern bag, laying by the bones of the late Retief. We, the joint Subscribers, Hercules Pretorius and P. du Preez, do likewise certify and declare, that we found the Document abovementioned by the bones of the late Retief, and which we knew by pieces of his clothes, the Document being among other papers in a leathern shooting bag, and which we delivered to the chief Commandant, Evert Potgieter being also present when we found it. We are ready to verify this our [sic] Certificate if required, on oath.

The 9th January, 1839.

(Signed) A.W.J. PRETORIUS, Chief Commandant,⁵⁰⁴ / C.P. LANDMAN, Commandant,⁵⁰⁵ / H. PRETORIUS,⁵⁰⁶ P.D. DU PREEZ,⁵⁰⁷ E.T. POTGIETER.⁵⁰⁸

This is by far the most elaborate certification we know. As it contains a number of details which were not addressed in the two certifications of the Cape and Kew copies, it needs further attention. Apart from the correct(ed) treaty date of 1838, *De Zuid-Afrikaan* certification mentions for the first time that the treaty was ‘found, among other [never specified] papers’, on ‘the 21st December last’, that these and the treaty were discovered ‘in a leathern bag, laying by the bones of the late Retief’ identified ‘by pieces of his clothes’, and that the undersigned ‘are ready to verify this our Certificate if required on oath’. Why the details were added and the numbers of undersigned enlarged to five, and why they finally offered, if requested, to swear an oath to validate their certificate, is difficult to answer. Evident, however, is that the public announcement of the finding of the land deed was spiced with particulars which were omitted in the official Cape and Kew Volksraad copies. Were these minutiae possibly meant to buttress the authenticity and legality of the treaty?

Another question is why the act of authentication was divided into two different issues. First Andries Pretorius and Karel Landman testify that *De Zuid-Afrikaan* copy (fig. 12.17) is a ‘literal copy’ from the original that had been found in a leathern bag lying next to Retief’s remains without specifying by whom. Then Hercules Pretorius, Pieter Daniel du Preez and Evert Frederik Potgieter validate the above and explain that it was actually they who found the deed and delivered it to Pretorius. In doing so they reinforce their commandants’ certification. But one could argue that *De Zuid-Afrikaan* copy is less likely than the Cape and Kew Volksraad transcriptions to have been a ‘literal’ duplication of the treaty because, as detailed in the footnotes above, it differs in significant particulars from them – the only two early treaty copies which share a verbatim relationship and do not correct the so obviously incorrect date of 1837 (figs 12.15a–b; 12.16a–c). Be that as it may, given the distances, the copies of the treaty may all have been sent out at the same time, although the

TORIUS en P. DU PEEZ [sic], certificeeren en verklaren mede, dat wy het geschrift hierboven gemeld gevonden hebben, by de beenderen van nu wylen den Hr. RETIEF, welke aan ons kenbaar waren door stukken zyner kleederen, en welk geschrift was tusschen andere papieren, in en lederen jagerzak, en door ons aan den Hoofd-Kommandant overgelyverd, en door EVERT POTGIETER, die ook toen wy het vonden, by ons was, – en wy zyn bereid, het gecertificeerde des vereischt wordende met eeden te staven. / Den 9 January 1839. / (Get.) A.W.J. PRETORIUS, Hoofd-Kommandant / C.P. LANDMAN, Kommandant. / H. PRETORIUS, / P.D. DU PREEZ, / E.F. POTGIETER.’

503 According to the American missionary David Lindley, one of these documents was his English translation of Retief’s letter to Dingane, originally drafted in Dutch (now evidently lost), dated 8.12.1838 and discussed above (fig. 12.12). Lindley’s translation (or a copy of it?) survived in a damaged state; kept in NARSSA (R14/37), ‘currently in the SS collection, Volume 1’ (email from Gerrit Wagener, 14.12.2018); see *Voortrekker argiefstukke* 1937, 21–24. It is said to have been ‘found on Retief’s body’. We gratefully acknowledge Gerrit Wagener’s help and his provision of photographs of the document. Muller (1978, 54–55, figs 17–18) states more plausibly but without reference that Lindley’s translation was ‘found, partially burnt, in Dingane’s capital’ and ‘later preserved among the papers of Andries Pretorius’.

504 For Pretorius, see *Arrival*.

505 Karel (Carel) Pieter Landman, 1796–1882 (Visagie 2011, 274); *DSAB* 3, 1977, 496–497.

506 Hercules Albertus (Bart) Pretorius, 1803–89, brother of A.W.J. Pretorius (Visagie 2011, 383).

507 Pieter Daniel Andreas Salomon du Preez, 1807/09–89 (*ibid.*, 159).

508 ‘E.T.’, obviously a typographical error, refers to Evert Frederik Potgieter sr, 1799/1800–63 (*ibid.*, 362–363), as the Dutch copy of the treaty confirms (*De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 16.2.1839).

**COPY OF THE DOCUMENT GRANTED BY DINGAAN
TO THE LATE RETIEF.**

[ORIGINAL.]

Unknukinglove, 4th February, 1838.

"KNOW ALL MEN BY THIS,

"That whereas PIETER RETIEF, Governor of the Dutch Emigrant Farmers, has retaken my Cattle which SINKONY-SELLA had stolen from me, which Cattle he the said RETIEF now delivered unto me: I, DINGAAN, King of the Zoolas, do hereby certify and declare, that I thought fit to resign unto him, RETIEF, and his Countrymen, the place called PORT NATAL, together with ALL the Land annexed: that is to say, from the Togeia to the Omsovoobo Rivers, Westward, and from the Sea to the North, as far as the Land may be useful and in my possession.

Which I did by this, and give unto them for their everlasting property.

Mark X of King DINGAAN.

Witnesses,

M. OOSTHUISEN,	MOARO X Great Counsellor.
A. C. GREYLING,	JULIAVIUS X do.
B. J. LIESENBERG,	MANONDO X do.

We, the Undersigned, A. W. Pretorius and Carel Pieter Landman, hereby certify and declare, that the foregoing is a literal Copy from the Original, found, among other papers, on the 21st December last at the residence of Dingaan, in a leathern bag, laying by the bones of the late Retief. We, the joint Subscribers, Hercules Pretorius and P. du Preez, do likewise certify and declare, that we found the Document above-mentioned by the bones of the late Retief, and which we knew by pieces of his clothes, the Document being among other papers in a leathern shooting bag, and which we delivered to the chief Commandant, Evert Potgieter being also present when we found it. We are ready to verify this our Certificate if required on oath.

The 9th January, 1839.

(Signed) A. W. J. PRETORIUS, Chief Commandant,	H. PRETORIUS, P. D. DU PREEZ,
C. P. LANDMAN, Com- mandant,	E. T. POTGIETER.

Togala River, Jan. 9, 1839.

Dear Sir,—I have the pleasure to communicate to you the continuation of my account touching our late Commando, having now returned to the great camp. My first letter, dated 22d December last, I still find here, so that you will receive it at the same time with this.—We all rejoice and feel grateful to God, and I have no doubt but many of you will participate therein.

Figure 12.17: De Zuid-Afrikaan copy of Retief–Dingane treaty. 22.12.1838–9.1.1839 (De Zuid-Afrikaan, 16.2.1839)

first reached the British a good month in advance of the release of the copy in *De Zuid-Afrikaan* on 16 February 1839. In the latter's heading the place 'Unkuginsloave' was changed to 'Unkinkinglove', the date '1837' silently corrected to '1838', and a number of phrases in the text were also modified. For example, the territorially defined 'dutch Emigrant South Afrikans' became the agriculturally focused 'Dutch Emigrant Farmers'; the statement 'Sinkonyella had stolen' was rhetorically reinforced as 'Sinkonyella had stolen *from me*' (our italics); 'to resign to the said Retief' was altered to the more expressive 'to resign unto him, Retief'; and finally the names of the Zulu witnesses, 'N/M[?]wara, Julianus [and] Manondu' mutated to 'Moaro, Juliavius [and] Manondo'. While some of the changes may have been editorial or the result of difficulties with Zulu names, the certification was entirely different, as will be discussed shortly, suggesting an entirely different transcription.

Curious also are the chronological details related to the publication of the first treaty copies. Pretorius wrote in a follow-up letter published in *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, dated 9 January 1839, without addressee (in all likelihood *De Zuid-Afrikaan*'s editor P.A. Brand): 'My first letter dated 22nd December last, I still find here, so that you will receive it at the same time with this.' In a post scriptum he informs Brand about the latest developments in Natal and the position of the Boers:

Major Charters is at Port Natal, with a detachment of Troops, he has taken TEMPORARY possession of the Bay, with a view to make peace between us and the Zoolas, which we will gladly do, if it can be effected with security to ourselves and by getting back the cattle not yet recovered. We [the Volksraad] have sent him [Charters] copies of some Documents relative to the land;⁵⁰⁹ we are not acquainted with his instructions, but whatever measures Government may find necessary to adopt, we hope they may not tend to compel us to penetrate farther into the interior. To ask us to return to the Colony, will be useless.⁵¹⁰

What caused Pretorius to delay sending his completed letter from 22 December with the triumphant news of the Boers' success at Blood River and the first copies of the all-important treaty for almost three weeks? Did this perhaps happen in reaction to the British who, on 3/4 December 1838 had taken possession of Port Natal under the command of Major Charters, the military secretary of the Cape governor, Sir George Napier⁵¹¹ – a place that was, as Pretorius knew since the discovery of the treaty, resigned by Dingane to the Boers? The delay gets an even sharper edge with the first reference to the treaty in the Rev. Smit's diary, who, even though he had spoken with Pretorius on 8 January when the commandant returned to the camp, and received from him a cow and calf from the uMgungundlovu plunder, apparently only had confirmation of the treaty the following day, 9 January 1839 – coincidentally the day on which diverse treaty copies were sent away (certainly Cape Volksraad, possibly also *De Zuid-Afrikaan*) – when he writes:

Today I received a return visit in my hut from the Commander General Pretorius. His Excellency allowed me to see the agreement that had been found in the pouch of the martyred and lifeless Governor, by Dingaan. I asked for an authentic copy in order to enter it here, but ... [I] could not obtain it today. I have however seen and read it.⁵¹²

The chronological coincidence suggests that Pretorius and the Volksraad were ready to release the first copy of the treaty on 9 January 1839, but evidently not before. This is reinforced by Smit's

509 Here 'We' refers to the Volksraad which on 9 January 1839 sent Charters a duplicate of the treaty (the Cape Volksraad copy) and three further letters which we discussed above ('Finding the treaty'). On the same day also Pretorius sent a reply to a letter the major had sent to him on 6 December that had intended to prevent a confrontation between the Boers and the Zulu (NA Kew CO48/200/v2 pp.96–97). Here the Boer emphasises that it was the Volksraad that had appointed him 'Commander in Chief of the Expedition against the Zoola chieftain' and that this Council will answer Charters' questions in detail; Retief and the treaty were in that communication not on Pretorius' agenda.

510 *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 16.2.1839 (reproduced in Chase, *Natal* 2, 1843, 72, and Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 456).

511 See *ibid.*, 428–429 (on 31 December 1838 Napier reported to the Secretary of State in London that on 3/4 December British troops had appropriated Port Natal as a military outpost to protect British interests).

512 Smit trans. Mears 1972, 161 (Dutch text: Smit ed. Scholtz 1988, 182–183).

earlier entries referring to news from Pretorius as far back as 25 December 1838, when he reported that during the morning service three men arrived from Pretorius' 'war camp' at uMgungundlovu. The minister announced 'that in the afternoon at 3 o'clock a thanksgiving service would be held in the church,' but when he 'heard and later understood that the information of the 3 men was by word of mouth, he postponed the thanksgiving until more certain written information shall have been received'.⁵¹³ Smit does not define the nature of the information, but this sudden change may indicate that the news (perhaps early rumours about the finding of Dingane's land treaty?) delivered by the three messengers was too sensitive to be celebrated in public without further confirmation. And in none of the entries preceding 9 January and written by Andries Pretorius to the Volksraad about incidents at and around uMgungundlovu is the land deed mentioned, although he writes of 'the bones of the unfortunate martyrs (of our Brothers together with those of the late His Honour the former Governor Mr P. Retief)'.⁵¹⁴

After 9 January, Smit brings the document up once more, on 22 January:

We have again today received a letter from Major Charters, dated 15th January 1839 [discussed above]: This contained nothing special in it other than His Excellency had received the letter of the Council [Raad] and the General Commander His Excellency, A.W.J. Pretorius in addition to a copy of the document of Dingaan and His Excellency Piet Retief ...⁵¹⁵

That Smit did not regard the delivery of the treaty document as being 'special' possibly indicates that at least he (and possibly also other Boers who were camping at the Tugela) already knew its content. But what is very surprising is that Charters does not appear to have heard about the treaty document earlier, as is evident in his report about the Boer operations, dated 5 January 1839, which, like Pretorius' earlier missives, did include the finding of Retief's skeleton:

The reports of the operations of the Boers have reached me in no very authentic form, and it is only by comparing different accounts and private letters that I can give it in an intelligible state ... On the 21st the Boers reached this town [uMgungundlovu], which Dingane had burned, and he and his people had retired more into the interior. The Boers had found here the bones of Retief and his party, and were still able to recognise them. On the day following they occupied themselves in burying these remains. Sunday. 23rd, they were still on the same ground ...⁵¹⁶

Also here silence speaks loudly. One can only surmise that Pretorius and the Volksraad had had reason to suppress news about the treaty, when Charters had been able to learn about the discovery of the remains of Retief and his men but not of this all-important find.

The second certification of the Cape and Kew Volksraad copies by E.D. Ward Parker reads (figs 12.15b, 12.16c):

I hereby certify that the above Document is a true Copy of the original Grant made by Dingaan to the Emigrant Farmers and found on the murdered Body of the late Pieter Retief, in my presence by Swart [Evert Frederik?] Potgieter on or about the 23d day of Decr. 1838.⁵¹⁷

Even if we assume that Parker, who wrote and signed the certification of the Cape Volksraad copy in his own hand,⁵¹⁸ was able to actually see the original, this did not qualify him to certify that his document was 'a true Copy of the original Grant' as it is unlikely that he would have had the

⁵¹³ Ibid. 153 (Dutch text: 174–175).

⁵¹⁴ Ibid. 153–161 (quote p.156; Dutch text: 174–183 [quote p.177]).

⁵¹⁵ Ibid. 164 (Dutch text: 185). For further speculation, see Preller, *Sketse* 1928, 208–209.

⁵¹⁶ NA Kew CO48/199/v1 pp.204, 205; Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 492.

⁵¹⁷ NA Kew CO48/200/v2 p.101 (transcribed in Eybers 1918, 148).

⁵¹⁸ His handwriting for the certification is comparable with a letter he wrote in Port Natal dated 20.7.1839, as is the signature, a closely aligned 'ED Ward Parker' (Muller 1978, 73 figs 12–13).

chance to study it in any detail – which leads to a further question: why of all people did Pretorius and Landman choose the Englishman Parker to verify not only the finding of the treaty but also the text as true? Was this possibly done, apart from his being a welcome foreign eyewitness, because he was, as an English speaker, able to read the treaty's language with ease? It was in many ways a poor choice as the wayward Parker was less likely to inspire confidence amongst the English than to be treated with suspicion and rebuked for his affiliations with the Boers and for taking part in the commando that defeated Dingane.

As argued above, the Cape and Kew Volksraad copies set the standard for all subsequent copies. Next in the chronological line of certified treaty duplications, apart from *De Zuid-Afrikaan* copy discussed above, are the Den Haag copy (fig. 12.18) sent by the Pietermaritzburg Volksraad to the Dutch king in 1842⁵¹⁹ and, without further contextual information, the undated 'Jeppe copy' in NARSSA.⁵²⁰

Two further significant duplications, the Weinthal facsimile (figs 12.20a–b) and the unpublished Pretoria copy (fig. 12.21), both kept in NARSSA too, are discussed separately as their story has its own complexity.⁵²¹ While the Den Haag and Jeppe copies follow the English text of the Cape and Kew copies, their certifications are now in Dutch. And while they were duplicated verbatim from the Cape and Kew Volksraad copies (apart from marginal differences in spelling and punctuation, additional people as certifiers, and the notable absence of A.W. Pretorius and K.P. Landman), both introduce a new clause that became part of the successive treaty copies we know. After Dingane declared 'I thought fit to resign unto him the said Retief and his Countrymen', the clause '(on reward of the case hereabove mentioned)' was added. This was evidently meant to reinforce the Boer interest in emphasising that the Zulu king signed the land grant for no other reason than that Retief had faithfully returned the king's cattle stolen by his adversary Sekonyela – an issue discussed above.⁵²² Hence our main focus is here on their certifications.

The Den Haag copy (fig. 12.18) can be dated, as it was sent in April 1842 by the Natal Volksraad to the king of the Netherlands, then William II. Its certification is based on that of *De Zuid-Afrikaan* copy but is significantly shorter.⁵²³

We certify that the annexed contract was found by us [the] undersigned with the bones of the late Mr. P. Retief in Dingaans' country on the 21[st] day of December 1838 in a leather hunting bag. If required, we are prepared to uphold this by solemn oaths.
(Signed) E.F. Potgieter / H Pretorius / P.D.J. du Preez
In accord with the Original. Jacs Johs Burger, Secretary.⁵²⁴

⁵¹⁹ Breytenbach c. 1958, 406 'Aanhangsel II. E.38, Republiek Natalia, no. 2 (attachment to a letter from the Pietermaritzburg Volksraad to the Dutch king, pp.399–405 Bylaag 3, 1842. G.H. 28/18, Annexure to Encl. 4 Desp. no. 116/1842); Muller 1978, 59 fig. 30. We failed to find this copy in NA Den Haag, despite the kind assistance of Rene Janssen.

⁵²⁰ Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 366 (for the archivist Jeppe see below). Regardless of the intensive help of Zabeth Botha (HF Archives) and Gerrit Wagener (NARSSA), we were not able to trace this copy's location and archival reference number in NARSSA, and had to rely on published versions. The only noteworthy difference to the Cape and Kew Volksraad copies here is that it repeated *De Zuid-Afrikaan* copy phrase 'resigned unto him, Retief,' instead of 'resigned unto him the said Retief'.

⁵²¹ See below, 'The Weinthal facsimile'.

⁵²² A subtext here is that the Boers accused Dingane of being dishonest because he had not returned the cattle the Zulu had previously taken from the trekkers.

⁵²³ The translation follows for the most part that of *De Zuid-Afrikaan* copy (*De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 16.2.1839; Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 366 n k).

⁵²⁴ 'Certificeere dat deeze omschreevene contract is gevonden door ons ondergetek by de gebeente van wylen den Heer P. Retief in Dingaans land op den 21 dag van December 1838 in een leedere Jager Zak indien vereyscht zyn wy bereyd dat met solemneele Eede te staaven. (Get.) E.F. Potgieter, H. Pretorius, P.D. du Preez. Accordeerd met het Orricineel. Jacs. Johs. Burger, Secs.' (Breytenbach c. 1958, 406). It is puzzling that Breytenbach (*ibid.*, 406 figs opp.) quotes the text of the Den Haag copy (of which a photograph is published in Muller 1978, 59 fig. 30) but illustrates it, without explanation, with one of the Weinthal facsimiles, which differs from it in three ways: first, it was written in a different hand (Muller 1978, 59 fig. 30); further, the certification of its discovery was signed by two additional Boers (Hercules

Unkūngsloave The 4th
February 1838.

Know all men by this that Whereas Peter
Retief Governor of the Dutch Emigrants
South of Natal has retaken my Cattle
which Inkozala had stolen which Cattle
to the said Retief not deliver unto me
I Dingane King of the Swolus do hereby
Certify and declare that I thought fit
to resign unto him the said Retief and
his Countrymen in reward of the Cattle
here above mentioned the Place Cal-
led Port Natal together with all the
land annexed that is to say from Dozcala
to the ombomboo Rivier westward and
from the Sea to the north as far as the
land may be useful and in my possession
which I did by this and give unto them
for their Everlasting property
als getuygen,

De Meke vanden van
de Koning Dingane
als getuyge
get / M. v. d. Hagen
A. C. Greyling.
B. F. Liebenberg.

Kwana — grote Land / Land
Julianus — —
manonda — —

Certificeere dat deke ombomboene
Contract is gevonden door ons ondergeteete.
by de geteente van Mylen den Heer P. Retief
in Dingane's land op den 21 dag van
December 1838. in een leedere Sager Laks
in dien verijocht Syn my bereygt dat met
Solemnnele lede te Staaken
get / J. P. v. G. J. J. v. G. J. J.
A. J. v. G. J. J. v. G. J. J.
A. J. v. G. J. J. v. G. J. J.
A. J. v. G. J. J. v. G. J. J.



Figure 12.18: Den Haag copy of Retief–Dingane treaty. 1839–42 (Muller 1978, 59 fig. 30)

As for *De Zuid-Afrikaan* copy, E(vert) F. Potgieter, H(ercules) Pretorius and P(ieter) D.J. du Preez certified on the same page as the treaty, though in different words, that they had found the treaty. But in contrast to *De Zuid-Afrikaan* copy there is no verification that the Den Haag treaty is ‘a literal copy from the original’, which Pretorius and Landman alone were entitled to do (we will pick up this point in our discussion of the Weinthal facsimile below). So, when the Den Haag copy was sent to the Netherlands, Jacobus Johannes Burger sr (1795–1849),⁵²⁵ then secretary of the Natal Volksraad, added a further certification in which he confirmed that the treaty is ‘in accord with the Original’ (Accordeerd met het Orricineel). But here Burger’s verification must surely refer to the Den Haag copy being a true reproduction of a handwritten treaty document, which, apart from the added clause, clearly duplicates the Cape and Kew Volksraad copies. It has to be questioned, however, why Potgieter, Pretorius and Du Preez omitted two details which they had verified in *De Zuid-Afrikaan* certification, that (unspecified) ‘other papers’ were found with the treaty and Retief identified ‘by pieces of his clothes’. Likewise puzzling is why the certification of this and the Jeppe copies were changed from English to Dutch. Does this perhaps demonstrate Dutch authority over the land cession written in English or, more simply, could it indicate that many Boers were not literate in English⁵²⁶ (and perhaps also Dutch recipients) and needed a certification in their native tongue? All we know is that the Den Haag copy was sent to the Netherlands in the hope of gaining the king’s support for the Boer farmers in Natal – though with no success.⁵²⁷

Another early copy is probably the Jeppe copy, which we name in honour of the archivist who had supplied it to John Bird for his 1888 *Annals of Natal*.⁵²⁸ Like the Den Haag copy, the Jeppe replication is qualified by two certifications. The first is a verbatim duplication of the Den Haag certification confirming that the ‘contract was found by us’, but then (as in subsequent certifications) it is verified by E.F. Potgieter alone,⁵²⁹ and an additional authentication asserts that it is ‘A true copy’ (Een ware copy). While its two certifiers, Jan Gerritze Bantjes and Johan Bern(h)ard Roedeloff (Rudolph) sr,⁵³⁰ were with Chief Commandant Pretorius at uMgungundlovu, neither the certification of *De Zuid-Afrikaan* copy nor any other source mentions that they were present at the moment the treaty was found, let alone empowered to issue such an endorsement. The addition does, however, assist us to date the Jeppe copy fairly accurately. Since Bantjes left Natal (Pietermaritzburg) in January 1840, it is more than likely that he and Rudolph had signed the certification no later than 1839 or the very beginning of 1840.⁵³¹

History of the original

Before we can tackle the two remaining copies, the Weinthal facsimile (figs 12.20a–b) and the Pretoria copy (fig. 12.21), we need to discuss whether the treaty between Dingane and Retief was ever signed. It is remarkable that the records from the three witnesses – the Rev. Owen, his young interpreter, William Wood (c. 1824–)⁵³² and Dingane’s cuspidor, Tununu ka Nonjiya, who provides quite com-

Potgieter and Pieter D.J. du Preez (ibid.) and, finally, it has no additional true copy verification by Jacobus J. Burger, secretary of the Volksraad.

⁵²⁵ DSAB 4, 1981, 66–67; Visagie 2011, 100.

⁵²⁶ This is possibly one of the reasons for *De Zuid-Afrikaan* publishing the treaty in a Dutch translation as well as English.

⁵²⁷ DSAB 4, 1981, 66.

⁵²⁸ ‘Mr. Jeppe ... [was] the custodian of the records in Pretoria’ (Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, i). For the Jeppe family in the Transvaal, see Carruthers 2003, 961–963.

⁵²⁹ It is likely that by the time the Den Haag copy was prepared not all the original signatories were available in Pietermaritzburg.

⁵³⁰ Visagie 2011, 432–433.

⁵³¹ DSAB 1, 1972, 52.

⁵³² DSAB 4, 1981, 897–898.

prehensive coverage of both the festivities and the slaughter of Retief and his men – do not report on the crucial signing of the treaty in any detail, and the last not at all.⁵³³ All we have about the treaty are two short notices. In 1840 Wood reported that, when Retief and his men arrived in uMgungundlovu, Dingane ‘gladly received the cattle’ the Boer took from Sekonyela, but that Retief had refused the king’s demand for the guns and horses.

With this Dingaan appeared satisfied, and shortly after, told them that the cattle should also be theirs; likewise promising them a piece of land extending from the Tugela to the Umzimvubu. Retief accepted his offer, and a treaty was signed between Dingaan on the one hand and the emigrant farmers on the other.⁵³⁴

As Wood’s account was published at a time when, as we argue above, it had been well publicised that a land treaty signed by Dingane had been found at his residence, it is possible that this story may have coloured his narrative.⁵³⁵ In fact, as we argue in *Murder of Retief*, the details of Wood’s recollections are questionable, as he included quotations of dialogues between Dingane, Zulu and Boers in uMgungundlovu, which he could not possibly have heard from his distant vantage point at Owen’s hut. In contrast to Wood’s description that the signing of the land treaty happened on 4 February 1838, Owen’s entry in his diary for 6 February 1838 states that no treaty was yet signed:

Two of the Boers paid me a visit this morning and breakfasted only an hour or two before they were called into Eternity. When I asked them what they thought of Dingarn, they said he was good: so unsuspecting were they of his intentions. He had promised to assign over to them the whole country between the Tugala and the Umzimvubu rivers, and this day the paper of transfer *was to be signed*.⁵³⁶

In line with Owen’s diary is the report of Tununu ka Nonjiya, Dingane’s inceku, the cuspidor later prominently portrayed in *Treaty*. As the king’s personal servant, he was present on the day the treaty was supposed to be signed, but did not mention it when he recounted to magistrate and historian James Stuart (1868–1942) a detailed report of Retief’s visit at uMgungundlovu. That he does not mention a treaty, let alone a ceremonial signing, seems a significant omission.⁵³⁷ Adding to the confusion are irreconcilable dates for the treaty itself, as the known copies are consistently dated 4 February, the day after Retief’s arrival in uMgungundlovu, when Owen states that it ‘was to be signed’ in his diary entry of 6 February.⁵³⁸ Compounding this uncertainty, the Cape and Kew Volksraad copies even have the wrong year, 1837 instead of 1838. There is also no eyewitness report as to whether the text of the treaty was fully drafted or by whom, or the circumstances of its signing, whatever the day. And when Owen, after the murder of Retief and his party, saw Dingane, the king ‘said it never was his wish that white people should build houses in his country. ... he had told them again and again ... however, they would not believe him: they would not take his No’.⁵³⁹ This does

⁵³³ Nathan’s (1937, 201) account of signing the treaty is fabricated.

⁵³⁴ Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 379 (according to *ibid.*, 376, first published by Wood in Cape Town, Collard & Co., 24, Heerengracht, 1840). Interestingly, Wood does not name Retief as a signatory, which matches the treaty copies.

⁵³⁵ The reference to ‘the emigrant farmers’ is used only in *De Zuid-Afrikaan* copy (16 February 1839) and no other known treaty duplication, which further supports the contention that Wood was writing with knowledge of that publication.

⁵³⁶ Owen ed. Cory 1926, 108 (our italics). Apart from the ‘very rare work’ (*ibid.*, Preface) of the *Church Missionary Record* (no. 10, October 1838, vol. 10), one of the earliest quotes of this passage was published by Boyce (1839, 154): ‘and this day the papers of transfer were to be signed’. See later Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 348 (with marginal adjustments of Owen’s text); Naidoo 1985, 189–190. Richard Brangan Hulley (also called Halley), Owen’s interpreter, who provides a brief report of what had happened on 6 April after his return to uMgungundlovu on 8 February (Kotzé 1950, 239), does not mention a treaty (Owen ed. Cory 1926, 177–178). Hulley published the 12-page-long pamphlet *Zululand under Dingaan: account of the Rev. Mr. Owen’s visit to Zululand in the year 1837* only in 1880.

⁵³⁷ *James Stuart Archive* 6, 260–261 (30.5.1903).

⁵³⁸ Owen ed. Cory 1926, 108; see Naidoo 1985, 192.

⁵³⁹ Owen ed. Cory 1926, 114.

not sound like the statement of a king who had recently ceded extensive territory to the Boers in a treaty – or indeed previously to the English.

A possible explanation to resolve these contradictions is offered in ‘The Weinthal facsimiles’ section below. As to the subsequent history of the treaty itself, its discovery, state of preservation, safe keeping and ultimate fate are shrouded in mystery, as explained especially by George Cory and Jay Naidoo.⁵⁴⁰ The history of the treaty commences with its discovery on 21 December 1838, certified on 9 January 1839 by Hercules Pretorius, Pieter D. du Preez and Evert F. Potgieter, who stated that they had found the treaty and handed it over to Andries Pretorius. Thus he alone was equipped with full power of disposal over this document. A further rare testimony of the treaty, cited earlier, is the entry in Smit’s diary for 9 January, reporting that Pretorius ‘allowed me to see the agreement’, although we cannot discount that Smit may well not have seen the treaty but a handwritten copy of it, disseminated by Pretorius on that day.

The next witness who reported he had seen the treaty (as opposed to the copies sent to Charters and Brand) was Henry Cloete, Her Majesty’s commissioner of the Natal territory, who wrote from Pietermaritzburg on 4 July 1843 to the Hon. J. Montagu, secretary to the government:

The first object of my enquiries was to ascertain the extent of the territory occupied de facto by the emigrant farmers ... On the first part, I have ascertained satisfactorily that when the Volksraad as now constituted was first established here, in the middle of the year 1838, they considered themselves as of right entitled to occupy and recognise, as belonging to the emigrant farmers, the extent of territory as conceded to them by the Zulu chief Dingaan, and as described in a document said to be signed by the chief and some of his counsellors, and found among the dead bodies of the unfortunate P. Retief and others who were butchered on the 6th February, 1838. It is somewhat singular that this document, *which I have seen in original*, should have been written in English (as I am informed) by the Rev. F. Owen, a missionary of the Church of England, at the time residing with Dingaan, and who appears to have acted both as interpreter and amanuensis on the occasion. An authentic copy of that document is hereunto annexed; and from all the enquiries I have made, from the respectable character of the witnesses who found and attested the document, from the superstitious feeling which seems to prevail among the Zulus not to touch anything belonging to the dead, and more particularly from the language in which that document has been written, there can exist no doubt as to the authenticity thereof. Under this grant, the emigrant farmers took possession immediately of the territory ... compromising an area of about 35,000 square miles ... and presenting (from the little I have seen) the most picturesque and fertile tract of land on the face of the globe.⁵⁴¹

Cloete’s account is not as clear as it seems and harbours a number of troubling errors, notably that Owen had written the treaty, and that he was interpreter on the occasion of its signing. We must also ask whether he was in fact looking at a handwritten duplication likely to have been based on the Cape Volksraad copy (fig. 12.15a–b) – for most people indistinguishable from a handwritten original. Finally, his statement that the ‘superstitious feeling which seems to prevail among the Zulu not to touch anything belonging to the dead’ is a shaky presumption. As George Cory astutely remarked in 1924, ‘Mr. Cloete heard and believed too much.’⁵⁴² In fact, many domestic objects and a significant number of rifles that belonged to the murdered Boers were found at uMgungundlovu – abandoned by the Zulu when they burnt down their residence to escape the Voortrekker commando. On 24 and 26 December 1838 the Boers auctioned ‘the booty from Dingane’ (de buit van Dingaan), mostly Boer items taken by the Zulu, especially all kinds of household goods and quite a number of guns, some probably taken from the dead at Bloukrans as well as those at uMgungundlovu.⁵⁴³ Long lists reference the names of the buyers and the prices they paid for these items, when

⁵⁴⁰ Naidoo 1985; Etherington 2001, 281–282.

⁵⁴¹ Bird, *Annals* 2, 1888, 202–203 (our italics). The annexed document is unfortunately missing here.

⁵⁴² Cory 1924, 4.

⁵⁴³ *Voortrekker argiefstukke* 1937, 32–48 (R.21/38 and R.22/38; quote p.32).

they could not be returned to their families. The ‘booty’ was probably a most welcome supplement to the commando’s depleted stock.

Also questionable is James Stuart’s report published in 1854. He stated that the land grant of Natal was not, as Cloete had claimed, ‘now (or ought to be) among the archives of the Colonial Office here’ (apparently in Pietermaritzburg),⁵⁴⁴ but

that the certificate of acquisition of Natal is in the right hands. The emigrants, beyond the Vaal River, have it. On the 2nd January 1852 Mr A.W.J. Pretorius had let me read it [the deed from Natal], and then I saw myself that it was written in English by the missionary Owen, and signed by him and the King Dingane with three of his captains, with a little cross, together with Retief and three of his fellow citizens.⁵⁴⁵

Compounding other common errors such as the attribution of authorship to Owen, Stuart claims that Retief had signed the treaty, when no known copies bear his signature. A clue to his source may be found in his subsequent statement that he sailed to England in August 1853 in the company of ‘Mr Richard Hallew [Hulley]’, the father of Richard Hulley, Owen’s interpreter.⁵⁴⁶ If this was Stuart’s source, it was much later and at second hand, and made even more problematic by the fact that the younger Hulley was not present at uMgungundlovu on the day of Retief’s murder. The untrustworthiness of Stuart’s account leaves one wondering whether his statement about the treaty’s whereabouts is reliable. But in 1876 Hofstede too thought it was in the ZAR, saying that he ‘believed that the original treaty was kept in the archives of the Transvaal Government’.⁵⁴⁷ Preller had no doubt that in 1886 the document was in the possession of a certain A. Schmidt, who entrusted it with other early Boer state papers to the then secretary of the ZAR. But if that was the case, why was John Bird unable to include the original treaty in his 1888 *Annals of Natal*, only ‘a certified copy of the original, supplied to the Compiler by Mr. Jeppe’ – whose ‘valuable assistance’ as ‘the custodian of the records in Pretoria’ Bird gratefully acknowledged?⁵⁴⁸

Significant in the history of the treaty is Preller’s assertion, though without supporting reference, that around June 1900 the original was sent with other unspecified ‘staatspapiere’ (state documents) from British-occupied Pretoria to ‘dr. Leyds ... in Holland’.⁵⁴⁹ However, he states that the treaty never arrived at its destination and has been lost ever since.⁵⁵⁰ If the land grant was indeed sent to Leyds, the address should have been Brussels, Leyds’ residence at the time. Dr Willem Johannes Leyds (1859–1940)⁵⁵¹ was a distinguished Dutch jurist and high-ranking politician in the service of ZAR, characterised as ‘President’s [Kruger] right-hand man in the administration, as well as in internal and foreign politics’.⁵⁵² His last appointment, from May 1898 to May 1902, was ‘Ambassador Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary’ of the Transvaal Republic, who had accredited himself ‘to the governments of France, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and

544 Cloete 1899, 110.

545 ‘... de koop-akte van Natal is in de regte handen. Op den 2den Januarij 1853 heeft de heer A.W.J. Pretorius mij die [koop-akte van Natal] laten lezen, en toen heb ik zelf gezien, dat ze in het Engelsch geschreven was door den zendeling Owen, en door hem en den Koning Dingaan met drie zijner kapiteins, ieder met een kruisje, mitsgaders door Retief en drie zijner medegezanten onderteekend’ (Stuart 1854, 217–218).

546 ‘Van 12 Junij tot 17 Augustus 1853 heb ik van de Kaap de Goede Hoop naar Engeland gereisd met den heer Richard Hallew, die mij verzekerde, dat zijn zoon, ook Richard genaamd, tijdens den moord van Retief en de zijnen, de tolk en gewoon bediende was van den zendeling Owen, die aan het hof van Dingaan resideerde ...’ (Stuart 1854, 218).

547 Hofstede (1876, 38 n *): ‘Wij menen, dat het origineele verdrag zich bij de archieven van het Transvaalsche Gouvernement bevindt.’ See Preller 1924, 52 (providing the wrong date of Hofstede’s publication and a more colloquial wording of Hofstede’s text).

548 *Annals of Natal* 1, 1888, i (second quote), 366 (first quote).

549 Preller, *Sketse* 1928, 217.

550 Ibid.

551 *DSAB* 3, 1977, 516–520.

552 Ibid., 517.

Portugal', with headquarters first in The Hague, and after October 1898 in Brussels.⁵⁵³ In July 1900 the ZAR Executive Committee entrusted to his care and personal control 'the funds of the Transvaal Republic in Europe'.⁵⁵⁴ When the ZAR ceased to exist (31 May 1902), Leyds moved back to The Hague and 'retained control not only of the secret funds of the former republic, but of the important archival heritage of the embassy, consulates and other well-disposed bodies'.⁵⁵⁵ Why the treaty was not entrusted to Leyds personally with other state documents before he left for Belgium is puzzling, and even more so is a decision to risk sending a crucial document to Europe in the midst of the Anglo-Boer War. If this story is true, it is hardly surprising that the treaty was lost.

After close inspection of the conflicting evidence and the crucial discovery that the missionary Owen, long considered the writer of the treaty,⁵⁵⁶ had not drawn up the document,⁵⁵⁷ the historian George Cory concluded in 1923 that the treaty must be a forgery,⁵⁵⁸ fabricated ten months after the murder of Retief as concrete proof of the Boers' right to settle in Natal.⁵⁵⁹ And Cory underlined in 1924 that 'I cannot yet divest myself of the opinion that the treaty is written by a Dutchman and with a view to its being read by some Englishman in authority who would not know Dutch'.⁵⁶⁰ As Naidoo interprets Cory's argument, it was done because 'the trekkers knew from bitter experience that their every act against the Africans would be negatively construed by the London Missionary Society and the British Government' and wanted evidence of a negotiated claim to the land rather than asserting ownership solely by conquest.⁵⁶¹ Cory's contention instigated a polemical debate, especially in Afrikaner circles where his line of reasoning was fiercely rejected.⁵⁶² Although Cory said in a conciliatory gesture in 1924 that if he had caused offence, 'I wish now to express my regret,' he held his ground as a historian in the subsequent sentence, 'But I do not see how one can work impartially at historical matters without, at times, running the risk of going counter to some sentiment or other.'⁵⁶³

The Weinthal facsimiles

The history of the treaty, as fragmented as it is, provides the necessary framework to focus on the last two treaty documents in the string of copies, the Weinthal facsimile (figs 20a–b) and an unusual copy in the National Archives in Pretoria (fig. 12.21). The early dissemination of treaty copies was greatly multiplied when Leo Weinthal (1865–1930)⁵⁶⁴ – a trained photographer, who joined the surveyor-general's department in Pretoria as the state lithographer in 1889, and was a stout supporter of the Kruger government – produced in 1891 his widely acknowledged facsimiles of what he believed

⁵⁵³ Ibid., 518.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid., 518–519.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid. NA Den Haag keeps substantial files of W.J. Leyds, i.a. his archives (reference no. 2.21.105) and documents related to the Netherlands Embassy, then in Cape Town.

⁵⁵⁶ Owen's alleged authorship was already mentioned, for example, by Cloete in 1843; see Bird, *Annals* 2, 1888, 202; Naidoo 1985, 192.

⁵⁵⁷ When in the early 1920s Cory was editing Owen's diary, he concluded that the English syntax and spelling, as well as the handwriting, excluded the possibility that the missionary had drawn up the treaty (see Naidoo 1985, 189–190), a finding also conceded in Cory, Preller and Blommaert 1924 and Preller, *Sketse* 1928, 192–196.

⁵⁵⁸ Public address to the South African Association for the Advancement of Science in Bloemfontein; see *The Cape Times*, 12 July 1923 ('Retief-Dingane treaty'); Naidoo 1985, 188–189.

⁵⁵⁹ For the debate about the (possible) authorship of the treaty by Jan Gerritze Bantjes, see Naidoo 1985, 200–201.

⁵⁶⁰ Cory 1924, 10.

⁵⁶¹ Naidoo 1985, 190.

⁵⁶² Cory, Preller and Blommaert 1924; Naidoo 1985, 190–206. It was a topical enough issue to warrant a lengthy article, 'Die Retief-Dingane-ooreenkoms', by Professor Dr W. Blommaert, in the popular *Die Huisgenoot*, September 1923, 205–210.

⁵⁶³ Cory 1924, 12.

⁵⁶⁴ *DSAB* 1, 1968, 871–872.

to be the original treaty.⁵⁶⁵ Ever since, by the compelling power of reproduction, and the fact that it provided the first disseminated visual reproduction of the document, the Weinthal facsimile has become a widely affirmed icon of the original text. Indeed, most people regarded it as the only true copy of the lost treaty document, although its date and history remain unsettled.

The wide dissemination of the facsimiles is attested to in an unpublished Fiji copy of 1891 (fig. 12.19) at NARSSA. Mounted in a long frame, the treaty is presented with a rather surprising label:

This Document, after being for some years in the Fiji Museum at Suva, was presented to the Government of the Union of South Africa by the Museum Committee.⁵⁶⁶

Although this is all we know about this facsimile, for our study the Fiji document is remarkable for two reasons. It demonstrates how far and to what remote locations the Weinthal facsimiles travelled, in this case some 14 200 kilometres to the east. And close inspection reveals that its foolscap paper has two watermarks: the higher one shows, although hardly visible, a seated figure of Britannia, and the other the date of manufacture, '1830', which is given in large figures and clearly visible beneath the treaty's last sentence. The first genuine facsimile-photo-reproduction of the treaty made by Weinthal shows the latter watermark only, here not beneath but in line with the treaty's last sentence, although the missing figure of Britannia may not be visible simply because of the low-quality illustration in *Ooreenkoms*.⁵⁶⁷ Both copies clarify that, when Weinthal duplicated the 'original' treaty in 1891, foolscap paper with the Britannia watermark, distributed in the British colonies since c. 1800, was still around, including paper dated 1830.

To understand the Weinthal facsimiles fully, we need to begin some thirty years later when, in reply to Cory's considered arguments against the validity of the facsimiles, Weinthal explained how he had gone about making them, in his article 'The Dingaans-Retief treaty. Mr. Weinthal's view. Original being searched for', in the *Pretoria News* of 29 August 1923:⁵⁶⁸

I well remember the tremendous trouble I had to convince Pres. Kruger to allow me to reproduce the old parchment treaty, which we found in a leather satchel in the basement of the Government Buildings. The President told me that the leather bag was found on the bones of Retief at Dingaan's Kraal after the victorious battle of Blood River. I traced the treaty myself wi[t]h much difficulty, as near to the original writings as possible. Had the document been in a proper condition, we would have reproduced it by photo-lithography, but this was impossible at the time, neither did we then half-tone blocks in the Transvaal, which was first done in 1894 or 1895.

I have personally not the slightest doubt that this original was the genuine treaty.

... I am sure that Lex Goldman and Mr. Morkel – formerly of Dr. Leyd's [sic] office – will remember the document [the treaty] well. If I remember rightly, it was the late Mr. van Vouw [sic] (father of the sculptor [Anton van Wouw]) who showed it to us and handed it over to me for tracing, by special permission of the State President. We lithographed 3,000 copies and they went world wide.⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁶⁵ Good illustrations are provided by Leyds 1906, opp. p.46 (treaty text and Potgieter certificate); Preller 1924, 57 pls 1, 9–12 (with reproductions of several facsimiles).

⁵⁶⁶ Label of mounted copy in NARSSA. As the 'Union of South Africa' is mentioned it must have come into NARSSA (Pretoria) any time between 1910 and early 1961. We are grateful to Gerrit Wagener of NARSSA who brought this copy to our attention and kindly provided us with a photograph.

⁵⁶⁷ Preller 1924, 55 pl. 10.

⁵⁶⁸ *Pretoria News* was launched by Weinthal in 1898 (<https://www.pressreader.com/south-africa/pretoria-news/20180206/281668255425226>).

⁵⁶⁹ *Pretoria News* 29.8.1923, p.5. Preller (1924, 48) and Preller (*Sketse* 1928, 212) quote short sections of this article.

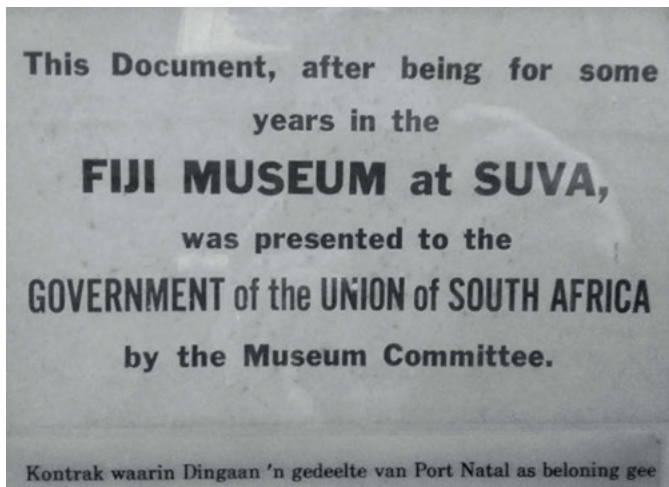
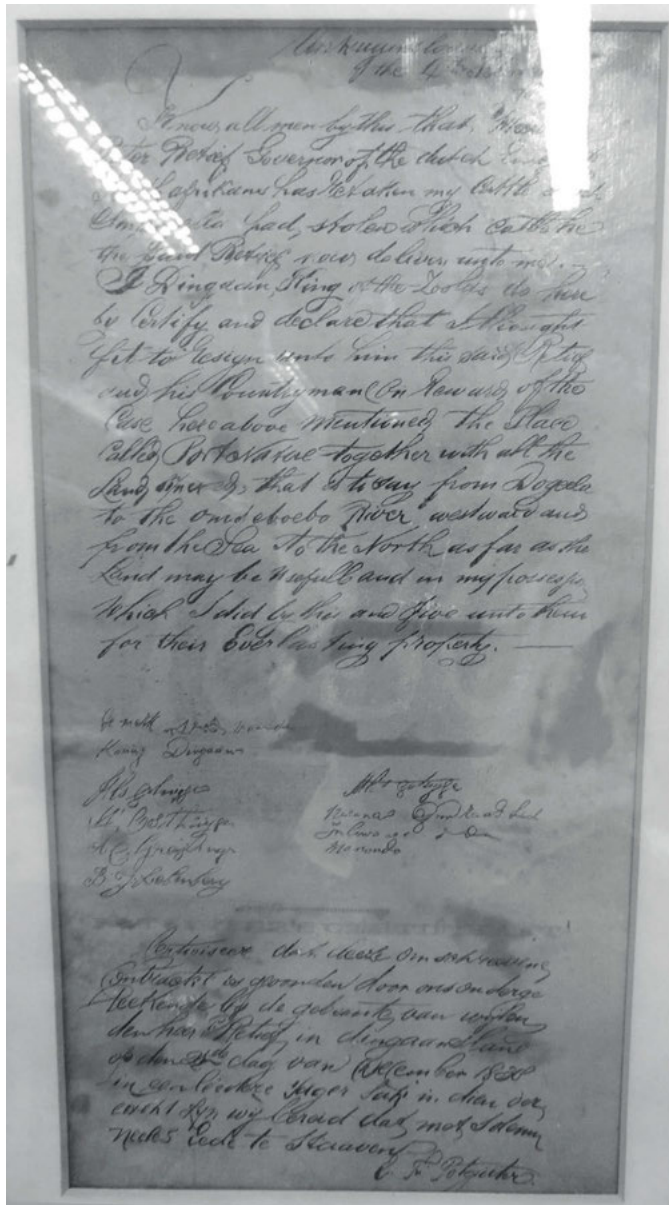


Figure 12.19: Fiji copy of Retief-Dingane treaty. 16.5.1891 (courtesy of NARSSA; photo Gerrit Wagener)

Winkuginsloover
 of the 4th February
 1836.

I now all men by this that Whereas
 Pieter Retief Governor of the Dutch Emigrants
 South Africans has released my Cattle which
 Sinkoyella had stolen which Cattle he
 the said Retief now delivers unto me.
 I Dingaan, King of the Zoolas as here
 by Certify and declare that I thought
 fit to resign unto him the said Retief
 and his Countryman on account of the
 Case hereabove mentioned, the Place
 called Port Natal together with all the
 Land annexed, that is to say from Sinkoyella
 to the Omagboebo River westward and
 from the Sea to the North as far as the
 Land may be useful and in my possession
 which I did by this and give unto them
 for their Everlasting property. —

Je metk ~~in~~ vande
 Koning Dingaan

A. G. G. G.
 M. C. C. C.
 A. C. G. G.
 B. J. Liebenberg

H. G. G.
 K. G. G. G. G. G. G.
 J. L. G. G.
 M. G. G. G.

Dutch of
 Orange

Figure 12.20a: Weinthal facsimile of Retief–Dingane treaty. 16.5.1891 (Leyds 1906, foldout opp. p.46)

Certifieere dat deese omschreuen
 Contract is gevonden door ons onderge-
 tekende bij de gemeente van capen
 den heer. Retief in Dingaan's land
 op den 25^{de} dag van December 1838
 in een besolere Jager Hut in dien ver-
 ewyk Lyn wy bereid dat met Solem-
 neke Eede te Staaven
 O. F. Potgieter

Figure 12.20b: Potgieter certification on the Weinthal facsimile of Retief–Dingane treaty. 16.5.1891 (Leyds 1906, foldout opp. p.46)

Weinthal lucidly explains that his reproduction was, in fact, not a facsimile in the true sense, but a tracing by his own hand, ‘as near to the original writing as possible’,⁵⁷⁰ then reproduced lithographically. Cory concluded that Weinthal’s clarifications about his facsimile had made the fierce debate about whose handwritings could be identified on the facsimile obsolete as we have only the handwriting of the copyist:

It has been suggested that these facsimiles – namely, the one in Dr. Leyd’s [sic] book and that in the Archives of Pretoria are really not facsimiles of the original but facsimiles of a copy or copies of it. If this be the case then there is little to be said, and it is vain to draw any conclusion from the handwriting or to compare the signatures on the treaty with the undoubtedly genuine signatures of these same people on other documents. We should be dealing with the handwriting of the copyist and not with that of the writers of the original. Now, what is meant by the word ‘copy’? It may mean merely the transcription verbatim of the words of a document in the handwriting of the individual who copies it, or it may be a facsimile copy in the sense I have already mentioned.⁵⁷¹

Weinthal published his ‘facsimile’ on 16 May 1891 in *The Weekly Press Edition*, Pretoria (edited by him after 1893),⁵⁷² which was given added status by its publication in Willem Johannes Leyds’

⁵⁷⁰ See, in contrast to Preller (*Sketse* 1928, 210–215 ‘Die faksimilees’), Cory’s elegant, but in substance profound scepticism, about Weinthal’s approach to achieve the ‘facsimile’ (Cory 1924, esp. 2, 6–7, 11–12).

⁵⁷¹ Cory 1924, 6.

⁵⁷² Preller 1924, 47, 55 pl. 8: ‘Photographic facsimile of an article in *The Press Weekly Edition*, d.d. 16 May 1891. Here Leo Weinthal presents a valuable description of the original document, of which he had recently produced a facsimile’ (Fotografiese faksimile van ’n artikel in ‘The Press Weekly Edition,’ d.d. 16 Mei 1891. Leo Weinthal gee hier ’n waardevolle beskrywing van die oorspronklike dokument, wat hy kort tevore nagetrek had).

1906 book *The first annexation of the Transvaal* (fig. 12.20a–b).⁵⁷³ The same *Weekly Press* ‘also distributed a number of loose examples of it to Volksraad members, top officials, and others’.⁵⁷⁴ This article gained new significance when, in 1924, Preller published not only an illustration of the text of that article, and of the handwritten Potgieter certification,⁵⁷⁵ but also a ‘portrait [photograph] of the first genuine facsimile-photo-reproduction of the Treaty, (the date is unfortunately cut-off). In the lower part of the treaty is shown the watermark-year (1830)’.⁵⁷⁶ The text of the Weinthal certification follows verbatim that of the Den Haag (fig. 12.18) and Jeppe copies,⁵⁷⁷ but the certification is signed by E.F. Potgieter alone as in the Jeppe copy. Weinthal argued that he could not have reproduced the ‘original’ by the non-invasive technique of photolithography because the document was not in ‘proper condition’, but fails to explain what he meant by this. And it is perplexing that he, a trained photographer, did not provide a single photograph of the precious document he used for his facsimiles to promote the treaty’s circulation worldwide.

When the Weinthal facsimiles were made public in 1891, it was with the article ‘The story of Retief’s Treaty’.⁵⁷⁸ The date of this issue was well chosen, the very day on which the remains of Pretorius – buried on 23 July 1853 at Grootplaats, Rust-der-Ouden, Magaliesberg near Pretoria – were ‘reinterred with great ceremony in the Old Cemetery in Pretoria’.⁵⁷⁹ It is in this context, related to Pretorius and his pivotal role in the discovery of the treaty, that Weinthal in *The Press Weekly Edition* reports:

As the Retief-treaty is one of the most sacred State-documents of the Transvaal, a short description will be interesting. The document was found in a satchel on the bones of Retief in a blue woven envelope (now) bearing the following inscription:

Cession of Natal by Dingaan to Piet Retief and his burgers, 4th February, 1838.

The cession itself is written on blue woven foolscap and is folded in four.

The watermark in the paper is very distinct, being on one page the makers’ trademark, representing Britannia, whilst on the other side appears the date of manufacture, namely 1830. The writing is thoroughly legible, and here and there dark stains of what must have been Retief’s blood appear.

This is the only description which provides some physical features of a treaty document, namely that it is ‘written on blue woven foolscap’,⁵⁸⁰ ‘thoroughly legible’, ‘folded in four’, distinguished by the watermarks of ‘Britannia’ on the one side and ‘the date of manufacture ... 1830’ on the other, ‘and here and there [discoloured by] dark stains of what must have been Retief’s blood’. Without expert analysis it would have been impossible to confirm the precise character of the paper and

⁵⁷³ Leyds 1906, 46 n * (ob- and reverse): ‘This document, of which a *fac simile* [sic] is given on the opposite page, was found intact in a wallet on Retief’s body when the Boers occupied Dingaan’s Kraal on December 21, 1838. In after years it was kept with the wallet among the archives of the South African Republic.’ For Leyds, see Van Niekerk 2004; from *DSAB* (1, 1968, 872) we learn that Weinthal had ‘incurred the enmity of Dr. W.J. Leyds’.

⁵⁷⁴ Breytenbach c. 1958, 406 n 6.

⁵⁷⁵ Preller 1924, 47: ‘In *The Press Weekly Edition* of 16 May 1891, on p.19, a facsimile reproduction of the treaty is shown, and on p.20 a consistent reproduction of the Potgieter-certification, – the first of its kind which I know’ (In *The Press Weekly Edition*, d.d. 16 Mei 1891, op bl. 19, kom voor ‘n natrek reproduksie van die traktaat, en op bl. 20 ‘n gelijksortige weergawe van die Potgieter-sertifikaat, – die eerste van die aard wat aan mij bekend is).

⁵⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pl. 10: ‘Portret van die eerste regstreekse natrek-foto-reproduksie van die Traktaat, (die datum werd ongelukkig afgesny). In die onderste deel van die traktaat is die watermark-jaar (1830) te sien.’

⁵⁷⁷ There are only marginal differences in the spelling of names.

⁵⁷⁸ See Preller 1924, 47–48, 61 pl. 8.

⁵⁷⁹ *DSAB* 2, 1972, 565.

⁵⁸⁰ Foolscap stands not for paper quality but size (the traditional writing ‘folio’ is 8 × 13 in = 203.2 × 330.2 mm), referring to its early watermark, a fool’s cap. Around 1795 it was replaced by the seated figure of Britannia and this became the standard writing paper in British territories. See Kathryn Kane: <https://regencyredingote.wordpress.com/2008/10/31/oh-foolish-foolscap/>.

the dark stains, which conflict with the descriptions of the pristine document reported in 1839. But as noted above, the Fiji document, one of the facsimiles, has the same two watermarks. This conformity can only mean that Weinthal had either reproduced or had access to paper with these watermarks and used it for a number of his facsimiles.

The unpublished Pretoria copy – kept for many years locked in a safe in the NARSSA vault, but kindly made accessible to us by archivist Gerrit Wagener to study in early 2018 (fig. 12.21)⁵⁸¹ – follows not only the same wording but also shows the same handwriting as the Weinthal facsimiles. Although undated, the nature of its handwriting places the Pretoria document prior to the facsimiles, because it is implausible that the Pretoria document reproduced the replicated handwriting of the facsimile. We argue further that the same calligraphic handwriting in two different documents which copy either an original or another copy is quite rare as scribes customarily use their own handwriting. Hence the exceptional handwriting, physical condition and extraordinary safekeeping make this document one of the most interesting ‘copies’ of the treaty series. It is also the only treaty duplication we know without an added certification. The paper was folded three times, once vertically and twice horizontally, and the woven foolscap shows numerous brownish, reddish and beige fibres; while large parts of the margins are intact, the fabric is significantly damaged at the upper and lower right corners, the right margin and in two areas of the text. The text of the treaty and the names of the signatories are written in the same purplish ink, though with an uneven effect, which has made the individual words appear either faded or intense, as if the writer had dipped the pen in the ink inconsistently. The signatures of Greijling and Liebenberg are oddly spidery. The same handwriting and the verbatim treaty text, as well as the age, the delicate condition and its safekeeping in Pretoria make the Pretoria copy a prime candidate to be the ‘original’ of the Weinthal treaty facsimiles. But this possibility is weakened because the document does not fully comply with Weinthal’s description as the colour of the foolscap and the way it is folded seem to be different and the photograph does not show watermarks. It is a conundrum which we cannot resolve, but the foolscap size and the same calligraphic handwriting are powerful arguments for a close relationship between the Pretoria copy and the Weinthal facsimile. There seems little doubt that the Pretoria copy is an early duplication, perhaps already written like the verbatim Jeppe copy around 1839. And its particular safekeeping in NARSSA suggests that here it may have achieved even the status of the original.

A key question for us is why in the late nineteenth century Weinthal was so keen to make his facsimiles and distribute three thousand copies worldwide, as attested by the Fiji copy. It might provide an explanation that Weinthal’s efforts occurred in the aftermath of the first war of independence won by the Boers, whose new national awareness and ascendancy might have been reinforced by such prior achievements. It also suggested perfidious behaviour by the British in their colonisation of southern Africa when they overrode Boer rights to Natal, as had again been attempted in the ZAR. There may even have been the hope, in the heady atmosphere of victory over the British, that claims to Natal might be revisited.

Apart from demonstrating the Boers’ agency in the dissemination of their land rights, the close analysis of the early treaty copies provides insights into a number of other issues. It is clear that the copies rapidly substituted the treaty, and might have been often understood to be the original or at least of the same credibility. As argued above, the copies had been produced to emphasise political issues such as the Boers’ right to South African land and their willingness to negotiate it peacefully with black people – also to non-Afrikaner audiences. At a time when so many seem to have believed in Dingane’s land cession, the factual presence of the original became more and more irrelevant. It was the many handwritten and certified copies which served to keep the original alive and gave it an almost mythical status. Compounding the confusion for later scholarship is the fact that since

⁵⁸¹ Gerrit Wagener of NARSSA informed us in an email of 27 June 2018: ‘Some other records around the Treaty is in the State Secretary Collection [which we were not able to visit] so that is why my guess is that it might have been removed from that collection, but I might be wrong.’

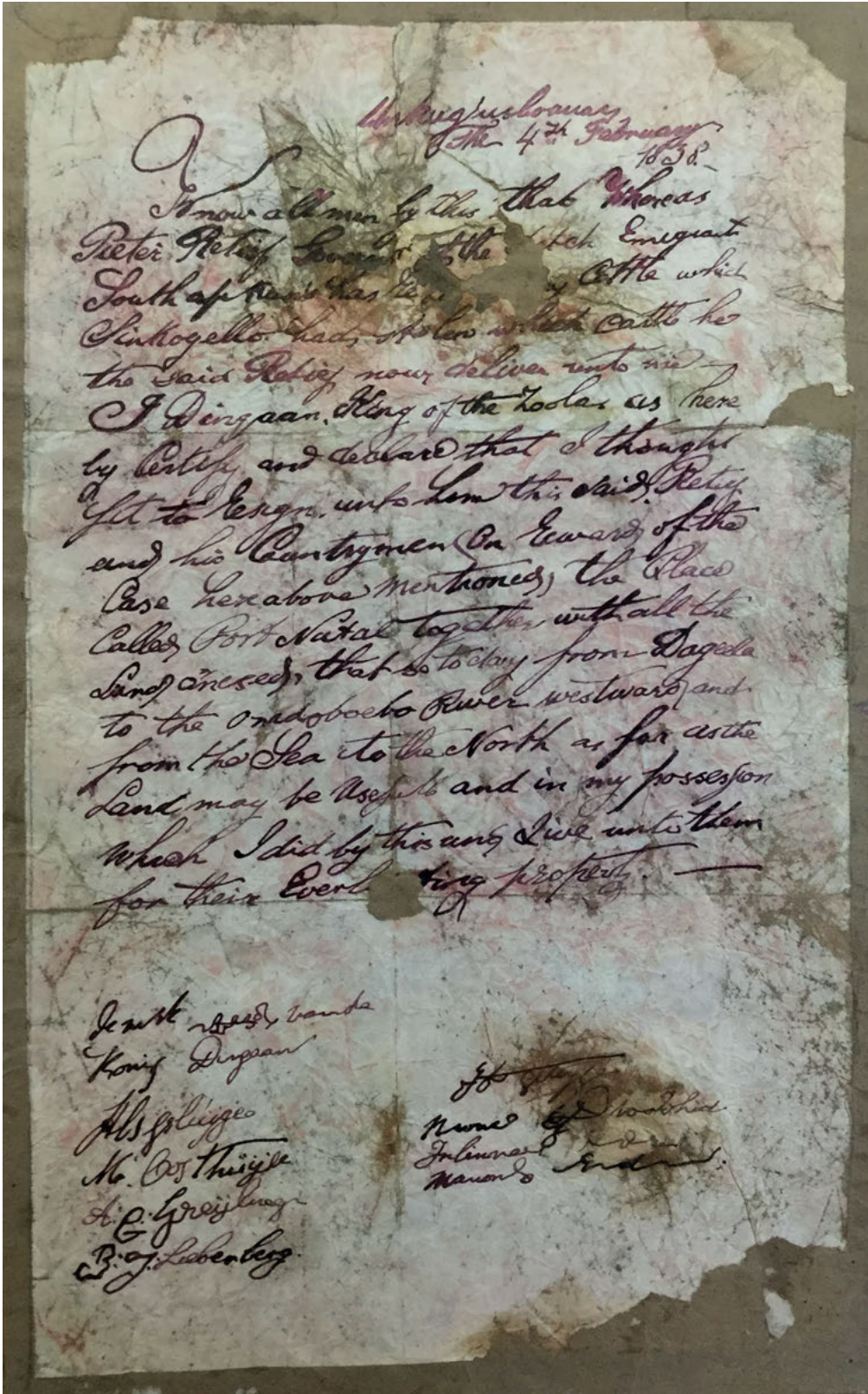


Figure 12.21: Pretoria copy of Retief–Dingane treaty, perhaps the model for the Weinthal facsimile. Possibly 1838–39. Woven foolscap (courtesy of NARSSA, Gerrit Wagener; photo the authors)

1891 we have a flood of Weinthal facsimiles, but not a single photograph of the original. Only the early copies, for the most part forgotten, were (and needed to be) verified as true duplications of the original by two Boer commanders, Chief Commandant Pretorius and Commandant Landman. When Weinthal went public with his ultimate facsimiles of the 'original', the focus of the certification had shifted. Now there was, as in the early Jeppe copy, only one of the three certifiers who had discovered the treaty and verified this aspect in *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, the trekker Evert Frederik Potgieter. Although he was present when the treaty was found, he does not verify that the facsimile is a true copy of the original treaty but only that it was discovered 'with the bones of the late Mr. P. Retief in Dingaan's country on the 21st day of December 1838 in a leather hunting bag'. Apparently the Weinthal facsimiles did not need to prove the authenticity of their content: it was beyond question.

Our analysis has revealed so much inaccuracy, contradiction and sheer invention in the accounts of the treaty that it throws serious doubt on its existence. In particular, we ask who wrote it, whether and when it was signed; why, if it was, Dingane did not have it destroyed; how it survived and was recovered; why it took three weeks to certify and release the wording of the treaty and its first copies (Cape and Kew Volksraad, and *De Zuid-Afrikaan*); why, in contrast to the copies (Cape Volksraad and Den Haag), the original was never photographed; and why the original, even before it was said to be lost, remained almost invisible.

Although the evidence and the fragmented history of the treaty pose irresolvable difficulties, there is one possible explanation. Cory stated in 1924: 'It is not impossible ... that he [Retief] may, astute man as he was, have had something already prepared.'⁵⁸² Retief was versed in negotiating contracts, deaf to all warnings, and supremely confident that, having met Dingane's conditions and coming with a show of the Boers' strength, he would conclude a land grant with the king. It is hard to imagine that Retief would have come to uMgungundlovu empty handed, without a written draft based on his understanding of previous discussions, when he had a few months earlier had the temerity to draft a letter for Dingane to sign. Indicative also is that Owen, who remained strangely uninvolved in the interaction of Retief and Dingane during Retief's February visit to uMgungundlovu, seems to have acknowledged the existence of a written document when he wrote on 6 February 1838 that Dingane 'had promised to assign over to them [the Boers] the whole country between the Tugala and the Umzimvubu rivers, and this day the paper of transfer was to be signed'.⁵⁸³ But on that fateful day, Retief may not have had the opportunity to even remove a draft from his bag before Dingane's warriors fell upon him and his men.

A further question to be asked is that, if Retief had prepared a draft, would it not have been in Dutch, as was the case with his drafted letter for Dingane?⁵⁸⁴ On that occasion, he had learned that Dingane was happier with English documents that Owen could read and witness, and had required a translation before he would sign it.⁵⁸⁵ Retief was a quick learner and when he shortly wrote another letter to Dingane, he had it translated into English by Lindley before he sent it. It is therefore likely that he would also have prepared a document for Dingane's treaty translated into English as well, although by whom we can only guess.⁵⁸⁶ Given the situation with the British in

⁵⁸² Cory 1924, 9.

⁵⁸³ Owen ed. Cory 1926, 108.

⁵⁸⁴ We know, however, that Retief understood English (*ibid.*, 66).

⁵⁸⁵ See the section 'Land issues' above.

⁵⁸⁶ A person of trust amongst the trekkers who might possibly have been able to undertake this task was Gerrit Maritz. He journeyed with a small stock of theological and legal works and several dictionaries, two French–Dutch and one Dutch–English, in his blue wagon (*DSAB* 1, 1968, 510). Another possible candidate might have been Jan Gerritze Bantjes, who had joined the Retief trek at Thaba Nchu (*DSAB* 1, 1968, 50–52). Although Preller argued 'that Bantjes had drawn up [the English text of] the land cession for Retief' (dat ... Bantjes die traktaat vir Retief opgestel het' [*Sketse* 1928, 192 n *], followed up and critiqued by Naidoo (1985, 200–201), there is no positive evidence that Bantjes knew English, and Muller clarified that 'comparison with the handwriting on the document recording the sale of Bantjes' farm in Natal casts doubt on the [Preller] assumption' (1978, 72 figs 9–10).

relation to the occupation of Natal, he would probably also have perceived the advantages of having a document that they would immediately understand.

If we follow our assumption that there must have been a treaty draft ready to be signed, what do we gain by it apart from a conceptual advantage? Principally, that we would no longer need to question the historical evidence that a treaty was found, as reported by so many. This would have supplied a document that could have been found, even if it had not been ratified. We might even then find a reason for the curiously long delay from when the treaty was found (21 December) to when its first copies, certified as 'literal' transcripts, were released (9 January), which we discussed above in 'Finding the treaty'. Apart from the issue of how much detail could actually be processed at the moment of its discovery, 'among the thousands of bleached human bones on that terrible hill',⁵⁸⁷ time was needed for its significance to be digested. According to our scenario, it seems more than likely that it was not realised initially that what had been recovered was not a signed treaty but Retief's draft. Believing as the Boers did that Dingane had made the grant, at least verbally, Pretorius needed time to transform the unsigned document into an unquestionable grant of land. This unexpected challenge could sufficiently explain why three weeks elapsed before the 'adjusted' treaty and its first certified copies were to be released (fig. 12.15a–b), verified as true transcripts of the original treaty (draft) by two people of authority, the leaders Pretorius and Landman.

If our reconstruction is plausible, it could further explain why there are anomalies regarding the signing of the treaty, why the 'original' was oddly intangible, and why from the very beginning certified copies took its place. It would also offer an explanation for the confusion of the dates of the treaty,⁵⁸⁸ since 4 February might well have been in Retief's mind as the day for signing the land grant he was so sure to achieve. As there were no Boer survivors to naysay it – and it was unlikely that anyone could know about Owen's diary entry that recorded the proposed signing on 6 February – there was no reason to modify the 4 February date. In short, the existence of a drafted treaty that was never ratified provides a possible explanation for some of the anomalies presented by the evidence. Only a massive conspiracy could have sustained the falsity of a complete fake, but the existence of a draft – a sort of half-truth which many would have understood as truth – would have been much easier to uphold. The wrong year of the Cape and Kew Volksraad copies, 1837 instead of 1838, however, remains a mystery beyond comprehension.

Coming from a different angle, historians have pointed to a further obstacle in the interpretation of the treaty: the understanding of land ownership by the Zulu people in the nineteenth century was profoundly different from the principles of the Roman Dutch Law to which the Boers were bound.⁵⁸⁹ This suggests that Dingane and Retief might have been at cross-purposes in their discussions from the outset, whether or not the treaty that Retief sought was ever signed. In his doctoral thesis, *Origins of the British settlement at Port Natal*, Anthony Cubbin defines the main distinctions between the two traditions:

The concept of the permanent alienation of land through a treaty is entirely foreign to the Zulu. Europeans placing any faith on a piece of paper did not understand the working of their host's mind and, as guardian of Tribal land; this understanding was cardinal in negotiations with the Zulus. The arrangement which included responsibilities was a royal prerogative which could be terminated, extended or transferred.⁵⁹⁰

But, however much a Zulu understanding of land ownership may have differed from that of the Boers, it is important to bear in mind the contention, lucidly presented by Naidoo, that Dingane

⁵⁸⁷ Cory 1924, 10.

⁵⁸⁸ Naidoo 1985, 192.

⁵⁸⁹ Lee 1946, 124–208. See also Vusumuzi Shongwe 2004, 196–199.

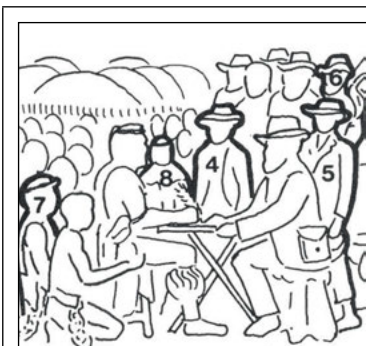
⁵⁹⁰ Vusumuzi Shongwe (2004, 199), quoting from the unpublished doctoral thesis of A.E. Cubbin, *Origins of the British Settlement at Port Natal, May 1824 to July 1842*, p.123 (University of the Free State, 1983). See also Cubbin 1980, 76.



Figure 12.22: Two opponents facing each other in *Treaty* – Dingane signs the land cession to which Retief points. Marble, detail of fig. 12.1 (photo Russell Scott)



Figure 12.23: The parties of opponents in *Treaty* – heads of Zulu and Boers, Thomas Halstead among the latter without hat. Maquette, details photographed in raking light as installed in 2017 exhibition (courtesy of VTM Museum VTM 2184/1–28; photo the authors)



- 4&5 Sons of Frikkie [Kruger, sculptor]
- 6 Willem Louw, friend of the sculptor
- Hennie Potgieter
- 7 N. Ghubeni [Zulu]
- 8 F. Luthuli [Zulu]

Figure 12.24: Models for portraits (Potgieter 1987, 22–23)

was an astute man, perfectly capable of understanding the deed he was supposed to have signed.⁵⁹¹ The evidence would suggest that he never did.

The scene

When we return to it at last, the frieze reflects none of these uncertainties. Even more convincingly than any certified copy of the treaty, the marble representation confirms its existence. The detailed re-enactment, lifelike yet ceremonial, of the signing of the document at uMgungundlovu by Dingane as the leader of his people under the direction of Retief's imperious gaze seems authoritative and incontrovertible (fig. 12.22). One might go so far as to suggest that it was the lurking historical uncertainty of the signing that made this representation mandatory. In the narrative of the frieze it was imperative that Dingane be shown signing the treaty to dispel all doubt. This was the key message that needed to be carved into marble forever.

As we saw at the outset of our discussion, Moerdyk acknowledged that there were doubts in his entry on the panel in the *Official Guide*. But he did not engage with them, instead passing on quickly to claims of painstaking accuracy and hence authenticity achieved by a contemporary assemblage of historical objects:

The table shown is an exact replica of one belonging to Mr. Owen, the missionary, and the chair on which Dingane is seated, which was hewn in one piece from a tree trunk, belonged to the Zulu king. Both are today to be seen in the Voortrekker Museum in Pietermaritzburg. The leather wallet worn on Retief's shoulder was modelled from the original which was found on his skeleton and which contained the signed treaty.⁵⁹²

Yet the authenticity of the objects mentioned by Moerdyk as ultimate proof of the historical correctness of the marble narrative is as contestable as the treaty. Most critical is his claim regarding Retief's 'leather wallet'. Apart from the conflicting descriptions in contemporary accounts of the (vanished) leather container and how it was recognised as Retief's when it was found,⁵⁹³ Bantjes' account described that it was almost consumed:

The late worthy Mr. Retief we recognised by his clothes, which, although nearly consumed, yet small rags were still attached to his bones, added to which there were other tokens, such as his portmanteau, which was almost also consumed, in which there were several papers, of which some were damaged and rained to pieces; but some were found therein, in as perfect a state as if they had never been exposed to the air; amongst which was also the contract between him and Dingane, respecting the cession of the land, so clean and uninjured, as if it had been written to day, besides a couple of sheets of clean paper, on one of which the chief commandant wrote a letter to Mr. J. Boshoff, the following day.⁵⁹⁴

And, as mentioned above, although Weinthal said that in 1891 he saw the treaty 'in a leather satchel in the basement of the government buildings in Pretoria',⁵⁹⁵ Preller, who vehemently upheld the existence of the original treaty document, evidently believed that the satchel was destroyed, perhaps in or soon after 1886.⁵⁹⁶ So what original was Moerdyk referring to? It is noteworthy that Coetzer, who

⁵⁹¹ Naidoo 1985, 203.

⁵⁹² *Official Guide* 1955, 49.

⁵⁹³ Naidoo 1985, 197–199. The leather bag is not in the uMsunduzi Museum Collection, as Elrica Henning confirmed (2015).

⁵⁹⁴ This is the English translation in Chase, *Natal* 2, 1843, 67; Breytenbach c. 1958, 281, gives the text in the original Dutch.

⁵⁹⁵ Preller 1924, 52; Preller, *Sketse* 1928, 212.

⁵⁹⁶ Preller 1924, 52; Preller, *Sketse* 1928, 216–217.

was himself well informed about Afrikaner history and Preller's work, in his drawings for *Treaty*, showed Retief not with a leather bag but a bottle (figs 12.3, 12.5), although the bag was included in the sketch for the next scene, *Murder of Retief*, and made prominent there and in *Treaty* in the reliefs. Also puzzling is that none of the three named eyewitnesses present at the discovery of the treaty on 21 December 1838, who certified this for various copies, or anyone else had ever mentioned a 'blue woven envelope', let alone blue woven foolscap paper with a Britannia watermark and date of 1830 – described by Weinthal as main features of the original in *The Press Weekly Edition* of 16 May 1891. Nor do they mention Weinthal's 'dark stains' which he believed 'must have been Retief's blood'. On the contrary, Boers such as Bezuidenhout underlined that the treaty 'was still white and uninjured'.⁵⁹⁷

Also contestable is the authenticity of the missionary's folding table and of Dingane's chair, which the Historiese Komitee itself had rejected as inappropriate in Coetzer's first drawing. The table is a common enough type to resist any specific attribution (and one might ask how the missionary's table was to be found in Dingane's domain),⁵⁹⁸ but the chair is distinctive. However, there is uncertainty whether 'Dingane's Chair', carved from a single block of either ironwood (*Millettia grandes*) or Redbush Willow (*Combretum apiculatum*) and bequeathed to the Voortrekker Museum Pietermaritzburg (now part of the uMsunduzi Museum) in December 1933, was ever owned or used by the Zulu king.⁵⁹⁹ After thorough inspection of the existing documents,⁶⁰⁰ Sandra Klopper concluded in her unpublished doctoral thesis, *The art of Zulu-speakers in northern Natal-Zululand*, that, while 'it is not entirely inconceivable that the chair ... may have belonged to the second Zulu king [Dingane]', there is no verification that it predated 1838.⁶⁰¹ In addition, there is no evidence that it was generally associated with Dingane, and it certainly was not by the Historiese Komitee, which rejected it. Once again the sculptors seem to have depended on Coetzer's initial reproduced drawing (fig. 12.4), with its representation of the unusual chair, and indeed the table – not in this case on the comments of the committee, which had demanded their removal, saying that Dingane 'wrote on a block' and 'sits on a block'.⁶⁰²

However, the rather disparaging tone of the committee comments about Dingane, whom they said should look more clumsy, is reflected in the marble relief in other ways. The Boers are shown in the superior position as they stand upright around their seated leader. They disregard both the European convention of respect for Dingane by not removing their hats, and also Zulu protocol where no heads should be higher than that of the seated king – a hierarchy scrupulously observed by the Zulu (fig. 12.22). Yet Dingane has considerable dignity and the facial features of the Zulu entourage are occasionally individualised, showing, in a way not dissimilar to the Boers, a variety of age and physiognomy, although they lack the expressiveness seen in the maquette (fig. 12.23). And in this case, Hennie Potgieter does identify models for some of the Zulu as well as the Boers (fig. 12.24).

⁵⁹⁷ Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 370.

⁵⁹⁸ Van Rooyen 1938, 165–166 with fig.

⁵⁹⁹ See *ibid.*, 167–169 with fig.

⁶⁰⁰ Gillian Berning (1996, 48–49, 59) provides an excellent overview of the chair's history (including Sandra Klopper's 1992 discussion), which was bequeathed to the Museum by Leonard Line (21.12.1933), a prominent stockbroker of Pietermaritzburg. Berning reports two different accounts which further confuse our understanding of the chair. The museum entry reads: 'This was the chair of many Zulu Kings. It was the throne of Dingane, Pande [sic], and Cetshwayo. The chair was made out of a tree trunk of solid ironwood. It was made by three *indunas* [sic] who [in 1828] were sent to the Cape by Chaka [sic] on a diplomatic mission. When they returned they found that Dingane had succeeded Chaka. They wanted to gain Dingane's favour and gave him a chair.' – A second narrative is on the back of a photograph of the chair from the Line family: 'The story attached to this chair is that Dingaan [sic] sent two *indunas* [sic] to interview the white men in Durban. They returned so quickly that he would not believe that they had been there, and he ordered them to make something the White men had which he had never seen, or they would be killed at once. They made the chair from a solid trunk of ebony but made the mistake of putting in five legs.'

⁶⁰¹ Klopper 1992, 101, as quoted by Berning 1996, 59.

⁶⁰² '... Dingaan skryf op 'n blok; ... Dingaan sit op 'n blok' (Historiese Komitee 4.9.1937: 4j).

Apart from differences in social conventions, the panel may suggest some friction between the two groups in other ways too. Although the treaty document is pivotal, it is notable that neither leader looks at it, so intent are they on each other, a confrontation that suggests the uneasy tension in this short-lived moment of accord. The inclusion of the two boys in the foreground of the Voortrekker group, while documenting the historical make-up of Retief's party, also invokes the vulnerability of the trekkers in the face of the trust Retief had in Dingane and its betrayal by the Zulu king, the subject of the following scenes. There was apparently a different agenda in the presence of the English interpreter Halstead, distinguished from the Boers by his lack of hat and beard. He was picked out for special mention in the *Official Guide*, where Moerdyk took pride in drawing attention to the inclusivity of the frieze regarding people of other nations who are 'not usually included among the Voortrekkers but who nevertheless contributed their full share to the "heroic deed"'.⁶⁰³ In this case the support offered the Boers by an Englishman might even allude obliquely to the policies of the United Party, founded by Hertzog and Smuts in the 1930s in an attempt to unite the two white groups in South Africa, Afrikaans and English.

Treaty, like the frieze in general, focuses on two opposing concepts: white civilisation versus black tyranny. In the process of conceiving the imagery of the Great Trek, as though anticipating the rise of Afrikaner nationalism and the intensified and legislated racial segregation of apartheid, the marble frieze provides an almost impregnable register of the separation of whites from non-whites. Not only through actual conflict, but in the constant reiteration of differences of behaviour, dress and accoutrements, the relief cleaves a gulf between the two. In *Treaty* and the following scene, even the background detail further stresses this difference by painstakingly depicting the otherness of uMgungundlovu. It forms a striking contrast to European architectural styles in *Delagoa Bay* and the *Church of the Vow*, and even the little schoolhouse at *Soutpansberg* that in the frieze represented the first efforts to uphold Christian education in the Voortrekkers' self-appointed mission to civilise the barbarous interior.

It is another irony of history, of which there is no lack in the frieze, that Retief is here shown in front of Dingane with, as we have argued, what was probably no more than his own draft of the treaty. Cory succinctly defines the difficulties of current research:

Unfortunately, in the elucidation of the truth in all these matters connected with the treaty we are met on all sides by so many inconsistencies and contradictions.⁶⁰⁴

But he ended his paper on a more light-hearted note of optimism that owes something to 1 Corinthians 13.12.⁶⁰⁵

Things we now see obscurely will be as clear and visible as the midday sun and among them, probably standing forth free from all perplexity will be the Retief-Dingaan treaty.⁶⁰⁶

⁶⁰³ *Official Guide* 1955, 31. The 1970 edition, however, downplayed the rhetoric: who 'are not normally associated with the Voortrekkers but who none-the-less contributed their share to the common weal' (p.29). It adds another twist that Dingane had in fact promised that he would not harm Halstead, but said that 'in the confusion of the time he was killed with the rest' (Hulley 1880, 10).

⁶⁰⁴ Cory 1924, 7.

⁶⁰⁵ 'For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known' (<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+13%3A12&version=NIV>).

⁶⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

13 *Murder of Retief* and his men (6 February 1838)



A3



B2



C1/C2



D

13 Murder of Retief

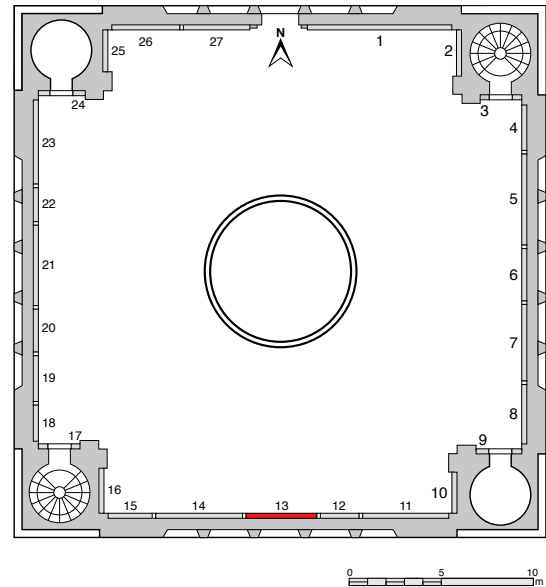
South wall, central scene (panel 16/31)
h. 2.3 × w. 3.71 m (small overlap with panels 15 and 17)
Restored fractures on vertical edges
Sculptor of the clay maquette: Frikkie Kruger

STAGES OF PRODUCTION

- A1 W.H. Coetzer, pencil drawing, retained only in A2 (April–June 1937)
A2 Reproduction of A1 (June 1937)
A3 W.H. Coetzer, revised pencil drawing A1, h. 13.5 × w. 23 cm (after September 1937)
Annotations: ‘DingaansKraal in Agtergrond’ / (Dingaan’s kraal in background) / ‘Moord op Retief’ (Murder of Retief)
A4 W.H. Coetzer, *Die moord op Retief en sy manskappe* (The Murder of Retief and his party); monochrome oil on board, h. 27.3 × w. 46.6 cm (late 1937–38?)
B1 One-third-scale clay maquette, not extant but replicated in B2 (1942–43)
B2 One-third-scale plaster maquette, h. 75 × w. 120.5 × d. 8 cm (1942–43)
C1* Full-scale wooden armature for C2, not extant but photographed (1943–45)
C2* Full-scale clay relief, not extant but photographed; replicated in C3 (1943–45)
C3* Full-scale plaster relief (1943–45), not extant but illustrated (*Die Vaderland*, 26.2.1945); copied in D (1948–49)
* were developed in two halves
D Marble as installed in the Monument (1949)

EARLY RECORDS

- SVK minutes (4.9.1937) — item 4k (see below, ‘Development of the design’)
Voorstelle (5.12.1935?) — item 11 ‘Moord op Retief en sy volgelinge. Miskien kan ook hier gedink word aan die voorstelling daarvan in die rolprent, of soos ’t op die bestaande Monument aan Moordspruit (Chieveley)’ (Murder of Retief and his followers. Perhaps here the presentation in the film can also be thought of, or as it is on the existing Monument at Moordspruit (Chieveley))⁶⁰⁷
Panele (c. Dec. 1934–36) — item 5 ‘Moordtonele soos’, a. ‘op Piet Retief’ (Murder scenes such as, a. of Piet Retief)
Wenke (c. 1934–36) — item II. Dr. L. Steenkamp, mnre. A.J. du Plessis en M. Basson, A. ‘MAATSKAPLIK’ (SOCIAL), 3. ‘Verhouding met ander volksgroepe’ (Relationship with other ethnic groups), d. ‘Dingaan’ (Dingane), vi. ‘Afskeidsgroet en moord; spil waarom due [sic] lotgevalle van die Voortrekkers in Natal gedraai het’ (Parting farewell and murder; the axis around which the fate of the Voortrekkers in Natal turned)
Moerdyk Layout (5.10.1936–15.1.1937) — scene 11 on panel 16 ‘Moord op Retief’ (Murder of Retief)
Jansen Memorandum (19.1.1937) — item 7.11 ‘Massacre of Retief and his men, including the Englishman Halstead’



⁶⁰⁷ The reference to the Moordspruit Monument is misleading as its two marble reliefs both show the massacre of Boer women and children by Zulu in the area of Bloukrans, after they had killed Retief and his men at Dingane’s residence.



Figure 13.1: D. *Murder of Retief*. 1949. Marble, 2.3 × 3.71 m (courtesy of VTM; photo Russell Scott)

Description

Nine Zulu club and stone seven Voortrekkers to death (fig. 13.1). The killing takes place on a rocky hillside (kwaMatiwane) with scant vegetation, which overlooks the huge Zulu capital uMgungundlovu in the background. The image is divided into three sections: an almost empty space in the middle allowing the view of Dingane's metropolis, with a group of adversaries on either side. The right group is dominated by the sole upright trekker who is bound and forced to stand erect, yet impeccably presented in a neatly buttoned jacket. This is the Boer governor, Piet Retief, who fixes his gaze upward, and has his fettered hands clenched in fists, suggesting indomitable will. A satchel lies behind his left foot, and on a strap over his shoulder is a bottle decorated with an ordered assembly of symbols around an arched aedicule (fig. 13.11), which we discuss in the appendix below.

Behind Retief are five Zulu, three forcing him into his upright position. One leans with all his weight on the Boer's shoulders; another behind him thrusts a stake forcefully into the Boer's back; a third seated on the ground braces his left foot against the Boer's leg, while he pulls back on the ropes tightly bound around his knees. The Zulu are all in traditional dress with lavish ornaments including earplugs, although they do not wear head rings.

Retief is staged in profile view next to the central opening, facing to the left and hence directing both his own and the viewer's attention to the slaughter of the Boers at the other side. On the ground between the two groups, the heads of three supine Boers meet from opposite sides in the centre. The Boer in the foreground, perfectly dressed, eyes almost closed, lies tidily on the lower edge of the panel, parallel to the picture plane, his left arm at his side, his left leg slightly bent. Further back on the other side, a second Boer has succumbed. He is young, his head fallen back, his flowing hair in disarray, and his jacket or shirt torn open over the breast, stressing his vulnerability. A third head to the left, this time bearded, appears to lack any body. Above this head a pair of disembodied legs emerge, indicating a fourth dead trekker.

On the left side four Zulu, two wielding sticks and one with a large stone, force two more Boers to the ground. The one in the foreground has sunk onto one knee, and his head and right arm droop in despair. The other Boer kneels, his stress captured in the dislocated appearance of his torso and hips and his harshly twisted head. The incoherence of this figure is heightened by the puzzling torn shirt or jacket with folded drapery beneath his arm. He is framed by two Zulu: one grips his hair to beat him to death, while the other grasps his torn shirt, his stick also raised high in attack. Further back a third Zulu crouches in rear view, while a fourth Zulu with strong back and arm muscles raises a rock, probably attacking the Boer whose lower legs alone are visible. The Zulu are uniformly violent, while the Boers are united in their passive habitus and emotionless expressions. None of them shows any sign of resistance or suffering, their demeanour reminiscent of unflinching saintly martyrs.

The centre background is dominated by an aerial view of the geometric layout of uMgungundlovu, oval in shape with hemispherical kraals placed in strict order around the circumference. The outer groups of kraals are divided by long straight passages that lead to the large empty space in the centre. The sole structure in the space is a perfect circle composed of four quadrants of small kraals, flanked by an arc of further dwellings, which act as a barrier to the inner sanctum, its only access through small passageways.



Figure 13.2: A2. W.H. Coetzer. Reproduction of first sketch for *Murder of Retief*. June 1937 (courtesy of ARCA PV94 1/75/5/1; photo the authors)

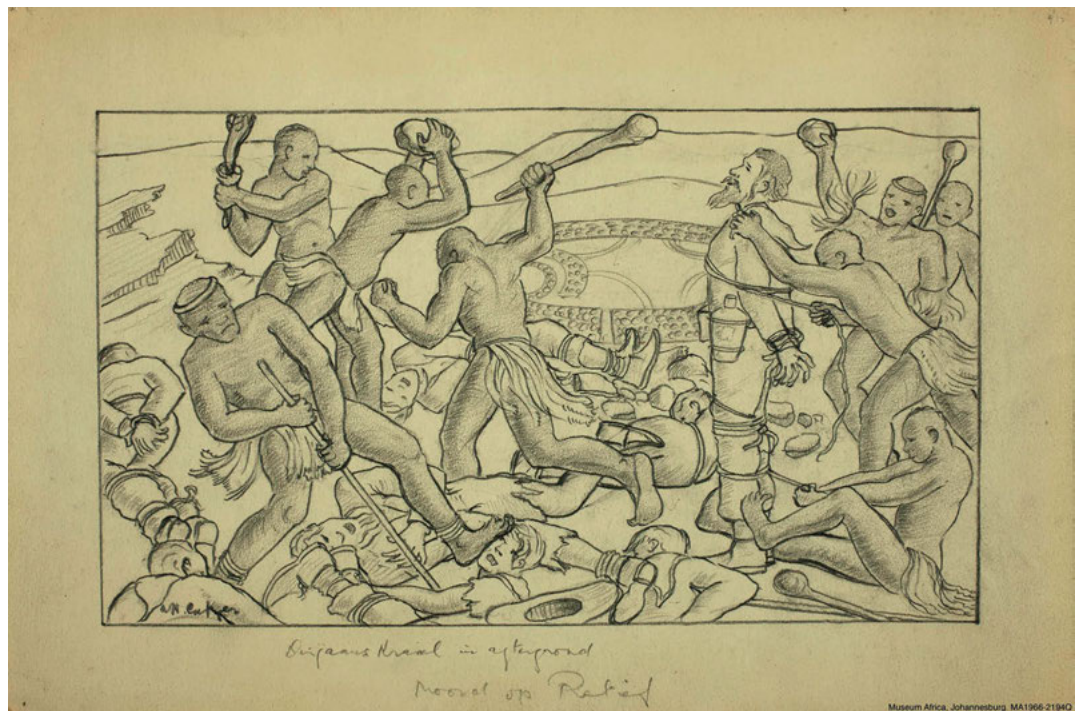


Figure 13.3: A3. W.H. Coetzer. 'Moord op Retief'. After September 1937. Pencil, 13.5 x 23 cm. Revised first sketch (courtesy of Museum Africa, no. 66/2194Q)

Developing the design



Figure 13.4: A4. W.H. Coetzer. *Die moord op Retief en sy manskappe*. Late 1937–38? Monochrome oil on board, 27.3 × 46.6 cm (courtesy of DNMCH, OHG 901; photo the authors)

Again the Coetzer drawings provide the basic plot for the subsequent designs (figs 13.2, 13.3). He staged the scene on top of kwaMatiwane and divided it into three sections. On the right two Zulu force Retief, the sole Boer on this side, to stand upright. Important for the reading of the narrative is that he is shown with a flask on his left hip and, on his right, some sort of rectangular object partially visible beyond his jacket. This object is more distinct in Coetzer's monochrome painting of the scene (fig. 13.4) and was possibly intended to represent the leather container in which it is reported the treaty was found. On the opposite side four Zulu armed with sticks, stones and assegais are murdering seven trekkers, all forced to the ground, most of them young and bound. Coetzer shows some of the figures cut off by the frame, particularly in the foreground, to suggest the many Boers and Zulu involved. In the middle the significant gap between the two groups both emphasises Retief on its edge, and enables the beholder to look upon uMgungundlovu in the background (fig. 13.17)⁶⁰⁸ – the choice of an aerial view also suggesting the elevation of the killing field of kwaMatiwane. The fierce action of the Zulu and the extreme suffering of the Boers are more dramatically expressed than in the later reliefs. For example, Retief's writhing fingers suggest his anguish. In Coetzer's monochrome painting the emotional impact is even stronger. Here Retief no longer gazes aloft but looks down compassionately on his young son who, at his father's feet, strains to raise his head to gaze at him. Notable too is that one of the Boers fights back in this depiction and throttles a collapsing Zulu figure.

⁶⁰⁸ A painting of uMgungundlovu by Margaret Carey shows a similar view of the city; see *Huisgenoot* 1938, fig. after p.96 ('Painting by Margaret Carey in the care of the Historical Commission of the Saamwerk Union of the Natal associations. Originally owned by Dr. L.S. Steenkamp').



Figure 13.5: B2. Frikkie Kruger. *Murder of Retief*. 1942–43. Plaster, 75 × 120.5 × 8 cm (courtesy of VTM Museum VTM 2184/1–28; photo Russell Scott)



Figure 13.6: C2. *Murder of Retief*. 1943–45. Clay. Full-scale relief (Potgieter 1987, 24; photo Alan Yates, stitched)

At the SVK meeting on 4 September 1937 the following alterations to the pencil sketch were requested:

Murder of Retief. The kaffers must be typical Zulus; they had sticks and not assegais; show that they handle implements (hitting things).⁶⁰⁹

Significant differences in the revised pencil drawing (fig. 13.3) from the reproduction (fig. 13.2) presented to the SVK are the more nuanced ranges of hills in the background and the shading of the Zulu to distinguish them from the Boers: it reveals Coetzer's oblivion to the sculptural purpose of the sketches, since this differentiation could not be deployed in a marble relief. Following the requirement of the committee is the erasure of the central assegai shaft in favour of a club (knobkierie), which changes that Zulu warrior's action from a downward stabbing to a more brutal swinging of the club.

In the maquette (fig. 13.5) modelled by Frikkie Kruger, Coetzer's composition is retained in a general sense but considerably changed and formalised in detail as there are fewer figures and the drama is reduced. The figures are more posed and frozen, and Kruger has created a tectonic composition, contained within the panel and avoiding Coetzer's cut-off figures at the margins. In the main, the number, distribution, motif and interaction of the figures are already close to the final marble. The foreground is now dominated by two Boers who crouch and lie on the ground. As in the drawing, Retief is separated from the fate of his men and stands erect with his head raised, a stoic figure who shows no emotion; his mouth is closed and his frenetic fingers have been controlled into clenched fists. He carries the bottle over his shoulder, decorated in a similar way to the final carved image, while a satchel is now lying on the ground in front of him.

As in the Coetzer drawing, the Zulu do not wear the war costume of knee-long aprons but a short version worn for dancing.⁶¹⁰ But, as in his preliminary drawing, they are using mostly assegais to kill the victims, here clearly shown with blades, which is not in accord with historical records or Coetzer's revised version (fig. 13.3). The Zulu in the foreground of the drawing who ferociously stabs the Boer boy lying in front of him and tramples on his face is replaced by another who strides to the left behind the dying Boer to kill a trekker crouched helplessly in front of him. A disembodied pair of legs which was, in the drawing, part of a slain Boer in the background, now hovers bodiless behind this figure. The central gap between the two groups of figures is not yet filled with the aerial view of uMgungundlovu.

As with *Inauguration*, for the full-size clay panel (fig. 13.6) the sculptors had to deal with the tricky situation of developing one half of the scene at a time, because the support boards in Harmony Hall were only long enough to accommodate half of the full south frieze. This is even apparent in the armature, where a photograph of the left side has survived (fig. 13.7). Despite some later criticism that there was a hiatus between the two halves of the composition, discussed in Part I,⁶¹¹ it was in fact based on Coetzer's composition which Kruger had followed in the maquette, although the central area was extended a little, making the panel longer. And this provided the space for Dingane's stronghold, which was omitted in Kruger's maquette but reintroduced into the background of the full-size clay relief. A Yates photograph, taken while this panel was being made, shows several details still unfinished (fig. 13.8) when compared with a photograph of the final clay version (fig. 13.9); uMgungundlovu and the rocky terrain and its vegetation have not yet been modelled and the rendering of the clothing of the Boer lying dead behind Retief is incomplete.

⁶⁰⁹ 'Die kaffers moet tipiese Zoeloes wees; hulle het stokke en nie asgaaie gehad nie; wys dat hulle 'n slaanding hanteer' (Historiese Komitee 4.9.1937: 4k). Coetzer does not, in fact, show the blades of assegais, so the weapons could be long sticks.

⁶¹⁰ Gardiner 1836, 99–101, describes the Zulu dress of the time and illustrates different costumes such as war (drawing opp. p.101) and dance dress (frontispiece; drawings opp. pp.50 and 70); see Bird, *Natal* 1, 1888, 303–304.

⁶¹¹ Chapter 3 ('The full-scale frieze').



Figure 13.7: C1 and C2. Hendrik Ploeger. Left half of wooden armature of *Murder of Retief* (1943–45) compared with full-scale clay relief, detail of fig. 13.6 (courtesy of Kirchhoff files; photos Alan Yates)



Figure 13.8: C2. *Murder of Retief*, right half, partly finished state. 1943–45. Clay. Full-scale relief (courtesy of Kirchhoff files; photo Alan Yates)



Figure 13.9: C2. *Murder of Retief*, right half, finished state. 1943–45. Clay. Full-scale relief (courtesy of Kirchhoff files; photo Alan Yates)



Figure 13.10: Retief's Masonic flask in *Murder of Retief*, detail of maquette, photographed in raking light as installed in 2017 exhibition (courtesy of VTM Museum VTM 2184/1–28; photo the authors)



Figure 13.11: Retief's Masonic flask in *Murder of Retief*. Marble, detail of fig. 13.1 (photo Russell Scott)



Figure 13.12: Masonic flask, GIV-4 type. c. 1815–30. Green glass, 21 × 11.5 cm. Keene-Marlboro-Street Glass Works, Keene, New Hampshire, USA (courtesy of uMsunduzi Museum Collection; photo the authors)

Also, Retief's flask is only roughly shaped, indicating that the flask must have been modelled late, after the narrative had been fully developed (figs 13.8, 13.9, 13.10, 13.11).

Changes from the maquette related chiefly to the representation of the Zulu. The warriors were clad in long aprons rather than short dancing skirts, and once again their assegais were exchanged for clubs and stones. The sculptors were apparently unaware of the Historiese Komitee's injunction that this should be done, for the SVK minutes in September 1943 record that Mr Faye, who had assisted in the correct depiction of the Zulu in *Treaty*, had also offered advice in this case, saying that according to Zulu custom assegais would not have been used in the murder.⁶¹² Overall, the process of formalisation continued, and was replicated in the final marble, so that the scene has an even more pronounced quality of being staged; of being a historical event frozen in memory.

⁶¹² 'Mnr. Faye [or Feye] het hom [Moerdyk] ook baie goeie raad gegee o.a. (i) dat volgens kaffergewoontes by die moord geen asgaie gebruik was nie' (SVK 30.9.1943: 3).

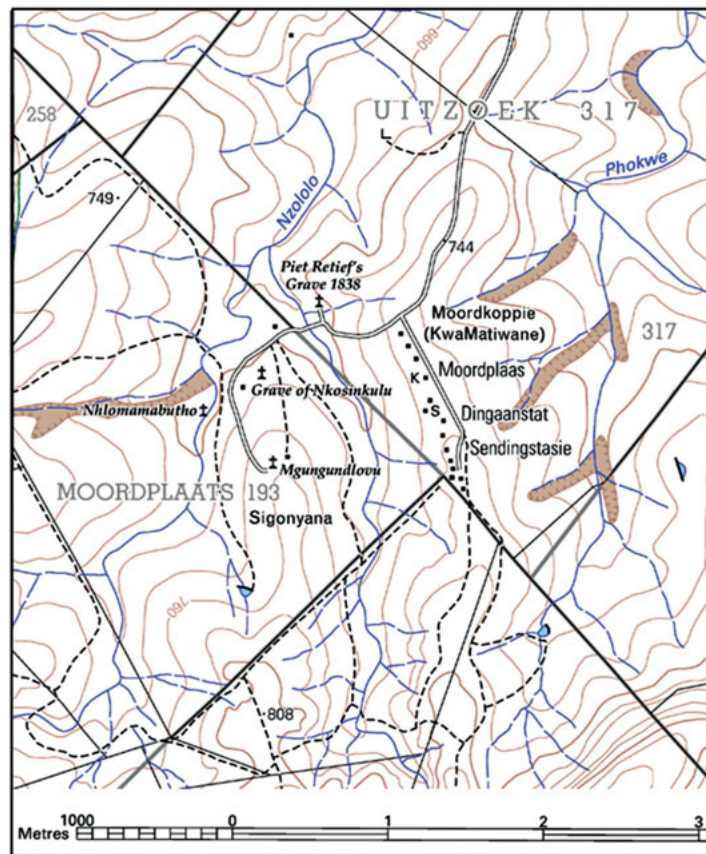


Figure 13.13a:
Topographic Sheets of South Africa
 (1:50 000).
 October 2010.
 Detail, showing
 uMgungundlovu
 with kwaMatiwane
 and Owen's hut at
 the sendingstasie
 (mission station)
 (map 2831AD)



Figure 13.13b: View of uMgungundlovu from the area of Owen's hut. 2015 (photo the authors)

Reading the narrative

The *Murder of Retief* follows directly after *Treaty*. As discussed in our account of the controversial evidence there, we have conflicting information about what happened when Dingane and Retief met on 6 February 1838, although the evidence strongly suggests that no land treaty was signed. For the subsequent massacre we have reports from three English eyewitnesses who were at uMgungundlovu: the missionary Rev. Francis Owen,⁶¹³ and two people attached to his household, young William Wood, aged ‘about eleven or twelve’,⁶¹⁴ and Jane Bird, neé Williams, who had accompanied the reverend from London.⁶¹⁵ All three were at the mission station, a hut built on the same ridge as kwaMatiwane, east of Dingane’s city (figs 12.13, 13.13a–b). They therefore had a view, albeit from more than a kilometre away, of both uMgungundlovu and the dread hill of kwaMatiwane, on which countless people had been executed by order of the Zulu king.⁶¹⁶ For our context, the reports of Wood, Bird and Owen, and the later recollections of Zulu eyewitnesses discussed below, are crucial and deserve close reading.⁶¹⁷ We begin with William Wood’s *Statements respecting Dingaan* published in 1840 in Cape Town, about two years after the event, which offers the most detailed report of the murder on 6 February 1838:

Dingaan came out of his hut, and having seated himself in front of it in his arm-chair,⁶¹⁸ ordered out two regiments ... These troops he caused to form in a circle, and, having placed his two principal captains on his right and left hand respectively, he sent a message to Retief, inviting him to bring his men, and wish the king ‘farewell,’ previously [sic] to starting. Retief a short time after this entered the kraal, accompanied by the other farmers and all their servants, with the exception of one or two, who were sent out to fetch the horses; their arms being left unguarded under the two milk-trees without the kraal.

On Retief approaching Dingaan, the latter told him to acquaint the farmers at Natal, as soon as he arrived there, of the king’s desire that they should soon come and possess the land he had given them; also to remember him to them. He then wished the party an agreeable journey to Natal, and invited them to sit down and drink some ‘tywala’ [Kaffir-beer] with him and his people, which invitation they unfortunately accepted.

Retief sat by the king; but the farmers and their servants sat in a place by themselves, at a short distance from the king and his captains. After drinking some beer together, Dingaan ordered his troops to amuse the farmers by dancing and singing, which they immediately commenced doing. The farmers had not been sitting longer than about a quarter of an hour, when Dingaan called out: ‘Seize them!’ upon which an overwhelming rush was made upon the party before they could get on their feet. ...

The farmers were then dragged with their feet trailing on the ground, each man being held by as many Zulus as could get at him, from the presence of Dingaan, who still continued sitting and calling out ‘Bulala amatakati’ (kill the wizards). He then said, ‘Take the heart and the liver of the king of the farmers and place them in the road of the farmers.’ When they had dragged them to the hill, ‘Hloma Mabuto’,⁶¹⁹ they commenced the work of death by striking them on the head with knobbed sticks

613 See *Treaty*.

614 Quote: Moodie 1888, 426. William Wood (*DSAB* 5, 1987, 897–898), born in the Cape Colony in about 1824, was the son of Richard Wood, a carpenter at Port Natal.

615 Moodie 1888, 425–430 (personal recollection, Jane Bird, neé Williams, 1877). Grobler (2011, 117–122) enumerates the conflicting reports of further contemporaries.

616 For kwaMatiwane, Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 282; Van Warmelo 1938; Kotzé 1950, 223–224 n 5; Becker 1979, 82–83, 203–204. We examined the topography of Owen’s hut in relation to uMgungundlovu and kwaMatiwane in 2015, and confirmed Jane Bird’s report (Moodie 1888, 425) that ‘Dingaan gave us a location something less than a mile distant from his own residence’.

617 A short but measured account is provided by Kotzé 1950, 234–235.

618 Only recognisable if Wood used Owen’s telescope.

619 Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 381 n *.

[knobkieries], Retief being held and forced to witness the deaths of his comrades before they dispatched him. It was a most awful occurrence, and will never be effaced from my memory. The Rev. Mr. Owen and I witnessed it, standing at the doors of our huts, which faced the place of execution. Retief's heart and liver were taken out, wrapped in a cloth, and taken to Dingaan.⁶²⁰

It is impossible to judge the veracity of each detail in Wood's report, published two years later, considering his youth (which suggests that someone else must have transcribed the text for publication) and the lack of any comparable account. His position at Owen's hut certainly excludes any first-hand verbal recall of the communication between Dingane and Retief, as he cannot possibly have heard it (figs 13.13a–b). In contrast to the account of Jane Bird, his report reads as if he had been a bystander at the event instead of looking at it from Owen's hut. Here Bird's recollection in 1877 is more informative:

We looked out, and saw a great commotion in the chief's kraal, and a struggle going on. We saw that the Zulus dragged the Boers out of the kraal, and took them to the side of a hill, where the usual execution place was situated. If I had understood the Zulu or the Dutch language, I would have understood many of the exclamations which were made at the scene. I had seen executions take place at that spot eight days after we arrived, and at least four or five a week afterwards. I do not think half an hour elapsed between the seizing of the Boers and the end of their slaughter, and the return of the murderous executioners to the kraal of Dingaan. Scarcely had the Zulus left the place of slaughter when the vultures swooped down on to the bodies of the victims.⁶²¹

Bird confirmed the clear view from Owen's hut on uMgungundlovu and kwaMatiwane. Her comment that she 'would have understood many of the exclamations' if she had knowledge of Zulu or Dutch suggests that the cries of both Zulu and Boers on kwaMatiwane could be heard over a considerable distance, but not normal communication in uMgungundlovu. Wood's and Bird's accounts of the events are for the most part confirmed by later recollections of Zulu eyewitnesses who were interviewed by James Stuart around 1900. The most important of them is Dingane's cuspidor (inceku), Tununu ka Nonjiya, who was present at Retief's death:

They [the Boers] went to the king early in the morning [of 6th February]. They arrived. Beer and *amasi* came from different sides. All came, leaving guns behind except 3 *amalawana*. They arrived and seated themselves. The king came to them. When they finished the beer and *amasi* the commotion (*isidumo*) occurred and they were killed. An *inkondhlo* was being sung and an *ukuketa* dance was being performed for them; they were surrounded. D.[Dingane] went suddenly at the back. Then the *ubedu* came together, i.e. the ring of people. They were killed with sticks, not assegais. They [the Boers] stabbed with knives. I was not stabbed. I did not strike them. The *amabuto* were hidden near the kraal; they arrived just as the disturbance began and in an extended movement. Being an *inceku*, I took no part in the slaughter.⁶²²

The report from Owen, the only one penned at the time of the event, contradicts some details in Wood's account, particularly in stating that the land treaty had not yet been signed. The missionary wrote on 6 February 1838 in his diary, published that year in the *Church Missionary Record*:⁶²³

A dreadful day in the annals of the mission! ... This morning, as I was sitting in the shade of my waggon reading the Testament, the usual messenger came with a hurry anxiety depicted in his

⁶²⁰ *Ibid.*, 380–381. Hulley (1880, 9), who was not present himself, was told on 9 February that 'to prevent any resistance [from the Boers] their necks were at once broken; then their bodies were carried to the execution ground to be mutilated, then left to decay'.

⁶²¹ Moodie 1888, 427.

⁶²² *James Stuart Archive* 6, 2014, 260–261 (30.5.1903).

⁶²³ No. 10, Oct. 1838, vol. IX. The *Graham's Town Journal* published extracts of Owen's diary including entries for 2, 4, 6 and 7 February 1838 as early as April 1838 (Harington 1973, 44–45). And Hulley (1880, 7–9), Owen's interpreter, provided a similar report after his return from Port Natal on 9 February 1838.

looks. I was sure he was about to pronounce something serious, and what was his commission! ... a horrid instance of perfidy – too horrid to be described ... He [Dingane] sent to tell me not to be frightened as he was going to kill the Boers. This news came like a thunder stroke to myself and to every successive member of my family as they heard it. The reason assigned for this treacherous conduct was that they were going to kill him, that they had come here and he had *now* learned all their plans. The messenger was anxious for my reply, but what could I say? Fearful on the one hand of seeming to justify the treachery and on the other of exposing myself and my family to probable danger if I appeared to take their part. More-ever [sic] I could not but feel that it was my duty to apprise the Boers of the intended massacre whilst certain death would have ensued (I apprehended) if I had been detected in giving them this information. However, I was released from this dilemma by beholding an awful spectacle! My attention was directed to the blood-stained hill nearly opposite my hut, ... where all the executions at this fearful spot take place, and which was now destined to add 60 more bleeding carcasses to the number of those which have already cried to Heaven for vengeance. There (said some one), they are killing the Boers *now*. I turned my eyes and behold! an immense multitude on the hill. About 9 or 10 Zoolus to each Boer were dragging their helpless unarmed victim to the fatal spot ... I lay myself down on the ground. Mrs. and Miss Owen were not more thunderstruck than myself. ...

Dingarn's conduct was worthy of a savage, as he is ... and being unable to attack them [the Boers] openly, he massacred them clandestinely! Two of the Boers paid me a visit this morning and breakfasted only an hour or two before they were called into Eternity. When I asked them what they thought of Dingarn, they said he was good: so unsuspecting were they of his intentions. He had promised to assign over to them the whole country between the Tugela and the Umzimvubu rivers, and this day the paper of transfer was to be signed. My mind has always been filled with the notion that however friendly the two powers have heretofore seemed to be, war in the nature of things was inevitable between them ... The hand of God is in this affair, but how it will turn out favourably to the Mission, it is impossible to shew. The Lord direct our course. I have seen by my glass that Dingarn has been sitting most of the morning since this dreadful affair in the centre of his town ...⁶²⁴

To Dingarn's message this morning, I sent as guarded a reply as I could ... I was quite ready to go myself; but Wm. Wood, my young Interpreter was too much petrified for me to ask him to accompany me.⁶²⁵

It happened that, just after the execution of the Boers, the American missionary Rev. Henry Isaac Venable, accompanied by his interpreter James Brownlee, 'reached the capital on Tuesday [6 February] at one p.m.'⁶²⁶ and he provides another account from the time. The reverend wanted to talk to Dingane because Mungo, induna (headman) of Kongela, had 'issued an order forbidding the people, men or women, to attend our instructions'. Informed by the king's prime minister, Umhlela, about the killing of the Boers, he saw for himself 'the vultures ... hovering over their lifeless bodies'.⁶²⁷ According to Jane Bird, they had 'swooped down on to the bodies of the victims' as soon as the Zulu had left the place of slaughter.⁶²⁸ And when on 9 February Richard Hulley, Owen's interpreter, returned from Port Natal to uMgungundlovu, a week later than expected, he reported that he 'observed a large flock of vultures hovering over the place of the dead'.⁶²⁹ In the end, more than a hundred people had been murdered, some seventy Boers, 'about thirty-eight achter-ryders

⁶²⁴ Hulley (1880, 10) reports that Dingane said to Owen after the murder: 'I was told also that you stood on the front of the wagon with your glass in your hand, and that when you saw what was going on [killing the Boers] you fell down in a faint, and were taken up insensible.' It shows that Owen and his small party had been under close surveillance.

⁶²⁵ Owen ed. Cory 1926, 106–109.

⁶²⁶ Kotzé 1950, 237 (for this and the following quotes). See also Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 216; Kotzé 1950, 10–16 (Henry Isaac Venable), 80 n 3 (James Brownlee); Becker 1979, 225–226.

⁶²⁷ Kotzé 1950, 237. Coetzer was possibly referring to the vultures when he painted birds approaching kwaMatiwane in his monochrome oil (fig. 13.4).

⁶²⁸ Moodie 1888, 427 (Jane Bird).

⁶²⁹ Hulley 1880, 7, confirmed by Owen ed. Cory 1926, 112 (9.2.1838).

(grooms) and servants' and Thomas Halstead, the English interpreter.⁶³⁰ According to Hulley's recollection of 1880, Dingane justified the murder saying

... during your absence the Boers arrived; I kept them waiting as long as I could, expecting you to return with Capt. Gardiner and John Cane, but when I could keep them no longer I had put them out of harm's way. I see that every white man is an enemy to the black; every black man is an enemy to the white; they do not love each other, and never will.⁶³¹

Murder of Retief broadly follows the narratives of the three English eyewitnesses, Owen, Wood and Bird, but the individual representation and general composition are filtered by Afrikaner intentions. The slaughter of Retief and his men is shown on top of kwaMatiwane, where executions ordered by Dingane took place.⁶³² As reported by Wood, Retief is shown as the last to die, forced to witness the massacre of his people. The Boers are generally older in appearance than in the maquette, where the two foreground figures might have represented the young boys in the Boer party; whether one of the younger unbearded Boers in the final frieze was meant as a reference to Retief's son Pieter is possible but not recorded. It is significant that the marble diverges from Wood's account in an essential detail and follows the consistent recollections of Zulu eyewitnesses mentioned above. One of them, Nduna ka Manqina, reported on 27.4.1910 when he was about thirty years old:

The Boers came up, they came up outside the *umuzi*. They tried to surround Mgungundhlovu, but could not do so. He [Dingane] said, 'Do you see?' The warriors said, 'Let them be killed'. He said, 'I shall not order the men to carry assegais in case the Boers become suspicious.' He said, 'Ndhela, gather the men of the army. They must carry dancing shields [*amahau*], and not war shields [*izihlangu*], and also *izikwili* sticks. (*Isiqayi* – a very stout cudgel, not a knobbed stick (*isagila*), say 2 foot 6 inches in length). I shall hold a dance for them. I shall tell them, "I shall hold a dance for you. You will watch. After the dance I shall give you your cattle and you can take them away." He said, 'See, Ndhela, tell the men that two songs will be sung. At the second song I shall do this with my hand' [wave left and over the left shoulder]. The men of the Zulu sang. 'We have two, three *inkondhlo* dances; they wind about; they turn all over the place; we shall dance this way, and not that way' – this is the chorus they sang ... Dignana waved his hand. Upon this the men of the army poured into the *isigodhlo*. For each Boer who died, one of Dingana's men died. They finished them off. That was where Piti died, the chief of the Boers.⁶³³

Like other Zulu, Nduna ka Manqina emphasised that the trekkers were executed with 'izikwili sticks', described in his report as 'very stout cudgels (*isiqaya*) ..., say 2 foot 6 inches in length', but not knobkieries as recounted by Wood, or assegais, the Zulu military weapon par excellence. The use of sticks was probably regarded as an act of severe humiliation. The *Official Guide* takes this for granted when it states that the trekkers 'were beaten to death with sticks and stones'.⁶³⁴ Here it is the Zulu tradition which provided the sharper ideological edge for shaping the Afrikaner narrative of the Great Trek. And, accordingly, Moerdyk explains in the *Official Guide*,

630 For the assassinated victims listed by name, see Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 402 (quote); Nathan 1937, 212–213. A report of the only survivor of the massacre, a black servant of Retief, is quoted by Owen ed. Cory 1926, 47 n 1.

631 Hulley 1880, 8.

632 Moodie 1888, 427; Kotzé 1950, 223–224 n 5; Becker 1979, 82–83, 225–226.

633 *James Stuart Archive* 5, 2001, 7–8 § 27. For further Zulu reports, see *James Stuart Archive* 1, 1976, 319 § 13 (testimony of Lunguza ka Mpukane from 14.3.1909); 4, 1986, 263 § 135 (testimony of Ndukwana ka Mbengwana from 18.10.1897); 6, 2014, 253 § 95 (testimony of Tununu ka Nonjiya from 1.6.1903), 260–261 § 8–9 (testimony of Tununu ka Nonjiya from 30.5.1903).

634 *Official Guide* 1955, 49 (repeated in Heymans 1986, 22; Potgieter 1987, 24; Heymans and Theart-Peddle 2009, 27). Bantjes records for 21 December 1838, when Retief and his men were found at kwaMatiwane, 'the sticks and spokes [sic] with which they have been beaten, were found by thousands, ... some were those with which they danced, and some were poles wheron they built there houses, or wherewith they plant their fortifications' (Chase, *Annals* 2, 1843, 67). But no eyewitness mentions stones (or the impalement of Boers as claimed by Cilliers; see *Treaty*).

Because assegais dared not be used in the royal kraal, they were beaten to death with sticks and stones.⁶³⁵ Retief was kept alive to the last, so that he might watch the martyrdom of his son, his friends and his servants. Then he was killed. At the order of Dingaan his heart and liver were then removed and buried in the path along which the Trekkers had come to the kraal. Retief is represented just before his death, fearless and defiant, with head erect, to symbolise the victory of European civilization over barbarism.⁶³⁶

Like the other Boers, Retief, their leader, does not show any expression of pain or emotion but only calm and composure – in contrast to their adversaries who look fierce or resolute. The facial control of the Boers is antithetical to their tortured bodies. In this respect they are portrayed as legendary heroes and martyrs who are stoic in the face of torture, similar to images of Christians being stoned or burned to death for their faith. This is particularly true of Retief (fig. 13.14), the only Boer still upright, who is forced by the Zulu to direct his gaze – and that of the viewer – towards the slaughter of his people. A religious reading of his martyr-like demeanour was not missed by commentators: Jan Gerritze Bantjes, one of the trekkers who reported on the finding of Retief’s bones on about 21 December 1838, commented ‘O horrible martyrdom!!!’⁶³⁷ and Cloete even called the hillock of kwaMatiwane ‘the Boers’ “Golgotha”.⁶³⁸ The decision to portray the Boers as unresisting victims in the frieze underlined a concept of martyrdom, as opposed to portraying them fighting back, as Coetzer did in his monochrome painting, and as described by Erasmus Smit in his diary on 22 March that year:

The patrol from the camp of du Plessis has captured 2 spies of Dingaan, who have related that our Governor Piet Retief and all his men were killed without their having their weapons with them but that they defended themselves with their pocket knives, and killed a number of Kaffirs, and that Dingaan had them killed because His Excellency P. Retief had not brought back with them the head of Sekonyela.⁶³⁹

For the first time in the frieze, black people are the victors and white trekkers the victims, albeit as the result of treachery rather than a battle. And, in contrast to when Boers overcome Zulu, as in the Battle of Blood River, the rhetoric of defeat is so radical that not a single trekker can escape death. In *Murder of Retief* extinction is absolute. The motifs chosen to distinguish winners and losers can be related to different ancient traditions. While Retief has the unwavering habitus of Christian martyrs, the two supine Boers and the crouching trekker on the left echo motifs of defeated or dying figures from Hellenistic and Roman imagery (fig. 13.15).⁶⁴⁰ The Zulu, again, dressed in knee-length

⁶³⁵ But the only survivor of the massacre on 6 February 1838, one of Retief’s black servants, recalls that Dingane’s warriors used assegais which ‘were all concealed in front of their feet when they sat. The dry dung and dust of the Kraal was piled over them ... My master was one of the last to fall. I saw the assegai pierce his breast, below the throat’ (Cory 1926, 47 n 1). This seems to have been a common belief as Erasmus Smit (trans. Mears 1972, 134; Dutch text: ed. Scholtz 1988, 159) reports on 31 August 1838, when a Zulu prisoner was sentenced to death by the Boer Council, that our people ‘will not torture you with 30, 40, and 50 stabs [“steken”], as you and your people have slowly murdered our people in the cruellest way; but your death will be short and compassionate’. The idea of the assegais hidden in the dust was used in the 1938 film *Die bou van ’n nasie*, where they were revealed as the Zulu danced and seen by Retief’s son just before the attack.

⁶³⁶ *Official Guide* 1955, 49–50. The Council no doubt also had the Bloukrans massacre in mind.

⁶³⁷ Chase, *Annals* 2, 1943, 67; for Bantjes, see Naidoo 1985, 195, 200–201.

⁶³⁸ Cloete 1899, 100.

⁶³⁹ Smit trans. Mears 1972, 96–97 (Dutch text: Smit ed. Scholtz 1988, 125). That the trekkers were dependent on second-hand reports, because none of the Retief party had survived, meant that they had no certainty about Retief’s fate, as demonstrated by another diary entry on 26 June (ibid., 118) that a black in the Maritz laager ‘reported that the Old Boss (His Excellency Piet Retief) and 5 others sit alive in bonds with King Dingaan. Many reports, which we have, from time to time, heard concerning this matter agree with one another, but the whole matter still remains without certainty for us. May God grant that His Excellency and the others still alive [sic]!’

⁶⁴⁰ Stewart 2004, esp. 1–10, 171 fig. 193, passim.

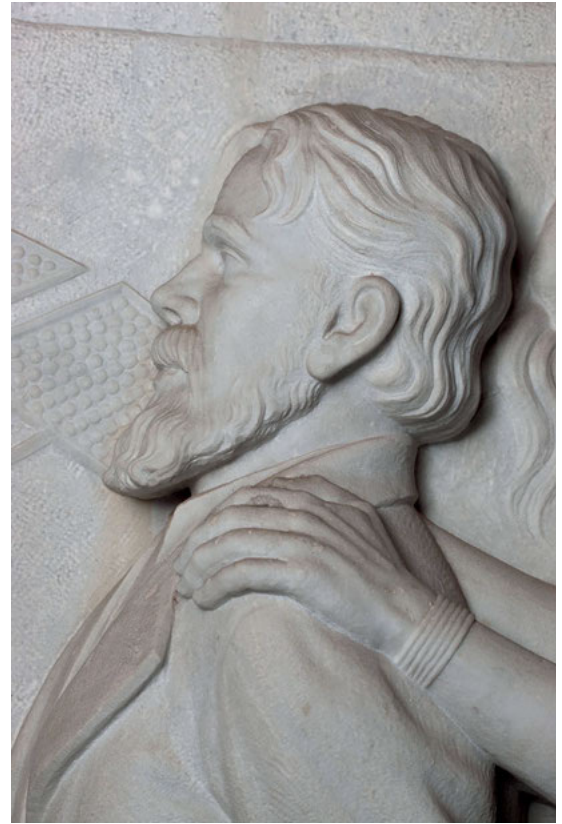


Figure 13.14: Retief as martyr in *Murder of Retief*. Marble, details of fig. 13.1 (photo Russell Scott)

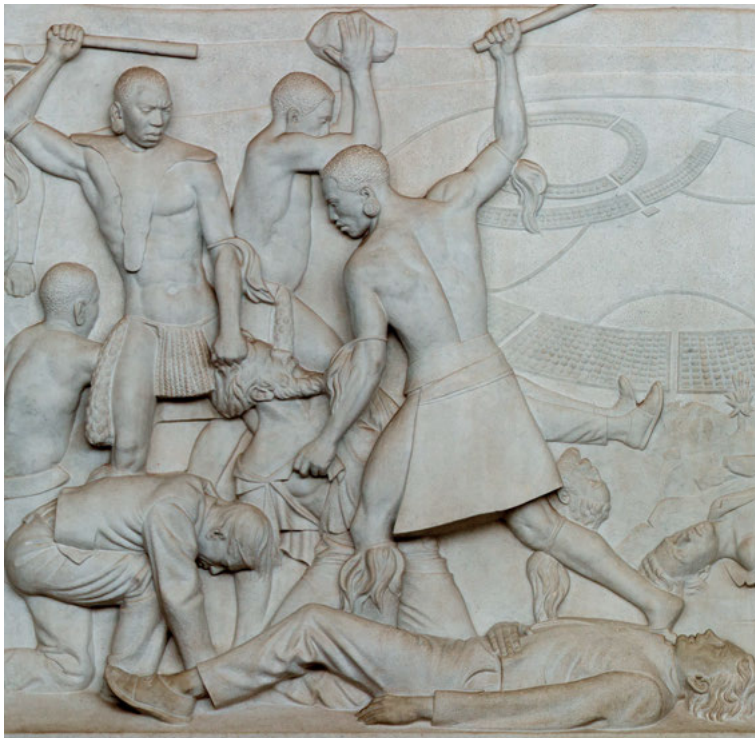


Figure 13.15: Zulu killing Boers in *Murder of Retief*. Marble, details of fig. 13.1 (photo Russell Scott)

aprons and killing with raised sticks, are reminiscent of figures from ancient Egypt, especially the two on the left who grasp the hair or clothing of the collapsing Boer that they attack with their sticks, which recalls Pharaoh smiting the enemy.⁶⁴¹ Whether the sculptors deployed these motifs deliberately or not is irrelevant. Important is the fact that their eclecticism, related to established ancient traditions, can colour the way viewers read the historical narrative of the frieze.

On 14 February 1945, when the finished plaster panels were provisionally installed in the Monument, a *Rand Daily Mail* reporter gained access to the Hall of Heroes. On the following day, as discussed in more detail in *Bloukrans*, he published a reproachful article under the headline ‘Gruesome friezes in Voortrekker Monument’ (fig. 14.23), in which he criticised the violence in *Bloukrans* and *Murder of Retief*. He remarks about the latter:

The martyrdom of Piet Retief and his comrades is illustrated by a picture of the Boers lying prostrate while savage warriors beat them to death with clubs and rocks. Retief is shown standing while his legs are bound.

These episodes could have been portrayed just as adequately if more subtle and impressionistic methods had been used. It is quite possible to do justice to the events without exciting passions of hatred and antagonism.⁶⁴²

It is an interesting indication of thinking of the time – even in a ‘liberal’ newspaper – that the scenes of black brutality to whites were considered offensive and likely to incite hostility, but no comment was made about scenes where blacks were the victims. Due to ongoing public and political pressure the obnoxious motif of a Zulu about to dash a little child against a wagon wheel in the plaster relief of *Bloukrans*, which the reporter had used to illustrate the article, was ultimately changed – while, less in the limelight, *Murder of Retief* attracted less attention and remained unaltered.

Two personal objects associated with Retief in the frieze distinguish the trekkers’ first governor and commander-general: the satchel at his feet and the richly adorned flask that hangs over Retief’s shoulder (fig. 13.14). The satchel is a topic of controversial debate,⁶⁴³ discussed fully in *Treaty*. Here it signals that the land treaty between Dingane and Retief had indeed been signed and stored away safely in the leather case, awaiting its discovery by Pretorius’ men after the Boers’ landslide victory over the Zulu in the Battle of Blood River.

The flask is based on one of green glass ascribed to Retief in the collection of the uMsunduzi Museum and Voortrekker Complex in Pietermaritzburg, which has been identified as a Masonic flask (figs 13.10–13.12). In the frieze its Masonic symbols have clearly been the model, yet they were either disfigured or omitted to obscure a clear reading. More or less accurately copied are the aedicule with its square-cut tiled pavement, the shape of the central triangle and the eye-like motif within the arch, both surrounded by rays. The alterations and omissions of well-known Masonic symbols are distinct: the letter ‘G’ in the triangle is replaced by flames; the open book with square and compass is disfigured into a meaningless zig-zag line; the keystone is now adorned with an odd bearded mask; the moon on the flask’s left shoulder is transformed into a sun/flower with petals arranged like rays; the sickle-shaped ornament ending in four curved stripes on the opposite shoulder is incomprehensible. Omitted from the flask’s decoration in the frieze are Jacob’s ladder with the quarter moon surrounded by seven stars, the motifs of trowel and skull and crossbones next to the right column, and the crossed level cum plumb line and beehive below the pavement. W.H. Coetzer, who introduced the bottle in his drawing, merely indicates that there is some sort of decoration, but the small clay maquette depicts the general adornment of the flask as shown in the frieze: aedicule with pavement and keystone; blank triangle and eye, both partly framed by rays; the two ornaments on the shoulder, the sun/flower on the bottle’s left and the unintelligible décor

⁶⁴¹ Luiselli 2011.

⁶⁴² NARSSA, BNS 146/73/3 (another copy is in Cape Town, National Library).

⁶⁴³ Naidoo 1985, 197–199.

on the right (fig. 13.10). Yet it is close enough to the uMsunduzi flask to suggest that Frikkie Kruger, the sculptor of this scene, had access to the original bottle or a good representation of it, such as the one reproduced in both the 1935 and 1937 guides of the *Voortrekker-Museum Pietermaritzburg*.⁶⁴⁴

As already mentioned, one extant Yates photograph of the full-size clay panel in an incomplete state (fig. 13.8) shows the flask rough and unfinished with no details, and the background without Dingane's capital, which suggests that these details were left till last, while the figures are for the most part complete. A later photograph taken by Yates shows the completed relief (fig. 13.9); here, however, the flask is so out of focus that we can only identify the outlines of the aedicule with pavement and cornerstone, the triangle and eye, and the centre of the flower/sun, but no further detail. Our examination of the changes to the container's final form leads us to conclude that Moerdyk or the SVK were interested in using Retief's glass flask to identify him but, at the same time, kept the representation of Masonic imagery to a minimum. The likely assumption that Retief would not have carried a breakable glass flask when he visited uMgungundlovu on horseback – because if he had it would hardly have survived the brutal attack on his person and been preserved to become a museum artefact – adds a further layer of historical distortion to the scene, discussed in more details in the appendix, 'Retief's Masonic flask'.

The debate about *Murder of Retief* does not rest. A seemingly small matter in the minutes of the Dagbestuur in 1966 highlights the meandering and conflicting pathways of Afrikaner readings:

The secretary read to the meeting an exchange of correspondence with the Secretary of Coloured Affairs and between him and PP Stander and the Chairman in relation to the desirability or not of appropriately commemorating the 'agterryers' [grooms or servants] of Piet Retief who were murdered with the Voortrekker party. The meeting resolved that the letter of the secretary of 20 July 1966 to the Secretary of Coloured Affairs be approved and that it should also be noted that there is already a plate on the relevant panel in the Voortrekker Monument and that on it mention is made of the murdered 'agterryers' of Retief.⁶⁴⁵

Yet the plate on the relevant scene merely reads 'The Murder of Retief and His Men' and does not mention the slaughtered 'agterryers'.⁶⁴⁶ One wonders whether the caption was kept deliberately general as 'his men' can be understood either inclusively or exclusively, depending on the political proclivities of the reader. There is little doubt, however, that in its Afrikaner context 'his men' refers to the Boers as no other victims are portrayed. One might surmise that, if the role of the servants was considered at all, it was felt that the inclusion of blacks amongst the murder victims here or in the succeeding *Bloukrans* scene would have undermined the predominant theme of the distinctive opposition of blacks and whites in the narrative of the frieze.

Unique in the frieze is the staging of *Murder of Retief* on top of a hill and the topographical connection to an aerial view on uMgungundlovu in the background (fig. 13.16), as shown, for example, in an etching by E. Whimper in Holden's 1855 *History of the colony of Natal* (fig. 13.17),⁶⁴⁷ and later mooted in Coetzer's drawing and in a number of his works (figs 13.3, 13.4).⁶⁴⁸ Without prior geographical knowledge, however, the relationship is almost impossible to understand and shows that the task of linking the two topographies with consistent perspective had overtaxed the capabilities of the sculptors. The view of uMgungundlovu is inaccurate, taken from roughly north-west of where kwaMatiwane is situated; the general organisation of the capital, however, is broadly

⁶⁴⁴ Basson 1935, 7 with fig.

⁶⁴⁵ 12.2.1966: 8.

⁶⁴⁶ Communication with the research staff at the Monument has not uncovered reference to any plaque other than the current one.

⁶⁴⁷ Oberholster (1972, 268) erroneously attributes this to 'Capt. Allen Gardiner: A Narrative of a Journey to the Zoolu Country in South Africa' (here Gardiner 1836).

⁶⁴⁸ It was also shown in Coetzer's depiction of *Dingaanstat* (oil, 23 × 22 cm), reproduced in Coetzer 1947 (fig. opp. p.199).



Figure 13.16: Aerial view of uMgungundlovu in *Murder of Retief*. Marble, detail of fig. 13.1 (photo Russell Scott)

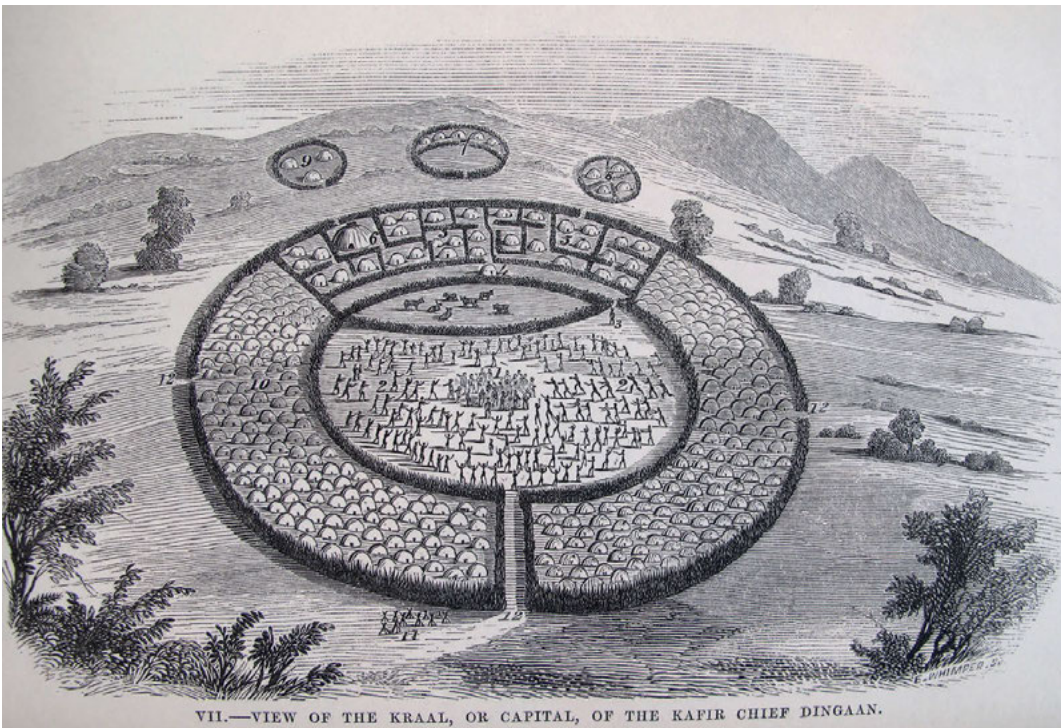


Figure 13.17: E. Whimper. *View of the kraal, or capital, of the kafir chief Dingaan. Umgungundlovu.* Etching (Holden 1855, opp. p.81)

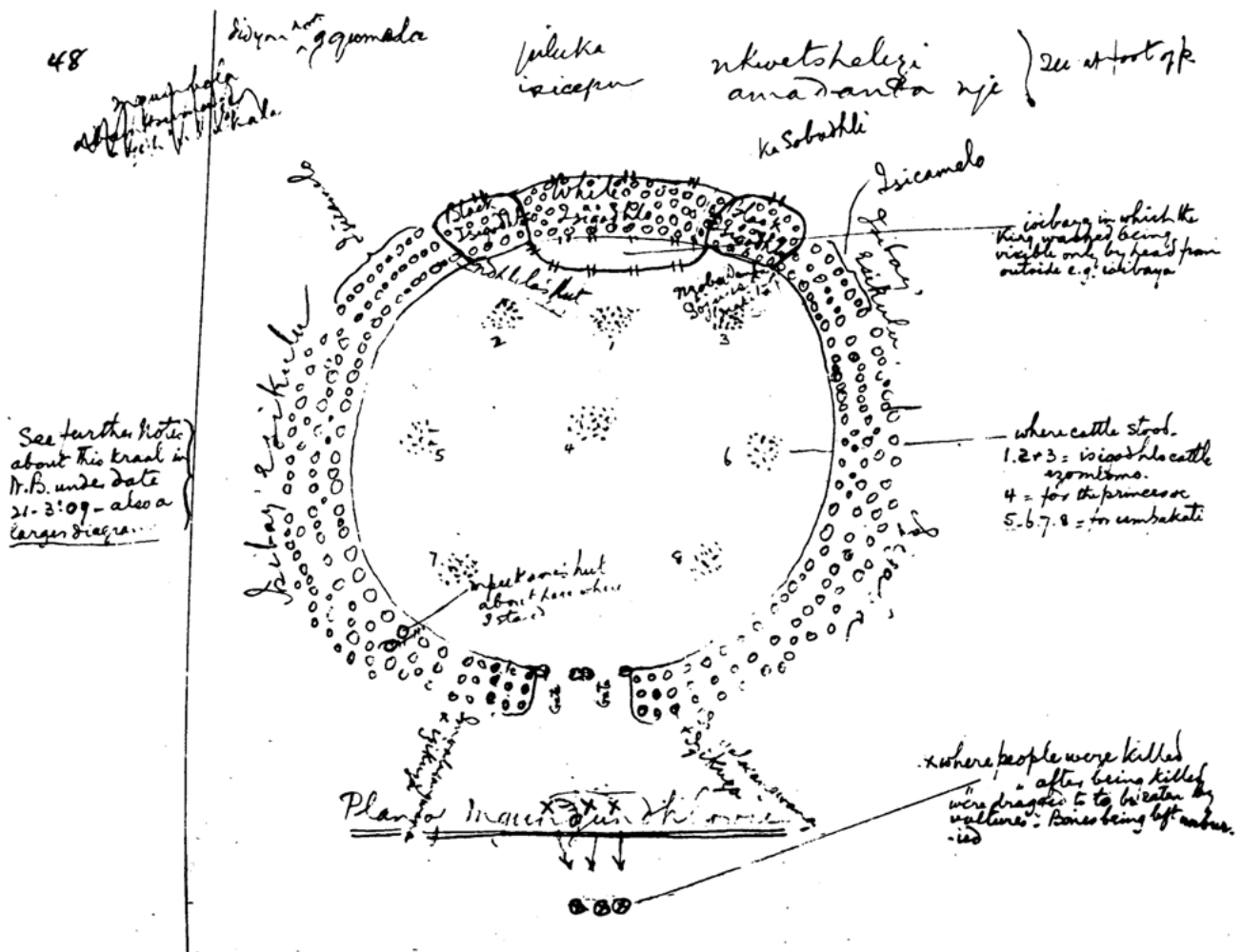


Figure 13.18: Sketch of uMgungundlovu following the recollection of Lunguza ka Mpukane, 11.3.1909 (James Stuart Archive 1, 1976, 309)

speaking correct, drawing on the available records, although details of the layout and inner structure are clearly idealised.

In 1829, after Dingane had taken part in the murder of his predecessor, King Shaka (c. 1787–1828), and himself occupied the Zulu throne, he had started to have his colossal capital built, naming it uMgungundlovu or emGungundlovu, ‘the place that encloses the elephant’.⁶⁴⁹ It lay in the heart of the fertile and abundantly watered ‘Valley of the Zulu Kings’, situated about 110 kilometres east of present-day Ladysmith. While uMgungundlovu is known from early drawings and records,⁶⁵⁰ important additional information was published by John Parkington and Mike Cronin based on a review of the historical descriptions and the fieldwork carried out by the archaeological department of the University of Cape Town in January 1974 and July 1975.⁶⁵¹ Before the close of 1829 Dingane moved into his new capital with large numbers of women and warriors. James Stuart

⁶⁴⁹ Laband 1995, 64.

⁶⁵⁰ Gardiner 1836, 200–201; Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 202–203 (Journal of Mr. Champion, 17 January 1836); Oberholster and Walton 1963; Oberholster 1972, 268–272; James Stuart Archive 1, 1976, 308–311 (interview of Lunguza ka Mpukane on 13.3.1909, who lived there at the time the Boers were killed and provided a detailed description of the residence); Muller 1978, 12 fig. 5, 55 figs 15–16, 58 fig. 27; Parkington and Cronin 1979, 133–136 figs 1–4; Laband 1995, 64–71; Raper, Möller and Du Plessis 2014, 515.

⁶⁵¹ For here and the following, see Parkington and Cronin 1979.

(1868–1942), who was born in Pietermaritzburg, brought up among Zulu speakers, and a ‘Clerk and Interpreter to Resident Commissioner and Chief Magistrate’, provides perhaps the most detailed and informative plan of uMgungundlovu (fig. 13.18).⁶⁵² Roughly oval in shape, uMgungundlovu consisted of some 1 100 huts, mainly for Dingane’s warriors, which were arranged in either four, five or six rows like two horns framing a central area, a vast stretch of ground intended mainly for military celebrations: ‘with maximum and minimum diameters of about 570 m north-south and 500 m east-west, with an area of about 22 hectares. The circumference would have been about 1.7 km.’⁶⁵³ At the top, or eastern section, and dominating the inner area, was the ‘isigodlo’ (royal enclosure) of Dingane and his large (female) entourage, cut off from the rest of the city by a thorn-bush hedge.

... Although all the huts of emGungundlovu were equally well built none was as large or attractive as the *indlu enkulu*, Dingane’s private abode ... No less than twenty feet high and twenty in diameter the royal hut towered over the rest of the seraglio. It was built on an eminence so that at all times Dingane could view not only the entire settlement but also the country beyond, stretching to the hills on the horizon.⁶⁵⁴

Recent archaeological research confirms this description and adds important details about the structure of the capital.⁶⁵⁵ As regards the frieze, it seems remarkable that it includes such a specific rendering of uMgungundlovu, the stronghold of the enemy. In some ways it suggests the respect that Afrikaners had for the Zulu, but also that it was felt that the verification of Zulu detail would add to the authenticity of the Voortrekker story as a whole. More importantly, however, no other image in the frieze would have been able to capture the power of the Zulu people more compellingly than the representation of Dingane’s residence. It emphasised the magnitude of the force the Boers eventually succeeded in breaking, shown in two triumphant scenes, *Blood River* and *Death of Dingane*.

⁶⁵² James Stuart Archive 1, 1976, 309. In one of his notebooks Stuart described his objective ‘to collect native custom so universally and thoroughly as to become an authority on it and compare it with existing legislation &c., &c.’ (James Stuart Archive 1, 1976, xiii–xiv).

⁶⁵³ Parkington and Cronin 1979, 143.

⁶⁵⁴ Becker 1979, 79–80. A contemporary drawing of the interior is provided by Allen Gardiner (1836, opp. p.201).

⁶⁵⁵ Mitchell 2002, 373–376.



Figure 13.19: Masonic flask, GIV-4 type. c. 1815–30. Green glass, 21 × 11.5 cm. Keene-Marlboro-Street Glass Works, Keene, New Hampshire, USA (courtesy of uMsunduzi Museum Collection; photo the authors)

Appendix: Retief's Masonic flask

The flask's biography

The flask reputed to have belonged to Retief is kept in the former Voortrekker Museum, now part of the uMsunduzi Museum Collection in Pietermaritzburg (fig. 13.19).⁶⁵⁶ Like a 'decanter flask' it is made of relatively heavy thick glass, 'clear forest green in color',⁶⁵⁷ and measures about 21 cm in height, with a width of 11.5 cm (mid-section) and 7.5 cm (base).⁶⁵⁸ On the eagle side the rim of the bottle neck is slightly damaged, and the flask shows numerous small marks of the production process. The container has vertically ribbed sides, a fire-polished finish, 'glass tipped pontil scar',⁶⁵⁹ and was blown in a two-piece hinge mould (see below).⁶⁶⁰ Later, metal fixings, to accommodate a strap for its user to carry it, and a silver bottle top were added.

The more elaborate front design – substantially changed in the frieze – is dominated by Masonic emblems, most prominently by an archway with keystone supported by two columns on high pedestals that stand on a pavement of 34 square tiles,⁶⁶¹ a structure meant to represent the entrance to King Solomon's temple. The architecture is complemented by an ordered assembly of Masonic symbols. Between the columns is a radiant triangle enclosing the letter 'G' (standing for God or the Grand Architect of the universe), above it an open book with set square and compass in a rectangular format and, on top of that, God's radiant all-seeing eye. Alongside the right-hand column is 'Jacobs ladder ascending to "cloudy Canopy" or "Star Decked Heaven", represented by radiant quarter moon surrounded by 7 stars at right of archway',⁶⁶² complemented on the other side by a blazing sun. Left of the other column are a trowel, skull and crossbones, and, below the pavement, level cum plumb line and beehive. The decoration of the other side is less dense and apparently inspired by the US coat of arms (fig. 13.20).⁶⁶³ Below a decorative pennant is a frontal depiction of an eagle, the head turned to its right, holding a branch in its right claw that is not easy to identify, perhaps the Masonic sprig of acacia. Below the eagle the initials 'J • K / B•' are framed by a horizontal oval with a bead-like pattern.

To the present day, the flask has been regarded as an extraordinary container for water and linked to Piet Retief by most. Helperus Hofstede called it his 'canteen' (Veldflesch), while in the first catalogue of the Voortrekker Museum in Pietermaritzburg it is classified as 'Piet Retief's

⁶⁵⁶ Illustrations rarely show the eagle (Becker 1979, fig. opp. p.209; Smail 1968, unpaginated, fig. bottom left, opp. 'Bible Presentation'), but usually the Masonic symbols: Hofstede 1876, drawing opp. p.50 (reproduced by Butler 1974, 280); Preller, *Retief* 1930, fig. opp. p.262, 363; Basson 1935, 7 with fig.; *Huisgenoot* 1938, 105 with fig.; Van Rooyen, *Kultuurskatte* 1, 1938, 163–164 with fig.; Groenewald and Bresler 1955, 53 with fig.; *Voortrekkermuseum Pietermaritzburg* 1955, 17 with fig.; *Voortrekkermuseum Pietermaritzburg* 1982, 21 with fig. The richly illustrated 1962 guidebook *Voortrekkermuseum Pietermaritzburg* (for the major part based on Basson 1935), however, does not include a photograph of the flask. One wonders whether it was perhaps suppressed because, as was possibly the case for the frieze, the bottle's Masonic decoration was regarded as inappropriate.

⁶⁵⁷ Email from Bill Lindsey (29.12.2018), a specialist of historical American bottles: 'Actually, after looking at the images again, along with some other more pure "clear olive green" flasks and bottles I have, I would lean towards calling it a "clear forest green" in color ... Those heavier flasks would have held up better to their use as a canteen as most other flasks of the time.' We gratefully acknowledge his detailed advice about US Masonic flasks of the earlier nineteenth century in general and the Pietermaritzburg example in particular.

⁶⁵⁸ Information kindly provided by Elrica Henning (Head of the Department of Research, Information and Collections) and Slindokuhle Ngobese (Collection's Officer), both uMsunduzi and Ncome Museums.

⁶⁵⁹ Bill Lindsey (email 29.12.2018) clarified: 'Typical of the earlier Keene Masonic flasks like yours, usually with heavy glass ..., what I see is what is called a "glass tipped pontil scar".'

⁶⁶⁰ McKearin and Wilson 1978, 12–14, 513 (form group I, no. 8).

⁶⁶¹ For the terminology of Masonic emblems, see *ibid.*, 591 GIV–1.

⁶⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶⁶³ *Ibid.*, 437. McKearin and Wilson (1978, 412) further note that 'the eagles on the Masonic flasks' were not given the same 'careful attention' as their twins on early historical flasks (441–444).

Water Bottle' (Waterflës).⁶⁶⁴ Yet this type of flask with the same volume, design and composition of symbols, Masonic icons on the front and a version of the American eagle on the back, is well known: it was used for liquor, not water; the standard size is a pint and the height usually around 20 cm. Such flasks were produced and distributed in the early nineteenth-century United States and Canada only. That the Pietermaritzburg flask found its way to South Africa makes it a rare exception.⁶⁶⁵ The motif of the American eagle, intended to emphasise the Masons' accord with state sovereignty, was not exclusive to Masonic flasks, but was the predominant image of 'historical flasks' whose production in the United States started around 1820.⁶⁶⁶ According to Helen McKearin and Kenneth Wilson – who published the 779-page standard volume *American bottles and flasks and their ancestry* in 1978 – the earliest examples of the Masonic flasks were manufactured between c. 1815 and 1830 for communal Masonic drinking.⁶⁶⁷ In the 1830s their production seems to have ceased, linked by McKearin and Wilson to the then widespread anti-Masonic sentiment and, in its wake, the ineligibility of Freemasons for public office.⁶⁶⁸ We attribute the Pietermaritzburg type by analogy to the Keene-Marlboro-Street Glass Works (Keene, New Hampshire), including bottles with the maker's 'J • K / B •' mark (not yet deciphered), namely the 'comparatively scarce' and quite similar groups of McKearin and Wilson GIV-3 and GIV-4 type.⁶⁶⁹ Recently Bill Lindsey, author of a professional US Historical Bottle Website,⁶⁷⁰ clarified that

the McKearin & Wilson attribution is solid and likely supported by archaeological evidence that was unstated in the book. Much attribution is thanks to the work of Henry Hall White back in the early 1900s, who excavated many of the old glass works sites including Keene⁶⁷¹ ... It [is] virtually certain ... that both sides of your flask are GIV-4.⁶⁷²

The new evidence discussed provides further background to the assumption that Retief owned this flask. It seems to be first mentioned in Hofstede (1876), where a (rather inaccurate) drawing of the container is provided in his history of the Transvaal (fig. 13.21).⁶⁷³ Evidently Retief's ownership was so well established by the time Hofstede was writing that he felt able to add the flask as proof of the identification of Retief's corpse on kwaMatiwane.⁶⁷⁴ he claims that Retief was recognised by a leather satchel containing the treaty with Dingane as well as 'a green glass canteen with silver fittings' (een groene met zilver gemonteerde glazen veldflesch).⁶⁷⁵ This is highly unlikely, however,

664 Hofstede 1876, opp. p.50; *Voortrekker Museum Pietermaritzburg* 1912, 83.

665 'I've never heard of any of the regular GIV series of Masonic flasks being found in South Africa or anywhere else but the US and Canada (my area of study ...); the pictured example you sent is the first to my memory' (Bill Lindsey, email 24.12.2018).

666 McKearin and Wilson 1978, 440–491. Further information on Masonic flasks and the distinct GIV-3/4 (Pietermaritzburg) type is provided at <https://sha.org/bottle/liquor.htm#Masonic%20Flasks>, and www.peachridgeglass.com/2012/04/the-giv-masonic-eagle-historical-flask/.

667 See below, 'Retief and Freemasonry in Grahamstown'.

668 McKearin and Wilson 1978, 439–440.

669 *Ibid.*, esp. 102–103, 414–417, 592–593 (quote), GIV-3/–4 (with drawings).

670 <https://sha.org/bottle/about.htm>

671 Bill Lindsey email 24.12.2018. He added that he has 'to disagree with Bill [Lockhart] for a variety of reasons as to any likelihood that the flask was blown in England'. Lindsey refers here to Lockhart, Schriever, Lindsey and Serr 2016, a joint article in which Lockhart had tentatively attributed the McKearin and Wilson GIV-3 and GIV-4 flasks to John Kilner companies which produced similar liquor containers from 1842 to 1844 in Castelford, Yorkshire.

672 Lindsey email 29.12.2018.

673 Hofstede's drawing of the flask (1876, opp. p.50), reproduced by Butler (1974, 280), has many mistakes: 1) the level crossed by a plumb line, the beehive, the skull between crossed bones and the (sun) rays around the eye and the moon are not represented; 2) the position of sun and moon is inverted; 3) the stairs leading to the mosaic pavement, the mallet next to the right column and the 'G' in the apex of the arch, and a 'J' on the right-hand column are additional inventions; 4) more stars are added to the original three and their design is overly articulated.

674 See Naidoo 1985, 194–197. Elrica Henning, uMsunduzi Museum, wrote of the claim that she 'grew up with it (word of mouth)', probably one of the most efficient modes to keep such readings of history strong.

675 Hofstede 1876, 49 (both quotes). It is remarkable that the accuracy of Hofstede's statement has never been questioned.

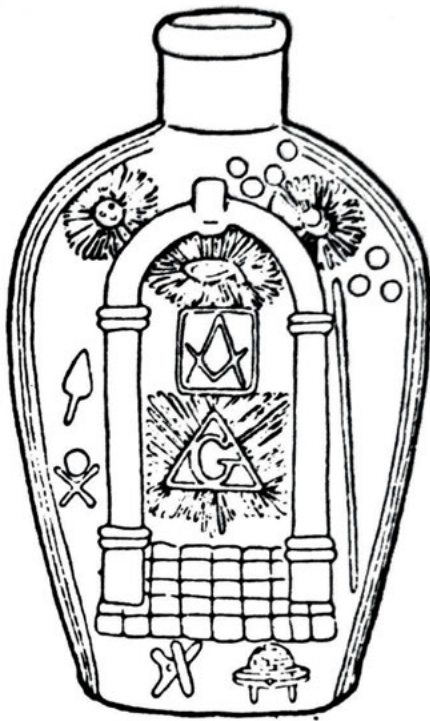


Figure 13.20: Obverse and reverse drawing of GIV-4 type flask (McKearin and Wilson 1978, 593 GIV-4) next to uMsunduzi flask (photos the authors)



Figure 13.21:
‘Veldflesch van
Wijlen P. Retief’.
Drawing of flask in
fig. 13.19 (Hofstede
1876, opp. p.50)

when none of the eyewitness reports mentioned this remarkable object. Moreover, it is hard to imagine that a flask made of glass and in the near pristine condition of this example was one that had survived the brutal force of the Zulu when murdering Retief, especially considering that they – if the eyewitness report of William Wood quoted in the main text is correct – extracted his heart and liver in a bestial mutilation of his body.

Hofstede provides further information in the caption of the drawing that assists in reconstructing its history:

Canteen from the late P[ieter] Retief, now in possession of the gentleman Dr A[braham] van Velden, Minister of the Holy scripture. [Pieter]Maritzburg.⁶⁷⁶

As the names and dates of the ministers of Pietermaritzburg are known, A. van Velden must refer to the Dutch Reformed Church minister Dr Abraham van Velden, who was born on 27 October 1844 in Leuven, Belgium, and died on 6 March 1893 in Newcastle, Natal.⁶⁷⁷ In 1863 nineteen-year-old Abraham began to study theology at the Theological Seminary in Stellenbosch, which was founded only four years earlier in 1859. On 5 March 1868 he was inducted as candidate Dutch Reformed Church minister. A few months later he moved to Pietermaritzburg to be ordained as minister (11 July), where his father, Dr Dirk van Velden (1813–78), had also served as minister for a few months in 1850 and again in 1852. On 22 October 1868 Abraham van Velden married Anna Margaretha Joubert

⁶⁷⁶ Ibid., opp. p.50: ‘Veldflesch van wijlen P[ieter]. Retief nu in bezit van den W[el].E[dele].Z[ij].G[eneesheer]. Heer A[braham]. Van Velden V[erbi]. D[ivni]. M[inister]. Maritzburg.’

⁶⁷⁷ All personal information is from the Archive of the Dutch Reformed Church (Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk = NGK) in South Africa, Stellenbosch, file no. K-Div 1455. We thank Prof. Em. Pieter Coertzen (Faculty of Theology, Stellenbosch) and archivist Karen Minnaar for their kind help. For a list of the Pietermaritzburg NGK ministers, see Groenewald and Bresler 1955, 61.

(1846–77) from Pietermaritzburg. His confession of alcoholism to the Dutch Reformed Church in 1879, perhaps related to the early death of his wife, led eventually to his dismissal from his ministry on 30 November that year.⁶⁷⁸ That he was once the keeper of the Masonic liquor flask adds a further layer to its convoluted biography.

Abraham van Velden's vita coincides well with the details provided by Hofstede, and would seem to confirm that the flask was kept in Pietermaritzburg before 1876. As already mentioned, we have good reason to doubt that Retief carried it at the time of his death, and it seems likely that he would have left such a flask in the camp with his other belongings, before he departed to sign a land treaty with Dingane. After his murder in uMgungundlovu on 6 February 1838, custom has it that his possessions passed on to his wife, Magdalena Johanna de Wet Retief (1782–1855),⁶⁷⁹ which would have led to the flask's arrival in Pietermaritzburg when she settled there in 1839/40, although some (ten?) years later she moved to Potchefstroom, where she died in 1855. To affirm the subsequent history of the flask in Pietermaritzburg, it must be surmised that she entrusted the flask to somebody there, though we do not know to whom. Here one may think of her good friends, Susanna and Erasmus Smit, or perhaps the minister Dirk van Velden, father of Abraham, who was the Masonic flask's next recorded owner.

The next mention of the flask is apparently in the catalogue published for the inauguration of the Voortrekker Museum in Pietermaritzburg on 16 December 1912. Here it is listed, one of 339 categorised items of the collection at the time, as the first object under 'XIII Miscellaneous', which repeats the claim that it was found on Retief's corpse, and adds the donors, a point that seems to have gone unnoticed:

Piet Retief's Water Bottle. Found on Piet Retief's remains on Matiwane Hill, Dingaanstad, 12 [sic] months after his murder. Matiwane Hill was the place of execution in the days of Dingaan. Donors: Curators of Theological Seminary, Stellenbosch. Mus. No. 298.⁶⁸⁰

The last two owners of the flask – the Theological Seminary in Stellenbosch and then the Voortrekker Museum – permit further conclusions. First, the flask was for an unknown time after 1876 and before 1912 in the possession of Stellenbosch's Dutch Reformed Church seminary – Abraham van Velden's alma mater – which by tendency was opposed to Freemasonry (see below). Second, within this timespan the curators of the seminary decided to donate the Masonic object to the Voortrekker Museum, an institution itself intimately related to the early Dutch Reformed Church ministry in Natal. Third, the return of Retief's flask to Pietermaritzburg, named in honour of him and Gerrit Maritz, fits well with the growing awareness of Afrikanerdom, which, we have suggested in our discussion of the frieze, led to its Masonic ornament being underplayed there some thirty years later.⁶⁸¹

The flask's Masonic links are consistently omitted in the *Voortrekker-Museum Pietermaritzburg* catalogue, but a remarkable shift in the flask's evaluation can be noticed in the 1930s when one compares the captions for its illustration in the different editions. In the duplicate editions of 1935 and 1937, M. Basson stated as matter of fact:

⁶⁷⁸ This information was kindly provided by Elize de Villiers, Archive of the Dutch Reformed Church, KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg (email 28.10.2016).

⁶⁷⁹ Gledhill and Gledhill 1980, 50–51; Visagie 2011, 415.

⁶⁸⁰ Voortrekker Museum Pietermaritzburg 1912, 83.

⁶⁸¹ A rare exception is Van Rooyen 1938, 163: 'On the bottle the freemason's emblems are clearly visible' (Op die fles is die kenteken van die vrymesselaars duidelik te sien).



Figure 13.22: W.H. Coetzer. Auction table with (probably Retief's) Masonic flask in 'Uittog uit Kaapland', detail of fig. 1.3. After September 1937 (photo courtesy of Museum Africa, no. 66/2194U)

Water flask of Piet Retief found on his remains at Umgungundhlovu, where he and 71 Burgers were massacred by the Zulus on Dec. [sic] 6, 1838.⁶⁸²

However, in the enlarged centenary edition published only a year later, Basson had rephrased the caption significantly:

Water flask alleged to have belonged to Pieter Retief who together with 70 Burgers were massacred at Umgungundhlovu, the Kraal of the Zulu King Dingaan, on the 6th Feb. 1838.⁶⁸³

In this publication the established reading of the flask – that it was found with Retief's remains at Umgungundhlovu as stated by Hofstede in 1876 and the Voortrekker Museum Catalogue from 1912 – was dropped. No explanation is given for why, suddenly, the container's ownership was only 'alleged' and its finding next to Retief's corpse omitted. One is tempted to ask whether the distancing of the Boers from the Masonic flask was linked to the anti-Freemasonry politics of the Dutch Reformed Church and Afrikaner nationalism in general around the time of the centenary of the Battle of Blood River. In the centenary edition of *Die Huisgenoot*, 'Piet Retief's canteen' is illustrated, but its meaning reduced to 'the only personal reminder of him which has remained', again without a word about its Masonic symbolism.⁶⁸⁴ Around the same time, in his revised drawing of *Departure* (fig. 1.3), Coetzer depicted a canteen identified by its unusual shape and the added fixing and strap as Retief's flask (fig. 13.22). The artist placed it, clearly visible with other glassware, on the auction table shown in front of a Dutch-gable house. Perhaps Coetzer intended to hint at Retief's central role in the visual narrative through this representation of his flask right at the outset, although he omitted any indication of the decoration.

⁶⁸² Basson 1935 and 1937, 7.

⁶⁸³ Basson 1938, 15.

⁶⁸⁴ Van der Walt 1938, 105 with fig.: 'Piet Retief se veldfles – al persoonlike herinnering aan hom wat bewaar gebly het.'

Retief and Freemasonry in Grahamstown

Hofstede makes a further claim. The illustration of the flask, he argues, ‘shall show my readers that Retief belonged to the order of the Freemasons’; Van Rooyen, on the other hand, records that: ‘It has been recounted that the canteen was given to Retief by the Freemasons of Grahamstown when he left the Colony,’⁶⁸⁵ which suggests that Retief was not necessarily a Mason himself. This requires further discussion.

The Freemasons were established in southern Africa in the eighteenth century, with the first independent (Grand) Lodge, De Goede Hoop at Cape Town, founded by the Dutch in 1772.⁶⁸⁶ About half a century later, the 1820 settlers from England founded a second Lodge, Albany, in Grahamstown in 1828,⁶⁸⁷ which was to be at the forefront of the political separatism movement of the Eastern Cape that from 1833 ‘challenged the political supremacy of Cape Town and the West’.⁶⁸⁸ A few years later, in 1834, the Dutch Lodge De Vereeniging was formed in Graaff-Reinet, some 240 kilometres north-west of Grahamstown.⁶⁸⁹ Cosmo Grenville Henning explains that there the Afrikaners ‘were its most ardent supporters in the nineteenth century, ... but after the exodus of hundreds of families who joined the Great Trek, the Lodge closed down for nearly thirty years’.⁶⁹⁰ The public presence of Grahamstown’s early Freemasons is further attested to in marketing, for example, when William Rowland Thompson, a local frontier merchant, discussed in *Presentation*, continued during 1834 his regular ‘advertisements’ for ‘mason’s t[r?]owels’.⁶⁹¹ In his biography we also read that in ‘January 1834, a notice appeared [in Grahamstown] requesting the subscribers to the Howison’s Poort Road to meet at the Freemasons’ Tavern as the Committee wished to submit to them the Ordinance which had been obtained for a toll upon the road’.⁶⁹²

Here we can return to the belief that the distinctive flask we have been discussing not only belonged to Retief but marked him as a Freemason. Important for our context, since Retief was based in Grahamstown before the Trek, are early members of the Albany Lodge. We begin with Louis Henri Meurant, alias Klaas Waarzegger (1812–93).⁶⁹³ Born in Cape Town, he founded the *Graham’s Town Journal* in 1831, the first newspaper in the Eastern Cape.⁶⁹⁴ After 1834, in partnership with Robert Godlonton, like Meurant a friend of Retief,⁶⁹⁵ the *Journal* became a mouthpiece for the impending exodus of the trekkers and published, for example, Retief’s famous ‘Manifesto of the Emigrant Farmers’ (2.2.1837).⁶⁹⁶ Meurant was not only politically engaged as journalist, magistrate and Member of Parliament for the Cape Colony, but also a performer and playwright, a strong advocate for the recognition of written Afrikaans⁶⁹⁷ and, rarely mentioned, a Freemason.⁶⁹⁸ Apart from personal ties to other Voortrekker leaders, such as Jacobus Uys and Andries Pretorius, he

⁶⁸⁵ Hofstede 1876, 49 (... mijne lezers zien zullen, dat Retief tot de orde der Vrijmetselaars behoorde); Van Rooyen, *Kultuurskatte* 1, 1938, 163 (‘Dit word vertel dat dié veldfles aan Retief ten geskenke gegee is deur die vrymetselaars van Grahamstad toe hy die Kolonie verlaat het’).

⁶⁸⁶ Cooper 1986, 16–17.

⁶⁸⁷ Drury 1928, 6–16; Cooper 1980, 96, 116–121; Cooper 1986, 30–31.

⁶⁸⁸ Wilson and Thompson 1969, 324.

⁶⁸⁹ Henning 1975, 111–113; Cooper 1986, 18–19.

⁶⁹⁰ According to Visagie (2011, 20), altogether 409 Voortrekkers left the Graaff-Reinet district to join the treks.

⁶⁹¹ Typed biography of ‘William Rowland Thompson, Frontier Merchant’, p.4; see UCT Thompson A2.1–A.2.14.

⁶⁹² *Ibid.*, p.5.

⁶⁹³ *DSAB* 1, 1968, 538–539; Nienaber 1968, 1–11.

⁶⁹⁴ Meurant 1885, 76–102; Harington 1973, with a critical analysis of the *Journal*’s coverage of the Great Trek from 1834 to 1843.

⁶⁹⁵ Franken 1949, 376; Harington 1973, 39–40.

⁶⁹⁶ Reprinted in Chase, *Natal* 1, 1843, 83–84; see *Inauguration*.

⁶⁹⁷ He is regarded as having published, in 1861, the first book in Afrikaans: *Zamenspraak tusschen Klaas Waarzegger en Jan Twyfelaar: over het onderwerp van afscheiding tusschen de Oostelyke en Westelyke Provincie*. Cradock: J.S. Bold & Co.

⁶⁹⁸ Though it is not known whether he was a member of Albany Lodge, he was given a Masonic burial in Riversdale where he died (*DSAB* 1, 1968, 539). Gledhill and Gledhill (1980, 110) call Meurant ‘Retief’s friend and fellow-Freemason’.

was a close friend of Piet Retief.⁶⁹⁹ Two other prominent Albany Freemasons – Benjamin Norden (1798–1876), Master of the Lodge in 1834 and 1835,⁷⁰⁰ and John Mandy (c. 1787–1848), one of the founding members of the Lodge⁷⁰¹ – had intensive business dealings with Retief and helped him in times when he had serious financial troubles, even though the two brethren had filed damage suits against him.⁷⁰² It was Mandy to whom Retief owed payment for ‘spirits and other liquors sold and delivered – and for lodging and entertainment furnished and provided by the said John Mandy for the said Peter Retief and at his special instance and request’.⁷⁰³ Edward Guy Dru Drury reports that from December 1928 to April 1835 the Masons’ ‘dining hall was Mandy’s bottle store, the Freemasons’ Tavern’, a pub and evidently also an inn, ‘used as a sort of club by lodge members’.⁷⁰⁴ Since the early brethren often lacked their own premises, a room in a tavern, such as the one provided by Mandy, was regularly used for their ritual meetings followed by communal eating and drinking. On these occasions the Masons purchased their own liquor, or brought it with them, one of the main reasons for the production of the early Masonic decanter flasks.⁷⁰⁵ In 1949 John Lambert Machiel Franken questioned whether Norden’s and Mandy’s ‘merciful succour was related to the fact that Retief had perhaps been a Freemason’.⁷⁰⁶ But he could not uphold this assumption because Drury, author of the *Records of the Albany Lodge*, had told him ‘in person that he had not found the name of Piet Retief in the “Records”’.⁷⁰⁷ Drury confirmed what Gustav Preller (1875–1943) – the ardent Afrikaner historian, who had accepted the claim that the flask was found with Retief’s body – had already deduced in 1912:

In addition, the writer Dr [George McCall] Theal was helpful in investigating facts regarding Retief’s freemasonry which, so it seems, was demonstrated by the canteen decorated with Masonic symbols found with his bones. (Although the examination was thoroughly carried out – thanks to the support of Mr A. Silberbauer, Deputy Grandmaster for South Africa of the Dutch Grand Orient – in the archives of the Dutch, French and English Freemasons of the Grand Orient, there is no conclusive evidence that Retief was a member of a former Masonic Lodge).⁷⁰⁸

⁶⁹⁹ Franken 1949, 429–430; *DSAB* 1, 1968, 538.

⁷⁰⁰ Drury 1928, post p.51 ‘Masters of Albany Lodge, 389’; Franken 1949, 246–248, 295–296, 303; Cooper 1980, 101–103. See also Marshall 2008, 23, 25–26, 38–39.

⁷⁰¹ Drury 1928, 9–10, 13, *passim*.

⁷⁰² Franken 1949, 245–247, 301–302, 429–430; Gledhill and Gledhill 1980, 109–110, 112 (with special reference to the Masons’ support). On Retief’s sometimes successful, but mainly disastrous, financial activities, leading to bankruptcies and numerous damage suits, see the painstaking account by Franken 1949, esp. 125–140 (land speculation), 160–233 (building activities and bankruptcy), 234–252 (cash flows between 1825 and 1833); Gledhill and Gledhill 1980, 46–121, 222–223. For the wider social and cultural network of contemporary Grahamstown, see Marshall 2008.

⁷⁰³ Franken 1949, 430 with note 21a, 532: ‘Notar. Aktes van G. Jarvis, deel A0 1837, A.H.G.’.

⁷⁰⁴ Drury 1928, 15. Between 1828 and 1837 the Albany Masons met in six different locations. The first, ‘a room of W[illiam] Wathall’, only used for a couple of months, became eventually the ‘Masonic Hotel’, which burnt down in 1899 (*ibid.*, 15–18 [quotes p.15]; Van der Riet 1974, 54–55 fig. VII 4).

⁷⁰⁵ Messimer 2011.

⁷⁰⁶ Franken 1949, 246 (‘Ons vra ons ook af of bogenoemde barmhartige bystand in verband gestaan het met die feit dat Retief miskien ’n vrymesselaar was’), complemented by n 58 (p.501): ‘See the Masonic symbols on his canteen’ (‘Vgl. Die vrymesselaarsimbole op sy veldfles, Preller, *op. cit.*, bl. 246’).

⁷⁰⁷ Franken 1949, 501 n 58a (‘Dr. Dru Drury het my persoonlik meegedeel dat hy die naam van Piet Retief nie onder die bogenoemde “Records” gevind het nie’).

⁷⁰⁸ Preller, *Retief* 1917, 292–293 (referring to Theal’s *Geschiedenis van Z. Afrika*): ‘Buitendien is dr. Theal skrywer behulpsaam gewees in die nasporing van feite betreffende Retief s’n vrijmetselaarskap, wat, naar ’t skijn, aangewijs werd deur die veldfles met maconieke emblema daarop, soals op sijn gebeente gevonde. (Ofskoon dié ondersoek egter deurgeset werd – dank sij die hulp van mnr. A. Silberbauer, Gedeputeerde Grootmeester vir S. Afrika van die Ned. Groot Ooste, – tot in die archiewe van die nederlandsse, franse en engelse vrijmetselaars Groot-oosten, is daaruit nog nie afdoende gebleke dat Retief lid was van ’n toenmalige vrijmetselaarsloge.’ Steenkamp (2009, 160 n 3), however, claims: ‘It is a well known fact, first put forward by Gustav Preller in his biography of Piet Retief, that he was a Freemason.’

Considering the above, it does not seem entirely unlikely that a Mason, such as Mandy or his influential friend Meurant, had given Retief the liquor flask as a personal farewell present when the Boer left Grahamstown to join his fellow trekkers.

Freemasonry and the Dutch Reformed Church

Retief's personal relationships with Masons are mirrored in their close interaction with Boers in general, which was not then frowned upon by Dutch Reformed Christianity. This is demonstrated by the event involving Thomas Philipps (1776–1859) – who was a founding member and first Master of Albany Lodge (1828 and 1829)⁷⁰⁹ and 'actively encouraged the erection of the earliest Anglican churches in Albany'⁷¹⁰ – being asked by the British settlers to present the 1756 Dordrecht Bible to Jacobus Uys in April 1837, depicted in *Presentation*, while Meurant acted as interpreter.⁷¹¹ In the nineteenth century several ministers of the Dutch Reformed Church had been members of De Goede Hoop Lodge.⁷¹² Rev. David Pieter Faure (1842–1916), for example, was Provincial Grand Master of this Division for eleven years and a Deputy Grand Master of the Netherlands, although he came to oppose the traditional doctrines of the Dutch Reformed Church, and became a founder minister of the Free Protestant (Unitarian) Church in Cape Town.⁷¹³ Later some of the most distinguished Boers politically were brethren, such as Sir Christoffel Brand (founding member of *De Zuid-Afrikaan* in 1830 and elected speaker of the first Cape Legislative Assembly, 1854–73, who was Deputy Grand Master National from 1847–74);⁷¹⁴ Marthinus Wessel Pretorius (president of the Transvaal Republic, 1855–60, then of the Free State, 1859–63);⁷¹⁵ Johannes Brand (president of the Free State, 1864–88);⁷¹⁶ Francis William Reitz (president of the Free State, 1889–95);⁷¹⁷ General Ben Viljoen (leading commandant in the Anglo-Boer War);⁷¹⁸ and General Louis Botha (prime minister of the Transvaal, 1907–10, then first prime minister of the Union of South Africa, 1910–19), to name only a few.⁷¹⁹

However, church dislike 'for Freemasonry had been expressed in the Cape since the start of the De Goede Hoop Lodge'.⁷²⁰ It assumed 'full voice at the synod of the newly organised Dutch Reformed Church, which met in Cape Town in October 1862'.⁷²¹ When it was discussed whether the theological seminary should move from Stellenbosch to Cape Town, it was argued that 'the youths would fall into the snares of the clique of Freemasons ... There might be one or two stray Freemasons in Stellenbosch but it is well-known there was no city on earth so completely under the influence of Freemasonry than Cape Town'; as a result the seminary stayed in Stellenbosch.⁷²² In response to such accusations Mason Christoffel J. Brand declared in 1869:

We form no church: religion, morality and love are the groundwork of our labours and the aim of our actions, because by that we promote the happiness of mankind. Why then should the clergy, and particularly those of the Dutch Reformed Church, act so hostilely against us?⁷²³

⁷⁰⁹ Drury 1928, 8–13; Cooper 1980, 96.

⁷¹⁰ DSAB 1, 1968, 542. Albany, the district around Grahamstown, was the destination of the 1820 settlers.

⁷¹¹ Ibid., 538.

⁷¹² Cooper 1986, 150.

⁷¹³ Faure 1907 (pp.115–122, for his Freemasonry); Cooper 1986, 107–108, 110–111.

⁷¹⁴ Cooper 1986, 22–30.

⁷¹⁵ Ibid., 23.

⁷¹⁶ Ibid., 24.

⁷¹⁷ Ibid., 100–101.

⁷¹⁸ Ibid., 76–78, naming further leading Boer soldiers and statesmen who had been Freemasons.

⁷¹⁹ Ibid., 76–77, 89, 95, 100, 157; photographs of most of the said Afrikaner Freemasons are provided after p.64.

⁷²⁰ Ibid., 149–154 (quote p.150).

⁷²¹ Ibid., 150.

⁷²² Ibid.

⁷²³ Ibid.

Yet the disapprobation of Freemasonry by the Dutch Reformed Church became more and more extreme in the twentieth century. In April 1931 – the foundation year of the SVK – the Dutch Reformed Church Transvaal Synod in Pretoria condemned Freemasonry by 129 votes to 29 and ‘strongly urged members of its community to have nothing to do with masonic lodges ..., not to join Freemasonry and that masons should not be members of church councils’, though many were.⁷²⁴ Later, the Afrikaner Broederbond mirrored the Dutch Reformed Church opposition to Freemasonry. At the nineteenth Broederbond meeting on 4 and 5 October 1940 a resolution was put forward to reject the Freemason movement and forbid dual membership of the two societies. Although the proposal regarding double membership was not carried, the minutes recorded that ‘From the discussions it is clear that the Bondsraad was opposed to Freemasonry, especially its imperialistic character in South Africa’.⁷²⁵ Jan Serfontein goes so far as to state that the Freemason movement was the Broederbond’s ‘enemy number one’, because not only was its membership ‘much larger numerically’ but 60% were Afrikaans-speaking; it was felt to be imperative to avoid ‘young Afrikaners falling into the clutches of Freemasonry and its “denationalising” influence’.⁷²⁶

This context of conflicting relations between Freemasonry, the Dutch Reformed Church and Afrikanerdom gives the Masonic flask depicted in the frieze a rather ambiguous status. We surmise that the flask was shown only to identify Retief, and that its Masonic ornamentation was inaccurate and blurred on purpose. In fact it is surprising that the flask, first introduced by Coetzer in his sketch for the *Murder of Retief*, was not altogether excluded, particularly when one considers Moerdyk’s key role in supervising the frieze, given that he was a long-standing member of the Broederbond, as too were many members of the SVK including chairman Jansen, treasurer Lombard and secretary Botha. Apparently the flask seemed indispensable to identify Retief, but the negative attitude to Freemasonry meant that Retief’s possible association with the Masons had to be avoided. The reluctance to present the flask fully may be reflected in the delay in finishing its details in the full-size clay panel, until after the figures were for the most part complete (fig. 13.8). It suggests once again that the quest for ‘authentic’ detail in the frieze, as incontrovertible evidence of the validity of this history of the Trek, outweighed other considerations. The disfigurement of the flask’s Masonic ornament in the frieze – something overlooked by scholars⁷²⁷ – was evidently, as far as the claim for historical accuracy was concerned, the lesser evil. In the end, the flask’s biography, now unfolded, and its adapted representation make the object itself a significant document for the history of the marble frieze.

⁷²⁴ Ibid., 151. See also the damning report published in the *Dutch Reformed Church and Freemasonry 1940*, and the Freemasons’ response to it in *Review of report on Freemasonry 1942*.

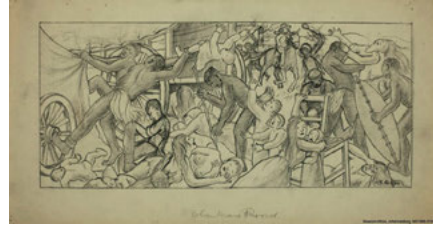
⁷²⁵ Serfontein 1978, 50.

⁷²⁶ Ibid., 174.

⁷²⁷ Alta Steenkamp (2009, 151), for example, in her speculative article (‘A shared spatial symbolism: The Voortrekker Monument, the Völkerslachtenkmal [sic] and Freemasonry’) takes it for granted that in the frieze ‘Piet Retief’s water bottle [is] clearly marked with Masonic symbols’.

**14 Massacre of women and children at *Bloukrans*
(16/17 February 1838)**

A2/A3



B2a



B2b/c



C2



D



14 *Bloukrans*

South wall (panels 17 and 18/31)

h. 2.3 × w. 4.61 m (panel 17: 2.31 m; panel 18: 2.3 m; small overlaps with panels 16 and 19)

Restored fractures on vertical edges

Sculptor of the clay maquettes: Laurika Postma

STAGES OF PRODUCTION

A1 W.H. Coetzer, pencil drawing, retained only in A2 (April–June 1937)

A2 Reproduction of A1 (June 1937)

A3 W.H. Coetzer, revised pencil drawing A1, h. 13.5 × w. 30.5 cm (after September 1937)

Annotation: ‘Blaukrans Moord’ (Bloukrans murder)

B1 One-third-scale clay maquettes, not extant but replicated in B2

B2 Three one-third-scale plaster maquettes

a. Entire scene, h. 82 × w. 156 × d. 10.5 cm (1942–43)

b. Revised scene on far left, h. 78 × w. 71.8 × d. 7 cm (1946–47)

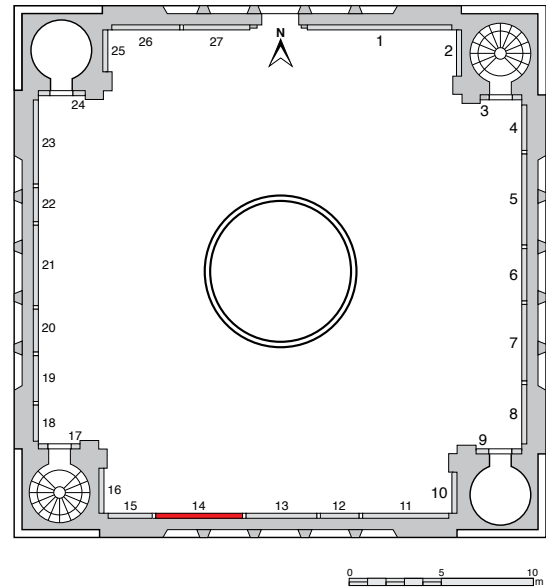
c. Revised scene on far right, h. 79 × w. 83 × d. 9 cm (1946–47)

C1 Full-scale wooden armature, not extant (1943–47)

C2 Full-scale clay relief, not extant but photographed; replicated in C3 (1943–47)

C3 Full-scale plaster relief (1943–47); only baby extant (fig. 14.26) but full scene of first design illustrated (*Rand Daily Mail*, 15.2.1945); modified design copied in D (1948–50)

D Marble as installed in the Monument (1950)



EARLY RECORDS

SVK minutes (4.9.1937) — item 41 (see below, ‘Developing the design’)

Voorstelle (5.12.1934?) — item 13 ‘Zulu-aanval op Van Rensburgkoppie, (digby Estcourt) voorgrond: gelyke vlakke waarop uitgespande waens alleen. Agtergond die koppie, waarop die verdedigers. Marthinus Oosthuizen jaag deur Zulus, om ammunisie by verdedigers te bring’ (Foreground Zulu attack on Van Rensburgkoppie [close to Estcourt]; level plains with outspanned wagons alone. Background the koppie with defenders. Marthinus Oosthuizen rushes through Zulu to bring ammunition to the defenders)

Panele (c. Dec 1934–36) — item 5 ‘Moordtonele soos ...’ (Murder scenes such as ...), b. ‘Bloukrans met heldedaad v. Martinus Oosthuizen’ (Bloukrans with heroic deed of Martinus Oosthuizen)

Wenke (c. 1934–36) — item I. F.A. Steytler, c. ‘Die van Rensburgers vasgekeer op van Rensburgkoppie: Marthinus Oosthuizen jaag tussen die Soeloes deur om kruit ens. te bring’ (The Van Rensburgers trapped on Van Rensburgkoppie: Marthinus Oosthuizen chases through the Zulu to bring gunpowder, etc.), d. ‘Brandende waens langs Blauwkrans ens. met lyke rondgestrooi, Soeloes met asgaaie op die waens’ (Burning wagons near Bloukrans etc. with bodies strewn around, Zulu with assegais on the wagons.) / item II. Dr. L. Steenkamp, mnre. A.J. du Plessis en M. Basson, A. ‘MAATSKAPLIK’ (Social), 3. ‘Verhouding met ander volksgroepe’ (Relationship with other ethnic groups), d. ‘Dingaan’ (Dingane), vii. ‘Moordtonele; Blauwkrans, Moordspruit, ens.’ (Murder scenes; Bloukrans, Moordspruit, etc.)

Moerdyk Layout (5.10.1936–15.1.1937) — scene 12 on panel 17–18/31, ‘Weenen Oosthuys[e]n’

Jansen Memorandum (19.1.1937) — item 7.12 ‘Scenes of the massacre at Blauwkrantz and *inter alia* Marthinus Oosthuizen’s act of heroism’



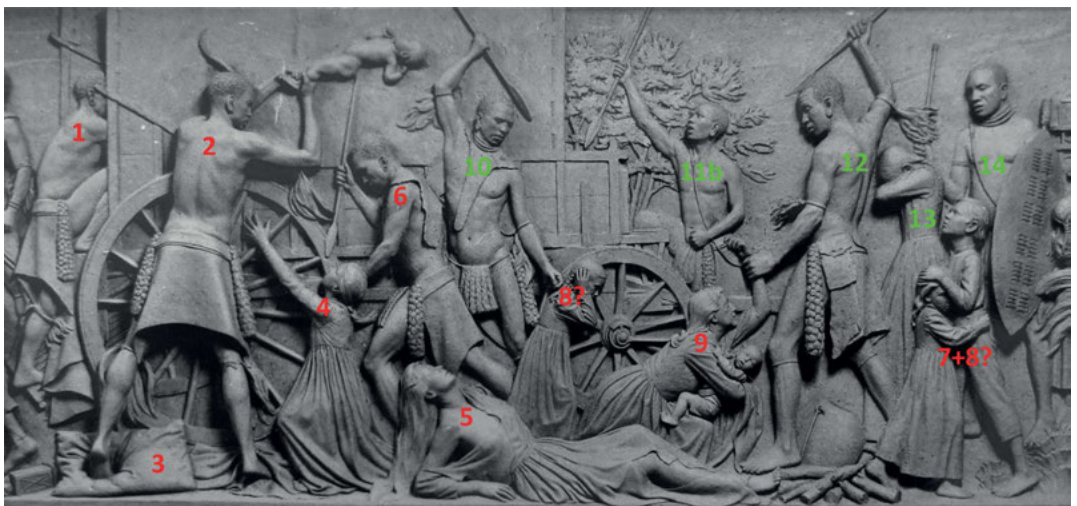
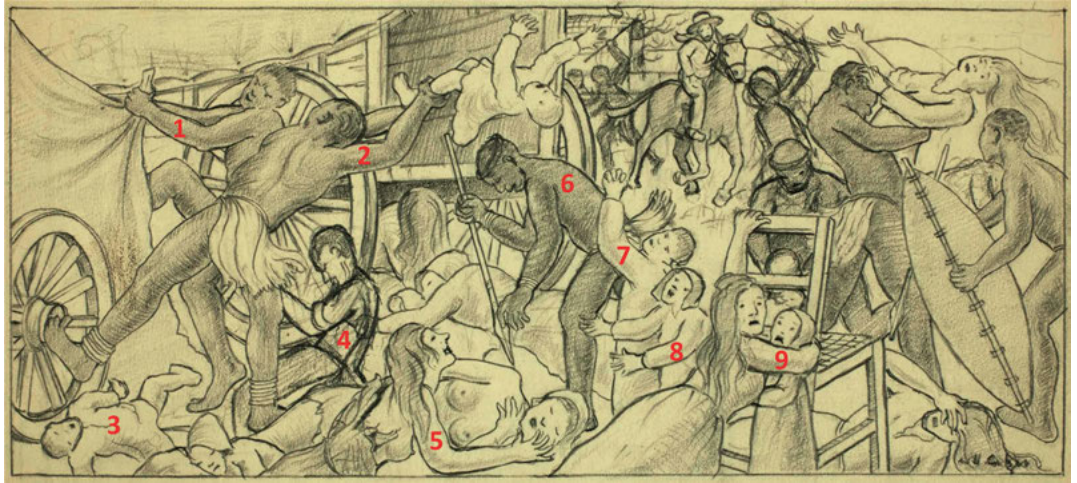
Figure 14.1: D. Bloukrans. 1950. Marble, 2.3 × 4.61 m (courtesy of VTM; photo Russell Scott)

Description

Following *Murder of Retief*, this scene shows another massacre but now of Boer women and children (fig. 14.1). Seven towering Zulu, most of them with raised assegais, slaughter six children and two women, all in positions that display their extreme vulnerability. The fierce attackers come from all directions, closing in on their victims who are staged in frozen horror against a backdrop of a wagon, with a tree and sloping hillside beyond, locating the event in a Voortrekker encampment.

Within the melee, two Zulu, two women and two children form a central group. The young reclining woman who leans heavily on her elbow in the foreground is exceptional in the frieze: she is the only female figure shown supine, her breast and leg exposed through ripped clothing, her eyes closed, and her loose hair cascading to the ground. Already expiring, she potently signifies the devastation and disarray of the scene. This is also suggested by the abandoned pillow, tipped-over cooking pot and strewn logs in the foreground that, like the visible bare feet of women and children, signal that the Zulu have violently disrupted a peaceful, sleeping community. Beyond the dying woman a little girl turns away, her ears covered with her hands as though to shut out the horror, while a Zulu attacks her from behind with his short stabbing assegai. In front of the girl an old woman crouches, her hair half loose, her wrinkled face marking her, together with the seated woman in *Presentation*, as the oldest female figure in the frieze. Protectively bent over a baby that she holds in her right arm, she raises her other arm and her ravaged face in supplication to a huge Zulu, who grips her wrist, his assegai raised to deal a death blow. Caught between him and another attacking Zulu at the far right, also with assegai readied, are three children: a girl in the background, who despairingly hides her bowed head in her arms, and a boy defensively holding his little sister who buries her head in his chest as she clings to him. The boy is the only male figure among the Boers, a diminutive echo of Retief in the previous scene, as he stands upright with his head raised, as he looks up to heaven. In the background in front of the wagon, a third Zulu, with his mouth agape, raises his assegai wildly.

The left side is dominated by two Zulu and a little Boer girl in profile view between them. With upraised head and arms, she pleads for mercy, her mouth wide open. But her cry goes unheeded as the Zulu behind her grips her right shoulder, stabbing downwards lethally, the blade of his assegai already just above her face. The Zulu on the far left, positioned in three-quarter back view, leaps with one leg raised high, the ball of his left foot poised on an abandoned pillow, to reach the cover of a wagon he is torching with his extended right arm. Yet another Zulu on the far left, half obscured, disappears into the wagon to loot or kill.



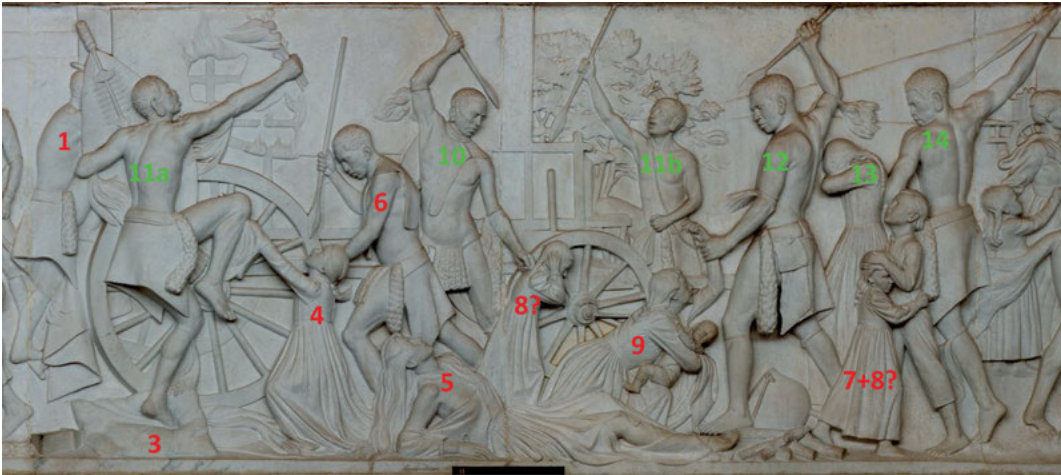
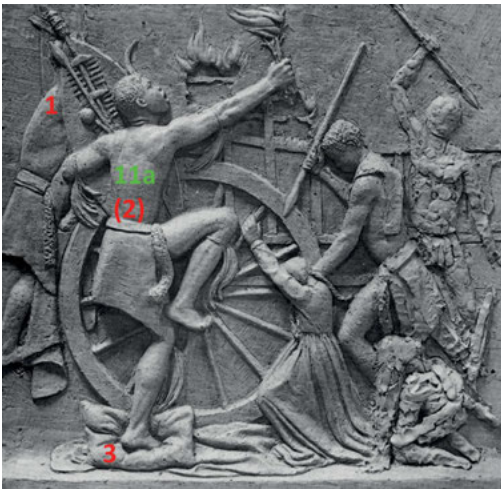
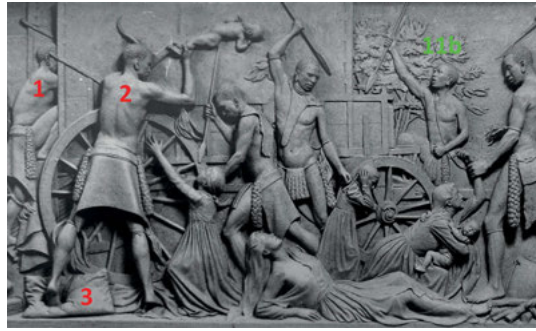
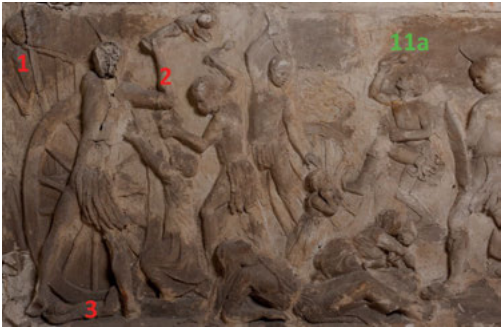


Figure 14.2: Numbered figure schema of major changes in the design process: in red from Coetzer drawing (1937), in green added figures in maquettes, full-scale clay and marble reliefs (1942–50) (the authors)

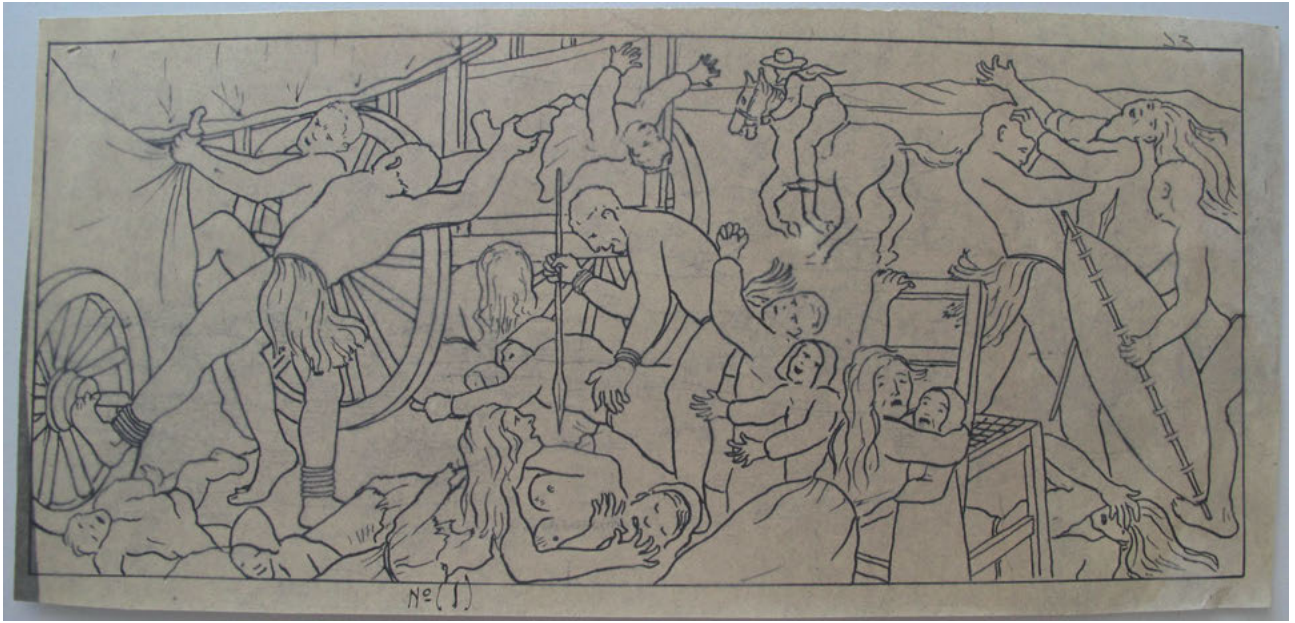


Figure 14.3: A2. W.H. Coetzer. Reproduction of first sketch for *Bloukrans*. June 1937 (courtesy of ARCA PV94 1/75/5/1; photo the authors)

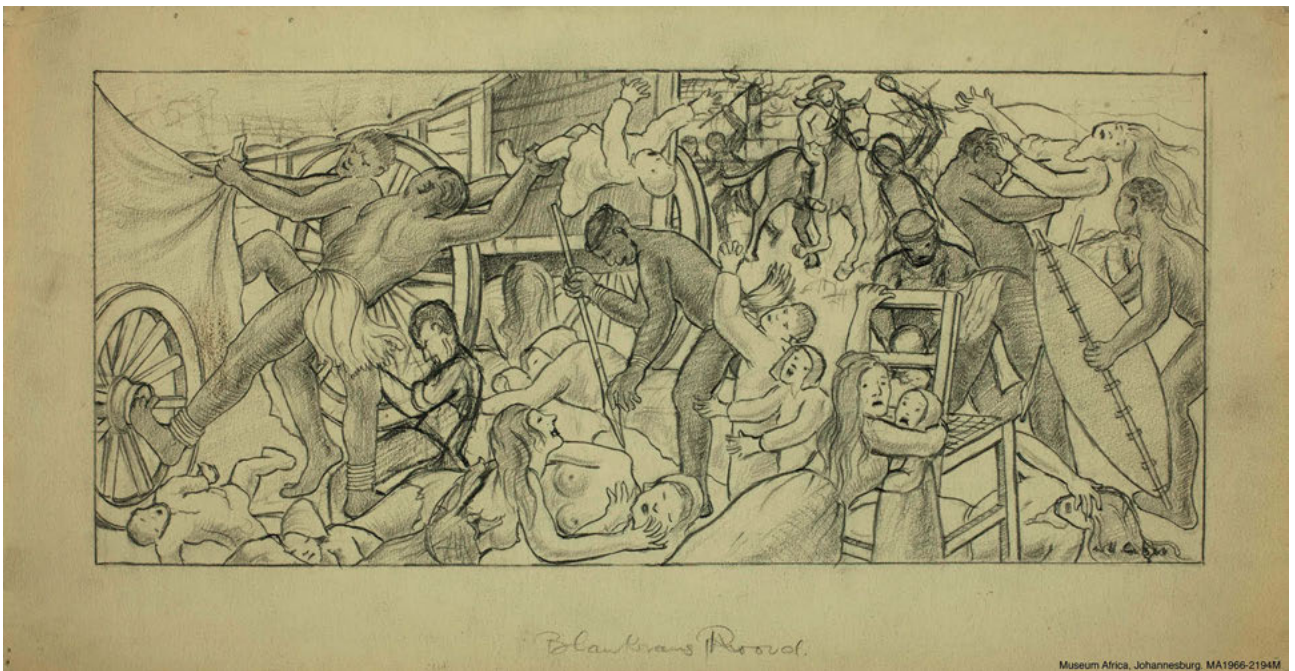


Figure 14.4: A3. W.H. Coetzer. 'Blaukrans Moord'. After September 1937. Pencil, 13.5 x 30.5 cm. Revised first sketch (photo courtesy of Museum Africa, no. 66/2194M)

Developing the design

No other composition for the frieze has been altered as often as *Bloukrans*. It is a unique and enlightening case for scrutinising changes in the narrative, this time not only internally initiated by the SVK and the artists, but also externally demanded by the South African government. In order to be able to trace the complicated process of the designs we have provided a numbered schema at the beginning of this section to act as a guide (fig. 14.2): first, the figures in the Coetzer drawing that survived in the relief models albeit in modified form (1–9 red); new figures added to the maquette (10–14 green); a late redevelopment in reverse of figure (11a green) originally created for the clay maquette; and finally the coded numbers applied to the marble frieze. These numbers are placed in brackets in the discussion that follows to aid identification of each of the figures. While there might be disagreement about exactly which figures were the basis for later developments, in general the visual evidence is clear.

In his first drawing, known to us in its reproduction (fig. 14.3), Coetzer introduced every motif possible to illustrate the brutality of the attackers. On the left a Zulu pulls the cover of a wagon (1 red), while you see into the empty interior of a second wagon. A woman crouches beneath it with hair curtaining her face, and nearby is a dead mother lying with her baby. In front on the left is a Zulu (2 red) who is about to dash an infant against a wagon wheel, depicted in a strong diagonal with his left foot braced against the wheel hub and his arms at full stretch, both hands gripping the legs of his small victim. Between his legs lies a baby (3 red) already smashed to death, and the face of another youthful figure. In the foreground are two half-naked women (5 red) with dishevelled hair and breasts exposed; one lies helpless as the central Zulu (6 red) uses his assegai to murder her, while the other looks up at him in horror. Next to them are two children, the boy (7 red) praying and the smaller girl (8 red) crying out. A half-length mother desperately clings to her child (9 red), while trying to pull herself up with her other hand that grasps the back of a chair. Beyond that another Zulu, his legs splayed, is raping a woman with flowing hair, her right arm outstretched in despair, while her left tries to push him away. On the far right, half-obsured by the chair, is a woman on the ground who covers her face with her hand. Yet another warrior with a shield enters the right foreground, implying still more advancing Zulu, while in the background a small Boer figure on horseback leaves the scene.

At the SVK meeting on 4 September 1937 the following alterations were requested from Coetzer:

The Great Murder. For the scene consult Baines' works in the Africana museum; the boer on horseback must come to the laager.⁷²⁸

In his modified drawing, in accord with the SVK, Coetzer changed the Boer on horseback (fig. 14.4), who was probably leaving to warn others of the unexpected Zulu assault, into a rider who is arriving. Perhaps there was concern that the figure appeared to be fleeing. The approaching figure is puzzling, however, as the rider is without a muzzleloader and not ready to attack or defend. Perhaps the horseman was intended to be Marthinus Oosthuizen returning with bullets and powder to save the Van Rensburgs, but the foreground group would not match their successfully fighting off the Zulu attackers. Ultimately, that episode was developed as an independent scene by the sculptors. So it is understandable that this figure disappeared in the maquette.

It seems surprising that the Historiese Komitee did not refer Coetzer to the marble reliefs of the Bloukrans massacre on the early memorial erected near the Bloukrans River (figs 14.16–14.20), some 8.5 kilometres south-east of the Chieveley Military Cemetery,⁷²⁹ and stopping point on the

⁷²⁸ 'Vir hierdie toneel raadpleeg Baines se werke in die Africana museum; die boer op die perd moet laer-toe kom' (Historiese Komitee 4.9.1938: 41).

⁷²⁹ www.battlefieldsroute.co.za/place/chieveley-military-cemetery/ (situated next to Chieveley railway station; see Raper, Möller and Du Plessis 2014, 69).



Figure 14.5: Thomas Baines. *Battle of Blauwkrantz*. c. 1854. Oil on canvas, 63 × 77 cm (Museum Africa; photo https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Thomas_Baines?uselang=de)



Figure 14.6: W.H. Coetzer. *Bloukrans-Moord – Middernag – 17 Februarie 1838*. Pre-1937. Oil on canvas, 152 × 84 cm (location unknown; Nathan 1937, fig. after p.224 'The massacre at Bloukrans')

ossewatrek of 1938.⁷³⁰ Instead, they recommended that Coetzer look at the work of Thomas Baines (1820–75), the English artist and explorer of British colonial southern Africa, and his oil painting, *Battle of Blauwkrantz* (fig. 14.5).⁷³¹ Baines painted it around 1854 when he spent some time in his native town King's Lynn (Norfolk), 'likely ... either [as] a commission or an attempt by the artist to prove that he could create an imaginative interpretation of history'.⁷³² Visual evidence suggests that Coetzer did know the depiction, even before the admonitions of the Historiese Komitee, as some of the painting's motifs are comparable with his first drawing (fig. 14.3), such as Baines' Zulu murdering a supine, half-naked woman with cascading hair, who embraces her baby in the foreground, and a little dead child splayed across a spar of wood in front of a wagon wheel (arranged almost in cruciform shape) on the right. Even more likely, however, is that Coetzer was thinking of his own huge oil painting of the attack which he was making around the same time (fig. 14.6). In it, amidst slain bodies, toppled wagons and blazing fires, are a number of recognisable motifs, such as the profile of a standing Zulu raping a woman in the centre, a sole figure praying, and a mother protecting her child on the right.⁷³³ He might well have examined the Baines prior to making this painting rather than for his sketch. But what is distinctively different is that, while Baines shows men actively defending the laager, as does Coetzer in his painting, the focus in Coetzer's first sketch, apart from the departing rider, is entirely on women and children, emphasising that they were helpless victims of the Zulu attack.⁷³⁴

Although Coetzer's first drawing was already packed with action, after the criticisms of September 1937 he added seven further figures for the final pencil drawing (fig. 14.4), with smaller figures in the background suggesting that the carnage continues beyond the foreground scene. He now includes a number of men, perhaps after consideration of the Baines painting, or his own, although this was not specifically requested by the committee. Some engage more actively with the attackers: a Boer kneels right of the Zulu dashing a baby to death (4 red); a Boer is attacked by a Zulu behind the wagon; the now advancing rider in the background is about to be set upon by a Zulu with a knobkierie; and there is possibly a dead Boer shown behind the Zulu shield on the far right, indicated by the outlines of an unfinished upper body and arm. There is also a Zulu murdering a baby on the chair. Coetzer further incorporated a third wagon burning in the centre background – a motif that was relinquished in the maquette and first full-scale versions, but destined to gain prominence in the final marble relief.

When Laurika Postma started to model the maquette (fig. 14.7), she probably had the earlier form of the drawing (fig. 14.2) to work from, and her group is already much less congested than the revised drawing (fig. 14.3), and includes no Boer men. Compared to that crowded scene, she had removed no fewer than sixteen figures. But comparison with the simpler drawing also shows some reductions, and some new figures of her own, all of them concentrated in the foreground, with the wagon turned parallel to the picture plane as a backdrop. The Zulu (1 red) on the far left who, in the drawing, was pulling the cover of a wagon beyond the picture frame, now peers around the edge of the main wagon. The Zulu (2 red) dashing a child to death is more upright and has lost much of his original dynamism; he swings the baby with his right hand only, his left arm invisible, and the wagon wheel is not in an appropriate position. The arms of the baby are extended on either side of the body, almost in cruciform, and on the ground between the Zulu's splayed legs lies not a baby but a dead boy (3 red), his arms outstretched behind his head and his knees raised.

⁷³⁰ Duvenage 1988, 142.

⁷³¹ Carruthers and Arnold 1995, 161 colour fig. 17. See also Muller 1978, 13 colour fig. 7; Coetzee 1988, 178–179.

⁷³² Carruthers and Arnold 1995, 154; for Baines' time in King's Lynn, see pp.36–37.

⁷³³ The oil is dated before 1937 as it is published in Nathan 1937, post p.224; further information is provided by Coetzer (1947, opp. p.123) and De Beer (1969, 46, with the measurements). There seem to be more shared motifs but they are difficult to scrutinise as the oil is poorly illustrated. We do not know where the painting presently is.

⁷³⁴ One wonders whether this focus might have been suggested by the SVK in informal discussion, although we have no evidence for this.



Figure 14.7: B2a. Laurika Postma. *Bloukrans*. 1942–43. Plaster, 82 × 156 × 10.5 cm. Maquette (courtesy of VTM Museum VTM 2184/1–28; photo Russell Scott)



Figure 14.8: C2. *Bloukrans*. 1943–45. Clay. Full-scale relief (courtesy of Kirchhoff files; photo Alan Yates)

Instead of the Boer who kneels right of the Zulu dashing a baby to death, a supplicating girl (4 red) is shown desperately clinging to the wagon wheel, about to be beaten to death by the Zulu (6 red) who in the drawing was ready to stab the supine woman. In this repositioning, although he still has his weapon in his right hand, he blocks his own action by holding the girl with his left hand. Behind him, facing to the right, another supplicating child (8? red) is under attack from behind by a Zulu (10 green) with raised assegai. In the foreground, instead of several dying women, there is one supine female figure (5 red), a composite of Coetzer's dead and grovelling semi-naked women. Shown in a very staged pose with her head tipped back and neck extended, she supports herself on one elbow, with her knees raised, the rips in her dress exposing her right breast and part of her legs. Behind her a crouching woman (9 red), probably based on Coetzer's mother and baby, raises her ravaged face, while she protectively holds a child close to her body. They are confronted on the right by the Zulu (12 green) with a shield who has now advanced into the scene and raises his assegai to attack.

Another group in the foreground brings together a boy holding a girl (7 red; 8? red), who clings to him, her head on his chest, while the boy gazes upwards as though seeking divine intervention. The girl (13 green) next to him provides a counterpoint, as she is unable to face the horror around her and hides her face in her arm. All three children are doomed to die, as a Zulu (14 green) appears behind them, ready to deal the death blow with his raised knobkierie. The strangest figure is a prancing Zulu (11a green) in the background, who waves a small knobkierie in his right hand, and has raised his left foot almost in the face of the supplicant girl in the centre. His frenzied activity is captured by the agitated form of his skirt and the different angles of his bent limbs. Although this motif was abandoned in the initial full-scale clay relief (C2), it was later reinstated in a reversed form and finally copied in the marble relief, as discussed below.

While Postma was selective in what she derived from Coetzer, it is notable that she follows the affective principle of showing solely victims, as in his first drawing, so that any Boer male presence is removed, including the rider in the background. The only male figures amongst the Voortrekkers are the young boys. It adds to the horror of the Zulu attack that they face no adversaries, but prey only on helpless women and children. Yet Coetzer's group of a Zulu raping a Boer woman has been removed – a first piece of censorship probably imposed by the artist herself.

Translated to full scale in the large clay relief (fig. 14.8), the composition is more formalised, the proportions of individual figures more correct and relationships between single figures more clearly articulated. The Zulu skirts shown by Coetzer and still shown in the maquette have been turned into more correct aprons worn by warriors. There are also changes in the figures. The Zulu (1 red) at the far left is now shown full length, climbing into the wagon. The baby who is dashed to death by the Zulu (2 red) is fully modelled, its tiny fists clenched, and the dead boy between the warrior's legs has been replaced by a discarded pillow (3 red) – one of the details that underlines the disruption of the Boers' peaceful existence, also seen in the other domestic items that make their appearance. The small girl (8? red) in the centre protects her bowed head with her hands; another (4 red) near the rear of the wagon stretches her arm out in mute appeal rather than clinging to the wheel, while the Zulu (6 red) killing her has relinquished his knobkierie and thrusts an assegai directly at her head. The crouching group of mother and child (9 red) is larger and more visible, looking up at the Zulu (12 green) in supplication, but he grabs her outstretched arm as he positions himself to stab them to death. The frenzied Zulu (11a green) who also reappears, has become a more conventional figure (11b green), who raises his assegai triumphantly, his mouth wide open to emit a menacing cry. To close off the composition on the far right, the previously active Zulu (14 green) now surveys the scene impassively, without taking part in the killing, even though he is armed with assegai and shield.

Despite all the reworking of *Bloukrans* that we have traced here, members of the SVK had a rather different understanding of the scene's visual development. Jansen states in an official letter sent on 21 March 1945 to the Secretary of the Ministry for the Interior:



Figure 14.9: B2b. Laurika Postma. *Bloukrans*. 1946–47. Plaster, 79 × 83 × 9 cm. New maquette for scene on far left, with reversed frenzied Zulu (courtesy of VTM Museum VTM 2184/1–28; photo Russell Scott)



Figure 14.10: B2a. Frenzied Zulu in *Bloukrans*. Maquette, detail of fig. 14.7 (courtesy of VTM Museum VTM 2184/1–28; photo Russell Scott)



Figure 14.11: Frenzied Zulu torching wagon on far left in *Bloukrans*. Marble, detail of fig. 14.1 (photo Russell Scott)



Figure 14.12: Zulu killing women and children on far right in *Bloukrans*. 1943–45. Full-scale clay relief, detail of fig. 14.8 (courtesy of Kirchhoff files; photo Alan Yates)



Figure 14.13: B2c. Laurika Postma. *Bloukrans*. 1946–47. Plaster, 78 × 71.8 × 7 cm. New maquette for scene on far right (courtesy of VTM Museum VTM 2184/1–28; photo Russell Scott)

The depiction of the Bloukrans incident of which a picture appeared in the *Rand Daily Mail* [15.2.1945] is based on one of Coetzer's drawings and does not deviate from it in any major way.⁷³⁵

However, Jansen's focus was undoubtedly on the Zulu dashing the child against a wagon wheel – the root of much criticism, initiated by the *Rand Daily Mail* report he alludes to. The scandal that this provoked will be traced below, but in terms of the development of the scene, it led to a complete remodelling of the left side, first tested in a new maquette (fig. 14.9). Its main purpose was to change the obnoxious motif of the Zulu swinging a baby into a Zulu who brandishes a torch to set fire to a wagon: the idea of a burning wagon had been included in Coetzer's oil (fig. 14.6) and revised drawing (fig. 14.4), although this was probably never seen by the sculptors. Undertaken by Postma and Potgieter working together,⁷³⁶ the changes to the scene were limited to the necessities: the three Zulu (1, 2 and 6 red) on that side and the Boer girl (4 red), while the rest was just roughed out. It is evident that the artists looked for inspiration in earlier models in pencil and plaster: as a blueprint for their new task they seem to have chosen the frenzied Zulu (11a green) from the first maquette (fig. 14.10), who was now reversed, with his left leg raised even higher, and his right poised on tiptoe on a pillow. While he carries his shield, assegai and knobkierie in his sharply bent right arm, he stretches his left out tautly to flaunt a torch. The little girl (4 red) in front of him has lowered her head and clings to the wagon wheel, as she did in the small plaster, while her Zulu assailant lifts his assegai higher to give more force to his murderous act.

When the full-scale version of the left side was produced (fig. 14.11), some details of the new maquette were altered (B2b and c). The Zulu (2 red) brandishing the torch seems more focused on

⁷³⁵ 'Die uitbeelding van die Bloukrans-insident waarvan 'n prent in die "Rand Daily Mail" verskyn het, is gebaseer op een van Coetzer se tekenings en wyk in geen belangrike opsig daarvan af nie' (unpublished letter, NARSSA, BNS 146/73/3).

⁷³⁶ Dagbestuur 5.8.1947: 4.

setting fire to the wagon. Even more on tiptoe on the cushion, he is almost flying upwards to torch the canvas, which acts as a backdrop that increases his prominence. The little girl (4 red) has raised her head again to face him and cry for mercy, indicated by her open mouth and her arms that reach out, almost touching him. This was the version that must have been enlarged into full-size clay then plaster, and was copied into the final marble.

Although not the cause of public dissension, the opportunity was also taken to remodel the right side (fig. 14.12), probably for two reasons: to change the inactive Zulu (14 green) on the far right into another murderer, and to rethink the connection to the following scene of *Teresa Viglione* – something that was not considered in the original maquettes which were worked on independently. This remodelling was developed in a new maquette (fig. 14.13) that could take account of the interrelationships developed in the full-scale clay reliefs, so that a little girl from the next panel, *Teresa Viglione*, unmolested because of the horsewoman's timely warning, is sketched in to establish the connection to the continuing narrative. The Zulu on the far right of *Bloukrans*, instead of standing surveying the scene, raises an assegai to stab the cowering girl (13 green). This modification may relate to a comment about this scene in the handwritten critique of the plaster panels in the Laurika Postma file in the Art Archive at the University of Pretoria: 'Zulu on the far right no action' (Zulu heel regs geen aksie). Now without a shield, he is aligned with the Zulu (12 green) in front of him, their doubled action reinforcing the violence of the scene, and in the full-scale version he no longer holds a shield and appears even more concentrated on the act of killing the girl (8 red?) in front of him. While we cannot be sure when this modified group was made, one wonders whether this additional motif of slaughter might have been meant to compensate for the removal of the offending Zulu killing the baby.

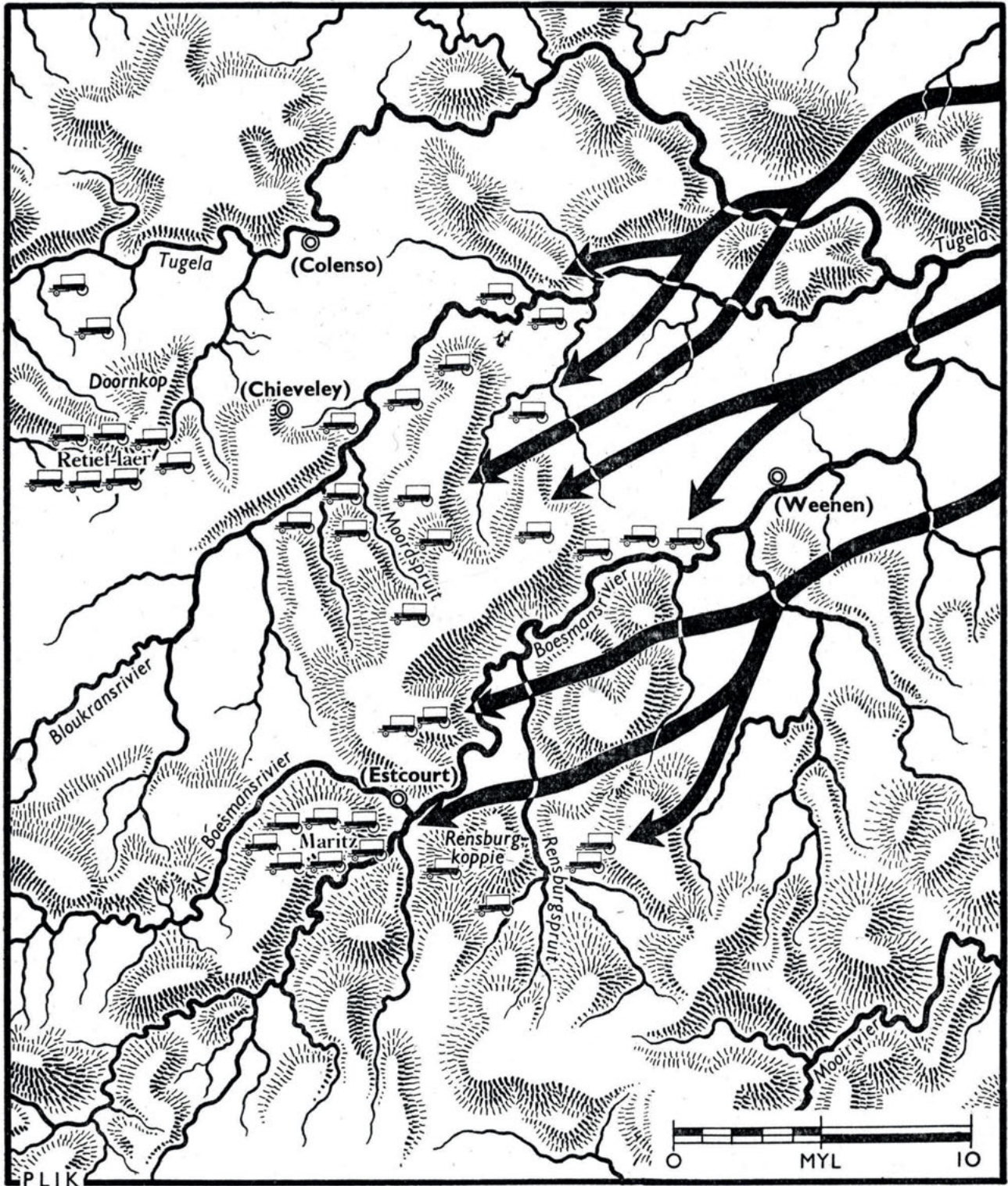


Figure 14.14: Zulu attack on Boer camps in the Bloukrans area, 16/17.2.1838 (Thom 1947, 207)

Reading the narrative

The attacks in the area of the Bloukrans and Modder rivers began in the late hours of Friday 16 February 1838 and continued well into 17 February (fig. 14.14),⁷³⁷ just ten days after Retief's party had been executed at uMgungundlovu. A few days later Dingane had sent an estimated force of about ten thousand Zulu⁷³⁸ to find the trekkers who were camped in an area some two hundred and fifty kilometres south-west of the royal city.⁷³⁹ Dingane's order was radical: a surprise attack to annihilate every Boer on his territory, which was echoed – according to the 1840 report of Owen's interpreter, William Wood – in responses from his people who intermittently called out: 'We will go and kill the white dogs!'⁷⁴⁰ The Voortrekkers felt safe after, as they believed, Dingane's initial expression of willingness to sign a land treaty,⁷⁴¹ and had not yet heard that the king had murdered Retief and his delegation. So, despite warnings within their own ranks, especially from Maritz, who was leader in Retief's absence,⁷⁴² they had scattered, often in smaller family units, and their unprotected camps⁷⁴³ were dispersed over an area mainly north-east of the sixty-five kilometre line between the modern towns of Bergville and Estcourt.

While the trekkers were unsuspecting of any change in Dingane's attitude towards them, the Zulu were well aware of the Boers' presence on the east side of Bloukrans River, and had sent forces there secretly in preparation for the attack. They struck around midnight. As they caught most trekker parties by surprise, the assault took a terrible toll. Several eyewitnesses later described the atrocities. Few, however, are as graphically recounted as those suffered by the Bezuidenhout family near Bloukrans River,⁷⁴⁴ recounted by Daniel Pieter Bezuidenhout (1813/14–95)⁷⁴⁵ in 1879. He was twenty-four years old at the time his family was massacred, when he had been able to escape through the Zulu lines:

It was about one o'clock in the night, and there was no moonlight ... Then I received the first wound from an assegai on the knot of the shoulder, through the breast and along the ribs. A second assegai struck the bone of my thigh, so that the point of the blade was bent, as I found afterwards when I drew it out. The third struck me above the left knee – all the wounds were on my left side. A fourth wound was inflicted above the ankle, through the sinews, under the calf of the leg. Then I found myself under the cattle, and stood a moment listening. I heard no further sound of a voice – all were dead; and the Kafirs were busy, tearing the tents, and breaking the wagons, and stabbing to

737 For the Bloukrans massacre, see Boyce 1839, 148–151; Owen ed. Cory 1926, 125 (reporting on 11 March that at Port Natal he met Richard King, who was present at the Bloukrans massacre and gave him an 'authenticated account of the dreadful scene', but the wrong time: 'At daybreak on Saturday the 16th [sic] ult. the savages surprised an outpost of the Dutch camp in a perfectly defenceless condition, when the families were all in bed'); Cory, *South Africa* 4, 1926, 50–52; Laband 1995, 89, 91; Delegorgue, *Travels* 2, 1997, 65–66.

738 Nathan 1937, 219.

739 For the different camps or laagers, see Thom 1947, 207 and 247 with map; Oberholster 1972, 251–254 no. 31a–g; Chadwick 1980, 3–4; Visagie 2014, map opp. p.98.

740 Bird (*Annals* 1, 1888, 381), confirmed in 1877 by Jane Bird, quoting a 'Zulu maid servant' who had said to her that the Zulu 'are taking the dogs [Boers] away to kill them' (Moodie 1888, 427). For William Wood, see *Treaty* ('History of the original').

741 Letter from Dingane to Retief, dated 8 November 1837 (see *Treaty*).

742 For his camp in the Bloukrans area, see *Saailaer*; for the warnings, see *Treaty*.

743 Owen (ed. Cory 1926, 125) reported in reference to Richard King: 'The camp was perfectly defenceless, the wagons not having been put in any order as usual when they fortified themselves: nevertheless such was the terror of their muskets that the main army of Zoolus were afraid to make a general charge, which if they had done, would have succeeded (it is said) in the total ruin of their adversaries.'

744 For further accounts, see Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 233 (Narrative of Willem Jurgen Pretorius), 241–243 ('Journal of the late Charl Celliers', 1871), 404–408 (Letter of Mr. Jacobus Boshof to the editor of the *Graham's Town Journal*, 2 July 1838), 463–464 (reprint of Steenkamp 1876); Preller, *Voortrekkermense* 1, 1918, 24–32 ('Herinneringe van Ferdinand Paulus van Gass'; Visagie 2011, 533–534), 158–160 ('Herinneringe van J.H. Hattingh'; Visagie 2011, 214); Smit trans. Mears 1972, 88 (17 February 1838; Dutch text: Smit ed. Scholtz 1988, 117); Havemann n.d., 10–11.

745 Visagie 2011, 58.

death the dogs and the poultry. They left nothing alive. Of the women and children murdered at my father's wagons, there were: my mother, Elizabetta Johanna, born Liebenberg; my wife, Elizabetta Cecilia Smit; my mother-in-law, Anna Smit, born Botha; my sister, Susanna Margarita, married to Botha, her little child, Elizabetta Johanna, about five months old; another sister, Maria Adriana Bezuidenhout; also my sisters, Rachel Jacoba and Cornelia Sophia, a little brother, named Hendrik Cornelius, my little daughter, Anna Bezuidenhout (she was eleven months old), who was murdered with her mother. My wife lay in bed with a little one, three days old, also murdered with the mother; and on the following day we found my wife with her breast cut off, and the corpse of my child laid at the blood-stained breast.⁷⁴⁶ There was also a brother of mine, Petrus Johannes, fourteen years old. He slept in my father's tent, and when I shouted, 'Here are Kafirs!', he understood me to say that the sheep were running off. He jumped out, and received only an assegai-wound along the skin of the back, and then ran among the thorn trees. The next day late he arrived at Doornkop.⁷⁴⁷

His recollections were similar to those of Izak Johannes Breytenbach (1819–97),⁷⁴⁸ eighteen at the time, who reported related acts of violence, published in 1894:

The scene that the Boers found could not be described. Women lay there cut open, children had their brains splattered against the wagon wheels, others hung in thorn trees amongst the branches; the men fought to the death, but were gruesomely mutilated. The tents and sails were cut to pieces, the bedding also shaken out, the chests broken and the contents destroyed or stolen. Nothing remained in place.⁷⁴⁹

Breytenbach's grisly account is confirmed by Jacobus Nicolaas Boshof(f),⁷⁵⁰ who reported a few months after the terrible slaughter, on 2 July 1938, to the *Graham's Town Journal* (also published in *De Zuid-Afrikaan* on 17 August that year):

As the day began to dawn, the Zulus were perceived at some of the scattered wagons. There they had surrounded them, and the cries of women and children were heard mingled with the report of the few shots that were fired now and then; but the word "mercy" was unknown to these miscreants. Not even satisfied with stabbing their wetted broad spears into the bosoms of unresisting women, or piercing the bodies of infants who clung to them, they cut off the breasts of some of the women, and took some of the helpless babies by the heels and dashed out their brains against the iron bands of the wagon wheels.⁷⁵¹

On 31 July 1838 Boshof sent to the *Graham's Town Journal* (published 9 August) a detailed register of the men, women, children and servants murdered on 17 February, which takes horrifying stock of the dead: 40 men, 56 women, 185 children and 250 servants, 'including Zulu herdsmen, and families according to the nearest calculation', altogether 531 victims.⁷⁵² No records survive of how many Zulu warriors were killed. However, there are records about individual survivors, such as

⁷⁴⁶ Similar cruelties are reported by Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 243 ('Journal of the late Charl Celliers', 1871); Preller, *Voortrekkermense* 1, 1918, 30–32 ('Herinneringe van Ferdinand Paulus van Gass').

⁷⁴⁷ Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 372 (*Orange Free State Monthly Magazine*, December 1879). For the Dutch/Afrikaans text, see Preller, *Voortrekkermense* 3, 157–158 (here quoted from *Die Brandwag*, 15 April 1911).

⁷⁴⁸ Visagie 2011, 90–91.

⁷⁴⁹ 'Het toneel dat de Boeren hier vonden is niet te beschrijven. Vrouwen lagen daar opengesneden, kinderen met hunne hersenen verpletterd tegen de wagenwielen, anderen aan dorenbomen opgehangen tussen die taken; de mannen hadden zich doodgevochten, doch warden gruwelijk verminkt. De wagen tenten en zeilen waren stuk gesneden, de bedden eveneens uitgeschud, de kisten stukgeslagen en de inhoud vernield of geroofd. Niets bleef op z'n plaats' (Preller, *Voortrekkermense* 3, 1922, 97).

⁷⁵⁰ See *Church of the Vow* ('Pietermaritzburg and the Church Erf').

⁷⁵¹ Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 404 (Boyce 1839, 149, has almost the same text). Around 1938(?) the undated typescript 'De Voortrekker-eeufest in Zuid-Afrika', written by SVK member F.N.S. van Zijl for foreign newspapers, mentions on p.18 that infants' skulls were smashed against wagon wheels ('zuigelinen met hunne schedule tegen de wagenwielen verpletterd'); see NHKA P 1/2/3/8/10 (Voortrekker Monument, S.P. Engelbrecht).

⁷⁵² Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 406–407 (quote).

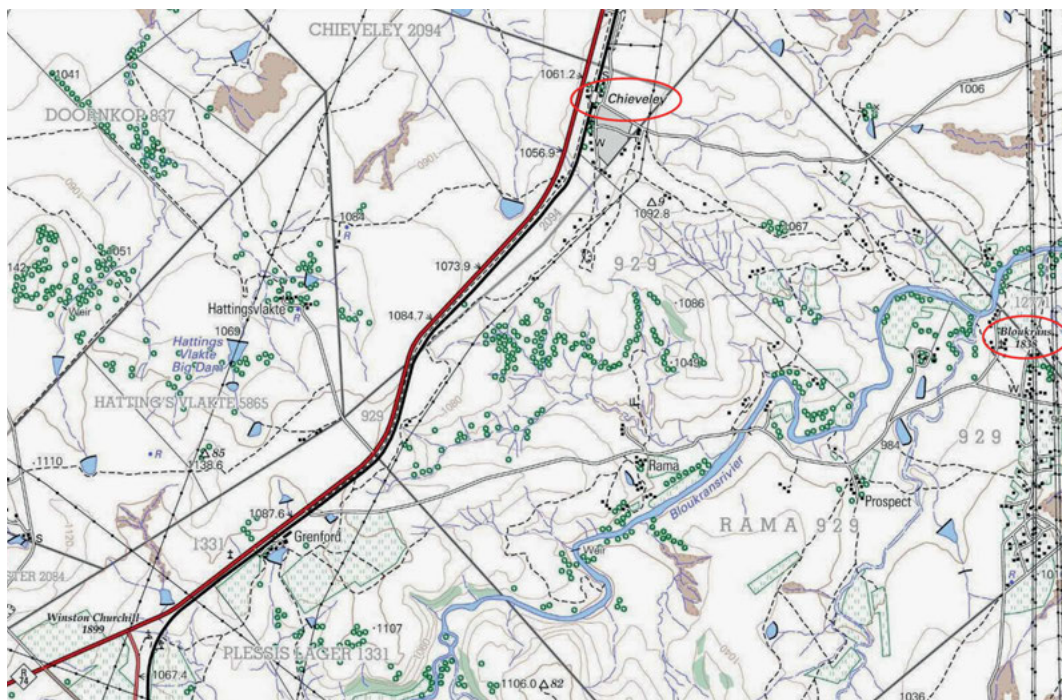


Figure 14.15: *Topographic Sheets of South Africa (1:50 000)*. May 2009. Detail, marking Chieveley and the Bloukrans memorial (map 2820 DD)

Aia Jana, who would many years later plant a Natal Mahogany tree at the new Voortrekker Museum in Pietermaritzburg during its inauguration on 16 December 1912. She was found by Hester Maria Magdalena Maré/Maree (1822–1907), the wife of the German Johan Heinrich Carl Havemann,⁷⁵³ after the attack beneath

a pile of dead children, under a wagon, ... seven years of age ... still alive, although she had no less than seven assegai wounds. Afterwards the little girl related that before the kaffirs left the wagon one of them had said they were to make sure that everybody was dead. With these words he gave her a stab at the back of her head ... She lay perfectly still, and nothing further happened to her. Hester then called her mother, and they pulled the poor little creature out from under the dead. After this discovery, they searched further, and found eighteen little children still alive, all severely wounded. The next day seventeen out of eighteen succumbed to their wounds ... Hester also told how the mother had nursed the little kaffir girl and she recovered. They gave her the name of Jana ... But where she came from is still unknown to the very day. She remained with her rescuers and their children till the day of her death [24 May 1924].⁷⁵⁴

The impact of the tragedy of February 1838 was so great that it was commemorated immediately when, in April 1838, about thirty-five kilometres north-east of present-day Estcourt, the Voortrekkers laid out a town named Weenen (fig. 14.14) – Dutch for ‘weeping’.⁷⁵⁵ It was later ZAR commandant-general Petrus Jacobus Joubert who paved the way for the Bloukrans memorial, erected some five kilometres east of Chieveley and twenty-two west of Weenen as the crow flies (fig. 14.15). He initiated

⁷⁵³ See Visagie 2011, 215 with figs.

⁷⁵⁴ Havemann n.d., 11. For Hester’s father, Wynand Wilhelmus Maré/Maree, see Visagie 2011, 299. Boyce (1839, 150–151) reports that ‘one child who had received 30, and a women 22 assegai-wounds, are still living, though injured for life’.

⁷⁵⁵ Raper, Möller and Du Plessis 2014, 539.



Figure 14.16: Jesse and William Smith, Bloukrans memorial near Chieveley, view from south (2015). 1897. Brown sandstone and mottled white stone (marble?), estimated height 5.5 m (photo the authors)

the exhumation of the scattered remains of the Voortrekkers killed in the area, and their reburial near Chieveley in a communal grave, followed by a cornerstone ceremony on 16 December 1895⁷⁵⁶ – the day of the Boers’ victory over the Zulu in the Battle of Blood River in 1838. The memorial itself was inaugurated fourteen months later, on 17 February 1897, the fifty-ninth anniversary of the Bloukrans massacre (fig. 14.16). The Dutch inscription on the front reads:

In memory of the Voortrekkers murdered at Moordspruit. They paid for our land with their blood.
17 February 1838. ‘The Lord reigns.’ Psalm XCIX.1. (fig. 14.17).⁷⁵⁷

The lavish, some five metres high memorial was made by the Pietermaritzburg sculptors and stonemasons Jesse Smith (1825–1900) and his son William (fig. 14.18).⁷⁵⁸ A rectangular stepped substructure in brown Ferncliffe(?) sandstone supports a fine pedestal, carved from an off-white mottled marble, also used for the monolithic obelisk on its top. The pedestal is decorated at eye level, the two smaller sides with inscriptions and the two larger ones with reliefs. They show graphic scenes of the massacres in a pictorial style with multiple small figures interacting in the foreground, even spilling over the frames of the panels. In the north-west scene a superior force of Zulu slaughters Boer women and children (fig. 14.19); in its south-east counterpart trekkers on foot and horseback shoot down large numbers of Zulu (fig. 14.20). Here the Boer revenge appears to be immediate

⁷⁵⁶ The Dutch inscription on the south-east socle of the monument reads ‘GELEGD DOOR P. J. JOUBERT. / COM. GEN. Z. A. R. / 16 DEC. 1895’ (Laid by P.J. Joubert, Com[mandant] Gen[eral] ZAR. 16 Dec. 1895).

⁷⁵⁷ ‘TER GEDACHTENIS / AAN DE VOORTREKKERS / TE MOORDSPRUIT [Murder River] VERMOORD / ZIJ KOCHTEN ONS LAND MET HUN BLOED / 17. FEBRUARI 1838. 7 ‘DE HEERE REGEERT.’ PSALM XCIX.1.

⁷⁵⁸ See Alcock 2014, 11–12.

and related to the same scenery as the massacre, while in the Voortrekker Monument it occurs later as the climax of the narrative of the frieze, the Battle of Blood River, fought at a different place and time. Also distinctive is that the drama of the two Bloukrans reliefs is somewhat diluted because of the expansive mountainous landscape settings with trees, which occupy the upper half of both panels. In the distant background, wagons are placed and further fights between Zulu and Boers staged.

No such respite from the tragic spectacle is offered in the representation of *Bloukrans* in the frieze at the Voortrekker Monument. The sole focus on the murder of women and children in the scene relates strongly to reports such as those quoted above, and fulfils the brief of the frieze as a whole. The suffering of children was an ongoing Afrikaner trauma. This is highlighted in the decision to name two of the eight replica Voortrekker wagons – built as flagships for the re-enactment of the historical treks for the 1938 centenary and chiefly commemorating Boer leaders – in memory of Magrieta Prinsloo and Johanna van der Merwe, girls who survived the Bloukrans massacre.⁷⁵⁹ It was undoubtedly felt to be

important to emphasise this massacre, together with the murder of Retief and his men, because they provided justification for the Voortrekkers taking revenge at Blood River, and supported the underlying theme that the Voortrekkers were peace-loving people who only fought when provoked. On both occasions, although witnesses mention Zulu that were killed in retaliation during the massacres, there is no evidence of counter-deaths in these scenes. The sacrifice of the trekkers is absolute. Even when related resistance was represented later in the frieze, in *Saailaer*, it is not obvious that its narrative is linked to the Bloukrans massacre, and we find only women presented to resist an attack on the Maritz laager which survived the onslaught. It is significant that the reading of the Great Trek in the narrative of the frieze excluded massacres carried out by the Voortrekkers. As discussed in *Kapain*, on 17 January 1837, under the command of Hendrik Potgieter and Gerrit Maritz, trekkers had slaughtered most of the men and women of Mosega, devastating some thirteen to fifteen Ndebele settlements in the valley of the Marico River.⁷⁶⁰ In the frieze the only Africans that are shown dead or dying are warriors, and that in the context of a ‘fair’ fight.

In *Bloukrans*, women, boys and girls of all ages are the victims, from a newborn to the old woman trying to protect an infant with no more than her body. No other scene in the frieze shows Boer women and children facing certain death, or depicts them in such horror-stricken and pitiful poses. This is



Figure 14.17: Jesse and William Smith, Bloukrans memorial. Detail, front inscription (photo the authors)



Figure 14.18: Jesse and William Smith, Bloukrans memorial. Detail, makers' inscription (photo the authors)

⁷⁵⁹ For the 1938 ossewatrek, see Part I, Chapter 1 ('The centenary').

⁷⁶⁰ Kotzé (1950, 168–169) provides the joint report of the American missionaries (see *Kapain*), the Revs Daniel Lindley and Henry Isaac Venable, who witnessed the Mosega massacre: 'The Boers attacked and destroyed thirteen, some say fifteen, kraals. Few of the men belonging to them escaped, and many of the women were either shot down or killed with assegais [sic]. We have no means to ascertaining how many lives were destroyed. We suppose two to four hundred.' Also suppressed in the frieze is the Boer practice of taking black children into servitude after their victories.



Figure 14.19: Jesse and William Smith, Bloukrans memorial. North-west relief, Zulu massacre women and children (photo the authors)



Figure 14.20: Jesse and William Smith, Bloukrans memorial. South-east relief, Voortrekkers on horseback kill Zulu (photo the authors)



Figure 14.21: Dying young female and elderly woman protecting a baby in *Bloukrans*. Marble, details of fig. 14.1 (photo Russell Scott)

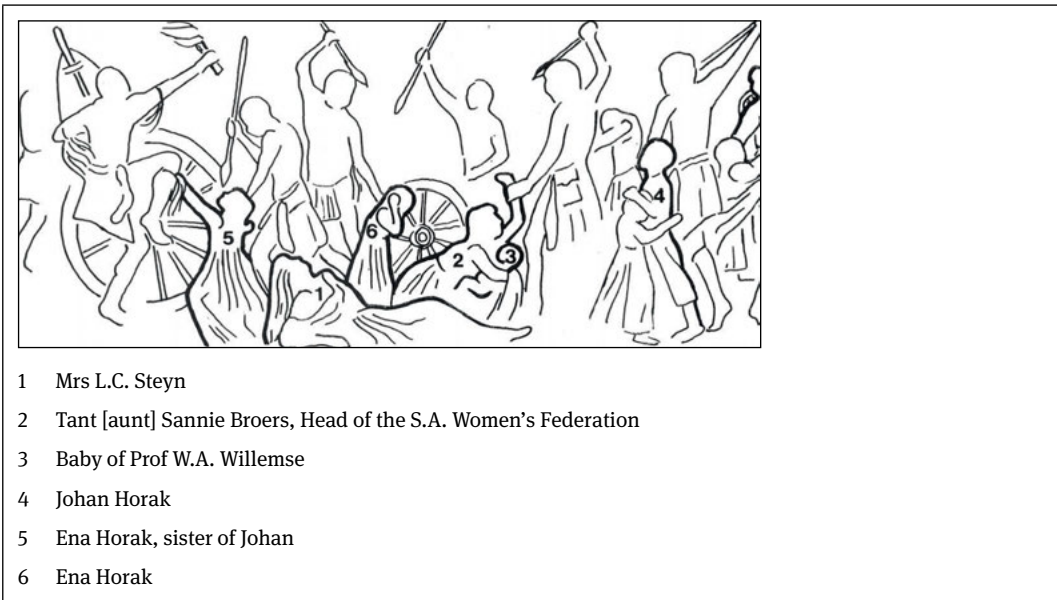


Figure 14.22: Models for portraits (Potgieter 1987, 26–27)

underpinned by exceptional motifs in contrast to the usual female hallmarks throughout the frieze: the collapsed semi-naked dying figure in her tattered dress in place of customary female demeanour and attire, and her loose hair, as well as that of the old woman, replacing the neat kappies or coiffured hairstyles (fig. 14.21). Hennie Potgieter identifies a number of the models for the distraught figures, even the baby held by the elderly supplicant (fig. 14.22). In contrast to *Murder of Retief* where the Boers are impassive victims (not identified by Potgieter), here the excess and intensity of human suffering – and human atrocity – is foregrounded, unique in the entire frieze.

Willem Coetzer and later Laurika Postma developed one especially gruesome motif, described by Boshof and Breytenbach, that Zulu ‘dashed’ or ‘splattered’ the brains of little children against the wagon wheels, an image that would arouse opposition later, as discussed below. It was a motif that brought home the horror of the massacre, portrayed by giving the weakest and most vulnerable creatures of the Great Trek centre stage, entirely overshadowing the forty men and two hundred and fifty servants who were also murdered, or indeed the Zulu warriors who were killed as some Voortrekkers fought back.

Ultimately this version of *Bloukrans*, conceived first in Coetzer’s drawing and finally in a full-size plaster model, was considered too shocking. After it and other finished panels were provisionally installed in the Hall of Heroes, a reporter of the *Rand Daily Mail*, a liberal newspaper published in Johannesburg, gained access to the Hall on 14 February 1945, and his response led to a profound change in the narrative of *Bloukrans*. On the following day the correspondent published a censorious article under the headline ‘Gruesome friezes in Voortrekker Monument’ (fig. 14.23):

Yesterday, I visited the great Voortrekker Monument ... where ... a pictorial history of the Great Trek is taking shape. ... But not all the sculptures fall exclusively within the realms of art. Some of them contain deadly propaganda.

The events, it should be stressed, are portrayed in strict accordance with historical fact. Some of them reveal a fairly high standard of artistic skill, and constitute an excellent pictorial tribute to the courage of the Boer pioneers. There are others, however, which are not calculated to create such a happy impression. They are, in fact, more likely to stir up racial feelings of the most undesirable kind.

Unfortunate Scenes

What may be described as the unfortunate scenes are those concerned with the murder of Retief and his comrades near Dingaan’s kraal, and the massacre of their womenfolk and children at Bloukrans.

There is no question, of course, that such events, however tragic, have great historical value and fully deserve to be recorded in the friezes. Competent observers take exception to them because of the method of treatment used in their portrayal.

The sculptures in question are grim and gruesome, and they must produce in the minds of many onlookers deep and bitter resentment against the Zulu – and probably also against natives in general – for the crimes committed by their forebears more than a century ago.

The bas-relief of the Bloukrans massacre, for example, shows a Zulu swinging an infant through the air with the intention, apparently, of dashing its brains out against the wheel of a wagon. Other Zulus, with raised assegais, stand over Boer women and their children. They are about to stab them to death ...

These episodes [for the other see *Murder of Retief*] could have been portrayed just as adequately if more subtle and impressionistic methods had been used. It is quite possible to do justice to the events without exciting passions of hatred and antagonism.⁷⁶¹

⁷⁶¹ NARSSA, BNS 146/73/3 (the lower part of the article in NARSSA is missing; the last two paragraphs of our quote are from the copy in the National Library, Cape Town).



Figure 14.23: *Rand Daily Mail*, 15.2.1945 (NARSSA, BNS 146/73/3; photo the authors)

The article was illustrated by a photograph of the full-scale plaster relief of *Bloukrans*, with a provocative caption: ‘Is this type of sculpture advisable?’ – a question that challenges the portrayal of human violence and recommends constraint. The public outrage prompted by the article was considerable and seriously troubled the South African government (see list of selected correspondence, fig. 14.24). The critique focused especially on the motif of the Zulu who was about to dash a little child against a wagon wheel. As we have seen, such horrors were explicitly recorded by more than one of the trekkers present at Bloukrans, and there were (and are) no obvious reasons to doubt their veracity. So it is perhaps not surprising that, despite a flurry of letters to the committee, the press and even directly to the government, outlined in Part I,⁷⁶² the SVK was extremely reluctant to make any changes to the obnoxious motif, asserting that it ‘would be disastrous ... to prevent the truthful portrayal of Voortrekker history’⁷⁶³ – a claim, we have argued, that they themselves had so often violated.

After nearly a year of controversial interchanges, Prime Minister Jan Smuts, who made a personal visit to see the panel in question, finally ordered the motif’s removal. The Secretary of Internal Affairs wrote on 2.1.1946 to Jansen:

Following the visit of the Prime Minister to the Monument, I am instructed to inform you that it is the wish of Field Marshall Smuts that the panel that represents the Bloukrans murder should be altered by removing the section that he brought to the attention of those present from your committee – that is, the representation of the murder of the baby against the wagon wheel.⁷⁶⁴

On 15.2.1946 Hofmeyr wrote to the Secretary of Internal Affairs to ask for a report on progress, as the prime minister regarded the matter as urgent, but J.S. Hurter from Internal Affairs responded that the matter was not yet resolved. On 23 February, however, he was able to report that the SVK had met and the offending murder of the baby was to be removed; and that Moerdyk was looking into the matter and would make a proposal. It is an indication of how urgent the government considered the affair that this must have been conveyed to him verbally: Jansen’s written report on the matter, dated 1.3.1946, was only available a week later. Moerdyk did show a revised sketch to the Dagbestuur in June 1946, but nothing material was done until the following year.⁷⁶⁵ It was another nine months, in March 1947, before we read in the minutes of the SVK about the ‘Modification of a panel in the frieze’:

Alteration of the panel in the frieze. Moerdyk presented a picture of what has been made to take the place of what upset the government [sic]. In place of the Zulu that swings a baby in the air a Zulu is now introduced who is setting a wagon on fire. The Chairman questioned whether any wagons were ever burnt. Resolved ... that the new proposal should be placed before government and, if historians find that the burning was historically correct, the panel should be approved and the alteration made.⁷⁶⁶

⁷⁶² Chapter 3 (‘The plaster casts’).

⁷⁶³ Official letter (21.3.1945) from Jansen to the Secretary of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, J.S. Hurter (NARSSA, BNS 146/73/3).

⁷⁶⁴ ‘Na aanleiding van die besoek van die Eerste Minister aan die Monument, is my opgedra om u mee te deel dat dit Veldmarskalk Smuts se wens is dat die tafereel wat die Bloukransmoord voorstel gewysig word deur die weglating van die deel daarvan wat hy onder die aandag van die verteenwoordigers van u komitee gebring het, nl. die voorstelling van die moord van die baba teen die wawiele.’ This document is signed by V.H.V. Hönck from Internal Affairs, following instructions in a letter of 21.12.1945 from Minister of Finance Jan Hofmeyr to convey the decision to the SVK (NARSSA, BNS 146/73/4).

⁷⁶⁵ Dagbestuur 26.6.1946: 4. The documents mentioned in this paragraph are housed at NARSSA, BNS 146/73/4.

⁷⁶⁶ ‘Verandering van paneel in fries. Mnr. Moerdyk lê ’n prent voor van die voorgestelde paneel om die plek te neem van dié waarteen van Regeringsweë beswaar gemaak was. In die plek van die Zoeloe wat ’n baba in die lug swaai word nou ’n Zoeloe voorgestel wat ’n wa aan die brand steek. Die Voorsitter spreek twyfel daaroor uit of enige waens wel verbrand is. Besluit: Die Dagbestuur besluit dat die nuwe voorstelling aan die Regering voorgelê moet word en dat as historici die brandstiging histories korrek vind die paneel goedgekeur en die verandering gemaak moet word’ (Dagbestuur 6.3.1947: 4).

15.02.1945	<i>Rand Daily Mail</i>
26.02.1945	Letter from Secretary of Internal Affairs to Jansen
01.03.1945	Letter from Association of European and African Women and Margaret Ballinger Home to Minister of Internal Affairs
08.03.1945	Letter from JD Rheinallt Jones of SA Institute of Race Relations to Minister of Finance
12.03.1945	Letter from Senator Edgar H Brookes (Adams Mission) to Minister of Public Works, Clarkson
13.03.1945	Telegram from Jansen to Minister of Internal Affairs
14.03.1945	Note to Minister of Internal Affairs, Clarkson, re SA Institute of Race Relations
15.03.1945	Letter to Minister of Internal Affairs
15.03.1945	Afrikaans press cutting March 1945; three English press cuttings
17.03.1945	Note from Secretary of Internal Affairs re telegrams about frieze
21.03.1945	Letter from Jansen to Secretary of Internal Affairs
12.06.1945	Letter from National Council of Women of South Africa to Acting Prime Minister
23.07.1945	Letter from Secretary of Internal Affairs to Jansen
30.07.1945	Letter from Secretary of Internal Affairs to Jansen
13.09.1945	SVK Dagbestuur, item 2
26.10.1945	SVK, item 13
23.11.1945	Letter from Secretary of Internal Affairs to Jansen
21.12.1945	Letter from Minister of Finance to Secretary of Internal Affairs
02.01.1946	Letter from Secretary of Internal Affairs to Jansen
01.02.1946	Letter from Secretary of Internal Affairs to Jansen
15.02.1946	Letter from Minister of Finance to Secretary of Internal Affairs
16.02.1946	Letter from Secretary of Internal Affairs to Minister of Finance
16.02.1946	Letter from Secretary of Internal Affairs to Minister of Finance
22.02.1946	SVK, item 4
23.02.1946	Letter from Secretary of Internal Affairs to Minister of Finance
26.02.1946	Letter from Minister of Finance to Secretary of Internal Affairs
27.09.1946	Letter from Peter Kirchhoff to SVK chair
06.03.1947	SVK Dagbestuur, item 4
03.08.1947	SVK Dagbestuur, item 4

Figure 14.24: Selected records about the Bloukrans controversy, 1945–47 (NARSSA, BNS 146/3/3; table the authors)

More than two and a half years after the *Rand Daily Mail* had disclosed the problematic content of *Bloukrans*, the issue was still unresolved. The last time this topic appears in the minutes is on 5 August 1947 when the SVK Dagbestuur recorded:

Following a question from the Chair arising from the minutes, Moerdyk answered that it was still being established whether wagons had been set on fire during Zulu attacks. The Chair also explained that he could not get proof about it and undertook to consult Drs Thom and Engelbrecht shortly. Resolved ... that the Chair must consult historians and that if it was historically correct ... [it] could be represented in the frieze, but if it was unhistorical another scene of violence must be thought of.⁷⁶⁷

⁷⁶⁷ 'Op 'n vraag van die Voorsitter na aanleiding van die notule antwoord mnr. G. Moerdyk dat nog vasgestel word of waens tydens die Zoeloe-aanvalle aan die brand gestee is. Die Voorsitter verklaar dat hy nog g'n bewyse daarvoor kon kry nie en onderneem om dit binnekort ook met drs. Thom en Engelbrecht te bespreek. Besluit. Die Daagbestuur

The need to search for hard evidence as to whether Zulu set fire to wagons at Bloukrans is difficult to understand, as it was not an unfamiliar motif. It was included in Coetzer's revised drawing (fig. 14.4) and his dramatic oil painting of the scene (fig. 14.6). The trekkers' official minister, Erasmus Smit, present at the time of the massacre though not under immediate attack in the Retief laager, noted it in his well-known diary on 17 February:

Today the saddest night and day of our long journey ... the Kaffirs have, as enemies, attacked the small camp of W. Bezuidenhout and B. Liebenberg and murdered everyone and burnt everything ('alles vermoored en verbrand').⁷⁶⁸

Further, F.A. Steytler's suggestion was recorded in the 'Wenke' document from the time the SVK asked for topics of the frieze: 'burning wagons near Bloukrans etc. with bodies strewn around, Zulu with assegais on the wagons'. One wonders whether the professed need to search was a delaying tactic. In the end, the new motif was in its way as devastating as the other: Smit's text groups burning together with murdering, suggesting that flames were as deadly as assegais. On a more practical level, it did not require too much effort to adjust the original scene.

Yet the treatment of this Zulu is curious, trampling on a cushion while torching the wagons. Abandoned pillows and stray feathers are mentioned in various accounts of the massacre, but the position of the cushion seems to take the place of the dead child previously shown under the Zulu's feet (fig. 14.2 no. 3) – perhaps yet another, earlier substitution for an offensive motif. But the orgiastic pose of the torching Zulu, recycled from the maquette as discussed above (fig. 14.2 no. 11a), still implies a barbarism that chimes with Moerdyk's vindictive description in the *Official Guide*:

The massacre shown in this panel is one of the bloodiest in our history. The Zulus are on the warpath and have attacked the unsuspecting Voortrekkers in their unprotected laagers, wiping them out almost entirely ... It is said that natives in their primitive state grow drunk when they smell or drink blood. On a careful examination the scene depicted gives an impression of a drunken orgy.⁷⁶⁹

It is disconcerting that the motif of the gruesome Zulu smashing a baby against the wagon wheel remained in circulation as late as December 1949, when Afrikaner newspapers like *Die Transvaler* (13 December) in their special issues for the inauguration of the Monument showed *Bloukrans* unchanged within the sequence of the frieze. They had to use Alan Yates' photographs of the full-size panels in their clay state (figs 14.8, 14.25), provided by the SVK in the absence of new photographs of the installed marble reliefs. One wonders whether anyone even noticed the oversight. However, kept for many decades 'under wraps', a physical relic of the original *Bloukrans* panel has recently come to light: a fragment with the detail of the Zulu's right arm holding the baby (fig. 14.26) – the only full-size plaster section of the entire frieze to have survived, and another curious twist in the history of the frieze when this was the very motif that had to be suppressed.

Bloukrans has a further dimension in a strong association with a well-known Christian prototype for child murder, the New Testament slaughter of all male children under two years in Bethlehem by King Herod,⁷⁷⁰ famously portrayed in Rubens' oil, *The massacre of the innocents*

besluit dat die Voorsitter historici moet raadpleeg en as dit histories juis is, mag die aan die brand steek van waens deur die Zoeloes in die fries voorgestel word maar as dit onhistories is, moet 'n ander gewelddoneel bedink word' (Dagbestuur 5.8.1947: 4).

⁷⁶⁸ Smit trans. Mears 1972, 88 (Dutch text: Smit ed. Scholtz 1988, 117).

⁷⁶⁹ *Official Guide* 1950, 48.

⁷⁷⁰ Matthew 2: 16–18.



Figure 14.25: Centrefold of Monument and frieze panels taken from Yates' photographs, *Die Transvaler* 13.12.1949 (photo the authors)



Figure 14.26: C3: Section cut from full-scale plaster relief of *Bloukrans* with baby being dashed to death. 1943–45 (courtesy of VTM Museum; photo Russell Scott)



Figure 14.27: Peter Paul Rubens. *The massacre of the innocents*. 1611–12. Oil on oak panel, 142 × 182 cm (photo Rubenshuis, Antwerp; https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rubens_-_Massacre_of_the_Innocents_-_Art_Gallery_of_Ontario_2.jpg)

(fig. 14.27).⁷⁷¹ In the many paintings of this subject, examples of babies suffering extreme brutality are legion, but the motif closest to the repugnant group of Zulu swinging a baby to its death is found here. Although the biblical parallel is not mentioned in the historical evidence around the frieze, it seems obvious, especially within the prevalent references to Christianity that run like a thread through the narrative of the frieze. *Bloukrans* articulates a pointed antithesis of good and evil in the context of the frieze, representing Afrikanerdom versus heathendom, directly linked to the racial demarcation between peoples of different ethnicity and skin colour.

⁷⁷¹ Jaffé 2009.

**15 *Teresa Viglione* warns camps around Bloukrans
(17 February 1838)**



B2



C2



D

15 Teresa Viglione

South wall (panel 19/31)

h. 2.3 × w. 2.07 m

Restored fractures on vertical edges; figure on far right partly cut off

Sculptor of the clay maquette: Frikkie Kruger

STAGES OF PRODUCTION

B1 One-third-scale clay maquette, not extant but replicated in B2 (1942–43)

B2 One-third-scale plaster maquette, h. 77 × w. 77 cm × d. c. 8 cm (1942–43)

C1 Full-scale wooden armature, not extant (1943–45)

C2 Full-scale clay relief, not extant but photographed;
replicated in C3 (1943–45)

C3 Full-scale plaster relief (1943–45), not extant but illustrated
(*Die Vaderland*, 26.2.1945); copied in D (1948–49)

D Marble as installed in the Monument (1949)

EARLY RECORDS

None

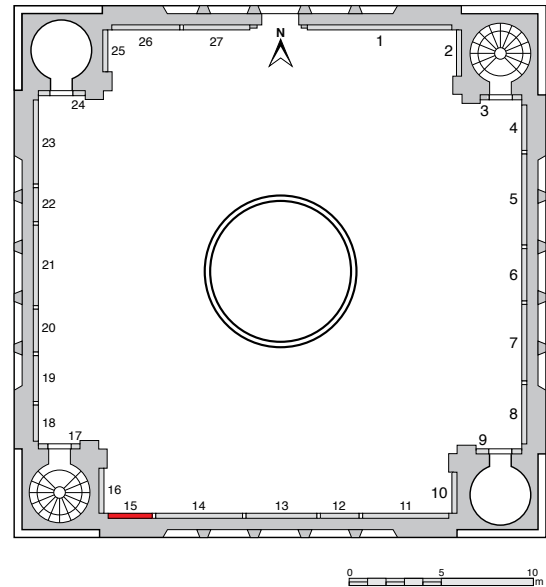




Figure 15.1: D. Teresa Viglione. 1949. Marble, 2.3 × 2.07 m (courtesy of VTM; photo Russell Scott)

Description

Teresa Viglione is dominated by a single figure, a woman on horseback, who fills the entire width of the panel (fig. 15.1). This is the Italian woman Teresa Viglione, who holds the reins lightly like an expert rider, as she urges her stallion forward beyond the right-hand margins of the panel. Yet the horse is rather static, with only one foreleg off the ground. The declamatory gesture of Viglione's left arm is also rather frozen, but movement is suggested by her bonnet that has slipped from her head and streams behind her, held in place by the ribbons tied around her neck. Her uncovered hair has short-cut, curving tresses. She wears a long-sleeved dress with a collar and a full skirt that almost conceals her foot in the stirrup. Behind her is a shallow semi-circle of three standing women, all perfectly dressed, who turn towards but hardly seem to look at her. They are mothers, each with a spotless child, each a different age. A small barefoot boy in a short-sleeved top buries his face in the skirt of the woman on the right, who wears a richly embroidered kappie. The woman opposite her has her left hand at her throat, perhaps signalling distress although her face is impassive, while she has a protective arm around her little daughter who clings to her. The mother in the middle, whose hair is loose, holds an infant at her breast, their faces close together.

The foreground shows grass and plants beneath the horse's hooves, but there is no indication of ground beyond that, so that the feet of the participants seem free-floating. In the far distance is a row of rolling hills framing three wagons. Two of them are seen in three-quarter view with open back flaps, while the third on the right has cords tied over its canvas cover, perhaps to secure goods such as the two rolls of fabric tied to the side, which signals that it is a trader's wagon.

The measurements of the horizontal recess in the south wall and the panels of the frieze had clearly not been precisely correlated and it was necessary to trim the horse's nose and most of the left side of the woman on the far right to fit the relief.



Figure 15.2: B2. Laurika Postma. *Teresa Viglione*. 1942–43. Plaster, 77 × 77 × c. 8 cm. Maquette (courtesy of VTM Museum VTM 2184/1–28; photo the authors)



Figure 15.3: C2. *Teresa Viglione*. 1943–45. Clay. Full-scale relief (courtesy of Romanelli files; photo Alan Yates)

Developing the design

The first design we have is the plaster copy (fig. 15.2) of the maquette in clay, as the topic was not included in the Coetzer sketches. Although the general composition of the small plaster is very similar to the full-scale clay (fig. 15.3), there are significant differences. While the two women with their children on the left are similar in pose, in the maquette the woman on the far right is shown more in three-quarter view and without her small son. Next to her, but for the most part obscured by the stallion, is a young woman with loose hair who moves towards the rider. Her gaze and that of the women on the left is much more focused on Teresa Viglione, which creates a stronger relationship between them, and directs the viewer's attention to the horsewoman. Their heads are also positioned less formally, not yet in pure profile as in the marble, and the hair of the woman on the far left is more casual, her bun low on her neck. Teresa Viglione's hair too has a loose bun, she holds the reins more slackly, and her skirt is less activated, clinging to her near leg. Yet her arm is more dramatically outstretched with her hand in profile, and her foot more firmly in the stirrup than in the marble version. There is more detail in the maquette which shows the framework that supports the canvas covers on the wagons very precisely. It also has a little basket fixed underneath the trader's wagon on the right, and a trunk in front of the foremost of the other wagons, which has a barrel underneath. On the other hand, the foreground of the maquette is mainly rocky and has only some rough outline of grass and vegetation, while the full-size clay relief shows both in abundance but no rocks. The composition and details of this panel were further formalised when they were copied into marble.



- 7 Lea Spanno
- 8 Miss du Preez, a niece of Frikkie Kruger
- 9 Helene Guldenpfennig, later married to Professor Postimus

Figure 15.4: Models for portraits (Potgieter 1987, 26–27)



Figure 15.5: Lea Spanno, model for *Teresa Viglione* (Van der Walt 1974, 82)



Figure 15.6: Portrait of the Italian trader on horseback in *Teresa Viglione*. Marble, detail of fig. 15.1 (photo Russell Scott)

Reading the narrative

Teresa Viglione is placed immediately next to *Bloukrans* in the frieze because her story is part of that traumatic night. Erasmus Smit, the appointed minister of the Boers who trekked with the Retief party, is the only one who recorded her story as it was told some nine days after the events at Bloukrans in the Retief laager at Doornkop (fig. 14.14):⁷⁷²

Monday, 26 February 1838. There is an Italian Mrs Viglione with 3 Italian men with 3 waggons for trade in our camp.⁷⁷³ She behaved herself as bravely as a man during the attack of the Kaffirs. People tell of her that she, having quickly saddled her two bags of money on a horse, immediately went around everywhere among the emigrants, and warned them of the attack of the Kaffirs, in order to put them on their guard. She took the wounded children to her tent, and worked with her medicines, salves, and ointments, and she in this way has earned much praise in the camps.⁷⁷⁴

This story served as the blueprint for *Teresa Viglione*. She is portrayed at the moment she leaves a laager as she warns the trekker camps around Bloukrans that Dingane's Zulu are on the warpath. There is a sharp contrast to *Bloukrans* as this laager has apparently not yet been targeted by the Zulu attackers. Instead of horror-stricken women and children dead or dying, three relatively composed Boer women and children witness Viglione's venture, although some anxiety is suggested by the way the young ones cling to their mothers who hold them close. And the central woman's hair is loose, the only indication that the laager has been disturbed in the middle of the night, as all the figures are fully clothed. Without knowledge of Smit's report the story would be difficult to read.

Teresa Viglione is the only scene in the narrative that is dominated by a single figure, distinguished too by being the only female on horseback in the frieze. Although Boer women fulfil many tasks, in the frieze they never ride, perhaps a reflection of gender-coded expectations. Teresa Viglione is also the only one of Italian descent – deliberately modelled after an Italian sitter, Lea Spanno, we are told by Hennie Potgieter (fig. 15.4),⁷⁷⁵ and a photograph of the model with her distinctive profile is recorded by Van der Walt (figs 15.5, 15.6).⁷⁷⁶ According to the little we know of her, she originated from Piedmonte and emigrated around the time of the treks to the Cape Colony, either with her family, or in the company of Italian traders.⁷⁷⁷ That link is suggested by the trader's wagon in the background.

The story of Teresa Viglione handed down by Smit was later recounted by others so that her tale was known by the time it was chosen for the frieze.⁷⁷⁸ In the later 1930s the Cape Town lawyer and literary historian Manfred Nathan, who sympathised with the Afrikaner cause, was among the first to connect her story to the similar one of an otherwise unknown Heila Petronella Roberts. In the recollections of Lourens Christian de Klerk (1831–1909), the latter is incorrectly identified as the widow of Izak Jacobus Roberts, which throws doubt on the veracity of the detail in his account.⁷⁷⁹

⁷⁷² For the camps in this area, see Thom 1947, 207 with map; Oberholster 1972, 251–254 no. 31 (Voortrekker Laagers, Estcourt District); Visagie 2014, 99–102.

⁷⁷³ The presence of Italian traders is also mentioned by Jacobus Boshof in his letter on 31 July 1838 to the editor of the *Graham's Town Journal* (Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 412): '... two Italians then in the [Potgieter] camp, and one woman, immediately took their leave', when they heard about the 'Vlugkommando' (see *Dirkie Uys*).

⁷⁷⁴ Smit trans. Mears 1972, 91–92 (Dutch text: Smit ed. Scholtz 1988, 120).

⁷⁷⁵ Potgieter 1987, 42.

⁷⁷⁶ Van der Walt 1974, 82.

⁷⁷⁷ Sani 1992, 35; Gilbert 2008, 176; Buranelli 2009, 27 with n 22. The story of Teresa Viglione is surprisingly well known in Italy, as part of the film 'I piemontesi del Sud Africa dal 1868 al 2007', first shown in 2008 (p.35: http://www.esteri.it/mae/doc_osservatorio/rassegna_%20n14_2008.pdf); see also https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theresa_Viglione.

⁷⁷⁸ See Walker 1934, 168; Nathan 1937, 223 ('Thérèse Viglione'); Thom 1947, 223 with n 31 (referring to the *Graham's Town Journal*, 8.3.1838, and *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 16.3.1838; both *non vidimus*).

⁷⁷⁹ De Klerk's narrative was first published in the *Volkstem* in March and April 1912, and then by Preller in

De Klerk recounts that Daniel Pieter Bezuidenhout (1813–95),⁷⁸⁰ after having escaped the Zulu massacre at Moord Spruit, came across the unsuspecting De Beer and De Klerk parties and alerted them to the attack:

While Bezuidenhout was still telling everything to the de Beers and De Klerks, their aunt Heila Petronella Roberts (widow of Izak Jacobus Roberts, who was murdered with Retief) arrived on horseback, with her two daughters and son, also on horseback ... She could only confirm Bezuidenhout's story: all were murdered. ... Mrs. Roberts and her children were further along the river and as far as she could she warned those people to the rear, so then everyone, as soon as the laagers were brought into a state of defence, rushed to go and help.⁷⁸¹

Teresa Viglione seems to have warned different laagers from those mentioned by De Klerk as neither he nor Bezuidenhout in his own report refers to the Italian. But it is strange that Bezuidenhout does not mention Heila Roberts either.⁷⁸²

It is interesting to see how these partly overlapping episodes were later picked up in the Monument's official guidebooks, although initially the focus was entirely on Teresa Viglione. In the various editions of the *Official Guide* (1955–76) she is promoted by Moerdyk as an outstanding heroine in the frieze:

[She] jumped to horse when the news of the massacre reached her and raced along the banks of the Bushman's River up to Gert Maritz's laager warning the Voortrekkers. Trekkers further up the river were thus enabled to defend themselves. Theresa Viglione's gallant deed undoubtedly saved the lives of many men, women and children.⁷⁸³

But the contribution of Heila Roberts, and a seemingly otherwise unknown Fea, was picked up in later guidebooks published by the Board of Control of the Voortrekker Monument and, since 1993, the subsequent non-profit Section 21 company Voortrekker Monument and Nature Reserve, discussed in Part I.⁷⁸⁴ In the 1986 booklet *The Voortrekker Monument*, the successor of the *Official Guide*, Riana Heymans incorporated both stories and referred to them in an unambiguous hierarchy, Boer women first (with the Afrikaans form of the surname), Teresa Viglione and others second.⁷⁸⁵

The panel pays tribute to the brave women Heila and Fea Robertse, Thérèse Viglione and others, who rode on horseback during the night to warn the other Voortrekkers of Bloukrans murder.⁷⁸⁶

Voortrekkermense 1, 1920, 214 (reference to the *Volkstem*), 226–227 (narrative); Preller was apparently the source for Nathan (1937, 223). Recently, Visagie (2011, 419) clarified that Isak (Isaac) Jacobus Robbertse (also called Roberts) was married to Hilleljetje Anna Magdalena Pretorius, not Heila Petronella (who is not listed by Visagie 2011).

780 Visagie 2011, 58.

781 Preller, *Voortrekkermense* 1, 1920, 226–227: 'Terwyl Bezuidenhout dit alles nog aan die de Beer's en de Klerk's vertel, kom hul tante Heila Petronella Roberts (weduwe van Izak Jacobus Roberts, wat bij Retief vermoor was) tepêrd daar aangejaag, met haar twee dogters en seun, ook tepêrd ... Sij kon slegs die verhaal van Bezuidenhout bevestig: alles was uitgemoor! ... Mevr. Roberts en haar kinders is verder langs die rivier op, en het so vér als sij kon agterste mense gewaarskuw, wat toen almaal, sodra hul die laers in 'n staat van verdediging gebrenk hat, opruk om te gaan help.'

782 According to his own account (first published in December 1879 in the *Orange Free State Monthly Magazine*; see Bird, *Natal* 1, 1888, 373), Bezuidenhout had himself warned the parties of (Joseph) Sybrandt van Dyk (Visagie 2011, 532), Scheepers, Hans Roets, Petrus van Vooren and Karel Geer.

783 1955, 50.

784 Chapter 5 ('An Afrikaner monument').

785 As does Nathan (1937, 223), who first tells the story of Heila Petronella and then of 'another brave woman, Thérèse Viglione'. In the early reports on the treks there is no mention of Fea Robertse, who thus remains a dark horse.

786 Heymans 1986, 25.

In the subsequent booklet, written by Heymans and Salomé Theart-Peddle, first published in 2007 and revised in 2009, the order of Heymans' previous narrative is reversed and Teresa Viglione is back in the limelight:

This panel pays tribute to the brave Italian woman who went to warn the other Voortrekkers during the night of the Bloukrans attack ... Her heroic act probably prevented great loss of life. The panel also honours the other fearless women who helped warn the Laagers, among whom were Heila and Fea Robertse.⁷⁸⁷

We do not know whether there was a debate about Teresa Viglione, Heila and Fea Robertse inside the SVK. But the small plaster maquette (fig. 15.2) and the subsequent full-scale work (fig. 15.3), with the inclusion of three children, two girls and a boy, may make an oblique reference to the De Klerk narrative and Heila Roberts' ride from Klein Moordspruit with her son and two daughters. In the scene, however, the children are not part of the dramatic ride, and each of them is entrusted to an individual Boer woman of the laager, all of whom are portrayed selflessly, thinking first of their children rather than themselves. Hence in this scene we find two different female role models which complement each other: the more static group of Boer volksmoeders, who personify the collective care of Voortrekker women for future Afrikaner generations – and the dynamic, independent Italian heroine who shows solidarity with her white kin through her brave ride to warn many endangered Boer families in the Bloukrans area. This explains why the SVK selected a foreign woman as the central figure to exemplify bravery, alacrity and community spirit when help was most needed. Teresa Viglione was clearly regarded as the impartial female model to counter Zulu perfidy and slaughter with white trust and humanity.

⁷⁸⁷ Heymans and Theart-Peddle 2009, 29.

16 *Dirkie Uys* defends his father (11 April 1838)



A2/A3



B2



C2



D

16 *Dirkie Uys*

South wall, south-west projection, above door (panel 20/31)

h. 2.3 × 2.4 m

Restored fractures on the vertical edges

Sculptor of the clay maquette: Laurika Postma

STAGES OF PRODUCTION

- A1 W.H. Coetzer, pencil drawing, retained only in A2 (April–June 1937)
- A2 Reproduction of A1 (June 1937)
- A3 W.H. Coetzer, revised pencil drawing A1, h. 13.4 × w. 15.2 cm (after September 1937)
Annotation: ‘Dirkie Uys’
- A4 W.H. Coetzer, *Dirkie Uys*; monochrome oil on board, h. 27 × w. 27 cm (late 1937–38?)
- B1 One-third-scale clay maquette, not extant but replicated in B2 (1942–43)
- B2 One-third-scale plaster maquette, h. 78.5 × w. 85 × d. 8 cm (1942–43)
- C1 Full-scale wooden armature, not extant (1943–46)
- C2 Full-scale clay relief, not extant but photographed; replicated in C3 (1943–46)
- C3 Full-scale plaster relief (1943–46), not extant but copied in D (late 1947–49)
- D Marble as installed in the Monument (1949)

EARLY RECORDS

SVK minutes (4.9.1937) — item 4m (see below, ‘Development of the design’)

Voorstelle (5.12.1934?) — item 14 ‘Vlugkommando keer verslae terug. Piet Uys gewond, sy seun Dirk sterf by hom:

Donga aan die bokant waarvan perderuiters deurjaag, agtervolg deur vyand. Aan die anderkant (oorkant die sloot) Uys van sy perd, en sy seun oor hom gekniel, word met assegai gegooi’ (Flight commando turns back defeated. Piet Uys wounded, his son Dirk dies alongside him: donga at the top through which horseriders rush, followed by enemy. On the other side [across the ditch] Uys [fallen] from his horse, and his son kneeling over him, are showered with assegais)

Panele (c. Dec 1934–36) — item 9 ‘Indiwiduele heldedade (a) Dirkie Uys’ (Individual heroic deeds [a] Dirkie Uys)

Wenke (c. 1934–36) — item I. F.A. STEYTLER, g. ‘Dirkie Uys omsingel deur Soeloes word doodgesteek by die lyk van sy vader’ (Dirkie Uys surrounded by Zulu is stabbed to death next to the body of his father)

Moerdyk Layout (5.10.1936–15.1.1937) — scene 13 on panel 19/31, ‘Dirkie Uys’

Jansen Memorandum (19.1.1937) — item 7.13 ‘Heroic death of Dirkie Uys’

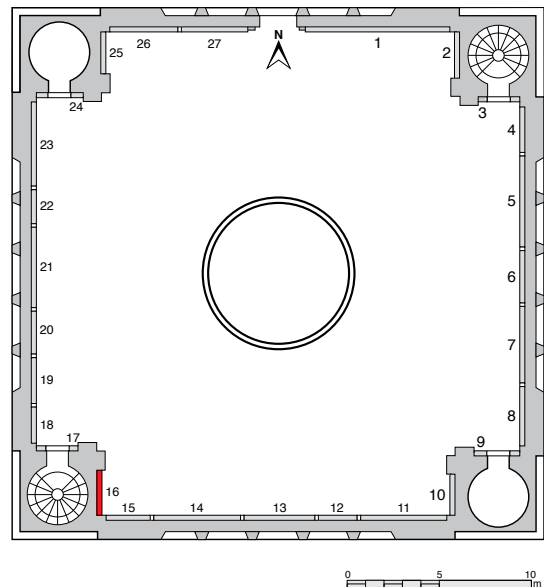




Figure 16.1: D. *Dirkie Uys*. 1949. Marble, 2.3 × 2.4 m (courtesy of VTM; photo Russell Scott)

Description

Although a group of three Zulu towers above him and fills the height of the panel, a young Voortrekker is clearly the all-important protagonist here, picked out because he is isolated on the left, with ample space around him (fig. 16.1). It is Dirkie Uys who, undaunted by the heroically proportioned attackers with their raised assegais,⁷⁸⁸ kneels to aim his muzzleloader directly at the central figure. The Zulu on the far right has already been despatched and topples backwards with a dramatically up-flung arm, while another is stretched out lifeless in front of the boy. In the foreground his father, Piet Uys, lies facing in the opposite direction to the dead Zulu, obscuring most of his body and shield, Uys' limbs echoed by the corpse's lifeless outstretched arm. Mortally wounded and with drooping head, Uys barely raises his upper body on his left elbow, while his right hand grasps the edge of the marble panel as though he tries to support himself. Yet he is staged frontally in a tranquil classical pose and, within the decorous frame provided by his arms, his dying face with half-closed eyes shows little sign of his suffering. He remains dignified and neatly dressed even in death, with only a loose lock of hair suggesting any loss of his calm control. Despite Dirkie's valiant attempt to defend him, the boy's isolation makes him appear vulnerable and a tragic end is inevitable. A riderless horse that gallops away in the left background, against a scene enclosed by flat-topped mountains, adds to the sense that the two Voortrekkers have been abandoned to their fate.

⁷⁸⁸ For Zulu dress and arms, see *Bloukrans*.



Figure 16.2: A2. W.H. Coetzer. Reproduction of first sketch for *Dirkie Uys*. June 1937 (courtesy of ARCA PV94 1/75/5/1; photo the authors)

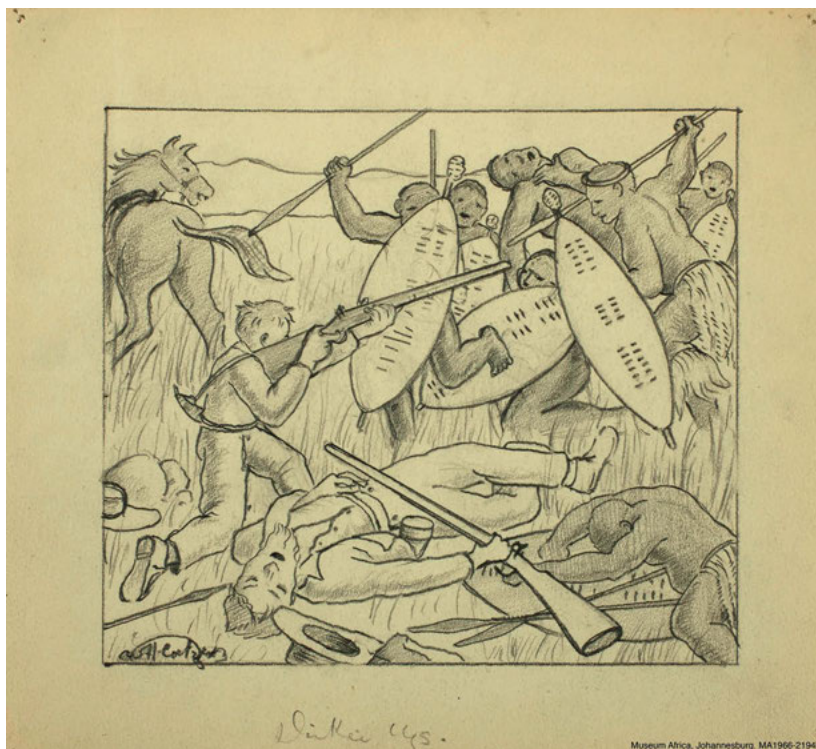


Figure 16.3: A3. W.H. Coetzer. 'Dirkie Uys'. After September 1937. Pencil, 13.4 x 15.2 cm. Revised first sketch (photo courtesy of Museum Africa, no. 66/2194H)

Developing the design

Already the reproduction of Coetzer's first drawing (fig. 16.2) shows a compositional divide of the Voortrekkers and their foes similar to the final marble. Six Zulu (one of them wounded) are approaching from the right with assegais and shields to attack the two Voortrekkers who occupy the lower left-hand side of the composition. Two people lie dead on the ground. One, at the lower right corner, partly beyond the frame, is a Zulu who lies on top of his shield and two abandoned assegais. The other, centrally positioned, is the body of Piet Uys in an oblique foreshortened view. He still clings to his rifle, but his head falls backwards towards the viewer, hat abandoned, shirt unbuttoned and legs curiously crossed. The awkward angle of his head is echoed in the wounded Zulu at the top. Next to his father, a bare-headed Dirkie with short tousled hair balances himself on one knee (the other oddly angled) to take aim with his gun, its weight partly supported on an outcrop of jagged rocks that affords him a little shelter. Behind him on the far left a horse without saddle looks back as it moves away.

The Historiese Komitee requested the following alterations at its meeting on 4 September 1937:

Death of Dirkie Uys. Italenis is level land with high grass. Show rolling hills; the fight takes place on the bank of a small stream; it must be a flintgun; show a horse that runs away.⁷⁸⁹

The final pencil sketch (fig. 16.3) shows traces of a different drawing underneath with a full face and left arm of the Zulu nearest to Dirkie; at some point they were for the most part covered by a shield. Following the committee's instruction, Coetzer removed the rocks (faint signs are still detectable) and covered the ground with the requisite high grass. Without the rocky prop for his gun, Dirkie now has to support its full weight and his hands are enlarged as though to indicate this. The changes also meant that the lower part of some Zulu previously hidden by the rocks became visible amidst the grass, so that Coetzer had to supply them with legs, including some puzzlingly positioned buttocks and a bent leg in the middle of the group. The horse is similar, but its left rear leg is now lifted and the mane ruffled to suggest greater movement, and the addition of a saddle suggests that it has been abandoned by its rider. Apart from the more elevated position of Piet Uys and his inward gaze towards the Zulu attack, Coetzer's monochrome oil (fig. 16.4) is close to his revised drawing (fig. 16.3), although the horse is without a saddle, and the grassland setting implies that it was made after the feedback from the Historiese Komitee.

For the small plaster maquette (fig. 16.5), Laurika Postma changed Coetzer's arrangement significantly, although she reintroduced rocks, showing her dependence on the earlier drawing. They form a natural stage, with more coherent flat layers, rather than a steep and rugged barrier. Again Zulu close in from the right, brandishing assegais and small shields. Two figures are more distant, while two are depicted prominently in the foreground, one forcefully attacking, the other dramatically collapsing, precariously balanced on the toes of his left foot on a rectangular rock. On the far left a much younger Dirkie Uys kneels on a rocky pedestal with his far knee raised in a calm and compact pose. He takes aim at the attacking Zulu in the foreground with his rifle, the barrel ominously overlapping the head of a dead Zulu staged prostrate on the rocks. It is not clear which of the Zulu is in the line of fire although the collapsing figure on the far right is presumably the victim. The foreground figure is again Piet Uys, now shown in a reversed pose parallel to the picture plane, with his far knee raised. The right arm crosses the body to rest over his rifle, the hand framed by the

⁷⁸⁹ 'Dood van Dirkie Uys. Italenis is 'n gelyk wêreld met hoë gras. Wys rollende heuwels; die geveg vind op die wal van 'n klein spruitjie plaas; dit moet 'n vuursteengeweer wees; wys 'n perd wat weghardloop' (Historiese Komitee 4.9.1937: 4m).



Figure 16.4: A4. W.H. Coetzer. *Dirkie Uys*. Late 1937–38? Monochrome oil on board, 27 × 27 cm (courtesy of DNMCH, OHG 902; photo the authors)

strap of his gun, while the other arm is bent to cushion his head. The reclining posture and closed eyes are more suggestive of a sleeping figure than the suffering of a fallen man. In the distance on the far left a horse is again depicted. It is now really fleeing the scene, represented in profile with a full saddle, front legs lifted off the ground, stirrups, tail and mane flying. Regardless of the dynamic design, however, it looks more like a statue than a real animal.

The full-scale clay panel (fig. 16.6) increases the height of the Zulu adversaries who close ranks on the right. They are reduced to four, one already killed, two that attack, and the fourth in the foreground, hit by a bullet and shown collapsing in the same precarious moment as in the small plaster maquette (fig. 16.5). Three much larger Zulu shields play a role in the narrative's composition: the first shield masks the body of the attacker, who will ultimately be victorious, and the second is a foil behind the collapsing figure who succumbs to Dirkie's gun. The third, however, rests on the ground, placed emblematically to divide Piet Uys from the dead Zulu, who lies in frontal view, partly obscured by the Boer and the shield, but presented like a trophy in front of the young gunman, the victim's head hard against his knee. There are major changes too in the way the Voortrekkers are shown. Now Piet Uys is shown dying but not dead, agonisingly supporting himself on his left arm. But his posture is further formalised and only a few loose strands of hair emphasise his fatal condition. Dirkie appears more adolescent than child, taller and with styled hair. His older demeanour makes his action less miraculous but more credible. He seems to be more in control of his weapon, now with the correct details for a flintlock, which is held on his shoulder more firmly, his raised arms higher, as he aims directly at the middle Zulu. The loss of distracting details such as the aloe at his feet and the hat in the foreground of the maquette help to focus attention on the young hero, and the ample space around him singles him out and brings him close to the viewer. The horse, however, remains above his head in curious isolation. It appears frozen, although its galloping pose is more realistic.



Figure 16.5: B2. Laurika Postma. *Dirkie Uys*. 1942–43. Plaster, 78.5 × 85 × 8 cm. Maquette (courtesy of VTM Museum VTM 2184/1–28; photo Russell Scott)



Figure 16.6: C2. *Dirkie Uys*. 1943–46. Clay. Full-scale relief (Pillman 1984, 48–49, photo Alan Yates)



Figure 16.7: *Dirkie Uys*. 1943–46. Plaster. Full-scale relief, as installed in the Monument before cleaning (photo courtesy of Unisa Archive; Van Schaik album, MSS 134, 27)

An intriguing photograph in J.L. van Schaik Publishers' photo album in the Unisa Archive shows the relief in an exceedingly dirty state (fig. 16.7): it is difficult to know whether it is the plaster version installed in the Monument before being sent to Italy to be carved, or more probably the marble itself, soiled and stained during its journey back to South Africa, as the two are very similar. As discussed in Part I,⁷⁹⁰ noticeable differences between the full-size clay (fig. 16.6) and the marble relief (fig. 16.1) are the less detailed textural treatment of the foremost Zulu's front apron and, in the dying Voortrekker, the less articulated beard and hands, the curious form of the left shoulder and arm, and the simplified rendering of the fabric's folds.

⁷⁹⁰ Chapter 4 ('From plaster to marble').

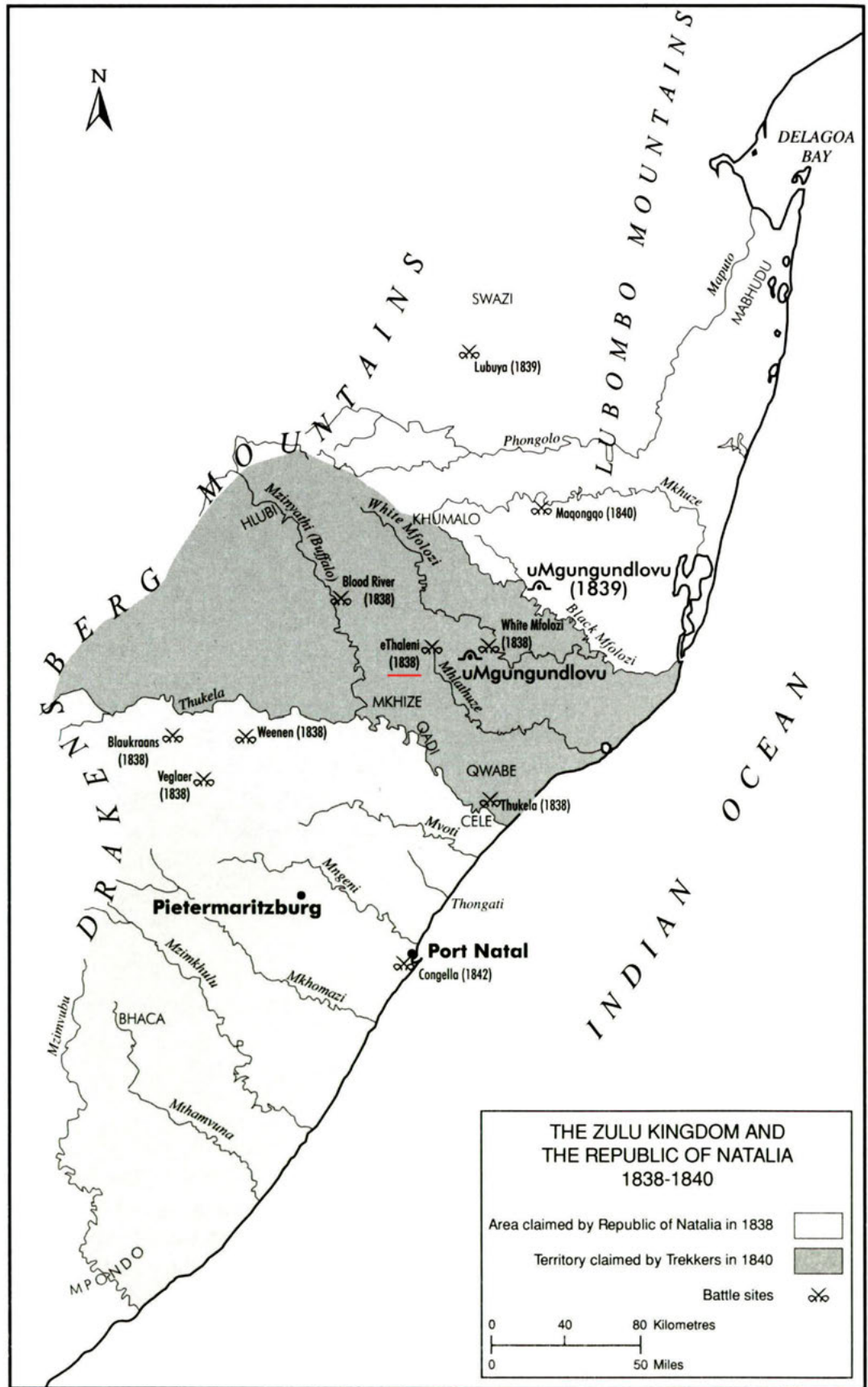


Figure 16.8: Major battle sites, Boer, Zulu and Swazi, including eThaleni (Italeni) (courtesy of Laband 1995, 106)

Reading the narrative

The killing of the Voortrekker leader Petrus Lafras (Piet) Uys and his son Dirk Cornelis (Dirkie)⁷⁹¹ by Zulu happened on 11 April 1838 at a site usually called Italeni by Boers and British, situated ‘near the sources of the Mhlahuze River and the eThaleni Hill’ (fig. 16.8),⁷⁹² just five kilometres south-west of uMgungundlovu.⁷⁹³ Their deaths were the consequence of an attempt to avenge the two terrible losses the Voortrekkers had suffered barely two months before: first at uMgungundlovu (6 February), where Retief and his entire entourage, some seventy Boers, thirty-eight servants and the English interpreter, Thomas Halstead, were murdered – and then, only eleven days later, in the area of Bloukrans, where Dingane’s Zulu had slaughtered two hundred and eighty-one Boers, mainly children and women, as well as some two hundred and fifty black servants. The Voortrekkers reacted to these tragedies with two mounted commandos, a party of one hundred and forty-seven men led by Piet Uys and two hundred further men by Hendrik Potgieter, who had come from the Transvaal to support them.⁷⁹⁴ On 6 April 1838, both groups began to move from the south-west against uMgungundlovu, while a smaller force of English settlers advanced from Port Natal.⁷⁹⁵ On 11 April at Italeni, the Uys and Potgieter parties ran into an ambush laid by Dingane’s army, estimated to be 6 000 to 7 000 strong.⁷⁹⁶ Potgieter sensed a trap and retreated with his men in time, but Uys and his commando, who rode on to confront the Zulu, came suddenly under attack from all sides; he, his son Dirkie and ten further men were killed before the rest escaped.⁷⁹⁷ The Voortrekker defeat came to be known by the shameful name of the *Vlugkommando*, literally the commando that took flight.⁷⁹⁸

The recollections of what specifically happened to Piet Uys and his son Dirk vary substantially. The basic narrative is that, in the course of fierce fighting, Piet Uys and a small group of his men including his son were separated from their commando and came under attack by a superior force of Zulu. Most reports say that Piet Uys was fatally wounded by an assegai, and died with his son at the hands of the enemy. While this is the context in which Dirkie Uys has become known to historians, he and his death are shrouded in mystery. It provided fertile ground for heroic myths. Not only is there conflicting information about where, when and how he died, but we know almost nothing about him. His name is remembered in the diminutive as Dirkie, an affectionate form implying youthfulness, but even his age has been disputed, with estimates ranging between ten and fifteen years, and the reliefs show him as very young, particularly the maquette (fig. 16.9). So too was the model for this portrait, Werner Kirchhoff, corroborated by Potgieter (fig. 16.10), who was a school-boy in his early teens at the time he posed for the figure. Only recently has Ian S. Uys clarified that the higher age is correct, and that Dirkie was born on 3 March 1823;⁷⁹⁹ among the Voortrekkers, males of this age would have been thought of as young men and regularly undertaken the tasks of adults. Some chroniclers report merely that he died with his father.⁸⁰⁰ Others, however, hand down more colourful accounts. They describe how from the small group of Uys’ men Dirkie alone remained with or turned back to his mortally wounded father, and that they died together after the

⁷⁹¹ Visagie 2011, 503 (Dirk Cornelis Uys), 504–505 (Petrus Lafras Uys).

⁷⁹² Laband 1995, 92; Raper, Möller and Du Plessis 2014, 207.

⁷⁹³ *DSAB* 5, 1987, 787.

⁷⁹⁴ Laband 1995, 92–93.

⁷⁹⁵ For the English alliance with the Boers against Dingane during March and April 1838, see Cubbin 1988.

⁷⁹⁶ Van der Merwe 1986, 252.

⁷⁹⁷ Owen ed. Cory 1926, 135; Van der Merwe 1986, 254 (who states that seven men died with Uys).

⁷⁹⁸ Already emphasised by Smit trans. Mears (1972, 102; Dutch text: Smit ed. Scholtz (1988, 129) recorded on 12 April 1838: ‘... in the evening two men arrived ... with the saddening news for us that our force with a loss of 10 men has been defeated with God’s leave, and they have been forced to flee [hebben moeten vluchten] ...’

⁷⁹⁹ Uys 1988, 31; Visagie 2011, 503.

⁸⁰⁰ For example, Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 233 (Willem Jurgen Pretorius, 1839?), 243 (Sarel Cilliers, 1871); Owen ed. Cory 1926, 135.



Figure 16.9: The glorified hero in *Dirkie Uys*. Maquette and marble relief, details of figs 16.5 and 16.1 (photos Russell Scott)

son had bravely killed several Zulu.⁸⁰¹ The undated recollections of Hermanus Jacobus Potgieter (1821–99),⁸⁰² the eldest son of Andries Potgieter, recorded by the Dutch schoolteacher Odé in the 1890s,⁸⁰³ are a good example of how heroic suffering, Christian belief and nationalistic glorification became part of the story:

While Uys adjusted the flint of his gun, he was struck by a spear in the side. The strong man retained his presence of mind, and he pulled the spear out of the wound and helped another wounded Boer on a horse. The blood loss he suffered was unfortunately too great; soon he felt death approaching. Then he ordered his men to flee, while he had to die. ... His last words to his friends were: 'Save yourselves. Strike through the enemy. Keep God in mind!' One could do no better than to follow the command of the dying Uys, and so his companions fled (by Modderspruit) and initially Dirk Uys was with them. Then looking back, he saw his father surrounded by enemies, and his intense feelings as his child made him resist flight; he turned his horse around, and rode into the Zulus. He wanted his father to be saved, or to die with him. Three Zulus quickly fell before his infallible shots, but the number of the enemy was too great, and soon father and son fell to the ground, with countless assegai wounds, and gave up the spirit in each other's arms.

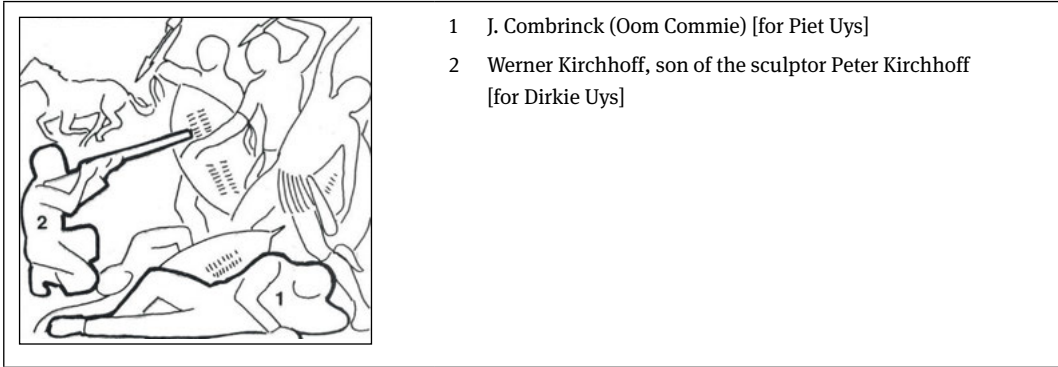
The name of Piet Uys is honoured by our nation, no less than that of his son Dirk, such an outstanding example of parental love and heroism for other young people.⁸⁰⁴

⁸⁰¹ According to Uys (1976, unpaginated [printout, p.6]) 'The usual version'. See also Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 374 (Daniel Pieter Bezuidenhout, 1879), 411 (Jacobus Boshof, 1838).

⁸⁰² *Visagie* 2011, 364–365.

⁸⁰³ For Odé, see Preller, *Voortrekkermense* 3, 1925, 'Vooraf' (preface).

⁸⁰⁴ 'Terwyl Uijs de vuursteen van zijn geweer verstellde, werd hij door 'n assegai in de zijde getroffen. De sterke man behield zijn tegenwoordigheid van geest, hij trok de assegai uit de wond en hielp nog 'n gewonde Boer bij zich op 't paard. Het bloedveries dat hij leed, was helaas, te groot; weldra voelde hij de dood naderen. Daarop gebod hij zijn manschappen de vlucht te nemen, wyl hy toch sterven moest. ... Zijn laaste woorden tot zijn vrienden waren: "Red u, slaat u door de vijand heen, houdt God voor ogen!" Men kon niet beter doen dan 't bevel van de stervende Uijs opvolgen, zijn metgezellen vluchten (door Modderspruit) en aanvankelijk Dirk Uijs met hen. Deze omziende, ziet zijn vader van vijanden omringd, zijn kinderlik gevoel kwam toen zo hevig in verzet tegen zijn vlucht, dat hij zijn perd wendde, en op de Zoeloes inreed. Hij wilde zijn vader redden of met hem sterven. Spoedig vallen drie Zoeloes voor zijn gewisse schoten, maar 't getal vijanden is te groot, en weldra vallen vader en zoon door ontelbare assegaaisteken verwond,



- 1 J. Combrinck (Oom Commie) [for Piet Uys]
- 2 Werner Kirchhoff, son of the sculptor Peter Kirchhoff [for Dirkie Uys]

Figure 16.10: Models for portraits (Potgieter 1987, 28)

The Potgieter narrative reads like an eyewitness report, although he had presumably left Italeini with his father's *Vlugkommando* and was not present when Dirkie Uys died. Such accounts and a desire to exalt the Voortrekker past paved the way to transform Dirkie Uys into a widely respected hero of the Great Trek. Hennie Potgieter named some of these issues and the Boer ideologies around them when he recounted the debates of the SVK and the sculptors on the *Dirkie Uys* panel:

The Dirkie Uys narrative gave rise to widely diverse opinions in the committee. Some contended that Dirk shot and killed three Zulus from the saddle, others that he beat three Zulus to death from the saddle with a rifle-butt. Two other viewpoints held that the skirmish happened on the ground. A descendant of the Uys family was convinced that it never happened and that Dirk was killed as they raced away from the Zulus. Whatever the case, we decided that a twelve-year-old boy could not have killed three Zulus with a rifle butt, and Laurika decided to portray him in a heroic pose, kneeling next to his father while shooting. Whether this is a myth or not, it is an inspiring story that deserves to be recorded in the Monument.⁸⁰⁵

Predictably, the heroic account was the one chosen for the frieze.⁸⁰⁶ Laurika Postma portrayed Dirkie Uys in a valorous pose kneeling next to his father, bravely shooting at the attacking Zulu. In doing so she represented the intrepid son and the dying father in an honorific manner, in the tradition of memorial statuary, which makes the father the counter model of the dead Zulu behind him. Looking back at the earlier designs it is interesting to note that this concept took shape only in the

ter aarde, en geven in elkanders armen de geest. Blijf de naam van Piet Uijs bij ons volk in ere, niet minder die van zijn zoon Dirk, die zulk 'n voortreflik voorbeeld voor andere jongeren gaf van ouderliefde en heldemoed' (Hermanus Jacobus Potgieter in Preller, *Voortrekkermense* 3, 1925, 49–50). See also Daniel Pieter Bezuidenhout (ibid., 161), who exclaimed, 'If [only] all Afrikaners were like small Piet Uys ...!' ('... als alle Afrikaners zo als klein Piet Uijs waren ...!')

805 'Oor die Dirkie Uys – verhaal was daar by die Komitee groot meningsverskil. Sommige het gesê dat Dirkie van die rysaal af drie Zoeloes doodgeskiet het; party het beweer dat hy van die saal af drie Zoeloes met die geweer kolf doodgeslaan het. Twee ander sienswyses was dat die verweer op die grond plaasgevind het. 'n Afstammeling van die Uys-familie was vas oortuig dat dit nooit gebeur het nie, maar dat Dirkie in die wegjaag deur die Zoeloes doodgemaak is. Hoe dit ook al sy, ons het aangeneem dat 'n twaalfjarige seuntjie nie drie Zoeloes met 'n geweer kolf kon doodslaan nie, en Laurika het besluit om hom in 'n heldhaftige houding langs sy pa, gekniel en besig om te skiet, uit te beeld. Of dit nou 'n mite is al dan nie, dit is 'n inspirerende verhaal, en verdien sy plek in die Monument ...' (Potgieter 1987, 46).

806 Potgieter (ibid.) notes that the Dirkie Uys story 'can also be taken as a symbol of many child heroes' (kan ook geneem word as simbool van baie kinderhelde). Postma later undertook relief panels on the theme of 'kinderhelde' (child heroes) for the Kindermonument, installed at the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk Sunday School building in Bloemfontein in 1959. Dirkie Uys was not among those portrayed and only one, Petrus Bezuidenhout, was associated with the Trek, saving horses during the Bloukrans massacre. The central panel depicted a boy and girl with the national flag and an open Bible, 'symbolic of Afrikaners' Christian National outlook' (simbolies van die Afrikanervolk se Christelik-nasionale lewensbeskouing). See Pillman 1984, 83–86 with figs (quote p.83); Duffey 1993, 54.

maquette (fig. 16.5) and received its final form in the full-scale clay (fig. 16.6). The more general and possibly more trustworthy statements of the majority of chroniclers were ignored as they would not have contributed to the purpose of the panel within the narrative of the frieze. *Dirkie Uys* is a telling example of how a shifting blend of history, myth and Afrikanerdom promoted a powerful new image.

Similar dynamics of memory are attested by the Uys family, who have kept contradictory versions of Dirkie's fate alive to the present day. Two articles by Ian S. Uys are revealing. In his 1976 article 'A Boer family', he explained:

The usual version of how Piet's son, Dirkie, 15, met his death is that on glancing backwards he saw his dying father lift his head for a last look at his son. The anguished boy turned his horse and with a cry of 'I will die with my father' he raced back to Piet, shooting three Zulus in the process, and fell under the assegais at his father's side.

The Uys family version is that Dirkie was not aware of his father's fate. He and Jan de Jager, 20, were galloping together when Zulus sprang up in a reed-choked stream ahead. Jan's horse jumped in and out of the donga, but Dirkie's horse landed with its forelegs splayed and before he could escape Dirkie was dragged from its back. His remains were never found, possibly through being washed away in the donga.⁸⁰⁷ Another version is that he was taken alive to Dingaan who had 'muti' (medicine) made from this brave young boy.⁸⁰⁸

Twelve years after this article, Ian Uys revisits the Italeni episode but does not mention the 'Uys family version', instead reinstating a simplified account of the 'usual version' in an account that valorises not only the son but also the father, who is credited with qualities that would have changed South African history. In his article 'Her Majesty's Loyal and Devoted Trekker Leader: Petrus Lafras Uys', he writes:

... on 8 April (1838) ... Uys rode to the rescue of two impetuous Malan brothers and was mortally wounded by an assegai in his back. He was supported in his saddle but kept fainting and eventually ordered his men to leave him. His 15-year-old son, Dirkie, then achieved immortality. The boy looked back to see his dying father raise his head and watch him ride to safety, while Zulus swarmed towards him. Dirkie swung his horse around and rode back to fight and died with his father.⁸⁰⁹ Piet Uys was the only Trekker leader to die on the battlefield.

History has not forgotten the spontaneous heroism of Dirkie, but has largely overlooked the tremendous charisma of the man which inspired it. The boy's love for his father was the natural consequence of the respect and adulation his family and friends bore for a morally and physically courageous man ... Piet Uys' vision of a United States of South Africa, ... had he survived ..., would perhaps have prevented the carnage of two Anglo-Boer Wars and led to a more peaceful solution to our sub-continent's problems.⁸¹⁰

807 This is close to P.S. de Jongh's account in *DSAB* 5, 1987, 787: After the death of his father, Piet Uys, 'approximately one kilometer further on U. [Dirkie Uys] was cornered by the Zulu warriors, and probably died in the spruit at that place. His remains were never found and his body was most probably swept down in the stream'. What neither account concludes is that, since Piet Uys' remains were later recovered and buried, but his son's body was not with his, it is very likely that they did not die together.

808 Uys 1976, unpaginated (printout, pp.6–7).

809 This coincides with the account of Schalk Willem Burger in Preller, *Voortrekkermentse* 4, 1925, 95.

810 Uys 1988, 39. It is interesting that Marthinus Oosthuizen, who rode with the Vlugkommando but did not himself witness the death of Uys (recounted to him by his brother-in-law Rudolph who did), does not mention Dirkie's heroic deed in a letter of 19 January 1897, as his emphasis is on demonstrating what a hero Piet Uys was (quoted in Preller's account of the memories of his wife Aletta Oosthuizen, *Voortrekkermentse* 3, 129–132; see also *Marthinus Oosthuizen*).



Figure 16.11: Dying Piet Uys in *Dirkie Uys*. Marble, detail of fig. 16.1 (photo Russell Scott)



Figure 16.12: Apollo kills the Giant Epialtes, detail of Pergamon Altar, east frieze. c. 200–150 BC. Marble, h. 2.3 m; total length of frieze 113 m (Pergamonmuseum, Berlin; photo Susanne Muth)

While the dying Piet Uys is portrayed with dignity (fig. 16.11), in an ancient pose reminiscent of the Giant Ephialetes in the ancient frieze of the Pergamon Altar (fig. 16.12),⁸¹¹ we have seen that it was the ‘usual version’ glorifying Dirkie that is portrayed in the marble. In the scene Dirkie has killed two of the attacking Zulu already: the first lies dead in front of him, next to his dying father, the second collapses on the far right, and his third victim, the middle Zulu, is at gun point. In the narrative of the frieze it is the task of the remaining Zulu nearest to Dirkie to stab him to death with his assegai, but he is portrayed *before* he kills the young Boer to allow Dirkie to be represented as a hero performing a heroic act.

Purpose, context and moral high ground have throughout history been driving forces to lend stories a cutting edge. In the visual narrative of the frieze the intention of the *Dirkie Uys* relief was to portray cardinal values which formed part of the Afrikaner mythology of the Great Trek, namely the unbreakable bond between father and son, and their perfect, irreproachable behaviour when faced with death. The choice of this very episode is relevant for another reason also. As Eric Walker has argued, the disaster at Italeni was the Voortrekkers’ first ‘stark defeat in fair fight’ including the loss of one of their leaders.⁸¹² The murder of Retief and his party ‘had been done by treachery upon unarmed men’, and the massacre at Bloukrans was ‘achieved by surprise on open laagers in the dark’⁸¹³ – explanations which avoided having to think of the cost of the many lives in these two tragedies as defeat. The story of Dirkie Uys as a Boer hero, a young man ready to die for the Afrikaner cause, transformed Italeni from the shameful ignominy of the Vlugkommando into a worthy chapter of the foundation myth of Afrikanerdom.

811 The likelihood of Laurika Postma knowing this work from the time she spent in Berlin is discussed in Part I, Chapter 2 (‘Topics for the Great Trek’).

812 Walker 1934, 172.

813 *Ibid.*

**17 *Marthinus Oosthuizen* gallops through Zulu lines
(17 February 1838)**



B2



C2



D

17 Marthinus Oosthuizen

South wall, south-west projection, above door (panel 21/31)

h. 2.3 × 2.4 m

Restored fractures on the vertical edges

Sculptor of the clay maquette: Laurika Postma

STAGES OF PRODUCTION

B1 One-third-scale clay maquette, not extant but replicated in B2 (1942–43)

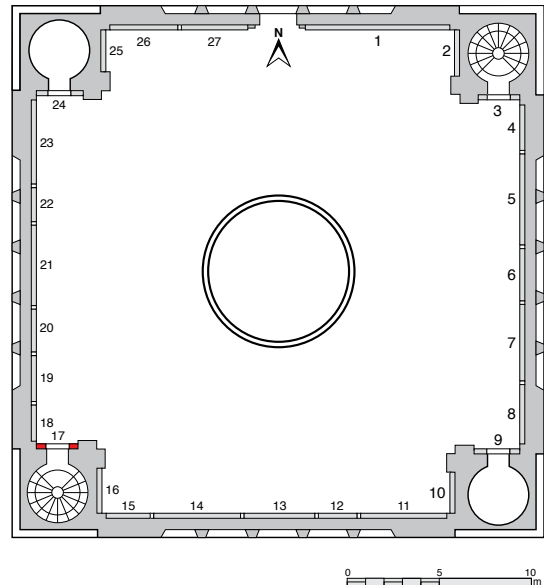
B2 One-third-scale plaster maquette (1942–43): h. 77.2 × w. 83 × d. 10 cm (1942–43)

C1 Full-scale wooden armature, not extant (1943–46)

C2 Full-scale clay relief, not extant but photographed; replicated in C3 (1943–46)

C3 Full-scale plaster relief (1943–46), not extant but copied in D (late 1947–49)

D Marble as installed in the Monument (1949)



EARLY RECORDS

Voorstelle (5.12.1934?) — item 13 ‘Zulu-aanval op Van Rensburgkoppie, (digby Estcourt) voorgrond;

gelyke vlakke waarop uitgespande waens alleen. Agtergrond die koppie, waarop die verdedigers.

Marthinus Oosthuizen jaag deur Zulus, om ammunisie by verdedigers te bring’ (Foreground Zulu attack on Van Rensburgkoppie (close to Estcourt); level plains with outspanned wagons alone. Background the koppie with defenders. Marthinus Oosthuizen rushes through Zulu to bring ammunition to the defenders)

Panele (c. Dec 1934–36) — item 5 ‘Moordtonele soos’ (b) ‘Bloukrans met heldedaad v. Martinus Oosthuizen’ (Murder scenes such as [b] Bloukrans with heroic deed of Martinus Oosthuizen); item 9 ‘Indiwiduele heldedade’ (b) ‘Oosthuizen’ (Individual heroic deeds [b] Oosthuizen)

Wenke (c. 1934–36) — item I. F.A. STEYTLER, c. ‘Die van Rensburgers vasgekeer op van Rensburgkoppie; Marthinus Oosthuizen jaag tussen die Soeloes deur om kruit ens. te bring’ (The Van Rensburgs trapped on Van Rensburg koppie; Marthinus Oosthuizen rushes through the Zulu to bring gunpowder and so forth)

Wenke (c. 1934–36) — item VI. Mevr. van Reenen, ‘Dat die heldedaad van Marthinus Oosthuizen herdenk sou word ek graag aan die hand wou gee. U onthou hoe hy met sy saalsakkie vol ammunisie deur die duisternis van kaffers gejaag het om uitkoms te bring aan van Rensburg en ’n klompie medeburgers wat of ’n koppie vasgekeer was. Die episode het my man in ’n gedig sy Agsterstevoortrekkers beskrywe en die portret wat hy van ’n foto afgeteken het was destyds deur ou mevr. Oosthuizen goedgekeur. Tog neem ek aan dat hy tydens die gebeurtenis jonger moes gewees het’ (I would like to suggest that the heroic deed of Marthinus Oosthuizen should be commemorated. You remember how he raced through a dark host of kaffers with his saddlebag full of ammunition to bring help to Van Rensburg and a group of fellow burgers that were trapped on a koppie. My husband described this episode in a poem called Agsterstevoortrekkers [back-to-front trekkers], and the portrait that he drew from a photograph was approved at the time by old Mrs Oosthuizen. Nevertheless, I think that he would have been younger at the time it happened)

Moerdyk Layout (5.10.1936–15.1.1937) — scene 12 on panels 17–18 ‘Weenen Oosthuyzen’

Jansen Memorandum (19.1.1937) — item 7.12 ‘Scenes of the massacre at Blauwkrantz and inter alia Marthinus Oosthuizen’s act of heroism’



Figure 17.1: D. Marthinus Oosthuizen. 1949. Marble, 2.3 × 2.4 m (courtesy of VTM; photo Russell Scott)

Description

The dominant figure in this scene is a young Voortrekker, his muzzleloader at the ready, mounted on a leaping horse (fig. 171). It is Marthinus Jacobus (Tienie) Oosthuizen, under attack by four Zulu with assegais. Two further warriors in the foreground succumb in staged drama, supporting themselves on either side of the gable-shaped door frame. The large Zulu shields behind the horse and rider and the right-hand Zulu act as a foil to create the maximum effect, while yet another protrudes above the gable to point to horse and rider. Although considerably smaller than the foreground Zulu, Oosthuizen's poise, neat hairstyle and dress make him seem untouchable, as though he acts in an impervious world of his own – especially as the four attacking Zulu are reduced to head and shoulders, and the three in the background are smaller in scale. Moreover, the assegais are not aimed directly at Oosthuizen, who rides invincibly to the rescue of his compatriots, carrying a bulging bag across his saddle that rests on his right thigh, improbably stable although the horse leaps forward. In the distance on the far right, against a backdrop of hills, a Voortrekker wagon stands deserted.



Figure 17.2a: Marthinus Oosthuizen? Sketch with Oosthuizen on his horse 'Zwartje' riding through Zulu lines to supply the Van Rensburgs with ammunition. Ink and pencil on paper. Undated, h. 33 x w. 20 cm (photo courtesy of uMsunduzi Museum Collection)

Developing the design

Although early accounts and later scholarship on Natal's history provide only minimal evidence about Marthinus Oosthuizen, the depicted story was well known and among the first suggestions of scenes for the visual narrative of the Great Trek.⁸¹⁴ It may seem surprising then that it was not among Coetzer's drawings, since it was included in Moerdyk's first layout of the frieze and Jansen's definitive list of 19.1.1937. But it was not presented as an independent item: as in Moerdyk's annotated design, Jansen's twelfth topic is defined as 'Scenes of the massacre at Bloukrans and inter alia Marthinus Oosthuizen's act of heroism'. So we should identify the horse and rider in Coetzer's drawings of the massacre at Bloukrans (figs. 14.3, 14.4) as the young hero, who rather curiously rides away from the laager in the first sketch, but into it in the second, presumably bringing the gunpowder and shot which would save the Van Rensburg party from the attacking Zulu. The rationale for this was a requirement from the Historiese Komitee, which instructed Coetzer that the Boer on the horse must come into the laager, although it was not explained why.⁸¹⁵ The incident was ultimately selected as an independent scene because of the need for additional topics for the short corner walls over the doors in the Hall of Heroes, discussed in Part I, Chapter 3, for which this youthful exploit was an apt theme. Without a preliminary sketch from Coetzer, it had to be a new invention.

However, there are earlier depictions of the event. Exceptional is a detailed sketch in the form of a mapped narrative with handwritten annotations in Dutch, curiously framed with a band of hatching on three sides (fig. 17.2a). Christoffel Muller attributed the sketch to Marthinus Oosthuizen⁸¹⁶ when he published a drawn copy of the original kept in the uMsunduzi Museum Collection, Pietermaritzburg.⁸¹⁷ According to paper conservationist Dr Estelle Liebenberg-Barkhuizen, the map's discoloured and extensively foxed paper is genuine and indicates that it was made in the 'period of the early and mid 19th century'.⁸¹⁸ It is foolscap in the traditional folio size of 8 × 13 inches (203.2 × 330.2 millimetres), a longer equivalent of today's A4 paper, and it has been folded three times, once vertically and twice horizontally.⁸¹⁹

The map portrays topographical features of the site, such as the bold winding line representing the named 'Rensburg Spruit' that runs from the bottom of the page, alongside the oval shape of 'Rensburg Kop[pie]', and through the prominent opening in the hatched landscape next to it, perhaps explained in the hard to read annotation 'Neck(?)'. There is also a small section above Rensburg Kop that is textured with dots, which might correspond to the area of bush beyond the koppie (clearly visible today on Google Earth), but the caption is again unclear, possibly including the word 'doring' (in Afrikaans, beginning to evolve at the time, this would mean thorn).⁸²⁰ As well as the names of topographical features, the annotations refer to the Boers and their camps of wagons.⁸²¹ 'Kommandant Johannis van Rensburg [sic] wagens' are positioned below Rensburg Kop, the 'Harmses Log[g]enbergs' roughly opposite and, on the bottom left above what appears to be a

814 See above, 'Early records'.

815 'Die boer op die perd moet laer-toe kom' (Historiese Komitee 4.9.1937: 41).

816 Muller 1978, 63 fig. 44 'Marthinus Oosthuizen's own sketch of the event of 17 February 1838' (see fig. 17.5a). Small 1968 (unpaginated, figure before no. 13) provides an illustration of the original map.

817 This remarkable document deserves fuller enquiry. The sketch is in ink on paper, with additional pencil lines. We thank Elrica Henning from the uMsunduzi Museum for her kind help in supplying the measurements, the description of the paper and the photograph of this find, about which the museum 'has no information' (email 12.7.2019).

818 Email from Elrica Henning, 16.7.2019.

819 For the use of foolscap in this period, see *Treaty* ('The Weinthal facsimile').

820 Google Earth (Rensburg Kop, South Africa) provides views of the terrain including the Rensburg Spruit.

821 We gratefully acknowledge the help of Zirk van den Berg with whom we discussed the inscriptions.

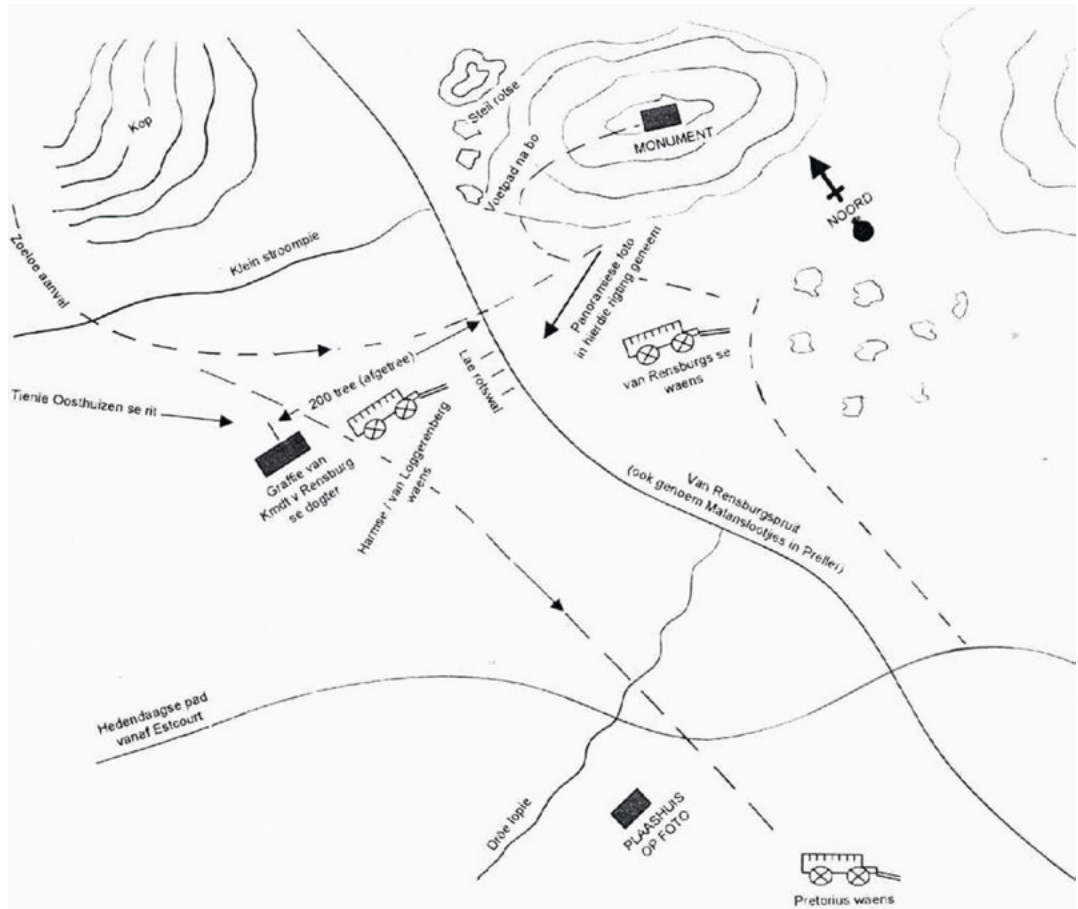


Figure 17.2b: P.J.J. van Rensburg. Modern reconstruction of Marthinus Oosthuizen's site of action. Undated (www.oocities.org/athens/rhodes/1266/RenKopKrt.jpg)

house, 'Isaak(?) Marais Syn Huis', the 'Wilhelmus Pretorius Wagens', the figures scattered around it, some with legs closed, perhaps people who had been killed.⁸²² The position of the topographical features (and camps) corresponds well with a mapped reconstruction of the event developed by P.J.J. van Rensburg, a modern Van Rensburg descendant (fig. 17.2b).⁸²³

The nineteenth-century sketch shows four galloping horses, their importance marked in the two that are staged prominently in the open central area of the map. They are mounted by figures recognisable as Boers because they are on horses and armed; they are also distinctively bare-headed. All are unspecified, but the one on the lower right is identifiable as Oosthuizen because his horse 'Zwartje' (Blackie) is named.⁸²⁴ The horsemen, who ride along a lightly drawn line, are probably intended to depict the hero at various stages of his journey. This identification is further supported by the annotation next to the horseman that sallies forth on the upper left, 'Kapitein

⁸²² Voortrekkers of the families named here are mentioned in Bird (*Annals* 1, 1888, 407–408 'Loggenberg', in the context of the Bloukrans massacre) and Visagie (2011, 211–212 'Harmse', 293–296 'Marais' [not clear which one], 395 'Wilhelmus Pretorius [Willem Jurgen]', and 43–551 'Van Rensburg' [not clear which one]).

⁸²³ www.oocities.org/athens/rhodes/1266/RenKopKrt.jpg

⁸²⁴ Lea 1936, 30: 'Young Marthinus Oosthuizen, on his good mare Swartje ...'; <http://www.oocities.org/athens/rhodes/1266/historical-SurviveZuluAttack.htm>.



Figure 17.3: Henry Lea. 'De redding door Martinus Oosthuizen van de verdedigers van Rensburg's Kop, Natal 1838' (The rescue by Martinus Oosthuizen of the defenders of Rensburg Koppie, Natal 1838). Pre 1936. Drawing (Muller 1978, 63 fig. 46)

Mansin Dada gedoot'. It refers to another of Oosthuizen's feats, as he is credited with having killed the Zulu commander 'Manzi mDada', said to have led the attack on the Van Rensburgs.⁸²⁵

To rescue the stranded family, Oosthuizen races down the page to pick up ammunition from a wagon in the camp of Wilhelmus Pretorius, and back again to deliver it to the Van Rensburgs on the outcrop that was to take their name, Rensburg Kop.⁸²⁶ Part of the terrain he traverses is packed with figures, some upright, some supine – presumably warriors attacking or succumbing. The vehemence of the attack on the Rensburg Kop is suggested by the majority of the figures being clustered around the koppie. But why is the koppie itself, recorded to have served the Van Rensburgs as a last stronghold, shown vacant – apart from the annotations and a single figure, possibly the leader Van Rensburg? We surmise that here the topographical part of the map ends and what we see above is an additional space with a sole depiction, like an inset of a detail on larger scale. The focus here is on the koppie that is crowded with nineteen well-ordered figures, their legs bent as if to indicate their crouched poses, trapped in collective helplessness. The nature of these people, symbolically transferred and isolated on this 'extra' koppie, seems to be explained by the annotations on the actual Rensburg Kop: 'vrouwen' (women⁸²⁷), the name 'Rensburg', and 'Kop' (head or koppie). The emblematic image gains further significance through its crowning position at the top of the map.

⁸²⁵ See the illustration with the Oosthuizen map in Smal 1968 (unpaginated, before no. 13), identifying the horsemen as Oosthuizen, and including a separate handwritten explanation 'Kaptein Manzin Dada onwetend deur M Oosthuizen dood geskiet / Captain Manzin Dada incidently shot by M Oosthuizen'. In 2001 J.P.P. van Rensburg stated that 'Manzin mDada, the commander of the Zulu' (Manzin mDada, die leier van die Zoeloes) had headed the attack on the Van Rensburgs before he was shot by Marthinus Oosthuizen (<http://www.oocities.org/athens/rhodes/1266/Rensburg-koppie3.pdf>). Was this narrative, one wonders, (also) based on the Oosthuizen map?

⁸²⁶ Raper, Möller and Du Plessis 2014, 433.

⁸²⁷ See below the narrative of Aletta Oosthuizen.

The simplified wagons and stick figures to represent Zulu attackers and Boer defenders – all with legs astride and sporting the same headgear or spiky hair, hence indistinguishable apart from Oosthuizen – recall a diagrammatic map that someone might make to explain and record a complex event. It provides a lasting pictorial narrative of the feat. If Muller's attribution of the sketch to Marthinus Oosthuizen is correct (he does not substantiate his identification or provide the map's provenance), it is a rare visual document of the period of the Great Trek portraying an incident by a participant trekker.

Later the English artist Henry Lea (1870–1941), farmer and tutor to Afrikaner families in the Eastern Transvaal, demonstrated the dramatic potential of the subject in more conventional style when his drawing of it was published in 1936. It shows Marthinus Oosthuizen on horseback, his gun raised aloft, while he storms through Zulu lines towards the Rensburg koppie, attacked from all sides (fig. 17.3).⁸²⁸

The maquette (fig. 17.4) is the earliest depiction of the scene for the frieze that we know. Although the composition is in principle similar to the full-scale clay and marble reliefs, the particulars show significant differences. In the maquette, the young Voortrekker sits upright on his horse, but his body does not answer to the angle of his gun and the steep stance of the rearing stallion, and the precious bag of gunpowder lies unsupported across the horse's shoulders. Compared to the vigorously attacking Zulu (only the warrior on the far right is stationary), the main narrative group of horse and rider appear improbably immobile. The horse is not leaping, but frozen in action, with only his right foreleg raised, and the left strangely extended like a supporting strut, reminiscent of elaborately posed equestrian monuments. In the full-scale clay (fig. 17.5), however, both forelegs are raised more convincingly. The complex positions of the two foreground Zulu, now with their dress more fully represented, also suggest extravagant statuary. In the maquette, they are more precariously presented than in the full-scale version, especially the one on the left, who futilely hangs on to his assegai to try to avoid total collapse, a motif removed in the full-scale clay relief. The odd pose of the standing Zulu on the far right remains unresolved in the marble, however, as his inexplicably large left leg that stretches down the margin of the panel is not convincingly attached to his body.

Overall, there is a different mood in the maquette (fig. 17.4). Its rider appears younger and is assaulted not by four but six Zulu who are more fully portrayed because their shields are considerably smaller than in the final form. The larger number and greater visibility of the Zulu, together with the greater variety in the ways the shields are held, distracts attention from the main group. Here the rider is in the thick of the fight and less in control. The full-scale clay panel (fig. 17.5) is more idealised with less distracting detail. We even find this in the lonely wagon in the distance, which is portrayed at an angle with a rolled-up back flap in the maquette, but more schematically in the marble, positioned parallel to the surface, as are the enlarged Zulu shields.

⁸²⁸ Lea 1936, 29–30 with fig.; see Muller 1978, 63 fig. 46, 103 (on the artist).



Figure 17.4: B2. Laurika Postma. *Marthinus Oosthuizen*. 1942–43. Plaster, 77.2 × 83 × 10 cm. Maquette (courtesy of VTM Museum VTM 2184/1–28; photo Russell Scott)



Figure 17.5: C2. *Marthinus Oosthuizen*. 1943–46. Clay. Full-scale relief (Pillman 1984, 52; photo Alan Yates)

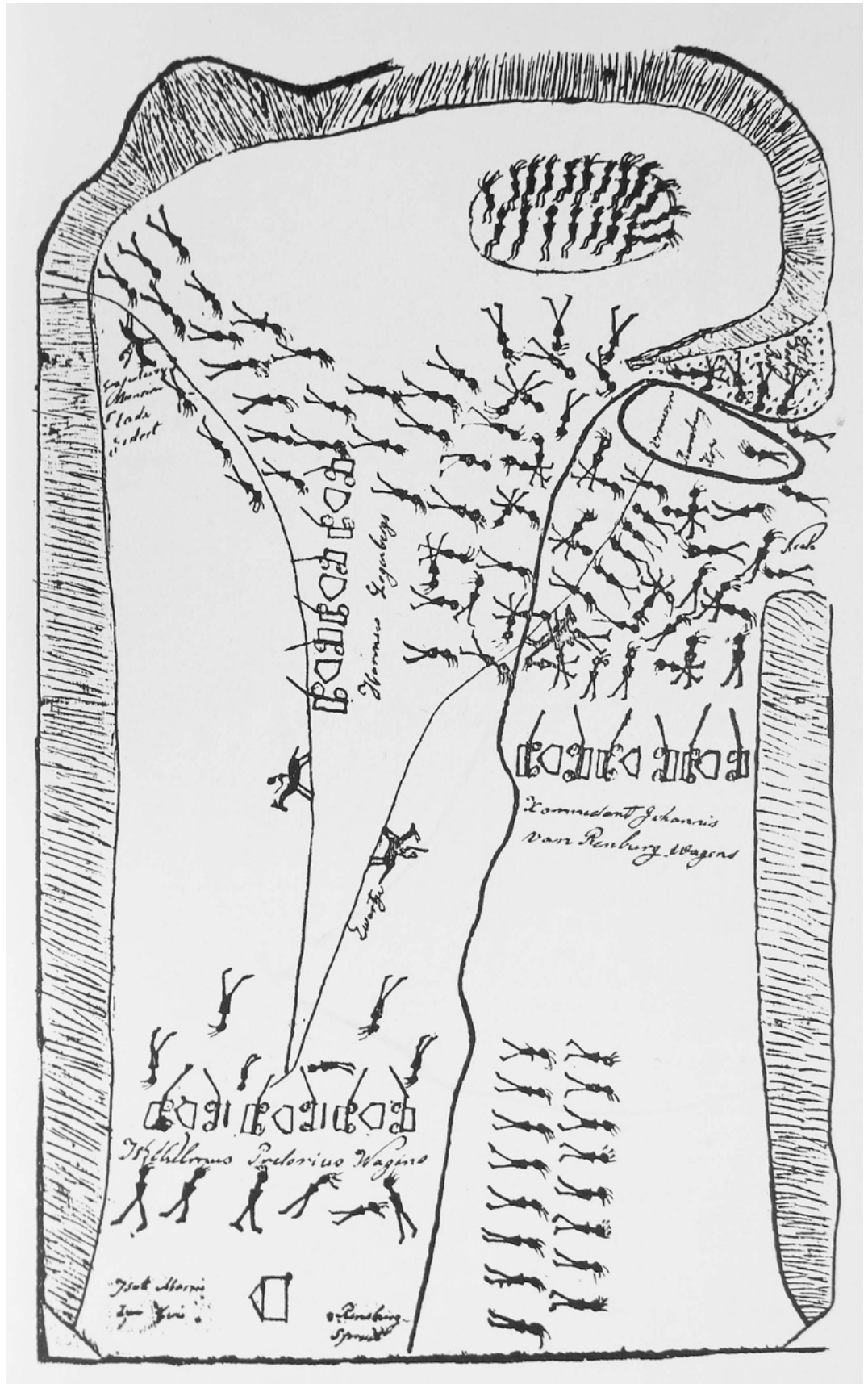


Figure 17.6: Simplified copy of Marthinus Oosthuizen(?) sketch, see fig. 17.2a (Muller 1978, 63 fig. 44)

Reading the narrative

Marthinus Jacobus Oosthuizen (1818/19–97)⁸²⁹ achieved historical recognition in the context of the massacre of the Voortrekkers when, on the night of 16 to 17 February 1838, Dingane's Zulu launched a surprise attack on the Voortrekker encampments around Bloukrans. Attacking under cover of darkness, the Zulu slaughtered some 530 people, mainly children, women and servants (see *Bloukrans*). Johannes Hendrik Hattingh (1819–97) remembered that 'the Kaffirs were so many in number that before day broke they simultaneously attacked and murdered people across a distance of three hours on horseback'.⁸³⁰ Hence there was little time to forewarn camps such as the one of the Van Rensburgs situated on the plain in the vicinity of Estcourt, near an outcrop afterwards known as 'Rensburgkoppie' (fig. 14.14).⁸³¹ It was within this family's story that Oosthuizen became famous.⁸³²

The earliest account we have of this incident is a letter of Jacobus Nicolaas Boshof(f) jr (1808–81), later president of the Orange Free State,⁸³³ to the editor of the *Graham's Town Journal*, sent from Graaff-Reinet and dated 2.7.1838. Although he had first-hand information, since he had visited the Voortrekkers in Natal only three months earlier in May 1838, his letter does not mention any involvement of Marthinus Oosthuizen:

At one place about eight or ten families, the Rensburgs and Pretoriuses, were driven from their wagons to the top of an adjoining hill, which was only accessible from two sides [see fig. 17.2a]. Fourteen men here stood on their defence against a whole Zulu regiment, the number of which increased to about fifteen hundred. Repeated attacks were made for about an hour, but the gallant little party as repeatedly drove them back, until at last their ammunition failed, and no hope was left. But, providentially, at this critical moment two mounted men came to their assistance and made their way to the top of this hill, through the line of Zulus, and upon learning there that the ammunition of the party was almost expended, they undertook, at the most imminent peril of their lives, to force their way back to the wagons, from whence they safely returned at full speed, with an ample supply of ammunition. All this was done in less than five minutes, and as the firing now began with greater vigour than before, the Zulus retreated; and as a few more of the burghers arrived, they were soon put to flight, leaving more than eighty killed at the spot. Several more anecdotes of bravery and resolution on this trying occasion could be told on the part of the defenders, but it would take too much space in your columns.⁸³⁴

Against Boshof's clear statement of 'two mounted men',⁸³⁵ Philippus Jeremias Coetzer (1819–98)⁸³⁶ claims in a later account (c. 1894) that there was a single rider, namely Marthinus Oosthuizen, who came to rescue the Van Rensburgs:

The next day many Boers came to bury the dead. While they were busy with this, the Van Rensburgs arrived, who had all been thought murdered. They said that they had run out of gun powder and

⁸²⁹ Visagie 2011, 346.

⁸³⁰ Preller, *Voortrekkermense* 1, 1918, 158: 'De kaffers waren zóveel in getal, dat zij tegelijkertijd bij 't breken van die dag op 'n afstand van ongeveer 3 uur te paard de mensen aanvielen en vermoorden.' For Hattingh, see Visagie 2011, 214.

⁸³¹ Thom 1947, 207 (for area map with Rensburgkoppie, see *Bloukrans*); Oberholster 1972, 252. Photograph in Visagie 2011, 347.

⁸³² A summary of the generally accepted story is provided by Nathan 1937, 224–225; <http://www.ooocities.org/athens/rhodes/1266/Rensburgkoppie3.pdf> (P.J.J. van Rensburg, 2.11.2001, has further details); see further Thom 1947, 212–213.

⁸³³ Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 10 n *; Visagie 2011, 65–66 (with photograph).

⁸³⁴ Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 405–406. For a less detailed account of this incident but without bringing up the help of the two riders, see Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 242–243 ('Journal of the late Charl Celliers', 1871).

⁸³⁵ If the four riders in the Oosthuizen sketch (fig. 17.2a) do not refer to different stages of Oosthuizen's ride, they would support Boshof's report of more than one Boer on horseback.

⁸³⁶ Visagie 2011, 110 (b1c12d3e2).

lead, but a brave Boer, Marthinus Oosthuizen, alone on his horse, raced through the Zulus with a bag of bullets and a bag of gunpowder, so that, provided with bullets and powder, the Van Rensburgs could fight off the Zulus, with the help that was later lent by Rudolph, Maritz and Jacob Naudé who arrived a little later.⁸³⁷

Coetzer's version of the event is backed up by that of Aletta Bernhardina Oosthuizen (née Rudolph) (1820–1916), apparently written down in 1905, and obtained in 1914 by Preller from her son-in-law C.F. Sniyman (Snyman) for inclusion in Volume 3 of *Voortrekkermense*.⁸³⁸ She had married Marthinus Oosthuizen on 5 August 1838,⁸³⁹ thus relatively soon after the Bloukrans massacre, and first mentions his brave deed when describing how, shortly afterwards, Kommandant van Rensburg had assisted the newly-weds with oxen to pull their wagons after theirs had been lost to Zulu marauders. She remarked that 'He [Van Rensburg] thought of the sacrifice that my young man had made to rescue him, riding through the Zulus with bullets and powder, and had thus saved them'.⁸⁴⁰ Later she elaborated on the story, saying that her husband, who had fought with Potgieter against the Ndebele, and at Italeni and Blood River, had been reluctant to speak about the Bloukrans affair, but told her all about it. She describes how, his father and brothers having died with Retief, he was with his mother in a small laager not very far from the Van Rensburgs, when someone came to warn them of the Zulu attacks. He took his mother to the safety of another group, then rode to check on their horses and ran into a Zulu contingent. As he fought single-handedly with them he came closer to the Van Rensburgs and saw their small deserted laager and the people trapped on the nearby Rensburgkoppie. Aletta Oosthuizen continued that Marthinus Oosthuizen

... had come so close to the koppie that the people could see him clearly, and Hans van Rensburg cried out to him to do his best to bring them lead and powder. He would find it in one of the wagons, of a certain Pretorius [see fig. 17.2a].

Oosthuizen turned his horse, and raced back as hard as he could to the small laager. There he found the indicated wagon and left his horse at the wagon pole while he forced open the chest at the front and took out the bullets and powder. He took as much as he could carry, and also decided to throw his gun over his shoulder and not to attempt to shoot, because of the weight of what he was carrying. As soon as he was finished he reined his horse directly to the koppie, right through the Zulus. He said the Van Rensburgs did their best from the other side to shoot clear a path, but it seemed to him that the Zulus opened up of their own accord to let him through, and he could not remember that an assegai was lifted against him.

837 'De andere dag komen velen der Boeren terug om de lijken der gevallen te begraven. Terwijl men hiermede bezig was, kwamen de Van Rensburgers aan, die men allen vermoord waande. Deze vertellen, dat 't met hun kruut en lood gedaan was, doch dat 'n moedige Boer, Marthinus Oosthuizen, alleen met 'n zak kogels en 'n zak kruut op zijn paard door de Zoeloes had heengejaagd, zodat de Rensburgers van kruut en kogels weden voorzien en de Zoeloes konden weerstaan met de hulp die hun even later werd verleend door Rudolph, Maritz en Jacob Naudé' (Preller, *Voortrekkermense* 4, 1925, 39–40). See also *ibid.*, 40 footnote 3 to 'Jacob Naudé': 'Regarding Oosthuizen's name Odé had a question: "with four others; who are they?" – After Oosthuizen carried out his bold act, and before the enemy had left, Sarel Cilliers with a group of other people appeared on the scene, who also bombarded the Kaffers from behind.' (By die naam van Oosthuizen kom voor 'n vraag van Odé: 'met vier anderen; wie zijn dat?' – Nadat Oosthuizen sy koene daad volbring had, en nog voordat die vyand gewyk had, is Charl Cilliers met nog 'n klompie ander mense op die toneel verskyn, wat die Kaffers toe ook van agter bestook het.)

838 The circumstances are recounted by Preller (*Voortrekkermense* 3, 1922, 119–120), who states that she was fit and well although in her nineties.

839 Visagie 2011, 346 (with photograph).

840 'Hij dacht aan de opoffering die mijn jonge man gedaan had, om met kogels en kruut hem to redden, midden door de Zoeloes doorjagende, wat hen also gered had' (*ibid.*, 123).

... he reached the top of the koppie safely, where the people could not express their joy and gratitude. The bullets and powder were distributed and the resistance was now doubled. The poor women, who had fled to the koppie in their nightdresses, fell on Oosthuizen's neck and kissed him out of joyfulness. With his help and the increased fire power, it was not too long before the Zulus gave way.⁸⁴¹

It is puzzling that Boshof, who was writing nearer the time, though not as an eyewitness, said that there were two horsemen who rode to the rescue, and did not name them. It is possible that Mrs Oosthuizen's account of her husband's intervention became increasingly heroic over the years, almost suggesting divine intervention in the parting of the Zulu to allow him to ride to the rescue. Whatever the case, Marthinus certainly became an epic figure in the minds of Afrikaners. Nathan summarises in 1937:

Then a horseman was seen approaching. It was Marthinus Oosthuizen, a youth aged eighteen. He boldly approached the hill through the 1,500 attacking Zulus. Seeing him, Johannes Rensburg held up his gun reversed. Comprehending the signal, Oosthuizen turned the horse, and, shooting right and left, dashed through the native horde, making his way to the wagon of Pretorius, about a mile distant. Here he found a supply of ammunition, which he gathered up, and immediately took to the hill. With this welcome aid, the defenders were enabled to beat off the Zulus.⁸⁴²

From a narrative point of view the youthful bravery of the 'heroic deeds' of *Dirkie Uys* and *Marthinus Oosthuizen*, which are staged directly after the calamities of *Murder of Retief* and *Bloukrans*, generate a symbolic trajectory towards new hope and a better future. It seems no coincidence that models for these heroic roles were chosen from boys who were closely associated with Harmony Hall: Kirchhoff's son for the first (fig. 16.10), and Moerdyk's son for the second (fig. 17.7), as Potgieter notes (fig. 17.8). It is interesting that Moerdyk stresses the youth of the protagonists in the *Official Guide*, calling Dirkie a 'boy', although at fifteen he would have been considered of fighting age, and Marthinus 'youthful',⁸⁴³ although he could already be considered a seasoned fighter if he had ridden with Potgieter's commando, and was about twenty. It is also notable that in both cases the young heroes are portrayed in calm command of the challenging situation. Contrary to Aletta Oosthuizen's account, Marthinus Oosthuizen has not slung his weapon over his shoulder, but instead fires from the saddle, which makes his act all the more dramatic, as does the rearing

841 'Oosthuizen was só nabij aan die koppie gekom, dat die mense hom duidelik sien, en Hans van Rensburg hom toeskreeu, om sij bes te doen lood en kruid in te breng. Hij sou dié aantref op een van die waëns, van 'n sekere Pretorius. / Oosthuizen keer sij pèrd en jaë so hard hij kon terug, naar die laërtje. Daar krij hij die aangeduide wa, en laat sij pèrd somaar dwarsoor die disselboom van die wa staan, terwijl hij die voorkis oopruk, en die koëls en kruid daaruit haal. Hij neem soveel as hij kon dra, en besluit toe maar ook, om sij eie geweer oor sij skouer te slaan, en nie te probeer skiet nie, aangesien die gewig wat hij dra. Sodra hij klaar was, gee hij sij pèrd die teuels, reg teen die koppie uit, dwarsdeur die Zoeloes. Hij sê, die van Rensburgers het van die anderkant hul bes gedaan om 'n pad te skiet, maar dit was vir hom net of die Zoeloes vanself oopmaak, om hom deur to laat, en hijself kan hom nie herinner dat daar 'n assegai teen hom opgelig werd nie. /... hij bereik veilig die hoogte van die koppie, waar die mense hul blijdschap en dankbaarheid nie kon uitspreek nie. Die koëls en kruid word rondgegee, en die weerstand word nou verdubbel. Die arme vrou-mense, wat daar op die koppie gevlug het in hul nagklere, val Oosthuizen om die hals en soen hom van blijdschap. Met sijn hulp, en die vermeerderde weerkrag, het dit toe nie al te lang geduur nie, vóordat die Zoeloes padgee.' She adds that the withdrawal may have been speeded by knowledge of strong resistance elsewhere and the death here of one of the Zulu leaders, Mazentdata (presumably Manzin mDada), and also mentions that Sarel Cilliers arrived with another group and bombarded the Zulu from behind (*Voortrekkermense* 3, 1922, 127–128).

842 Nathan 1937, 224.

843 *Official Guide* 1955, 50, adding that he was 'one of the many child heroes of the Great Trek'.

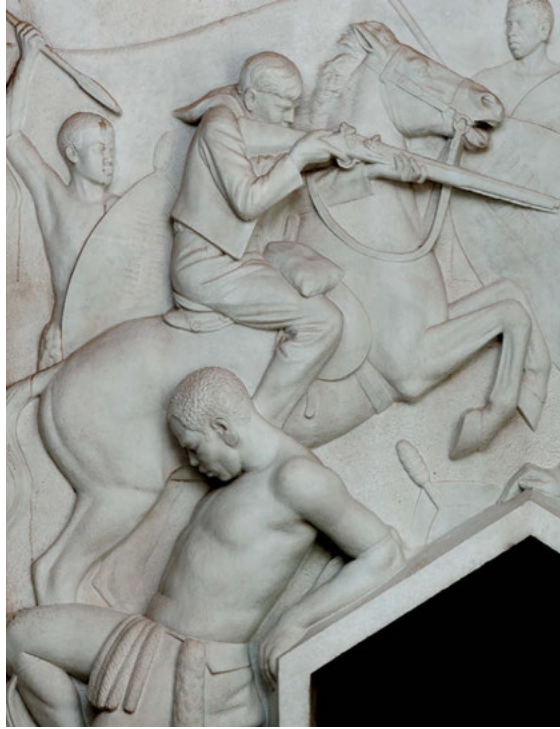


Figure 17.7: Marthinus Oosthuizen on horseback in *Marthinus Oosthuizen*. Marble, detail of fig. 17.1 (photo Russell Scott)

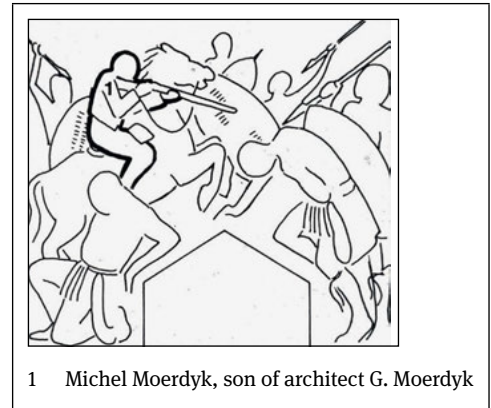


Figure 17.8: Model for Oosthuizen (Potgieter 1987, 29)

horse and elaborately collapsing Zulu that Laurika Postma invented for this scene (fig. 17.7).⁸⁴⁴ Thus it splendidly portrays how, in Moerdyk's words, 'His [Oosthuizen's] heroism saved the Van Rensburg trek from extermination.'⁸⁴⁵

While we previously suggested that compositional reasons might have accounted for the strange chronological order of *Dirkie Uys* (April 1838) being followed by *Marthinus Oosthuizen* (February 1838), the nature of the two scenes may offer further explanation. The narrative on the west wall, which prepares the viewer for the *Battle of Blood River*, the glorious climax of the frieze, would not have been appropriately opened with the downfall of a father and son no matter how great their heroism. The triumphant outcome of Oosthuizen's deed foreshadowed victories to come.

⁸⁴⁴ It is irresistible to speculate whether, had this scene been presented to the *Historiese Komitee*, it would have been corrected, but Preller, who had faithfully transcribed Aletta's account, died in 1943.

⁸⁴⁵ *Official Guide* 1955, 51.

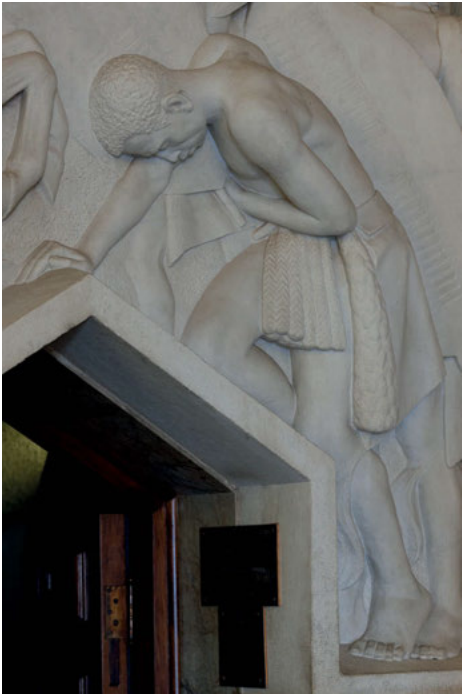


Figure 17.9: Collapsing Zulu in *Marthinus Oosthuizen* (marble, detail of fig. 17.1; photo Russell Scott) with Zulu model for maquette, fig. 17.4. 1942–43. Harmony Hall garden (Pillman 1984, 53)

18 *Women spur men on* (after 17 February 1838)



A3



B2



C2



D

18 *Women spur men on*

West wall (panel 22/31)

h. 2.3 × 2.25 m

Restored fractures on the vertical edges

Sculptor of the clay maquette: Laurika Postma

STAGES OF PRODUCTION

A1 W.H. Coetzer, pencil drawing, retained only in A2 (April–June 1937)

A2 Reproduction of A1 (June 1937)

A3 W.H. Coetzer, revised pencil drawing A1, h. 13.5 × w. 15.3 cm
(after September 1937)

Annotations: 'Mans wil terug gaan maar vrouens weier' (Men want to go back but women refuse) / 'Vroue eis Vergelding' (Women demand retribution)

B1 One-third-scale clay maquette, not extant but replicated in B2 (1942–43)

B2 One-third-scale plaster maquette, h. 77.8 × w. 77 × d. 8 cm (1942–43)

C1 Full-scale wooden armature, not extant (1943–46)

C2 Full-scale clay relief, not extant but photographed; replicated in C3 (1943–46)

C3 Full-scale plaster relief (1943–46), not extant but illustrated (*Die Volkstem*, 10.9.1947); copied in D (1948–49)

D Marble relief as installed in the Monument (1949)

EARLY RECORDS

SVK minutues (9.4.1937) — item 4n (see below, 'Developing the design')

Voorstelle — 5.12.1934(?), item 16 'Byeenkoms aan Klein Tugela in Maritz-laer. Vroue weier om terug te keer, en eis wreking van die moord' (Gathering in Maritz laager at the Little Tugela River. Women refuse to turn back, and demand that the murder be avenged)

Moerdyk Layout (5.10.1936–15.1.1937) — scene 15 on panel 21/31 'Vroue eis vergelding' (Women demand retribution)

Jansen Memorandum (19.1.1937) — item 7.15 'Scene portraying the dejection of the men and the refusal of the women to leave Natal before the blood of their dear ones had been avenged'

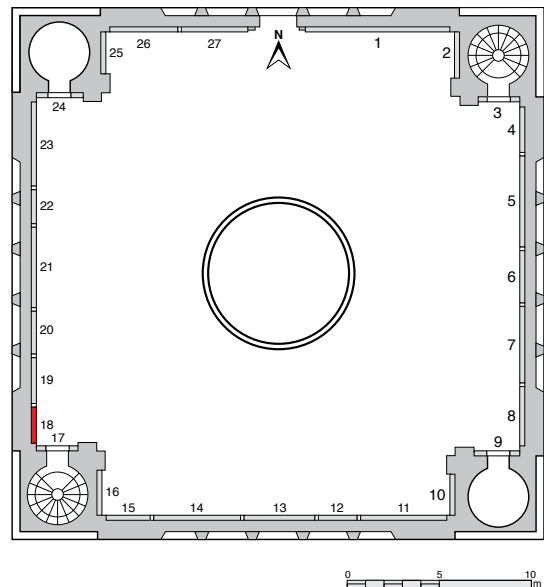




Figure 18.1: D. *Women spur men on*. 1949. Marble, 2.3 × 2.25 m (courtesy of VTM; photo Russell Scott)

Description

Five women and four men in Voortrekker dress, most of them in profile view, are grouped in close proximity: two couples are seated low in the foreground and, just behind them, stand two more, and the fifth woman (fig. 18.1). The upright woman in the centre dominates the scene, head and shoulders above her kin at the apex of the composition, although there is no obvious support to elevate her. She gestures dramatically with her outstretched left arm, her kappie pushed back to reveal her strong features, closed lips and determined jawline, her hair drawn back severely into a braided bun. She is the leader of the women, who outmatch the men here, not only in number but also in their more alert bearing.

The central woman's right hand reaches down to hold, reassuringly, the arm of the beardless man in front of her, presumably her husband, who has his left foot raised on the riempie chair between them. In contrast to his wife, he is passive, his head down, and his whole demeanour suggesting apathy. In the foreground, facing inwards, an older couple, seated on a travel chest and a folding stool respectively, frames a younger pair positioned awkwardly on the ground, the woman particularly cramped and keeping herself upright with an arm outstretched behind her. The young man in front of her leans against the knees of the more matronly figure behind him, who reaches out to touch his shoulder. In contrast to the attentively raised heads of the women, he and the elderly man with a walking stick on the right look down disconsolately.

Behind, and set a little apart as though to frame the central couple, are three further figures. The woman on the right, with her kappie over her left arm, also turns her head towards the centre. But the woman opposite looks closely at her dejected partner, attempting to draw the central couple to his attention with a pointing finger. The whole composition emphasises the central pair and the woman's commanding position. The space they are allotted means that the other figures are constricted, and their complex poses can become confused as their gestures converge in the relief.

But while the figures are compressed, their outdoor setting is expansive. The distinctive mountains in the background, hills in front of a towering range of table-top mountains, suggest a specific place, probably the grand Drakensberg amphitheatre (fig. 18.9). The lines of this specific backdrop continue into the next two scenes, *Arrival* and *The Vow*, thus underlining the close link of the landscape and hence the narrative of the three sequential scenes.



Figure 18.2: A2. W.H. Coetzer. Reproduction of first sketch for *Women spur men on*. June 1937 (courtesy of ARCA PV94 1/75/5/1; photo the authors)



Figure 18.3: A3. W.H. Coetzer. 'Vroue eis Vergelding'. After September 1937. Pencil, 13.5 × 15.3 cm. Revised first sketch (photo courtesy of Museum Africa, no. 66/2194S)

Developing the design

The reproduction of Coetzer's first pencil drawing (fig. 18.2) and his revised version (fig. 18.3) show no changes of significance: in the latter the far spar on the base of the chair is missing and there are no buttons on the trouser flap of the central Boer. The drawing depicts an informal gathering of Voortrekkers against a backdrop of a wide flat-topped mountain – four men, three women and two children. The upright man in the centre and the two women who frame him are prominently staged in the middle and set the tone. The man in frontal view stands inert, legs apart, with his hat in his lowered hand. On the right a woman, shown in three-quarter view from the back, turns towards him with flourishing hands as if to rouse him to action; even though her kappie obscures her face we can imagine her agitated address. Two other women facing us close in on him from the left. Although the one in front carries a baby, she dramatically raises her free left arm, curiously elongated to emphasise her action. By contrast, the three men at the edges of the composition are inactive and unmotivated. The Boer on the left leans on the back of a chair, legs crossed and head resting on his folded arms; the open rear end of a wagon behind him perhaps suggests imminent departure. Another Boer standing opposite him on the far right smokes a pipe. The third, in the right foreground, sits wearily on a folding stool, holding a walking stick in front of him. Next to him stands a little girl, back view, who is patting his arm. All the men are bearded, and two have hats and rolled-up shirt sleeves; only the one in the middle has a buttoned-up jacket. The women wear kappies and their customary long dresses.

The Historiese Komitee meeting on 4 September 1937 required no alteration:

The women demand retribution. Good.⁸⁴⁶

Possibly unaware of the positive comment of the SVK, Postma significantly revised Coetzer's design in her small plaster maquette (fig. 18.4) that paves the way for the final layout. We know from a set of photographs in the Kirchoff family collection, discussed in Part I,⁸⁴⁷ that models were used to assist with the poses of the figures for the new composition, photographed outside Harmony Hall so that the sculptors had a record that they could consult. With the exception of the child, there are photographs of all the figures in this scene, some posed singly, some in groups (fig. 18.5). It was a necessary exercise, for Postma again favoured complex poses, as she did in *Marthinus Oosthuizen*. It results in a very different composition from Coetzer's simpler group. The key change for the narrative is that the reduced and more staged central group forms the pivot of the scene, focusing on a woman in the centre, not a man. With her left arm extended in a declamatory gesture, which picks up on that of Coetzer's woman with a baby, she is elevated above her husband. He leans forward to support himself on a diminutive chair, a scaled-down version of the one on the left of the drawing, now marking the centre of the scene. The figures around the pair are all rearranged, with four seated figures across the foreground and three standing figures behind, which flank the central pair. On the right, a woman with a kappie, who carries a small child, is shown from the back, evidently gazing at the distant range of mountains. Her counterpart on the far left is a standing couple, who respond differently to the main group: whereas the woman actively draws attention to the central figure, the angle of her pointing arm echoing that figure's gesture, the bearded man in profile is rather inert but has his arms obstinately folded. Below, an older couple sit facing each other across the foreground. Her head raised, the woman in a quilted kappie on the left rests her right hand on the shoulder of the boyish figure leaning against her legs. Her male counterpart on the right, who wears a brimmed hat, sits with his legs tucked under his stool, resting his chin and right hand on top of his walking stick, while the other holds a pipe. At his feet sits a little girl in rear

⁸⁴⁶ 'Die vroue eis vergelding. Goed' (Historiese Komitee 4.9.1937: 4n).

⁸⁴⁷ Chapter 3 ('Models and portraits').



Figure 18.4: B2. Laurika Postma. *Women spur men on*. 1942–43. Plaster, 77.8 × 77 × 8 cm. Maquette (courtesy of VTM Museum VTM 2184/1–28; photo Russell Scott)

view who holds a doll, echoing the pose of the mother and child above, and mimicking her maternal role. The doll looks outwards, the only one in this scene to engage with the viewer.

The full-scale clay relief (fig. 18.6) follows the general layout of its smaller forerunner (fig. 18.4), but generally enlarges the figures and compresses the composition, so that it is cramped and difficult to read. There are two substantial replacements in the right half that remove references to the women's maternal qualities, perhaps to emphasise their decisive role on this occasion (see below). The girl with the doll is replaced by a young woman who sits in profile view, and the mother with the small child by a woman on her own, now turned frontally to participate in the group dynamics. Both women turn their heads inwards: the standing figure looks at the woman in the centre, while the seated one gazes at the pair on the left, perhaps suggesting a relationship that is not part of the historical narrative, since the model for that female figure was her sister – a private jest.⁸⁴⁸ Different

⁸⁴⁸ As discussed in Part I, Chapter 3 ('Models and portraits'), there may be some humour in Postma's choice of a self-portrait for this determined woman in a scene 'spurring on' the men, when she was the sole female in the sculpture team.



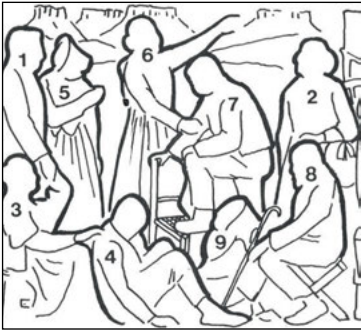
Figure 18.5: Models for *Women spur men on*, lower row for foreground figures, upper row for figures behind them. 1942–43. Pretoria, Harmony Hall garden (photos courtesy of Kirchhoff files)

models were used for the full-scale version of the scene, people who were not necessarily available at Harmony Hall at the time the maquettes were being conceived, when the sculptors often seem to have posed for each other. Hennie Potgieter identifies many of the portrait models for the large relief, including members of Postma's extended family and her self-portrait in the standing woman on the left (fig. 18.7). *Die Huisgenoot* of December 1974 provides a photograph of the sitter for the old man in the right foreground, Dietloff van Warmelo of Pretoria (fig. 18.8), who holds his walking stick in front of him as the figure did in Coetzer's drawing. The old man's pose is less cramped as his back intrudes into the next panel, as does the elbow of the female figure above him, crooked to hold the ribbons of her kappie. Opposite him, the elderly woman is more upright than in the maquette and barely touches the man slumped despondently in front of her, who has become considerably older.

The composition still revolves around the chair, although it is less prominent, obscured by the figures around it and a kappie of finely quilted fabric that hangs over its back. The posture of the standing couple on the left is conceived more antithetically: instead of defiantly folding his arms, the man is passive, his right hand lowered to rest on his thigh. The woman, on the other hand, is almost intimidating, her head turned sharply to look directly into the man's face, while her right arm crosses her body at an acute angle to draw his attention to the central figures. The torsion of her pose is reminiscent of archaic figure conventions with profile heads on frontal shoulders. The sense of formality in the poses is matched by the decorum of the dress: more than in the drawing or the maquette, which are both in their different ways more relaxed and informal, the men and women are extremely well groomed, the central two male figures even with short haircuts. This sense of formality is even more pronounced in the final marble which follows the large clay closely, and appears more planar overall with some details flattened, such as the quilted fabric of the kappie on the back of the chair.



Figure 18.6: C2: *Women spur men on*, 1943–46. Clay. Full-scale relief (courtesy of UP Archives; photo Alan Yates)



- 1 Gerard Kammeyer, brother-in-law of Lenus Postma, Laurika's brother
- 2 Tannie Alie Lindeque, foster mother of Lydia Lindeque
- 3 Grandmother Catharina Oelofse, mother of Dr Carel Potgieter
- 4 Van Zyl, a student
- 5 Laurika Postma, the sculptor
- 6 Mrs Sylva Moerdyk, wife of architect G. Moerdyk
- 7 Philip Postma, Laurika's brother and husband of the writer, Minnie Postma
- 8 Oom Dietloff van Warmelo
- 9 Stephanie Postma, Laurika's sister

Figure 18.7: Models for portraits (Potgieter 1987, 32)



Figure 18.8: Dietloff van Warmelo, model for old man in *Women spur men on* (Van der Walt 1974, 81)



Figure 18.9: Drakensberg amphitheatre (Mont-Aux-Sources) with Little Tugela River (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Amphitheatre_Drakensberg.jpg; photo Rudolph Botha)

Reading the narrative

Like the scene of *Saailaer* further along on the west frieze, the narrative of Boer women spurring their men on focuses on the role of women, but not on a specific historical event that was key to the sequential story of the Trek. Within western historical narratives, a story of women rousing disheartened men is exceptional – as is the iconography of the entire scene. It portrays impeccably dressed Boers, strangely passive and indolently lingering in enemy territory without any weapons, while spotless women either comfort them or spur them to action. Positioned directly after reliefs that portray the slaughter of Voortrekkers, it would be expected that this scene would relate directly to them. And indeed in the early records of the treks there is a report referring to the lack of morale after the series of disastrous confrontations with the Zulu. The Rev. Erasmus Smit noted in his diary on 17 April 1838:

Today there was a great disturbance in all the camps caused by some of the emigrants who wish to move back over the Drakensberg Mts. to some other place. We hope that the Lord will prevent this, because it will give the enemy courage to attack in turn the parties fleeing and the parties remaining behind.⁸⁴⁹

This is later confirmed in the so-called journal of Sarel Cilliers,⁸⁵⁰ published after his death. He recounts that, as a consequence of the massacres by Dingane's Zulu in the spring of 1838, 'The greater number of the emigrants were then inclined to quit the country, but I could not think of it.'⁸⁵¹

In 1917 Schalk Willem Burger sr described the role of the women responding to the uncertainty about what to do after the Bloukrans massacre and Potgieter's decision to leave Natal, which forms the subject of the Monument scene.

The women responded: 'If the men are too weak to avenge the death of the women and children, then we will do it.' Some of the women who spoke like this were well known to me, among others Mrs. Smit, the wife of the field preacher Erasmus Smit (a sister of Gert Maritz), the widow Mietje Kruger and the widow Gouws.⁸⁵²

The words of an outsider, Major Samuel Charters, a British officer at Port Natal in late 1838, capture a comparable view:

They [the Boers] considered themselves as unjustly and harshly treated by the Colonial Government while under its jurisdiction, and all they now desired from it was to leave them to their own resources and not molest them again. This spirit of dislike to the English sway was remarkably dominant amongst the women. Most of these, who had formerly lived in affluence, but were now in comparative want and subject to all the inconveniences accompanying the insecure state in which they were existing, having lost moreover their husbands and brothers by the savages, still rejected with scorn the idea of returning to the Colony. If any of the men began to droop or lose courage, they urged them on to fresh exertions, and kept alive the spirit of resistance within them.⁸⁵³

849 Smit trans. Mears 1972, 103 (Dutch text: Smit ed. Scholtz 1988, 130).

850 See *The Vow*.

851 Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 243 (translation of Hofstede 1876, 56 'Toen wou de Meederheid de land verlaten maar daar kon ik niet aan denken'). For Bird's English translations of the *editio princeps* of Cilliers' Dutch journal by Hofstede, see *The Vow*.

852 'De vrouwen zeiden daarop: "Als de mannen te zwak zijn om de dood van de vrouwen en kinderen te wreken, dan zullen wij 't doen." Van de vrouwen die zo spraken waren mij welbekend, o.a. mev. Smit ('n suster van Gert Maritz), de weduwee Mietje Kruger en de weduwee Gouws' (Preller, *Voortrekkermense* 4, 1925, 96).

853 Schoeman 2003, 113. In 1839 Adulphe Delegorgue (*Travels* 1, 1990, 83) also noted that 'African Dutch women have strong opinions and do not hesitate to make them known. The husbands do as their wives bid them' (see also *ibid.*, 116).

Early accounts like these would have been the basis for Jansen's description of the projected fifteenth scene for the frieze in his letter to the Minister of Internal Affairs of 19.1.1937 (Part I, fig. 92): 'Scene portraying the dejection of the men and the refusal of the women to leave Natal before the blood of their dear ones had been avenged.'

There is further verification of the women's determination not to relinquish the overriding goal of the Trek – to find freedom from British rule – although that now involved quitting Natal. On 8 August 1843, the British commissioner Henry Cloete reported to John Montague, then colonial secretary in Cape Town, about his negotiations with the Boer Volksraad (Legislative Council) in Pietermaritzburg. Cloete described how, when he was urging the Voortrekkers to acknowledge the unconditional control of Natal by the British Crown, a group of Boer women interrupted the talks:

The state of suspense in which I was kept was agreeably relieved by a formal deputation which I received from the standing committee of the ladies of Pietermaritzburg, headed by Mrs. [Susanna] Smit, the wife of a person officiating as missionary [Erasmus Smit]. The spokeswoman commenced by declaring that, in consideration of the battles in which they had been engaged with their husbands, they had obtained a promise that they would be entitled to a voice in all matters concerning the state of this country: that they had claimed this privilege, and although now repelled by the Volksraad, they had been deputed to express their fixed determination never to yield to British authority; that they were fully aware that resistance would be of no avail, but they would walk out by the Drakensberg barefooted, to die in freedom as death was dearer to them than the loss of liberty.

I endeavoured (but in vain) to impress upon them that such a liberty as they seemed to dream of had never been recognised in any civil society; that I regretted that, as married ladies, they boasted of a freedom which even in a social state they could not claim, and that, however much I sympathised in their feelings, I considered it a disgrace on their husbands to allow them such a state of freedom. After an interview which lasted for a couple of hours, they left me still more excited than they had been when they first arrived, and departed exclaiming that their shibboleth was liberty or death. From this state of frenzy into which the females had worked themselves, His Excellency may conceive how easy it was for them to impart some portion of that excitement into the minds of their relatives.⁸⁵⁴

The very earliest list of proposals for topics for the frieze, the 'Voorstelle' of late 1934, proposes as item 16, after events related to *Bloukrans* (16/17 February 1838): 'Gathering in Maritz Laager at the Little Tugela River. Women refuse to turn back, and demand, that the murder be avenged.'⁸⁵⁵ And, indeed, the impressive backdrop of the mountain range shown in the frieze points to the panoramic Drakensberg amphitheatre as seen from the Little Tugela River (fig. 18.9). But item 20 of the 'Voorstelle' recommends another topic of women's action, in this case related to the event described by Cloete that took place in an entirely different location some five years later, in August 1843: 'Public gathering in Pietermaritzburg (or in the laager) with Cloete. The women, led by Mrs Smit, Maritz and another, read the English commander a lesson.'⁸⁵⁶ The later 'Panele' list of proposals also put forward this scene, quoting Susanna Smit's memorable words of defiance in the face of British rule, that she would rather go barefoot over the Drakensberg ('liewer kaalvoet oor D'berge').⁸⁵⁷

⁸⁵⁴ Bird, *Annals* 2, 1888, 258–259; see also Walker 1934, 311–312; Etherington 2001, 293–294.

⁸⁵⁵ 'Byeenkoms aan Klein Tugela in Maritz laer. Vroue weier om terug te keer, en eis wreking van moord'; see also Part I, Chapter 2. For similar descriptions, see 'Early records' at the beginning of the scene, especially 'Panele' and 'Jansen Memorandum'.

⁸⁵⁶ 'Publieke byeenkoms in Pietermaritzburg (of in die laer) met Cloete. Vroue, onder aanvoering van mevre. Smit, Maritz en nog een lees die Engelse aanvoerder die les.' For similar descriptions, see 'Panele', item 7 (c. Dec 1934–36) and Sub-Komitee van die Boukomitee (SVK) met Kunskomitee van die Akademie, item 1 (12.12.1936).

⁸⁵⁷ In the 'Wenke' lists, a Mrs van Reenen provides an early example of confusion between the two events when she suggested that 'Where the women at Pietermaritzburg had to encourage the despairing men to carry on could also provide an inspiring scene' ('Waar die vrouens op Pietermaritzburg die wanhopige mans moes aanhits om voort te gaan kon ook 'n besielende toneel verskaf'), presumably referring to the earlier episode but misplacing it in the later location of Pietermaritzburg.

It is clear from Jansen's list of topics in 1837, as well as the inscription for Scene 15 on Moerdyk's diagram of the frieze panels, 'Vroue eis vergelding' (Women demand retribution), that the intention was to portray the earlier event, while the other proposal was dropped. In the narrative of the frieze, *Women spur men on* follows chronologically from the preceding panels, linking back thematically to *Murder of Retief* and *Bloukrans* in particular, and directly precedes the reassuring arrival of the new commander, Pretorius, who would lead the Voortrekkers to victory at Blood River. It shows how the women, by persuading the men to stay and fight, acted as a crucial link that connects the narrative from *Murder of Retief* right up to *Blood River*. This reading is also underlined by the background landscape which suits the earlier event: the later meeting between Susanna Smit and Henry Cloete did not take place in the countryside of Natal as shown in the panel, but in the office of the chief district magistrate (*landdrost*) in Pietermaritzburg.⁸⁵⁸

Yet although all the evidence supports this being a representation of the 1838 incident, there has been a progressive conflation of the two events that paved the way for an inconsistent reading of the scene to the present day. Moerdyk, for example, published contradictory statements, which confused understanding of the scene, and also its place within the narrative of the frieze. In the *Official Programme* for the Monument's inauguration in 1949 he claimed that the event portrayed in the frieze occurred after the bloodshed at uMgungundlovu and Bloukrans, when the women encouraged the men, but he incorrectly cited Susanna Smit's 'historic words "Rather barefoot over the Drakensberg than back to slavery"' that were uttered five years later.⁸⁵⁹ Expanding on his error, in the *Official Guide* published a few years later, he actually titled the panel 'Sooner Barefoot over the Drakensberg', and wrote that the 'scene depicted took place when some 400 women approached the British representative, Hendrik Cloete, in the office of the landdrost in Pietermaritzburg and presented their grievances to him',⁸⁶⁰ when Susanna Smit had actually made the statement. His reading was no doubt encouraged by the declamatory gesture of the female protagonist in the relief that matches the strident pronouncement, a gesture originally conceived in Coetzer's drawing but heightened in the sculpture. Moerdyk's reading may also have been influenced by the fact that Susanna Smit was associated with the earlier display of womanly determination too, as we read in Schalk Burger's description cited above.

In the account he published some thirty years after the *Official Guide*, Hennie Potgieter was faced with a dilemma.⁸⁶¹ As one of the sculptors of the frieze he must have been aware of the original instructions to portray the Voortrekker women's determination to stay in Natal to avenge so many Boer deaths (1838). But he also had in front of him the description that stated the scene represented the women's determination to leave Natal to escape British rule (1843) written by Moerdyk, who had been in charge of decision making about the frieze, as Potgieter's own account attests. The sculptor resolved the situation by explaining that the scene conflated the two accounts, alluding in equal measures to both episodes, the women's encouragement of the men to stay in Natal and punish Dingane for having ordered terrible massacres, and Susanna Smit's later declaration in Pietermaritzburg. Unwittingly, his explanation suggests a strategy of conflating events that we have detected in the iconography of other scenes in the frieze – whether intentional or not – such as *Inauguration* and *Saailaer*.

The incongruity of the readings of *Women spur men on*, all the more ironic when the one involved staying in Natal, the other the exact opposite, is further complicated by a memorial bronze(?) statue placed next to the Oliviershoek (Retief) Pass (fig. 18.10), inaugurated on 10 October 1977 by the previous state president, C.R. Swart. The sculpture represents a bare-footed Susanna Smit leaving over the pass, at her feet a plaque inscribed with her famous 'Liewer kaalvoet terug

⁸⁵⁸ Bird, *Annals* 2, 1888, 258: '... I at my residence (a few yards away from the court-hall)'. See also Schoeman 2003, 150–151.

⁸⁵⁹ *Official Programme* 1949, 56 (repeated by Vermeulen 1999, 135).

⁸⁶⁰ *Official Guide* 1955, 51 (1970, 49); similar, but more nuanced, Heymans and Theart-Peddle 2009, 32.

⁸⁶¹ 1987, 30.



Figure 18.10: Statue of bare-footed Susanna Smit. Pre 1977. Bronze(?), c. life-size. Drakensberg, near Oliviershoek (photo <http://www.boerenbrit.com/archives/1669/dsc07865#main>)



Figure 18.11: Inauguration inscription, statue of Susanna Smit. 10 October 1977. Bronze (photo <http://www.boerenbrit.com/archives/1669/dsc07865#main>)

oor die Drakensberg' – turning her rhetoric into an invented reality (fig. 18.11).⁸⁶² For in fact the feisty Susanna and her husband never left Natal, but lived out their lives there, both dying in Pietermaritzburg in 1863.⁸⁶³

Narrative inconsistencies aside, both the events discussed above underline key virtues of Voortrekker women, supporting their men and spurring them on to fight for liberty whenever necessary – and the diverse readings of the marble panel at the Voortrekker Monument are consistent in that respect. But only the later episode offered the possibility of an intrepid protagonist, a named heroine to match the esteemed male heroes depicted in so many other panels. And although the panel was certainly intended to represent the earlier episode, there are aspects of Cloete's report on the 1943 episode quoted above that are relevant for reading the scene. Even though Cloete himself strongly disapproved of independent females, he acknowledged that the Boer men had agreed that the women who had supported them in so many battles 'would be entitled to a voice in all matters concerning the state of this country'. Or as Nathan has it, the women's declaration in Pietermaritzburg 'was the foundation of the first claim to woman's suffrage, certainly in South Africa, probably in all the world'.⁸⁶⁴ Whether or not one agrees with Nathan's extravagant claim, it was clearly felt that the significant role of Boer women warranted recognition, all the more so when their determination that their men should fight on in the Anglo-Boer War, despite all their suffering, was still keenly remembered.⁸⁶⁵

862 The 'Kaalvoet Vroue Monument' seems to be unpublished, but two additional bronze plaques supply information about the event it commemorates and its inauguration.

863 A joint gravestone was erected to them during the ossewatrek of 1938 (*DSAB* 1, 1968, 728–731); Schoeman 2003, 112–159, 234–254; Visagie 2011, 454 s.v. Smit, Erasmus.

864 Cloete's statement is recorded by Bird (*Annals* 2, 1888, 259); the following one is from Nathan (1937, 276–277). In a lively interview with *Die Vaderland*, 13.12.49, Mrs Johanna Preller, widow of historian Gustav Preller and great-granddaughter of Piet Retief, asked the reporter if he was aware that, by virtue of their actions in Natal, women were given the vote by the Transvaal Volksraad in 1855.

865 See Giliomee 2003, 169.

19 *Arrival* of Andries Pretorius (22 November 1838)



A2



B2



C2



D

19 Arrival

West wall (panel 23/31)

h. 2.3 × w. 2.34 m

Restored fractures on the vertical edges

Sculptor of the clay maquette: Laurika Postma

STAGES OF PRODUCTION

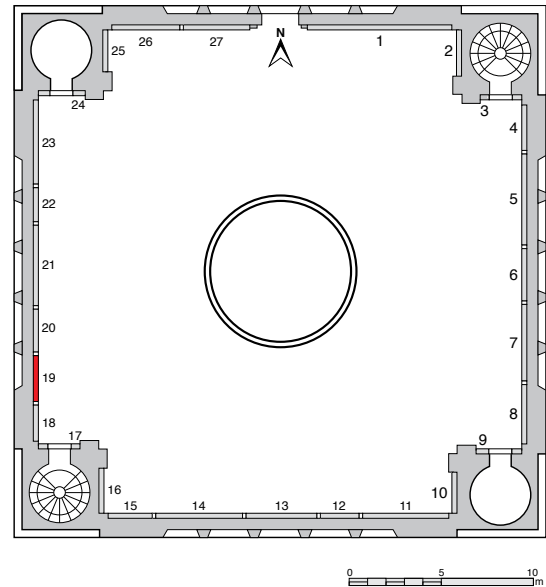
- A1 W.H. Coetzer, pencil drawing, retained only in A2 (April–June 1937)
- A2 Reproduction of drawing A1, h. 17.5 × w. 15.6 cm (June 1937)
- B1 One-third-scale clay maquette, not extant but replicated in B2 (1942–43)
- B2 One-third-scale plaster maquette, h. 78.2 × w. 77 × d. 8.6 cm (1942–43)
- C1 Full-scale wooden armature, not extant (1943–46)
- C2 Full-scale clay relief, not extant but photographed; replicated in C3 (1943–46)
- C3 Full-scale plaster relief (1943–46), not extant but copied in D (1948–49)
- D Marble relief as installed in the Monument (1949)

EARLY RECORDS

SVK minutes (4.9.1937) – item 4o (see below, ‘Developing the design’)

Moerdyk Layout (5.10.1936–15.1.1937) – scene 16 on panel 22/31 ‘Aankoms’ (Arrival)

Jansen Memorandum (19.1.1937) – item 16 ‘Arrival of Andries Pretorius’



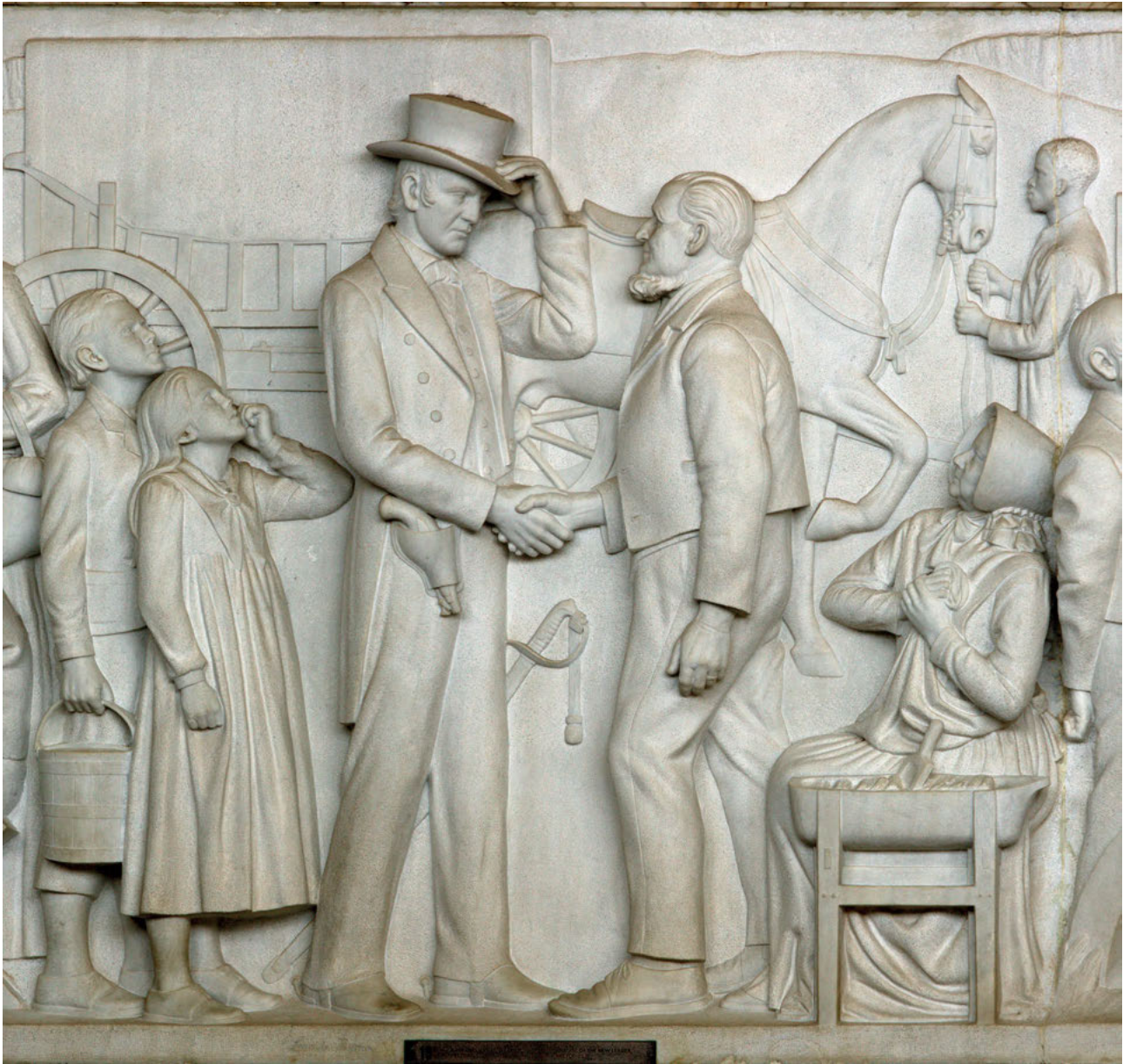


Figure 19.1: D. Arrival. 1949. Marble, 2.3 × 2.34 m (courtesy of VTM; photo Russell Scott)

Description

Two standing males face each other in the centre, framed by two children on the left and a seated woman on the right, all in close to profile views (fig. 19.1). The focus of attention is the taller of the two men, distinguished by his upright stance and height, further enhanced by his top hat, and his urbane appearance. He is clean-shaven and stylishly dressed in a formal tailcoat, with bow tie, waistcoat and full-length trousers, not cropped at the ankle like those of most of the men but strapped under his shoes. It is the Voortrekker Commandant-General Andries Pretorius, exceptional in the frieze not only because of his attire but also his pistol and sabre. Pretorius touches his hat in salutation while shaking hands with the older bearded Voortrekker, who has come forward to greet him. Behind him, a Voortrekker woman wearing an apron over her dress has been interrupted in her work, making butter in a long container on a stand. Her clasped hands held to her breast suggest her strong emotion at the arrival of Pretorius. The two children opposite her gaze up at him in astonishment and admiration, the girl with her hand to her mouth. In the background is a Voortrekker wagon, indicating a laager, and the spirited saddled stallion on which Pretorius arrived, held in check by a black man who holds its reins. Beyond them, a range of mountains continues the landscape of the previous scene, *Women spur men on*.



Figure 19.2: A2. W.H. Coetzer. Reproduction of first sketch for *Arrival*. June 1937 (ARCA PV94 1/75/5/1; photo the authors)



Figure 19.3: B2. Laurika Postma. *Arrival*. 1942–43. Plaster, 78.2 × 77 × 8.6 cm. Maquette (courtesy of VTM Museum VTM 2184/1–28; photo Russell Scott)

Developing the design

The reproduction of Coetzer's first drawing (fig. 19.2) shows a much more informal welcome for Pretorius than the marble, with quite a number of Boers rejoicing in his arrival; even a dog leaps up to greet him. The general is picked out by his frontal pose and central position against the apex of a tent, but otherwise displays the same hatless attire and jovial habit as most of his fellow Boers. He shakes hands with the bearded Boer who comes to greet him, and places a friendly hand on his shoulder. There are no children, but to the right a young Boer couple run in to welcome him, the woman enthusiastically waving something in the air. While she wears a kappie, he is bare-headed, a combination repeated in another couple to the left. There a woman with raised clasped hands turns animatedly towards her partner. Her apron suggests that she has been interrupted in her daily chores, perhaps represented by a tub on the far right. But a further Boer to her left seems unaware of Pretorius' arrival and bends to gather carrots, still wearing his hat. Yet another behind him tends Pretorius' horse, only its head visible.

At the Historiese Komitee meeting on 4 September 1937 the following alterations were required:

Arrival of Gen. Pretorius. Gen. Pretorius wore a sabre and pistols (see diary of Erasmus Smit). The flap pants unbutton at the sides; the carrots must be removed; most jackets should be buttoned to the top; draw more dignified figures; (consult the Voortrekker film).⁸⁶⁶

We do not know whether Coetzer followed these instructions, as no finished drawing by him survives, but the small plaster maquette made by Laurika Postma (fig. 19.3) responds to at least some of the critique of the Historiese Komitee. Her design in general terms became the model for the full-scale relief. Dignity is ensured by a more balanced composition with Pretorius and a welcoming Boer in the centre, flanked by figures on either side. The dominant figure of the tall commandant is clean-shaven but with longer hair that curls over his ears, and he wears more formal attire with a long jacket falling in folds and strapped-down trousers. As requested by the Historiese Komitee, he is armed with a pistol and, on his far side, we can see the hilt of his sabre, with the blade also visible in the gap between his legs. Pretorius still shakes the hand of the approaching Boer, who has removed his hat respectfully, but instead of placing his left hand reassuringly on the man's shoulder, he decorously tips his tall hat. The woman who turned excitedly towards her partner is now seated on her own in the right foreground, looking up at Pretorius, her raised hands clasping her bunched-up apron, the container with her butter-making abandoned for the moment. On the other side a boy with a bucket and the smaller girl in front of him look up in awe at the new arrival, taking the place of the four figures (and the carrots) on the left of the drawing. Only one figure, who waves a hat in the background, survives from the young couple that ran in on the right. Alongside, in place of Coetzer's tent, are two covered wagons, one behind the other, the prominent rear wheel of the front wagon encircling the young boy's head. Between the wagons and the group in the foreground stands Pretorius' horse, its reins now held by a black servant in shirt sleeves, who holds his master's gun in his other hand.

As in the drawing, there is no space for a landscape background, but none of the figures are cut off by the frame as Coetzer portrayed them, so that the composition is more closed and comprehensive, and also more static. It is typical of the clay maquettes that none of the figures are incomplete, and they sometimes even encroach into the next scene to make this possible in the final frieze. Indeed, this happened when *Arrival* was reworked at full scale (fig. 19.4). The backs of the Boers from the flanking panels of *Women spur men on* and *The Vow* intrude on both left and right respectively. The bent elbow of the Boer woman in the former panel fits neatly into the concave of

⁸⁶⁶ 'Aankoms van Gen. Pretorius. Gen. Pretorius het 'n sabel en pistole aangehad (Sien Dagboek van Erasmus Smit.) Die klapbroeke is aan die sye losgeknoop; die wortels moet uitgehaal word; die meeste baadjies moet tot bo toegeknoop wees; teken waardiger figure; (Raadpleeg die Voortrekker-rolprent.)' (Historiese Komitee, 4.9.1937: 40). The 'rolprent' refers to Gustav Preller's silent film *De Voortrekker*, produced in 1916.



Figure 19.4: C2. *Arrival*. 1943–46. Clay. Full-scale relief (photo courtesy of Kirchhoff files; photo Alan Yates)

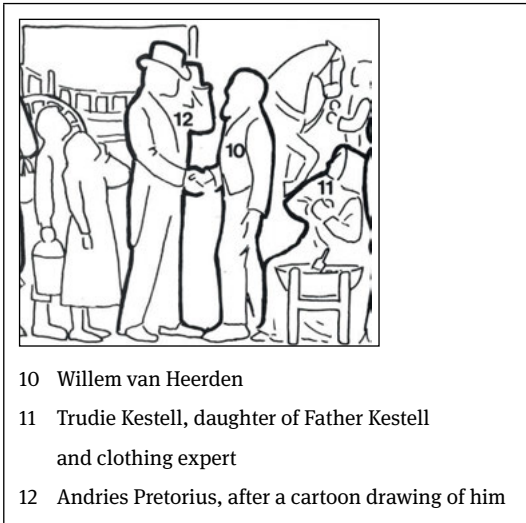


Figure 19.5: Models for portraits (Potgieter 1987, 32)



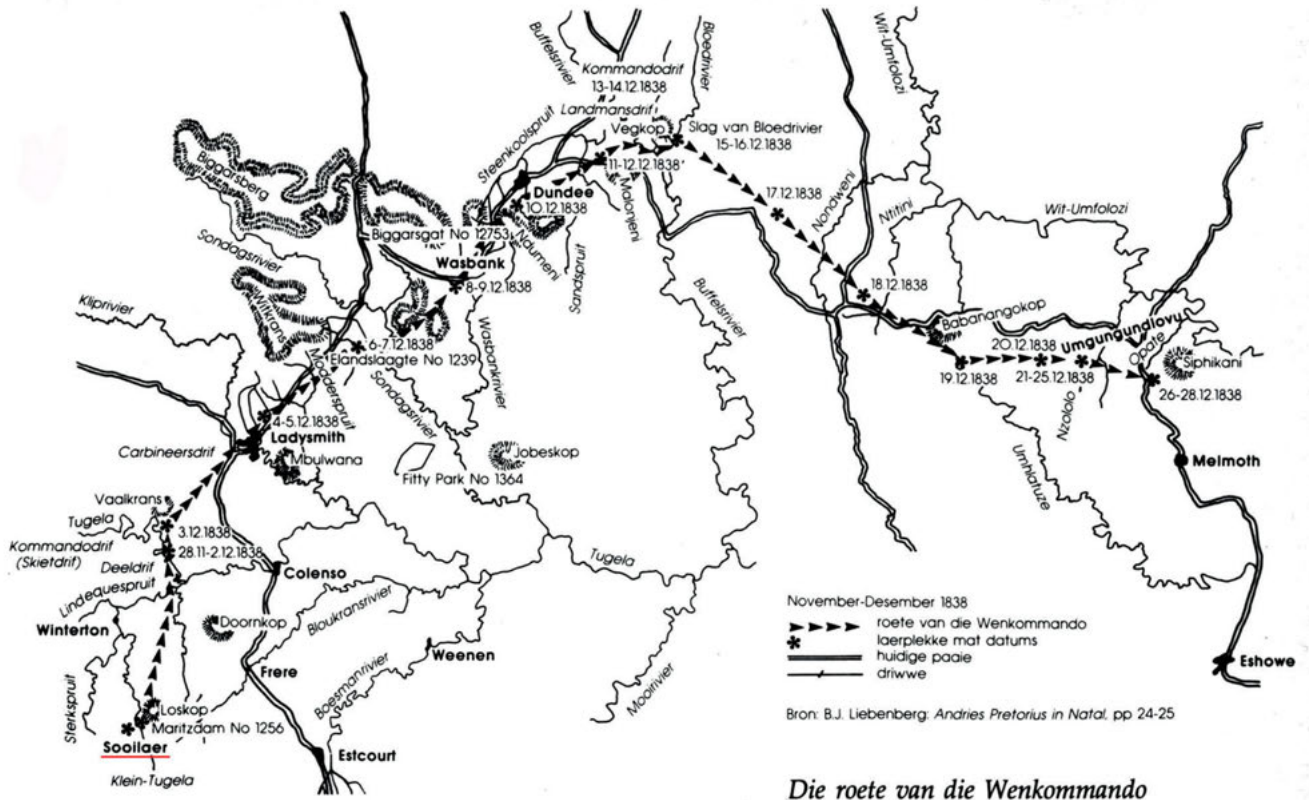
Figure 19.6: Portrait of Willem van Heerden as Boer welcoming Pretorius in *Arrival*. Marble, detail of fig. 19.1 (photo Russell Scott)

the boy's neck in *Arrival*, and obscures part of the wagon wheel that earlier seemed to form a halo around his head.

While the maquette made Coetzer's drawing more decorous, it is markedly more relaxed and naturalistic than the large clay version (fig. 19.4). Although retaining all the figures, except the one waving his hat in the background, the full-size composition has been further clarified and formalised in its details, poses and overall arrangement. For example, Pretorius now wears a tailored tailcoat, and his sabre is more visible, the hilt hanging below his hip with the blade extending behind him. As though in a staged tableau, the two children on his left replicate each other's poses, the girl now a little taller so that her head fits deftly under the boy's chin. There is an overall sense of propriety, evident even in the neater hairstyles of the participants, particularly that of Pretorius who has been shorn of his curls so that his ears are visible. With only an old cartoon to work from, the sculptors have endowed the commandant with rather bland features. The face of the elderly Boer who greets the commandant is more individualised, though, and obviously a portrait, a man called Willem van Heerden according to Hennie Potgieter (fig. 19.6), and so is the face of the seated woman, modelled on Trudie Kestell, well known to the sculptors as she gave advice on correct Voortrekker clothing.⁸⁶⁷ The background has been tidied up, with only one wagon. The black man, who is shown in perfect profile, no longer holds a gun and controls the horse with both hands; he wears a belted jerkin over a long-sleeved garment instead of workmanlike shirt sleeves. The parallel arrangement of wagon, horse and servant is echoed in the mountains on the horizon that tie in with the landscapes in the flanking scenes.

The large clay panel acquired an even greater sense of gravitas when it was copied into Carrara marble in Florence (fig. 19.1). But there is one significant difference: in the marble the black attendant's dress is disrupted by the vertical cut which separates panels 23 (*Arrival*) and 24 (*The Vow*).

⁸⁶⁷ See Part I, Chapter 3 ('Harmony Hall').



Die roete van die Wenkommando

Figure 19.7: Route of the 'Winning Commando', showing the Boer laagers at the Little Tugela River near Soilaer where Andries Pretorius was appointed head commandant (Liebenberg 1977, 24–25)

Reading the narrative

The scene focuses on the arrival of Andries Wilhelmus Jacobus Pretorius (1798–1853)⁸⁶⁸ at the laager of the Voortrekker leader Jacobus Christoffel (Koos Grootvoet) Potgieter (1801–?),⁸⁶⁹ situated on the east bank of the Little Tugela River, opposite Gerrit Maritz' 'Sooilaer', and some eighteen kilometres west of today's Estcourt (fig. 19.7).⁸⁷⁰ The representation is based on a short record in Erasmus Smit's diary for 22 November 1838:

In the afternoon there arrived back in our camp on horseback a very worthy fellow emigrant, Andries Pretorius (like a well equipped dragoon with sword and pistols). His Excellency, although somewhat wearied, attended the evening service which was then held in the field tent of the late J.D. Hatting, where His Excellency had offsaddled to stay.⁸⁷¹

Why was this scene chosen to be part of the narrative of the frieze? The Boers were in great need of a new leader after Dingane had ordered the Zulu to murder Retief and all of his men at kwaMatiwane and a great number of their unprotected women and children in the Bloukrans area. They had also suffered further losses of prominent Voortrekker leaders: Gerrit Maritz had died, Piet Uys was killed at Italeni, and Hendrik Potgieter, who had never favoured settlement in Natal, had returned to the Transvaal area after that defeat.⁸⁷² Pretorius was regarded as the appropriate person to take up the leadership. Schalk Willem Burger sr provided the following account, which was first published in *Die Volkstem*, 11 December 1917:

Because the first commando [Vlugkommando, see *Dirkie Uys*] was regarded as a failure, and the people in Natal were still suffering and living in constant uncertainty, commandant-general Gert Maritz urged his fellow Afrikaners to form another commando to try to punish the Zulus. Charl Cilliers and others were sent back, Cilliers with the request or an appeal to Graaff-Reinet in the Colony to Andries Wilhelmus Jacobus Pretorius.⁸⁷³ He had already visited Natal and arrived with a lot of people from the Colony. On his way more people had joined him, so that they were seventy in number when he arrived at the laager of Maritz at the Klein Tugela.⁸⁷⁴

In his book *Andries Pretorius in Natal*, B.J. Liebenberg makes no claim that Pretorius was identified in advance as a man who would lead the Boers to victory over Dingane, and requested to join the trekkers as their head commandant. Rather, he points out that, while his good standing made Pretorius an excellent choice, his arrival at the Little Tugela camp offered a fortuitous solution to a situation where there were a number of suitable potential leaders, such as Karel Landman, Hans de Lange, Gert Rudolph and Jacobus Potgieter, but none wanted to give way to allow another to lead.⁸⁷⁵ Whether or not Pretorius was invited to take this position for the Natal Voortrekkers in

868 DSAB 2, 1972, 559–567; Liebenberg 1977, 11–23; Visagie 2011, 376–377.

869 Visagie 2011, 367.

870 For the J.C. Potgieter laager, see Liebenberg 1977, 16–17; Visagie 2014, 111–113. For 'Sooilaer', see Thom 1947, 246–248, figs opp. p.252; Oberholster 1972, 254 no. 31g; De Jongh 1977, 157–158, 163; Liebenberg 1977, 16–17, 24–25 with map; Anderson 2014, 20–21; Visagie 2014, 111–113.

871 Smit trans. Mears 1972, 147–148 (Dutch text: Smit ed. Scholtz 1988, 170). For J.D. Hattingh, see Visagie 2011, 213–214.

872 For a summary of the Boers' sufferings between February and November 1838, see Laband 1995, 89–97.

873 Nathan (1937, 239) dates this to 18 April 1838. Letters with appeals for assistance were sent to the Colony, from Maritz, for example, who wrote to his old friends in Graaff-Reinet, which might well have included Pretorius.

874 'Aangezien het eerste commando 'n mislukking bleek, en de mensen in Natal nog voortdurend moesten lijden en in onzekerheid leven, deed commandant-generaal Gert Maritz 'n beroep op sijn mede-Afrikaners, om weder 'n kommando op de been te brengen en te trachten de Zoeloes te straffen. Charl Cilliers e.a. werden teruggezonden, Cilliers met het verzoek of 't beroep naar Graaff-Reinet in de Kolonie, naar Andries Wilhelmus Jacobus Pretorius. Deze was reeds op 'n bezoek in Natal geweest, en kwam toen met 'n klomp mensen uit de Kolonie. Hij kreeg nog met zijn uitkomen er meer bij, zodat zij zeventig in aantal waren toen zij bij Maritz z'n lager aankwamen, dat aan de Klein Toegela lag' (Preller, *Voortrekkermense* 4, 1925, 96–97). For Pretorius' early visits, see DSAB 2, 1972, 559.

875 Liebenberg 1977, 19–21.



Figure 19.8: Andries Pretorius with sabre and pistol in *Arrival*. Marble, detail of fig. 19.1 (photo Russell Scott)



Figure 19.9: Black servant holding reins of Pretorius' horse in *Arrival*. Marble, detail of fig. 19.1 (photo Russell Scott)

advance, he had reconnoitred the area in late 1937, and even bought a farm, Summer Hill, from one of the Englishmen at Port Natal,⁸⁷⁶ so had already been planning to return with his own trek. But it took him some time to complete arrangements before he could leave the Cape permanently, not least to sell his two farms, Hoeksfontein and Wilde Paarde Fontein, adjacent to his home Letskraal in the field cornetcy of Voor-Sneeuberg, about thirty kilometres north-east of Graaff-Reinet.⁸⁷⁷ Eventually Pretorius and his party left the Colony in October 1838.⁸⁷⁸ Shortly after his arrival in the laagers at the Little Tugela River in November 1938, the Volksraad unanimously elected Pretorius as ‘chief officer, or Commandant (Hoofd-Officier of Kommandant) of the commando to march’ against Dingane, later called the ‘Wenkommando’ (Winning Commando).⁸⁷⁹ Thus the scene is imperative to prepare the viewer for the narrative high point of the frieze, the *Battle of Blood River*.

Significant for the scene’s reading is the dress and demeanour that characterise the parts the figures had to play. Pretorius himself, taller than the other figures and somewhat out of place with his top hat and formal tailcoat, oddly accompanied by pistol and sabre, stands out amongst his new compatriots (fig. 19.8). His appearance defines his role: while his impeccable presentation is improbable after a long journey through the wilderness, it serves to distinguish him as a ‘heer’ (gentleman), stressing not only his social standing but what he had to give up to come to the aid of the Boers, and his weapons foretell his military prowess. His fine stallion in the background and the black servant who looks after it add to his superior status (fig. 19.9).⁸⁸⁰ In contrast, the four figures around him are in typical Voortrekker attire, which together with the everyday accoutrements of bucket and butter container underlines their hard-working lives, briefly interrupted by Pretorius’ arrival. They represent different generations, young and old, male and female, all shown with their eyes fixed on their new leader, receiving him with varying expressions of emotion. The onlookers are set up to make clear that the Voortrekkers’ hope is pinned on the authoritative figure of Pretorius.

⁸⁷⁶ DSAB 2, 1972, 559.

⁸⁷⁷ *Voortrekker argiefstukke 1937*, 18–21 ad R.13/37, with the sale contract of Hoeksfontein and Wildepaardefontein (see also Visagie 2011, 376). Preller (*Pretorius* 1940, 24) refers only to the sale of his farm Letskraal (Liebenberg 1977, 11–13), followed by a summary of Pretorius’ substantial possessions. See also <http://archiver.rootsweb.ancestry.com/th/read/SOUTH-AFRICA-EASTERN-CAPE/2007-04/1176404896>.

⁸⁷⁸ For the route and dates, see DSAB 2, 1972, 559; Liebenberg 1977, 11–15.

⁸⁷⁹ Chase, *Natal* 2, 1843, 56 (Journal of the Expedition of the Emigrant Farmers under their chief commandant A.P.[sic]W. Pretorius ... against Dingaan, King of the Zoolas, in the months of November and December 1838 ... kept by ... Mr. J.G. Bantjes, the Clerk of the Representative Assembly, who acted during the Expedition as the Secretary to the chief commandant, Pretorius); Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 438. For the process of his appointment, see Liebenberg (1977, 19–22), who further states that Pretorius was ‘Kommandant Generaal’ (commandant general) only since 15 May 1840.

⁸⁸⁰ As in *Blydevoornutsig*, this rare inclusion of a black man reminds us of the numerous servants who played a crucial role in the trekkers’ success.

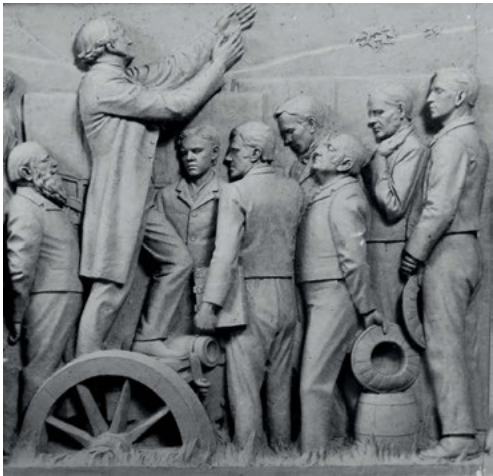
20 *The Vow* (9 December 1838)



A3



B2



C2



D

20 The Vow

West wall (panel 24/31)

h. 2.3 × 2.28 m

Restored fractures on the vertical edges

Sculptor of the clay maquette: Laurika Postma

STAGES OF PRODUCTION

A1 W.H. Coetzer, pencil drawing, retained only in A2 (April–June 1937)

A2 Reproduction of A1 (June 1937)

A3 W.H. Coetzer, revised pencil drawing A1, h. 13.4 × w. 15.4 cm
(after September 1937)

Annotations: ‘nog nie klaar’ (not yet finished) / ‘C Celliers moet op
Kanon wa staan’ (C Celliers must stand on cannon carriage) /
‘Gelofte Danskraal’ / Vow Danskraal

B1 One-third-scale clay maquette, not extant but replicated in B2 (1942–43)

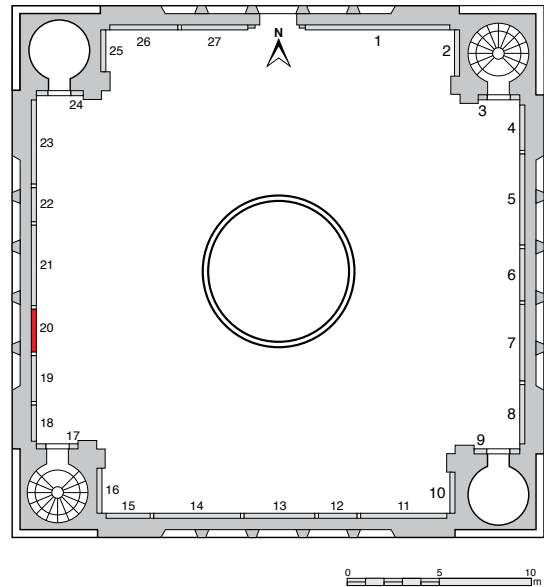
B2 One-third-scale plaster maquette, h. 72.5 × w. 81.5 × d. c. 8 cm
(1942–43)

C1 Full-scale wooden armature, not extant (1943–46)

C2 Full-scale clay relief, not extant but photographed; replicated in C3
(1943–46)

C3 Full-scale plaster relief (1943–46), not extant but illustrated (*Die Volkstem*, 10.9.1947); copied in D (1948–49)

D Marble as installed in the Monument (1949)



EARLY RECORDS

SVK minutes (4.9.1937) — item 4p (see below, ‘Developing the design’)

Voorstelle – (5.12.1934?) — item 17 ‘Laertoneel aan Bloedrivier. Die gelofte van Dingaansdag word afgelê. Hiervoor is verskeie suggesties voorradig, uit rolprent sowel as die simpatieke sketse van Henry Lea. Wenslik om in hierdie toneel Pretorius die aanvoerder (en ontwerper van die gelofte-gedagte) sterker op voorgrond te laat tree dan Cilliers, wat slegs gelofte afgelê het, en dit ook enigste geleentheid om Pretorius, die held by uitstek van Dingaansdag, te huldig’ (Laager scene at Blood River. The vow of Dingaans’ Day is made. For this various suggestions are on hand, from the film as well as the sympathetic sketches of Henry Lea.⁸⁸¹ It is desirable in this scene that Pretorius the leader [and the originator of the concept of the vow] should feature more strongly in the foreground than Celliers, who only delivered the vow, and it is also the only opportunity to honour Pretorius, the pre-eminent hero of Dingaans’ Day)

Panele (c. Dec 1934–36) — item 11 ‘Die gelofte by Danskraal’ (The vow at Danskraal)

Wenke (c. 1934–36) — item I. F.A. STEYTLER, h. ‘Die gelofte by Danskraal’ (The vow at Danskraal) / item II.

Dr L. Steenkamp, mnre. A.J. du Plessis en M. Basson, A. ‘MAATSKAPLIK’ (Social), 1. ‘Godsdienstig’ (Religious), c. ‘Die gelofte by Danskraal’ (The vow at Danskraal)

Moerdyk Layout (5.10.1936–15.1.1937) — scene 17 on panel 23/31 ‘Gelofte’ (Vow)

Jansen Memorandum (19.1.1937) — item 7.17 ‘The Vow’

⁸⁸¹ For the English artist Henry Lea and his Voortrekker drawings, see *Marthinus Oosthuizen*.



Figure 20.1: D. *The Vow*. 1949. Marble, 2.3 × 2.28 m (courtesy of VTM; photo Russell Scott)

Description

The focal point of the scene (fig. 20.1) is the prominent Voortrekker, Sarel (Charl) Arnoldus Cilliers (1801–71).⁸⁸² He stands on top of a gun carriage supporting a cannon, his left foot stepping up next to the wheel, somewhat precariously, and his arms raised aloft. In contrast to his fellow countrymen around him, who are shown in typical trekker attire, Cilliers wears a long coat. He has also longer, slightly curling hair and heavy side whiskers ('bakkebaarde' in Afrikaans, sometimes known as 'mutton chops' in English), in place of the more usual Voortrekker beard. Cilliers' upward gaze and gesture are fixed on some higher being beyond the frame.

Cilliers' importance is enhanced by his position above the seven Boers who stand below him. They are of different ages, neatly attired and mostly clean shaven, but notably neither too young nor too old for combat. Two men are presented from the back, leading us into the scene, and all face towards the elevated figure. Although the heads of the audience are at different heights, they are arranged to slope down from the right, guiding the viewer's eyes to Cilliers. So too does the gaze of two older Boers of shorter and heavier stature who turn their faces up to look at him from either side. Many figures have their heads lowered and their eyes closed in prayer, however, and all are respectfully bare-headed. Their demeanour speaks of a solemn, sanctified moment, also suggested by the Bible held by the central man in the foreground – perhaps the same Dordrecht Bible as that given to the parting Voortrekkers by the English settlers of Grahamstown in *Presentation*. Yet while this scene too has a Christian emphasis and sense of decorum, the cannon and the powder barrel pictured amongst the men suggest the hostilities to come. And in the background, beyond two wagons, the hill line continues the mountainous landscape that runs from *Women spur men on* to the battle at *Blood River*.

⁸⁸² DSAB 4, 1987, 83–85; Visagie 2011, 103–104.

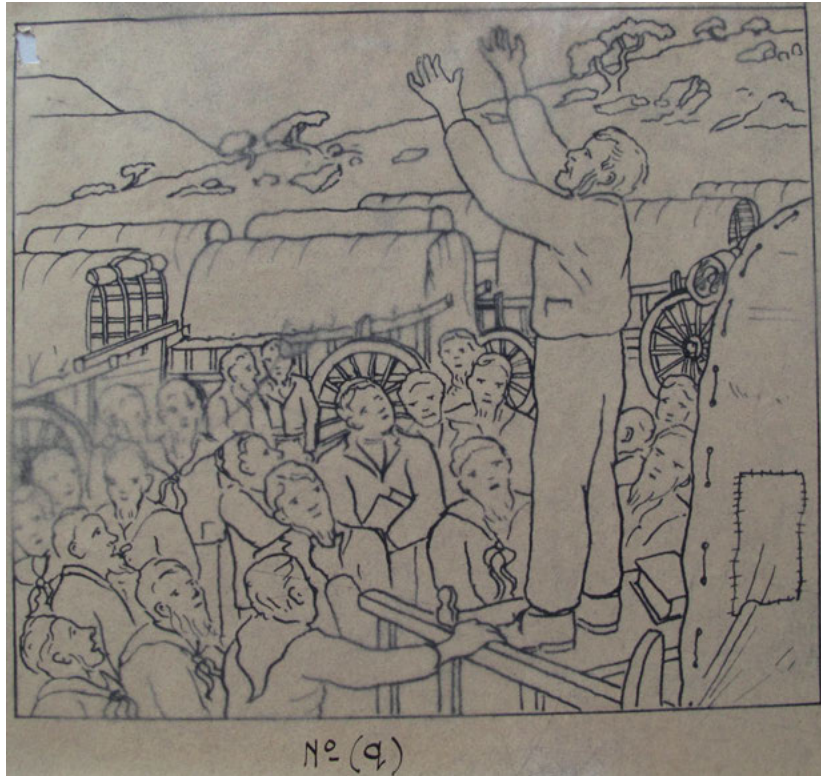


Figure 20.2: A2. W.H. Coetzer. Reproduction of first sketch for *The Vow*. June 1937 (courtesy of ARCA PV94 1/75/5/1; photo the authors)

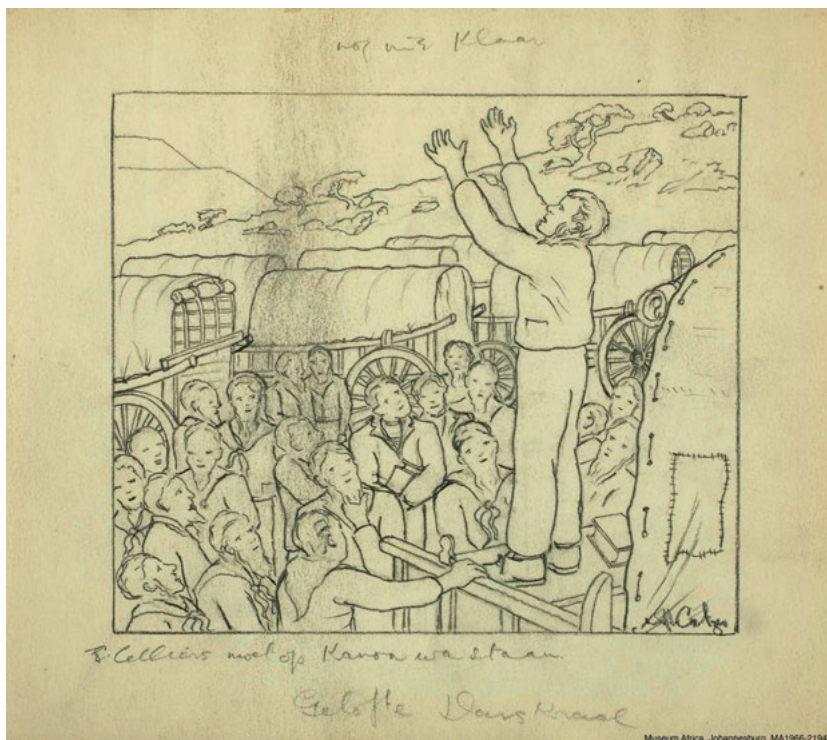


Figure 20.3: A3. W.H. Coetzer. 'Geloofte Danskraal'. After September 1937. Pencil, 13.4 x 15.4 cm. Revised first sketch (photo courtesy of Museum Africa, no. 66/2194D)

Developing the design

Coetzer's first drawing and its Gestetner reproduction (fig. 20.2) are almost identical with his revised drawing (fig. 20.3), except for the annotations on the latter, which includes the comment 'not yet finished' (nog nie klaar). This possibly explains why the drawing provides only a little more pencilling of detail in hair and fabric, and augmenting the outlines. Elevated on the right-hand side, Cilliers dominates the scene. He stands upright on the front of a wagon, which, with a prominent patch in its canvas cover that suggests the hardships of a long trek, is just visible at the right edge of the drawing. With a Bible at his feet and wearing the usual trekker outfit, Cilliers addresses the audience beneath with outstretched arms, his head raised heavenwards. There are twenty-one Voortrekkers in the crowd, all males in similar attire but of different ages, who become smaller as they recede to fill the space that is surrounded by seven more wagons. We see the scene from a high eye level, slightly behind Cilliers, which emphasises his predominance over the listening men who look up at him attentively. Beyond the laager lie open hills, the nearest with bare rocks and several trees.

At the Historiese Komitee meeting on 4 September 1937 the following alterations were demanded:

Danskraal. The scene must give a view of Gen Pretorius and Sarel Celliers; in other words the spectator should look at the two over the heads of a multitude of people, as they stand next to each other; they stand on a gun carriage (consult Hofstede [1876]). Show the moment where Celliers raises his folded arms [hands] in prayer.⁸⁸³

The small plaster maquette shows profound modifications in the composition (fig. 20.4). Coetzer's drawing did not respond to the instructions of the SVK, but the new design that Laurika Postma developed for the relief picked up on at least one of them, the idea of Cilliers being mounted on a gun carriage instead of a wagon. Now positioned on the left and wearing a long coat, he seems almost to balance on one of the wheels as his raised left leg is supported by it. However, there is no sign of Pretorius being partnered with Cilliers as the SVK had proposed, and Postma has reduced the audience to seven people. They are still placed lower than Cilliers, but on the same large scale and distributed across the foreground, graduated in height from the tallest on the right. They avoid the pictorial recession in Coetzer's sketch, and use the full width of the panel; indeed, the leftmost figure is cut off by the edge of the panel, which implies the continuation of the group beyond the frame. The wagons in the background are also reduced in number, and there is the merest suggestion of hills. The focus is on Cilliers as part of a close circle of people; he gestures portentously, his hands closer together than in the Coetzer sketch, but not clasped in prayer, although some of those listening respond with bowed heads.

Apart from the different format, rectangular at the Voortrekker Monument, semi-circular at Blood River, Postma's composition corresponds fairly closely with the relief of the Vow developed by Coert Steynberg for his centenary monument at Blood River (fig. 20.5), a colossal Voortrekker wagon made of granite (fig. 20.13), which we discuss in more detail below. Completed in 1939/40, it would likely have been known to the frieze sculptors. As in the Monument frieze, Cilliers is mounted – and similarly posed – on a partly concealed gun carriage in the open air, indicated by a wagon and two trees squeezed into the upper background. Placed in the centre of the scene, closely surrounded by packed Boers, all of the same scale, but in frontal, profile and back view, Cilliers is both the axis and the dominating apex of the symmetrical scene. Although the composition differs from the asymmetrical arrangement in Postma's frieze scene with its more naturalistic grouping of the Boers, in both representations they devoutly listen to Cilliers' Vow with eyes either partially or fully closed.

⁸⁸³ Danskraal. Die toneel moet 'n aansig van Gen. Pretorius en Sarel Celliers gee, m.a.w. die toeskouer moet oor die hoofde van 'n menigte manne na die twee kyk wat naas mekaar staan; hulle staan op 'n kanonstel; (Raadpleeg Hofstede.) Wys die oomblik waar Celliers sy gevoude arms ophef in gebed' (Historiese Komitee 4.9.1937: 4p).



Figure 20.4: B2. Laurika Postma. *The Vow*. 1942–43. Plaster, 72.5 × 81.5 × c. 8 cm. Maquette, photographed in raking light as installed in 2017 exhibition (courtesy of VTM Museum VTM 2184/1–28; photo the authors)



Figure 20.5: Coert Steynberg. Relief of the Vow on the Blood River Monument. Granite, detail of fig. 20.13 (photo the authors)



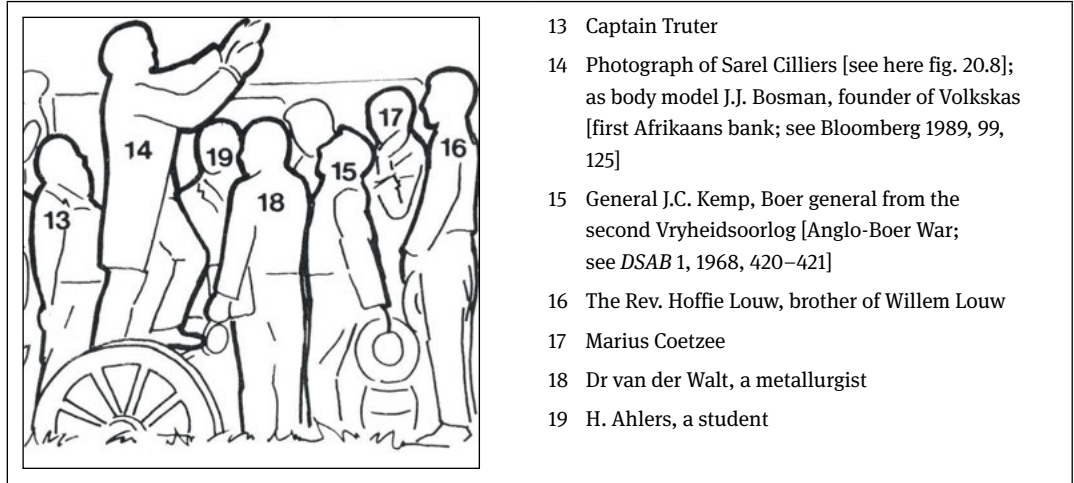
Figure 20.6: C2. *The Vow*. 1943–46. Clay. Full-scale relief (courtesy of UP Archives; photo Alan Yates)

Another significant difference is that in Steynberg’s relief Cilliers is depicted with only one hand raised. Here the sculptor followed the interpretation of one of the Natal advisors of the Blood River Monument committee, Dr L. Steenkamp. On the basis of old unnamed evidence, he had argued in a letter to Coetzer of 18 October 1938 that Cilliers would have raised only one hand, his right, for the swearing of the Vow;⁸⁸⁴ it was a point probably also made to the SVK since Steenkamp was a member of the *Historiese Komitee*, although it was not ultimately followed in the frieze. Apart from these clear differences, the focus on the iconography is in both reliefs surprisingly similar.

The full-scale clay relief (fig. 20.6) shows important refinements that make the composition more tectonic. The older figure on the left is now fully depicted, firmly closing the composition on that side, just as the tallest trekker does on the right: their backs provide clearly articulated edges to the scene. Overall the large-scale relief tidies up the relatively relaxed naturalism of the maquette, and regulates the decreasing height of the figures as they near Cilliers. Yet in contrast to the controlled formality of the composition, the faces are individualised portraits of the sitters, all named by Potgieter in his 1987 publication (fig. 20.7). This had a symbolic purpose for, as Moerdyk was to write in the *Official Guide*, ‘Almost without exception the persons depicted around the gun-carriage are Voortrekker descendants’⁸⁸⁵ – such as J.C. Kemp, for example, who had been a general in the Anglo-Boer War.

⁸⁸⁴ DNMCH Archives, Coert Steynberg files. See our discussion in Part I, Chapter 2 (‘Topics of the Great Trek’).

⁸⁸⁵ *Official Guide* 1955, 51 (reprinted in the later editions).



- 13 Captain Truter
- 14 Photograph of Sarel Cilliers [see here fig. 20.8]; as body model J.J. Bosman, founder of Volkskas [first Afrikaans bank; see Bloomberg 1989, 99, 125]
- 15 General J.C. Kemp, Boer general from the second Vryheidsoorlog [Anglo-Boer War; see *DSAB* 1, 1968, 420–421]
- 16 The Rev. HOFFIE Louw, brother of Willem Louw
- 17 Marius Coetzee
- 18 Dr van der Walt, a metallurgist
- 19 H. Ahlers, a student

Figure 20.7: Models for portraits (Potgieter 1987, 32)



Figure 20.8: Two portraits of Sarel Cilliers, in *The Vow* (marble, detail of fig. 20.1; photo Russell Scott) and photograph, c. 1855 (Gerdener 1925, fig. opp. p.90)

Cilliers now has distinctive hair and side whiskers, and the double frown line on his forehead seen in an old photograph of him (fig. 20.8); his gesturing arms are also more clearly differentiated. However, as in Steynberg's relief, the lack of an agreed model for the gun carriage is evident, and its structure remains obscure and Cilliers' stance on it uncertain. But it serves to make his figure more elevated than in the maquette, and he stands head and shoulders above the other participants and the wagons in the background. The Bible carried by the figure in front of Cilliers is now turned so that it is fully visible and its distinctive hasps identify it as the Bible of *Presentation* (fig. 20.9).

While close to the large clay relief, the marble shows a few changes. The decorative metalwork of the Bible is flattened and less detailed, presumably already a feature of the full-scale plaster

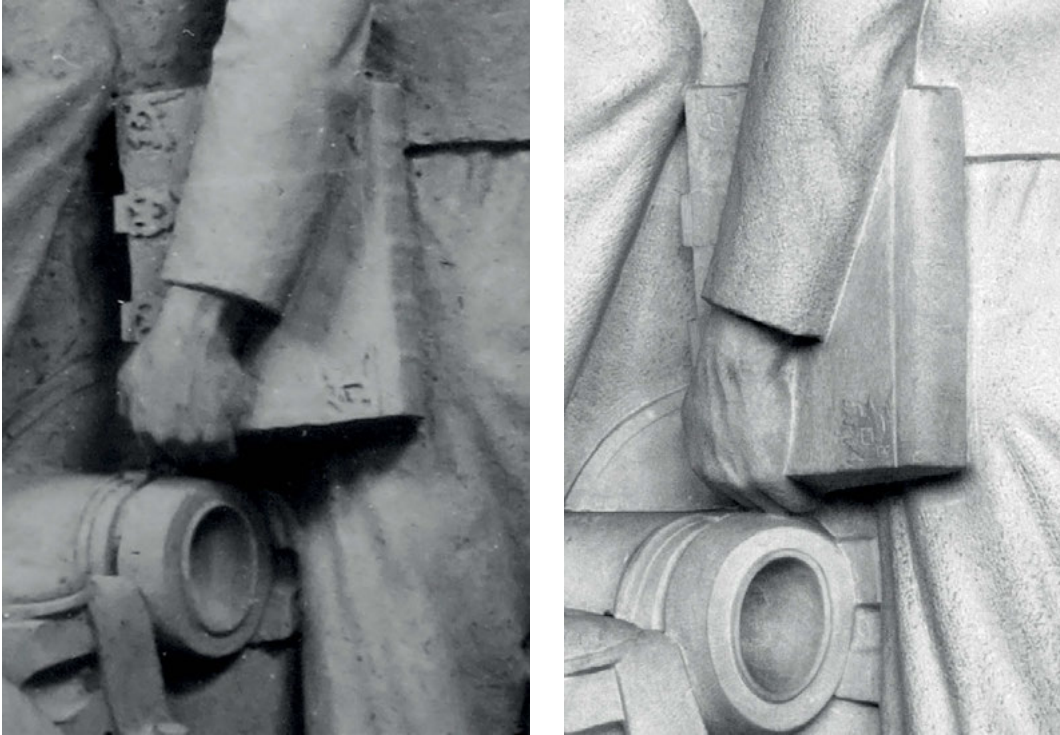


Figure 20.9: Detail of Bible of central trekker in *The Vow*. Full-scale clay relief (courtesy of UP archives; photo Alan Yates) and marble (detail of fig. 20.1; photo Russell Scott)

copied by the Italian carvers.⁸⁸⁶ Other changes may have occurred during the process of bringing together the compositions of the different maquettes into a continuous full-scale relief and during the installation of the marble panels, which we discuss more generally in Part I, Chapter 3. For example, an awkward relationship is created where the elderly woman in *Arrival* is tucked against the back of the Boer standing on the left of *The Vow*, so that the curled fingers of his hands behind his back narrowly miss an intimate encounter with her buttocks.

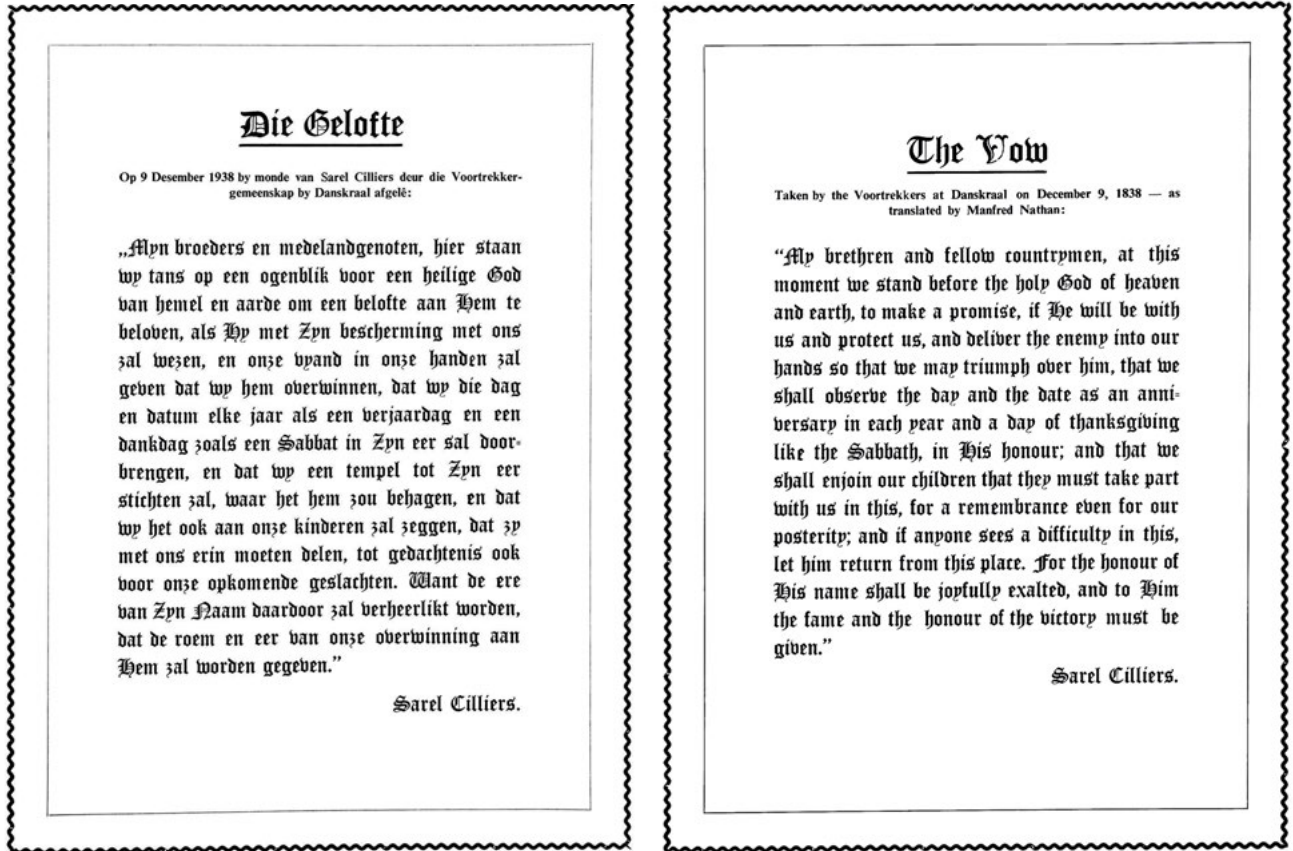
When the sculptors were asked by the chair of the SVK to submit a critique of the historical frieze, Peter Kirchoff's reply on 27 August 1946 included comment on this panel:

The scene of the Vow is completely wrong, with the exception of the figure of Jan [sic] Cilliers. The couple of men who stand around the cannon without interest and in pointless poses, fail to give the impression that they are aware of the weightiness of the vow that they are called upon to make. In general it can be said that the reliefs became too deep on this part of the wall, and that what we are dealing with here are no longer reliefs but free standing figures. This does not fit with the rest of the walls.⁸⁸⁷

From what we know, Kirchoff's detailed criticisms were not utilised for any serious reworking of the scene.

⁸⁸⁶ The lack of undercutting of the full-scale plaster reliefs is discussed in Part I, Chapter 4 ('From plaster to marble').

⁸⁸⁷ 'Die toneel van die gelofte is totaal verkeerd, met uitsondering van die figuur van Jan Cilliers. Die paar mans wat sonder belangstelling en in 'n verspotte houding om die kanon staan, skeep glad nie die indruk dat hulle bewus is van die gewigtigheid van die gelofte wat hulle verwag word om af te lê nie. Oor die algemeen kan oor hierdie deel van die muur nog gesê word dat die reliëfs almal te diep geword het en dat ons hier nie meer met reliëfs nie maar met vry staande figure te doen het. Dit pas nie by the orige mure nie' (Kirchoff files).



Die Gelofte

Op 9 Desember 1938 by monde van Sarel Cilliers deur die Voortrekker-gemeenskap by Danskraal afgeleë:

„Myn broeders en medelandgenoten, hier staan wy tans op een ogenblik voor een heilige God van hemel en aarde om een belofte aan Hem te beloven, als Hy met Zyn beskerming met ons sal wezen, en onze vyand in onze handen zal geben dat wy hem oëwinnin, dat wy die dag en datum elke jaar als een verjaardag en een dankdag zoals een Sabbat in Zyn eer sal doorbrenge, en dat wy een tempel tot Zyn eer stichten zal, waar het hem sou behagen, en dat wy het ook aan onze kinderen zal zegge, dat zy met ons erin moeten delen, tot gedachtenis ook voor onze opkomende geslachten. Want de ere van Zyn Naam daardoor zal verheerlikt worden, dat de roem en eer van onze oëwinnin aan Hem zal worden gegeven.”

Sarel Cilliers.

Bladsy 5

The Vow

Taken by the Voortrekkers at Danskraal on December 9, 1838 — as translated by Manfred Nathan:

“My brethren and fellow countrymen, at this moment we stand before the holy God of heaven and earth, to make a promise, if He will be with us and protect us, and deliver the enemy into our hands so that we may triumph over him, that we shall observe the day and the date as an anniversary in each year and a day of thanksgiving like the Sabbath, in His honour; and that we shall enjoin our children that they must take part with us in this, for a remembrance even for our posterity; and if anyone sees a difficulty in this, let him return from this place. For the honour of His name shall be joyfully exalted, and to Him the fame and the honour of the victory must be given.”

Sarel Cilliers.

Page 5

Figure 20.10: The Vow, front pages of *Official Guide*. Afrikaans and English editions. 1955 (photos the authors)

Reading the narrative

The first rigorous study of ‘all the evidence concerning the origin and growth of the official tradition of the Covenant’ was published in 1985 by Leonard Thompson, who pointed out that ‘Until recently, to do so was taboo in South Africa’.⁸⁸⁸ Before we engage in more detail with his important analysis, we recount the canonic Afrikaner reading of both the representation and the text of the Vow as promoted in the *Official Guide*, and setting the scene for the two subsequent panels, *Blood River* and *Church of the Vow*:

This panel refers to the taking of the Vow on 9th December, 1838, on the banks of the Blyde River. Sarel Cilliers has mounted Old Grietjie, the Voortrekker gun, and repeats the Vow that if the Lord gave them the victory over their enemy, they would consecrate that day and keep it holy as a Sabbath in each year and that they would build a church to the glory of God.⁸⁸⁹

The Vow mentioned above is reproduced as a manifesto on the first page of the *Official Guide* (fig. 20.10), framed and printed in Gothic font to differentiate it from the other text. It is placed immediately after the first illustration, a photograph of E.G. Jansen, the fervent Afrikaner politician and chair of the SVK (in the first edition pictured together with his no less fervent wife). Although previously cited in reports, the first full text of the Vow was in Dutch and was handed down as part of the so-called journal of the church elder Sarel Cilliers.⁸⁹⁰ On his deathbed, his memories of the events before and after the Battle of Blood River were written down with the help of three other people (H. v.d. Merwe, Jos. de Kock jr and W.S. van Rijneveld), before Cilliers passed away on his farm in the Orange Free State in 1871.⁸⁹¹ Five years later, in 1876, this account – testified by W.S. van Rijneveld as ‘een verbatim Copy’ – was published in Helperus Johannes Hofstede’s Dutch history of the Orange Free State.⁸⁹² Here Cilliers recollects the second Sunday of December 1838:

It was on 7th December.⁸⁹³ I complied to the best of my weak capacity with the wish of all the officers, and I knew that the majority of the burghers concurred in the wish. I took my place on a gun carriage. The 407 men of the force were assembled around me. I made the promise in a simple manner, as solemnly as the Lord enabled me to do. As nearly as I can remember, my words were these:

‘My brethren and fellow countrymen, at this moment we stand before the Holy God of heaven and earth, to make a promise, if He will be with us and protect us, and deliver the enemy into our hands so that we may triumph over him, that we shall observe the day and the date as an anniversary in each year and a day of thanksgiving like a Sabbath, in His honour; and that we shall enjoin our children that they must take part with us in this, for a remembrance even for our posterity; and if anyone sees a difficulty in this, let him return from this place. For the honour of His name shall be joyfully exalted, and to Him the fame and the honour of the victory must be given.’ Sarel Cilliers.

I said, further, that we must join in prayer to be raised up to the throne of His grace; and so forth. And I raised my hands towards the heavens in the name of us all. Moreover, we confirmed this in our prayers each evening, as well as on the next Sabbath.⁸⁹⁴

888 Thompson 1985, 144–188 (quote, p.144). Apart from Thom 1949, 107–114, see later also De Jongh 1988, 31–33; Du Spies 1988; Bailey 2002; Ehlers 2005.

889 *Official Guide* 1955, 51.

890 See Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 238–252 (‘Journal of the late Charl Celliers’, 1871).

891 Thompson 1985, 166.

892 Hofstede 1876, 50–66, ‘Journaal van Wiljen den Heer Charl Celliers, oud-ouderling der N.G. gemeente Kroonstad, Oranje Vrijstaat’.

893 According to the 1838 calendar, Sunday was on 9 December.

894 ‘Het was op den 7de dag der Maand December 1838 ik voldeed om mijne zwakheid, aan de begeerte van alle de ambtenaren, ook wis ik dat de Meerdere deel van die Burgers er ook voor was, Ik ging op een kanonwagen staan, en de 407 Man, was om mij geschaard, Ik deed op een eenvoudige wijze zoo plegtig als de Heer mij er toe in staat heeft gesteld, dat ik mij herinneren kan onder deze bewoording: “Mijne Broeders en medelandgenooten, hier staan

Our translation of Cilliers' wording of the Vow follows the English one in the *Official Guide*, there attributed to Manfred Nathan, although he had in turn taken it from John Bird's 1888 translation, which Thompson approved as 'substantially accurate' in 1985.⁸⁹⁵

It is this version of the story of the Vow which provided the narrative for the scene: with Cilliers on top of a gun carriage,⁸⁹⁶ seven of the 407 Voortrekkers assembled around him and his hands raised towards heaven, as described in his recollections. Remarkable too are his front locks that refer broadly to an early photograph of him, but are reminiscent of the 'claw-like' hair motif in classicising portraits of the first Roman emperor Augustus.⁸⁹⁷ Cilliers' heroic portrayal on top of 'Ou Grietjie', the only Voortrekker gun still extant,⁸⁹⁸ demonstrates exemplarily how the Voortrekker commando against Dingane was later justified, not only as fitting retribution for the deaths of the Voortrekkers at uMgungundlovu and Bloukrans, but by a belief that this was an undertaking against heathens by God's chosen people. This message is endorsed by further features. One is the Koos Bible, the key topic of *Presentation*, here carried by the Boer next to Cilliers (fig. 20.9). And the Boers' thoughtful, introspective appearance captures their rapt attention to Cilliers' Vow, with their eyes either partially or fully closed.

Cilliers' later narrative differs in crucial details from the contemporary accounts of two eyewitnesses, who also reported on the Vow in the wider narrative of the Boer commando against Dingane's Zulu that culminated in the Battle of Blood River. The first and more detailed report on the events of November and December 1838 is by Jan Gerritse Bantjes (1817–87),⁸⁹⁹ apparently a coloured man, who was to be the clerk of the Voortrekker Volksraad (People's Assembly) and at the time of his report was Andries Pretorius' personal secretary.⁹⁰⁰ The second one is a brief despatch by Pretorius, written on 23 December 1838 in uMgungundlovu, but sent only after 9 January 1839 with another letter, written on that date at the Tugela River.⁹⁰¹ According to Thompson, the 'Pretorius reports ... were published in supplements to *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, a sympathetic Cape Town newspaper, on 16 February 1839; the Bantjes report on 14 June 1839'.⁹⁰²

wij thans, op eene Ogenblik voor een Heilige God, van Hemel en aarde, om een belofte aan hem te beloven, als Hij met zijne bescherming met ons zal wezen, en onze vijand in onze handen, zal geven dat wij hem overwinnen, dat wij die dag, en de datum, elk jaar als een verjaardag, en een dankdag, zoo als een Sabbath, en zijne eere, dienen zal, doorbrengen en dat wij het ook aan onzen kinderen zal zeggen, dat zij met ons er in moeten delen, tot gedachtenis ook voor ons opkomende geslagten, en als iemand is die er onder bezwaard bevind, dat die dan van deze plaats, weg moeten gaan, Want de ere van zijn naam, daardoor zal verheerlijk worden, dat de roem en eer van overwinning, aan hem zal worden gegeven." Ik zeide ook verder, dat wij in de gebed zamen moetendeelen, die tot den troon van Zijne Genade zal worden opgezonden, en zoo foor, en ik bereyde mijne handen, na de Hemel uit, in naam van ons allen, Verder elk avond, en ook de ophanden zijne Sabbathdag' (Hofstede 1876, 57–58).

895 *Official Guide* 1955, 5, based on Nathan 1937, 252, which was taken from Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 244–245, with Thompson 1985, 273 n 52 (quote).

896 According to Bantjes (Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 442), already on 5 December 1838 both Pretorius and Cilliers had preached to the men 'from the carriage of the cannon'.

897 Smith 1996; Schneider 2008, 279–284; https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=466397&partId=1&searchText=meroe+augustus&page=1.

898 Voigt 1899, 86; Otto 1974, 35–37.

899 *DSAB* 1, 1968, 50–52; Thompson 1985, 271 n 16; Visagie 2011, 48.

900 Chase, *Natal* 2, 1843b, 56–69; Bird, *Annals* 2, 1888, 438–452.

901 Chase, *Natal* 2, 1843b, 69–74; Bird, *Annals* 2, 1888, 453–458. For this letter and its context, see *Treaty*.

902 Thompson (1985, 152) underpinned this reference with two important editorial/methodological remarks. First (*ibid.*, 270–271 n 14): 'There are English versions of the first and the last of these documents [written in Dutch and published by Breytenbach c. 1958] in *The Annals of Natal* 1: 453–458, but several passages in Bird's [*Annals* 1, 1888] translations are inaccurate. In citing these documents and the one identified in the next note, I have treated the Dutch versions as authentic and have corrected the English translations by Bird and *De Zuid-Afrikaan* as requisite.' Second (*ibid.*, 271 n 18): 'I am grateful to Nancy Clark, William Worger, and André du Toit for sending me xerox copies of these *De Zuid-Afrikaan* sheets, which appeared as special supplements of the newspaper. William Worger and Nancy Clark have also examined the problem in the South African Archives, Pretoria [now NARSSA] and conclude that the original manuscripts no longer exist and that no other contemporary eyewitness reports are available. *De Zuid-Afrikaan* supplements include English as well as Dutch versions of these documents. The Dutch version would probably have been

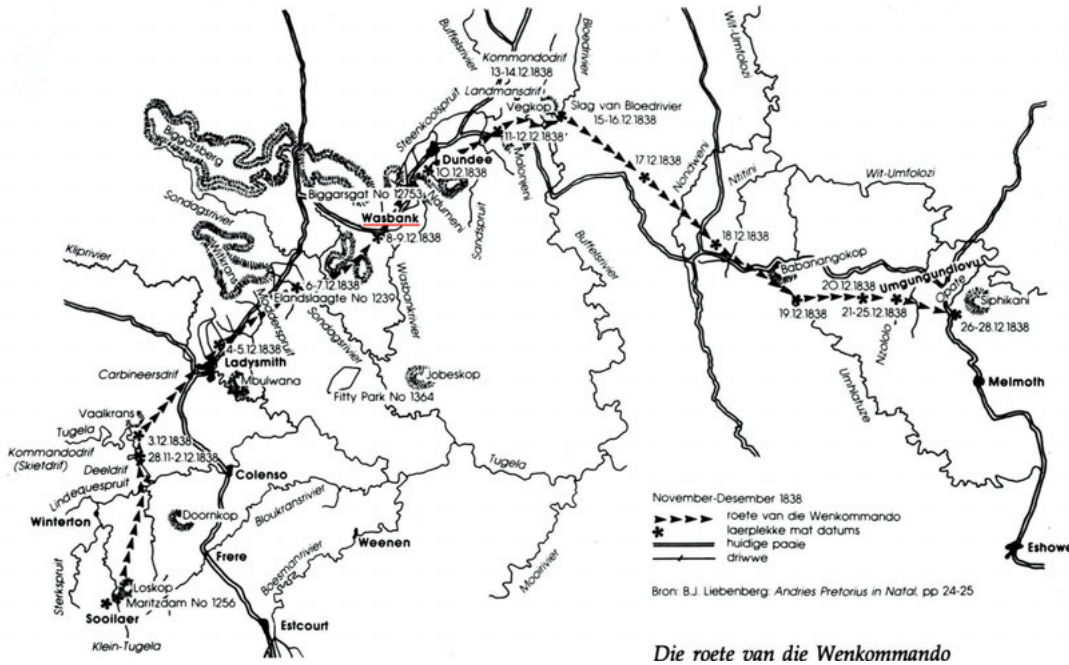


Figure 20.11: Route of the 'Winning Commando', showing the Pretorius laager at Wasbank, site of the Vow (Liebenberg 1977, 24–25)

Bantjes dates the making of a Vow to Sunday 9 December 1838, when the Boer forces were encamped at the head of a river 'they named the Wasbank because they washed their clothes there' (fig. 20.11),⁹⁰³ and writes:

That Sunday morning, before the service began, the chief commandant called together the men who would conduct the service, and told them to suggest to the congregation that they should all pray to God fervently in spirit and mind for his help and assistance in the struggle with the enemy; [he said] that he wanted to make a Vow to the Almighty, (if they were all willing), that 'should the Lord give us the victory, we would raise a House to the memory of his Great Name, wherever it shall please Him;' and that they should also invoke the aid and assistance of God to enable them to fulfil this Vow; and that we would note the day of the victory in a book, to make it known even to our latest posterity, so that it might be celebrated to the Honour of God. Messrs. Celliers, Landman, and Joubert were glad to hear it. They consulted their congregations about it and obtained their general consent. After that, when divine worship began separately, Mr. Celliers conducted the one that took place in the tent of the Head Commandant, where he started with the singing of Psalm 38 verses 12 to 16, then delivered a prayer, and preached about the first 24 verses of chapter 6 of the Book of the Judges; and then followed with the Prayer in which the aforementioned Vow was made to God, with a fervent supplication for God's help and assistance in its fulfilment. The 12th and 21st verses of the said 38th Psalm were again sung, and he ended the services with the singing of Psalm 134.⁹⁰⁴

The intimate situation of the service in Pretorius' tent, where Cilliers conducted the Vow, apparently provided the narrative for an undated pencil drawing (fig. 20.12), which Coert Steynberg produced for the Vow relief of his Blood River Monument discussed below (fig. 20.13). Here Cilliers,

copied from the original manuscripts, and the English versions would probably have been translations made by the editorial staff. The *Notule* [see Breytenbach c. 1958] use the Dutch versions in *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, so I am treating them as the most authentic forms of the only contemporary eyewitness reports on the Wenkommando.'

⁹⁰³ Thompson 1985, 152.

⁹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 152–153 with n 14. Thompson translated the Dutch text in Breytenbach c. 1958, 277–278 (Bylaag 11, 1838), which differs from the ones in Chase, *Natal* 2, 1843, 62, and Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 445.

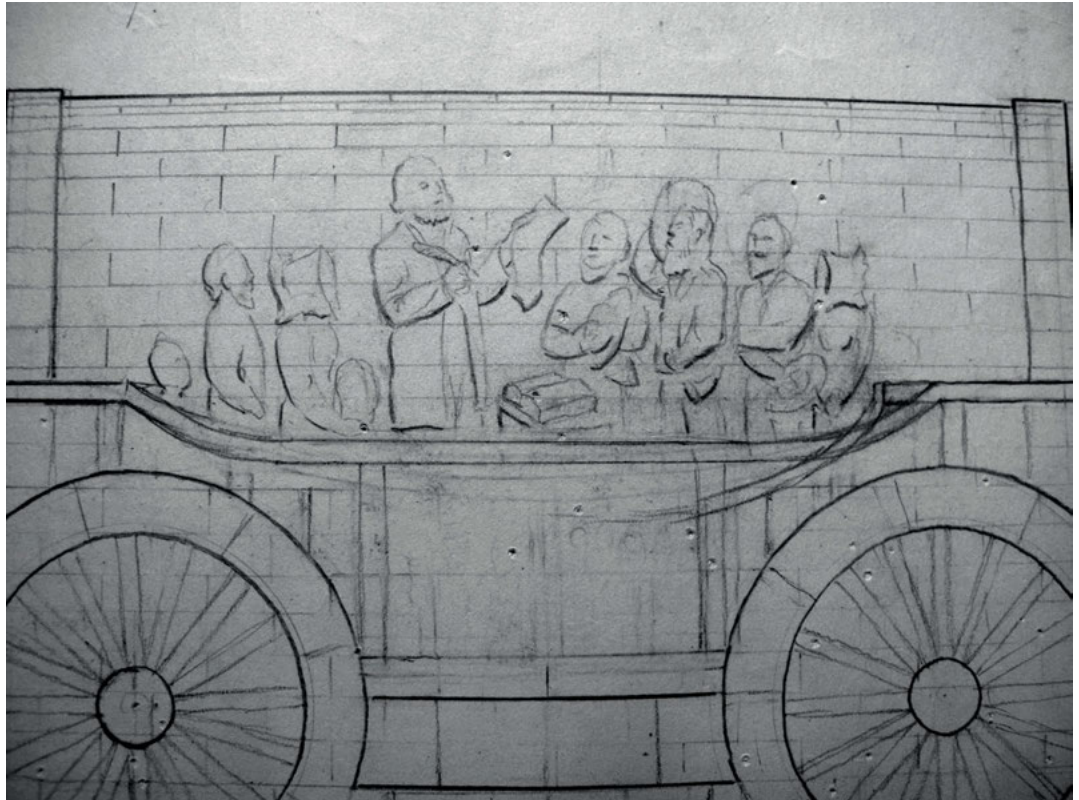


Figure 20.12: Coert Steynberg. Early version of the Vow relief in drawing for the Blood River Monument. Before 1938 (DNMCH Archives, Coert Steynberg file; photo the authors)

elevated in the centre, is framed by four trekkers, two Boer women and a child to listen intently to the Vow.⁹⁰⁵ Equipped with pen and paper, and the Bible on a small table in front of him, Cilliers is clearly distinguished as the scene's key figure. In his despatch of 23 December 1838, however, Pretorius does not mention either the locale or Cilliers when he reports about the Vow:

The undertaking [the Battle of Blood River] was great and our force small, as it consisted of only 460 men;⁹⁰⁶ therefore we could entertain no other confidence than in the justness of our cause and in the God of our Fathers; and the result thus far has also shown that – He who trusts in the good God/Has surely not built on sand ... The Almighty, who had given us the victory, was pleased to grant it without the loss of lives ... I also wish to inform you that we have here decided among ourselves to *make known* the day of our victory, being *Sunday, the 16th of this month of December, among our entire community*, and that we shall consecrate it to the Lord, and celebrate it with thanksgiving, since, before we fought against the enemy, *we promised in a public prayer* that should we manage to win the victory, we would build a house to the Lord in memory of his name, wherever He shall indicate it; which vow we now also hope to honour, with the help of the Lord, now that He has blessed us and heard our prayers.⁹⁰⁷

In significant difference to Cilliers, both Bantjes and Pretorius report that the Vow also included the promise to build a house for God, if the Boers would defeat Dingane's vast Zulu army (see *Blood River*). In the version of the Vow in the Afrikaans programme for the centenary celebrations, as well

⁹⁰⁵ Steynberg's inclusion of women and a child is unexpected and was dropped in his final relief, as Pretorius' commando consisted of men of fighting age.

⁹⁰⁶ For the (divergent) numbers of Boers in the commando against Dingane, see *Blood River*.

⁹⁰⁷ Thompson (1985, 154), who translated the Dutch text published by Breytenbach c. 1958, 271–273 (Bylaag 10, 1838).

as the Afrikaans edition of the *Official Guide (Amptelike Gids)* – although still purporting to quote Sarel Cilliers – there appears to be some sleight of hand to incorporate in Cilliers' wording the additional promise that a dedicated church will be built.⁹⁰⁸ This manipulation was in fact made in 1919 by Gustav Gerdener, theologian of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk,⁹⁰⁹ who is the source of the version of the Vow in these publications, though he is not cited. In his Afrikaans translation of the Dutch, Gerdener had made two changes to Cilliers' declaration as first published by Hofstede in 1876, adding the promise 'that we shall dedicate to God a temple, wherever it will please Him' (en dat wy een tempel tot Zyn eer stichten zal, waar het hem zou behagen), but omitting 'and if anyone sees a difficulty in this, let him return from this place'.⁹¹⁰ Gerdener justified his version in an annotation:

Today, nobody is able to reproduce the text of this pledge precisely. The words that Cilliers himself wrote down on his deathbed, the reader will find in his Journal (Appendix I). We have above taken essentially those words, with a few amendments which we thought were necessary, especially the addition of a sentence about the erection of a Temple, which was done later on in [Pieter]Maritzburg. It was without doubt part of the Vow, but was left out by Cilliers in his deathbed statement. The above text is, as far as one can judge, as close to the original as possible.⁹¹¹

Gerdener's poor justification of his significant intervention in the Cilliers Vow is only outmatched by the extraordinary inconsistency between the Afrikaans and English editions of the *Guide*. As we have seen, the *Amptelike Gids* includes the additional pledge of a church, interpolated by Gerdener, but this is omitted in the English *Official Guide*, as it follows the translation in Nathan's 1937 *Voortrekkers of South Africa*, discussed above (fig. 20.10). It is also not immediately noticeable, as the length of the Vow reproduced in the two editions is so similar, because the Afrikaans edition, following Gerdener, eliminates one clause as it adds another. In remarkable abnegation of historical accuracy, normally the all-important claim of the SVK, the chair, E.G. Jansen, confessed in a letter written about the Vow on 31 January 1939 to a Mr W.A. Odendaal of Harrismith:

There is undoubtedly still much confusion about our history, even that of the Voortrekkers. I agree with you that it makes no difference where or on what date the vow was made, or by whom it was signed. The important thing is the content, and about that there is no great disagreement. The wording given by Sarel Cilliers is generally accepted with the addition of the part that refers to the building of a house of God, about which there can be no doubt. There is thus no doubt about the fact that the vow included a promise to celebrate the day of victory as a Sabbath. It is thus unnecessary to have a conference about the matter. Everyone is agreed about it.⁹¹²

908 *Amptelike Gids* 1955, 5. The text reads: 'Die Geloofte. Op 9 Desember by monde van Sarel Cilliers deur die Voortrekkergemeenskap by Danskraal afgelê: "Myn broeders en medelandgenoten, hier staan wy tans op een ogenblik voor een heilige God van hemel en aarde om een belofte aan Hem te beloven, als Hy met Zyn beskerming met ons zal wezen, en onze vyand in onze handen zal geven, dat wy hem overwinnen, dat wy die dag en datum elke jaar als een verjaardag en een dankdag zoals een Sabbat in Zyn eer sal doorbrengen, *en dat wy een tempel tot Zyn eer stichten zal, waar het hem zou behagen*, en dat wy het ook aan onze kinderen zal zeggen, dat zy met ons erin moeten delen, tot gedachtenis ook voor onze opkomende geslachten. Want de ere van Zyn Naam daardoor zal verheerlikt worden, dat de roem en eer van onze overwinning aan Hem zal worden gegeven." Sarel Cilliers' (our italics).

909 A detailed biography is provided at https://af.wikipedia.org/wiki/G.B.A._Gerdener.

910 Hofstede, 1976, 58: 'en als iemand is die er onder bezwaard bevind, dat die dan van deze plaats, weg moeten gaan.'

911 Gerdener 1925 (first edition, 1919), 68 n *: 'Die teks van hierdie gelofte kan niemand vandag presies weergee nie. Die woorde wat Cilliers self op sy sterfbed neergeskrywe het, vind die leser in sy Joernaal (Annhangsel I). Hierbore het ons daardie woorde nagenoeg oorgeneem, met 'n paar wysigings wat ons nodig beskou het, veral met toevoeging van die sin omtrent die oprigting van 'n Tempel, wat later op Maritzburg geskied is. Dit was ongetwyfeld deel van die gelofte, maar is deur Cilliers in sy sterfbed-verklaring uitgelaat. Bowestaande teks is, sover ons kan oordeel, so na aan die oorspronklike as molik [sic].'

912 ARCA PV94 1/75/1/6. Jansen continues that other details can be left to the researchers and historians; there is now so much interest that it will be studied more than ever. He feels that it would not be possible for the SVK to take

Yet, while all the historical reports of the occasion are united by ‘profound religious fervor’,⁹¹³ there are many discrepancies in detail, not only concerning the exact nature of the Vow, but also in accounts of how it was made. As Thompson has analysed these inconsistencies in depth, we will summarise the main distinctions only:⁹¹⁴ 1) the date of the Vow, Sunday 9 (Bantjes) or Friday 7 (Cilliers) December; 2) the location of the Vow, at Danskraal (Cilliers)⁹¹⁵ or the Blyde River, later known as the Wasbank River (Bantjes);⁹¹⁶ 3) the actual place where the Vow took place, in the limited space of Pretorius’ tent (Bantjes) or in the wide encampment of the laager (Cilliers); 4) the ceremony of how the Vow was conducted, as part of a Sunday service inside Pretorius’ tent (Bantjes) or as a public event outside (Cilliers); 5) the promise that in the case of victory they would commemorate the day as an anniversary and a day of thanksgiving like a Sabbath (Cilliers) or they would do so and also raise a House to God (Bantjes and Pretorius). Our analysis confirms later scholarship that it was Sunday 9 December, at the Wasbank River, when Cilliers took the Vow in Pretorius’ tent. It is understandable that Cilliers’ memory for detail could have been compromised when he recounted the event more than thirty years later, as he himself recognised. And as the Vow’s content – recording the promise to both consecrate the day and build a church in God’s honour – was consistently confirmed in public despatches released by Pretorius and Bantjes shortly after the event, it is unlikely that their report contained fabricated information, because it could easily have been disproved by Voortrekker eyewitnesses.

But there is more. It was Thompson who demonstrated how poorly the fervent rhetoric of the Vow was honoured initially, uncovering its wide neglect in the following generation.⁹¹⁷ For some thirty years it was commemorated only occasionally by some families and religious associates, discussed in *Church of the Vow*. No earlier than 1864 was it agreed by the general assembly of the Dutch Reformed Church in Natal that ‘the 16th December should be celebrated as a day of thanks’.⁹¹⁸ A year later, the Transvaal government ‘proclaimed December 16 a public holiday, “to commemorate that by God’s grace the immigrants were freed from the yoke of Dingane”’.⁹¹⁹ After the Union of South Africa in 1910, the day was made a national holiday.⁹²⁰ An early publicly recorded name of this day is found in *Die Volkstem* of 16.12.1875. In the Afrikaner newspaper, however, the day’s name was not literally connected to the Vow as one might have expected, but instead called ‘Dinggaans-Dag’ (Dingane’s Day).⁹²¹ From an Afrikaner perspective it seems extraordinary that, of all things, it was the Zulu king Dingane, badly hit by the Boers’ victory at Blood River, who acted until 1952 as namesake of this day.⁹²² In that year the apartheid regime tried to obliterate the traditional name, replacing it with ‘Geloftesdag’ – the ‘Day of the Covenant’ (or later the Vow) – and gave

on responsibility for the research. Yet, as will be discussed regarding *Church of the Vow*, the SVK did later undertake research in this area (SVK 20.1.1947: 12).

913 Thompson 1985, 152.

914 *Ibid.*, 174–175.

915 Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 244 ‘Dancekraal’.

916 *Ibid.*, 444 ‘Bly River’ (*Official Guide* 1955, 51: ‘Blyde River’). Liebenberg (1977, 31, following Jansen 1938, 63–67) explains that the commando ‘proceeded towards a river which was called the Bly River by the members of the Potgieter and Uys “Vlugkommando”, but which is today known as Wasbank River’ (... en voortgetrek tot aan ’n rivier wat deur lede van Potgieter en Uys se Vlugkommando die Blyrivier genoem is, maar vandag bekend staan as die Wasbankrivier); see also Thompson 1985, 174, 274 n 75, and Duvenage 1988, *Groot Trek*, 144–146 (‘Danskraal or Wasbankspruit?’ p.150 with map).

917 Thompson 1985; Bailey 2002; Ehlers 2005.

918 Cachet 1883, 201 (English quote as in Thompson 1985, 166); see Bailey 2002, 33–36.

919 Thompson 1985, 168; see Bailey 2002, 36–37.

920 Malefane 2001, 29–42 (‘Changing Images of the Battle of Blood River/iNcome’, by J. Sithole).

921 Bailey 2002, 38.

922 Thompson (1985, 270 n 1) remarks: ‘According to the *Standard Encyclopaedia of Southern Africa* (Cape Town,

it the legal status of a Sabbath with its distinct restrictions.⁹²³ In telling opposition to the Day of the Covenant, on 16 December 1961 the African National Congress (ANC) established its military arm, 'Umkhonto we Sizwe' (Spear of the Nation), thus counter-marking the beginning of the armed struggle against apartheid.⁹²⁴ South African History Online states that its formation was commemorated annually, on the same day as the Vow.⁹²⁵ When the ANC was elected to government in 1994, the public holiday was renamed the 'Day of Reconciliation' to resolve these conflicting traditions. In the history of this day, it is the first name to encompass all peoples of South Africa, not only a chosen few.⁹²⁶

Thompson has argued that, 'in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a number of clergy, politicians and intellectuals in the Transvaal and Orange Free State began to resurrect, embellish, codify and celebrate a version of the events of December 1838 for the purpose of promoting pride and self-confidence among Afrikaners in the face of British imperial aggression ...'⁹²⁷ Hofstede, for example, professed in the foreword of his 'History of the Orange Free State' (1876): 'May my book contribute to ennoble nationalistic sentiment and to foster the love for the fatherland among young readers especially, so shall I in my effort be abundantly rewarded.'⁹²⁸ In the process of developing a rigid Calvinistic agenda for the Voortrekker past, a key role was allotted to Sarel Cilliers and his version of the Vow;⁹²⁹ but many failed to acknowledge that Cilliers himself (who, as discussed above, did not mention a pledge to build a church) had admitted that he was recounting it 'as nearly as I can remember'.⁹³⁰ In the first half of the twentieth century, 'Afrikaner nationalist mythology', and with it the reinvented Vow, came to full maturity.⁹³¹ Prolific trend setters were, to name only a few, Gustav S. Preller with his relentless biographical and historical writing about the Great Trek and its leaders (1917–38), Jan Malan with his book *Boer and Barbarian* (1911; second edition 1918), Gustav Gerdener with his biography of Sarel Cilliers (1919; second edition 1925), elevating the church elder 'to the same level as Piet Retief and Andries Pretorius',⁹³² and George McCall Theal's multivolume and often reprinted *History of South Africa* (1888–1927), a powerful public mouthpiece of 'the stereotype of *voortrekkers* as an ultrareligious community ..., reinforced in the schools'.⁹³³ In the early twentieth century, the building believed to be the Church of the Vow was reinstated not as a house of worship but as a museum, which opened in 1912 and would play an important role at the centenary of the Battle of Blood River in Pietermaritzburg.⁹³⁴ And in the colossal re-enactment of the Great Trek with its climax at the centenary celebrations on 16 December 1938 in Pretoria, at the newly finished foundations of the Voortrekker Monument, the Vow was at the very heart of the event.⁹³⁵

1972), 5:562, the name Dingaans Day was dropped because it "conveyed the impression to the uninitiated that it involved esteem for Dingaans, or that it could rouse antipathy among the Bantu against the Whites".'

923 Thompson 1985, 144 with n 1 (stating that the second name change was legislated in 1980); Ehlers 2003, 6, 17.

924 See Part I, Chapter 5 ('The Afrikaner cause').

925 <http://www.sahistory.org.za/dated-event/day-reconciliation-celebrated-public-holiday-sa-first-time>

926 See Part I, Chapter 5 ('The Afrikaner cause').

927 Thompson 1985, 145–146 (quote); see also 165–180.

928 Hofstede, 1876, viii: 'Voorrede ... Mocht mijn boek bijdragen tot veredeling van het Nationaliteitsgevoel en vooral bij mijne jeugdige lezers vaderlandsliefde aanwakkeren, zo zal ik mijne moeite rijkelijk beloond vinden. Bloemfontein, Mei 1874. De schrijver.'

929 Thompson 1985, 167–168.

930 Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 244; Thompson 1985, 167.

931 *Ibid.*, 25–68 (quote, headline of chapter).

932 *Ibid.*, 181.

933 *Ibid.*, 182.

934 Henning 2014, 135–163.

935 Du Toit and Steenkamp 1938; Moodie 1975, 175–207; Thompson 1985, 183–186.



Figure 20.13: Coert Steynberg. Blood River Monument. Completed 1939/40, inaugurated 1947. Granite, c. 5.8 × 7.1 m (Blood River Heritage Site; photo P1010401)

At the inauguration of the 1938 trek in Cape Town, the main trek leader, Henning Klopper, however, chose to read out Cilliers' text of the Vow as recorded by Hofstede, which does not mention the pledge to build a church in remembrance of the sacred event – another example of the confusion around the proper version of the Vow and its specific content.⁹³⁶ Reconsidering the contradictions of the accounts discussed above, it is doubtful, in Thompson's words, 'that the vow or covenant was as central to the proceedings of the commando as Bantjes and Pretorius reported'.⁹³⁷ However, Jansen's belief that the detail was unimportant prevailed. Unaffected by the many factual inconsistencies but borne by Afrikaner fervour, the making of the Vow was assertively conceived and perpetuated in marble as the narrative prerequisite for *Blood River*.

As mentioned earlier, a contemporary perpetuation of the Vow, which demonstrates the same confidence in its message despite uncertainties in its facts and interpretation, was conceived by the South African sculptor Coert Steynberg.⁹³⁸ Turning down opportunities to work at the Voortrekker Monument, he had accepted a commission to create the centenary monument at Blood River itself (fig. 20.13), to be erected in the middle of the site of the laager over a nineteenth-century memorial

⁹³⁶ Mostert 1940, 112.

⁹³⁷ Thompson 1985, 164–165.

⁹³⁸ See our discussion of the artist in Part I, Chapter 2 ('Topics for the Great Trek').

cairn.⁹³⁹ The foundation stone was laid on 16 December 1938,⁹⁴⁰ as was that of the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria. Completed in 1939/40, the Blood River Monument was inaugurated only in 1947.⁹⁴¹ Steynberg's design was a colossal ox wagon carved from a number of large blocks of Halfway House granite, responding to the official reading of the Trek wagon, 'symbolically seen as the home, fortress and church of the Voortrekkers'.⁹⁴² On each side of the wagon's covering is a semi-circular relief, one that represents the Battle of Blood River, the other the Vow (discussed above; fig. 20.5), with the Church of the Vow portrayed on the back of the wagon tent (fig. 22.30): the same three key events that were grouped together on the west frieze at the Monument. In the Blood River Monument, however, the Vow relief is inscribed with the date of 7 December 1938, as per Cilliers, rather than Bantjes' Sunday 9 December, which was preferred at the Voortrekker Monument⁹⁴³ – and is by now historically confirmed. The Steynberg relief and the frieze panel affirm equally the significance of the Vow in the Voortrekker story, elevating the conflict at Blood River into a holy crusade.

939 The cairn of stones was said to have been erected at one of the earliest gatherings at Blood River, arranged by the Dutch Reformed clergyman, F.L. Cachet, on 16 December 1867 (Cachet 1882, 201 with n 1); see also Du Toit and Steenkamp 1938, 110–113; Thompson 1985, 166. For Steynberg's Blood River Monument, see Prinsloo 1971; Steynberg 1982, 31–35; Hagg 1989, 15–17; and *Blood River*. A substantial collection of documents, drawings and newspaper clippings, which record the making of the monument, are kept in the DNMCH Archives (Coert Steynberg file, Bloedrivier-Monument, 1/1937–65), to which we owe detailed information.

940 Du Toit and Steenkamp 1938, 108–109.

941 www.bloedrivier.org.za/attractions/, see 'The Granite Jawbone Wagon'.

942 Ibid.

943 *Official Guide* 1955, 51.

21 The Battle of *Blood River* (16 December 1838)



A3



B2



C2



D

21 *Blood River*

West wall (panel 25/31)

h. 2.3 × 4.29 m

Restored fractures on the vertical edges

Sculptor of the clay maquette: Peter Kirchoff

STAGES OF PRODUCTION

A1 W.H. Coetzer, pencil drawing retained only in A2 (April–June 1837)

A2 Reproduction of A1 (June 1937)

A3 W.H. Coetzer, revised pencil drawing A1, h. 13.3 × w. 23 cm
(after September 1937)

Annotations: 'nog nie klaar' (not yet finished) / 'Zulus in sloot en rivier'
(Zulu in ditch and river) / 'Bloed Rivier' / (Blood River)

B1 One-third-scale clay maquette, not extant but replicated in B2 (1942–43)

B2 One-third-scale plaster maquette, h. 79 × w. 147 × d. c. 8 cm (1942–43)

C1 Full-scale wooden armature, not extant (1943–46)

C2 Full-scale clay relief, not extant but photographed and replicated in C3
(1943–46)

C3 Full-scale plaster relief not extant (1943–46) but illustrated (*Die Volk-
stem*, 10.9.1947); copied in D (1948–50)

D Marble as installed in the Monument (1950)

EARLY RECORDS

SVK minutes (4.9.1937) – item 4p (see below, 'Developing the design')

Voorstelle (5.12.1934?) – item 17 'Laertoneel aan Bloedrivier' (Laager scene at Blood River) [the emphasis in this proposal was on the Vow, where this entry is transcribed in full]

Panele (c. Dec. 1934–36) – item 3 'Moelikhede om mee te kamp' (Difficulties the Voortrekkers faced);

b. 'die inboorling' (the native); B 'Gevegte teen Kaffers Vegkop of Bloedrivier. Die metode van verdediging: die rol wat vrou gespeel het indien dit kan' (Battles against the Kaffirs – Vegkop or Blood River. The system of defence: the role which woman played, if this is possible)

Wenke (c. 1934–36) – item I. F.A. STEYTLER, e. 'Die Bloedrivierlaer' (the Blood River laager) / item II.

Dr. L. Steenkamp, mnre. A.J. du Plessis en M. Basson, 3. 'Verhouding met ander volksgroepe' (Relationship with other ethnic groups); d. 'Dingaen' (Dingane); ix. 'Die slag van Bloedrivier en hinderlaag in die dal van die Witumfolosi' (The battle of Blood River and ambush in the valley of the White Umfolosi)

Moerdyk Layout (5.10.1936–15.1.1937) – scene 18 on panel 24/31 'Bloedrivier' (Blood River)

Jansen Memorandum (19.1.1937) – item 7.18 'Bloedrivier' (Blood River)

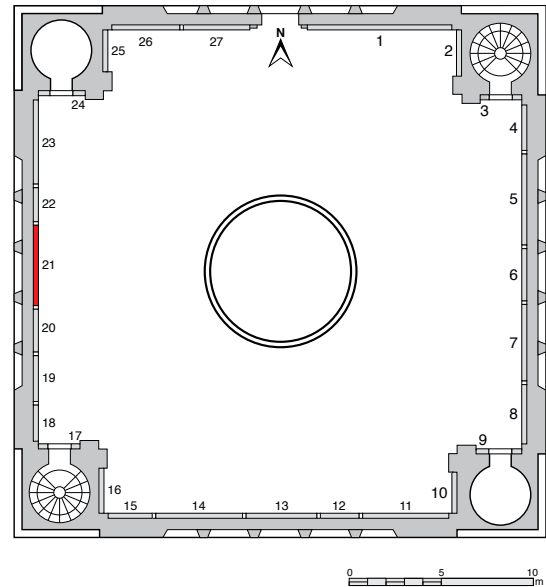




Figure 21.1: D. *Blood River*. 1950. Marble, 2.3 × 4.29 m (courtesy of VTM; photo Russell Scott)

Description

From the right, a galloping cavalcade of eleven Boer riders attacks superior numbers of Zulu foot soldiers in traditional dress, some twenty visible (fig. 21.1). This uneven juxtaposition represents the Battle of Blood River. Six horses are shown in the front row of the Boer charge. Despite their standardised representation, the thrusting heads of the horses with ears pricked or laid back, and the varied array of their galloping legs suggest the force of the attack.⁹⁴⁴ It is difficult to work out the spatial relationship between the overlapping forms, or to match horses and riders, so dense is the charge. Yet the Boers are portrayed in their usual impeccable attire, seated upright in rather rigid poses as though on parade, their profile heads and hats neatly aligned. Only three actually have their rifles levelled at the Zulu, and the most prominent horseman who dominates the foreground has his gun slung over his shoulder and holds a sabre aloft theatrically. This is the Voortrekker commandant, Andries Pretorius,⁹⁴⁵ who rides into battle like a dressage champion, portrayed in the same top hat and formal dress as in *Arrival*, his long coat tails tucked up behind him.

In contrast to the powerful Boer charge, the Zulu attack is represented as failing hopelessly. While from the far left a crowd of warriors still moves forward to assault the trekkers with raised assegais and cowhide shields, they are futile against bullets, and their front line is already completely crushed. The three Zulu in the foreground collapse like a cascade in a slow-motion sequence from left to right in different stages of prostration – from an upright kneeling pose until the third has his forehead on the ground as though in obeisance to the Boer commander, his shield and knobkierie beneath the hooves of Pretorius' steed.⁹⁴⁶ In the background there is total disarray. The nearest figure topples backwards, while disorderly limbs and the back views of others show them bolting back into their own lines. Yet curiously, the heroically bared torsos of the Zulu are unblemished by wounds. They seem leaderless. Only the warrior who kneels at the far left is distinguished by a double ring around his neck and an unusual patch of tight curls on the back of his shaved head, and the one in front of him by a ball-like ornament on his head.

Beyond the warring figures, twelve Voortrekker wagons locate this battle outside a laager, as they curve away to the left to indicate the semi-circular form. Above each wagon are two or three lanterns suspended on tall whips, some perhaps belonging to wagons on the other side of the laager. The hill line in the distance, continuing from *The Vow*, coincides with the landscape of *Blood River*.

944 They reflect Kirchoff's abiding interest in horses, and are comparable with Muybridge's famous *Animal locomotion. An electro-photographic investigation of consecutive phases of animal movements*, vol. 9: *Horses* (1887, pl. 631); see https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Photographs_by_Eadweard_Muybridge_in_the_Metropolitan_Museum_of_Art?uselang=de#/media/File:Horse_and_Rider_Galloping-_MET_DP275559.jpg.

945 Potgieter 1987, 32. For his title at the time, see *Arrival*.

946 Their staged prostration in front of Boer gun power echoes an incident reported to have taken place on 14 February 1940, when the new Zulu king was present at the salute of twenty-one guns. As Mpande 'could not bear the violent roaring of our guns ... he and his captains then ran with great fear to his camp, and, for fear, stooped down on the earth at every discharge of a gun' (Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 596; the original Dutch text: Breytenbach c. 1958, 336–337).



Figure 21.2: A2. W.H. Coetzer. Reproduction of first sketch for *Blood River*. June 1937 (courtesy of ARCA PV94 1/75/5/1; photo the authors)

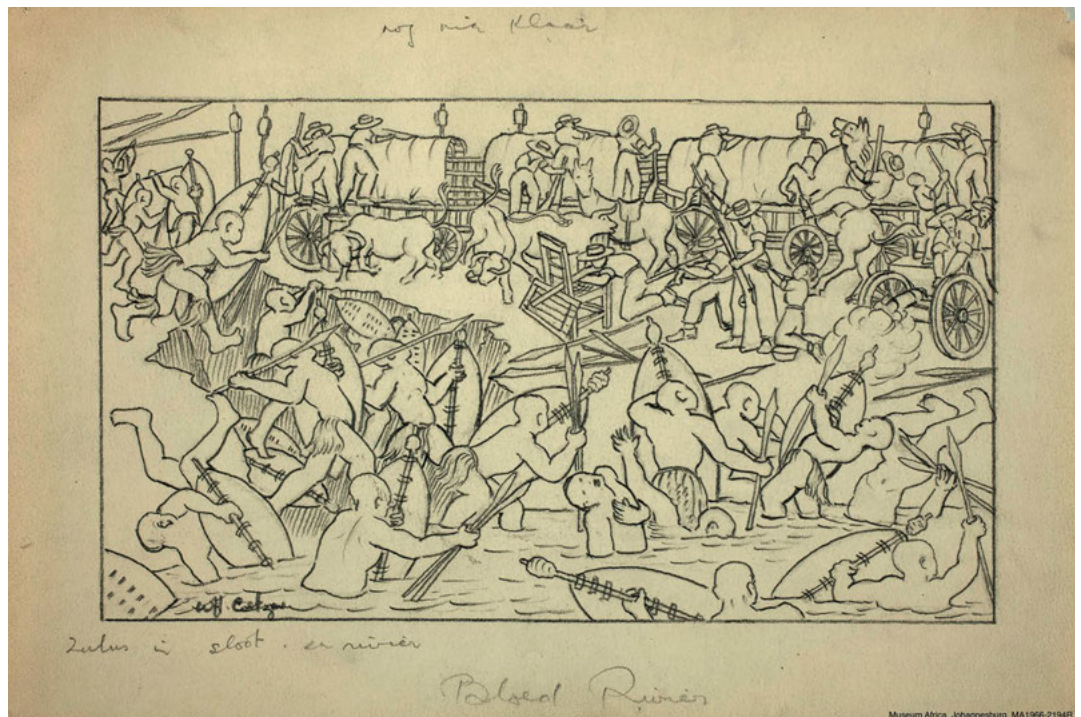


Figure 21.3: A3. W.H. Coetzer. 'Bloed Rivier'. After September 1937. Pencil, 13.3 x 23 cm. Revised first sketch (photo courtesy of Museum Africa, no. 66/2194R)

Developing the design

The reproduction of Coetzer's drawing (fig. 21.2) and the almost identical revised drawing (fig. 21.3) provide a radically different composition of the Battle of *Blood River* from the final relief.⁹⁴⁷ His sketch captures a sense of high drama in a chaotic melee of figures and animals. The view he selected showed the interior of the laager with Boers defending their wagons from Zulu attacking on the far side, reminiscent of the composition of *Vegkop*, which was originally planned to be opposite this scene. But here Coetzer has assumed that the laager was left open on the side of the river and deep ravine used by the Boers as part of their defensive position at Blood River, which occupies the foreground of his portrayal. It was a concept he would revisit when he later designed a tapestry series for the Monument (fig. 21.4). He was obviously trying to picture 'authentic' historical detail, including the lanterns that it was recounted were attached to the wagons during the night before the Zulu assault. The foreground is filled with attacking Zulu warriors in wild disarray, many wounded and dying. Dominating the most prominent part of the composition, they vastly outnumber those who defend the laager at this side, making it all the more impressive that the Boers fought off the Zulu successfully.

The Historiese Komitee meeting on 4 September 1937 required the following alterations:

Blood River. Make another scene that shows the wagons on the bank of the small ravine; the form was a half-moon; the lanterns hang on whips.⁹⁴⁸

Coetzer's careful consideration of the recorded history evidently did not match the expectations of the SVK experts.

However, when Peter Kirchoff started to work on the small plaster maquette (fig. 21.5),⁹⁴⁹ he rethought Coetzer's design completely, choosing to represent a different concept of the battle. His choice of one of the mounted forays outside the laager may have been prompted by his interest in horses, but it also serves to more clearly show the Boers as victors. Taking all the Zulu to the left side so that they are less dominant than in the sketch, Kirchoff depicted the heroic Voortrekker riders charging their adversaries from the opposite side, all the more prominent because they move against our conventional reading from left to right. In the maquette, the bodies and limbs of the figures are stiffer, thinner and longer than in the full-scale clay relief (fig. 21.6), and they lack its more three-dimensional quality. Indeed, the Zulu that take up positions that correspond to their final poses are quite emaciated, something that is modified in the final marble. There are differences in the Boers too. For example, in the maquette Pretorius, who wears a particularly tall top hat, holds his gun in an oddly diagonal position that lines up with his sabre in its sheath, worn next to his powder horn. The body of his stallion seems far too bulky and, strangely, has a collar harness. While the hats of the Boers line up in a regimented horizontal, the vigorously moving horses' legs are not fully resolved; two raised hind legs protrude oddly behind Pretorius' stallion, and a horizontal foreleg beneath its belly does not correspond with a particular horse. While the wagons in the background follow Coetzer's arrangement in the sketch, they lack the lanterns that the Historiese Komitee had commented on.

The refinements in the full-scale clay (fig. 21.6) are: lanterns now mounted on whips appear again on the wagons; Zulu shields are shown more parallel to the picture plane; the proportions of all the figures and horses are normalised; Pretorius raises his sabre to lead the charge; some

⁹⁴⁷ As with *The Vow*, the pencil drawing is again inscribed as unfinished, suggesting that changes might have been planned.

⁹⁴⁸ 'Bloedrivier. Maak 'n ander toneel wat die waens op die wal van die sloot wys; vorm was halwe maan; die lanterns hang aan sweepstokke' (Historiese Komitee 4.9.1937: 4q).

⁹⁴⁹ As the original is badly discoloured in our thumbnail photograph because a silicon mould was taken from it to produce a replica for the Blood River Museum, we show here a recent photograph of the refurbished plaster maquette in the 2017 exhibition in the Voortrekker Monument.

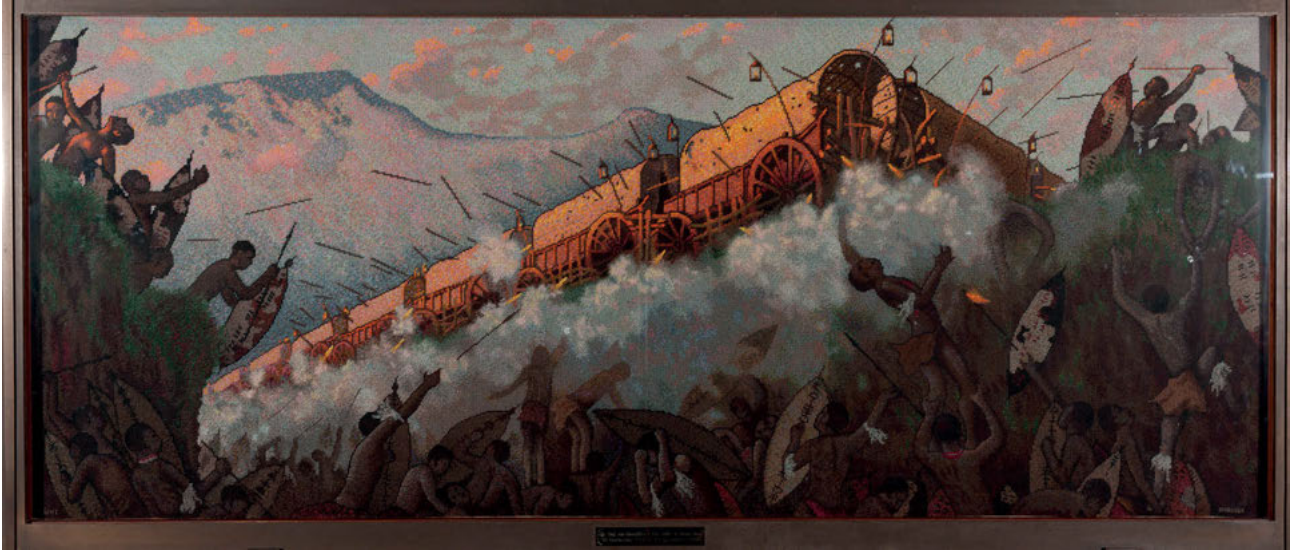


Figure 21.4: W.H. Coetzer. *Bloedrivier* (Blood River). Stitched by H.J. Combrink, one of fifteen tapestry scenes of the Great Trek for the Voortrekker Monument. 1952–60. Wool, 81 × 183 cm (courtesy of VTM Museum VTM 0001/14; photo Russell Scott)

variety is introduced into the angles of the Boers' hat brims and the horses' legs are more tidily and rhythmically arranged. It also adds the rear of another wagon on the right that is cut off by the edge of the panel, as are the heads of two new horses that now appear behind the Boers. The reasons for these additions are hard to explain, as they could not be continued on the next panel with the *Church of the Vow*. To have the horses' tails at the edge of the panel cut off seems an odd decision, and the truncation of the two horses' heads against the side of the church is particularly awkward. Evidently they were conceived focusing only on the narrative of this scene without considering its consequences for the frieze as a whole, even though Kirchhoff was responsible for the subsequent panel as well. It is likely that *Blood River* was modelled independently to avoid splitting it in the full-scale clay reliefs, which had happened with the central scenes of the east and south friezes – and perhaps because of friction amongst the sculptors. It is noteworthy that Potgieter is unable to identify any of the live models for this scene, perhaps suggesting a breakdown of communication. But if its separate development introduced other compositional problems, at least it meant that it avoided the invidious central breaks that characterised *Inauguration* and *Murder of Retief*.⁹⁵⁰

On 27 August 1946 Kirchhoff wrote to the SVK chair, E.G. Jansen:

For the Battle of Blood River, I would like to have had a little more space available. If the battles of Vegkop and Kappein [sic] are each on 15 feet, and the arrival of Pretorius is modelled on 7½ feet, it was difficult to portray the full significance of this, the greatest battle of the Trek, in 12 feet. I designed this battle, the building of the Church of the Vow, as well as the two scenes at Saaiplaas, and modelled them alone. In these, alongside depicting the historical accuracy, I had my own ideas about how the sculptural handling of the theme should be shown.⁹⁵¹

⁹⁵⁰ See our discussion in Part I, Chapter 3 ('The full-scale frieze').

⁹⁵¹ 'Vir die Slag van Bloedrivier sou ek graag 'n bietjie meer ruimte tot my beskikking gehad het. As die slag van Vegkop en Kappein elk op 15 vt, en die aankoms van Pretorius op 7½ vt gemodilleer is, is die moeilik om hierdie, die grootste geveg van die Trek, op 12 vt. in sy volle belangrikheid uit te beeld. Hierdie slag, die bou van die Geloofte Kerk, asook die twee tonele by Saayplaas, het ek ontwerp en alleen gemodilleer. Hierin het ek, naas die histories-waarskynlike uitbeelding ook my eie idees oor die beeldhoudelike behandeling van so 'n tema uit te druk [sic]' (Kirchhoff files).



Figure 21.5: B2. Peter Kirchoff. *Blood River*. 1942–43. Plaster, 79 × 147 × c. 8 cm. Maquette, photographed in raking light as installed in 2017 exhibition (courtesy of VTM Museum VTM 2184/1–28; photo the authors)



Figure 21.6: C2. *Blood River*. 1943–46. Clay. Full-scale relief (courtesy of Kirchoff files; photo Alan Yates)



Figure 21.7: Kneeling Zulu in *Blood River* whose little toe crosses into *The Vow*. Marble, detail of fig. 21.1 (photo Russell Scott)

Kirchhoff's note makes it quite clear that the sculptor, as well as having his own ideas, wanted more space for this scene; perhaps the additional horses represent wishful thinking on his part. In the end, there could be no enlargement of the final panel, so it is not surprising that Kirchhoff's additions to the full-scale clay were removed, possibly in the plaster, certainly in the final marble. The new gap right at the end of the wagons may have been meant to represent the opening through which the Boers attacked. Some other small changes in the marble include the introduction of a shield behind the prostrate Zulu in the centre: if anything, it makes the stray leg of another victim even more difficult to understand. And, although the extra horses no longer appear, so that their awkward truncation is avoided, the two foremost horses lack tails. The tail docking probably occurred after the panel arrived, nearly a year after the building's inauguration in December 1949, and it was tailored to fit into the frieze during the last few months of 1950. All the other panels of the west wall, including the two adjacent scenes, *The Vow* and *Church of the Vow*, had long been in place. To achieve a perfect fit between the two, it is likely that other elements were trimmed too: the right arm of the larger-scale adjacent Boer in *Church of the Vow* protrudes obtrusively into *Blood River*, and overlaps the back of the horses and their tails, so that they appear to emerge from behind him and the church. On the other side of the panel we see further adjustments. The spear of the standing warrior on the left is all too neatly cut short by the joint between the panels, while the 'amashoba' tuft on his arm – depicted in low relief next to the concave curve of the back of the Boer on the far right of *Vow* – just touches his shoulder, and the lower one belonging to a kneeling Zulu has been carved over his leg. There are clear traces of damage and repair next to the joints where these overlaps occur.⁹⁵² In the end it is not possible to know whether these corrections were

⁹⁵² Such repairs and corrections are mentioned in the minutes; see Dagbestuur 25.10.1950: 5a: 'Mounting of frieze. Moerdyk reports that all the panels are in the monument but that corrective carving is still required. Resolved. The

foreseen and carried out in Italy, or were amendments once the panel had arrived at the Monument. Most curious of all, a tiny strut seems to support the curled small toe of the kneeling Zulu figure as it marginally crosses into *Vow* (fig. 21.7).

A damning handwritten review of this scene in the Laurika Postma folder was possibly written by her in 1946 when the artists were asked for comment by the SVK. The anonymous critique states:

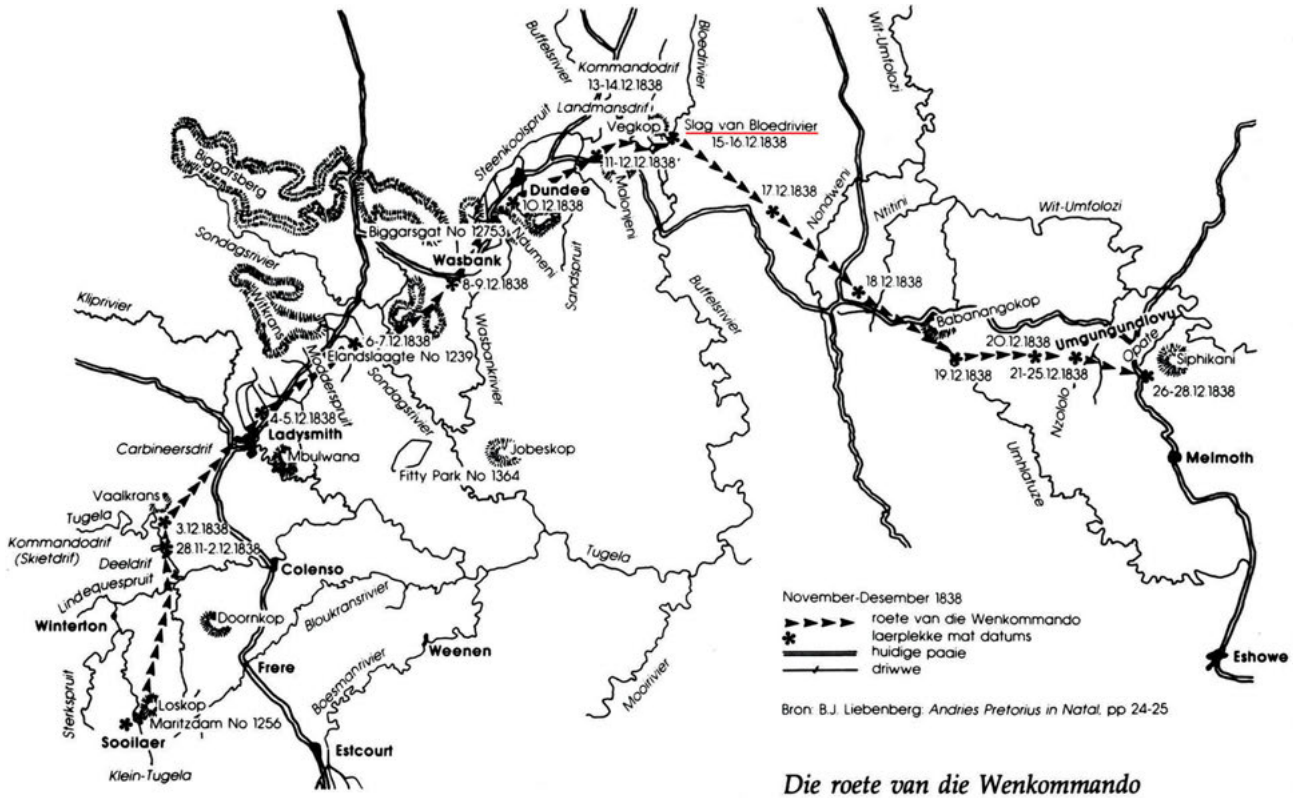
Blood River. Poorly resolved. The division of groups is so strong that a weak line forms in the middle that gives the idea that it could easily snap, and which also conflicts with the technique of the material in which it will ultimately be carved.

The proportions of the second horse from the front are completely wrong.⁹⁵³

Whatever else may be criticised in Kirchhoff's design, the proportions of the mostly invisible second horse do not appear problematic. Nor is the hiatus between Boers and Zulu inappropriate, since it offsets the two opposing groups and arguably contributes to the narrative drama. If Postma was indeed the reviewer, the negative appraisal may reflect the two sculptors' mutual dislike; it is notable that Kirchhoff had equally harsh criticisms of some of Postma's scenes. In the end, it seems that there was no response to this critique, and the composition was copied into the marble with no modifications apart from those already discussed.

committee resolves that it is essential to have the work completed by 1 December 1950, and the architect is charged to accomplish this even if it requires taking on more workers' (Montering van fries. Dr. Moerdyk meld dat al die panele in die monument is maar dat dit nog reggekap moet word. Besluit. Die vergadering besluit dat dit noodsaaklik is om al die werk aan die fries op 1 Desember 1950 klaar te hê en die argitek word opgedra om dit te bewerkstellig, al moet meer werkers aangeneem word).

953 'Swak opgelos. Die verdeling van groepe is so sterk dat 'n swak lyn vorm in die middle wat die idee gee of dit maklik kan kwak, en wat ook indruis teen die tegniek van die materiaal waarin dit uiteindelik gekap word. Tweede perd van voor se proporsies heeltemal verkeerd' (Art Archives, UP, Folder 16).



Die roete van die Wenkommando

Figure 21.8: Route of the 'Winning Commando', showing the site of the Battle of Blood River (Liebenberg 1977, 24–25)

Reading the narrative

The story of the iconic Battle of Blood River we reconstruct is based on the only two contemporary eyewitness reports, a shorter one from Andries Pretorius in January 1839 and a more elaborate one from J.G. Bantjes in June 1839 (see *Vow*).⁹⁵⁴ The idea of a powerful commando against Dingane took shape after the Zulu had murdered Retief and his men outside uMgungundlovu, and massacred many Boers in the Bloukrans area, especially women and children. An earlier attempt to seek retribution, unkindly called the ‘Vlugkommando’ (flight commando), had resulted in more deaths at Italeni, including those of Piet and Dirkie Uys. Finally, in December 1838, the recently arrived Andries Pretorius led a much larger commando against the Zulu, later called the ‘Wenkommando’ (winning commando).⁹⁵⁵

Such is the status of Pretorius among Afrikaners that he is often credited with the total conception of the strategy adopted at Blood River, including proposing the use of a laager. It has even been said that he sent ahead instructions before he left Graaff-Reinet for the making of ‘veghekke’ (fighting gates) to be used to block vulnerable gaps in the encircled wagons, which were to prove important in the treeless site of Blood River. But Barend Liebenberg points out that Pretorius had no authority to do this before he was actually appointed as commandant after his arrival at the Voortrekker camp at the Little Tugela. It was rather seasoned Boer fighters, experienced in conflict with Ndebele and Zulu armies, that would have recommended that a laager be used, particularly after the failure of the commando at Italeni, and who would have realised the value of preparing veghekke in advance.⁹⁵⁶ Pretorius, already a successful soldier of the conflict on the Cape borders, would have been shrewd enough to take advantage of their knowledge to shape the form of warfare that was ultimately victorious at Blood River.

The exact numbers of the Wenkommando and its reinforcements vary in reports, probably because most did not count the black servants, and some did not include those who joined the commando from Port Natal.⁹⁵⁷ On 5 December 1838, Bantjes stated, ‘... I proceeded to take a general return for the chief commandant of the number of men on the commando, which I found to be, including the persons of colour, 464 men, besides the commandants [5 December].’⁹⁵⁸ Much later, Cilliers recorded ‘407 men’,⁹⁵⁹ while Liebenberg specified,

the commando consisted of 468 Afrikaner, 3 Englishmen (Robert Joyce had arrived in the meantime [joining Alexander Biggar and Edward Parker]) ..., some 60 blacks who were entailed by Alexander Biggar from Port Natal, and an unknown amount of non-white servants (blacks as well as Hottentots or Coloureds).⁹⁶⁰

⁹⁵⁴ Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 438–452 (Bantjes), 453–458 (Pretorius). For the original text in Dutch, see Breytenbach c. 1958, 270–273 (Pretorius, *Bylaag* 10, 1838), 273–282 (Bantjes, *Bylaag* 11, 1838).

⁹⁵⁵ We cannot discuss here the warnings from British officials – namely Major Samuel Charters, at the time commanding officer of Port Natal – regarding a Boer commando against Dingane (significant, for the partly unpublished evidence, is NA Kew CO48/199/v1 and CO48/200/v2; see *Treaty*).

⁹⁵⁶ Liebenberg 1977, 18. He points out that Maritz had already proposed after the Vlugkommando that they should oppose Dingane with fifty wagons. Liebenberg also quotes Erasmus Smit’s diary that on 18 October 1838 stated that Jakobus Potgieter was making two ‘sluithekken’ (closing gates).

⁹⁵⁷ For a list of the Boers who fought at Blood River, including some biographies and photographs, see Du Toit and Steenkamp 1938, 65–84.

⁹⁵⁸ Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 442–443 (Dutch text: Breytenbach c. 1958, 276).

⁹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 244.

⁹⁶⁰ Liebenberg, 1977, 32: ‘Die kommando het bestaan uit 468 Afrikaners, 3 Engelse (Robert Joyce het intussen bygekome), sowat 60 swartes wat deur Alexander Biggar van Port Natal saamgebring is, en ’n onbekende aantal nie-blanke bediendes (swartes sowel as Hottentotte of Kleurlinge).’ Laband (1995, 99) states that Biggar ‘had about 120 Port Natal blacks with him’.

The numbers of wagons recorded differ too.⁹⁶¹ Bantjes declared on 28 November 1838: ‘The camp [at the Little Tugela River] was then pitched and enclosed by the wagons, fifty-seven in number,’⁹⁶² but Gustav Preller in his biography of Andries Pretorius states that there were sixty-four wagons,⁹⁶³ and also repeats this at the end of his life of Piet Retief, where he includes the Voortrekkers’ retribution for his death.⁹⁶⁴

It is revealing how Pretorius in his cautiously worded public despatch – dated uMgungundlovu, 22 December 1838, but sent off only on or after 9 January 1839, as discussed in *Treaty* – downplayed the trekkers’ intention to conquer Dingane’s army:⁹⁶⁵

After the people had by general election chosen me to be the commandant-in-chief, we marched out against that formidable foe, not trusting in our own strength in the least, as we could only muster not more than four hundred and sixty men; but we had full confidence in the justice of our cause. Our only hope was in God ... We marched in five divisions, each under the command of a proper officer. Our object was only to recover the property which the enemy had taken from our people. During the next few days we took prisoners several men of the Zulu nation, to whom I gave a white flag as a proof of our amity, and desired them to proceed to their king, and to inform him that if he would return to us the horses and guns which he had taken from our people,⁹⁶⁶ we should be willing to enter into negotiations for peace. I sent this message to him twice, but received no answer.⁹⁶⁷ In the meantime our patrols went out in all directions, and on Saturday, the 15th December, the Zulu army was discovered, posted on a very difficult mountain.

On receiving this information, I immediately proceeded there with two hundred men, but finding it unadvisable to attempt anything with so small a force, and in such a place, I returned to the camp. The next day being Sunday, we intended to remain quiet; but as soon as day broke upon us we discovered that our camp was surrounded by, as we thought, the whole of the Zulu forces. The engagement instantly commenced on both sides.

Pretorius downplays his proactive intentions and presents the Boers as would-be peacemakers. In contrast, his secretary Bantjes is more direct in his ‘Journal of the expedition’. According to him, Pretorius had made it clear that if Dingane would not opt for peace but ‘were otherwise inclined, that we were prepared to wage war with him, even for ten years running’.⁹⁶⁸ Bantjes affirms that on 7 December it had been ‘resolved ... to march towards Dingaan’s residence without any further delay’.⁹⁶⁹ His account of Cilliers’ Vow made on 9 December at a divine service in Pretorius’ tent underlines the Boers’ paramount concern, to ensure that the prayed-for victory over Dingane’s Zulu, originally planned for uMgungundlovu, was never forgotten:

⁹⁶¹ See the discussion by Liebenberg 1977, 23–26.

⁹⁶² Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 439 (Dutch text: Breytenbach c. 1958, 274).

⁹⁶³ Preller, *Pretorius* 1937, 40.

⁹⁶⁴ Preller, *Retief* 1917, 253. Liebenberg (1977, 23–26) discusses the varying wagon numbers proposed, pointing out that it is unclear where Preller’s tally of sixty-four came from. He favours Bantjes’ count of fifty-seven, since he was on the spot, but notes that Hattingh, who was also there, spoke of ‘about sixty wagons’ (omtrent 60 wagens).

⁹⁶⁵ Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 453. As discussed in *Treaty*, a longer version of the letter with the same date was published in *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 16.2.1839.

⁹⁶⁶ In Bantjes’ similar account, he writes ‘from our butchered brethren’ (Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 447).

⁹⁶⁷ The Volksraad, however, stated in the letter of 9.1.1839 sent to Major Charters: ‘You have said that you have come here with the intention of preventing us from proceeding against the Zoolas – the Government being afraid of the destruction of that portion of Africa. However bloodthirsty we may be considered to be, yet we on three [sic] different occasions sent messengers to Dingaan by Zoolas taken by us, before we commenced our attack, stating that if he gave up the plundered property of [p.95] the ruined among us, we would desist from further proceeding against him and would conclude peace with him’ (NA Kew CO48/200/v2 pp.94–95).

⁹⁶⁸ Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 447.

⁹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 444 (Dutch text: Breytenbach c. 1958, 277).

... should the Lord be pleased to grant us the victory, ... we would note the day of the victory in a book, to make it known even to our latest posterity ...⁹⁷⁰

The further movement of the Boer commando is thoroughly documented on Liebenberg's 1977 map (fig. 21.8).⁹⁷¹ On 13 December, when the Boers were advancing 'along a river, which runs eastwards', a patrol 'returned, making report that they had met a great number of Kafirs in a certain place on a mountain'.⁹⁷² Two days later, on Saturday 15 December, after having killed some thirty Zulu, the commando 'went on further to a spruit, where we encamped, and where instantly reports arrived' from several patrols that they saw many Zulu, 'who were in a very dangerous and inaccessible place'.⁹⁷³ Bantjes continues:

Having well secured the laager,⁹⁷⁴ the chief commandant repaired to said place with part of his men, having also received reports of the Commandant De Lange that it was the commando of the Kafirs which was approaching.

The chief commandant, having arrived at that place, thought it advisable (as it was about evening, and several men were out on patrol in different directions, so that he had too few with him to make an attack on so inaccessible a place; the more so as the Sabbath was at hand) to postpone the attack till the next Monday, even if they were to approach nearer, in order not to profane the Sabbath.⁹⁷⁵

Unlike later historical accounts,⁹⁷⁶ the contemporary reports about this all-important battle are rather sparse. They allow us to reconstruct that the Boer commando arrived on 15 December 1838 at the west bank of the Ncome (Cattle) River, situated some fifty miles north-west of Dingane's capital uMgungundlovu. This river, to be called Blood River,⁹⁷⁷ 'was entered, from the south-west of the position, by a donga, some fourteen feet wide by fourteen feet deep ...'⁹⁷⁸ Thus sheltered on two sides, the Boers secured a strong defence position and organised their fortified laager accordingly, probably in a horseshoe shape to follow the terrain rather than the more customary circle, with at least two gates, intended both for firing their cannons and undertaking a sudden charge.⁹⁷⁹ But

⁹⁷⁰ Ibid., 445 (Dutch text: Breytenbach c. 1958, 277).

⁹⁷¹ Liebenberg 1977, 24–25 (reproduced in Duvenage, *Gelofte* 1988, 150).

⁹⁷² Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 447.

⁹⁷³ Ibid., 447–448 (Dutch text: Breytenbach c. 1958, 279).

⁹⁷⁴ While Bird (*Annals* 1, 1888, 448) translates the Dutch 'Lager' with 'camp', 'laager' is more apt.

⁹⁷⁵ Ibid., 448 (Dutch text: Breytenbach c. 1958, 279).

⁹⁷⁶ See, for example, Nathan 1937, 256–260; Thom 1949, 108–126; Ransford 1972, 150–156; Liebenberg 1977, 34–40; Laband 1995, 98–105; Malefane 1998, 25–29 ('The Military Significance of the Battle of Blood River', by John Laband); Grobler 2010.

⁹⁷⁷ An early Dutch reference is provided by Willem Jurgen Pretorius, in or shortly after 1841: 'A battle was fought at Blood River on Sunday, 16th December, 1838' (Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 234). In another early report from Adulphe Delegorgue (*Travels* 1, 1990, 109) on 29 January 1840, we read: 'This bloody affair took place on 16 September [sic] 1838, and as a result the little river which runs near there has been called Bloed Rivier, the river of blood.' For the site, see Oberholster 1972, 278–281 no. 57; Raper, Möller and Du Plessis (2014, 38) who, however, argue that the Zulu name for *Bloedrivier* – *Umzinyathi* (blood water) – is an adaptation of a Bushman name which predates the Dutch denomination.

⁹⁷⁸ Nathan (1937, 255, quote), based on the 'Journal of the late Charl Celliers [Sarel Cilliers]', see Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 245; Hofstede 1876, 59.

⁹⁷⁹ For the laager, see Liebenberg 1977, 34–37; Duvenage 1988, 153–158. For the (numbers of) Boer cannons in Natal (but not specifically at Blood River), see *Zuid-afrikaansche kronyk* 1838, 476, citing a letter from the Boers in Port Natal (published in the *Graham's Town Journal*, 4 October 1838): 'We arrived here on 12 July ... We possess seven cannons; two eight-, two four-, and three two-pounder guns, and our troops are so well practised to operate them that they hit with one slug a target at 2,000 to 2,500 feet as well as if they shoot with a gun at 50 to 100 feet' (Wy zyn allhier op den 12 July aangekomen ... Wy zyn in bezit van 7 stukken geschut; twee acht, twee vier, en drie tweeponders, en onze manschappen zyn zoo wel geoefend, om met dezelve om te gaan, dat zy met eenen kogel op 2,000 à 2,500 schreden het wit [sic] even goed treffen, als of zy met een geweer op 50 of 100 schreden schoten). This evidence caused Otto (1974, 34) to conclude that 'it is an almost impossible task to determine the actual number of cannons at the Battle of

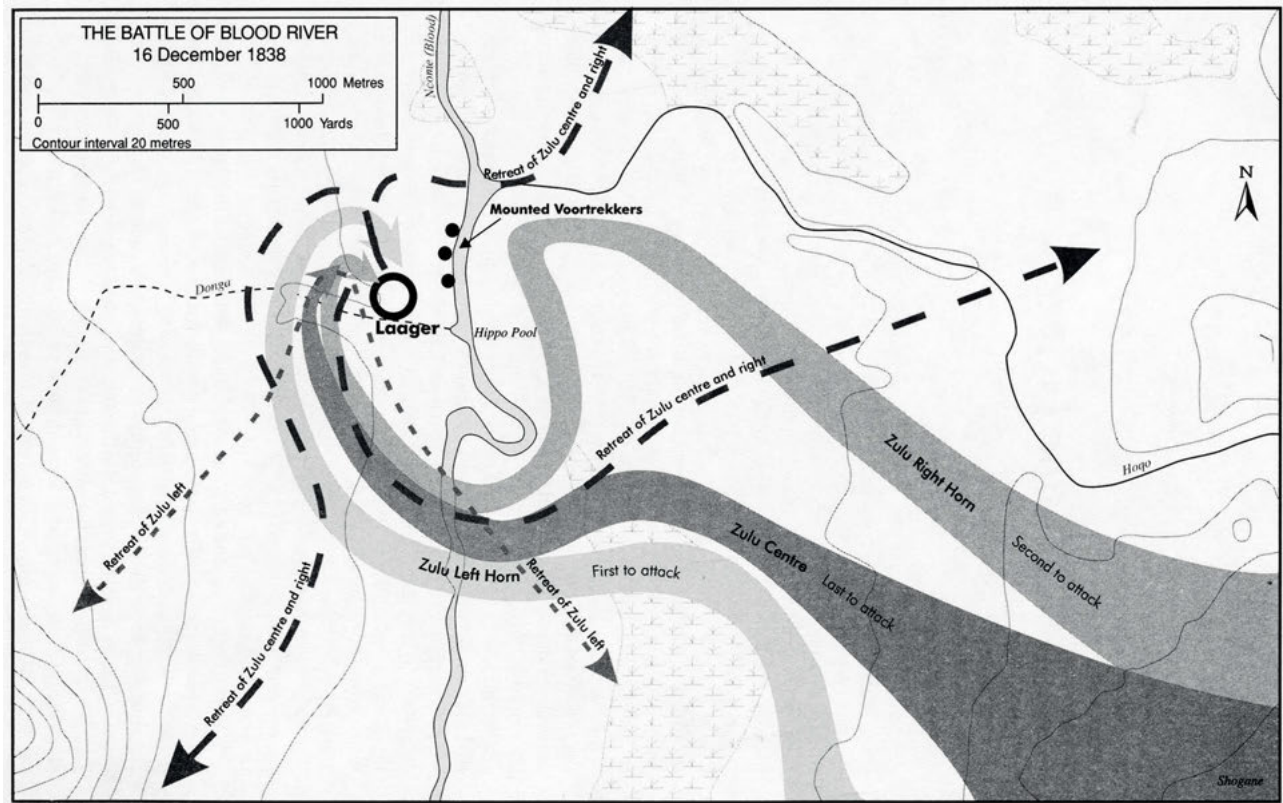


Figure 21.9: Battle of Blood River. John Laband's reconstruction of Boer laager and Zulu attack (courtesy of Laband 1995, 90)

nothing in the eyewitness reports of Bantjes and Pretorius indicates that the Boers had set up their laager especially to draw the Zulu attack. And why Dingane had decided to attack the Boers at the Ncome River 'remains an unsolved puzzle'.⁹⁸⁰ Ransford comments, from a western point of view, that as 'an example of martial courage the Zulu attack ... could not have been excelled, but as an example of the employment of military tactics it was deplorable and suicidal'.⁹⁸¹

The Zulu began their attack at dawn on 16 December, without their king Dingane, who never led or accompanied his troops into battle (fig. 21.9).⁹⁸² Bantjes continues:

[On Saturday, 15 December] The chief commandant ordered the barriers and gates to be properly secured, and that all men should be up about two hours before daylight. Everything was complied with. At the appointed time all men were roused, and we held ourselves in readiness. Sunday, the 16th, was a day as if ordained for us. The sky was open. The weather clear and bright. Scarcely was the dawn of day perceptible, when the guards, who were still on their posts and could scarcely see, perceived that the Zulus were approaching. Now the patrols were altogether in the camp, having been called in the day previous by alarm signals of the cannons.⁹⁸³ The enemy then approached at full speed, and in a moment they had surrounded the camp on all sides. In the meantime the day began to dawn, so that they might be seen approaching, while their advanced lines had already been repulsed by the firing from the camp. Their approach, although frightful on account of the

Blood River...' (dit wil dus voorkom asof dit 'n bykans onmoontlike taak sal wees om die werklike getal kanonne by die Slag van Bloedrivier te bepaal).

⁹⁸⁰ Etherington 2001, 280.

⁹⁸¹ Ransford 1972, 152.

⁹⁸² Rycroft and Ngcobo 1988, 4.

⁹⁸³ The plural indicates that the Boers had at least two cannons.

great number, yet presented a beautiful appearance.⁹⁸⁴ They approach in regiments, each captain with his men following him, in the same way the patrols had seen them coming up the day previous, until they had all surrounded us. I could not count them, but it is said that a Kafir prisoner had given the number of thirty-six regiments, which regiments may be calculated at from nine to ten thousand men [in toto]. The battle now commenced, and the cannons were discharged from every gate of the camp. The battle then became violent, even the firing from the muskets from our side as well as from theirs. After this had been kept up for full two hours by the watch, the chief commandant, as the enemy was continually bestorming the camp, and he was afraid that we should get short of ammunition, ordered that all the gates of the camp should be opened, and the fighting with the Kafirs take place on horseback. This was done, and to our regret, they took to flight so hastily that we were obliged to hunt after them. Few remained in the camp, and the chief commandant in person, after having given the necessary directions, also followed them ... [Wounded by a Zulu, Pretorius] returned to the camp to have the wound dressed, which was done ... Thus the Zulu commando was pursued for more than three hours, when we returned, as we were all short of ammunition ... The next day we counted the number of the slain; those who had been killed about or near the camp, of which some have not been counted, with those who had been overtaken and killed, we found amounted to (the lowest certain number) more than 3,000, besides the wounded.⁹⁸⁵

In his short letter of 22 December about the Battle of Blood River Pretorius has this to say about the charge outside the laager and his wound:

Seeing that it was necessary to display the most desperate determination, I caused the gates of our enclosed camp to be simultaneously thrown open, from which some mounted men were to charge the enemy, at the same time keeping up a heavy fire upon them. The Zulus stood our assault firmly for some time, but at last, finding their number rapidly decreasing, they fled, scattering themselves in all directions. They were pursued on horseback by as many of our men as could be spared from the camp. Having made some necessary arrangements, I started off myself, and shortly overtook a Zulu warrior. At the distance of about fifteen yards I made signs of peace to him, and called to him to surrender, intending to send him with a message to his king; but as he refused to submit, and threatened me, I at last fired, but missed. My horse being restive, I dismounted, and attempted to fire a second time, but the lock of my gun got out of order. At this instant the Zulu made a furious charge upon me, stabbing at me with his assegai [sic], which I parried repeatedly with my gun. At last he closed in with me, and attempted to stab me through the breast. I averted this by grasping at the weapon with my left hand, but in doing so received it through the hand. Before he could extricate it, I seized him and threw him to the ground, but as the assegai remained pierced through my hand, which was under him as I lay upon him, I had but one hand with which to hold him and use my dagger, whilst he attempted to strangle me. At this crisis one of my men came to my assistance, pulled the assegai out of my hand, and stabbed the Zulu on the spot ... it pleased the Almighty to give us this victory without the loss of a single life on our part, only three of us being wounded, viz., myself, Gerrit Raath, and Philip Fourie.⁹⁸⁶

⁹⁸⁴ Delegorgue (*Travels* 1, 1990, 105–106, quotes p.106) praises the ‘beauty, grace and elegance’ of the Zulu when performing the war dance. They ‘reveal and conceal the body as they move; in rapid action, their floating tails, their widowbird plumes, stream out behind them, suggesting that the individual who wears them is imbued with the spirit of long-maned horses and the courage of lions. We [Europeans] have nothing of this sort’.

⁹⁸⁵ Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 448–450. For a longer version of the same incident written by Pretorius in Dutch, see Breytenbach c. 1958, 279–280 (Bylaag 11, 1838).

⁹⁸⁶ Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 454. For a longer version in Dutch, see *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 16.2.1839 (reproduced in Breytenbach c. 1958, 271–272, Bylaag 10, 1838). Pretorius’ preoccupation with himself is also revealed in an entry in the diary (23.1.1840) of Adulphe Delegorgue (*Travels* 1, 1990, 107–108), when the Boer asked the Frenchman if he would “‘have the goodness to make my portrait ... For you will understand that the dangerous life which I lead may not last very long. I have already been thrown to the ground by a Cafre from whom I had this wound on my hand, and I owe my life to the quick action of my companions, who killed him just as he was about to kill me. Each day may be my last, and once I am dead, the memory of my features will rapidly fade in the minds of my dear ones and of my numerous friends’ ... [Pretorius] pursued the conversation in an attempt to impress upon me the urgency of the matter, particularly as statues and busts of all Napoleon’s generals, and even of Napoleon himself, were to be seen everywhere’.

Other eyewitness accounts of the battle, recollected and published later, provide further details, but no substantial new evidence.⁹⁸⁷ One of the few Zulu reports is from Ngidi kaMcikaziswa, who took part in the battle. According to James Stuart, a white magistrate who recorded Zulu oral history, the Zulu eyewitness told him in 1904:

We Zulus die lying facing the enemy – all of us – but at the Ncome we *turned our backs*. This was caused by the Boers and their guns.⁹⁸⁸

Bantjes' seemingly straightforward descriptive report is permeated by the mindset of Boer supremacy: the 'beautiful appearance' of the Zulu army, calculated 'at from nine to ten thousand men', is recounted in order to underscore the achievement of the Boers, who utterly destroyed it with their fearsome firepower, which within a single day killed more than 3 000 Zulu.⁹⁸⁹ The Boers' 'regret' that the Zulu took flight and had to be hunted implies disappointment that even greater numbers of them could not be killed by their riflemen. Both Bantjes and Pretorius expound at length how the general set out on his own and was wounded during his heroic pursuit of a Zulu – partly because 'his shooting horses [sic] had been taken by others, and he himself was obliged to mount a wild horse' which was frightened by gunfire and disrupted Pretorius' first shot. But despite his wounded hand, to continue in Bantjes' words, 'he now falls upon the Kafir, lays hold of him, and throws him on the ground, and holds him fast, though he struggled terribly until P. Roedelof came to his assistance'.⁹⁹⁰

Both men constantly conjure up in their public despatches, published in hindsight, the passionate religious cause of the Voortrekkers during their preparations for a decisive victory over the Zulu, which the Boers repeatedly prayed for, and thereafter. Bantjes recounts how 'prayers and thanksgivings were offered to God' immediately after the battle.⁹⁹¹ For Leonard Thompson, one

... possibility is that Andries Pretorius, the commanding officer, and Jan Bantjes, his secretary, exaggerated the religious behaviour of the commando, to counteract evangelical domestic pressures on the British Government to annex Natal and reestablish control over its emigrant subjects.⁹⁹²

It is interesting to note that, on 15 December, when the Boers were making arrangements for an attack, Bantjes refers twice to the impending Sabbath which should not be desecrated by fighting, but then, on the next day, when the Zulu started the attack, states, in the letter already quoted, almost the reverse: 'Sunday, the 16th, was a day as if ordained for us.'

Considered against this historical framework, the form of the relief makes obvious that the intention for this scene was not to portray the fight anecdotally, but to develop an enduring icon of the battle which was destined to become legend. In this, Peter Kirchhoff, the sculptor of the scene, was more successful than Coetzer: Hennie Potgieter reports that Kirchhoff defined his solution as representing 'orderliness against barbarism'.⁹⁹³ Although the scene focuses on a particular moment in the Battle of Blood River, when the trekkers charged the Zulu outside their laager to seal the final victory, the representation bears little resemblance to the two eyewitness reports. Instead of Boers charging from all the open gates between the wagons, as Pretorius described it, we find

⁹⁸⁷ Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 234–235 (Narrative of Willem Jurgen Pretorius, 1834–1839; published in or shortly after 1841), 245–247 (Journal of the late Charl Celliers, 1871; Dutch text in Hofstede 1876, 58–60), 374–375 (Narrative from Daniel Pieter Bezuidenhout, published in the *Orange Free State Monthly Magazine*, December 1879); Delegogue, *Travels* 1, 1990, 109–110; *Travels* 2, 1997, 70–72.

⁹⁸⁸ *James Stuart Archive* 5, 2001, 77.

⁹⁸⁹ Beyond measure but in line with contemporary trends to transform the Battle of Blood River into an event of mythic dimensions are the numbers given by Hofstede (1876, 47–48), 36 000 ferocious barbarians armed with guns and spears against 464 men ('36,000 woeste barbaren, met geweren en assegaaien gewapend, tegen 464 man').

⁹⁹⁰ Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 449.

⁹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹² Thompson 1985, 156.

⁹⁹³ Potgieter, 1987, 33: 'Dit is ordelikheid teen barbarisme.'



Figure 21.10: Collapsing Zulu in front of Pretorius in *Blood River*. Marble, detail of fig. 21.1 (photo Russell Scott)

a cavalcade of horses galloping in formation, six abreast, mounted by upright horsemen, calmly in control of the situation. And instead of Pretorius' individual pursuit on a 'wild horse' and his subsequent wounding, he rides into combat at the head of his cavalry, with impeccable bearing and raised sabre, like some seasoned military leader in a grand historical painting or a theatrical tableau. Immediate success is granted: the Zulu in the foreground do not attack him, but enact their foregone defeat as they fall at his feet in total obeisance (fig. 21.10). In the *Official Guide*, however, Moerdyk insists on the accuracy of the scene:

Some doubt has been expressed as to whether the Boers stormed in serried ranks during battle but this criticism is unfounded. Even more than a century ago serried attack was part of the military tradition in South Africa and it was regarded as a disgrace to leave the ranks. The recognized Boer technique here symbolises the war between civilization and barbarism.⁹⁹⁴

In 1988 Nico Coetzee remarked laconically that

The panel has only the vaguest probable historical basis: it is not a representation, it is a radical simplified *interpretation*. The message is that thus did the forces of order, the white man on his horse, overcome the dark forces of chaos! It is propaganda.⁹⁹⁵

Coert Steynberg's composition of the battle in granite at the Blood River Monument (1938–47),⁹⁹⁶ paired with his relief depicting the Vow, discussed in *The Vow*, also focused on the charge from the

⁹⁹⁴ *Official Guide* 1955, 51.

⁹⁹⁵ Coetzee, 1988, 184–185: 'Dié panel het slegs die vaagste moontlike historiese basis: dit is nie 'n voorstelling nie, maar 'n radikale, vereenvoudigde *interpretasie*. Só, is die boodskap, het die magte van ordelikheid, die wit man op die perd, die donker magte van chaos verslaan! Dit is propaganda.'

⁹⁹⁶ There is an intriguing comment in the SVK minutes (15.1.1937: 17) that a contribution would be offered to the Blood River committee for a replica of the Blood River panel: one wonders whether there was some thought of utilising this relief, or a version of it, for the Monument.



Figure 21.11: Coert Steynberg. Blood River Monument. Completed 1939/40, inaugurated 1947. Granite, c. 5.8 × 7.1 m (Blood River Heritage Site; photo the authors)

laager but was very different in composition (fig. 21.11).⁹⁹⁷ In the semi-circular relief Pretorius and two other Boers are galloping to opposite sides and they overwhelm four Zulu who are forced to the ground; the depiction is packed with the figures that fill the surface (fig. 21.12). Apart from the unusual lunette form which defines the contours of the composition, the crowded image of a chief commander on horseback with heaps of beaten barbarians below him recalls Roman sarcophagi, such as the Ludovisi sarcophagus in Rome carved around the mid-third century AD (fig. 21.13).⁹⁹⁸

Finally, two further issues need to be mentioned here briefly as they have in their own right contributed to making the Battle of Blood River a legend. A story had been developed around the lanterns painstakingly depicted in the scene. Hennie Potgieter recounts:

Lanterns on long whips were tied to the wagons to light the laager during the night. These lanterns, high in the air that misty night, were the Voortrekkers' salvation. Gunpowder would become wet in the misty weather, and would have left the trekkers defenceless. God's hand is manifest in that the Zulus did not attack that night ... Zulu warriors later said that they were afraid to attack during the night because the faint lights high in the air looked like ghosts to them.⁹⁹⁹

⁹⁹⁷ Steynberg 1982, 31–39; Hagg 1989, 15–17.

⁹⁹⁸ Zanker, Ewald and Slater 2012, 228 fig. 207.

⁹⁹⁹ Potgieter 1987, 33: 'Lanterns aan lang sweepstokke is aan die waens vasgemaak om die laer deur di nag te verlig.'



Figure 21.12: Coert Steynberg. Relief with Battle of Blood River, Blood River Monument. Granite, detail of fig. 21.11 (photo the authors)



Figure 21.13: Roman sarcophagus Ludovisi, Romans defeat barbarians. c. AD 250. Marble, 153 × 273 cm (Rome, Palazzo Altemps 8574; photo https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Grande_Ludovisi_sarcophagus?uselang=de#/media/File:Grande_Ludovisi_sarcophagus.jpg)

Whether this night was indeed misty and whether the Boers were fortuitously rescued from a Zulu attack by the light from their lanterns cannot be verified. But, expressed as an indication of ‘God’s hand’ preventing a Zulu assault against the Voortrekkers at night, it further magnifies the religious dimension of the event, which may explain why the Histories Komitee insisted on the inclusion of the lanterns.

The second issue, already mentioned above, is that the actual numbers of the ox wagons of the Boer laager at Blood River are at odds in different accounts: while Bantjes accounted for fifty-seven wagons, Jansen wrote for the celebration of the centenary of the Battle of Blood River that Pretorius ‘took the field against the Zulus with some 470 men and 64 wagons’.¹⁰⁰⁰ The number of ox wagons making up the wall encircling the Voortrekker Monument in reference to the Blood River laager was evidently to be based on Bantjes’ count. On 27 September 1948 the Dagbestuur of the SVK accepted the quote of £5 600 by the Italian firm Lupini Brothers to cast fifty-six wagons (‘56 waens’) in relief,¹⁰⁰¹ a slight reduction, possibly to create an even number. And this is the number that Moerdyk gives in the booklet for the opening of the Monument,¹⁰⁰² and again in the first edition of the *Official Guide* in both the Afrikaans and English versions:

A laager of fifty-six wagons, the same number as used at Blood River, in this case stands for defence against any and everything wishing to clash with the ideals of the Voortrekkers so that it may be kept away from this national shrine of the Afrikaner.¹⁰⁰³

The Afrikaans version claims that the laager serves as a symbol that will protect Voortrekker beliefs and ideals (opvattinge en ideale), while the English talks of a defence of ideals alone; the former speaks of the Monument as this altar of Afrikanerdom (hierdie altaar van Afrikanerdom), as opposed to a national shrine of the Afrikaner in the latter – they are subtle differences but point to a stronger assertion of Afrikaner nationalism in the Afrikaans text. However, both offer the count of fifty-six wagons, corresponding to the tender from Lupini.

What eventuated to cause that to change to sixty-four wagons is inexplicable. It surely cannot have been a mismeasurement which required the insertion of extra casts of the wagons to complete the wall. The actual number of sixty-four wagons corresponds to the accounts in Preller’s writing, whose influence no doubt continued to assert itself although he had died in 1943. In his biography of Andries Pretorius he wrote:

On two sides the laager was protected by natural means with the hippo pool and the donga, which made it possible to make the interior so much larger with the 64 available wagons for the trek animals and the horses.¹⁰⁰⁴

Later editions of the *Official Guide* record sixty-four wagons without reference to or explanation of the earlier number. As a heritage postscript we note that this was the number deployed to provide an ‘authentic’ laager monument at Blood River that replaced Steynberg’s memorial, completed in 1939/40 and inaugurated in 1947. In 1971 the granite wagon was moved to its current position

Hierdie lanterns, daar hoog in die lug daardie mistige nag, was dan ook die Voortrekkers se redding. Kruit sou deur die mistige weer natgeword het en die Trekkers weerloos laat. Dus is God se hand duidelik dat die Zoeloes nie die nag aangevul [misprint of ‘aangeval’?] het nie ... Zoeloekrygers het later gesê dat hulle bang was om gedurende die nag aan te val aagesien die dowwe ligkolle hoog in die lug vir hulle spookagtig gelyk het.’ See also Preller, *Voortrekker-mense* 4, 1925, 49 (recollection of Philippus Jeremias Coetzer); Grobler 2010, 371.

1000 Jansen 1939, 5. Grobler (2010, 367) also states somewhat oddly that ‘Pretorius se kommando is vergesel van sowat 64 waens ...’ (Pretorius’ commando was attended by about 64 wagons).

1001 Dagbestuur 27.9.1948: 10.

1002 *Official Programme* 1949, 45.

1003 *Official Guide* 1955, 39.

1004 Preller, *Pretorius* 1937, 40: ‘Aan twee kante was die laër dus op natuurlike wyse beskerm deur die seekoeigat en die donga, wat ’t moontlik gemaak ’t om die binneruimte met die 64 beskikbare waens soveel groter te trek, vir die trekvee en die pèrde.’

in front of the museum when heritage officials began to reconstruct the Boer laager, preferring a replica of the defensive strategy of the battle to Steynberg's more symbolic monument. In this case the laager was conceived as an elongated semi-circle around its (construed) centre, the open side closed with a straight line of wagons (fig. 21.14). It was created with sixty-four full-size historical ox wagons, careful copies of the Johanna van der Merwe wagon, cast in bronzed iron, each weighing some eight tons (fig. 21.15).¹⁰⁰⁵ The drive for 'authenticity' clearly continued well beyond the centenary celebrations.

An information sheet at the Afrikaans Blood River Heritage Site with the caption 'Bronze Ox-wagon (1996)' explains:

An attempt was made to reconstruct the Blood River battlefield (KwaZulu Natal) as accurately as possible towards the end of the 1960s. Approximately R800 000 was raised amongst Afrikaners for the project and it was decided to erect an additional monument at the site to represent the wagon laager of Andries Pretorius (1838). Battlefields of South Africa Limited, a non-profit company under the chairmanship of Mr Marius Jooste, undertook the reconstruction of the laager. A group of historians determined the shape and approximate position of the original laager, the number and type of wagons as well as the number, type and position of cannons. The design by Kobus Esterhuizen was selected. It consisted of 64 bronzed, cast iron wagons placed in a semi-circle around the original stone cairn, which was erected in the centre of the original laager. Each wagon ... was modelled from the example of the 'Johanna van der Merwe' Centenary wagon¹⁰⁰⁶ that participated in the Symbolic Ox-wagon Trek of 1938.

Although this physical (and immensely expensive) reconstruction of the laager may seem both impressive and instructive, it is in almost every aspect based on speculation, because we have no hard evidence of the precise number, location or arrangement of the wagons or the number of cannons on site. While this newer monument deploys sixty-four wagons, it is notable that it is arranged in a semi-circular laager that takes little account of the position of the sloop and the river. If Preller was the source, it accepts the number of wagons he noted in the quotation above, but ignores the arrangement he described. Ultimately, this Blood River memorial demonstrates not so much an accurate historical reconstruction as an ongoing obsession with the symbolism of that site for Afrikanerdom. Only the need to perpetuate this ideal can explain the need to replace Steynberg's large wagon monument (see *The Vow*) with another, to renew Afrikaner commitment to the Voortrekkers' victory over the Zulu.

Complementing it, yet in strong contrast, is a second site on the opposite side of the river, the Ncome-Blood River Heritage Site and Museum Complex (fig. 21.16). Laid out in the Zulu attack 'horn-formation' and embellished with painted replicas of shields of cattle hide, it presents the Zulu angle on the battle. When it was inaugurated in 1998 by the then Minister of Home Affairs, Mangosuthu Buthelezi, on the momentous date of 16 December, he presented it in reconciliatory mode. He

apologised to the Afrikaners for the murder of Retief and his men and ... appealed for 'a new covenant which embraces all the people of goodwill who together in peace join efforts to build a new country and to defeat the evils of poverty and social injustice.'¹⁰⁰⁷

Estelle Maré reports a rather unexpected act of 'reconciliation' on that occasion, namely that General Constand Viljoen, the then leader of the right-wing Afrikaner 'Vryheidsfront' (Freedom

¹⁰⁰⁵ There has been considerable contention about the exact layout of the Blood River laager, but it is generally agreed that its corner position next to the Ncome River and a deep, dry riverbed excluded the more customary simple circular form, as is discussed by Van der Merwe 1986, 52–55.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Discussed in Part I, Chapter 1 ('The centenary').

¹⁰⁰⁷ Maré 2009, 132.



Figure 21.14: Aerial view of commemorative laager at Blood River, with the Ncome-Blood River Heritage Site in the background. 1971 (photo courtesy of Freddy Reck, www.Reckfilm.de)



Figure 21.15: One of sixty-four full-size Voortrekker wagons replicated for commemorative laager at Blood River. 1971. Bronzed cast iron (photo the authors)



Figure 21.16: Aerial view of new museum complex at the Ncome-Blood River Heritage Site, inaugurated 1998 (photo courtesy of uMsunduzi and Ncome Museums)

Front), had ‘left the Blood River festivities and walked the kilometre to the opposite side of the river to participate with the Zulu in the inaugural ceremony’.¹⁰⁰⁸

While the Zulu horn-formation is in its way a military signifier of the same ilk as the Boer laager-formation,¹⁰⁰⁹ together the monuments form a unique memorial to the historical encounter of two adversaries. The coexistence of an Afrikaner and a Zulu monument with two different narratives at the very site of the Battle of Blood River is exceptional in the history of memorials, and acts as a powerful symbol of mutual acknowledgement between old adversaries. Now, intended to demonstrate anew the reconciliation of past enemies, there is a pedestrian bridge linking them across the river, in this case opened by then president Jacob Zuma, again on the Day of Reconciliation, 16 December 2014 – one hundred and seventy-six years after the Battle of Blood River.¹⁰¹⁰

1008 Ibid.

1009 Malefane 1998; Ehlers 2005; Girshick 2004; *Ncome/Blood River: Another point of view* 2008; Marschall 2010, 295–300.

1010 <http://www.dac.gov.za/content/president-jacob-zuma-unveil-%E2%80%99Reconciliation%E2%80%9D-bridge>.

22 Building the *Church of the Vow* (1840–43)



A3



B2



C2



D

22 Church of the Vow

West wall (panel 26/31)

h. 2.3 × 2.19 m

Restored fractures on the vertical and horizontal edges

Sculptor of the clay maquette: Peter Kirchoff

STAGES OF PRODUCTION

- A1 W.H. Coetzer, pencil drawing, retained only in A2 (April–June 1937)
- A2 Reproduction of A1 (June 1937)
- A3 W.H. Coetzer, revised pencil drawing A1, h. 13.4 × 15.4 cm (after September 1937)
Annotations: ‘nog nie klaar’ (not yet finished) / ‘Bou van Geloofte Kerkie’ (Building of the Church of the Vow)
- B1 One-third-scale clay maquette, not extant but replicated in B2 (1942–43)
- B2 One-third-scale plaster maquette, h. 77.2 × w. 76.2 × d. 8 cm (1942–43)
- C1 Full-scale wooden armature, not extant (1943–46)
- C2 Full-scale clay relief, not extant but photographed; replicated in C3 (1943–46)
- C3 Full-scale plaster relief (1943–46), not extant but illustrated in undated newspaper, UP Art Archives, Moerdyk files (shortly after 4 June 1948); copied in D (1948–49)
- D Marble as installed in the Monument (1949)

EARLY RECORDS

SVK minutes (4.9.1937) — item 4r (see below, ‘Developing the design’)

Voorstelle (5.12.1934?) — item 19 ‘Pietermaritzburg. Gelooftekerkie. Volksraadsitting, of die aanvang van boerdery: watervore, manne op die land besig met saai ens.’ (Pietermaritzburg. Church of the Vow. A sitting of the volksraad, or the beginning of farming: canals, men busy on the land with sowing, etc.)

Panele (1934–36) — item 14 ‘Boere bring permanente beskawing’ (Boers bring permanent civilisation), b. ‘stigting v. ’n dorp b.v. P.M.Burg of Pot’stroom’ (the establishment of a town, for example, Pietermaritzburg or Potchefstroom)

Wenke (c. Dec. 1934–36) — item II. Dr. L. Steenkamp, mnre. A.J. du Plessis en M. Basson, ‘A. MAATSKAPLIK’ (Social), 1. ‘Godsdienstig’ (Religious), d. ‘Volvoering van die Geloofte; inwyding van die eerste kerkgebou’ (Fulfilment of the Vow; dedication of the first church building)

Moerdyk Layout (5.10.1936–15.1.1937) — scene 19 on panel 25/31 ‘Kerk en P.M.B’ (Church and Pietermaritzburg)

Jansen Memorandum (19.1.1937) — item 7.19 ‘Erection of “Gelooftekerk” and founding of Pietermaritzburg’

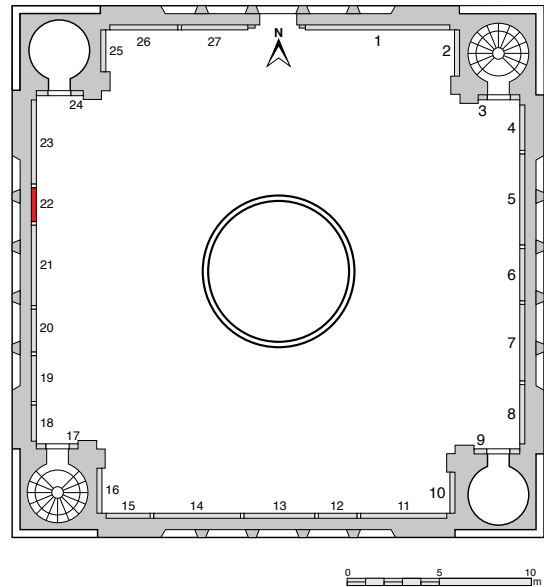




Figure 22.1: D. Church of the Vow. 1949. Marble, 2.3 × 2.19 m (courtesy of VTM; photo Russell Scott)

Description

The scene depicts a building site (fig. 22.1). The all-encompassing backdrop is the façade of an almost complete edifice, based on what since 1912 was the Voortrekker Museum, and generally believed to have formerly been the Church of the Vow. Two Voortrekkers stand facing each other, one on either side of the foreground, while a third kneels between them. The dominant figure is the older clean-shaven Boer on the left. The model was the architect of the Monument, Gerard Moerdyk, tall, upright and evidently in charge, holding a short hammer in his right hand and a large set square in his left. Unusually for the frieze, he is shown in his shirt sleeves, as are the other figures except the young man on the right, who wears a jacket. He holds a spool of leather riempie, used for measuring, to assist the bearded Boer in the middle. This man kneels to hammer a large peg into the ground with the end of the riempie attached. We can deduce that they are surveyors, laying out the new town.

Behind the group two builders are depicted, overly diminutive in scale, standing on top of rustic scaffolding made of branches. The middle figure in a brimmed hat, who seems to lack a left arm, is finishing off the plasterwork above the door of the building, while the other refines the moulded volute of the gable. The Cape Dutch gable of the concavo-convex holbol type is cut off at the top of the panel, but the lower volutes supported on horizontal mouldings are visible on either side. An oddly curtailed three-quarter view, squeezed in on the right, shows that there is a second gable at the back, with some high scaffolding, implying that it too has to be completed.



Figure 22.2: A2. W.H. Coetzer. Reproduction of first sketch for *Church of the Vow*. June 1937 (courtesy of ARCA PV94 1/75/5/1; photo the authors)



Figure 22.3: A3. W.H. Coetzer. 'Bou van Geloofte Kerkie'. After September 1937. Pencil, 13.4 × 15.4 cm. Revised first sketch (photo courtesy of Museum Africa, no. 66/2194G)



Figure 22.4: B2. Peter Kirchoff. *Church of the Vow*. 1942-43. Plaster, 77.2 × 76.2 × 8 cm. Maquette (courtesy of VTM Museum VTM 2184/1-28; photo Russell Scott)

Developing the design

The reproduction of Coetzer's initial sketch (fig. 22.2) and the final drawing (fig. 22.3) seem, as is the case with *Blood River*, to be one and the same. Five trekkers, most with rolled-up sleeves, are either busy building an edifice or, as we can infer, laying out the street grid of Pietermaritzburg. Nothing in the scene itself portends that the structure is a church. Seen in three-quarter view, the building recedes into the background. The nearer short end, its upper section cut off, is obscured by scaffolding and figures, but the long side has five rectangular windows and, beyond its thatched roof, an overlarge holbol-type gable with mouldings on the other end can be seen: the gable form corresponds to that of Pietermaritzburg's Voortrekker Museum as inaugurated in 1912 (fig. 22.21). A trekker in three-quarter back view advances from the right with a big bundle of thatching grass on his back, while another, much smaller in scale, attends to the roof, perched on a rustic ladder. On the left two Boers, both with beards and brimmed hats, are surveying the ground. The further figure holds a spool with a measuring line, while the other, the only one with a jacket, crouches down to pick up the loose end of the line that runs along a shallow trench, parallel to the long side of the church (facing Church Street). Another trekker kneels at the near end of the trench to hammer in a long surveyor's peg. Coetzer included a fair amount of everyday detail, such as the heap of sand with spade, bucket and spirit level beneath the first window of the church, and he filled in the space beyond the gable with decorative foliage, reminiscent of trees in Pierneef's paintings.

At the Historiese Komitee meeting on 4 September 1937 the following alterations were required:

The Church of the Vow. The measurement of Pietermaritzburg must be a separate activity a bit removed from the church; the form of the gable was different (consult Mr Basson,¹⁰¹¹ Pietermaritzburg); the ladder must be better made; the spirit level must be removed and replaced with a plumb line.¹⁰¹²

Coetzer's pencil drawing (fig. 22.3), again annotated as unfinished, has not responded to the committee's comments, as it still has a spirit level, a rustic ladder and the laying out of Pietermaritzburg in the foreground. When Peter Kirchoff started to work on the small plaster maquette (fig. 22.4), he made some adjustments that seem to respond to aspects of the criticisms, perhaps passed on to him by Moerdyk, but he too integrates the two scenes of surveying the town and building the church. He rearranged the composition in a way that excludes room for informal details such as the tree, ladder and tools. Now two features dominate the scene, the gabled façade of the 1912 Voortrekker Museum which fills almost the entire background, and the figure in the left foreground, upright, clean-shaven and in three-quarter view, who stands holding a long set square. In front of him are two bearded workers. The one kneeling at the tall man's feet is posed more naturally than in Coetzer's drawing, as he knocks a smaller stake into the ground with a now very small hammer. The thick measuring line attached to the stake, possibly made of leather, comes from the spool held by the second man. He has been brought to the front and leans forward to assist, part of his lower left leg and foot curiously cut off by the edge of the panel. All are in shirt sleeves to signal their role as workers.

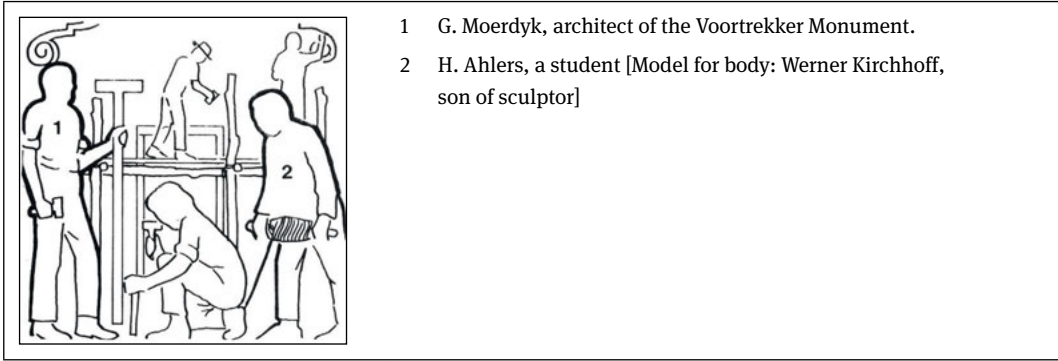
The façade in the maquette has a clearly defined plinth, a rectangular door and a holbol-type gable, again cut off at the top, and with a contour and spiral volute very like the one drawn by Coetzer, but questioned by the Historiese Komitee. Quite unlike the picturesque perspective of

¹⁰¹¹ Martin Johannes Adriaan Basson was appointed in October 1934 as new honorary secretary of Pietermaritzburg's Voortrekker Museum; he stated that the 'museum strictly adheres to the collection of relics originally belonging to the Voortrekkers or appertaining to that period insofar as the antiquities stand in some relation with the Voortrekkers' (Guest 2012, 40).

¹⁰¹² 'Die Geloftekerkie. Die opmetery van Pietermaritzburg moet 'n aparte bedrywigheid wees 'n ietsie verwyder van die kerkie; die vorm van die gewel was anders (raadpleeg mnr. Basson, Pietermaritzburg); die leer moet beter gemaak wees; die waterpas moet uitgehaal en deur 'n loodlyn vervang word' (Historiese Komitee 4.9.1937: 4r).



Figure 22.5: C2. *Church of the Vow*. 1943–46. Clay. Full-scale relief (courtesy of Kirchhoff files; photo Alan Yates)



- 1 G. Moerdyk, architect of the Voortrekker Monument.
- 2 H. Ahlers, a student [Model for body: Werner Kirchhoff, son of sculptor]

Figure 22.6: Models for portraits (Potgieter 1987, 34)

Coetzer's church, however, this building is more formally composed and parallel to the picture plane. An interesting addition is an austere oval shape in the gable, which, like the structure, refers to the form of the Voortrekker Museum of 1912 (fig. 22.4). Most of the façade is covered by a scaffolding of straight posts, which supports two workmen – considerably smaller in size than their three countrymen in the foreground; one with a brimmed hat smooths the plaster on the upper part of the façade, the other attends to the moulding of the right volute. The strictly frontal arrangement of the façade emphasises the planar nature of relief carving, but in the upper right corner there is a vestige of what appears to depict an extremely foreshortened lower roof line in perspective, and perhaps some further high scaffolding.

The full-scale relief (fig. 22.5) carries over the general arrangement of the maquette, but implements further modifications. In general the detail is finer, but most obvious are changes to two of the foreground figures. The Boer on the right is now young, unbearded and wearing an unbuttoned jacket, his youth perhaps the result of Kirchhoff's son posing for the figure; there is also now room for his legs. But more significantly, the dominant figure on the left can be identified as the architect of the Monument, Gerard Moerdyk, according to Hennie Potgieter's diagram of the models for this scene (fig. 22.6). Two undated photographs in the Kirchhoff files show Peter Kirchhoff modelling a clay portrait bust of Moerdyk, who stands next to his likeness (fig. 22.7). A section of the plaster cast of *Vegkop* in the background indicates that the photographs were probably taken around 1944 before the casts were installed in the Monument.¹⁰¹³ These photographs are complemented by others of the finished portrait (fig. 22.8).¹⁰¹⁴ This exceptional set of photographs allows a direct comparison between the sitter and the portraits, and between the three-dimensional head and the one modelled in relief for the Monument. While the clay portrait corresponds closely with Moerdyk in hairstyle and physiognomy, the relief representation has longer sideburns and hair brushed forward in rather artificial-looking locks, possibly intended to make the image more formal and historical (fig. 22.9). So too do details of his clothing, such as the buttoned trouser flap, which replaces the belt worn in the maquette, and a fastened rather than an open-necked shirt.

There are small changes to other figures too, such as the plasterer of the volute, who now has no beard and is placed slightly higher to work on the upper moulding of the gable, and the scaffolding posts are irregular tree branches cut to size. The edifice is similar in elevation, but it now fills the full width of the scene. The moulding on the gable is more elaborate, and the oval-shaped emblem has been omitted. There is also a clear although very compact indication of the right side

¹⁰¹³ See Part I, Chapter 3 ('The plaster casts').

¹⁰¹⁴ A plaster copy of Moerdyk's clay portrait was presented to the Voortrekker Monument by Werner Kirchhoff in 2017, and cast in bronze in 2018 for installation at the Monument, where it is now housed in the Hall of Heroes.

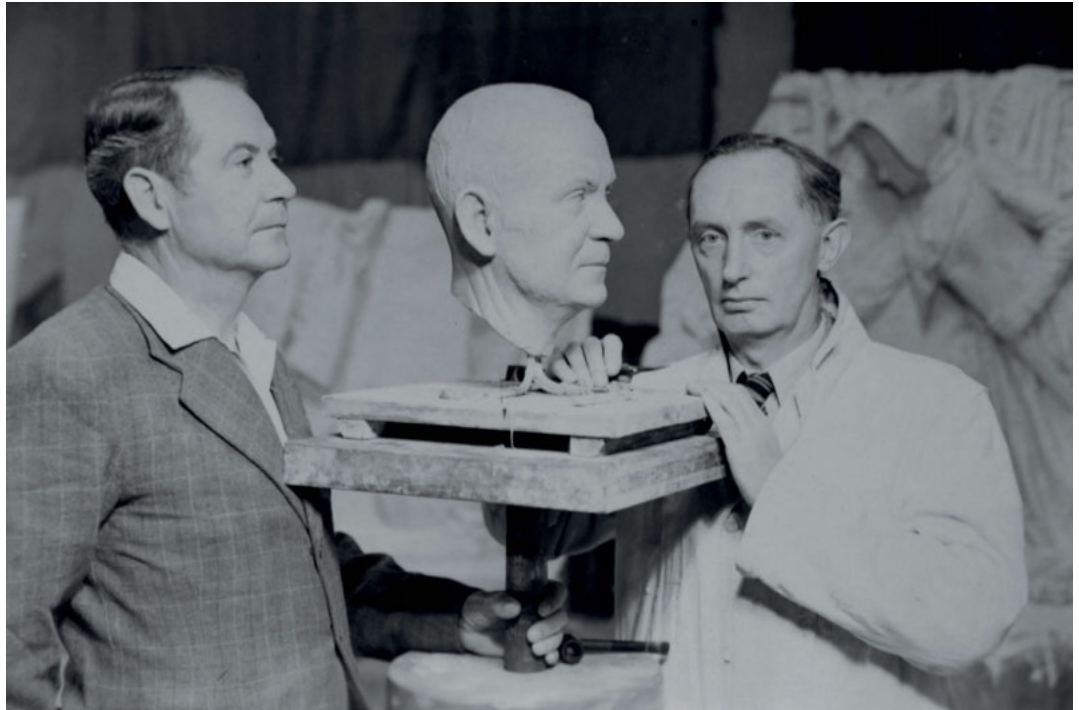


Figure 22.7: Peter Kirchhoff models portrait of Gerard Moerdyk at Harmony Hall, Pretoria. c. 1944. Clay, c. life-size (photo courtesy of Kirchhoff files)

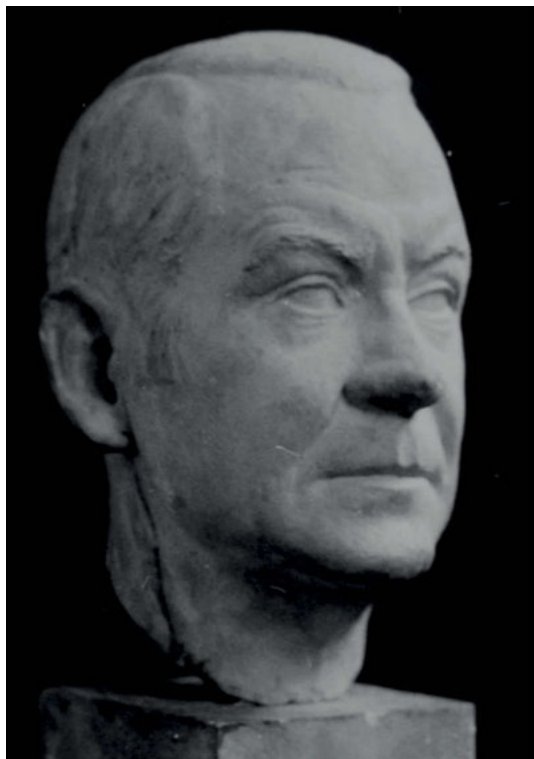


Figure 22.8: Peter Kirchhoff's portrait of Gerard Moerdyk. c. 1944. Clay, c. life-size (photo courtesy of Kirchhoff files)

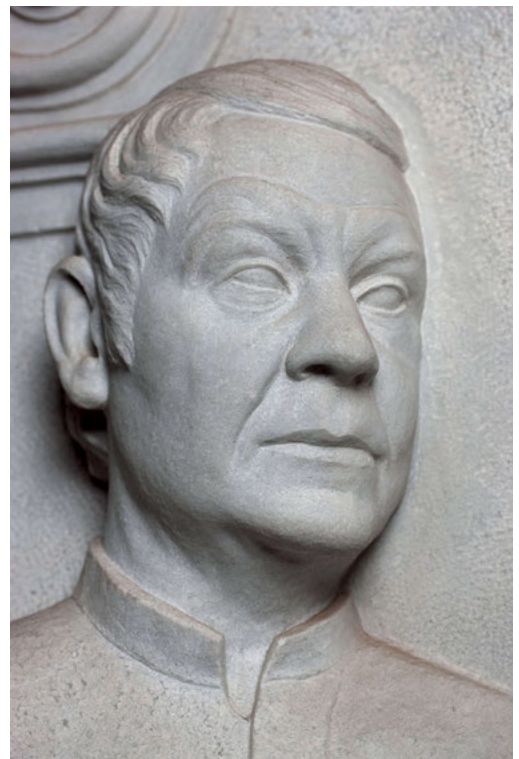


Figure 22.9: Portrait of Gerard Moerdyk in *Church of the Vow*. Marble, detail of fig. 22.1 (photo Russell Scott)

of the building in perspective, with a lower roof line, the back of the second gable, and scaffolding beyond.

A reference in the handwritten report in the Laurika Postma folders had this to say about the full-scale plaster panel:

Church of the Vow: Man with a rolled line in his hands: right arm is painfully distorted. The form of the hands is very weak. This is not a plea that details must be reworked, but the whole construction is wrong.

The arms of the two plasterers are also completely incorrect in relation to the height of the men. I know there are times when deviations do not disturb, or can be subordinated to an idea, but in this case there is no excuse for it.¹⁰¹⁵

The scathing criticism focuses only on details and does not elaborate on why ‘the whole construction is wrong’. More might have been added had the writer seen the final marble (fig. 22.1), for there have been some unfortunate changes. The distant plasterer in the centre has lost his shortened left arm. While there is still the necessary space to accommodate the left leg and foot of the young surveyor in the foreground, part of a stallion’s head and forelegs from the next scene have been squeezed into that area of the panel higher up, so that they appear to be running full tilt into the back of the church (see *Saailaer*). The most remarkable change, however, regards the portrait of Moerdyk (fig. 22.9). The curve of the brow and lower lid of the eye have been exaggerated, and the lines on his forehead rendered as a symmetrical pattern radiating from the bridge of the nose, creating a somewhat mask-like visage. Even more unfortunate, a strange chisel line runs across the pupil of the right eye. The lost arm and the changes in Moerdyk’s portrait indicate errors by the carvers in Romanelli’s workshops when they copied the narrative from the full-scale plaster panels into marble.¹⁰¹⁶ One is tempted to ask whether it was sheer coincidence that, of all the people in the frieze, it is the portrait of Moerdyk that provides a rare example of unprofessionalism on the part of the Florentine studio, all the more odd since the carvers would have seen the model in person on his many visits.

1015 ‘Man met rol lyn in hande. Regterarm pynlik verwronge. Vorm van hande baie swak. Dis nie ’n pleidooi dat in besonderhede gegaan moet word nie, maar die hele konstruksie is verkeerd. Die twee pleisteraars se arms is ook heeltemal verkeerd in verhouding tot die lengte van die mans. Ek weet daar kom tye waar afwykinge nie steur nie, of selfs met opset onder geskik gemaak word aan ’n idee, maar in hierdie beval is daar geen verskoning voor nie’ (UP Archives, Laurika Postma Folder 16).

1016 See Part I, Chapter 4 (‘From plaster to marble’).

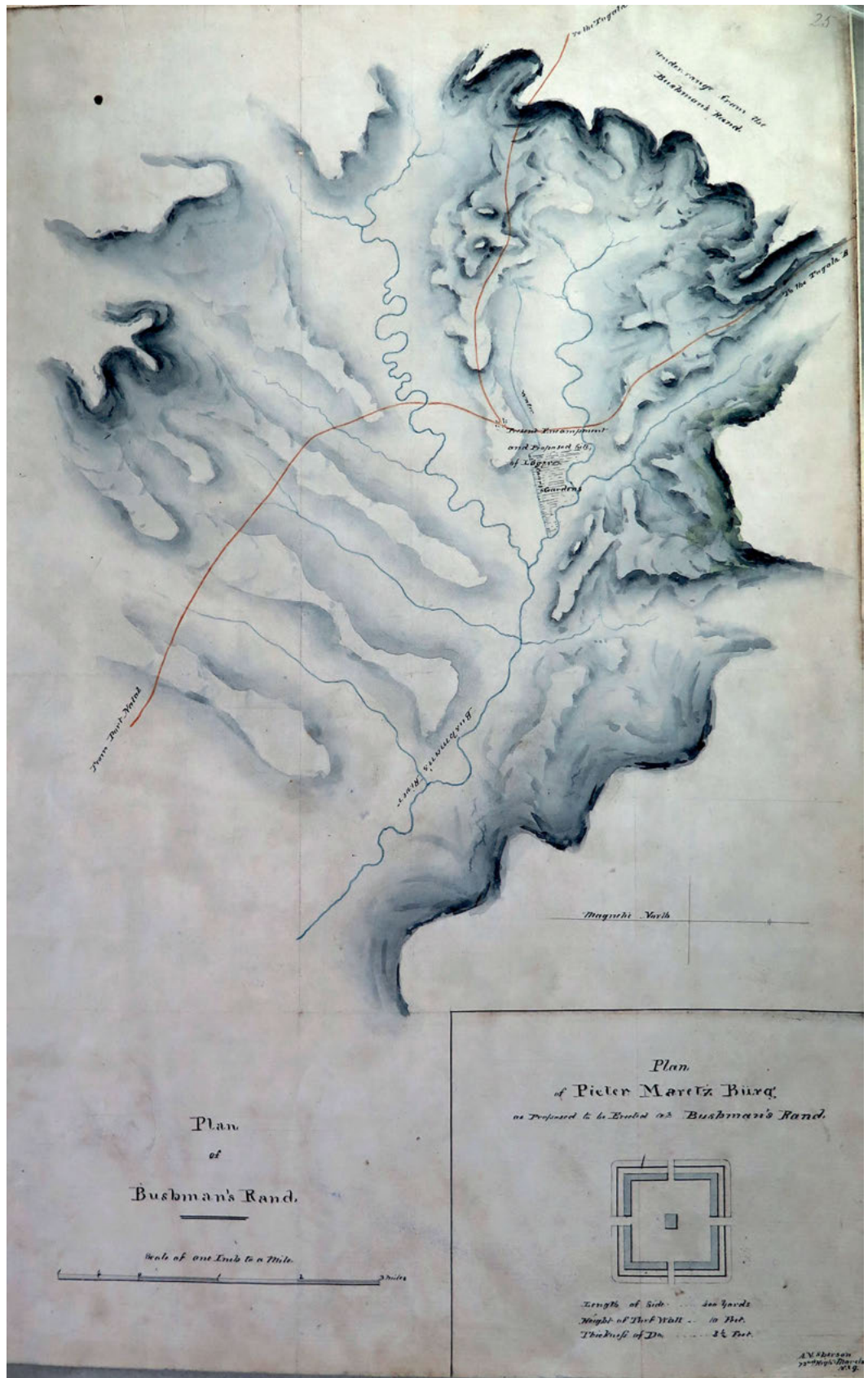


Figure 22.10a: A.N. Sherson. Plan of Bushman's Rand/Pieter Marez Burg. March 1839. Ink (courtesy of NA Kew, Colonial Office, MPG 1/144; photo the authors)

Reading the narrative

As discussed in *The Vow*, it was recorded that a group of trekkers from the ‘Winning Commando’ assembled for a holy service in Pretorius’ tent on 9 December 1838. Led in their prayers by the Dutch Reformed Church elder, Sarel Cilliers, they took a Vow to consecrate the day to God if he would grant them victory over the Zulu, and, according to the accounts of Bantjes and Pretorius, also pledged to ‘raise a House to the memory of his Great Name’.¹⁰¹⁷ After the Zulu defeat on 16 December 1838 at Blood River, however, it took almost two years before the Boers actually began to erect a building in Pietermaritzburg that could be used for church services.

On 23 October 1838, Erasmus Smit had noted in his diary the proposed foundation of this Voortrekker town:

... the Council has named the first village settlement: A newly planned colonial town, planned by the camp leader Piet Greyling and named by the Council Pieter Maritz Burg.¹⁰¹⁸ The first name is after the late His Excellency Pieter Retief, formerly the Governor, and the second name is after His Honour the late G.M. Maritz, President of the Council of Policy in the laager.¹⁰¹⁹

When the clergyman later wrote of the departure of his group from the Little Tugela River ‘to the new colony Pieter Maritz Burg’ (15 and 17 January 1839), he did not once mention that the Voortrekkers had vowed to build a church in this town, which casts some doubt on the confident portrayal of this event in the frieze.¹⁰²⁰ Moreover, the façade depicted in the scene does not match any of the diverse contemporary reports of the initial structures used for worship in Pietermaritzburg, which were probably very humble in form. So it is perhaps hardly surprising that some hundred years later members of the SVK themselves began to question whether the Church of the Vow was ever built. We will first follow this crucial debate step by step, then turn to contemporary evidence regarding the early development of Pietermaritzburg (initially called ‘Boschmansrand’ [Bushman’s Ridge])¹⁰²¹ and the building activities of the Dutch Reformed Church in this settlement.

When the SVK met on 20 January 1947, evidence was presented that the structure traditionally believed to be the Church of the Vow, and restored as the Voortrekker Museum (fig. 22.21), was, in fact, never built as a church.¹⁰²² The minutes report under item 12:

12. SMALLER MONUMENTS: PIETERMARITZBURG.

[C.]M. Booysen [from Pietermaritzburg] referred to archival research by the Reverend C. [Carl Wilhelm Irene] Pistorius that has brought to light that the little Voortrekker Church in Pietermaritzburg was never intended or thought of as the actual Church of the Vow.¹⁰²³ He communicated that representations had been made to the City Council of Pietermaritzburg to give the original piece of

1017 Thompson 1985, 152–153 (for Bantjes, who uses almost the same words as Pretorius, ‘we would build a house to the Lord in memory of his name’; see p.154).

1018 For the name, see Haswell in Laband and Haswell 1988, 26.

1019 Smit trans. Mears 1972, 143 (with our adjustments of his English translation). For the Dutch text, see Smit ed. Scholtz 1988, 166: ‘(Tevens) heft de Raad de eerste dorpsplaats genoemd: ’n nuwe aangelegde kolonieplaats, door de legerkommandant Piet Greyling aangeleeged, en door de Raad genoemd – *Pieter Maritz Burg*. De eerste naam is naar wiljen de overledene WelEd. heer Pieter Retief, voormalige Goeverneur; en de tweede naam naar wiljen de overledene WelEd. Heer G.M. Maritz, voormalige President van de Raad van Politie in ’t leger.’ Pieter Jacobus Greyling (Visagie 2011, 200), born 1801, was the second son born to Magdalena Johanna de Wet and Jan Greyling, before she, after the death of her husband (1811), married Piet Retief (1814).

1020 Smit trans. Mears 1972, 162 (Dutch text: Smit ed. Scholtz 1988, 183).

1021 Erasmus Smit (ibid., 122) mentions on 21 July 1838, ‘that the waggons which have moved out have divided themselves into three small camps – one at the Umlaas rivier, one at Boschmansrand, and one at Stinkhoutsberg’ (Dutch text: Smit ed. Scholtz 1988, 147); see Haswell in Laband and Haswell 1988, 24.

1022 This must have quickly attracted public attention as Lugg (1949, 45) mentions that the correctness of the Church of the Vow ‘is now being challenged by a number of people’.

1023 For Booysen, elected member and government representative on the SVK since 1935 (*Official Guide* 1955, 25), see Guest 2012, 56–57.

ground for such a great Church of the Vow. He hopes that the SVK will decide that such a Church of the Vow that will be erected will be considered the smaller Voortrekker Monument of Natal.¹⁰²⁴

The Chairman referred to the history of the Voortrekker Museum also and, after inspection of the historical documents, felt inclined to ask the SVK as a preliminary to first investigate the matter and to ask the Reverend Pistorius to address the SVK later.

He also recalled the SVK decision that, after the completion of the Voortrekker Monument, a Voortrekker monument must be erected at Winburg and thereafter one at Pietermaritzburg.

Dr Engelbrecht would not accept that the Voortrekker Museum was not the genuine Church of the Vow, and hoped that the SVK would not make a final decision immediately. He and the chairman also referred to the erection of the present day congregational church and asked what the forebears' view of it was in respect of the vow.

Dr H.B. Thom considered the alleged discovery of Rev. Pistorius very important and he hoped the Executive Committee would bring the necessary documentary evidence before the SVK.

At the request of the chairman Mr Booysen undertook to provide the SVK with the church's memorandum on the matter. Mr. van Rensburg warned against the danger of church disagreement about the erection of a church building implemented for a collective vow.

Resolution. The SVK resolved that drs. H.B. Thom and S.P. Engelbrecht be asked to investigate, at SVK expense, the historical correctness of Rev. Pistorius' findings, and that they be requested to submit a report of their investigation to the SVK within the course of one year.¹⁰²⁵

A three-page document in the National Archives and Record Services of South Africa reports that Hendrik B. Thom and Stephanus Engelbrecht had informed the SVK about their results.¹⁰²⁶ Although it is undated, it may well have been within the set period of a year, as not long afterwards

1024 Booysen seems to have raised this point with the SVK in 1947 in relation to the centenary monument promised to Pietermaritzburg in recognition that Natal housed many important sites of the Trek, although it had been decided to build the national Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria. Winburg in the Orange Free State was also promised its own monument and an edifice was inaugurated there in 1967; see Part I, Chapter 5 ('An Afrikaner monument'). Early discussions concerning additional monuments, which laid down that an amount not exceeding £5 000 be spent on each, expected one for Pietermaritzburg to be undertaken in 1945–47 (Dagbestuur 12.8.1939: unnumbered p.1) but there is very little to indicate what form it might take.

1025 SVK 20.1.1947: 12: 'KLEINER MONUMENTE: PIETERMARITZBURG. Mnr. C.M. Booysen verwys na argivale ondersoek deur ds. C. Pistorius wat aan die lig gebring het dat die Voortrekkerkerk in Pietermaritzburg nooit as die werklike Geloftekerk bedoel en beskou is nie. Hy deel mee dat vertoë tot die Pietermaritzburgse stadsraad gerig is om die oorspronklike stuk grond vir so 'n groot Geloftekerk te gee. Hy hoop die S.V.K. sal besluit dat so 'n Geloftekerk wat opgerig sal word, as die kleiner Voortrekkermonument van Natal beskou sal word. / Die Voorsitter verwys ook na die geskiedenis van die Voortrekkermuseum en na insage in die historiese stukke voel hy geneë om die S.V.K. te vra om voorlopig eers op die sake in te gaan en ds. Pistorius te vra om later die S.V.K. toe te spreek. / Ook herinner hy aan die S.V.K.-besluit dat daar na voltooiing van die Voortrekkermonument op Winburg 'n Voortrekkermonument opgerig moet word en daarna een te Pietermaritzburg. / Dr Engelbrecht wil nog nie aanvaar dat die Voortrekkermuseum nie die ware Geloftekerk is nie en hy hoop die S.V.K. sal nie dadelik 'n finale besluit neem nie. Hy en die voorsitter verwys ook na die oprigting van die huidige gemeentelike kerk en vra wat die voorgeslag se opvatting daaroor ten opsigte van die gelofte was. / Dr H.B. Thom beskou die beweerde ontdekking van ds. Pistorius as baie belangrik en hy hoop die Dagbestuur sal die nodige dokumentêre bewyse voor die S.V.K. bring. / Op versoek van die voorsitter onderneem mnr. Booysen om die kerk se memorandum oor die saak aan die S.V.K. te verstrek. Mnr. van Rensburg waarsku teen die gevaar van kerklike verskil oor die oprigting van 'n kerkgebou ter uitvoering van 'n gesamentlike gelofte. / Besluit. Die S.V.K. besluit om drs. H.B. Thom en S.P. Engelbrecht op te dra om op S.V.K.-koste ondersoek te gaan instel na die geskiedkundige juistheid van ds. Pistorius se bevindings en dat hulle versoek word om 'n verslag van hulle ondersoek binne die verloop van een jaar by die S.V.K. in te dien.'

1026 NARSSA, BNS 146/73/4.

both Thom (*Die Geloftekerk en Ander Studies oor die Groot Trek*, 1949)¹⁰²⁷ and Engelbrecht ('Die Geloftekerk', in *Almanak van die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika*, 1950) published their research. Both had concluded unanimously, although with somewhat different arguments, that the building in question was the 'Church of the Vow'. Any other conclusion would have been disastrous for the Monument, as the full-size plaster sections of the frieze had already been shipped to Florence, where the process of copying them into marble had commenced. The chronology of the early structures erected for Dutch Reformed Church services in Pietermaritzburg and the relationship of the contemporary evidence to these structures and the Vow is, however, more problematic than either Thom or Engelbrecht acknowledged. In fact, so powerful is the saga of the 'Church of the Vow' that to the present day even critical voices have hardly ever seriously questioned it.¹⁰²⁸ A brief outline of the early days of Pietermaritzburg aids an understanding of the initial dynamics of both the settlement and its religious structures, and provides a context for the report in the minutes quoted above.

Pietermaritzburg and the church erf

Wherever Boers settled, as in Pietermaritzburg, they followed the town layout of the Cape model, meaning 'long erven, water slote (channels), a gridwork pattern of straight streets with houses built on the street line, a large market place and a church'.¹⁰²⁹ The formal foundation date of the settlement is not known.¹⁰³⁰ As early as 11 April 1839 the *Graham's Town Journal* published a statement by Andries Pretorius, who pictured the establishment of Pietermaritzburg with confident enthusiasm:

A large, pleasant, and well-watered village, Pieter Mauritz Burgh, begins daily to raise its head above the surrounding hillocks; 300 beautiful plots ('erven') have already been surveyed and partly planted.¹⁰³¹

An earlier statement from Captain Jervis, commander of the 72nd Highlanders at Port Natal, confirmed this, though he had not seen the new settlement himself. He reported on 30 March 1839 to Sir George T. Napier, the governor of the Cape:

[Pietermaritzburg] is now the strongest [camp], and will, it is said, compose a community of 2,000 persons of all ages when Pretorius arrives ... They are, I am informed, measuring the ground, and laying out a village ... They have led water some 5,000 or 6,000 yards, and have already beautiful gardens.¹⁰³²

Captain Jervis based his report on a visit of a number of his 72nd Highlanders in March 1839 when one of them, A.N. Sherson, drew the first known and dated topographical map of 'Bushman's Rand/

1027 It is a rare touch of history that in the copy of Thom's book we used, from Yale Divinity Library, the only entry on the loan card was 'Leonard Thompson, Jul 12, 83', ergo Thompson 1985.

1028 See, for example, Groenewald and Bresler 1955, 12–28; Liebenberg 1977, 124–130; Labuschagne 1986, 73–74; Labuschagne in Laband and Haswell 1988, 28; Guest 2012, 20–21, 23–24; Henning 2014.

1029 John Laband, email 05.10.2016.

1030 For Pietermaritzburg's early history, see Hattersley 1936, 102–148 (including several early recollections); Groenewald and Bresler 1955, 41–48; Labuschagne 1986 (with excellent bibliography); Laband and Haswell 1988, 18–45; Guest 2012, 1–54; Henning 2014; Wildenboer 2015, 457 n 1.

1031 Haswell in Laband and Haswell (1988, 25) provides the original text: '... een groote, aangename, water ryk Dorp, Pieter Mauritz Burgh, begint dagelyks deszelfs hoofd boven de omliggende heuwels te verheffen – 300 fraaye erven zyn reeds opgemet en gedeeltlyk beplant.'

1032 Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 514 (NA Kew CO48/200/v2 p.253r). More correspondence about 1839 Pietermaritzburg, i.a. from Captain Jervis, Andries Pretorius and Jacobus Johannes Burger is kept in NA Kew CO48/201/v3.

Pieter Marez Burg'. He carefully noted and marked the 'water course, Present Encampment and Proposed Site of Lager, Gardens' (figs 22.10a–c).¹⁰³³ Jervis mentions him in his report of 30 March 1839 to Sir George Napier, then governor of the Colony: 'I am indebted to Ensign [officer] Sherson 72nd Reg. for the accompanying Sketch.'¹⁰³⁴

The French hunter and naturalist, Adulphe Delegorgue (1814–50), who stayed in the new settlement from November to December 1839, hands down a rather less sanguine and perhaps more accurate description of the living conditions in the village, namely that it

was at this time only a stockade camp, simply a collection of crude shanties made of wood and rushes and plastered with cow dung. These wretched shelters swarmed with bugs and remarkably vigorous rats, which each night ate our candles and carried off our handkerchiefs and stockings ... Pieters Mauritz Burg at that time was still called Boschjesmans Rand, because of the neighbouring mountains of that name.¹⁰³⁵

J. Andrè Labuschagne states that 'Carl Behrens, a German who later married a daughter of Gerrit Maritz, described the settlement in July 1840 as an established laager "bestaande uit 100–150 Strooihutte" (Krynauw 1946) [composed of 100–150 straw or grass huts] with the properties occupied by "goeie, soliede" [good, solid] houses'.¹⁰³⁶ Hattersley emphasised that the German 'Carl Pistorius' brick and tile works ... established in [late] 1840, facilitated the building of houses in stone and brick'.¹⁰³⁷ It is remarkable that neither Pretorius nor Cloete, Jervis nor Delegorgue mentions a church in their descriptions of Pietermaritzburg, although the intention to build one had been an early endeavour of the settlers (see below). A decisive turning point of the town's further development occurred when the British defeated the trekkers in the battle at Port Natal and began, from May 1843, to establish dominion over the Boer republic of Natalia, even though its formal annexation was not proclaimed until August 1845.¹⁰³⁸ With immediate effect, not only were boundaries of towns and erfs remeasured, which caused new problems 'due to the imposition of the British system of measurement on the Dutch',¹⁰³⁹ but also title deeds and registered properties were reviewed. On 12 May Sir George Napier issued a proclamation which granted landholders protection, if they had legitimate claims 'within the principle of the *bona fide* occupation for twelve months' before the arrival of Commissioner Henry Cloete in Natal in June 1843.¹⁰⁴⁰ As this principle was based on the concept of developed erfs, which is open to various interpretations, it caused misery and confusion among the Boers – many erfs were either still undeveloped or occupied by all kinds of structures, which may have been started quickly in support of claims and just as quickly disappeared again.¹⁰⁴¹ Although Cloete's new land register was 'not a survey of building but rather a study of occupation', the British power over landownership was a major factor in many trekkers leaving Natal.¹⁰⁴²

1033 NA Kew MPG 1/144, which also contains a fine ink 'Sketch of the Road from Port Natal to Bushman's Rand ... Time on Horseback ... 11 Hours', drawn also by Sherson.

1034 Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 514 (NA Kew CO48/200/v2 p.253r).

1035 Delegorgue, *Travels* 1, 1990, 96.

1036 Labuschagne 1986, 52. For early Voortrekker houses, see Van Rooyen (1940), who mentions in his chapter on these houses (169–182), for example, 'riet- of grasdak' (reed or grass roof, 176) and 'strooidakke' (straw or grass roofs, 177). He clarifies (172): 'Once the framework was ready, one began to cover the roof of the house, for which the Trekkers used reeds, sedge and undergrowth' (Sodra die raamwerk klaar was, is 'n aanvang gemaak met die dek van die huis en hiervoor het die Trekkers gebruik gemaak van riete, matjiesgras en 'ruigte').

1037 Hattersley 1936, 104 (quote), 114–115.

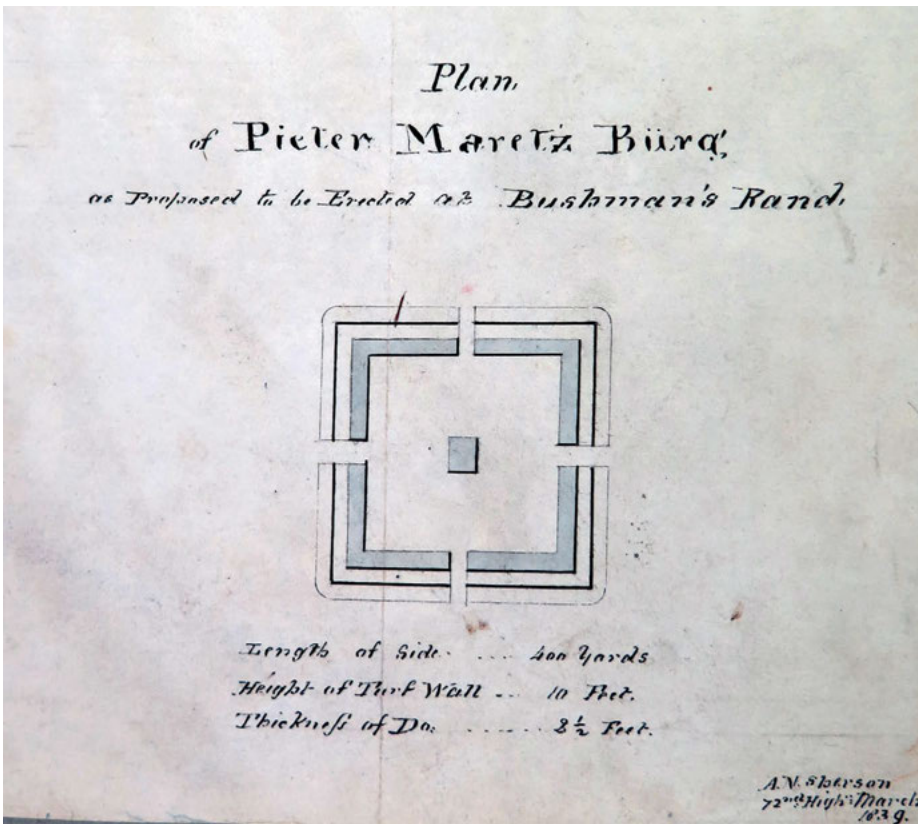
1038 Bird, *Annals* 2, 1888, 160–164 (4.5.1843), 465–469 (21.8.1845); Labuschagne 1986, 53.

1039 *Ibid.*, 55.

1040 Breytenbach c. 1958, 438–444 (Bylaag 5–17, 1843). See also Bird, *Annals* 2, 1888, 167–168; Labuschagne 1986, 53.

1041 Discussed in depth by Labuschagne 1986, 53–57.

1042 *Ibid.*, 53–54 (quote p.54).



Figures 22.10 b–c: Details of fig. 22.10a, plan of Bushman's Rand/Pieter Marez Burg

The incisive action by the British to redefine landholdings is summed up in the statement that ‘Commissioner Henry Cloete’s 1843 *Register of Erven* claimed at Pietermaritzburg records that more than 120 erven had indeed been granted by April 1839’.¹⁰⁴³ Its validity is confirmed in a report by the Rev. A. Faure, who emphasised in the same year that ‘there were approximately 120 dwellings, a court house and a church’.¹⁰⁴⁴ The register itself survives in the Pietermaritzburg Archives Record. Handwritten in English and labelled ‘Sketch Plan of Pieter Maritz Burg’, the 1843 register ‘by Her Majesty’s Commissioner, Mr H. Cloete, “Register of erven claimed; with names of claimants at Durban, Congella, Pietermaritzburg and Weenen”’ (fig. 22.11)¹⁰⁴⁵ supplies primary historical evidence. It shows how prominent trekker families had claimed land for themselves in the heart of the early town. Based on this document, the town’s official land register, presented by C. Piers and L. Cloete in November 1845, provides an instructive administrative and planning view of Pietermaritzburg, which documents the general layout of the early settlement, but without showing individual erf owners (fig. 22.12). It includes the streets (naming only the long ones from roughly west to east) and the exact allocation of each plot (numbered centrally and measured in feet at its narrow side), and, in black rectangular shapes, the position of some forty buildings.¹⁰⁴⁶ The public market ‘A’ incorporated erfs 26 to 33 Longmarket Street, renamed Langalibalele Street after 1994 (fig. 22.13).¹⁰⁴⁷

Of all the buildings shown on the Piers and Cloete plan, only one is labelled: it is the ‘Church’ marked on erf 34 Longmarket Street. However, the loss of many parishioners due to the British annexation of Natal caused such a severe impoverishment of the local Dutch Reformed Church¹⁰⁴⁸ that it was obliged to declare:

The first erf, Longmarket Street 34, had been kept by the Church Council for a long time inviolately. The church was built on the very [northern] edge of this [erf], and when in 1846 the congregation suffered serious financial difficulties, the Church Council asked the Government for permission to sell the undeveloped [southern] half of this [erf],

‘the remaining half of the said Erf being – soos die kerkraad meegedeel het [as the Church Council made known] – sufficient for the purposes of public worship.’¹⁰⁴⁹

1043 Labuschagne 1986. Guest 2012, 19, adds that the ‘initial Erf size of 450 × 150 feet (137.16 × 45.72 metres) was reminiscent of Grahamstown ...’

1044 Henning 2014, 31. For description of the building style, see Fransen in Laband and Haswell 1988, 55.

1045 Kindly confirmed by Pieter Nel of Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository (email 15.9.2016), who added, ‘Source: SGO (Surveyor General’s Office) Volume II/5. The register is dated: 1842–1846.’ A scan of a section of the 1843 register showing the market square with the erfs 15–36 (Loop, Long Market, Church and Pieter Maritz Streets) was kindly provided by Elrica Henning, Pietermaritzburg (email 12.09.2016). The scan, which is from an unknown publication, has the caption: ‘Central Portion of a plan of the City, showing original grants of erven. A slightly smaller section of this plan in Groenewald and Bresler (1955, 46) has the caption ‘A portion of the plan which indicates to whom the Volksraad had distributed erven. The market square is also marked’ (‘n Gedeelte van die plan wat aandui aan wie die Volksraad erwe uitgereik het. Die markplein word ook aangedui).

1046 Haswell in Laband and Haswell (1988, 24–27) discusses inconsistencies in the early records of Pietermaritzburg. For the history of the Piers and Cloete land register map, see Labuschagne 1986, 54–57. In 1846 John Bird, a citizen of Pietermaritzburg and the eminent compiler of *The Annals of Natal*, published in 1888, stated ‘that there were no more than 70 or 80 cottages’ (Labuschagne 1986, 55).

1047 Koopman and Deane 2005, 87.

1048 Guest 2012, 23.

1049 ‘Die eerste [erf] hiervan, Langmarkstraat 34, het die kerkraad nie lank ongeskonde behou nie. Die kerk was heeltemal op die een kant daarvan gebou, en toe die gemeente in 1846 finansiële baie swaar gekry het, het die kerkraad by die regering verlot gevra om die onbeboude helfte daarvan te verkoop, “The remaining half of the said Erf being – soos die kerkraad meegedeel het – sufficient for the purposes of public worship”’ (Thom 1949, 24: Ned. Geref. Kerk, Pietermaritzburg, I/2: Notule van Kerkraads- en Gemeentevergaderings, 1843–1853, 4 April 1846; en C.S.O 2236, Memorie no. 135. N.A.).

15 Pretorius	15 Wasseger	15 widow Kruger	15 Schrepper
16 Marais	16 Sheers	16 McCabe	16 Burger
17 Marais	17 Smit	17 McCabe	17 Smit
18 Marais	18 Sheers	18 McCabe	18 Smit
19 Schrepper	19 Kiekerk	19 Raath	19 Oortman
20 Van Rooyen	20 ^{Leijdeberg} Zichman	20 Smit	20 Van America
21 widow Hagedoorn	21 Pretorius	21 Potgieter	21 ^{Dutch Reformed} Church
22 Pradmus	22 Heine	22 widow Reijer	22 Meshaw
23 Eraentus	23 Hausmeyer	23 Pretorius	23 Meshaw
24 Van der Hart	24 Wicht	24 Coque	24 Postman
25 Van der Hart	25 Wicht	25 Wahl	25 Oortman
26 Wicht	26	26 Oortman	26 Botman
27 Boshoff	27 <i>Dutch Reformed Church</i>	27 Oortman	27 Maritz
28 widow Naude	28	28 Otte	28 Nel
29 Wessels	29	29 Smit	29 Nel
30 Boshoff	30	30 Pretorius	30 Nel
31 Boshoff	31	31 Oortman	31 Kuel
32 Boshoff	32	32 Landsberg	32 Bruwer
33 ^{Dutch Reformed} Church	33	33 Smit	33 Bruwer
34 Naude	34 Dutch Reformed Church	34 Smit	34 Bruwer
35 Naude	35 Smit	35 Pretorius	35 Malang
36 Kuel	36 Lotter	36 Oortman	36 Oortman

Figure 22.11: HM Commissioner H. Cloete. Central Pietermaritzburg, detail of Register of erven claimed, with names of claimants at Durban, Congella, Pietermaritzburg and Weenen, with erf 34 marked with black frame. 1843 (courtesy of Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository; photo Elrica Henning)

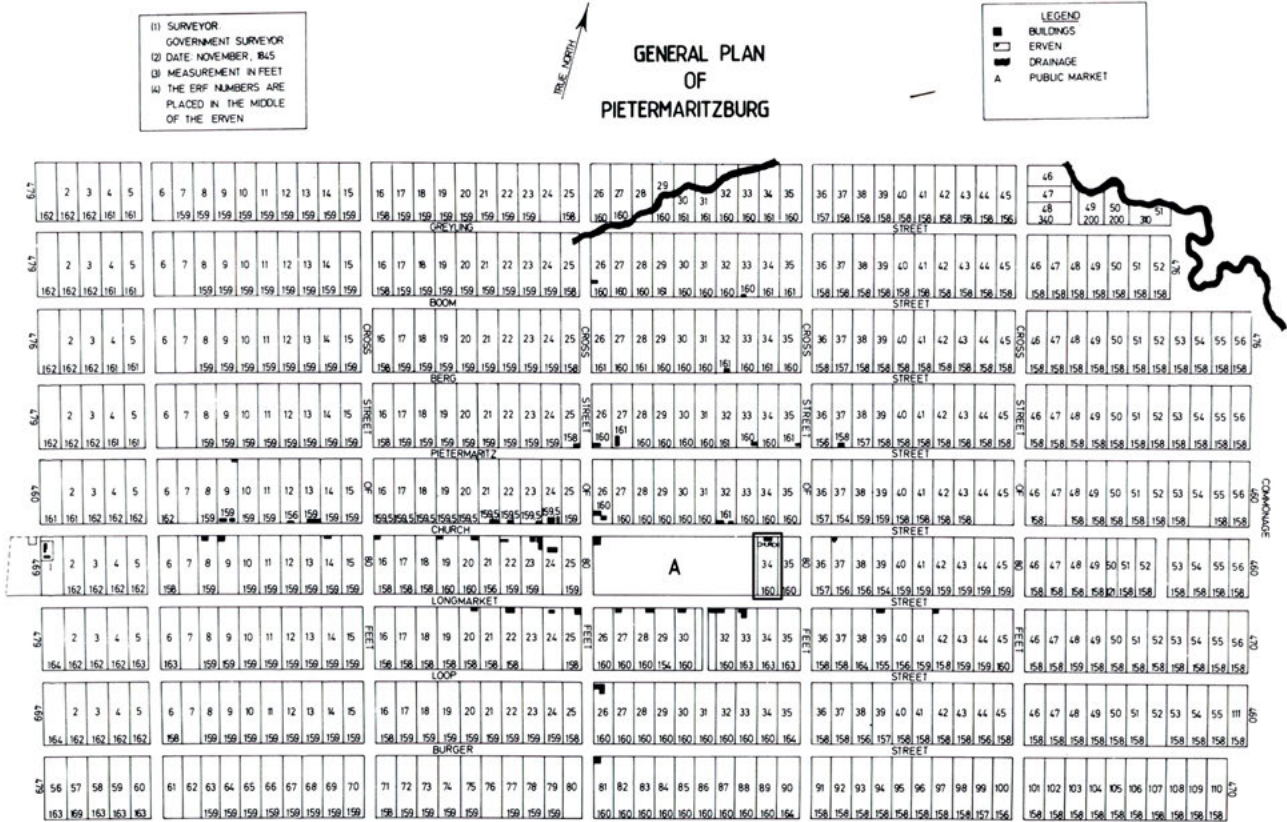


Figure 22.12: C. Piers and L. Cloete. Pietermaritzburg land register map, with erf 34 marked with black frame. November 1845 (Laband and Haswell 1988, 22)

The government agreed and on 4 May 1846 the undeveloped half was sold to [Jacobus Nicolaas] Boshof for £100 5s.¹⁰⁵⁰

On the handwritten 1843 register the erfes 26 to 33 'Long Market Street' are marked as 'Public Market', while erf 34 is still entirely in the possession of the 'Dutch Reformed Church' (fig. 22.11) as Boshof¹⁰⁵¹ acquired its southern half only in 1846. However, as the proper denomination of the then sole building on the remaining erf as a church has been contested for a long time, a short review of the available contemporary documents about the history of this building is needed.

¹⁰⁵⁰ 'Die regering het toegestem en op 4 Mei 1846, is die oop helfte aan Boshof verkoop vir £100 5s' (Thom 1949, 25: Ned. Geref. Kerk, Pietermaritzburg, 1/2: Notule van Kerkrads- en Gemeentevergaderings, 1843–1853, 4 Julie 1846. N.A).

¹⁰⁵¹ It is in all likelihood Jacobus Nicolaas Boshoff (1808–81), trekker and politician, who played a considerable part in the Boer republic Natalia (1839–43) and was later elected second state president of the Orange Free State (1855–59). Boshoff Street, Pietermaritzburg, was named in his honour. See *DSAB* 1, 1968, 100–104; Visagie 2011, 65–66.

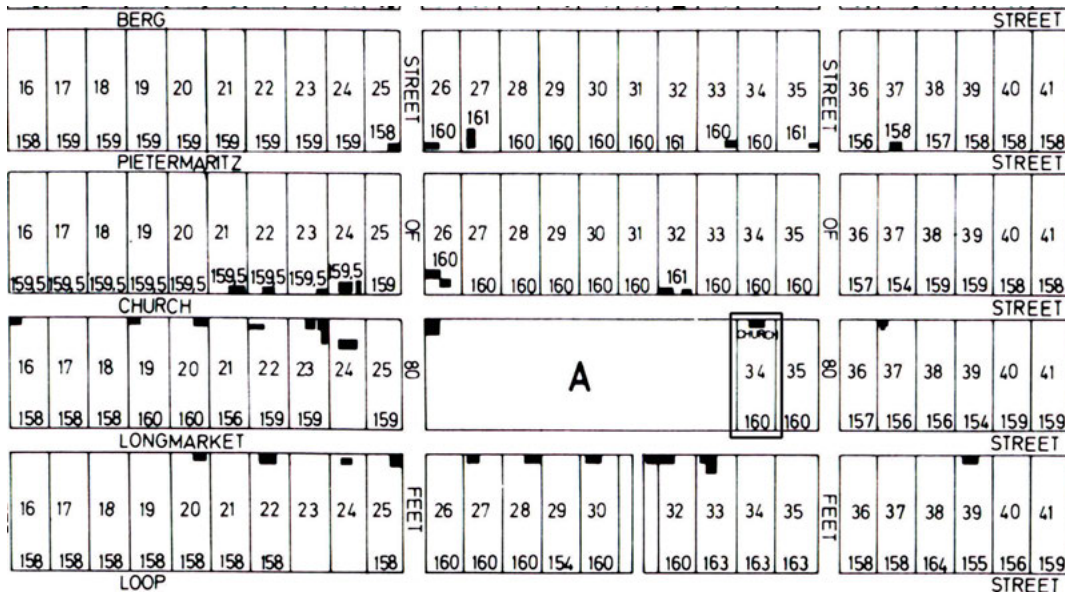


Figure 22.13: Central area of Pietermaritzburg land register map, detail of fig. 22.12 (Laband and Haswell 1988, 22)

The parsonage-church from 1840 to 1861

In 1839 there were several partly overlapping and contradictory initiatives to build a church in Pietermaritzburg, and it is often not clear which of these early structures was being referred to. There are references to the ‘riete kerk’ (reed church) and to the building erected on erf 34 Longmarket Street – it is possible that both referred to the same structure. In 1839, perhaps early that year, ‘the Council of the People had decided to found a Reformed Church on the site called Pieter Mouritz Burg’¹⁰⁵² For that purpose the Council of the People set up a building committee¹⁰⁵³ and appointed Andries Pretorius, Henning Petrus Nicolaas Pretorius,¹⁰⁵⁴ Johannes Stephanus Maritz,¹⁰⁵⁵ Lucas Johannes Meyer¹⁰⁵⁶ and Jan du Plessis¹⁰⁵⁷ as members, Jacobus Johannes Burger¹⁰⁵⁸ as secretary, and Jacobus Philippus Moolman¹⁰⁵⁹ as treasurer. In April 1839, a journalist reported that in Pietermaritzburg there were already 200 houses, ‘with a place for the church that we are busy building’ (‘met ’n plek vir die kerk, wat ons besig is om te bou’).¹⁰⁶⁰ A few weeks later J.J. Burger, J.S. Maritz and A. Pretorius mentioned in a joint letter dated 13 May – sent to A. Faure in Cape Town, T. Herold in Stellenbosch, G.W.A. van der Lingen in Paarl and P. Faure in Wynberg – that subscription lists had been opened to collect funds for a church ‘voor den God aller Goden’ (for the God of all Gods).¹⁰⁶¹

¹⁰⁵² ‘Daar de Raad des Volks besloten heeft op de Plaats genaamd Pieter Mouritz Burg eene Gereformeerde Kerk te stichten ...’ (Thom 1949, 6; Ned. Geref. Kerk, Pietermaritzburg: Lêer No. 1, Lyste 1839. N.A.); Engelbrecht 1950, 84 (with the text). This resolution does not seem to be recorded in Breytenbach c. 1958.

¹⁰⁵³ Thom 1949, 7; Engelbrecht 1950, 84.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Visagie 2011, 382.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Ibid., 301–302.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Ibid., 311.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Ibid., 148.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Ibid., 100.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Ibid., 317–318.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Preller, *Pretorius* 1937, 75; Henning 2014, 37. It may be possible that this statement echoes an entry in the first minutes of the Volksraad (Breytenbach c. 1958, 10, April or May 1839: Art. 1), which reports: ‘Church – to be built – Proposed by J.S. Maritz’ (Kerk – bouwen – Proponereerd door J.S. Maritz).

¹⁰⁶¹ Breytenbach c. 1958, 299 (Bylaag 15, 13 May 1839; the phrase ‘God of all Gods’ is obviously a reference to Deuteronomy 10:17); see also Thom 1949, 7–8; Engelbrecht 1950, 83; Henning 2014, 38.

The editor of *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, the jurist (and Freemason) Christoffel Joseph Brand,¹⁰⁶² wrote on 13 June 1839 to Andries Pretorius that he was pledging funds ‘to build a church which we have promised to God’ (van den opbouwen des tempels, welke gy den Heere hebt beloofd’), possibly a reference to the Vow, but the only statement of that kind in the available early records.¹⁰⁶³ Brand’s awareness that the building project of a church in Pietermaritzburg could be linked to the Vow is probably explained by his editorship. It was his newspaper, *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, which published the only two contemporary reports about the pledge, the one by Pretorius on 16 February and the other by Bantjes on 14 June 1839 (see *The Vow*) – the latter just one day after his letter to Pretorius mentioned above. Of further interest is another letter, this time written by the fervent church elder Sarel Cilliers to the people of Rietrivier in the southern Free State, dated 29 October 1839; he reports that ‘our brothers at Poort Natal have already begun preparing for a church of wood and stone’.¹⁰⁶⁴ Although Cilliers was believed to be the forefather of the Vow, he does not mention a church to be built in fulfilment of the Vow, either in this rather obvious context or in his late recollection of the wording of the Vow itself (see *The Vow*). As Thompson writes, ‘No record seems to have survived to demonstrate that Pretorius or any other emigrant ever explicitly referred to that church as a fulfilment of their vow.’¹⁰⁶⁵

Thom acknowledges this almost complete lack of specific reference to the church promised in the Vow before the Battle of Blood River, during the early years of Pietermaritzburg. But he argues mendaciously that it was because the pledge to build it in fulfilment of the Vow was so well understood that it was taken for granted, and hence it was not necessary for anyone to mention it.¹⁰⁶⁶ He unsurprisingly avoids acknowledging that the lack of reference to such a church lends itself equally well to the opposing argument that any such intention had been either forgotten or considered to be of little relevance. Given his argument, Thom focuses on evidence that the erection of a church was seen as a priority at the outset of the settlement, and well supported despite the poverty of many. He considers this ample evidence that people believed it to have been a church to fulfil the pledge of the Vow, although it is never mentioned. That a church was in the planning is not in doubt; it is confirmed by various donations listed by Thom, and specifically one by the English-speaking Johan van der Plank of Pietermaritzburg, who stated on 28 November 1839:

I will give to the Church of Pieter Maritzburg 2 kegs of White Paint of 30 lbs. each and one Keg of green paint 14 lb. weight and ten loads of building stone.¹⁰⁶⁷

On the first anniversary of the Battle of Blood River on 16 December that year, a thanksgiving ceremony with prayers was ‘held in Pietermaritzburg’, without any religious structure to house the gathering being named, however.¹⁰⁶⁸ The first three registered baptisms in Pietermaritzburg took place on Sunday, 15 March 1840, perhaps in ‘die riete kerk gebou’ (the reed church building).¹⁰⁶⁹ This may be ‘the one known to have stood in Berg Street’,¹⁰⁷⁰ which Thom characterised as a ‘very primitive, temporary meeting place’.¹⁰⁷¹ A further subscription list ‘for a Church in the place named Pieter Maritz Burg’ (eene Kerk op de plaats genaamd Pieter Mauritz Burg) was opened by the Volks-

1062 *DSAB* 2, 1972, 78–84; Botha 1982; Giliomee 2003, 114.

1063 *Voortrekker argiefstukke* 1937, 84, 23; see Thom 1949, 9; Groenewald and Bresler 1955, 12; Henning 2014, 38.

1064 ‘... dat onze Broeders die aan Poort Natal zyn allreede een aanvang maak tot een Kerk bereiding van hout en steen’ (Thom 1949, 10; Ned. Geref. Kerk, Pietermaritzburg: Lêer No. 1, Lyste 1839. N.A.).

1065 Thompson 1985, 155.

1066 Thom 1949, 23.

1067 *Ibid.*, 7.

1068 Henning 2014, 36.

1069 Accessions 65: *Dagboeke van mev. E. Smit*, No. 4, p.25. N.A. (Thom 1949, 5); for the ‘rietekerk’, see also Henning 2014, 34–36.

1070 Labuschagne in Laband and Haswell 1988, 28.

1071 ‘...’n baie primitiewe, tydelike vergaderplek ...’ (Thom 1949, 5; see also pp.13, 24).

raad in 1840.¹⁰⁷² Despite various claims, the above evidence is insufficient to allow any reasoned conclusion about the nature and completion of this building, and if or how it was related to the parsonage-church, as we shall call it, on erf 34 Longmarket Street, discussed below.

Complementing these initiatives to build a church and to celebrate the anniversary of the Battle of Blood River, another issue came up in early 1840: the replacement of Erasmus Smit, as he was not a properly ordained minister. The Volksraad decided to approach the American Daniel Lindley (1801–80) – although not clergy of the Dutch Reformed Church but an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church – to enquire whether he was willing to take up the vacant position in Pietermaritzburg.¹⁰⁷³ For some seven months a missionary at the Ndebele settlement of Mosega and then a shorter time in Zululand, Lindley was already in close contact with the Voortrekkers.¹⁰⁷⁴ In this context, two further questions were raised: where the new minister would live and where he would preach. On 15 April 1840, the Council of the Reformed Church of Pietermaritzburg announced:

[list no. 1] ... to make here on this site [erf 34 Longmarket Street] a house for worship which, after the [planned] church will be accomplished, has to be altered into a parsonage or a residence for the minister ...

[list no. 3] The public is by this writing invited, according to each and every one's personal ability, to contribute to the erection of a building for worship of the congregation on the parsonage ground – measuring 50 feet along the front, and 30 feet wide, 13 feet to the ridge pole – which, after a proper church will have been achieved, needs to be arranged as a parsonage for the minister to live in ...¹⁰⁷⁵

For this dual purpose the Church Council acquired erf 34 Longmarket Street, on the perimeter of the market square in the east, and erected a building at the north end where the plot abutted on Church Street – the building which in 1912 became the Voortrekker Museum (fig. 22.21).¹⁰⁷⁶ The decision of April 1840 shows, as André Labuschagne has argued, that the parsonage on erf 34 Longmarket Street was in fact built as a house, but allowed to be used as a church – on condition that, when a proper church was erected, the structure would revert to its intended use as a parsonage.¹⁰⁷⁷ He continued that, as this building was to be a house, its long side ‘had, by Volksraad resolution, to be placed on the street line’ (as is indeed the case with the present-day Voortrekker Museum), while a proper church would have been permitted to depart from this standard.¹⁰⁷⁸ Further evidence that this was the parsonage-church lies in the fact that its measurements correspond with those of the Voortrekker Museum: 16 m (50 feet) in length, 9.32 m (30 feet) in width and 4.16 (13 feet) in height, as was pointed out by Thom.¹⁰⁷⁹ The same priority, to build a house for the minister first and then a church, is also reported for the early days of Graaff-Reinet:

1072 Groenewald and Bresler 1955, 16.

1073 For a brief history of the ‘Volksraad’, see Breytenbach c. 1958, xliii–xlix; Du Toit and Giliomee 1983, 245–246; Guest 2012, 19–20.

1074 Kotzé 1950, 12–15; Henning 2014, 69–73.

1075 ‘Lys Nr. 1 ... “alhier ter Plaatzee een godsdienstig gestig te vervaardigen ... welke gebouw, na dat de Kerk zal voltooid zijn, tot een Pastorie of wooning voor den leeraar zal moeten veranderd worden” ... Lys No. 2 ... “Word door deezee het Publiek uitgenoodigd om naar ieders vermoogen te willen bij draagen tot het daarsteellen eener gestig tot Godsdienst oevening voor de gemeente op het pastorie grond in groote van 50 voeten frond, en 30 voeten wijd, 13 voeten onder de balkken hoog het welk na dat er een behoorlijke kerk zal zijn, tot een pastorie moet worden ingerigt voor den leeraar tot een wooning ...”’ (Thom 1949, 14; Ned. Geref. Kerk, Pietermaritzburg: Lêer No. 1, Lyste 1840. N.A.; see also Breytenbach c. 1958, 354 Bylaag 31 ..., 3den November, 1840).

1076 Thom 1949, 16; Ned. Geref. Kerk, Pietermaritzburg: Lêer No. 1, Lyste 1840, Nos. 1 en 4. N.A. (see also Labuschagne 1986, 73–74). Later, Labuschagne (Laband and Haswell 1988, 28) adds that when Cloete registered land claims in 1843 he confirmed that ‘erf 34’ was ‘claimed by the Dutch Reformed Church for the erection of the parsonage’.

1077 Labuschagne 1983 (*non vidimus*); Labuschagne 1986, 73–74; Labuschagne in Laband and Haswell 1988, 28.

1078 Labuschagne in Laband and Haswell 1988, 28.

1079 Thom, 1949, 14 n 30: ‘Dit is die afmetings van die huidige Voortrekkermuseum. Die Voortrekkers het dus by die afmetings gehou wat hulle hier op lys Nr. 3 aangegee het’ (These are the measurements of the present-day Voortrekker

While the Commission of Circuit wisely recommended the establishment of churches and schools, it considered that the first and foremost requirement, was the building of a parsonage ...¹⁰⁸⁰

On 29 September 1840 the 'Natale Volksraad' (People's Council of Natal) formally acknowledged the use of the parsonage for church services:

The Council was asked by some delegates to place the Church funds under their responsibility as a loan to complete the parsonage already under construction so that first it shall be used as a house for worship, which is permitted by the Council; the delegates who posed that question, are the gentlemen A.W.J. Pretorius, J.J. Burger, H.P.N. Pretorius & Sarel A. de Cilliers.¹⁰⁸¹

Only a few months later, on 7 January 1841, the Volksraad decided to erect a proper church; this, however, did not happen before 1854 (see below):

It was decided that the house ('huis') where at present the public church service is held, and the property here on plot no. 34 Longmarket Street, is ceded to the church, and it is further decided that donations which have already been received for the building of a New church, will be placed at the disposal of the 'kerkeraad' (church council) ...¹⁰⁸²

In February 1841 Daniel Lindley was formally appointed as the new minister and continued his ministry until 1847. The (still unfinished) parsonage-church was in use before July 1841, when Rev. James Archbell confirmed that 'They had built a large temporary church at Umlazi, and a more permanent one at Bushmansrand [Pietermaritzburg], where the Rev. Mr. Lindley is now officiating'.¹⁰⁸³

Just after the building had begun to be used as a 'temporary church', documents of Pietermaritzburg's Dutch Reformed Church report that in July 1841 the building had been flooded by rain, and that the Church Council had decided to replace the leaking flat timber roof ('planken dak') with a thatch structure ('gras dak') and to accommodate it with gables ('gevels').¹⁰⁸⁴ To bring this about, it appears that several individuals had offered unpaid work and appropriate building material.¹⁰⁸⁵ However, when the British commissioner Henry Cloete visited Natal, he reported that 'the church was still in progress in the middle of 1843 and that 21 Pietermaritz Street [also owned by the Dutch Reformed Church] was used as a church in the meantime'.¹⁰⁸⁶

After Thom's diligent study of the available contemporary documents, he deemed it 'remarkable that they [the people of Pietermaritzburg] had never used the term *Geloftekerk*',¹⁰⁸⁷ but still

Museum. The Voortrekkers thus kept to the measurements that they gave on list number 3 [discussed above]). See also Labuschagne (Laband and Haswell 1988, 28) and Henning (2014, 41). We owe the actual measurements of the Voortrekker Museum to Elrica Henning (email 11.7.2016).

1080 Henning 1975, 92.

1081 'Door de Commissaarissen [sic] gevraagd aan den Raad om van het Kerke vonds onder hunne toeverzigt in leen te hebben om die begonnene pastorie 'er meede te voltoojien dat voor het eerst tot een godsdienstig gestig zal gebruikt worden, het welk door den Raad is toegestaan; de Comissaaren die gevraagd hebben, zijn de Heeren A.W.J. Pretorius, J.J. Burger, H.P.N. Pretorius & Sarel A. de Cilliers' (Breytenbach c. 1958, 63, item 14).

1082 Ibid., 131, item 3: 'Beslooten dat het huis alwaar tans de publieke godsdienst in gehouden word met het Erf. No. 34 Lange Mk. Straat alhier in eigendom is afgestaan aan de kerk en is verder beslooten dat intekenings gelde dat reeds is ingekoomen tot opbouwing van een Nieuwe kerk, zal in handen gesteld worden van den kerkeraad ...'

1083 Engelbrecht 1950, 88–89 (with quote); see Henning 2014, 49.

1084 Thom 1949, 18–19 (Ned. Geref. Kerk, Pietermaritzburg: Lêer No. 1, Lyste 1841. N.A.); Henning 2014, 58. We note that in Dutch 'gevels' means any form of gable, from simple to ornate.

1085 Henning 2014, 58–59.

1086 Ibid., 60 (quote). Thom (1949, 19: Surveyor General's Office II/5: H.M. Commissioner H. Cloete; Register Erven claimed, etc., pp.99–100. N.A.) refers to the 1943 'Sketch Plan of Pieter Maritz Burg', which has the 'Dutch Reformed Church' as registered owner of this erf (here fig. 22.11).

1087 Thom, 1949, 23: '(Dit) is opmerklig dat hulle self nooit die term *Geloftekerk* gebruik het nie ...'

concluded that, when the Church Council began in 1842 to build a parsonage on erf 33 Loop Street, for which it paid ‘500 riksdaalers’, the building erected on erf 34 Longmarket Street was in the eyes of the congregation no longer a parsonage but a church.¹⁰⁸⁸ Although the building of a new parsonage elsewhere would seem to finally confer the status of church on the existing structure, the latter never lost its stipulation as a parsonage (see below). In the end, the parsonage-church on erf 34 Longmarket Street had, considering its conditional legal status, an unexpectedly long history, being in use from 1841–61. As the edifice was not particularly well built, it needed many restorations.¹⁰⁸⁹ Rev. Dr Faure stated in a letter dated 18 July 1855 that the building at ‘present in use is altogether in a state of dilapidation’.¹⁰⁹⁰

In 1849 the Natal sheriff, Thomas Phipson, wrote about Pietermaritzburg:

Our public buildings have at present not much to boast of in the way of architecture. The Court House and the Dutch Reformed Church [parsonage-church] are thatched and built of stone, both on the same model. The deficiency of a belfry to the church is supplied by two lofty poles, supporting a bell which a Caffer rings during the intervals when the congregation within are engaged in singing.¹⁰⁹¹

A sketch in sepia drawn in 1854 by Marianne Churchill (1831–1912),¹⁰⁹² resident of Pietermaritzburg, offers a good impression of the simple structure of the parsonage-church in a view of Church Street and the east end of market square from a high vantage point from the west (fig. 22.14).¹⁰⁹³ It shows the building placed along the street line with a peaked roof and a plain gable nearest the viewer (the three curved forms above the sloping roof of the building’s east end, facing away from the town’s market square, apparently represent trees – hardly a sole ornate gable).¹⁰⁹⁴ In accord with the preserved structures of the parsonage-church and its known measurements, the drawing attests the typical features of a ‘Kaapse langhuis’ (Cape long house), a simple rectangular design with two gable ends and parapets. As the western shorter end does not have an entrance in Churchill’s sketch, the main door to the building (in line with its designation as a parsonage) must still have been the one onto Church Street, which is shown in old photographs (fig. 22.15). We know from the undated recollections of Martha Jane Lindley (1838–1921), second daughter of Rev. Daniel Lindley, that at some later point ‘the main entrance on Church Street was moved to the front gable’, which must have been the one facing the market square.¹⁰⁹⁵ The design of this gable, whether simple or ornate, is unknown. It has, however, been claimed that it looked similar to the low holbol-type gable which decorated the town’s early ‘Raadsaal’, built in 1840 and recorded in an old undated photograph (fig. 22.16).¹⁰⁹⁶ That the two buildings shared a similar structure was

1088 See Thom, 1949, 21: ‘Die gebou wat in 1840-’41 [in erf 34 Lange Mk. Straat] opgerig is, was van die dag af toe daar in 1842 met die bou van ’n pastorie in [erf] Loopstraat 33 begin is, in die oë van die gemeente definitief ’n tempel van aanbidding, en sou permanent as sodanig gebruik word’ (The building that was erected in 1840–41 [on erf 34 Longmarket Street] was, from the day in 1842 when a start was made on building a parsonage at [erf] 33 Loop Street, in the eyes of the community definitely a house of worship, and would be permanently used as such). See also p.31.

1089 Henning 2014, 58–61.

1090 Thom 1949, 37.

1091 Hattersley 1936, 116–117.

1092 Child 1979; *DSAB* 5, 1987, 126.

1093 The best reproduction is provided by Muller (1978, 83 fig. 66). See also Laband and Haswell (1988, 26 with fig.), and Henning (2014, 62 fig. 40 with an inverted reproduction).

1094 An ornate gable would have made sense only at the market square (west) end of the building. Willem Jurgen Pretorius (1808–89; Visagie 2011, 259) confirms that, before he left Pietermaritzburg around 1847, the structure had at times only a sole gable: the parsonage church ‘was not the most beautiful or ornate but simple, with a front and back door [at the long sides] and a vestry. The curved gable had to be taken down, replaced and simplified because the gable wall could not support the weight of the first gable’ (Henning 2014, 63 with n 269).

1095 Henning 2014, 62.

1096 Van Rooyen (1938, 159), for example, states, but without a reference, that the old Raadsaal was adorned ‘with gables exactly like those of the little church [parsonage-church] in its original form’ (met gewels presies soos dié van



Figure 22.14: Marianne Churchill. Church Street and east end of Pietermaritzburg market square with parsonage-church. 1854. Sepia drawing (Durban, Local History Museum; Muller 1978, 83 fig. 66)



Figure 22.15: East side of Pietermaritzburg market square with former parsonage-church (left) and front of 1861 Dutch Reformed Church (right) in background. 1880s (photo courtesy of uMsunduzi Museum Collection, Church of the Vow file)



Figure 22.16: Pietermaritzburg Council Chamber and Court with Dutch holbol-type gable. 1840 (Buchanan 1934, fig. opp. p.24)

confirmed by Phipson in 1849 when he stated that both were ‘thatched and built of stone, both on the same model’,¹⁰⁹⁷ although he does not refer to the gables. According to E.G. Jansen, Martha Lindley remembered the parsonage-church prior to its basic restoration in 1910/11 (discussed below) as ‘a stone (shale) structure with Cape Dutch-style gables’, but her memory is not associated with a specific date.¹⁰⁹⁸

Further mid-nineteenth-century evidence discussed by Henning substantiates that the parsonage-church was at least temporarily furnished with two gables, but also mentions many repairs and structural problems with them and their support walls.¹⁰⁹⁹ Thus it is not unlikely that at times the parsonage-church had only one or even no curved and moulded gable. Further information is revealed in a photograph of an undated watercolour painted by General G.H. Gordon and labelled ‘View of Dutch Church and school house’ (fig. 22.17), which suggests a date between 1861 and 1873 (see below).¹¹⁰⁰ The caption explains the unusual view which ‘shows on the right a portion of the other [east] end of the building [the parsonage-church] viewed from the vicinity of Boshoff Street[;] on the left is the second [proper] Dutch Church (Natal Archives)’, inaugurated in 1861.¹¹⁰¹ The east end of the former parsonage-church visible on the right amongst foliage, by then housing a school (1861–63 and 1865–73), is distinguished by the depiction of a curved Cape Dutch gable similar to the one seen in the early photograph of the Raadsaal (fig. 22.16). The evidence thus suggests that

die kerkie in sy oorspronklik vorm). The photograph (fig. 22.16) is reproduced by Buchanan (1934, fig. opp. p.24), Thom (1949, 46 with fig.) and Henning (2014, 63 fig. 42, but in reverse).

1097 Henning 2014, 61, see ‘1849’ (quote).

1098 Guest 2012, 31.

1099 For the roof and the gables of the parsonage-church, see the references listed in Henning (2014, 4, 58–63), which range from 1841 to 1854.

1100 *Ibid.*, 125 fig. 105.

1101 We owe this information to Elrica Henning (email 11.7.2016).



Figure 22.17: G.H. Gordon. 'View of Dutch Church and school house' Pietermaritzburg, Dutch Reformed Church (left) and former parsonage-church (right) as viewed from Boshoff Street. 1861–73. Watercolour (photo courtesy of uMsunduzi Museum Collection, Church of the Vow file)

the gables on the building had more than one form – either simple, as in Churchill's 1854 drawing, or more decorative, as in Gordon's later watercolour and Martha Lindley's undated description. This gable's duration, however, was short-lived as a photograph from the 1880s shows the former parsonage-church at the east end of the market square altered into a commercial structure, again with a simple gable and what appears to be a large opening at the front (fig. 22.15; see also fig. 22.19).

It is remarkable that Engelbrecht, the other scholar tasked with Thom to investigate the identity of the 'Church of the Vow', cited, as evidence for his claim that the parsonage-church was beyond doubt linked to the Vow, solely history books published in English. After 1877 they increasingly began to mention 'the church' in Pietermaritzburg with explicit reference to the Vow: Engelbrecht's examples are John Noble's *South Africa, past and present* (1877, 93), D.C.F. Moodie's *The history of battles and adventures of the British, the Boers and the Zulus &c. in Southern Africa* (1888, 436), Forsyth Ingram's *The Colony of Natal* (1895, 174–175), and G. McCall Theal's *History of the Boers in South Africa* (1887, 152).¹¹⁰² An indicative example from Engelbrecht's list is Robert Russell's *Natal the land and its story: A geography and history for the use of schools*, published in 1891. As a superintendent of teaching in Natal, Russell had no doubt that the link between the church and the Vow was essential knowledge for young people:

The vow made before the battle [of Blood River] was religiously kept. *The Dutch Reformed Church in Pietermaritzburg* – one of the first buildings in the town – was erected in fulfilment of the pledge; and *Dingaan's Day*, the 16th of December, is still observed by all Dutch people in South Africa as a holy anniversary.¹¹⁰³

¹¹⁰² The list in Engelbrecht (1950, 101–102 nos 5a–b, d–f [for Theal, the reference should be p.117 not p.152]) includes the relevant quotes, and two books of Ingram, of which we quote only his earlier, more detailed publication.

¹¹⁰³ Engelbrecht (1950, 101 no. 5c), who quotes Russell (1903, 159; italics as in Engelbrecht).

Whether the use of these sources was a clever strategy on Engelbrecht's part to suggest that even the English recognised the Afrikaner claim of the 'Gelofterkerk', or simply resulted from the absence of similar statements in Dutch or Afrikaans, is not clear. But it is obvious that since the later 1870s, belief in the existence of the Vow taken by the trekkers before the Battle of Blood River had started to become more prevalent, especially in the Transvaal.¹¹⁰⁴ This was hardly a coincidence at a time when, as Thompson argues, Afrikaners had begun to advocate fervent religious and nationalistic feelings, which were picked up by British and Anglo-colonial writers.¹¹⁰⁵

However, it is notable that key Afrikaner texts about the Vow excluded the promise of a church. When, in his Dutch 'History of the Orange Free State' of 1876, H.J. Hofstede published the journal of the church elder Sarel Cilliers from 1871, he also included Cilliers' late recollection of the Vow, which provides its first known text (but lacks reference to a church, as discussed in *The Vow*) and has been regarded as the authoritative version.¹¹⁰⁶ For example, in his history of the Transvaal Afrikaners (1882), Frans Lion Cachet duplicated the words of Cilliers exactly.¹¹⁰⁷ Finally, none other than Paul Kruger, the president of the Transvaal from 1881, 'lent his immense prestige to the new concept' of Afrikaners as a chosen people, whose setbacks 'were God's chastisement for their failure to honor their vow'.¹¹⁰⁸ When he celebrated 16 December, however, he gave it a new political edge, as 'he was mainly concerned with the renewal of the Vow at Paardekraal in 1880, leading to victory in the War of Freedom in 1881, which reaffirmed God's selection'.¹¹⁰⁹

The evidence discussed so far allows us to clarify some of the perplexing issues around the early church(es) in Pietermaritzburg:

- 1) Until 1861 there was no purpose-built church; neither was there an officially acknowledged separate erf set aside as the plot for a church – also not no. 33 Longmarket Street, as discussed below.
- 2) There was a building, a house initially declared a parsonage, at the northern end of erf 34 Longmarket Street aligned with and accessible from Church Street, that was allowed by the Volksraad to be temporarily used for church services. The parsonage-church ceased to have an ecclesiastical occupation in 1861 when a proper church had been built on the same erf.
- 3) As long as the parsonage-church was in service, it never appears to have been called 'Gelofterkerk' (Church of the Vow), but instead either 'Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk' (Dutch Reformed Church), 'Gereformeerde Kerk' (Reformed Church) or simply 'ou(de) kerk' (old church) and 'Voortrekkerkerkie' (little Voortrekker church).
- 4) The term 'Gelofterkerk' does not seem to have been in use before the early twentieth century.
- 5) The omission of mention of a 'Gelofterkerk' is significant when one considers that eminent Boers who participated in the Battle of Blood River – and like Andries Pretorius in the taking of the Vow – became citizens of Pietermaritzburg.¹¹¹⁰

As late as 2 October 1854, Deacon Johan Christoffel Boshof proposed to the Church Council the building of the first proper church, whose planning the Volksraad had originally announced on 7 January 1841.¹¹¹¹ In April 1855, a building committee was set up to oversee the planning of this church which was to have solid walls of burnt bricks and a steeple.¹¹¹² However, the important

1104 Thompson 1985, 168–170.

1105 *Ibid.*, 176–180.

1106 As Mostert (1940, 112) records, it was this text that Henning Klopper chose to read out in the original Dutch at the initial ceremony launching the 1938 ossewatrek in Cape Town, even though it did not include the pledge to build a church in remembrance if the Boers defeated the Zulu.

1107 Cachet 1882.

1108 Thompson 1985, 170.

1109 *Ibid.*

1110 Engelbrecht (1950) provides a telling list of people who were crucial in the early church history.

1111 Thom 1949, 26–27 (Ned. Geref. Kerk, Pietermaritzburg, I/2: Notule van Kerkraads- en Gemeentevergaderings, 1853–1874, p.13. N.A.).

1112 Thom 1949, 27.

issue of which erf had been designated for it to be built on had never been addressed in the available official documents. This neglect sparked a lively public debate.¹¹¹³ A request for land in the town's market place (corresponding to erf 33) was lodged by Rev. Dr Hendrik Emmanuel Faure, then minister of the parsonage-church (1853–59), on behalf of the church with the town council in August 1855.¹¹¹⁴ J.C. Boshof explained that 'The ground applied for was, in fact, that which had been set apart by the original Dutch settlers for a Church. The present building used for the purpose having been intended for a parsonage',¹¹¹⁵ and produced documentation to support this. Another verification came from the former magistrate J.P. Zietsman,¹¹¹⁶ who 'declared before me [John Bird, J.P.] this 5th day of October 1855', in English:

I Johan Philip Zietsman do hereby declare that in 1840 being then Landdrost at this place under the Volks Raad was requested by a building committee to join them to select a place for the erection of a temporary place of worship, which was fixed where the present Dutch Reformed Church [parsonage-church] now stands. The present building was erected to be used as a temporary Church, and to be altered afterwards when more funds in hand to build a proper Church for a parsonage, with the extent of a full Erf. On my request then where they was [sic] intended to build the proper Church they spoke of to build hereafter. The next ground on the present Market Square [erf 33 Longmarket Street] was pointed out to me, to which I gave my consent and was afterwards approved of by the Volksraad in their first sitting.

The reason why that piece of land for the intended Church was not registered with Her Majesty [sic] Commissioner I cannot say other than on account of confusion then existed under the Volks Raad as well as under the public.¹¹¹⁷

Representations such as Boshof's and Zietsman's persuaded councilman David Dale Buchanan – founder of the Pietermaritzburg's widely read *Natal Witness, and Agricultural and Commercial Advertiser* (today *The Witness*)¹¹¹⁸ – who had originally opposed the request, to support the church position in his newspaper of 9 November 1855, arguing:

That as by some error the erf No. 33, Longmarket Street, has not been conveyed to the Dutch Reformed Church, this Council (on the proof produced) agrees to restore the same to the original proprietors.¹¹¹⁹

And Marthinus Philippus Cornelis Ferreira (1811–75),¹¹²⁰ a church elder and mayor in 1856, added:

That 150 by 100 feet, in the centre of erf No. 33, Longmarket Street, be allowed for the site of the [proper] Dutch Reformed Church.¹¹²¹

Ensuing debate failed to resolve the issue, however, causing the church to appeal to higher authority. How much church matters had been carelessly handled in the early days of Pietermaritzburg is confirmed in the letter of 17 December 1855 written by Faure to the Colonial Secretary:

1113 Groenewald and Bresler 1955, 17–20, 'Erf 33, Longmarket Street' (perseel 33, Langmarkstraat); Groenewald 1964, 6–10, 'Erf Nr. 33'; Guest 2012, 23 with n 38 (p.26).

1114 Thom 1949, 28. Faure had first applied to the Colonial Secretary who informed him that it was a matter for the town council.

1115 *Ibid.*, 28, citing a report from J.C. Boshof in the *Natal Witness, and Agricultural and Commercial Advertiser*, 5.9.1855.

1116 *DSAB* 4, 1981, 801–802; Visagie 2011, 625–626.

1117 Engelbrecht 1950, 94; see also Thom 1949, 30–31 (Colonial Secretary's Office 2244: Memorials, D. 1–300, No. 268. N.A.); Labuschagne in Laband and Haswell 1988, 28.

1118 See Leverton in Laband and Haswell 1988, 202–203.

1119 Thom 1949, 28 (quoting from the *Natal Witness and Agricultural and Commercial Advertiser*, 9.11.1855).

1120 Visagie 2011, 184.

1121 Thom 1949, 29 (quoting from the *Natal Witness and Agricultural and Commercial Advertiser*, 9.11.1855).

I herewith beg to transmit to you the answer of the Town Council of Pietermaritzburg to a memorial of the Dutch Reformed Church praying for a site on the Market Square to build a church upon and I humbly request you, in the name of our Consistory, to lay the same before His Honor the Acting Lieutenant Governor together with the accompanying documents on which the opinion of the Council of Pietermaritzburg is based. The Consistory willingly admits that through the mismanagement and neglect of its former office bearers who omitted the proper registration of the [church] erf with Her Majesty's Commissioner for the time being, all legal claim to the ground has been lost to the Dutch Reformed Church, but ... the Consistory ... humbly trusts and prays that His Honor will ... restore to the Dutch Church such a portion of the said erf adjoining the present [parsonage-]Church as will be sufficient to build a Church upon.¹¹²²

Considering the British redefinition of land in 1843, and the admission of neglect related to the request to occupy the public erf 33 Longmarket Street, Faure's request was a rather bold move. The past negligence suggested a lack of serious commitment of the Dutch Reformed Church to have had a proper church erf registered, especially as the erfs 26 to 33 had been – since the 1843 'Sketch Plan of Pieter Maretz Burg' (figs 22.10a–c) and the 1845 land register of Piers and Cloete (fig. 22.12) – an intrinsic part of the market square.¹¹²³ The consistory's plea had no effect on the Colonial Secretary, who two days later drily replied:

The land prayed for has been alienated by the Crown in favour of the Corporation of Pietermaritzburg in trust for the inhabitants of the Borough. The power of the local Govt. to deal with the land in question having consequently ceased, Memorialist is informed that the Acting Lieutenant Governor is unable to interfere in this matter.¹¹²⁴

After much debate of this issue between both parties, the Church Council was exceptionally allowed to build the proper church on the old parsonage ground, i.e. erf 34 Longmarket Street, as the British authorities refused to register a new church erf and thus diminish the market square by erf 33.¹¹²⁵ In their view the Boer claim of erf 33 Longmarket Street, which the latter maintained they had designated for a proper church, had surfaced for the first time in 1855, long after 1842, the official deadline for honouring former land claims imposed by the British when they took over in 1843.¹¹²⁶ As can be seen in the town plan compiled by borough surveyor Alex Mair in 1869 (fig. 22.18), the proper church was ultimately aligned to the edge of the market square on the southern end of erf 34 Longmarket Street's northern half, next to the parsonage-church – as the southern half of the erf was no longer available, having been sold by the Church Council in 1846, as discussed above.¹¹²⁷ This limitation in space led to a much smaller building than anticipated by P. Ferreira in 1855 (100 by 150 feet), and elucidates why the 1861 church in the end was hardly bigger than the parsonage church, although much higher and with a steeple.¹¹²⁸ It is interesting to note that the tender for its construction submitted in 1856 'included the demolition of the old church', which must have referred to the

1122 Engelbrecht 1950, 97–98 (Colonial Secretary's Office 2244: Memorials, D. 1–300, No. 268. N.A.), provides the full text, while Thom (1949, 32) has only an excerpt.

1123 See also Guest 2012, 23.

1124 Dated 19 December 1855; Thom 1949, 33–34 (Colonial Secretary's Office 2244: Memorials, D. 1–300, No. 268. N.A.); Engelbrecht 1950, 98.

1125 For this debate, see Thom (1949, 24–37), with contemporary references.

1126 The alleged erf 33 Longmarket Street has caused much confusion in scholarship, because it seems to have never been the subject of a close study. See *ibid.*; Labuschagne 1986, 73–74; Labuschagne in Laband and Haswell 1988, 28; Henning 2014, 41.

1127 Guest 2012, 23.

1128 According to Thom (1949, 37), it measured about 27 feet in width and 54 feet in length, while the parsonage-church was 30 feet wide and 50 feet long. Photographs showing the proper church and parsonage-church from a northern view are provided by Botha (1952, 130), Groenewald and Bresler (1955, 27) and Groenewald (1964, 8).



Figure 22.18: Alex Mair, surveyor. Central area of Pietermaritzburg land register map, with erf 34 marked in red. 1869 (Durban, Local History Museum; Laband and Haswell 1988, 34 fig. 4)

parsonage-church; this decision was revoked only later.¹¹²⁹ The new church was inaugurated on Sunday, 7 April 1861, the day after a formal farewell service was conducted in the old parsonage-church, according to the congregation ‘the first in this city’ (see below). The passionate farewell song in honour of the old church (‘Afscheidslied aan de oude kerk’) does not mention the Vow, but speaks of the building’s simple structure:

Yet well pleased with grief / we depart from our Church. / It was a humble abode / but the first in this city, / a door to You, oh Christ King, / whom we hope never to despise / ...¹¹³⁰

The parsonage-church from 1861 to 1981

The 1861 church was in use for some eighty years before it was demolished in 1955: it had in turn ‘become too small and dilapidated ... [and had] to make way for a new memorial hall which was used for church services until 1962 and remain [sic] intact until the present [2014]’.¹¹³¹

Considering the perplexing history of the early churches in Pietermaritzburg and the ambivalent status of the parsonage-church, it is not surprising that, after it had been abandoned in 1861, the Reformed Church treated it rather badly – it was not even used as a house for the minister.¹¹³²

¹¹²⁹ Henning 2014, 119 (with quote).

¹¹³⁰ Groenewald and Bresler 1955, 22 (see Henning 2014, 122 fig. 102), ‘... Wel verheugd en toch met smarte, / Scheiden wij van ’t Kerkgebouw. / ’t Was een nederige Woning / Maar toch d’ eerst’ in dezen Staat, / En door U, o Christus Koning, / Naar wij hopen, niet versmaad ...’

¹¹³¹ Henning 2014, 123.

¹¹³² *Ibid.*, 123–135.



Figure 22.19: North-west corner of enlarged former parsonage-church when used as a Dining & Refreshment Room. c. 1891–97 (photo courtesy of uMsunduzi Museum Collection, Church of the Vow file)

The immediate after-life of the parsonage-church seems unsuited to a building believed to be sacred to the Vow. It was first rented as a bookshop and a school, and in 1863 sold to Vicar Brayhurst on condition that it would not be used inappropriately; when again in the possession of the Church Council (1865) it was rented out as a school, then sold in 1873,¹¹³³ after which

it was in turn a wagon-maker's shop, a mineral water factory, a tea room [fig. 22.19¹¹³⁴], a blacksmith's workshop, a chemist's shop, a [Sunday] school, and the Government considered using it for the Supreme Court but decided not to do so. It had become a wool shed in 1908 ...¹¹³⁵

It was in that year that the Council of the Dutch Reformed Church finally formed a committee to buy the old parsonage-church back (1909/10) and to transform it 'into a museum with exhibitions about the life and times of the Voortrekkers'¹¹³⁶ – without any reference to the Vow. Henning argues that the 'building was rescued through the initiative of E.G. Jansen ...',¹¹³⁷ a member of the committee and a young advocate in the town, who would coincidentally later chair the SVK, by then as a

¹¹³³ Thom 1949, 38; Henning 2014, 124–128.

¹¹³⁴ Probably the 'restaurant' owned by W.H. Buchanan, as mentioned by Henning 2014, 130–131 fig. 110.

¹¹³⁵ Buchanan 1934, 18. Henning (2014, 128–135) provides important historical details of the building's different owners and functions.

¹¹³⁶ Henning 2014, 135 (with quote), 137. Page 135 dates the purchase 'by the Church Council in 1909', but p.138 states: 'In February 1910 the building was purchased from William Herbert Buchanan who, as part of his contribution, allowed the committee to buy the building for less than its rated value.' For the members of the church committee, see pp.135–138.

¹¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 166.



Figure 22.20: North-east corner of former parsonage-church during restoration works for new Voortrekker Museum. 1911 (*The Natal Witness* 22.8.1911, p.1; photo courtesy of uMsunduzi Museum Collection, Church of the Vow file)

well-established Member of Parliament for the National Party.¹¹³⁸ According to *The Natal Witness* in 1910 the general brief was

to restore the building as far as possible to its original condition, to erect a monument of Piet Retief and other Voortrekker leaders, to install plaques with the names of all the Voortrekkers inside the building, and to use the restored building as a museum for objects associated with the Voortrekkers.¹¹³⁹

Between 1910 and 1911 the building was profoundly renovated (fig. 22.20), including the installation of ‘teak to be of best Moulmein or Burmese’, ‘Dutch gables in brickwork finished in scrolled and moulded plaster, lime washed’, reclaimed roof timbers and tiles to replace bad ones, electric lighting and the removal of added structures.¹¹⁴⁰ Existing ‘sleeper walls were rebuilt’ too, apparently to secure the new Cape Dutch gables – modelled in the tradition of the concavo-convex holbol type,¹¹⁴¹ as the old structure had proved to be too weak to ‘support the weight of the first gable’.¹¹⁴² Another measure was apparently to create a new entrance in the middle of the building’s western front facing towards market square, although this change seems not to be recorded.¹¹⁴³ Due to lack of sufficient funds, however, some of the more expensive specifications for this Afrikaner museum

¹¹³⁸ For E.G. Jansen, see Part 1, Chapter 1 (‘The Monument Committee’).

¹¹³⁹ Henning 2014, 140.

¹¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 143–144 (with quote).

¹¹⁴¹ For this gable type, which became popular in the mid-1750s and remained fashionable into the early twentieth century, see Fransen and Cook 1965, x–xiii, xxi (definition); Hall 2000, 105.

¹¹⁴² Henning 2014, 63.

¹¹⁴³ From the 1880s onwards early photographs show a new entrance in the northern half of the building’s west façade, but not in the centre.

had to be amended.¹¹⁴⁴ Many more concerns are recorded, but again the Vow is not mentioned once. When the building was finished, the newspaper *The Natal Witness* (28.10.1911) praised it nevertheless as

‘almost a facsimile [sic] of the old church (built) in the days just after Dingaan[;] ... two Dutch gables have been built in place of the former gable parapets’ making it an exceptional feature of the building.¹¹⁴⁵

The reinvention of the Voortrekker past had produced a new architectural icon. On 16 December 1912 – Dingaan’s Day – the building was inaugurated (fig. 22.21), but in 1917 ‘an entrance porch was added to the front on the western end of the building ... to protect the door from damage by the sun and to prevent storm water from flooding the building’ (fig. 22.22).¹¹⁴⁶ The porch’s gable with its equally spaced concavo-convex shape and the double-stepped feature at the top, but no scrolls at the base, differs considerably from the larger gable of the 1912 restoration. Evidently it had come to be believed that the form of the gables added to the Voortrekker Museum when it was restored did not match earlier accounts of the Cape Dutch gable(s) which had adorned the nineteenth-century parsonage-church, and the gable of the porch was designed to reflect the original form more accurately.¹¹⁴⁷ This seems to be endorsed by its correspondence with a slightly taller undated gable outline published by Van Rooyen in 1938 (fig. 22.23), which he describes as a true reproduction: ‘Original form of gable of little Voortrekker Church. (After Prof. Dr. J.D. Kestell.)’¹¹⁴⁸ His statement has authority as Rev. Dr John Daniel Kestell (1854–1941) was a widely respected citizen of Pietermaritzburg and a strong advocate of the Afrikaner cause.¹¹⁴⁹ Yet without a firm date for the Kestell drawing, we cannot know whether its striking conformity with the porch gable was the result of it being used as a source for the new gable, or the reverse. But it marked yet another step in the reinvention of the parsonage-church.

On the tickets and the programmes printed for the opening festivities of the restored building (13–16 December 1912) it was called either the ‘Voortrekkerskerkje Museum’ or ‘Voortrekkers Museum’, again without a literal reference to the ‘Gelofterkerk’ (Church of the Vow).¹¹⁵⁰ However, in accord with British historians of the later nineteenth century discussed above, the first catalogue of the Voortrekker Museum, published in English and Afrikaans in the year of its inauguration, explains:

The annual observance of Dingaan’s Day is the fulfilment of the first part of the vow (Geloofte), and the second part was carried out by the erection by the voortrekkers, of a church in the newly laid-out town of Pietermaritzburg. The building was erected in 1840 or 1841, and was the first white man’s church built, in what is now British South Africa outside the Cape Colony.¹¹⁵¹

Following the impassioned development of Afrikanerdom for much of the twentieth century, the names ‘Gelofterkerk(ie)’ and ‘Church of the Vow’ became popular, as is well documented; for example, in the ½d stamps (fig. 22.24) issued from 1933 to raise funds for building the Voortrekker

¹¹⁴⁴ Henning 2014, 144–145.

¹¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 147.

¹¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 158.

¹¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, for example, states that the porch ‘gable was restored to replicate the original church’.

¹¹⁴⁸ ‘Oorspronklike vorm van gewel van Voortrekkerkerkie. (Volgens Prof. Dr. J.D. Kestell.)’ – quote in Van Rooyen 1938, 158 with fig. See also Henning 2014, 62 fig. 41.

¹¹⁴⁹ For Kestell, see *DSAB* 1, 1968, 421–424; Henning 2014, 127. It was Kestell (spelt Kestel) who wrote one of the prefaces to Moerdyk’s *Kerkbou van Suid-Afrika* in 1919, Van Wouw the other.

¹¹⁵⁰ Henning 2014, 153 figs 137–138.

¹¹⁵¹ *Voortrekker Museum Pietermaritzburg* 1912, iii.



Figure 22.21: North-west corner of restored former parsonage-church as new Voortrekker Museum. 17.11.1911 (photo courtesy of uMsunduzi Museum Collection, Church of the Vow file)

Monument,¹¹⁵² or in the new 1935 guide *Voortrekker-Museum Pietermaritzburg*.¹¹⁵³ Likewise, in documents of the SVK regarding proposals for possible scenes for the historical frieze of the Voortrekker Monument from 1934 onwards, the names ‘Geloftekerkie’ (little Church of the Vow) or ‘Geloftekerkerk’ (Church of the Vow) became common – and have been ever since.¹¹⁵⁴

The Voortrekker Complex

Further memorials, all of them established after World War II though some of them were proposed already in the 1930s, demonstrate to what extent the old Voortrekker Museum and its site and adjacent buildings (later known as the Voortrekker Complex¹¹⁵⁵) became more and more dominated by Afrikaner nationalism and religious manifestations – in memory of the Vow and its supposedly eponymous church, called the Geloftekerk since the 1930s. As this site is in itself complex and loaded with history (fig. 22.25), we will focus only on monuments relevant to the Voortrekker Monument frieze. A new museum extension, planned from the late 1930s, was finally completed and named for E.G. Jansen, who laid the foundation stone on 16 December 1955.¹¹⁵⁶ Set up next to the old

¹¹⁵² Guest 2012, 48–49. For this campaign, see Part I, Chapter 1 (‘Funding’).

¹¹⁵³ Basson 1935, 6–7.

¹¹⁵⁴ For the ‘Ossewatreks’ (ox wagon treks) heading to the inauguration of the Voortrekker Monument on 16 December 1949, models of the ‘geloftekerkie’ (in fact, the Voortrekker Museum) were even built, as in Witpoort, situated on the R504 between Wolmaransstad and Leeudoringstad (Botha 1952, 118 with fig.).

¹¹⁵⁵ Pols in Laband and Haswell 1988, 163–164; Guest 2012.

¹¹⁵⁶ Guest 2012, 72–73.



Figure 22.22: North-west corner of restored former parsonage-church as Voortrekker Museum with added porch. 1917 (photo courtesy of uMsunduzi Museum Collection, Church of the Vow file)

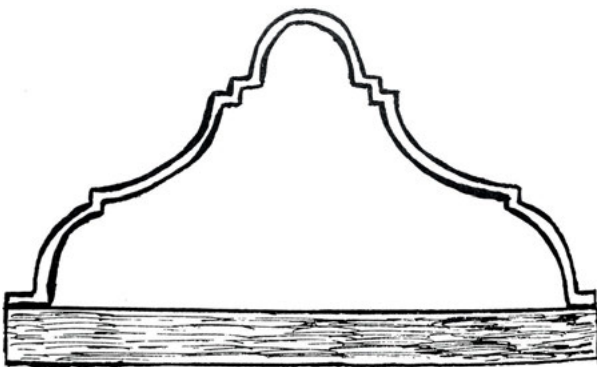


Figure 22.23: John Daniel Kestell. Undated drawing of Dutch holbol-type gable attributed to Pietermaritzburg parsonage-church (Van Rooyen 1938, 158)



Figure 22.24: *Geloftekerkie*. Stamp issued for Voortrekker Memorial Fund. 1933–36 (Guest 2012, 49)

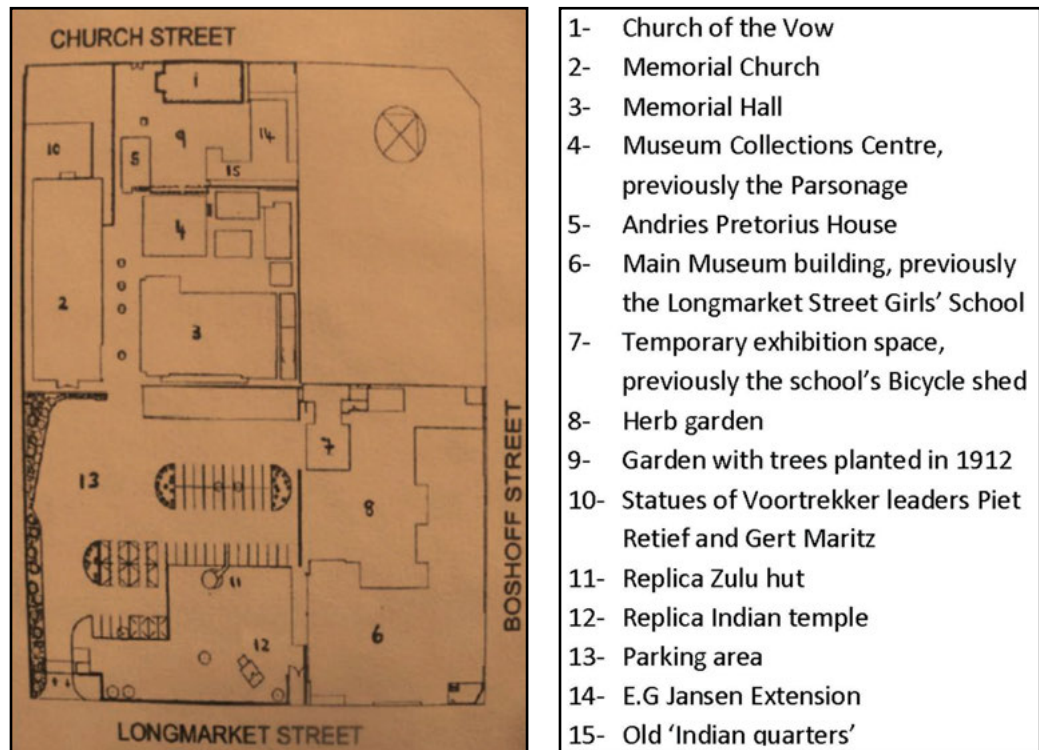


Figure 22.25: uMsunduzi Museum and Voortrekker Complex, Pietermaritzburg (Henning 2014, 185 fig. 164)

Voortrekker Museum, it was embellished with a historical frieze over the entrance, carved in stone in a slightly stylised naturalism (fig. 22.26).¹¹⁵⁷ In subject matter, if not in style, it echoed the frieze of the Voortrekker Monument in its choice of scenes, selecting three iconic moments in the story of the trekkers in Natal: *Descent*, *The Vow* and the heroic *Dirkie Uys* (a disputed heroism, as we have seen).¹¹⁵⁸ On the same day as the laying of the foundation stone,

celebrations were held at the Royal Agricultural Society's Showgrounds in the city. A large-scale model of the Church of the Vow Building, surrounded by ten wagons, provided the focal point for a tableaux, and there were speeches, 'volkspele' (folk-dancing) and a display of torches which had been lit at Ncome/Blood River ...¹¹⁵⁹

In the same year, the 'proper church' of 1861 was demolished to make way for a hall to accompany a new and much bigger church, the Voortrekker Gedenkkerk (Memorial Church), for which the Church Council had been planning since 1946.¹¹⁶⁰ As the Church Council could not provide the additional land needed for such a big structure, it reopened the debate on the alleged ownership of 'erf 33 Longmarket Street', a controversy one would believe to have been closed almost a hundred years before. However, after seven years of difficult negotiations, a formal settlement was reached, and, on 12 March 1956, an order of the Natal Supreme Court allowed the Church Council to

¹¹⁵⁷ We are grateful to Louis Eksteen for supplying a rare photograph, evidently taken in Atkins' studio before installation, and to Elrica Henning and Reggie Moodley (both uMsunduzi Museum) for providing the measurements.

¹¹⁵⁸ After a competition, the project for this frieze was awarded to sculptor Harry Atkins, who completed it by late 1959, although the unveiling was delayed until 6 April 1960 because of the death of Jansen; Mabel Jansen performed the ceremony in his place (personal communication from Elrica Henning, 16.8.2016); Guest 2012, 72.

¹¹⁵⁹ Guest 2012, 71.

¹¹⁶⁰ For here and the following, see Groenewald and Bresler 1955, 33–35; Groenewald 1965, 10–15; Guest 2012, 73–74 ('The struggle for Erf 33').



Figure 22.26: Harry Atkins. Voortrekker frieze of E.G. Jansen extension. Inaugurated 6 April 1960. Stone, h. 1.10 × w. 4.40 m (uMsunduzi Museum and Voortrekker Complex; photo courtesy of Louis Eksteen)



Figure 22.27: P.R. le Roux. Entrance façade of Pietermaritzburg Memorial Church. Inaugurated 6 April 1962 (uMsunduzi Museum and Voortrekker Complex; photo the authors)

purchase from the City Council a small strip of ‘erf 33 Longmarket Street’, ‘74 feet 6 inches (22.7 metres) wide running from Church Street along Voortrekker Street towards Langalibalele (once Longmarket) Street and 239 feet 6 inches (72.99 metres) long’.¹¹⁶¹ This strip of land provided extra space for the footprint of the new Memorial Church (fig. 22.27). A young Stellenbosch architect, P.R. le Roux, was ‘briefed as to the “liturgical demands” of the task, the importance of

¹¹⁶¹ Guest 2012, 73.



Figure 22.28: Coert Steynberg. Statue of Piet Retief. Inaugurated 5 April 1961. Bronze, 2.7 m (uMsunduzi Museum and Voortrekker Complex; photo the authors)



Figure 22.29: Jo Roos. Statue of Gerrit Maritz. Inaugurated 16 December 1970. Bronze, 2.7 m (uMsunduzi Museum and Voortrekker Complex; photo the authors)

producing a building that was symbolic of the history of the Covenant and the need to “link up closely with the existing Voortrekker Museum”.¹¹⁶²

Reconsidering the above, it gives one further food for thought to learn that, according to contemporary newspapers, the intended demolition of the 1861 church had caused ‘general consternation among Pietermaritzburgers ... [as it] was mistaken for the old Church of the Vow’.¹¹⁶³ In defiance of such confusions, the Memorial Church was inaugurated on 6 April 1962 as a lasting political and religious manifesto of Afrikanerdom, the mosaic in the vestibule transcribing yet another wording of the Vow against a background of Zulu weapons.¹¹⁶⁴ One might say that with it

¹¹⁶² Ibid., 74.

¹¹⁶³ Guest 2012, 74 with n 72 on p.78.

¹¹⁶⁴ Groenewald, 1964, 2 with fig.: ‘Die Geloofte. Hier staan ons / voor die heilige GOD van hemel en aarde / om ’n gelofte aan hom te doen dat / as hy ons sal beskerm / en ons vyand in ons hand sal gee. / Ons die dag en datum elke jaar as ’n dankdag / soos ’n Sabbat sal deurbring. / En dat ons ’n huis tot sy Eer sal oprig / waar dit hom behaag. / En dat ons ook aan ons kinders sal sê dat / hulle met ons daarin moet deel tot / nagedagtenis ook vir die opkomende geslagte. / Want die Eer van sy naam sal verheerlik word / deur die roem en die Eer van oorwinning / aan hom te gee’ (The Vow. Here we stand before the holy GOD of heaven and earth to make a vow to him that if he protects us and gives the enemy into our hands. We will spend the day and date as a day of thanks like a Sabbath. And we will erect a house in his honour where it pleases him. And we will say to our children that they must take part with us as long as remembered and also for the coming generations. For the glory of his name shall be enhanced by giving the glory and honour of victory to him). For our discussion of the established versions of the Vow, see *The Vow*.

a bewildering chapter of Voortrekker history had been closed: the Church of the Vow had finally been built. Notably on that day, Mabel Jansen, not only a long-standing member of the SVK, but the first women elected on the executive committee of the right-wing FAK and the founder of the Vroue Nasionale Party,¹¹⁶⁵ unveiled again the new bronze statue of Piet Retief (fig. 22.28), which she had unveiled at a separate ceremony the day before.¹¹⁶⁶ The chosen date of 6 April coincided with ‘the 101st anniversary of the closure of the Voortrekker Museum Building as a Church [the parsonage-church]’ and the inauguration of Pietermaritzburg’s first proper church in 1861.¹¹⁶⁷

Colossal bronze statues for each of the two whose names were given to the town were raised at the front of the Memorial Church – near to the former parsonage-church, the present Voortrekker Museum. The one of Piet Retief made by Coert Steynberg,¹¹⁶⁸ which Mabel Jansen had unveiled, was the centenary memorial promised the town by the SVK, set up on a 1.8 metre base covered by ‘rockery in the form of a small *koppie* planted with indigenous Drakensberg and other plants’.¹¹⁶⁹ The other, of Gerrit Maritz, by Jo Roos (1926–2010), a sculptor and art lecturer at the Pretoria Teacher’s Training College, was unveiled on 16 December 1970 (fig. 22.29).¹¹⁷⁰ Later, the house Andries Pretorius had built on his farm Welverdiend (Well-earned), situated some six miles south-east of Pietermaritzburg, was dismantled at its original location in Edendale, re-erected on the museum’s premises and, on 16 December 1981, officially opened by Pierre Cronje, then deputy minister of community development.¹¹⁷¹ The area around the humble former parsonage-church had been changed into an iconic Voortrekker Complex.

The frieze

When we finally return to the depiction of *Church of the Vow* in the Monument, it seems that, in the face of so much uncertainty, the main objective of the narrative was to make a humble structure as dominant as possible to endow it with historical significance. This was done at the expense of the upper part of the building’s gable, which is cut off because it is enlarged to fill the full breadth of the panel – a rare exception in the frieze. In truth, the edifice with its elaborate Cape Dutch gable does not represent the parsonage-church at all, but the new Voortrekker Museum inaugurated in 1912, without its 1917 porch. In contrast, when Coert Steynberg created a relief of the Church of the Vow for the rear face of his memorial ox wagon of granite (see *The Vow* and *Blood River*), he was advised by Dr Steenkamp, also a member of the Historiese Komitee for the Voortrekker Monument, to include the porch in his depiction, which the artist duly did (fig. 22.30).¹¹⁷² It is yet another indication of the general confusion regarding the relationship of the Voortrekker Museum to the Church of the Vow. Even if it were possible to assert that the two were one and the same – which we argue they were not – any claim that the antiquarian elements portrayed for this scene of the frieze are historically correct is only so for the restored building of seventy years later, and the form of its new façade (figs 22.21, 22.22). Even the tall scaffolding at the back was evidently developed from photographs of its construction like the one published in *The Natal Witness* on 22 August 1911 (fig. 22.20). In the relief, figures in Voortrekker attire are staged to re-enact the nineteenth-century building site, although the men on the scaffolding might more properly be said to be carrying out the restoration of the Voortrekker Museum (fig. 22.21). The marble scene also portrays a second

¹¹⁶⁵ For Mabel Jansen, see Part I, Chapter 1 (‘The Monument Committee’).

¹¹⁶⁶ The inauguration of the statue took place on two occasions, 5 and 6 April 1962; see Guest 2012, 72, 74 (quote).

¹¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹¹⁶⁸ For Steynberg, see *The Vow* and *Blood River*.

¹¹⁶⁹ Guest 2012, 72–73, 103.

¹¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 96.

¹¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 96–98.

¹¹⁷² Letter from Steenkamp to Steynberg, 24.4.1939 (DNMCH Archive, Steynberg folder).



Figure 22.30: Coert Steynberg. ‘The fulfilment of the Vow 1839–1840’. Back relief of Blood River Monument, depicting former Pietermaritzburg parsonage-church as the restored Voortrekker Museum with added porch. Inaugurated on 16 December 1947. Granite, see fig. 20.13 (photo the authors)

event, the survey of the settlement’s first layout, enacted here in close proximity to the building intended to portray the Church of the Vow. One cannot help thinking that the representation of the land survey was chosen to underline not only the genuineness of the Church of the Vow, but also its appropriate place in the heart of Pietermaritzburg – including a properly registered erf.

It is in this reconstructed historical environment that Moerdyk, the architect, chose to be portrayed. He stands next to the building that in his time was known as the ‘Church of the Vow’ (fig. 22.1), and which was also connected to the foundation of Pietermaritzburg as the trekkers’ capital in Natal. And it is in this setting that he carries a large set square, its iconic Tau shape reminiscent of the wooden cross allegedly used by the local pioneers, Piet Greyling and Filip Nel, ‘to get the streets at right angles’.¹¹⁷³

Within the historical narrative of Pietermaritzburg’s early churches, what Moerdyk wrote about the scene in the *Official Guide* both avoids the complex history which the SVK had uncovered (even if used to reach dubious conclusions), and draws a deliberate analogy between history and present-day Afrikanerdom:

Afrikaners are justly proud of the themes developed in this and the two preceding panels: the Vow, the Victory and the fulfilling of the Vow. Vows have been taken, history teaches us, and conveniently forgotten when the moment of danger has passed. Here we find a difference. A handful of people in dire

¹¹⁷³ Henning 2014, 31.

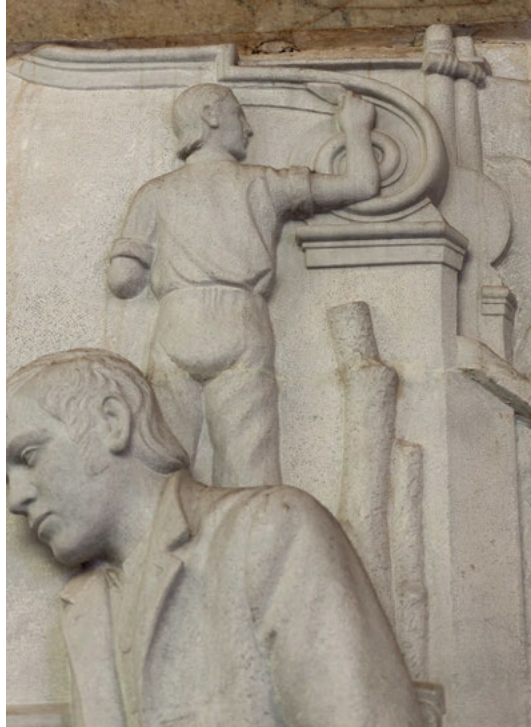


Figure 22.31:
Workman refining
gable's moulded
volute in *Church of
the Vow*. Marble,
detail of fig. 22.1
(photo Russell
Scott)

need cried aloud in their extremity and made a solemn promise and their descendants a century later still felt themselves voluntarily bound by that Vow. Not only was the Day of the Vow kept in remembrance and the little church built at Pietermaritzburg but wherever the Afrikaner settles and builds a town, the church is the largest and one of the first of the public buildings he erects.¹¹⁷⁴

Not only does Moerdyk claim a special status for Afrikaner people but, by implication, for all Afrikaner churches – and it is notable just how many he had himself designed. The ease with which he makes a connection between a complex happening of the past and its memory a century later exemplifies once more that he regarded this reading of history as indisputable. In the relief panel the architect of the Voortrekker Monument is presented as the builder of a new Church of the Vow to refocus Afrikaner attention on the promises of the past.¹¹⁷⁵ As the dominant person in the composition, with the set square in his hand like a staff of office, he appears to be almost a prophetic figure. And there is a solemnity about the scene as a whole. If here the figures are in shirt sleeves rather than the more formal attire the Boers customarily wear on the frieze, they are undertaking tasks of a high order, bringing religion and civilisation to the hinterland, and one might say they are aptly attired for going about God's work (fig. 22.31). There is more than a touch of irony that a church called 'Gelooftekerk' apparently never existed in early Pietermaritzburg, although in the frieze it appears to be so very real. In its palpable representation in marble, flanking the *Blood River* panel together with *The Vow* on the other side, the *Church of the Vow*, more than any other account, served to affirm that the Voortrekkers had honoured their Vow.

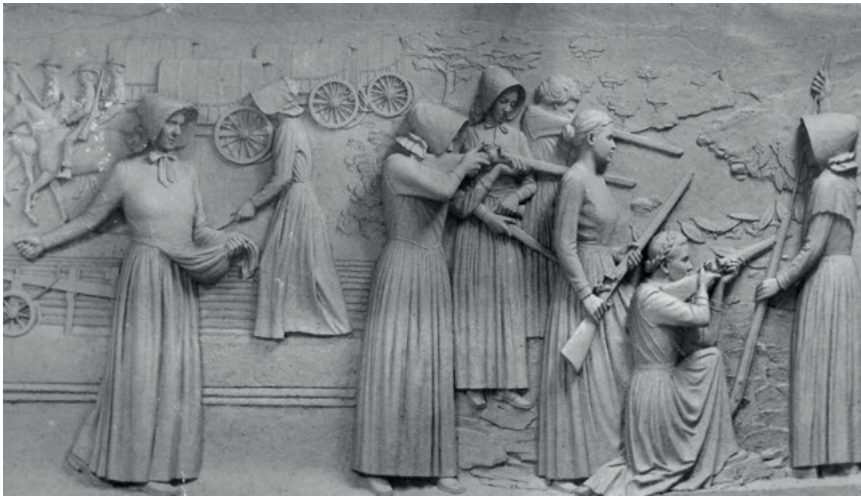
¹¹⁷⁴ *Official Guide* 1955, 51–52.

¹¹⁷⁵ It is notable that Moerdyk himself referred to the Voortrekker Monument in public as a church. Regarding the occasion when he was allowed to commandeer the not-yet-complete building for the 1946 marriage of his daughter, Irma (portayed in the frieze as Debora Retief), she wrote in her biography of her father, *Man en Monument*, 'Die gedagte het by hom opgekom om sy outdste dogter, vir my, aan die man van haar keuse af te staan in die grootste kerk wat hy gebou het, die heiligdom van die Afrikanervolk' (The idea came to him that he would give away his oldest daughter, myself, to her chosen husband in the greatest church he had ever built, the sanctuary of the Afrikaner people); quote in Vermeulen 1999, x, 101 with fig.

23 Women at *Saailaer* (1838?)



B2



C2



D

23 Saailaer

West wall (panel 27/31)

h. 2.3 × w. 4.01 m

Restored fractures on the vertical edges

Sculptor of the clay maquette: Peter Kirchoff

STAGES OF PRODUCTION

B1 One-third-scale clay maquette, not extant but replicated in B2 (1942–43)

B2 One-third-scale plaster maquette, h. 77 × w. 142.7 × d. c. 8 cm (1942–46)

C1 Full-scale wooden armature, not extant (1943–46)

C2 Full-scale clay relief, not extant but photographed; replicated in C3 (1943–46)

C3 Full-scale plaster relief (1943–46), not extant but copied in D (1948–49)

D Marble relief as installed in the Monument (1949)

EARLY RECORDS

Voorstelle (5.12.1934?) — item 19 ‘Pietermaritzburg. Geloftekerkie. Volksraadsitting, of die aanvang van boerdery: watervore, manne op die land besig met saai ens.’ (Pietermaritzburg. Church of the Vow. A sitting of the Volksraad, or the beginning of farming: canals, men busy on the land with sowing, etc.)

Panele (c. Dec 1934–36) — item 14 ‘Boere bring permanente beskawing’ (Boers bring permanent civilisation); a. ‘aanle van plaas: huis, landerye ens.’ (siting of farm: house, fields, etc.)

Wenke (c. 1934–36) — item II. Dr. L. Steenkamp, mnre. A.J. du Plessis en M. Basson, C. ‘EKONOMIES’ (Economic), 1. ‘Bedryfslewe’ (Industrial life), b. ‘Boerderybedrywighede, ploeg, beeste, ens.’ (Farming operations, plough, cattle, etc.) / item VI. SEN. F.S. MALAN, 6. ‘Begin van landbou in Natal te Saailager (Estcourt)’ (Beginning of agriculture in Natal at Saai laager [Estcourt])

Moerdyk Layout (5.10.1936–15.1.1937) — scene 14 on panel 20/31 ‘Saailaer’

Jansen Memorandum (19.1.1937) — item 7.14 ‘Saailaer and the cultivation of land’

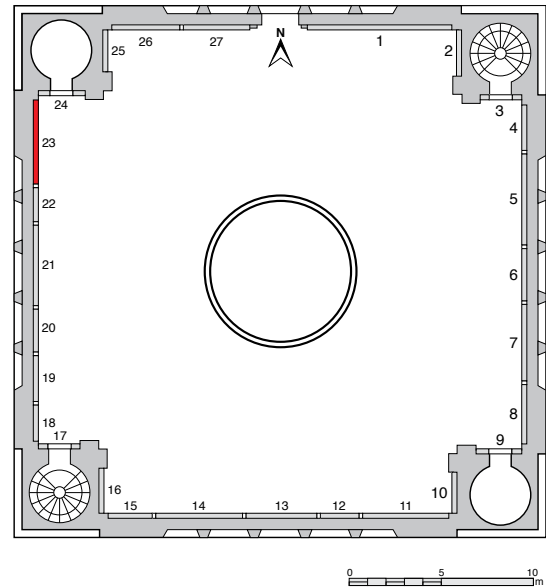




Figure 23.1: D. Peter Kirchoff. *Saailaer*. 1949. Marble, 2.3 × 4.01 m (courtesy of VTM; photo Russell Scott)

Description

This scene focuses on Boer women, eight of them busy on a flat stretch of land outside an encampment with four wagons (fig. 23.1). It is set in a typical Natal landscape (figs 23.9, 23.10), with rolling hills in the distance dotted with trees, and a river that winds down into a valley. Five women wear kappies, three have their hair drawn into buns, and all are neatly turned out, despite the tasks they perform. The two on the left cultivate the land, referred to in the scene's conventional title *Saailaer*, literally 'sowing camp or laager'. The nearest woman holds seeds in the folds of her apron and seems to move forward slowly as she scatters them. The further figure moves in the opposite direction, ploughing the soil in neat horizontal furrows. Curiously, she lacks feet and a right arm, so that she appears to float and steer the plough with one hand. In the distance behind them, four small figures of armed trekkers on horseback leave the scene to the left, the foremost horse traversing the panel's border.

To the right of the panel on rocky ground six closely grouped women defend the camp in the absence of the men. The women are fighting off a group of Zulu in the river valley below, the tiny figures armed with shields and assegais attempting to cross the water in a chain. The woman who frames the scene on the right looks inwards as she reloads her rifle with a ramrod, but all the others have their attention focused on the attacking Zulu. One woman kneels in front, her left foot on a rock, the other protruding behind her skirt, with only the sole of her shoe visible. She takes aim at the Zulu on the far bank, as do two of the standing women in the group behind her, their heads lowered to look along their gun sights. Between them, a young woman, her tiny feet apparently on higher ground, refills the flintlock of her rifle with a powder horn, while yet another in front of them considers her next target, holding her rifle to the ready.



Figure 23.2: B2. Peter Kirchoff. *Saailaer*. 1942–43. Plaster, 77 × 142.7 × c. 8 cm. Maquette (courtesy of VTM Museum VTM 2184/1–28; photo Russell Scott)



Figure 23.3: C2. *Saailaer*. 1943–46. Clay. Full-scale relief (courtesy of Kirchoff files; photo Alan Yates)

Developing the design

As with *Kapain*, *Debora Retief*, *Teresa Viglione*, *Marthinus Oosthuizen* and *Death of Dingane*, this is one of the scenes for which we have no Coetzer drawing and, accordingly, no entries in the early SVK minutes, despite the fact that the scene was included in Jansen's Memorandum of 19.1.1937. The design of the composition had to be developed by Peter Kirchhoff, probably in 1942, and it is handed down first in his small plaster maquette (fig. 23.2), which was followed fairly closely in the full-scale clay relief (fig. 23.3). There are relatively few developmental changes for us to trace, with the two groups of women – farming on the left and defending themselves on the right – established from the outset. However, the maquette shows differences in detail, most notably that there are three departing Boer riders instead of four, and all but one of the women wear kappies, as would have been normal practice when outdoors in the sun. The deep brims almost completely hide their faces, because most of them are turned towards the approaching Zulu who are shown further back in the river landscape. This may explain why the attackers are moved to the lower right in the full-scale version, so that the women can be shown turned in that direction, and more visible to the viewer. In addition, three are now bare headed, so that there is a clearer view of their faces.

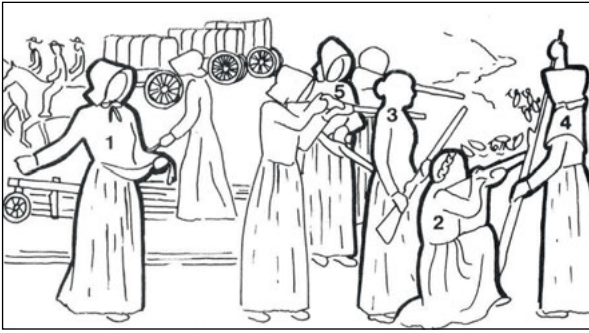
In general terms, the maquette has a less formal and more naturalistic quality, as is the case with many of the small plaster maquettes. The cloth apron holding seed is draped more convincingly over the sower's left arm, for example, and her ploughing companion has both her feet intact. The ground on which the defenders are grouped slopes uphill so that the elevated position of the feet of the young woman who loads her gun is more understandable, and the protruding foot of the kneeling woman more convincingly revealed. There is also more detail in the leafy vegetables that grow around the laager, and there is a tree next to the wagons. On the other hand, the distant hills are not clearly depicted, but in this case it may be the result of damage to the maquette.

Photographs in the Kirchhoff family collection labelled 'Harmonie S[aal]., Vera, 1942, Voortrekker Nooi' (Harmony Hall, Vera, 1942, Voortrekker maiden) demonstrate that Peter Kirchhoff had asked his daughter Vera to act as life model for developing his small clay maquette (fig. 23.4). It is interesting to note that not all the poses Vera was requested to adopt made it into the first design, such as the one on the upper left. Rather amusing is the pose, with hands reversed in the relief, where Vera enacts how to transfer powder into the flintlock of a gun, where she uses a modern glass bottle in place of a powder horn. Some of the folds of Vera's Voortrekker costume left clear imprints in the full-size clay relief; for example, the folds of the skirt of the kneeling shooter on the right, and the lines of the ploughing woman's legs seen through the fabric, visible even though she has lost her feet. Another photograph, on the lower left of the same page but unlabelled, which shows the pose of the sower, may be of Mrs Frikkie Meyer, identified by Hennie Potgieter as the model for this figure (fig. 23.5). Although often the models he names were for the portrait heads only, in this case the change from the rather flat-chested sower in the maquette to one whose upper body contours are emphasised by her well-fitting bodice may well be based on the model portrayed in this photograph – evidently made as a study for the full-scale clay panel, not the small plaster maquette.

Apart from changes to the figures in the full-size clay (fig. 22.3) already described, it was there that the background with the river and the rolling hills with many more trees was now elaborated, in a form reminiscent of a landscape painting, and the wagons shown in more detail with both rear wheels visible and their back flaps rolled up. The lines of furrows are longer and more numerous and the field of cabbages more fully represented. Although the clumsy fabric in the small plaster maquette has become more refined, the relationship between the women's clothing and their lower bodies is generally rather obscure, especially when they are in motion, as with the sowing woman. The six women busy with their rifles are now grouped more closely together, and, as already mentioned, the kappies of three have been removed to reveal carefully coiffeured hair, the kneeling woman with a coronet of plaits. It is also notable that the women's bodies do not generally reflect



Figure 23.4: 'Harmonie S., Vera, 1942, Voortrekker Nooi' (Harmony Hall, Vera [Kirchhoff], 1942, Voortrekker maiden), model for Saailaer, with an additional unknown model for the sowing woman bottom left (photos courtesy of Kirchhoff files)



- 1 Mrs Frikkie Meyer, wife of the head manager of Yskor [Suid-Afrikaanse Yster en Staal Industriële Korporasie Beperk; ISCOR, South African Iron and Steel Corporation]
- 2 Elza Pirow, daughter of minister Oswald Pirow [lawyer and right-wing politician; brother-in-law of Moerdyk]
- 3 Alida Holloway, daughter of Dr Holloway, state secretary, later married to Mike Moerdyk
- 4 Mrs Kirchhoff [sculptor's wife]
- 5 Vera Kirchhoff, daughter of the sculptor

Figure 23.5: Model for portraits (Potgieter 1987, 35)

the torsion that would result from supporting and firing a rifle; indeed, the heavy muzzleloaders are supported rather delicately with their left hands, more like holding a violin than a gun.

Some of the shortcomings are criticised in an undated anonymous critique, probably written by Laurika Postma, before the plaster casts of the full-scale clay panels were sent to Florence.¹¹⁷⁶ Drawing attention to the tableau effect of the rather frozen poses, she wrote:

Saaiplaas: The composition is lovely, but there is no movement, and it is a scene where the women are fighting for their lives. Then, the foreshortenings that are created in the forearms is unfortunate (namely those of the women who shoot). It is something that must be avoided in high relief and a problem that an artist must solve. The treatment of the dress of the woman in front who kneels with the gun gives no idea whether there is a body underneath from the hip downwards.¹¹⁷⁷

The making of this panel was linked to the tensions that had arisen among the four sculptors. To avoid serious conflict, Moerdyk assigned the full-scale clay panel of *Saaiplaas* to Kirchhoff to work on alone, as discussed in Part I.¹¹⁷⁸ An SVK document from 1947 summarises some of Moerdyk's thoughts about this panel and adds that Mrs K. Roodt-Coetzee had informed Kirchhoff about changes needed to meet historical accuracy, but had been ignored by the artist. She and the other artists had witnessed that Moerdyk too required modifications.¹¹⁷⁹ Evidently the changes chiefly involved the portrait of the woman sower on the far left and the hairstyle of the kneeling woman. Werner Kirchhoff recalls that the hairstyle was that of the model, one of the Pirow family, who had requested that her coronet of plaits be represented, as shown in the full-scale clay relief. Once Peter

¹¹⁷⁶ See Part I, Chapter 3 ('The frieze in Italy').

¹¹⁷⁷ 'Saaiplaas: Komposisie is mooi, maar daar is geen beweging nie, en dis tog 'n toneel waar die vrouens vir hulle lewe veg. Dan, die verkortings wat aangebring is met die voorarms is nie so gelukkig nie (nl die v.d. vrouens wat skiet). Dit is iets wat vermy moet word in so 'n hoë relief, en 'n probleem wat 'n kunstenaar moet oplos. Die dame wat voor kniel met die geweer se behandeling van die rok gee gladnie [sic] die idee of daar 'n lyf vanaf die heup na ondertoe is nie' (UP Archives, Laurika Postma Folder 16).

¹¹⁷⁸ Chapter 3 ('Harmony Hall').

¹¹⁷⁹ 'OPSOMMING VAN GEDAGTES I.S. DR. Kirchoff [sic] SE VERTOË GEUIT ... Mev. K. Roodt-Coetzee het ook op historiese gronde op veranderinge in die paneel aangedring maar dr. Kirchoff het haar geïgnoreer. Sy en ook die ander kunstenaars is getuies dat mnr. Moerdyk wysigings verlang het' (ARCA PV94 1/75/1/7, dated 8/10/47 by hand).



Figure 23.6: Armed kneeling woman with changed hairstyle in *Saailaer*. Full-scale clay relief and marble, details of figs 23.3 and 23.1 (photos Alan Yates; Russell Scott)



Figure 23.7: *Saailaer* mounted in Hall of Heroes. c. 1949. Marble (photo courtesy of Unisa Archive, Van Schaik album, MSS 134, 27)

Kirchhoff had left in 1946, Hennie Potgieter was brought in to exchange the coronet hairstyle for one with a bun like that of the other two women without kappies,¹¹⁸⁰ which resulted in this head abutting awkwardly onto the adjacent figure's muzzleloader (fig. 23.6). In a letter from Kirchhoff to Jansen dated 31.8.1947, the artist particularly objected to the modification of *Saailaer* (referred to by the alternative name *Saaiplaas*) on 'the grounds that this panel is my own artistic production and, what I call my own mental property'.¹¹⁸¹ From this point on he communicated through his solicitors, although no lawsuit eventuated.¹¹⁸²

Despite careful copying of the full-size plaster into the final marble (fig. 23.1), there are some telling discrepancies, largely simplifications of the full-scale clay relief. The lower border and some of the vertical folds of the dresses, especially those of the sowing, ploughing and kneeling women, were simplified. The left elbow of the latter is now missing and the right shoe, no longer covered by her dress, is strangely elongated and obscures the feet of the standing woman next to her. The second rear wheels of the wagons and the rolled-up flaps of the covers were omitted, and the field of cabbages has entirely disappeared. *Saailaer* is, like *Dirkie Uys*, one of the few scenes of the frieze shown mounted inside the Monument, in a photograph around mid 1949 in the J.L. van Schaik Publishers' album, when the marble veneer of the wall was not finished and the marble heavily discoloured by dirt (fig. 23.7).¹¹⁸³

1180 See letter from Laurika Postma, Hennie Potgieter and Frikkie Kruger to SVK dated 5.11.1947: 'In een geval was daar 'n vlegsel haar oor die hoof van 'n dame' (ARCA PV94 1/75/1/7).

1181 ARCA PV94 1/75/1/7.

1182 See Part I, Chapter 3 ('The plaster casts') and the series of documents that followed Kirchhoff's letter in ARCA PV94 1/75/1/7.

1183 The simplification and omission of many details in the panel indicate that the photograph shows the final marble, not the full-scale plaster relief; the pristine condition of the adjacent *Mpande* also suggests that the photograph was taken once the marble panels were in place.

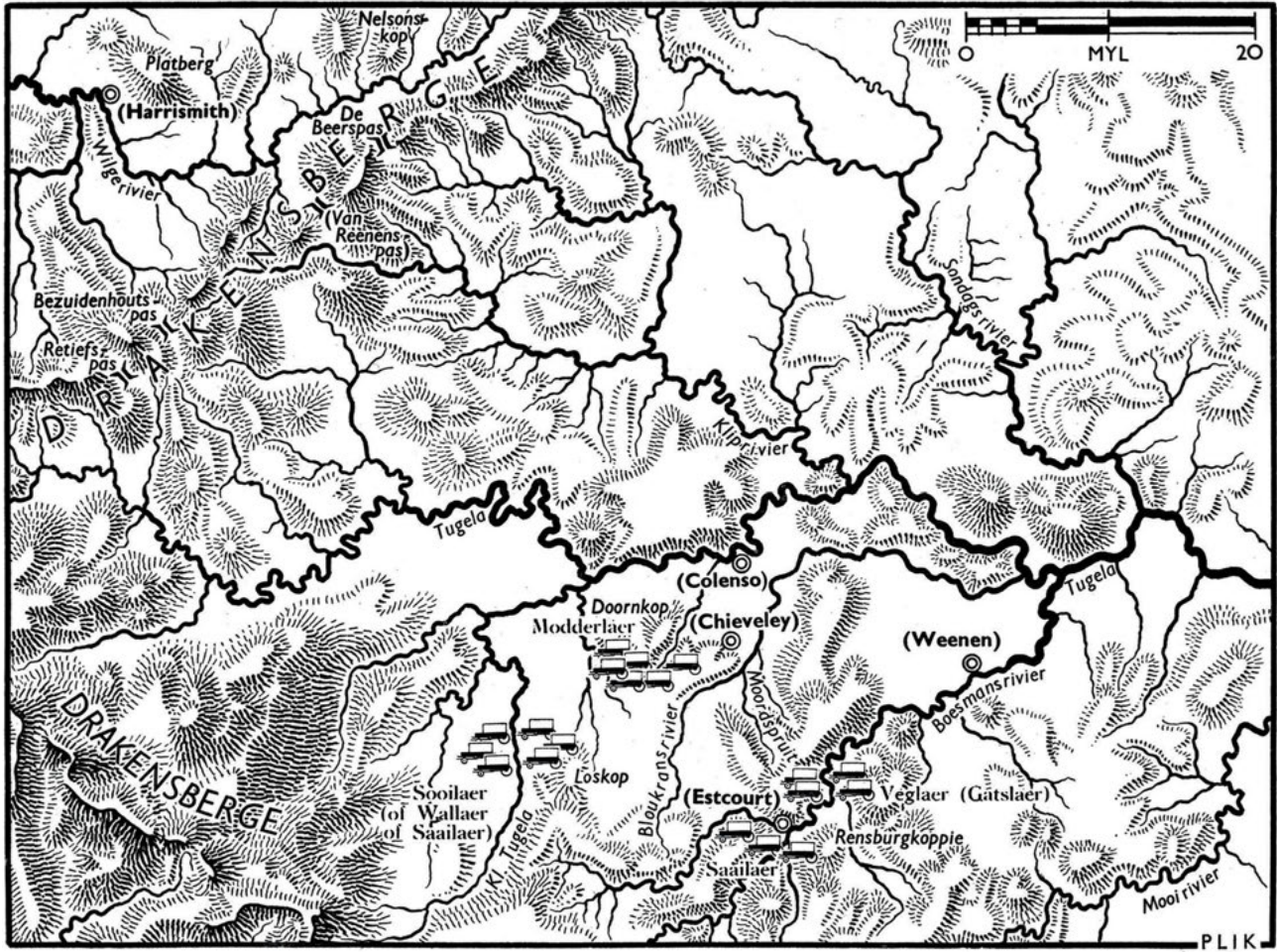


Figure 23.8: North-west Natal, showing the sites of Sooilaer and Saailaer near Estcourt (Thom 1947, 247)

Reading the narrative

A saailaer or saaiplaas, literary ‘sowing’ camp or farm, constitutes a topic which is central in the early proposals for the historical narrative of the frieze. At that stage in the development, however, as recorded in detail in our documentation for this scene above, a primary role for women cultivating the land was not conceived. In the ‘Voorstelle’ list of topic suggestions of c.1934, farming the land was clearly a male affair: it was proposed to consider a panel showing ‘the start of farming, irrigation, men busy on the land with sowing, etc.’¹¹⁸⁴ Similarly, but more explicitly linked to the idea of introducing white (agri)culture to the country’s hinterland, was the proposal in the later list ‘Panele’. Here item 14 proposes: ‘Boers bring permanent civilisation. (a) lay out of farm: house, farmlands, and so forth (b) establishment of a village e.g. P[ieter].M[aritz].Burg or Pot’[chef] stroom.’¹¹⁸⁵ In the ‘Wenke’ document which collected suggestions for the historical frieze, Senator F.S. Malan emphasised that cultural and religious aspects of the treks should be included in the frieze, not only battles and politics, and proposed under item 6: ‘Another scene: Beginning of agriculture in Natal and Saailager (Estcourt).’¹¹⁸⁶ After this continuous interest in the topic, and its inclusion in the ‘Moerdyk Layout’ and the final ‘Jansen Memorandum’ sent to the Minister of Internal Affairs in January 1937, why it does not feature in either of the sets of Coetzer’s drawings is perplexing.¹¹⁸⁷

It was decided to represent the Voortrekkers’ agricultural ventures on the site suggested by Senator Malan – Saailaer.¹¹⁸⁸ The name has been applied to two laagers established by Gerrit Maritz in the vicinity of present-day Estcourt, one in early 1838 on a bend of the Bushman’s River, which survived the February massacre by the Zulu but was abandoned later that year, apparently in June,¹¹⁸⁹ and another, more commonly known as Sooilager (sod laager).¹¹⁹⁰ The latter name referred to a thick wall of sods built around it for protection on the new site that Maritz considered less vulnerable to Zulu attack, which was situated at the Little Tugela River and just above today’s Gourton Bridge (fig. 23.8): it was his last laager, where he died on 23.9.1838.¹¹⁹¹ A description of Saailaer is given in J.J. Oberholster’s 1972 publication *The historical monuments of South Africa*, which corresponds to the one represented in the frieze, since the panel includes a confrontation with Zulu warriors:

Saailaer ... was the furthest south of the laagers at the time of the Great Murder [Bloukrans]. It stood in a horseshoe bend of the Bushman’s River just east of Estcourt ...

Because Saailaer was situated slightly off the direct route of the Zulu attacks on the night of 16–17th February, Maritz’s laager was not attacked until earlier in the day ... so he had time to prepare for an attack. The attack eventually developed from across the river. ... The Zulus tried to cross the river by linking hands and forming a human chain, but the chain was repeatedly broken by shots from a

1184 See ‘Early records’ above.

1185 Ibid.

1186 Ibid.

1187 It is unlikely that it was simply lost, as the records of the time consistently speak of twenty-two drawings by Coetzer, and there are indeed twenty-two represented across the ARCA and Museum Africa holdings, and they omit *Saailaer*; see Part I, Chapter 2 (‘Coetzer and the frieze’).

1188 A short overview of early Voortrekker agriculture is provided by Thom 1949, 96–106.

1189 Smit trans. Mears 1972, 117 (Dutch text: Smit ed. Schoon 1988, 143). For Saailaer, see Jansen 1938, 47; Oberholster 1972, 252 no. 31a; Visagie 2014, 100–101, 106–107 with n 54, 110.

1190 Jansen (1938, 47) explains the later confusion of ‘Saailaer’ and ‘Sooilaer’, as both laagers were protected by a loop of either the Bushman or Little Tugela River and entrenchments of divots; he points out that the site was also referred to as Maritzdam because of the irrigation developed there. See also Thom 1947, 246 n 2 and 3 (with archival sources), 253–255 (253 with two photographs of the site); Visagie 2014, 110–115 (map opp. p.98); Anderson 2014, 20–21.

1191 For ‘Sooilaer’ and its topography, see *Arrival*.

small brass cannon the Voortrekkers had. Eventually the Zulus took to flight and Maritz with a small commando could hasten to the help of the other laagers.

While Maritz's laager was camped here an irrigation scheme was started. Water was led from the river by a furrow which is still in use, and the fertile fields in the valley were cultivated just as they still are today.¹¹⁹²

From the time that the Boers entered Natal, and especially after their victory in the Battle of Blood River, they had begun to establish themselves, to build settlements such as Pietermaritzburg and to farm the land. Juxtaposing this scene of ploughing and sowing next to *Church of the Vow*, with its laying out of this town, neatly covered both aspects – potent symbols to demonstrate the superiority of white civilisation. Both settlement and farming were unquestionably looked upon as male activities, however, and their modification to a female-dominated event is extraordinary. But in terms of the narrative structure of the frieze it echoes the women's important role in *Women spur men on* at the other end of the west wall.

The *Saailaer* panel is double the other in length, so that on the west frieze there are only two scenes to the right of *Blood River* while there are three to the left. Yet Peter Kirchhoff refers to *Saailaer* as two scenes, and it does indeed encompass two themes, agriculture and defence. The second aspect is unexpected, as the emphasis in the early proposals for topics of this nature for the frieze was solely on agriculture. However, when Jansen's list of topics became public, *Die Huisgenoot* of 19.3.1937 instead of farming listed 'Die gevegte by Zaaialager' (the fights at Saailaer), a reminder that the laager was also attacked during the Bloukrans massacre.¹¹⁹³ But to show both the farming and the defence of the laager as the concern of women on their own was a surprising twist, although it met the insistent plea amongst proposals for the frieze that the role of Voortrekker women should be given recognition. Perhaps the decision to fuse two scenes into one is also an attempt on Kirchhoff's part to follow the advice he later proffered about the sequential scenes of *Descent* and *Treaty* by Kruger on the south frieze, in his letter to Jansen of 27.8.1946 in the Kirchhoff files:¹¹⁹⁴ 'Since the historical sequence requires that the one leads into the other, it would have been desirable to handle them as a compositional unit ...' But *Saailaer* did not provide an obvious chronological – or indeed historical – link to justify the coupled scenes.

The panel may have filled another requirement as well. A substitute was required for a reconciliation scene of the Voortrekker leaders Andries Pretorius and Hendrik Potgieter, which had been mooted as a topic from the earliest proposals through to the 'Jansen Memorandum' of early 1937, and had even been developed as a drawing by Coetzer in Manfred Nathan's contemporary book, *The Voortrekkers of South Africa* (fig. 27.8).¹¹⁹⁵ But for some reason it had been dropped. Perhaps it would have seemed something of an anti-climax to end the frieze if it had been portrayed in its correct chronological position after *Convention*. It also might have felt inappropriate to acknowledge that there had been dissension amongst the Voortrekkers, even if the two leaders ultimately reaching an agreement was a fine example of 'saamhorigheidsgevoel' – Afrikaner fellowship and unity – as had been suggested in the 'Panele' list of topics. Whatever the reason for its rejection, a scene representing women opened up more narrative options, and it was easier to place in the frieze sequence because of its lack of a clear chronology – one might even say its lack of clear history, since an occasion when Boer women acted entirely alone as farmers and defenders is indeterminate.

¹¹⁹² Oberholster 1972, 252 no. 31a.

¹¹⁹³ UP Archives, Moerdyk files, MDK0375T.

¹¹⁹⁴ Quoted in Part I, Chapter 4 ('Composition').

¹¹⁹⁵ Nathan 1937, opp. p.340.

Moerdyk, however, writes of the theme with his customary confidence for the *Official Guide*:

In this panel a laager of women is depicted at a spot near the present day Estcourt. The men had gone to war and they were left practically defenceless. While the men were absent, the women tilled the soil and planted wheat – hence the name Saailaer, or Laager of Sowing.

While the women were alone, they were attacked by the Zulus. Fortunately the Bushman's River was in spate, and the Zulus had to form a chain bridge, holding one another's hands, in order to cross. The women took up position on a little hill near the river and shot at link after link of the living bridge so that the Zulus were swept away by the stream and the attack was a failure.

The panel was made from a sketch of the country where the attack was warded off.¹¹⁹⁶

Perhaps mindful of its late position in the frieze, Moerdyk avoids positioning the scene chronologically, but the story of the Zulu failing to cross the Bushman's River in flood may relate back to contemporary accounts of the Zulu attack at Saailaer on 17 February 1838, during the massacres following the death of Retief, and it seems to be this event that formed the basis of the women's defence in the *Saailaer* panel (fig. 23.9), which is also set in a landscape that brings to mind Natal and the Bushman's River (fig. 23.10). On that occasion, many men were absent (although not all, and the missing men had gone to negotiate with Dingane, rather than 'to war' as Moerdyk states); even so, it is by no means clear that only women were involved in the camp's defence. Moerdyk's narrative seems to draw on a description mentioned in a letter written by Jacobus Boshof on 2 July 1838 to the editor of the *Graham's Town Journal*, which included the massacre of women and children in Bloukrans on 16/17 February. In his account, Boshof remarks that with the coming of daylight it was possible

to see the approach of the ferocious enemy ... Parties of three, four, and five [Zulu] were now coming in from all directions; and at the Bushman's River, the savages having at last been repulsed by less than fifty men, fled precipitately across the river, up to their chin and breast in water, hand in hand, to support each other, many were drowned and shot.¹¹⁹⁷

His account is backed up by other accounts such as that of Anna Steenkamp, who noted in her later remembrances that, when the Zulu attacked Maritz' laager at daybreak, 'He shot them to such an extent that the river was red with blood. The river was running high and the Zulu had to struggle hand in hand to cross and it was for this reason that so many were shot dead.'¹¹⁹⁸

Notably, they both write of men repelling the Zulu. In his same letter, but for a later period of this year, Boshof described the agricultural developments in the area:

The emigrants are now encamped at the Tugela and Bushman's Rivers, in parties from 50 to 100 wagons, and have commenced ploughing at the latter and other places. They must frequently from necessity expose themselves to great danger; and it is feared that, if the enemy should take advantage of their situation, and they should be off their guard, fresh disasters may yet befall them. There are altogether about 1,000 wagons, 640 men, about 3,200 women and children, and, say, 1,260 blacks.¹¹⁹⁹

¹¹⁹⁶ *Official Guide* 1955, 52. Moerdyk does not specify what sketch this might be, but it is tempting to think that it might have been one of Coetzer's studies of Voortrekker sites, although the location of Maritz' laagers does not seem to be represented in his publication of many of these, such as Kerkenberg and Bloukrans, in *My Kwas Vertel* (1947).

¹¹⁹⁷ Bird, (*Annals* 1, 1888, 404), translating an article in *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 17 August 1838. Grobler (2000, 134), claims that 'according to contemporary sources [which he does not name] the Zulu warriors attempted to cross the Bushman's River to attack the laager'.

¹¹⁹⁸ 'Hy het die kaffers so geskiet dat die rivier rooi van die bloed was. Die rivier was vol en die kaffers moes hand aan hand deursukkel en dis om hierdie rede dat daar so baie van hulle doogeskiet is' (Steenkamp 1939, 17). See also Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 463; Preller, *Voortrekkermense* 2, 1920, 38 has a variant text.

¹¹⁹⁹ Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 413. For the number of Boers, wagons and livestock in the Tugela River area in June 1838, see also Boyce 1839, 151.



Figure 23.9: Landscape and attacking Zulu crossing Bushman's River in a chain in *Saailaer*. Marble, detail of fig. 23.1 (photo Russell Scott)



Figure 23.10: Natal, Bushman's River? Undated and without location (photo courtesy of HF Archives F 02-0314F)

Moerdyk's account in the *Official Guide* conflates various episodes, but none of them accounts for the idea of the women farming and defending the laager on their own. In a publication about the Voortrekkers in Natal at the time of the centenary in 1938, E.G. Jansen, without supplying a historical reference, describes a version of this story in the context of Bloukrans, which, like Moerdyk's account, but in contradiction of Boshof, introduces the idea of women defending Gerrit Maritz' Saailaer. It also includes elements that do not match the relief panel as it depicts neither the boys nor the cannon that feature in this description.

The women had bravely helped to pull the wagons into a laager form, and [so] Maritz was able to ride out with a small group of men to help other Trekkers.

It was told that, when the able-bodied men were gone, a great number of Zulus appeared across the river. The river was high, and the Zulus tried to cross holding one another's hands to attack the laager. The women and young boys quickly moved a small cannon which was in the laager into position and began to shoot the Zulus in the river. Fortunately, they shot them accurately which caused the Zulus to leave the area.¹²⁰⁰

The narrative described by Jansen and Moerdyk appears to have been contrived from half-remembered events to add to the heroism of the Great Trek, but which was in conflict with the claimed intention of historical veracity in the frieze, and the Historiese Komitee's obsession with accurate detail.¹²⁰¹ This fictive event has the role of emphasising the importance of Voortrekker women. The message of this narrative can hardly be misunderstood: it was the Boer woman who guaranteed the Voortrekkers' future not only through her fertility, but also in her active role in day-to-day survival.

A paper entitled 'The Historical Importance of the Farm Zaay Lager', compiled by Louis J. Eksteen, follows Oberholster's account of the battle, but adds an interpretation that may provide another reason for the placement of the *Saailaer* panel. He points out that this battle

... could be seen as a very important turning point in the history of the Voortrekker-Zulu conflict at the time in KwaZulu-Natal. The Zulu's [sic] for the first time here, got a fierce resistance from a Voortrekker laager. The Zulu's witnessed the power of the Voortrekker weaponry and gun powder. In historical context the Battle of Zaay Lager can be seen as a prelude to the Battle of Blood River-Ncome.¹²⁰²

1200 'Die vrouens het dapper gehelp om die waens in laer vorm te trek, en Maritz kon met 'n klein klompie mense uitry om ander Trekkers te help. Dit word vertel dat onderwyl die weerbare mans weg was, 'n groot aantal Zoeloes oorkant die rivier verskyn het. Die rivier was vol, en die Zoeloes het probeer om hand-aan-hand deur te kom om die laer aan te val. Die vrouens en jong seuns het gou 'n klein kanon wat in die laer was, reggetrek en begin skiet op die Zoeloes in die rivier. Gelukkig het hulle raak geskiet, waarop die Zoeloes die wyk geneem het' (Jansen 1938, 45). This corresponds closely to the anonymous undated typescript 'Zaay Lager' that Zabeth Botha uncovered in the Voortrekker Monument Archives (file nr ES 9/5/1/5/1, vol. 1 = Eksteen 2006 [pages not numbered]), yet it makes the point that Maritz' laager was warned of the Zulu attack, which surely makes it unlikely that he would have left the women and children alone in the laager (ibid., [2-3]). And it is notable that Oberholster (1972, 252 no. 31a), whose version of the attack is quoted above, confirms the presence of the men and 'a small brass cannon', and concludes 'Eventually the Zulus took to flight and Maritz with a small commando could hasten to the help of the other laagers'.

1201 The conflicting accounts around *Saailaer* are also reflected in different readings offered by official Monument guidebooks. While, for example, Heymans and Theart-Peddle (2009, 38), presumably assuming that the chronological placement in the frieze is correct, link the narrative to an incident 'a few months after the Battle of Blood River' (without providing a reference), Heymans (1986, 33) avoids a connection with a specific event when stating that laagers called 'saailaer' were 'attacked sporadically by the Zulus, but the women successfully repulsed the attacks time and again'.

1202 Eksteen 2006, [5].



Figure 23.11: Hall of Heroes, west frieze. On the far left, *Women spur men on*; on the far right, *Saailaer* (courtesy of VTM; photo Russell Scott)

Positioning *Saailaer* after *Blood River*, and placing the defence of the laager in the hands of the women, ensured that it was not in competition with the dramatic high point of the frieze – the decisive victory over the Zulu by Pretorius and his commando that avenged the murder of Retief’s party and the massacres at the Bloukrans area. And *Saailaer* and *Women spur men on* frame the other four scenes of the west frieze, all male-dominated, creating a sense of balance (fig. 23.11). On this wall Boer women not only encourage the trekkers to fight the Zulu at Blood River but are, when the men are absent, themselves able to both fight the enemy off and cultivate the unworked land, and this with unperturbed calm.

24 *Mpande* proclaimed king of the Zulu (10 February 1840)



A3



B2



C2



D

24 Mpande

West wall (panel 28/31)

h. 2.3 × 2.4 m

Restored fractures on the vertical edges

Sculptor of the clay maquette: Frikkie Kruger

STAGES OF PRODUCTION

A1 W.H. Coetzer, pencil drawing, retained only in A2 (April–June 1937)

A2 Reproduction of A1 (June 1937)

A3 W.H. Coetzer, revised pencil drawing A1, h. 13.4 × w. 15.4 cm
(after September 1937)

Annotations: ‘nog nie klaar’ (not yet finished) / ‘Trekkers rig ’n gedenk steen op’ (Trekkers erect a memorial stone) / ‘Pretorius groet Pand’ (Pretorius greets Mpande) / ‘Geweer salevo’ (gun salute) / ‘MPanda Kroning’ (Mpanda Crowning)

B1 One-third-scale clay maquette, not extant but replicated in B2 (1942–43)

B2 One-third-scale plaster maquette, h. 77.5 × w. 86 × d. 8 cm (1942–43)

C1 Full-scale wooden armature, not extant (1943–46)

C2 Full-scale clay relief, not extant but photographed; replicated in C3 (1943–46)

C3 Full-scale plaster relief (1943–46), not extant; copied in D (late 1947–49)

D Marble relief as installed in the Monument (1949)

EARLY RECORDS

SVK minutes (4.9.1937) — item 4s (see below, ‘Developing the design’)

Voorstelle (5.12.1934?) — item 18 ‘Kroning van Umpande. Hiervoor bestaan verskeiegeskrewe suggesties: rotsblok in Zululand, waarop Pretorius e.a. aanvoerders, met Umpande, ens.’ (Crowning of Mpande. Different written suggestions exist for this: rock in Zululand on which Pretorius and other commanders, with Mpande, etc.)

Moerdyk Layout (5.10.1936–15.1.1937) — scene 20 on panel 26/31 ‘Volksraad ... Kroning Mpande’ (Volksraad ... Crowning Mpande)

Jansen Memorandum (19.1.1937) — item 7.20 ‘Mpande, who placed himself with his followers under the protection of the Volksraad, and who assisted in ultimately conquering Dingaan, is proclaimed by Andries Pretorius as “King of the Zulus” (14th February, 1840)

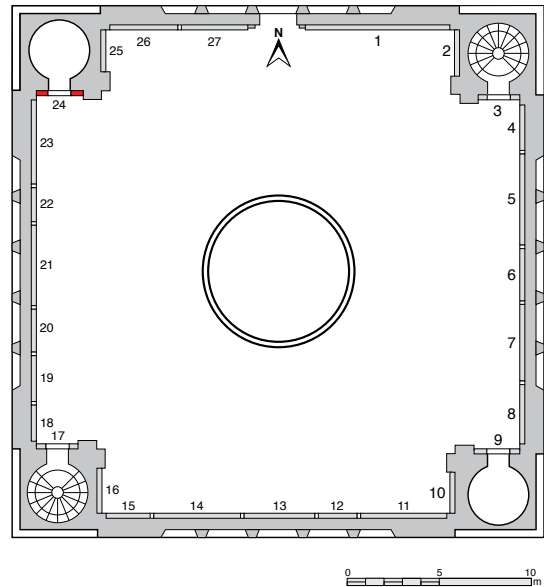




Figure 24.1: D. Mpande. 1949. Marble, 2.3 × 2.4 m (courtesy of VTM; photo Russell Scott)

Description

In the spotlight are three people in frontal view whose smaller scale and elevated position on a smooth rock plinth, sited over the gable-shaped door, set them back in space (fig. 24.1). In the centre is the Zulu king Mpande, flanked by a slightly smaller Zulu on his right and Andries Pretorius on his left. Pretorius is the tallest of the central group, clean-shaven and in the formal dress that helps to make him recognisable across the frieze, his tall hat topping the other heads, even though he stands lower on the sloping plinth. Yet Mpande is given royal treatment, holding a ceremonial staff and vested with full regalia which matches that of Dingane on the opposite wall in *Treaty*. He has a royal head ring with its large central attachment in the form of a feather ball and a single feather at the back; earplugs; a double ring around the neck; a small ring around the upper left arm; a purpose-cut skin covering his back and the midline of the chest; a cord bandolier worn diagonally over his shoulder (which almost seems to run through the gesturing left hand of the adjacent Zulu); two 'izinjobo' of genet tails hang between his front and his invisible back apron; and tufts of cow tails on a band around the upper arms and below the knees.¹²⁰³

Two parties form semi-circles on either side of the central group, witnessing the event: fourteen Zulu portrayed with almost classical naked bodies on the left, addressed by the Zulu next to the king, and ten Boers in their customary Voortrekker attire on the right. At the front of the parties are two pairs of men who stand on either side of the doorway. Large in scale, with their backs to us as they turn towards the group on the rock plinth, they not only fill the narrow space on either side but form a clever device to draw the eye to the centre, reinforced by the oblique position of their weapons. Their gaze is multiplied by the many onlookers depicted behind them, only their heads visible, Boer and Zulu with their hats and assegais respectively raised in celebration of the newly instated king.

¹²⁰³ For royal Zulu dress, see *Treaty*.



Figure 24.2: A2. W.H. Coetzer. Reproduction of first sketch for *Mpande*. June 1937 (courtesy of ARCA PV94 1/75/5/1; photo the authors)



Figure 24.3: A3. W.H. Coetzer. 'Mpanda'. After September 1937. Pencil, 13.4 × 15.4 cm. Revised first sketch (photo courtesy of Museum Africa, no. 66/2194T)



Figure 24.4: B2. Frikkie Kruger. *Mpande*. 1942-43. Plaster, 75.5 × 86 × 8 cm. Maquette (courtesy of VTM Museum VTM 2184-28/1-28; photo Russell Scott)

Developing the design

We can surmise that Coetzer's first pencil drawing, judging by its reproduction (fig. 24.2), was basically the extant drawing (fig. 24.3), since there is little difference between them. There are, however, some small corrections in the drawing: faint traces of erased lines show that the corner of the box in the tent was moved to the right, although this was evidently modified before the reproduction was made, as it shows the revised position. Further changes are the brim of Pretorius' hat, which is now floppier and turned up, accentuated by pencil lines, and some details of Mpande's regalia that are shaded in, as is the front but not the narrow side of a memorial stone on the left, which reverses the position of the hatching in the reproduction.

In Coetzer's design, the two key people stand in the centre foreground face to face, Pretorius approaching from the right to shake hands with Mpande. They are in front of an open tent, and a gun leans on a riempie stool in the right foreground, which suggests that this is a Voortrekker camp.¹²⁰⁴ While Pretorius is shown in normal trekker attire apart from his top hat and the unusual cuffs on his trousers, the new Zulu king with his prosperous round belly is arrayed with full royal regalia. Partly overlapped by him and partly obscured by the frame, two trekkers – with brimmed hats and rolled-up sleeves, and a pick and shovel lying beside them on the ground – erect a memorial stone called Panda-klip (Mpande's stone) to honour Mpande's crowning, as discussed below. On the opposite side and a little further back, a row of three trekkers who wear powder horns slung over their shoulders fire a salvo. There are four guns visible, so one must imagine at least a fourth trekker beyond the frame, just as the cut-off arm and shields on the opposite side suggest Zulu onlookers.

At the Historiese Komitee meeting on 4 September 1937 the following alterations were requested:

Coronation of Panda. Pretorius and Panda stand on a rock alongside each other; Pretorius is in his military dress (See Zietsman diary); a group of Boers stand in front of them and behind are the kaffers of Panda; flint guns; Panda does not have arm bands but possibly arm rings; his body is covered in skins.¹²⁰⁵

Coetzer's drawing, marked as unfinished, pays no attention to the comments; they are, however, taken up in the design of the small plaster maquette by Frikkie Kruger (fig. 24.4). Anticipating the final design, Pretorius and Mpande now stand on a rock, and a Zulu figure is introduced on Mpande's right, so that he is centred.

All three men are depicted in frontal view and the high ground on which they stand provides a pretext for raising them to fit over the gable-shaped door. Mpande is a much sprucer figure than in Coetzer's sketch, his bare torso well developed with no belly fat; he wears the royal regalia, much like the final panel, but including a visible 'ibeshu' (back apron), although not the skin to cover his upper body mentioned by the committee. He is also shown with a bandolier, perhaps portraying the officer's poignard presented to him by Delegorgue (see below). Mpande looks towards a crowd of Zulu on the left, to whom he is presented as the new king by the Zulu next to him. On the other side, Pretorius stands, no longer in Voortrekker clothes, as Coetzer had portrayed him, nor in military attire as the Historiese Komitee had requested, but in a waistcoat, bow tie and long frock coat from which his sabre and pistol protrude. Missing from his customary sartorial attire is his top hat,

¹²⁰⁴ Coetzer's design evidently follows the recollection of Philippus Jeremias Coet(s)zer (1819–98) in Preller (*Voortrekkermense* 4, 1925, 63; see also Visagie 2011, 110): 'Pretorius then gave him his hand and said: "Panda, now you are the king of the Zulu nation!" He led him from the tent to outside the laager. Pretorius fired ten shots from the cannon, and the Boers shot two salvos from their guns' (Pretorius gaf hem daarop de hand, en zeide: 'Panda, jij is nou de koning van de Zoeloe-natie!' Hij geleidde hem uit de tent tot buiten 't lager. Pretorius deed tien schoten uit 't kanon vuren, en de Boeren schoten twee salvo's uit hun geweren).

¹²⁰⁵ 'Kroning van Panda. Pretorius en Panda staan op 'n rots laans [sic] mekaar; Pretorius is in sy krygsklere; (Sien Zietsman se Dagboek); voor die twee staan 'n klomp Boere, en agter hulle staan die kaffers van Panda; vuursteen-gewere; Panda het nie armbande maar wel armringe; sy lyf is vol velle' (Historiese Komitee 4.9.1937: 4s).

though the low crown of the hat he wears may be the result of damage to the plaster maquette. He holds a partly rolled-up document in his left hand – a counterpart to Dingane’s treaty with Retief – in this case exhibiting the legal correctness and trustworthiness of the Boers. Pretorius is the only figure who looks straight at the viewer. Everyone else gazes at Mpande, not only his many Zulu followers (of whom fourteen are visible), but the throng of Boers represented by the ten men who balance them on the other side, their hats held aloft in a cheer for Mpande.

Already in his maquette, Frikkie Kruger established the symmetrical and far grander composition: he elevated the central group on a rocky outcrop as required by the Historiese Komitee, introduced figures that are merely implied to exist beyond the frame in Coetzer’s drawing, and deployed four large figures in the foreground, two on either side of the door. Of equivalent status and almost filling the height of the panel, these paired Zulu and Boers suggest a balanced harmony between the former adversaries. They also provide a frame for the central scene, their poses directing the viewer’s attention to the central group. This is reinforced by the angles of their weapons, now no longer associated with war, but the accoutrements of a peaceful settlement.

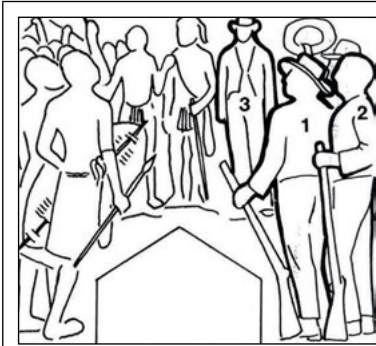
The full-size clay panel (fig. 24.5) follows the composition of the small maquette but settles and unifies many details. The rock supporting the elevated centre group is now more clearly developed above the door frame. Mpande wears the correct royal regalia, including items missing in the maquette, namely the head ring, earplugs, breastpiece of animal skin, small ring around the upper left arm, and two large ‘izinjobo’ dangling between the clearly visible back and front aprons. The head of the Zulu alongside him is now in three-quarter view, with open mouth as he addresses his people. His face, Mpande’s and indeed those of all the Zulu are less exaggeratedly ethnic, and their naked torsos more classical. The Boers in the foreground are also more aligned and clarified, and the faces more individualised, following the usual practice of employing portrait models (fig. 24.6). The clean-shaven one on the far right is no longer gazing up at the hat in his outstretched hand, but is more decorous, his far arm bent to raise his hat more sedately. While the Boers’ trousers are shown cropped above the ankle as they are elsewhere in the frieze, Pretorius wears full-length trousers, a tailored tailcoat and top hat, but has no sabre and pistol. Now on slightly higher ground than in the maquette, he is the tallest in the central group. Curiously, the document which he was holding is gone – an odd omission when it had reinforced the legal propriety of the Voortrekkers.

The final marble (fig. 24.1) copies the composition of the full-scale clay model for the most part, but introduces a few significant changes. The elevated rock over the door has been transformed into a designed plinth with a flatter surface for the central group to stand on, giving them a statuesque appearance. Pretorius’ prominent height is further accentuated by his tall top hat projecting above the edge of the panel. Some other alterations were probably the result of the Italian sculptor’s misunderstanding of Zulu dress: Mpande is portrayed without his back apron, and the very detailed surfaces of the two ‘izinjobo’ next to his thighs are not appropriately copied. There are also curvilinear outlines visible below the brim of Pretorius’ hat and on its right side, which seem to have no purpose, but were not chiselled away by the Florentine carvers. An undated photograph shows the white marble panel in the Hall of Heroes, here provisionally mounted, with wooden clamps to hold it in place, and in remarkable contrast to the besmirched marble relief of *Saailaer* on the west wall (fig. 23.7).¹²⁰⁶

1206 The contrasting state of the two panels invites two contradictory interpretations, which cannot be resolved without further information coming to light. Possibly *Mpande*, which likely arrived earlier with the other corner panels, had been cleaned and installed while *Saailaer* had just been put in place, still stained from the ship’s hold as we know many panels were. Or the latter might have been in place longer and become dirty during the building operations. Werner Kirchoff also offered the interesting comment that the glass in the windows was only installed late, leaving the interior open to the elements.



Figure 24.5: C2. *Mpande*. 1943–46. Clay. Full-scale relief (courtesy of UP Archives; photo Alan Yates)



- 1 Oom Tienie van Schoor, cultural leader and inventor of patents
- 2 Dr Theo Schuman, meteorologist and later chairman of the council on nuclear power
- 3 Andries Pretorius, made after a drawing

Figure 24.6: Models for portraits (Potgieter 1987, 36)

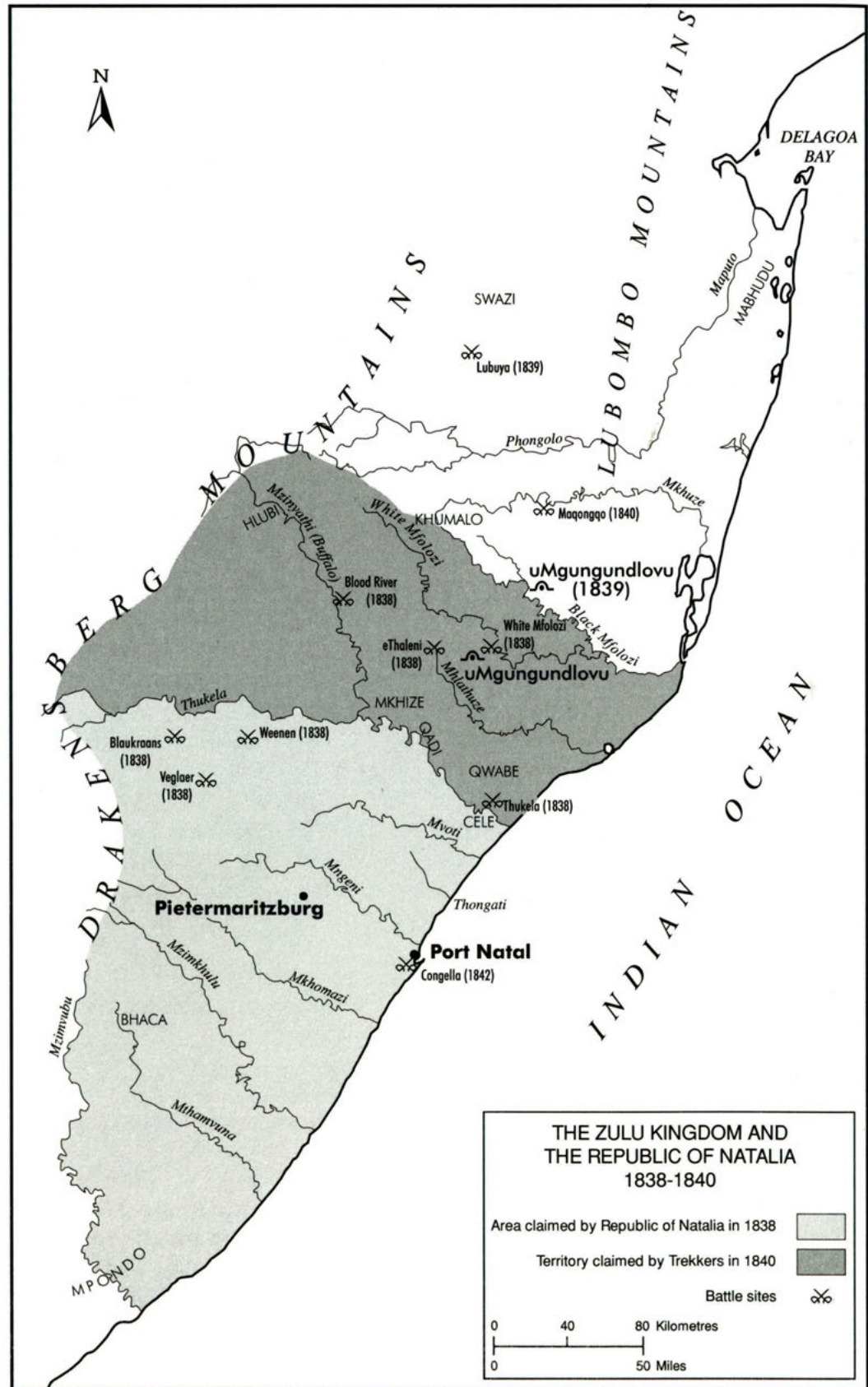


Figure 24.7: Map showing relevant sites and territory seized by Boers from Mpande in 1840 (courtesy of Laband 1995, 106)

Reading the narrative

Who was Mpande (1798–1872), called Panda by Europeans?¹²⁰⁷ As one of the numerous half-brothers of the first Zulu kings Shaka (1816–28)¹²⁰⁸ and Dingane (1828–40),¹²⁰⁹ he was a direct descendant in the royal Zulu line. Under Shaka's rule he lived the privileged life of a Zulu prince, including service in various military campaigns, for which he was 'rewarded by Shaka with at least two wives'.¹²¹⁰ In 1828 this situation changed abruptly, when Dingane murdered the then Zulu king Shaka to become king himself. Now being 'as vulnerable as any of his royal brothers whom Dingane had put to death, [Mpande] did his best to build up useful alliances as insurance'.¹²¹¹ The danger he was in is underlined by reports that Dingane had made two unsuccessful attempts on his half-brother's life, in 1832 and 1837.¹²¹² In the end, Mpande was able to avoid destruction for a variety of reasons, not least through the influence of Dingane's powerful induna, Ndlela kaSompisi, who protected and promoted Mpande's interests with the king, and also by Mpande's own initiative to make known that he had no kingly ambitions, a statement he endorsed by his always 'loyal and unassuming demeanour'.¹²¹³

The instatement of Mpande as the new king of the Zulu by the Boer Volksraad on 10 February 1840 is embedded in multiple histories based on contemporary reports of Boers, British and Zulu.¹²¹⁴ In the wake of the calamitous encounters between the Voortrekkers and the Zulu in 1838 (see *Bloukrans* and *Blood River*), and the worsening of the relationship between the two half-brothers, Mpande finally fled from Dingane's domain with his adherents across the Tugela 'to seek the protection of the Boers' (fig. 24.7).¹²¹⁵ This was officially acknowledged when Mpande was invited to meet the Boers in Pietermaritzburg to be interrogated by the Volksraad on 15 October 1839.¹²¹⁶

[Volksraad] If Dingaan had acted like you, and sent his principal captains, then the war would have been at an end.

[Mpande] Therefore you see that I come personally and deal with you in a more upright manner than Dingaan. I wish to be your friend and I will submit myself to you.

[Volksraad] What do you now expect from us?

[Mpande] As the gentlemen now give me liberty to speak, I would request of you the piece of ground between the Umslalie and Umvoti ...

[Volksraad] Do you consider yourself strong enough to wage war against Dingaan?

[Mpande] Not at the moment; but when the people hear of the peace, they will certainly come to me in crowds.¹²¹⁷

1207 DSAB 2, 1972, 496–498.

1208 Ibid., 655–657; Hamilton 1998; Laband 2017.

1209 See *Treaty*.

1210 Laband 1995, 111.

1211 Ibid.

1212 Ibid., 112.

1213 Ibid., 111.

1214 For Mpande and some of the histories around the period when he became an ally of the Boers, see Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, esp. 236–237, 536–548, 576–599, 600–602, 606–611, 624–625; Nathan 1937, 282–292; Jansen 1938, 86–102 ('Beeskommando'); Delegorgue, *Travels* 1, 1990, 82–127; Laband 1995, 107–124; Etherington 2001, 283–285, 287–288, 292–293.

1215 Laband 1995, 110; see also Bird, *Annals* 1, 236 (Narrative of Jurgen Willem Pretorius, 1834–1839).

1216 Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 536–540 (English translation); Breytenbach c. 1958, 306–308 (Bylaag 25, 1839; *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 29.11.1839), with the minutes. The first mention of Mpande in the Volksraad minutes (Breytenbach 1953, 18 [3.10.1839: 6]) states 'that the Zulus chief Panda shall not be allowed to settle on this side of the Togela ...' (Dat den Solas opperhoofd Panda niet zal toegelaaten worden aan deze zijde Togela te verblijven ...). Laband (1995, 113) provides a vivid account of the first encounters with the Boers, which must have been a strange experience for the Zulu prince.

1217 Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 538–539 (with adjustments of shortcomings in his translation); Breytenbach (c. 1958, 307):

Boers instate Mpande as Zulu king

The Volksraad decided to grant Mpande's request, but clarified that this did not give him 'any right to the land now occupied by him, and that he was to leave this part of the country as soon as his own safety should in any way allow'.¹²¹⁸ Contemporary accounts provide rather different figures for the Zulu who now inhabited the south side of the Tugela River. While Adulphe Delegorgue talks about '17,000 souls of all ages',¹²¹⁹ François Roos (1781–1853), landdrost of the Tugela,¹²²⁰ who visited Mpande's new kraal with a number of distinguished Boers and Europeans (including Delegorgue) later that month on 26 October 1839, reports that they estimated the Zulu 'at more than 3,000 warriors, and more than an equal number of young men and women ...'.¹²²¹ During his visit, Roos bestowed a new title upon Mpande, but linked it to clear conditions:

After having communicated to him with what view the commission had come there, and what orders we had received from the assembly of the emigrants, he was requested to prepare himself by the next morning to be solemnly installed as the head or prince of the Zulu emigrants, and to be presented to his people as such; ... a cry was raised [by them] three times as a sign of their approbation. The following morning having been fixed for a feast or military dance, Panda requested that after it should be finished the same honour of firing a volley of musketry might be shown him which he had received at Bosjesmansrand [Pietermaritzburg]. On the morning of that day Panda was invited to the tent of Mr. Breda, in front of which the national flag was offered him, also a fine blue cloak presented by Mr. Parker, and a fine officer's poignard by Mr. Delegorgue, wherewith he girded himself. Panda was then seated in our court on the right hand of the Landdrost, and the other gentlemen according to their rank, on which occasion the Landdrost repeated to him the assurance of alliance and the protection granted to him by the Assembly of the emigrants, which again having been communicated to the people, a cry of joy was again thrice raised: after which it was signified to Panda that his stay on this side of the Tugela was but of temporary character, and that neither the delivery of any cattle, nor anything else of a like nature, was to be considered as giving to him any right to the land now occupied by him, and that he was to leave this part of the country as soon as his own safety should in any way allow. It was also agreed with him that in the future he should allow no punishment of death for supposed witchcraft or other ridiculous superstitious pretences.

That at his death his successor should be chosen by his people, subject to our approval.

That his title should be 'Reigning prince of the Emigrant Zulu,' until he should have been confirmed as Dingaan's successor.

That he will fulfil and comply with the contract entered into by the Assembly of the emigrants with Dingaan [see *Treaty*], in respect of the acknowledged boundary line, as well as in respect of the delivery of the stolen cattle, &c.

'Vr. Als Dingaan nu gehandeld hadt als gy, en zyne Hoofd-kapiteins tot ons gezonden, dan zou de oorlog reeds voorby geweest zyn. – Ant. Dus, gy ziet dat ik zelf gekomen ben, en dus ook opregter handel dan Dingaan, ik wil gaarne uw vriend wezen, en my aan u onderwerpen. – Vr. Wat verlangt gy nu van ons? – Ant. Daar de heeren my vryheid geven om te spreken, zoo wil ik verzoeken om het stuk grond tusschen de Umslalie en Umvoti ...Vr. Vindt gy u sterk genoeg om tegen Dingaan te vechten? – Ant. Op het oogenblik niet; doch wanneer het volk van den vrede hoort, zoo zal het zekerlyk naar my stroomen.' The last answer does not comply with *DSAB 2* (1972, 496), which states that 'M[pande]. informed the Volksraad, he wanted to invade the Zululand and defeat Dingane'.

1218 Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 541 (Report of the Landdrost of Tugela, October 1839).

1219 Delegorgue, *Travels* 1, 1990, 82.

1220 Visagie 2011, 426–427.

1221 Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 540; Breytenbach c. 1958, 309–310 (Bylaag 28, 1839; *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 29 Nov. 1839), with the original text.

That in future he will not allow any woman, child, or defenceless aged person to be murdered; nor allow any war or hostility of his people with any neighbouring chief or tribes without the consent of the Assembly of the emigrants.¹²²²

It is a cynical act of inversion that the Boers, who only a few years before had emigrated from the Cape Colony to escape British rule, now implemented their own colonial dominion to monitor the Zulu. Roos' account leaves no doubt that the Boers had prepared Mpande's installation, first as the 'reigning prince' of the Zulu, with much constitutional care, namely his formal approbation by his people, the legal conduct of his succession, the restrictions of his power, the acknowledgement of the (alleged) treaty between Retief and Dingane and, most importantly, the paramount control on all Zulu matters by the Volksraad.

When, on this occasion, Delegorgue compared the habits of the Boers with those of Mpande, it

was to the complete disadvantage of the farmers who surrounded him: great, gangling, long-limbed fellows, with clumsy gestures, awkward bearing, dull faces, faltering speech, gaping mouths, men made to drive oxen and to hold converse with them. Panda was quite different: ... His bearing was so noble, the limbs so obedient to the will, the gestures so formal, that a Parisian might well have believed that Panda had frequented royal places in his youth.¹²²³

Further on, Delegorgue reports 'various secret clauses ... to be executed' if the trekkers achieved their main objective, the overthrow of Dingane, 'clauses of the greatest importance to the farmers, the cession of the bay of Saint Lucia for example', discussed below.¹²²⁴ At the same time the few British authorities present in the area tried hard to protect the interests of the Crown and to discourage the Boers, still regarded as British subjects, from establishing a strong coalition with Mpande's Zulu.¹²²⁵ In response to these different interests, the official declaration and protest of the Assembly of the Boer emigrants, issued on 11 November 1839, stood against the regulatory action of the colonial government 'that part of this country was sold to a number of English emigrants, and that they may soon be expected here to take possession hereof', and insisted on the binding legality of former and present land treaties with the Zulu.¹²²⁶ So the trekkers publicly warned any stranger who tried to enter the Boer territory that,

... instead of finding this country the 'promised land', [he] will meet with death and massacre.

... now that we may expect every moment the arrival on our shores of thousands of poor deluded strangers with the view of driving us from our dearly-purchased and lawfully-acquired new country, the Assembly have, for the maintenance of our indisputable right to this land, obtained by virtue of treaties with the chief Dingaan, and afterwards ratified by the chief Panda ... come to the following resolutions ...

That in the case of any landing of strangers as emigrants in the port of Natal, without the previous consent of the Assembly having been obtained, such emigrants shall be considered as enemies of the State.¹²²⁷

¹²²² Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 540–541; Breytenbach c. 1958, 309–310 (Bylaag 28, 1839, *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 29 Nov. 1839), with the original text. The eyewitness report of Delegorgue (*Travels* 1, 1990, 83–88) is distinctly more vivid and open-minded than Zietsman's narrative, which, in the wake of the events of 1838, is strongly coloured by Boer agendas. See also Laband 1995, 114.

¹²²³ Delegorgue, *Travels* 1, 1990, 87.

¹²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 88.

¹²²⁵ See the exchange of letters and reports in Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 600–614; Delegorgue, *Travels* 1, 1990, 84.

¹²²⁶ Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 544.

¹²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 544, 546.

This passage underlines that the lawfulness of the treaty between Retief and Dingane and its ratification by Mpande were the backbone of Boer politics in Natal. After the Volksraad had appointed Chief Commandant Andries Pretorius on 4 January 1840 to lead a final commando against Dingane – called later the ‘Beeskommando’, literally meaning cattle commando¹²²⁸ – Mpande and his army willingly joined the Boer forces and proved to be invaluable in defeating what was left of Dingane’s regiments.¹²²⁹ In fact, it was Mpande’s army alone which, on 29 January 1840, overcame Dingane’s forces in a great battle at the Maqongqo Hills, ‘spear against spear and shield to shield’, both parties ‘probably about equal, about 5 000 each’.¹²³⁰ The Boers’ Secretary of War, Paul Hermanus Zietsman (1814–92),¹²³¹ reported this success to the Volksraad in the form of a detailed diary (‘dagverhaal’), dated 24 February 1840, covering the events from 4 January to 14 February 1840 and written in their camp at Klip River.¹²³² When Dingane’s last forces had either surrendered or been annihilated, however, the king himself could not be found despite the deployment of intensive Boer search commandos. As early as 8 February, Zietsman stated:

We can now positively calculate that the whole kingdom of Dingaan is totally destroyed. He has not only fled his city, but even across his borders, in the country of other nations, who gladly await him as an old decaying enemy, like the cat awaits the arrival of a mouse.¹²³³

In the wake of this triumph Zietsman proclaimed two days later, on 10 February, how Mpande was finally instated by the Voortrekkers as the Zulu’s new king and the antitype of his predecessor Dingane:

This morning, the chief commandant caused Panda and his captains to come before him, and told them ‘that ... he had had an opportunity of ascertaining the good faith of himself [Panda], of Nonkalaza, and all his people, and he was happy to say that Nonkalaza and his people had behaved as valiant warriors; ... that our conquest over the powerful Zulu nation was obtained through Providence alone: that we should therefore not feel proud, but that we, fully justified in our claims against Dingaan, were instruments in the hand of God to put an end to the indescribable cruelties and murders committed by Dingaan, and also to deliver you and your people from the tyranny of Dingaan. According to the information I can obtain,’ said the chief commandant, ‘of the heathen people, it clearly appears to me that you have a claim to the kingdom of the Zulu. Dingaan has fled amongst other nations, and should we ever get possession of his person, we shall punish him by death for his unprovoked crimes committed upon us. I have now thought proper to appoint you, in the name of the Volksraad of our South African Society, king or chief of the Zulu, of the people under your command, and the fugitives, or remaining Zulu, who have escaped from Dingaan and seek your protection, and such as we shall be able to place under your government. I am also ordered to consider you as our great ally,

1228 Jansen 1938, 86–102; Liebenberg 1977, 66–91 (map pp.72–73).

1229 For the minutes of the Volksraad (4.1.1840: 3 & 4), Breytenbach c. 1958, 28; see also Delegorgue, *Travels* 1, 1990, 98–100; Laband 1995, 115–119.

1230 *Ibid.*, 116 (quote), 117. See also Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, esp. 585, 587.

1231 Visagie 2011, 626.

1232 Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 576–599 (‘Journal of the commando under Chief Commandant Pretorius against Dingaan’, from *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 10 February 1846. After Zietsman’s signature, it is additionally affirmed – as on the treaty between Retief and Dingane: ‘We, the undersigned, chief and other commandants, do certify that the above-mentioned journal, kept by Mr. P.H. Zietsman, has been read to us word for word, and that we declare every word therein mentioned to be correct. (Signed) A.W.J. Pretorius, Chief Commandant, and H.J. [likely to be Hermanus Stephanus] Lombard, Jacs. Potgieter, Andries Spies, M. Schepers [all] Commandants. Camp, date as above.’ Original text in Breytenbach c. 1958, 324–339 (Bylaag 11, 1840; *De Zuid-Afrikaan*, 10 en 17 Apr. 1840, Byvoegsels). The report of Delegorgue (*Travels* 1, 1990, 101–127), who accompanied the Boers, differs in focus and intent from Zietsman’s narrative and includes important observations on landscape, Boer behaviour and personal interaction. For ‘Kliprivier’, see Raper, Möller and Du Plessis 2014, 240.

1233 ‘Wy kunnen nu stellig rekenen, dat het Koningryk van Dingaan geheel verstrooid is; hy is niet alleen van zyne stad gevlugt, maar zelfs over zyne grenzen, in het land van andere natien, die hem als een oude verrottende vyand, gelyk de kat de aankomst van eenen muis, verblydend inwachten’ (Breytenbach c. 1958, 334). Our translation differs in tone and detail from Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 591.

and to treat your enemies as our enemies. You will not be at liberty to attack any nation previously to obtaining our permission, and on all occasions we shall assist you in destroying your enemies. I must once more repeat my satisfaction at the fidelity and courage of your people.'

Panda, who was filled with excessive joy from head to heels, could no longer restrain himself from uttering the most sincere feelings of his heart: 'Great Sir, ... I thank you that I am now delivered from the oppressive tyranny under which I lived for a series of years as an outcast. I can solemnly swear by all that exists, that I shall ever remain faithful to you, and the whole government of the white people. Should any nation or people ever attempt to do you any injury, ... I shall immediately order my whole force to assist you, and for your sake sacrifice my whole army to a man; for I was dead, and you have restored me to life; I was cast away, and you have lifted me up again.¹²³⁴ All my happiness and prosperity I owe to you.'¹²³⁵

The expressions of the new Zulu king were really too many to set them down precisely; but his address was sensible beyond all expression, and I could never have expected so much from a heathen ... The Zulu, when joined with us in battle, are more courageous than they ever were before, because they consider us a valiant people, and as men strong with their arms.¹²³⁶

Following the events in Preller's account cited earlier, Mpande had been crowned king by the grace of Pretorius as the highest-ranking official of the Boer Volksraad. Zietsman's rhetoric underlines how purposefully the restrictive clauses of Mpande's installation and the supremacy of the Boers were reiterated from his investiture as a 'reigning prince' to his appointment as 'king' of the Zulu.¹²³⁷ His narrative reads as though it needed the trekkers to save and develop the Zulu, rather than Mpande having overcome Dingane and arguably saving the Voortrekkers. In fact, 'Mpande had effectively been obliged to recognise titular Boer overlordship.'¹²³⁸ He must have learned to his dismay 'that the Volksraad seized all his land from the Thukela to the Black Mfolozi (including St Lucia Bay) bounded to the west by the Drakensberg, and to the east by the ocean'.¹²³⁹ As a result, 'Mpande was left by the Boers in a weak position, the vassal king of an impoverished and diminished kingdom, bleeding from the unhealed wounds of civil war.'¹²⁴⁰ Drawing on the eyewitness account of the French naturalist Adulphe Delegorgue, John Laband appositely characterised the new situation:

Delegorgue could not help reflecting critically on the extraordinary conceit of colonising Europeans, whether Boer or Briton, who lightly annexed already populated country, not to settle there, but simply to prevent their rivals from laying claim to it. Not only was it unjust, he concluded, but foolish too, for in this case the Boers had no means of occupying or controlling the lands between the Thukela and Black Mfolozi.¹²⁴¹

This annexation was later reinforced by the president of the Orange Free State, Francis William Reitz (1844–1934). His story is a telling example of how new material icons ascribed to the Voortrekker past served to underpin the political mythology of the Great Trek. Reitz claimed in *De*

1234 The phrasing is almost biblical; see Luke 15:32.

1235 The patronising attitude of the Boers is also evident in the recollections of Philippus Jeremias Coet(s)zer, mentioned above, who recounts Pretorius' words to Mpande as: 'I will carry you like a child, and I appoint you as king of the remaining Zulus' (Daroop zei Pretorius: 'Ik zal u optillen als 'n kind, en ik stel U heden aan als de koning over de overgebleven Zoeloes' [Preller, *Voortrekermense* 4, 1925, 63]).

1236 Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 591–593; Breytenbach c. 1958, 334–335, with the original text.

1237 See also Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 237 (Narrative of Jurgen Willem Pretorius, 1834–39; published post 1841): 'Panda was recognized as King of the Zulus, but only in the sense of being subject to the Boer government, and bound to accept their commands.'

1238 Laband 1995, 123.

1239 *Ibid.*

1240 *Ibid.*, 124.

1241 *Ibid.*, 123. See Delegorgue, *Travels* 1, 1990, 119–121.



Figure 24.8: Pandaklippe (Mpande's stones), said to commemorate Mpande's crowning as Zulu king and peace treaty between Boers and Zulu. 10.2.1840 (photo <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=urn:gvn:ZAH01:100000107>)

Huisgenoot (May 1918) that a certain P. Uys, following the author's own investigations at the farm Boeschhoek No. 156 near the locale of Mpande's crowning, had identified two black oblong rocks as the memorial stones originally set up by Andries Pretorius, explained below.¹²⁴² Hence the stones were given a biography which gained currency in Afrikaner circles. Subsequently, they were moved to Pietermaritzburg for display next to the Voortrekker Museum (see *Church of the Vow*), here called 'Pandaklippe' (Mpande's stones; fig. 24.8)¹²⁴³ – and the larger one was included in Coetzer's 1937 drawing (fig. 24.3), discussed above. Apart from their sheer existence, however, we know little about the alleged memorial stones, which were excluded from the representation in the frieze. Bill Guess stated in 2012 that Andries Pretorius himself had ordered the stones to be erected on 10 February 1840 on the banks of the upper Black Umfolozi River to commemorate both the peace treaty between the Boers and the Zulu and Mpande's coronation as the new Zulu king.¹²⁴⁴ Guess seems to have drawn on an earlier though unacknowledged account by Daniel Pieter Bezuidenhout in 1879, which may also have served as reference for Coetzer's drawings. In patronising rhetoric, Pretorius (or Bezuidenhout), like Zietsman above, converted the success of Mpande's army into a major Boer victory:

We returned with the mounted force to the Umfolozi. There, Pretorius said: ... 'I now appoint you to be King of the Zulu race that remains ... Then I give you as a concession – for it is my territory, conquered by my weapons – the kingdom of Zululand.' A salvo of twenty-two guns was then fired by us in presence of Umpanda [Mpande] and his people. We graved the day and date and year on two long large stones. One of them we placed erect in the ground, and buried the other below the soil on the bank of the Umfolosi. Panda withdrew from the spot, became King of the Zulus, and remained in peace with us till his death.¹²⁴⁵

But the extant rocks in the uMsunduzi Museum, although they appear to have been roughly shaped, bear no visible traces of the inscription mentioned by Bezuidenhout. Based on this evidence, E.G. Jansen concluded in 1938 that the Pandaklippe in Pietermaritzburg could not be linked

¹²⁴² Reitz 1918 ('Die gedenkstone van die traktaat tussen Andries Pretorius en Panda' [The memorial stones of the treaty between Andries Pretorius and Mpande]); Liebenberg 1977, 85.

¹²⁴³ Van Rooyen 1940, 183–186; Groenewald and Bresler 1955, 56 with fig.; Prinsloo 1987, 434–435; Guest 2012, 42.

¹²⁴⁴ Guest 2012, 42.

¹²⁴⁵ Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 376 (first published in *Orange Free State Monthly Magazine*, December 1879).

to the memorial stones recorded as having been set up by Pretorius' Beeskommando.¹²⁴⁶ The Histories Komitee did not mention the large Pandaklip, but instead insisted in its critique on Coetzer's drawing discussed above that 'Pretorius and Panda stand on a rock alongside each other'.

There may have been further confusion between the alleged Pandaklippe and the smooth rock plinth on which Mpande and Pretorius stand for the crowning ceremony in the marble relief. The plinth is acknowledged by Moerdyk in the *Official Guide* when he writes that Mpande 'had mounted a stone dais at the side of Andries Pretorius'¹²⁴⁷ – but there is no mention of the Pandaklippe. The source of the idea for the frieze was probably Preller's account in his book on Andries Pretorius, first published in 1937, which deploys the rock not only as a fitting natural podium, but as a metaphor of the steadfastness of the new relationship:

Standing on a rock of about 20 feet long by 14 wide, with Mpande next to him, and his commando as well as Mpande's followers rallied around them, Pretorius addressed Mpande. ...

Addressing Mpande's followers, Pretorius asked: 'Who made Mpande king?'

They answered that it was he, Andries – 'Antelisie.'

'No,' replied Pretorius, 'it is the innocent blood of women and children that Dingane shed. According to the white man's law no woman or child will ever be killed in war. And as long as this rock stands here ... Mpande will also not be allowed to wage war against women and children. Do not ever forget this. As long as this rock stands here the alliance between us will stand.'¹²⁴⁸

Preller's rocky dais was not only in accord with Afrikaner research of the time, but better suited the ceremonial presentation of the scene, as well as providing a useful compositional device to overcome the awkward shape of the panel over the door with its intruding frame.

A few days after Mpande's crowning, on 14 February, Pretorius, 'Chief Commandant and Commanding General of all the Burghers of the Right Worshipful Volksraad of the South African Society', issued another declaration which made the main objective of Boer politics manifest – to reign Natal, beyond British rule:

Whereas the Volksraad of the South African Society, on account of the unprovoked war which the Zulu king or the Zulu nation have commenced against the South African Society, without previously declaring the same against them, was compelled to incur expense of one hundred and twenty-two thousand rixdollars ... and whereas the Zulu king ... has deserted his territory and crossed the Pongola River (his boundary), ... so that there is no person to whom I can apply for payment of these enormous expenses, – be it hereby made known, that for recovery of said ... rixdollars, I do hereby proclaim and make known, that in the name of the said Volksraad of the South African Society, I do seize all the land from Tugela to the Umfolosi Mnyama (the Black River); that our boundary shall in future be from the sea along the Black River, where it runs through the Double Mountains, near where it has its source, and so on along the Randberg in the same direction to the Drakensberg,

¹²⁴⁶ Liebenberg (1977, 85 with n 72), who refers to unpublished sources, an undated acquisition entry 'Panda Klippe' and two letters of E.G. Jansen (8 and 19 September 1838).

¹²⁴⁷ *Official Guide* 1955, 52.

¹²⁴⁸ 'Staande op 'n rotsblok van ongeveer 20 voet lank by 14 breed, met Mpane [sic] naas hom, en sy kommande sowel as Mpande se gevolg rondom hulle geskaar, het Pretorius Mpande aangespreek. ... Mpande se gevolg toesprekende, vra Pretorius: "Wie het Mpande Koning gemaak?" Hulle antwoord, dat dit hy, Andries, was, - "Antelisie." "Nee," herneem Pretorius, "dit is die onskuldige bloed van vroue en kinders, wat Dingane vergiet het. Volgens die witman se wet sal geen vrou of kind ooit in die oorlog gedood word nie. En so lank as hierdie rots hier staan ... sal Mpande ook nie toegelaat word om oorlog te voer teen vroue en kinders nie. Vergeet did nooit. Solang hierdie rots hier staan sal ook die verbondskap tussen ons blystaan'" (Preller, *Pretorius* 1937, 117).

including the St. Lucia's Bay, as also all sea-coasts and harbours which have already been discovered, or may hereafter be discovered, between the Umzimvubu and Black River mouths. These lands and sea-coasts will, however, have to be considered the property of the Society, exclusive from that which the late Mr. Retief obtained from the Zulu nation for our Society.

God save the Volksraad!¹²⁴⁹

[Then Zietsman continues:] After which a salute of 21 guns was fired in honour of the Volksraad, and a general cry of 'Hurrah' was given unanimously throughout the whole army, while all the men, as with one voice, cried out, 'Thanks to the Great God, who by His grace has given us the victory.' ... Panda was also present at this salute, but could not bear the violent roaring of our guns ...: he and his captains then ran with great fear to his camp, and, for fear, stooped down on the earth at every discharge of a gun.¹²⁵⁰

Delegorgue, who was present at this address, criticised the annexation of land which legally did not belong to the Boers as an unjust act of European colonialism, and concluded that

the measure was simply bad politics which gave a wrong example to the Cafres who saw in it the triumph of greed and covetousness ... 'Thanks be to God by whose grace the victory has been given'. Can you picture this army composed of 436 men; can you imagine the voice of such an army, and the victory which such an army might win, even with the help of God? I must have facts if I am to be convinced, but I can find none here to suggest a victory worthy of a *Te Deum*. I can only humbly say that I took part in this war which ended without a single battle having been fought at which white men were present.

Delegorgue's comment, whether it be one-sided or not, sheds significant light on the lopsided rhetoric of the Boer reports.

The frieze

Returning to consider the scene in the frieze, it is first of all striking how densely populated it is, all the more so when the space is further restricted by the door's gable-shaped form. This made it necessary to reduce the scale of the three main figures in the crowning ceremony significantly if they were to be presented centrally. As discussed in Part I,¹²⁵¹ Kruger solved this problem by a creative spatial shift reminiscent of Raphael's *Parnassus* in the Stanza della Segnatura in the Vatican. If, in the central group, the elegant habitus of Mpande echoes Delegorgue's complimentary characterisation of the king, the urbane presentation of Pretorius seems designed to refute Delegorgue's denigration of the Boers (fig. 24.9). Overall, however, the scene was conceived as a visual reinforcement of the claims of the Afrikaner that Natal was justly appropriated by their forebears from Dingane, and additionally sanctioned by their installation of Mpande as the new king of the Zulu. In this regard, the panel is directly related to *Treaty*, where Dingane is shown signing the land grant for Retief at uMgungundlovu to substantiate the Boers' legal right to settle in and reign over Natal. Showing Pretorius holding a document in the *Mpande* maquette possibly referenced this

¹²⁴⁹ Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 595. There are two slightly different versions of the original text in Breytenbach c. 1958, 322–323 (Bylaag 8, 1840; E.38, Republiek Natalia, no. 7) and 336–337.

¹²⁵⁰ Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 596; Breytenbach c. 1958, 337. Here, Mpande's manifest dislike of roaring guns seems to contradict his explicit request of having a volley of musketry after the Boers had instated him as 'reigning prince' of the Zulu, but perhaps explains why the salvo of guns in Coetzer's original design was omitted.

¹²⁵¹ Chapter 4 ('Composition').



Figure 24.9: Mpande and Pretorius in *Mpande*. Marble, detail of fig. 24.1 (photo Russell Scott)

directly, although, since it was omitted in the full-scale relief, the point was finally made implicitly rather than explicitly. In the *Official Guide* Moerdyk stresses once again the accuracy that the SVK sought for the representations, explaining how the detail of the podium was based on contemporary research:

Some difficulty was experienced in ascertaining exactly how a Zulu king used to be consecrated, it being at first thought that Panda had been crowned with consecrated oil according to the Biblical tradition. It was finally decided, after an ethnologist, the son of a missionary, who had spent his life in Zululand, had questioned old Zulu, that Panda had mounted a stone dais at the side of Andries Pretorius who declared him to be the king of the Zulus. A Zulu interpreter, who stood on Panda's other side, enlightened the tribe as to what was going on.

On the panel Pretorius' followers are shown standing beside their leader, waving their hats and firing salutes from their guns. The soldiers of Panda, who stand opposite them, give the royal salute of 'Bayete!'¹²⁵²

In the contemporary context of the close relationship between the Reformed Church and Afrikanerdom, it is revealing that the first assumption was that 'Panda had been crowned with consecrated oil according to the Biblical tradition'. Although finally discarded, this conjecture lends an ecclesiastical overtone to the installation of Mpande in the frieze. Even ethnography is called into play to lend the scene veracity, although the account by Preller would presumably have sufficed. Given Moerdyk's attempt to strengthen the validity of Boer claims by demonstrating the care taken to achieve historical correctness, it is more than a little ironic that his description contradicts the actual presentation in the final relief, where not a single Boer is firing a salute.¹²⁵³

¹²⁵² *Official Guide* 1955, 52.

¹²⁵³ The Boers fired a salute when they proclaimed Mpande as 'reigning prince' and Pretorius annexed most of the land of Natal (see Zietsman quote above p.540), presumably the source for Coetzer's pencil drawing (fig. 24.3).

25 *Death of Dingane* (February 1840)



B2



C2



D

25 *Death of Dingane*

West wall (panel 29/31)

h. 2.3 × w. 2.4 m

Badly damaged by continuous vertical and horizontal fractures; numerous patches, e.g. in lower right leg of woman furthest left, left knee and lower leg of third woman from left and at Dingane's right shoulder, front apron and around lower end of tail of genets ('izinjobo')

Sculptor of clay maquette: Laurika Postma

STAGES OF PRODUCTION

B1 One-third-scale clay maquette, not extant but replicated in B2 (1942–43)

B2 One-third-scale plaster maquette, h. 75.5 × w. 84.7 × d. 9 cm (1942–43)

C1 Full-scale wooden armature, not extant (1943–46)

C2 Full-scale clay relief, not extant but photographed; replicated in C3 (1943–46)

C3 Full-scale plaster relief (1943–46); not extant but copied in D (late 1947–49)

D Marble as installed in the Monument (1949)

EARLY RECORDS

SVK minutes (4.9.1937) — item 4s (see below, 'Developing the design')

Voorstelle (5.12.1934?) — item 6 'Dood van Dingane, volgens die verslag van Karel Trichardt, aan die Maputa.

Trichardt op eilandjie in rivier neem waar hoe die Swazi Sopoeza die voortvluggende Dingane op die wal van die rivier inhaal en op die punt staan om hom af te maak' (Death of Dingane, according to the report of Karel [Carolus Johannes] Trichardt at the Maputa. Trichardt on a small island in the river takes note of how the Swazi Sopoeza catches the fugitive Dingane on the bank of the river and stands on the point to finish him off)

Wenke (c. 1934–36) — item II Dr. L. Steenkamp, mnre. A.J. du Plessis en M. Basson, A. 'MAATSKAPLIK' (Social), 3. 'Verhouding met ander volksgroepe' (Relationship with other ethnic groups), d. 'Dingaan' (Dingane), xii.c. 'Vlug van Dingaan' (Flight of Dingane)

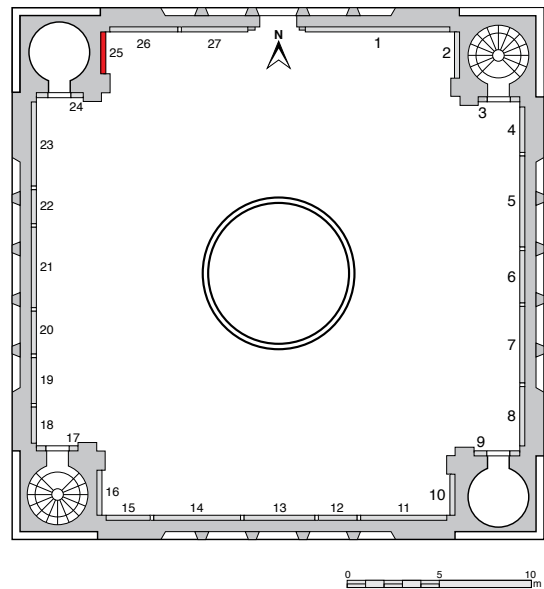




Figure 25.1: D. *Death of Dingane*. 1949. Marble, 2.3 × 2.4 m (courtesy of VTM; photo Russell Scott)

Description

This panel is unique in its focus solely on black people (fig. 25.1). The central figure in the foreground is Dingane, distinguished by his features, well-built frame and royal regalia similar to that seen in *Treaty*. His eyes are closed and his haggard features are marked by strong but controlled suffering. His shield and assegai abandoned beside him, the king, his fist clenched next to his heart, has fallen to his knees and his total collapse is only prevented by his outstretched right arm. With his left leg extended backwards and his shield lying forwards, he occupies the entire width of the panel. His adversary is a virile Swazi who stands tall, his legs straddling Dingane as he stabs him in the back, thrusting the assegai home with his right arm, while the other holds a knobkierie.

Behind, four young Zulu women on the left and three further Swazi coming in from the right reinforce the narrative drama. The Swazi stand ready with weapons to support the attack, and their shields provide a martial backdrop for their leader in the foreground. The women who face them are in disarray, mostly turning or moving away in distress from the defeated Dingane. In striking contrast to Dingane's cruel execution, the three women on the left, wearing only neckpieces and ornamented girdles with a small front apron,¹²⁵⁴ are posed like nude studio models, and shown with classical proportions. With supple bodies and limbs, they effortlessly balance supplies from the royal household on their heads: a calabash, a beer vessel, and a light basket filled with household goods.¹²⁵⁵

The Swazi are distinguished from the Zulu by more voluminous wig-like hairstyles and short skirts made of a single piece of skin. Their facial expressions are severe, emphasised by their frown lines and high cheekbones. The attackers have their eyes almost closed, not in anguish like Dingane or his women, but to intensify their aggressive downward gaze on the Zulu king.

1254 *Zulu treasures* 1996, 150–158 ('Beads that speak'), 160–163 (neckpieces and girdles), 171–181 (earplugs); a fine specimen of a girdle is illustrated in Giblin and Spring 2016, 158 fig. 51).

1255 *Zulu treasures* 1996, 128–129 figs c4–c7 (clay-made beer vessels), 140 fig. g15 (grass-woven basket).



Figure 25.2: B2. Laurika Postma. *Death of Dingane*. 1942–43. Plaster, 77.5 × 84.7 × 9 cm. Maquette (courtesy of VTM Museum VTM 2184/1–28; photo Russell Scott)

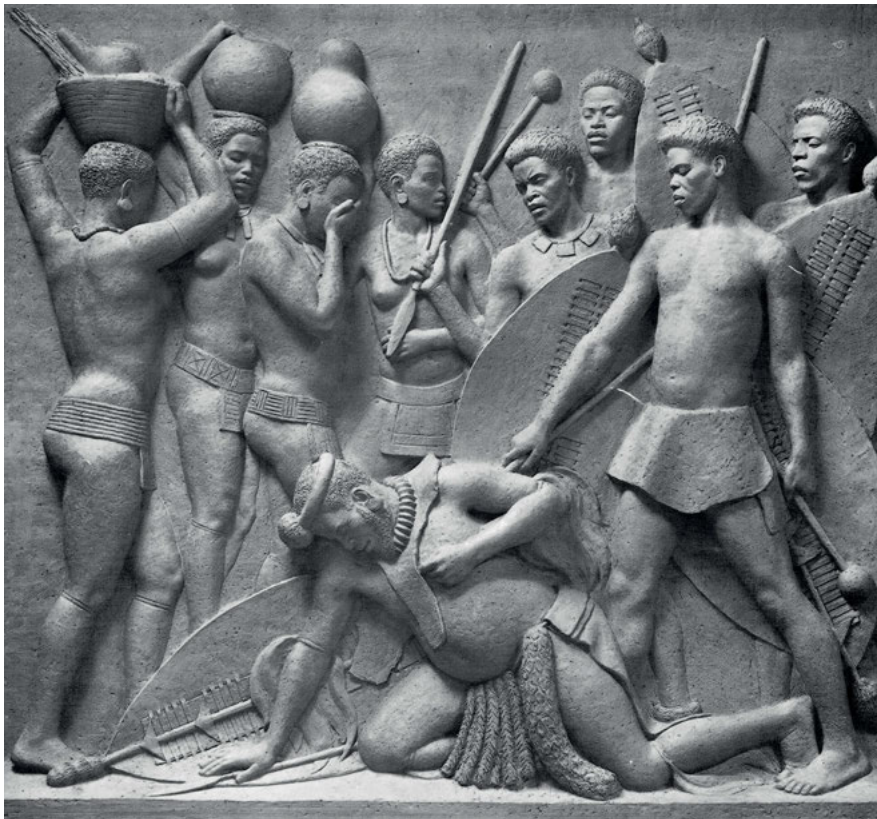


Figure 25.3: C2. *Death of Dingane*. 1943–46. Clay. Full-scale relief (Pillman 1984, 53; photo Alan Yates)

Developing the design

The subject of Dingane's death was not included in the list of topics for the frieze drawn up in 1937,¹²⁵⁶ for which Coetzer was asked to provide sketches. It had been proposed in the very earliest 'Voorstelle' list of c.1934, but, from the point of view of Afrikaner history, it was included as part of the extended story of Louis Trichardt's trek. That narrative recounted that it was his son, Carolus Johannes (1811–1901),¹²⁵⁷ who witnessed the king's assassination after he had left his father's party at Delagoa Bay to explore possible sites for them to settle. But in Jansen's copy of 'Voorstelle',¹²⁵⁸ this item was scored out, and it did not reappear until the maquettes for the frieze were being made, presumably recalled again because of the need for an additional corner panel.

Thus the design of the narrative seems to have been developed entirely by Laurika Postma when she began to make the maquette (fig. 25.2). Here the layout of the composition with Zulu women and Swazi warriors as a backdrop for the central group – a Swazi stabbing a crouching Dingane to death – is for the most part set. Yet, in comparison with the full-size clay (fig. 25.3), there are significant differences. Back- and foreground figures are more vividly portrayed, with the killing action of the Swazi leader more strongly articulated. The figures are stockier and modelled in a rather fleshy way in the maquette, particularly the women. The figures are also more closely packed together, and the buttocks of a fifth woman are visible on the far left, behind the sturdy female in the foreground. While three women wear the small aprons of the final panel, here two have fuller skirt-like aprons. We can also see more of the torsos of the Swazi as they hold their shields lower, and their leader looks down at his victim. Dingane's weakness is dramatically expressed by his slumped and suffering body, and his left hand splayed over his heart. The central woman in three-quarter view behind him is moving to the left, judging by the way her apron moves, but she turns her head as if she is looking back at the Swazi. However, our reading of the figure is disrupted by the unfortunate overlap of the right arm and assegai of the Swazi next to her.

In the full-scale clay the composition was changed in favour of a more ceremonial staging of the figures, although the disturbing overlap mentioned above remained. Dingane is posed parallel to the picture plane and his left hand is no longer splayed but clenched. His regal dress is more fully portrayed and he wears a skin collar instead of crossed bandoliers. His younger adversary now holds his head high. Like his companions in the background, who are characterised by grimmer faces and reduced movement, he is less animated and more statuesque, suggesting a cold and calculated act. In general, all the figures are more slender and less fleshy, yet the nakedness of the women is made more explicit as all wear reduced aprons, and their profiles and buttocks are more pronounced. This is clearest in the foreground figure, as the back view of a fifth woman has been removed.

Changes in the female figures may also have been promoted by Postma's access to a nude model. Although he does not provide the names of any of the models in this scene, Hennie Potgieter recounted in 1987 that 'after much difficulty Laurika [Postma] managed eventually to find a young Black woman willing to pose in Zulu dress of only a hip covering, provided there was a screen erected around Laurika and her'.¹²⁵⁹ There are also modifications of pose, as for the woman in the centre background, made more distinct by representing her body in frontal and her head in profile view. But when Romanelli's sculptors copied the full-scale clay into the stone-hard surface of the final marble (fig. 25.1), they reduced the physical essence of many details such as a nuanced rendering of flesh, the depiction of nipples, the texture of hair and the individual ornaments

¹²⁵⁶ ARCA PV94 1/75/1/7, quoted in Part I, Chapter 2.

¹²⁵⁷ DSAB 1, 1968, 799–802; Visagie 2011, 498–499.

¹²⁵⁸ ARCA PV94 1/75/1/7: the various lists of proposals are discussed in Part I, Chapter 2; see fig. 69.

¹²⁵⁹ 'Na baaie gesukkel het Laurika uiteindelik 'n jong Swart vrou gevind wat bereid was om in Zoelodrag van slegs heupbedekkings te poseer, mits daar 'n skerm om Laurika en haar opgerig word' (Potgieter 1987, 47).

decorating the girdles and loin cloths. In the end, the more naturalistic narrative in clay is transformed into an idealistic representation in marble.

The final marble was badly broken in a fall that happened when the panel was first delivered to the Monument site.¹²⁶⁰ The severe damage is still noticeable and has impaired the recognisability of motifs. This is obvious for the raised left arm supporting a calabash of the woman who covers her face in mourning, clearly visible in the full-scale clay but hardly evident in the marble. Here, poorly patched deep fractures run through the arm, whose visibility was anyway diminished by its very shallow relief.

1260 Dagbestuur 21.4.1949: 7: 'Mnr. Moerdyk rapporteer dat een van die historiese panele ("Die Dood van Dingaan") wat buitekant die monument gestaan het, omgeval het en stukkend gebreek het' (Mr Moerdyk reported that one of the historical panels ('The Death of Dingane') which was standing outside the monument, fell over and broke into pieces).

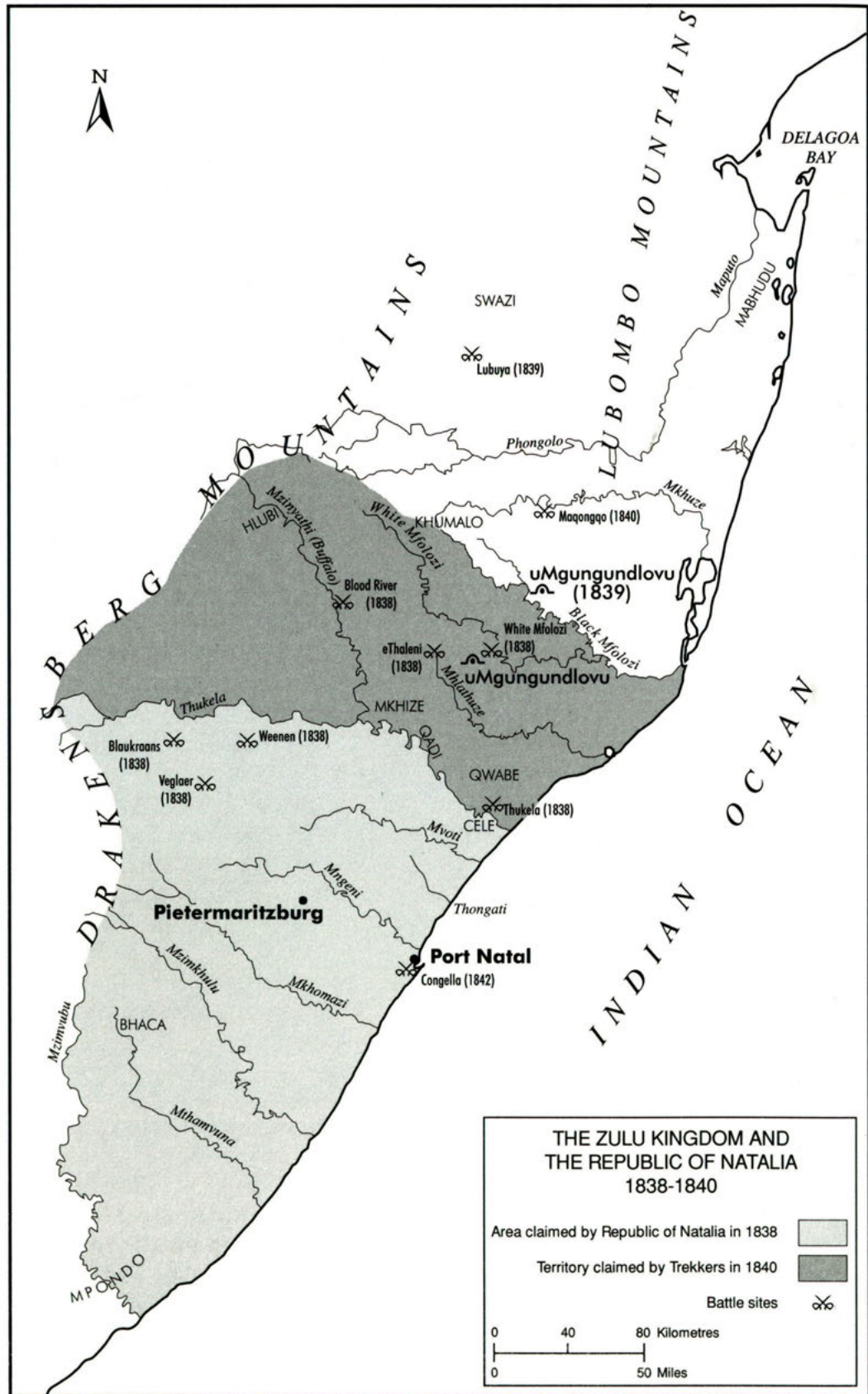


Figure 25.4: Map showing the Maqongqo and Lubuye (not Lubuya as on map) battle sites, Phongolo River and Lubombo Mountains in upper section (courtesy of Laband 1995, 106)

Reading the narrative

Coming after *Mpande* in the sequence of the frieze, *Death of Dingane* is placed in the correct order historically, as his demise followed a series of grave setbacks for the Zulu after their defeat at Blood River in late 1838. About half a year later Dingane launched a full-scale attack against the Swazi, who ruled the land north of Natal, beyond the Phongolo River.¹²⁶¹ It was an ‘attempt at conquest and occupation’, to re-establish his kingdom beyond the reach of the land-hungry Boers who, since their victory at Blood River, had appropriated large parts of Zulu Natal.¹²⁶² But again Dingane’s army was defeated, now by the Swazi in the valley of the Lubu stream (fig. 25.4). Even worse was the crushing defeat of his remaining militia by his half-brother Mpande on 20 January 1840 at the Maqongqo Hills, which led to Mpande’s ratification as the new Zulu king by the Boers, depicted in the preceding panel. Here the story is picked up after the Boers had tried in vain to capture Dingane, who had fled with his followers towards the Lubombo Mountains¹²⁶³ – a desperate move as this was the territory of his Swazi enemies. In 1921, the Zulu Socwatsha ka Papu clarified to James Stuart:¹²⁶⁴

When Dingana heard that the Boers were coming, and not Mpande’s *impi*, he said, ‘Let us take all (*kukula*) and go.’ He said that all his people – cattle, womenfolk, *amabuto* – should go with him to the place of Somkande. He said, ‘Never again will I face up to guns (*isitunyisa*).’ So his people all went off; they made for the uBombo in the country of the Nyawo.¹²⁶⁵

Here Dingane had ordered a traditional homestead to be built in the dense bush on the slopes of the Hlathikhulu hill, which he called eSankoleni, meaning ‘the secluded spot’.¹²⁶⁶ This region was ‘in the territory of Silevana, the regent for Sambane, of the heir to the Nyawo chieftainship’.¹²⁶⁷ And it was here, probably around March 1840, that Dingane was eventually killed, although most historians are rather vague when it comes to the great Zulu king’s end.¹²⁶⁸ How this was later understood to have happened is described at length by several Zulu interviewed by James Stuart between 1898 and 1921, whose reports largely confirm each other and are thus invaluable.¹²⁶⁹ Hence we continue with the narrative of Socwatsha, the most detailed of these:¹²⁷⁰

It is said that when Dingana’s great men were alone they said to one another, ‘Where are we going? We are being killed by fever (*umkuhlane*). We are leaving the country of our people, the country of the Zulu.’ They said, ‘Let us kill him, and go back to our own country.’ But some asked, ‘Which people (*uhlobo luni*) will kill him?’ They said, ‘Let the *amankengane* [foreigners] be decoyed into doing it. Let them kill him for us, while we go back. For Mpande is a son of [the Zulu chief] Senzangakona; he will rule us.’ They said, ‘Wo! Let amaSwazi be fetched.’ So men went off to the amaSwazi.

¹²⁶¹ Laband 1995, 110

¹²⁶² Ibid.

¹²⁶³ Ibid., 119–121; Etherington 2001, 285; *James Stuart Archive* 6, 2014, 129–131 (narrative of Socwatsha ka Papu, 30.8.1921).

¹²⁶⁴ For Socwatsha, a well-educated Zulu, see Ndlovu 2009, 99–100.

¹²⁶⁵ *James Stuart Archive* 6, 2014, 131 (29.8.1921).

¹²⁶⁶ Laband 1995, 119–120. See also Lugg 1949, 163; Bonner 1982, 44.

¹²⁶⁷ Laband 1995, 120.

¹²⁶⁸ For more detailed accounts, see Lugg (1949, 163–168), Becker (1979, 281–284, 282–283: ‘During the early hours of a morning in March [1840] ... the Nyawo had come ... to kill Dingane’), and Laband (1995, 120–121).

¹²⁶⁹ For the James Stuart Archive in Durban, see Wright 1996.

¹²⁷⁰ For additional Zulu reports of the killing of Dingane, see *James Stuart Archive* 3, 1982, 260–261 (Mmemi ka Ngu-luzane, 20.10.1904); *ibid.* 4, 1986, 68 (Mtshapi ka Noradu, 3.4.1918); *ibid.* 5, 2001, 8 (Nduna ka Manqina, 27.4.1910); *ibid.* 5, 2001, 52–53 (Ngidi ka Mckaziswa, 5.11.1904); *ibid.* 6, 2014, 228 (Tikuba ka Magongo, 26.11.1898).

The amaSwazi said, 'Are these abaNguni coming to kill us?' The Zulu replied, 'No. We have come to make a plan. The *amabuto* [warriors] will be sent off elsewhere. On that day, when they have gone, you must come and stab him and then go back to your caves (*izixotsha*). The *amabuto* will never go into the *izixotsha*.

This was told ... only to the *izinduna* [headmen]; the *amabuto* did not know of it. They were not told. When the amaSwazi agreed, the order was given to the *amabuto*, 'Go out from this place [eSankoleni]. Go to the cattle posts. There is an impi which wants to eat up the cattle of the king.' The cattle posts had been built some distance away; none of them were close by. The amaSwazi were told that the *amabuto* would go off that day, and that they should come in the night. Indeed they came. They made for the *isigodhlo* [the private royal enclosure] where the king used to sleep. Hau! They surrounded it, and stabbed him, wounding him. He escaped and ran off into the forest at kwa Hlatikulu. People who did not know that the amaSwazi had been called went running to raise the alarm at the cattle posts. The *amabuto* came back. When they arrived, not all the amaSwazi had yet gone into the caves (*imihume*). The *amabuto* stabbed them, and drove them off ... The amaSwazi called out, 'Why are you killing us, you men of the place of Sikiti, you abaNguni? For were we not invited (*ukubita*) by you? Have we not gone to kill your king for you, he who has caused you trouble, so that you can go back to your country?' The *amabuto* said, 'Hau! What are the *amankengane* saying?' They went back, but they could not find where the king had been stabbed. They looked for him and found him. They found him sitting up; he was not lying on the ground. He said, 'O! The *amankengana* have wounded me here,' and he showed them the wound. 'Go and fetch my medicines (*ubuhlungu*) and give them to me to drink.' The *izinduna* went to fetch the medicines from his place.¹²⁷¹ They washed a small pot, poured water in, stirred it, and gave it to him. No sooner had he swallowed it than he began to sweat copiously, and his whole body turned black. In a very short while he died.¹²⁷² People were killed for the *umgando* ceremony, together with black cattle for burying him.

The Zulu people then went back in a body to the Zulu country. They left Godide ka Ndhlela, saying that he should represent the people who had buried Dingane, for he was the heir of his father (the heir of Ndhlela, Dingane's chief *induna*).¹²⁷³ The people then went back to Mpande.¹²⁷⁴

Socwatsha alone reports that the *izinduna* had conspired with the Swazi to have Dingane killed. His narrative suggests that the king, after his devastating defeats of Blood River, Lubuye and Maqongqo, had become increasingly unpopular with his own people and lost their loyalty. All the other Zulu accounts agree that Swazi killed Dingane, but do not go into the reasons, and explanations by later historians differ as to why and even who in fact executed the Zulu king.¹²⁷⁵ For example, Harry Lugg, a high magistrate of Pietermaritzburg, argued in 1949 against the general belief

that Dingane was put to death by the Swazis, [as] information recently obtained from a number of old men of the Nyawo tribe is to the effect that he met his death at the hands of certain leaders of their tribe, supported by the Swazi. The probabilities appear to favour this version, as he was well within Nyawo territory at the time. By people distantly situated, the Nyawos could easily have been mistaken as Swazi.¹²⁷⁶

¹²⁷¹ For Dingane's antidotes and poisons, see especially *James Stuart Archive* 6, 2014, 44–45 (Socwatsha ka Papu, 26.9.1904).

¹²⁷² In another interview Socwatsha said that he 'does not know if the *izinduna* intended to kill Dingane or whether they made a bona fide mistake' (*James Stuart Archive* 6, 2014, 45), while Ngidi ka Mckaziswa claimed (ibid. 5, 2001, 53), 'I never heard that the king was given the wrong medicine (poison).'

¹²⁷³ He was chief of the Ntuli part of the Zulu people; see Knight 1995, 273.

¹²⁷⁴ *James Stuart Archive* 6, 2014, 131–132 (30.8.1921); see also Socwatsha's other reports on pp.13–14, 44–45.

¹²⁷⁵ Henry Cloete (1899, 117) concluded in his 1850s lecture on Retief in Pietermaritzburg that Dingane found shelter by 'the Amasuree, but who, it is supposed (for I believe there is no actual authentic account of his death), murdered him to ensure their own safety from his constant and fearful forays upon them and the adjacent tribes'.

¹²⁷⁶ Lugg 1949, 163 (for Lugg, see Cope 1979). The account on Dingane in *DSAB* 2 (1972, 196) tends to support this view, saying Dingane 'fled north across the Pongola, where, it was believed, he was captured and put to death by his old enemy, the Swazi king, although there is now fairly convincing evidence that it was in the Ubombo mountains that D. was killed by members of the Nyawo tribe, possibly supported by Swazi warriors'.



Figure 25.5: Head of dying Dingane in *Death of Dingane*. Marble, detail of fig. 25.1 (photo Russell Scott)

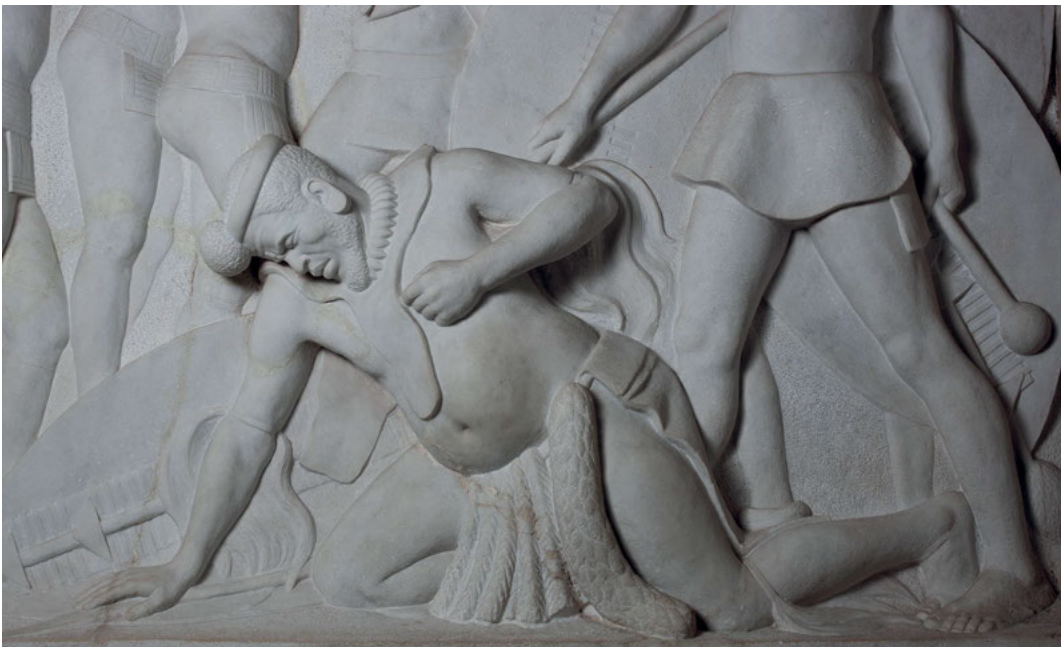


Figure 25.6: Dying Dingane in *Death of Dingane*. Marble, detail of fig. 25.1 (photo Russell Scott)

Later John Laband reasoned that the Nyawo supported the Swazi to attack the Zulu king, because he and his people had consumed all the Nyawo's 'precious store of grain', had failed 'to hand over the cattle they had promised in return' and were 'calculated to draw hostile armies into the area'.¹²⁷⁷ Laband continues that it was the regional Nyawo chief Silevana who 'cast his throwing spear at him [Dingane] with all his force'.¹²⁷⁸ The varying narratives do not allow us to conclude whether Zulu, Swazi or Nyawo killed Dingane. Finally, a remarkable detail of Dingane's end was kept secret for over a hundred years: the location of his burial. It was only in the late 1940s that the Nyawo helped Lugg discover Dingane's last resting place and thus make it public.¹²⁷⁹

The visual narrative of the frieze does not engage with the complicated detail of historical accounts, but has everything to do with the Voortrekker view of Dingane as a treacherous villain who deserved to meet an ignominious end. When the Boers gave up on their quest to find him, P.H. Zietsman, their Secretary of War, announced on 8 February 1840 that Dingane had not only fled his city, but across the border to the lands of another nation, who await their 'old decaying enemy, like the cat awaits a mouse'.¹²⁸⁰ Denied direct revenge on their prey, the Voortrekkers – although without first-hand knowledge – circulated sensationalised accounts of Dingane's death, relishing gory details in lieu of action. Especially repulsive is the narrative of Daniel Pieter Bezuidenhout (1814–95), published in December 1879 in the *Orange Free State Monthly Magazine*:¹²⁸¹

[On] the other side of the Umguza River, at Bamboesberg, ... Sapusa took him [Dingane] prisoner. On the first day (according to the statement of the Kafirs), Sapusa pricked Dinga with sharp assegais, no more than skin deep, from the sole of his foot to the top of his head. The second day he had him bitten by dogs. On the third day, Sapusa said to Dinga: 'Dinga! are you still the rain-maker? Are you still the greatest of living men? See, the sun is rising: you shall not see him set!' Saying this, he took an assegai and bored his eyes out. This was related to me by one of Sapusa's Kafirs who was present. When the sun set, Dinga was dead, for he had neither food nor water for three days. Such was the end of Dinga.¹²⁸²

Apart from the fact that this contradicts Zulu and Nyawo accounts, the Swazi king Sobhuza I, whom Bezuidenhout calls Sapusa, had in all likelihood already died by the time this account claims he had taken Dingane prisoner.¹²⁸³

In the *Official Guide*, Moerdyk avoided these gruesome details but commented that 'after the drama of the death of Retief and his men ... it was necessary to punish him [Dingane] for the evil that he had done'.¹²⁸⁴ The scene embodies this intention as, although it does not depict any form of torture, it is designed as a merciless end for the Zulu king. The focus of the frieze is on Dingane's total abasement, all the more acute because he is represented in full regal attire (figs 25.5, 25.6). The tall Swazi standing behind him pushes an assegai with ease into the king's back and forces him, like a wounded animal, to crawl, dragging himself along the ground, his suffering captured in his death portrait with anguished facial expression and closed eyes. The king's impotence is underlined by a last futile attempt at resistance when he raises his clenched left fist to his heart.

¹²⁷⁷ Laband 1995, 120.

¹²⁷⁸ Ibid. However, Ngidi ka Mcikaziswa (*James Stuart Archive* 5, 2001, 53) reported on 5.11.1904 that, after Dingane was stabbed by a Swazi, the 'Nyawo people now armed ... [had] chased off the Swazis'.

¹²⁷⁹ Lugg (1949, 164–168) found the grave on 27 February 1947.

¹²⁸⁰ Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 591; Breytenbach c. 1958, 334: 'als een oude verrottende vyand, gelyk de kat de aankomst van eenen muis, verblydend inwachten.'

¹²⁸¹ For Bezuidenhout, see Visagie 2011, 58.

¹²⁸² Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 375–376. For further outrageous stories about Dingane's death circulated at the time when the frieze was conceived, see Nathan 1937, 294 (repeated, without question, by Bonner 1982, 45).

¹²⁸³ Though the year of Sobhuza's death is not known, it has often been linked to 1836, while Philip Bonner (1982, 41) argues that it was 'much more probable ... in 1839', still preceding Dingane's death.

¹²⁸⁴ *Official Guide* 1955, 52–53.

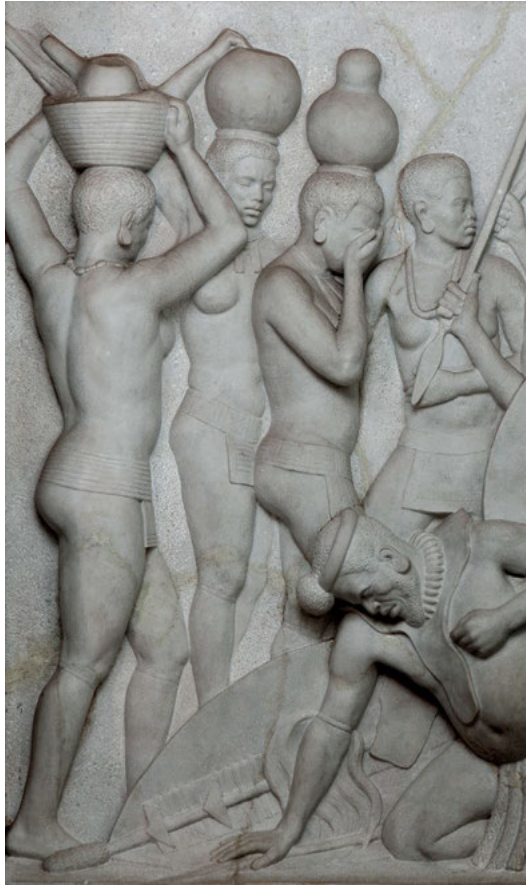


Figure 25.7: Dingane's wives in *Death of Dingane*.
Marble, detail of fig. 25.1 (photo Russell Scott)



Figure 25.8:
Jan Juta. *1700. ... native life ... as developed under Christian and governmental teaching*. 1934. Oil on canvas, 150 × 58 cm (South Africa House, London; Freschi 2006, 217 fig. 27)

His women turn away helplessly, and no male supporters can be seen. In contrast to *Treaty*, which portrays the Zulu king in full power, here Dingane is doomed to die in wretchedness.

This reading acquires an even sharper edge when we compare *Death of Dingane* with *Murder of Retief*. While the Boer is shown upright like an unfailing Christian martyr, the collapsed Zulu king is his exact opposite. While Retief's men were with him to the end, Dingane has been abandoned by his soldiers. While Retief witnesses his men being brutally slaughtered around him by the Zulu, Dingane's wives and the Swazi form a line of spectators who attest to his final downfall. And only one of his women, covering her face with her hand, seems to mourn him, while his enemies are grim-faced eyewitnesses to his demise. He who had been an assassin is now the victim.

In one key respect, however, the scene is not a reversal of Zulu vengeance on the Boers, for, as recounted above, the Boers failed finally to defeat and put an end to Dingane: it was Mpande who decisively defeated the king's army, and it was the Swazi and/or the Nyawo who killed him. The focus of this scene is therefore on black people only, and thus absolves the Voortrekkers from complicity in a cold-blooded murder. It surely implies that only blacks undertook ruthless assassinations, while the Voortrekkers fought openly and fairly, and only when provoked.

The inclusion of Dingane's women serves to make another point: they highlight his heathen polygamy, and the women's lack of loyalty as they prepare to leave him, carrying his possessions, in contrast to Christian Voortrekker women who always stood by their men. And there is telling otherness in the nakedness of the Zulu women also, a nakedness that is expressly accentuated

in those figures who, like Greek and Roman caryatids,¹²⁸⁵ raise their arms to support the objects on their heads (fig. 25.7). It is a common trope for the depiction of African women, and one that can be seen in Juta's depiction of three women carrying calabashes in his 1934 murals at South Africa House in London (fig. 25.8) – although they are clothed as a sign of the influence of colonial Christianity, albeit with clinging sarongs which accentuate, and even in one case expose, their full breasts.¹²⁸⁶ Perversely, while *Death of Dingane* is virtually denying that black people are capable of civil conduct, the scene invites the viewer to take pleasure in the nude female forms. Moerdyk himself seems to indulge in this kind of colonial voyeurism when he writes about the marble relief:

The exceptionally fine modelling of the native figures should be noted. It is noteworthy that throughout the frieze natives are never depicted as inferior beings – they are always represented as worthy opponents, very well developed as far as their physical characteristics are concerned.¹²⁸⁷

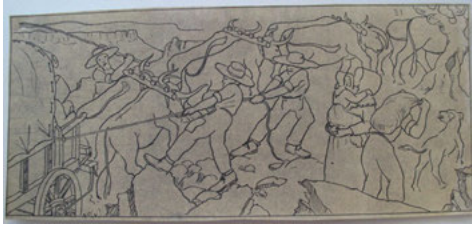
While self-righteously disclaiming any partisan prejudice, this outrageous statement in fact implies that a well-developed physique is an African's only outstanding quality.

1285 Although different to the famous maidens (*korai*) of the Erechtheion in Athens, the gesture of the Zulu women echoes numerous other caryatids of the Classical tradition; see Schmidt 1982; Schneider 1986, 103–108; Vickers 2014.

1286 Freschi 2005, 24–25 fig. 10; the mural is labelled in clear-cut colonialism 'native life ... as developed under Christian and governmental teaching'.

1287 *Official Guide* 1955, 53.

26 *Return from Natal over the Drakensberg (after 1843)*



A2



A3



B2



C2



D

26 Return

West wall (panels 30–31/31)

h. 2.3 × w. 4.29 m (full width of panel 30 and 0.69 m of panel 31)

Broken into three pieces during transport: vertical fracture near centre through panel 30; diagonal fracture from edge of left mountain under the feet of central Voortrekker joint between panels 30 and 31 through woman on the right; restored fractures on vertical edges

Sculptor of the clay maquette: Frikkie Kruger

STAGES OF PRODUCTION

A1 W.H. Coetzer, pencil drawing, retained only in A2 (April–June 1937)

A2 Reproduction of A1, reversed (June 1937)

A3 W.H. Coetzer, revised pencil drawing; h. 13.3 × w. 30.4 cm (after September 1937)

Annotation: ‘Terugtog oor Drakensberg’ (Return over Drakensberg)

A4 W.H. Coetzer, monochrome oil on board, h. 27.5 × w. 62 cm (c. 1937–38)

B1 One-third-scale clay maquette, not extant but photographed; replicated in B2 (1942–43)

B2 One-third-scale plaster maquette, h. 78 × w. 152.7 × d. 8 cm (1942–43)

C1 Full-scale wooden armature, not extant (1943–45)

C2 Full-scale clay relief, not extant but recorded in photograph; replicated in C3 (1943–45)

C3 Full-scale plaster relief (1943–45), not extant but illustrated (*Die Vaderland*, 26.2.1945); copied in D (1948–49)

D Marble relief as installed in the Monument (1949)

EARLY RECORDS

SVK minutes (4.9.1937) — item 4t (see below, ‘Developing the design’)

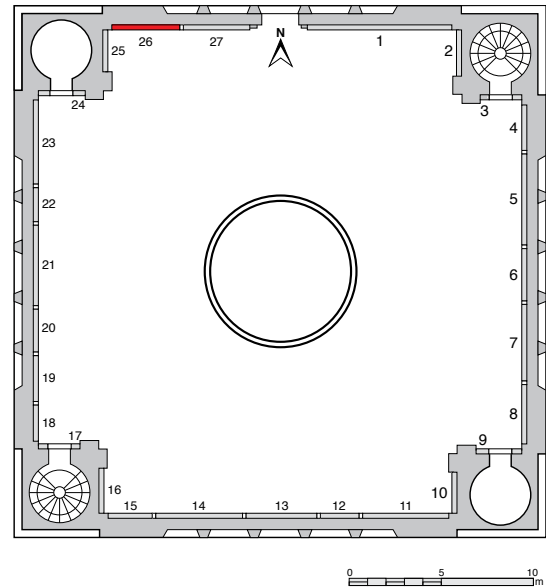
Wenke (c. 1934–36) — item II. Dr. L. Steenkamp, mnre A.J. du Plessis en M. Basson, A. ‘MAATSKAPLIK’ (Social),

3. ‘Verhouding met ander volksgroepe’ (Relationship with other ethnic groups), d. ‘Dingaan’ (Dingane), xiv.

‘Tweede Groot Trek oor die Drakensberge na die Volksmonument!!’ (Second Great Trek over the Drakensberg to the People’s Monument!!)¹²⁸⁸

Moerdyk Layout (5.10.1936–15.1.1937) — scene 22 on panel 28–29/31 ‘Terugtog oor Drakensberge’ (Return over Drakensberg)

Jansen Memorandum (19.1.1937) — item 7.22 ‘Retreat over the Drakensberg Mountains’



1288 Might this apparently jocular remark indicate that the ultimate goal of the ‘Second Great Trek’ was the Voortrekker Monument itself?



Figure 26.1: D. Return. 1949. Marble, 2.3 × 4.29 m (courtesy of VTM; photo Russell Scott)

Description

Five pairs of oxen pull a wagon uphill, from left to right, over almost impassable rocky terrain (fig. 26.1). The foremost animals disappear behind a tree that divides this event from *Convention*, the last scene of the frieze. The open rear of the wagon is loaded with two big sacks, and below them on a rack rests a well-stocked chicken coop. The goods are carefully tied to the wagon, while a barrel dangles under its chassis. Two trekkers in the centre stand one behind the other, their legs spread to support their pulling steadily on two sturdy thong-ropes to stabilise the precariously poised wagon. The first, sleeves rolled up and his front leg braced on a steep slab, is younger and clean-shaven under his brimmed hat, while his bearded companion is hatless and wears braces over a long-sleeved shirt. Two further trekkers in hats are busy behind the line of oxen, one swirling an enormous whip to drive the oxen forward, while his comrade on horseback, a gun slung over his shoulder, points reassuringly ahead.

In contrast to all this action, three Boers on the right, probably a family, calmly watch the scene before them. As onlookers they intensify the focus on the difficult operation of moving the wagon over dangerous boulders, particularly the woman whose kappie is directed like a spotlight illuminating the task. Her immaculate dress is copied in the small pigtailed girl in front of her, although the girl carries her kappie by its ribbons. The scene is closed on the right by the tallest and most prominent figure, a man whose right foot is raised on a rock, a stationary echo of the two active men securing the wagon. With coiffured beard and more formal dress, he seems a man of status, possibly older, given his use of a stout stick, and probably a veteran of battle since he has his left arm in a sling.

The nearly impassable terrain is an idealised depiction of the famous Mont-Aux-Sources, the distinct backdrop providing a simplified view of the Drakensberg amphitheatre (figs 18.9, 26.5). This places the narrative some 200 kilometres north-west of Pietermaritzburg. Hennie Potgieter, who is normally at pains to stress the authenticity of all aspects of the frieze, claimed that the three aloes carefully portrayed in the foreground are incorrect, as that species does not grow on the Drakensberg (fig. 26.10).¹²⁸⁹ However, botanist Neil Crouch suggests that, although they lack finer detail such as short spines on the leaves, they could be aloes which are found in the region, *A. spectabilis* in the case of the larger and *A. pratensis* the smaller. He also pointed out that, because only the latter is flowering, the time of year must be early spring to mid-summer.¹²⁹⁰

¹²⁸⁹ Potgieter 1987, 38.

¹²⁹⁰ We are very grateful to Neil Crouch for his input, and to Philippa Hobbs, who approached him on our behalf. *A. spectabilis*: Klopper and Smith 2010. *A. pratensis*: Trauseld 1969, 14–15 with fig.; Hilliard and Burt 1987, 66.



Figure 26.2: A2. W.H. Coetzer. Reproduction of first sketch for *Return*. June 1937 (courtesy of ARCA PV94 1/75/5/1; photo the authors)

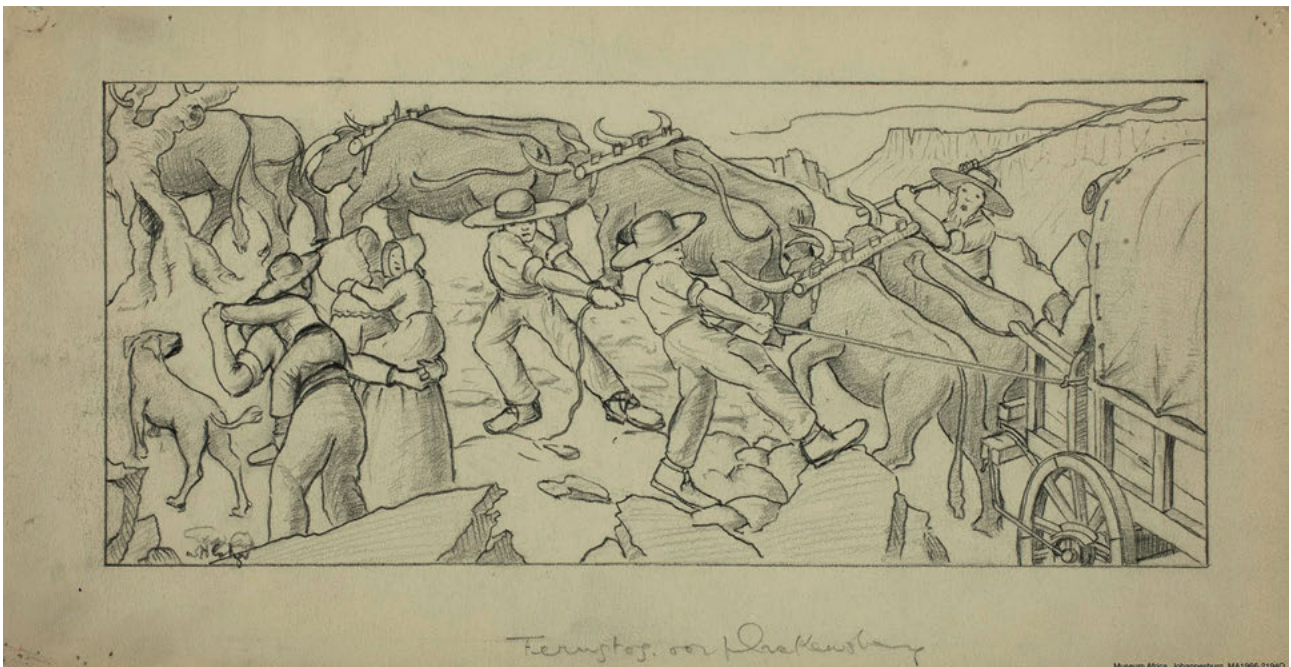


Figure 26.3: A3. W.H. Coetzer. 'Terugtog oor Drakensberg'. After September 1937. Pencil, 13.3 x 30.4 cm. Revised first sketch (photo courtesy of Museum Africa, no. 66/21940)

Developing the design

Apart from *Treaty*, this is the only scene of which we have two perfect mirror images in the preparatory sketches. In the reproduction (fig. 26.2) the ox wagon is being pulled from left to right, yet in the revised pencil drawing (fig. 26.3) it is in reverse. Whether the Gestetner reproduction was unintentionally produced with the stencil back to front, or Coetzer deliberately inverted the revised pencil drawing is not known. He might have been concerned about which of the two images would work best with the still undeveloped rhythm of the frieze, although there is little evidence of a consideration of the continuity of the relief in his sketches in general. But, whatever the reason behind the reversal, the movement from left to right taken from A2 is appropriate for the frieze, and avoids the incongruity of oxen and wagon disappearing into the corner, instead carrying the eye towards the final scene.

Coetzer sets the scene for the further development of *Return* in his first drawing as seen in the reproduction. The front part of a wagon, depicted in some detail, enters the picture at an angle in the left foreground. Four pairs of oxen pull it uphill over rocky ground and exit the frame on the far right as they move behind a gnarled tree, only the hindquarters of the leading beasts visible. Although the animals are generalised, Coetzer creates some liveliness by showing their horns at different angles and their tails flicking in different directions. In the centre, two trekkers, who lean back at an angle, help to stabilise the advancing wagon by jointly pulling on a thong which is fixed to its front, the first man bracing himself with one foot against a rocky outcrop. A bearded trekker, who stands on the other side of the oxen, swings his whip to keep the animals in line. There are three further adult Boers, and a few children, and a mother with her baby sits on the front of the wagon. The other Boers climb the steep slope alongside the oxen – a woman with a young girl carried piggyback and a man bowed under the weight of a sack. Their movement draws us into the scene in the same direction as the wagon is travelling, while a dog ahead of them turns its head to take us back to the oxen it watches.

At the Historiese Komitee meeting on 4 September 1937 only a minor alteration was required:

Back over the Drakensberg. The sack must be in the wagon.¹²⁹¹

Obedient to the request, Coetzer removed the sack in the revised – and reversed – drawing (fig. 26.3), and replaced it with a small boy to match the girl the woman carries, and the two children look at each other engagingly.

In the background there is a panorama of two flat-topped mountains. Four rocky outcrops in the foreground on the left rise up dangerously, which suggests the difficulty of the journey and the treacherous terrain, even further developed with the tonal details of the revised sketch emphasising the stony ground. The hard toil of the Trek is expressed in the ponderous progress of the ox wagon and the onerous task of the couple carrying their children uphill step by step. In Coetzer's gloomy monochrome painting (fig. 26.4), the hardship of crossing this extreme terrain is even more pointedly portrayed. Here the ox wagon comes in from the right, as in the revised drawing, with parts of its canvas cover torn. Emphasised by the diminishing scale of the oxen as they ascend then disappear over the escarpment, the rocky steepness of the terrain seems almost impassable. Instead of the couple carrying children on their backs, we now find a woman who appears to have given up the battle, seated with her head in her hands, while another offers her water. The painting's mountainous backdrop is taken from Coetzer's sketch of *Descent*.

¹²⁹¹ 'Terug oor die Drakensberge. Die sak moet in die wa wees' (Historiese Komitee 4.9.1937: 4t).



Figure 26.4: A4. W.H. Coetzer. *Terug oor Drakensberg*. c. 1937–38. Monochrome oil on board, 27.5 × 62 cm (courtesy of DNMCH, OHG 900; photo the authors)

Like the sketches, the oil painting has a strongly horizontal format, reflecting the original intention in Moerdyk's layout to have the scene crossing more than one panel, although it no longer overlaps the corner. This may explain the unusual decision to have this scene extend into the next in the frieze, sharing space on the panel that depicts *Convention*, with a tree as a natural divider between them. The long format allowed for a wide landscape to accommodate the ox wagon that traverses it and portray the resplendent Mont-Aux-Sources amphitheatre beyond (fig. 18.9). There was possibly also a concern to extend the scene to create better balance with the expansive *Departure* on the other half of the north wall – as well as matching *Descent* diagonally opposite on the south wall.

For *Return* we have a rare image of the clay maquette supported on an easel at Harmony Hall, before its translation into plaster (fig. 26.5). In this and the surviving plaster maquette (fig. 26.6), while there are fine details, the liveliness of Coetzer's narrative composition is gone. The action is now more frozen and the scene neatly compressed into the picture frame without a single cut-off figure or object. As in the reproduction (fig. 26.2), the wagon moves from left to right, but is now shown at an angle and almost tilted, and its view rather foreshortened. No one sits on the front box but, because the rear of the wagon can now be seen and the back flaps are drawn back like curtains, the load is visible, including the sacks required by the Historiese Komitee. Also lashed in place is a chicken coop on an extended rack (fig. 26.8), while a barrel swings between the wheels. Although five pairs of oxen still disappear behind a tree on the far right, they have been fitted into the format as they pull the wagon uphill, and their tails are now standardised to hang vertically.

The two centrally placed trekkers in shirt sleeves, bearded in this case, continue to stabilise the wagon by pulling it in their direction, their poses similar, though the second figure no longer has a hat. In the relief they use separate thongs, unlike the single one in the sketches, and that of the first Boer is coiled around his waist for extra purchase, the end hanging free between his legs. He stands on a rocky outcrop with both feet more securely placed than in Coetzer's sketches. Two further trekkers with hats are on the other side of the oxen, their smaller scale, like the diminishing oxen, suggesting distance. One holds a long whip and the other who is on horseback with a gun over his shoulder gestures ahead. There are now three figures on the right, taking the place of the



Figure 26.5: B1. Frikkie Kruger. *Return*. Clay. Maquette on easel (courtesy of Kirchhoff files; photo the authors)



Figure 26.6: B2. Frikkie Kruger. *Return*. 1942–43. Plaster, 78 × 152.7 × 8 cm. Maquette (courtesy of VTM Museum VTM 2184/1–28; photo Russell Scott)



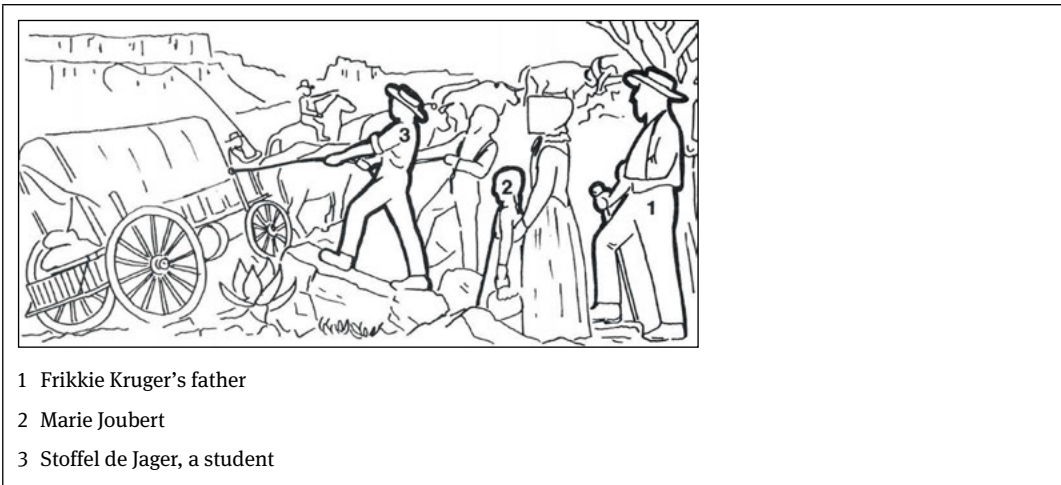
Figure 26.7: C2. *Return*. 1943–45. Clay. Full-scale relief (courtesy of Kirchhoff files; photo Alan Yates)

dog and adults with piggyback children. The new figures are not shown labouring up the hill, but stationary and turned inwards to watch the efforts with the wagon, closing off the composition and focusing our attention on the arduous crossing. An older girl stands in front of her mother, with a patriarchal bearded Boer behind them, wearing a formal jacket and hat, carrying a stick and with his arm in a sling. Rocky terrain dominates the foreground.

While the full-size clay (fig. 26.7) follows for the most part the small maquette, it introduces some important changes. Now the wagon is less foreshortened so that it occupies a more prominent position, and it has a single back flap drawn to the right, which still affords a clear view of the sacks within the wagon, as well as the chicken coop below, meticulously copied in the final marble (fig. 26.8). The first trekker in the centre no longer has the thong around his waist, and has his weight more convincingly distributed on the rock at his feet as though it was a pedestal and he a sculpture. There are many other new details too: the organic forms of three painstakingly depicted plants offset the harshness of the boulders in the foreground (fig. 26.10); the girl has pigtails and the woman's dress shows evidence of the study of actual Voortrekker garments; the beard and the features of the wounded trekker are finer, based on a portrait of Frikkie Kruger's father, according to Potgieter (fig. 26.9); the tree next to him is more elaborate; the Boers on the far side of the wagon are smaller, yet the whip has become enormous; the gun of the riding trekker is on his other side so that his pointing arm is less obscured. Curiously though, the alternation of upward- and downward-turned horns for the pairs of oxen has been retained throughout from the very first sketch. In contrast to the maquette, both the rocks and the mountains are modelled more compactly and are less sharp-edged, making them appear more staged.



Figure 26.8: Chicken coop and sacks on wagon in *Return*. Marble, detail of fig. 26.1 (photo Russell Scott)



- 1 Frikkie Kruger's father
- 2 Marie Joubert
- 3 Stoffel de Jager, a student

Figure 26.9: Models for portraits (Potgieter 1987, 39)



Figure 26.10: Aloes growing in stony ground in *Return*. Full-size clay and marble, details of figs 26.7 and 26.1 (photos Alan Yates; Russell Scott)

Motif and composition in the full-scale clay and the finished marble (fig. 26.1) are almost identical. A major difference between the two, however, is the finish, hand-modelled for the former and chiselled for the latter. Here especially the workmanship of the boulders highlights the difference. In clay the rocky shapes display varied texture, but in marble the shape is more cubic and the surface standardised by the use of a bull point chisel (fig. 26.10).

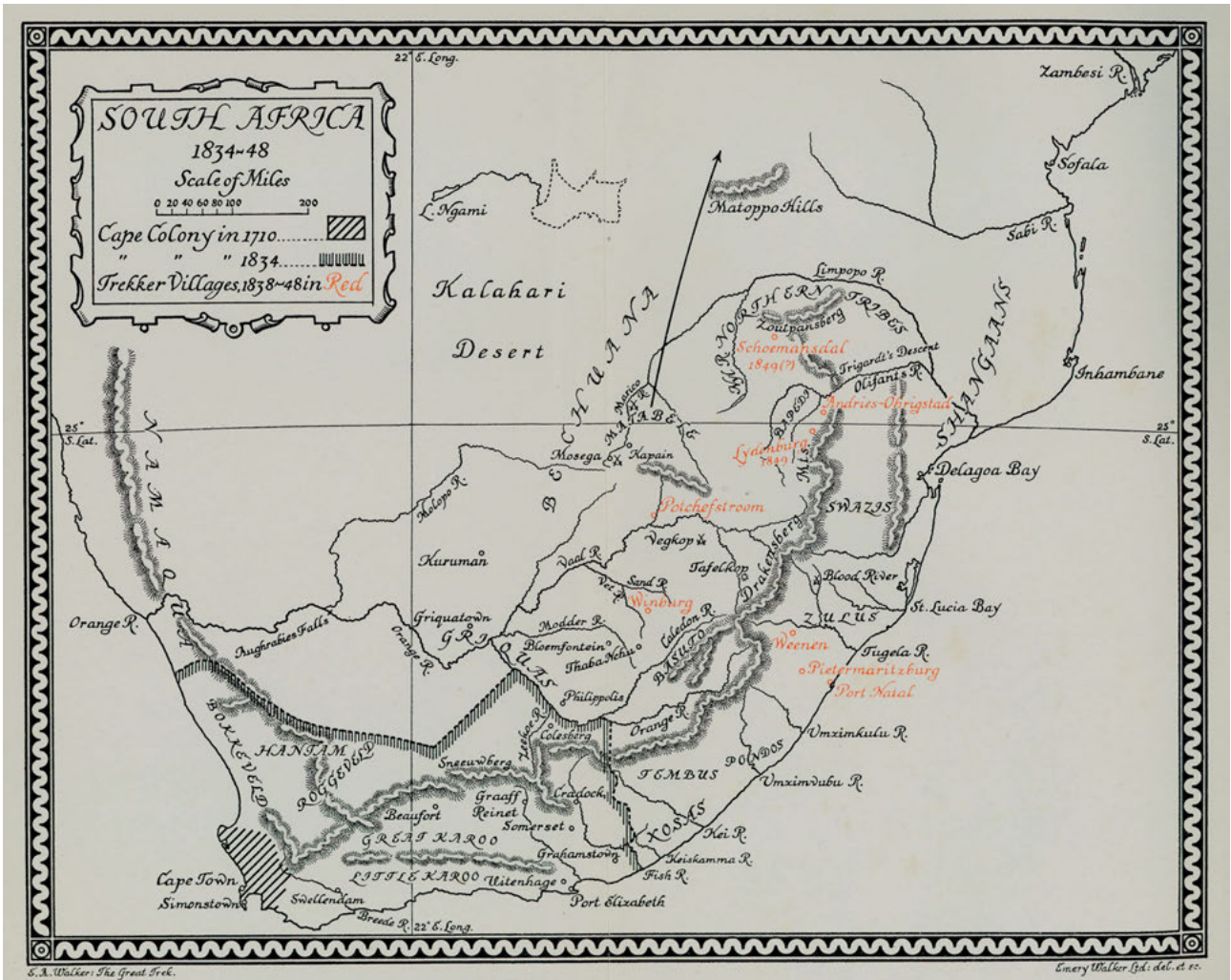


Figure 26.11: 'South Africa 1834-48' (Walker 1934, foldout after p.377)

Reading the narrative

Why did numerous trekkers begin to leave Natal after 1843? After the crushing victories over Dingane at Blood River (1838) and the Maqongqo Hills (1839), the Boers lost no time in taking command in Natal and, on 10 February 1840, instated Mpande as the new Zulu king, the topic represented, together with the ultimate downfall of Dingane, on the two previous reliefs. Only four days after Mpande was installed, Andries Pretorius, ‘Chief Commandant and Commanding General of all the Burghers of the Right Worshipful Volksraad of the South African Society, Port Natal, and Commander-in-Chief of the Army placed under [his] command by the Volksraad’, ordered the raising of the flag of the recently founded Republic of Natalia, and requested P.H. Zietsman, the Secretary of War, to read a proclamation defining its territory (fig. 26.11).¹²⁹² It was a barefaced act of colonisation: the Volksraad seized all the Zulu land from the Thukela to the Black Mfolozi River, bounded to the west by the Drakensberg, and to the east by the ocean with ‘all sea-coasts and harbours which have already been discovered, or may hereafter be discovered, ... exclusive from that which the late Mr. Retief obtained from the Zulu nation for our Society’ (see *Treaty*).¹²⁹³ Their territory was now enormous, stretching from the Mzimvubu River in the south, all the way to the Black Mfolozi in the north. However, this first self-proclaimed Boer republic was short-lived as it caused major upheavals for both Zulu and British in demographic, economic and political terms.¹²⁹⁴

Despite the Boer republic’s claim to much of Mpande’s land, he remained its ‘*de facto* ruler’,¹²⁹⁵ making traditional chiefly demands of his subjects. Why tens of thousands of black people began to leave his kingdom and flood into the Boer republic has been debated; whether they came as refugees to be free from Zulu rule as advocated by John Laband, or ‘empowered by the ambition of chiefs [to stake out territory], not by the dissatisfaction of ordinary people’, as argued by Norman Etherington.¹²⁹⁶ The Boers may have welcomed the newcomers initially as a labour source, but soon introduced counter-measures to control their vast numbers, and planned to transfer those that were unwanted beyond their southern borders. These and other related events threatened the stability of the north-eastern frontier of the British dominion, and ‘this fear fused with existing humanitarian concerns and long-term strategic and economic interests [was] to persuade [Governor] Napier to intervene once again in Natal’.¹²⁹⁷

A pivotal role was played by Boer women when it came to defending Boer interests. In early May 1842, for example, when the British repossessed Port Natal (Durban), Adulphe Delegorgue reported that the women ‘were inciting their husbands to fight [the Crown] and these cold men, suddenly stung into action, had begun to feel the stirrings of enthusiasm’.¹²⁹⁸ Following a preliminary victory over the British at Congella near Port Natal on 23 May,¹²⁹⁹ the Boers were confronted with a superior force sent under Lieutenant Colonel Josias Cloete on 25 June, and withdrew to Pietermaritzburg.¹³⁰⁰ Only a few weeks later, on 15 July 1842, the British forces advanced to the town and required the Boers to submit to the queen’s authority,¹³⁰¹ and the Volksraad surrendered unconditionally:

¹²⁹² Bird, *Annals* 1, 1888, 595.

¹²⁹³ *Ibid.*; see also Laband 1995, 123.

¹²⁹⁴ For the Republic of Natalia, see Russell 1903, 179–198; Nathan 1937, 276–282, 294–318; *DSAB* 4, 1981, 66–67; Ballard 1989, 122–124; Laband 1995, 123–125; Etherington 2001, 288–294; Giliomee 2003, 166–169.

¹²⁹⁵ Laband 1995, 124.

¹²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, esp. 124–125; Etherington 2001, esp. 287–288 (quote, 287).

¹²⁹⁷ Laband 1995, 124–126 (quote, 125); see also Etherington 2001, 289–293.

¹²⁹⁸ Delegorgue, *Travels* 2, 1997, 37; see also Etherington 2001, 291; Giliomee 2003, 169.

¹²⁹⁹ Lonsdale 1981. See also Delegorgue, *Travels* 2, 1997, 36–43.

¹³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 43–46; Laband 1995, 125–126; Etherington 2003, 291–294.

¹³⁰¹ Breytenbach c. 1958, 416–417 (Bylaag 11, 8.7.1842).

We the undersigned, duly authorised by the Emigrant Farmers of Pieter Maritz Burg, Natal, and the adjacent country, do hereby tender for them and ourselves our Solemn Declaration of Submission to Authority of Her Majesty the Queen of England.¹³⁰²

It was not before June 1843, however, that the British began to establish their power over the area with the arrival of Her Majesty's Commissioner Henry Cloete in Pietermaritzburg.¹³⁰³ A year later, on 31 May 1844, the Republic of Natalia formally ceased to exist when it was annexed as an autonomous district of the Cape Colony. On 15 July 1856 Natal was established as a separate colony of the British Crown.¹³⁰⁴

Many Boers did not wait to see the proclamation of British sovereignty in Natal, but began to leave from 1843, although we have little reliable evidence of exactly how many people left Natal and when¹³⁰⁵ – and there were more departures to come. They disagreed with Cloete's appeasement policy, especially the settlement of land claims, which did not satisfy their 'earth-hunger'. They also objected to the lack of protection against black people and the abolition of the colour bar.¹³⁰⁶ Here again women took the lead to stir up their men.¹³⁰⁷ The redoubtable Susanna Smit headed a delegation of Boer women who, on 8 August 1843, interrupted the Volksraad's negotiations with Cloete, and confronted the commissioner with their utter abhorrence of British rule. Mrs Smit emphatically pronounced that the women

had been deputed to express their fixed determination never to yield to British authority; that they were fully aware that resistance would be of no avail, but they would walk out by [sic] the Drakensberg barefooted, to die in freedom as death was dearer to them than the loss of liberty.¹³⁰⁸

As discussed in *Women spur men on*, in ironic contradiction of her own statement Susanna Smit and her husband did not leave Pietermaritzburg but spent the rest of their lives there. It is a reminder of the fact that a considerable number of Voortrekkers decided to trek no further but to stay in Natal and live under British rule. Andries Pretorius was among those who remained there initially, even though he was excluded from the general amnesty granted to the Natal trekkers by Josias Cloete in the first article of the peace treaty concluded between the British and the Boers on 15 July 1842. But at the very end of the agreement it was conceded to him by the same Cloete in an additional article:

In consideration of Mr. A.W. Pretorius having cooperated in the final adjustment of these Articles, and of his personal humane conduct to the Prisoners, and his general moderation, – the Amnesty granted in the 1st Article is hereby fully extended to him.¹³⁰⁹

A further incident of open Boer insubordination was recorded about a year later. On 4 September 1844 most of the representatives of the newly elected Volksraad refused to take an oath of allegiance to the British Crown, and the old Volksraad that served when the area was first annexed as a district of the Cape Colony, which had initially agreed to the queen's authority, had to continue in office.¹³¹⁰ There was also dissatisfaction that the British forbade the enactment of the Boer plan

1302 Ibid., 418–419 (Bylaag 14, 1842).

1303 Ibid., 435–438 (Bylaag 4, 1843, 'Proclamation By His Excellency Major General Sir George Thomas Napier ...'), 438–444 (Bylaag 5–17, 1843); see also Cloete 1899, 160–196 ('Lecture V: Submission to the Crown').

1304 Bird, *Annals* 2, 1888, 394–395 ('Annexation of the District of Natal to the Settlement of the Cape of Good Hope', 31.5.1844); Laband 1995, 125.

1305 A systematic analysis of the data provided by Visagie (2011) would help to shed more light on this matter. See the general remarks, for example, by Nathan 1937, 317–318; Laband 1995, 125–126; Giliomee 2003, 172–173.

1306 Russell 1903, 201 (quote); Le Cordeur 1960, xix.

1307 For their role in Pietermaritzburg and the strong divisions along Boer gender lines, see Giliomee 2003, 168–169.

1308 Bird, *Annals* 2, 1888, 259; see also Walker 1934, 311–312; Nathan 1937, 276–277; Etherington 2001, 293–294; Giliomee 2003, 169. For a fuller quotation, see *Women spur men on*.

1309 Breytenbach c. 1958, 419–420 (Bylaag 15, 1842); see also Liebenberg 1977, 182–184.

1310 Bird, *Annals* 2, 1888, 418–419 (Major Smith to Secretary of Government).

to demand and if necessary force Africans to leave their farms if they had settled there after British annexation: such numbers had flocked into Natal that it was claimed that this threatened the security of the area.¹³¹¹ These controversies no doubt led to the exodus of more Voortrekkers. When Pretorius and ‘the great majority of [Natal] trekkers abandoned their farms early in 1848 to seek independence on the Highveld’, he declared: ‘For liberty we sacrificed all.’¹³¹² It was the second time that Pretorius and his compatriots had had to give up their farms in a British colony – first the Cape,¹³¹³ and now Natal. And a reverse process followed. As soon as Boer discontent had ‘denuded Natal’, British immigrants began to flood the district.¹³¹⁴

Sir Harry Smith, since 1 December 1847 new governor of the Cape Colony, who appeared to have some sympathy with the departing trekkers, visited Pretorius and some of his men on 1 or 2 February 1848 in Natal.¹³¹⁵ He reported on this meeting on 10 February in Pietermaritzburg:¹³¹⁶

On my arrival at the foot of the Drackenberg [sic] Mountains I was almost paralysed to witness the whole of the population, with few exceptions, ‘trêkking’! Rains on this side of the mountains are tropical ... and these families were exposed to a state of misery which I have never before saw equalled ... The scene here was truly heart-rending.¹³¹⁷

Smith’s sympathy seems to have been short-lived, however. In response to the massive treks back over the Drakensberg he acted swiftly and, only a day or two after this meeting, issued a proclamation at the trekkers’ camp at the Thukela River by which he annexed with a single stroke of the pen the whole area between the Orange and the Vaal rivers as the Orange River Sovereignty (fig. 26.12), pre-empting any Boer intentions to settle there independent of British rule.¹³¹⁸ The following month Smith clarified that the British resident, Major Henry Douglas Warden, with a small force would be placed at present-day Bloemfontein as the chief authority.¹³¹⁹ This was an extraordinary act of seizure as no one, ‘not Tau the Lion nor Mzilikazi nor Barends nor Bloem nor Moshweshwe nor even Potgieter ... had ever claimed such dominion’.¹³²⁰ Pretorius and his followers did not take long to react. In July they forced Warden and his British troops to leave Bloemfontein.¹³²¹ And in the same month some nine hundred Natal and Transorange trekkers signed a bitter lament about their experience with British rule, written by Pretorius in Bloemfontein to Governor Smith (18.7.1848), stating

... we perceive, in a manifesto, that you threaten us with a war of military power; which appears to us very unjust to constrain us on lands which we have justly bartered from the natives – to them having been allowed self-government and all privileges of liberty; and we whites must be governed by laws which come from another place (or country).

One might ask, are we then worse, are we more contemptible than the coloured population? To them are acknowledged and secured the lands they have inherited; to them are allowed self-government and their own laws; but as soon as we whites are on the same lands, which we have justly obtained

1311 Ibid., 419–426; Liebenberg 1977, 212–215.

1312 Giliomee 2003, 172–173. See also Hattersley, 1936, 15: ‘By 1848, most of the farmers had already abandoned the district.’

1313 See *Arrival*.

1314 Hattersley 1936, 16 (quote), 38; Ballard 1989, 126–128.

1315 For Sir Harry Smith, see Moore Smith 1902, vols 1&2.

1316 For Sir Harry Smith and the Boers, see Etherington 2001, esp. 313–319.

1317 Liebenberg 1977, 268 (quote from the *Graham’s Town Journal*, 19.2.1848, ‘Sir Harry Smith’s progress’). See also Nathan 1937, 332; Giliomee 2003, 172.

1318 Theal (1916, 277) and Nathan (1937, 368) date the proclamation on 3 February 1848; see also Giliomee 2003, 172. For Warden, see Barnard 1948; Etherington 2001, 310–311, 315–319; Tweed 2013, 27; and *Convention*.

1319 Nathan 1937, 368–369.

1320 Etherington 2001, 314.

1321 Theal 1916, 281–283; Nathan 1937, 370–371.

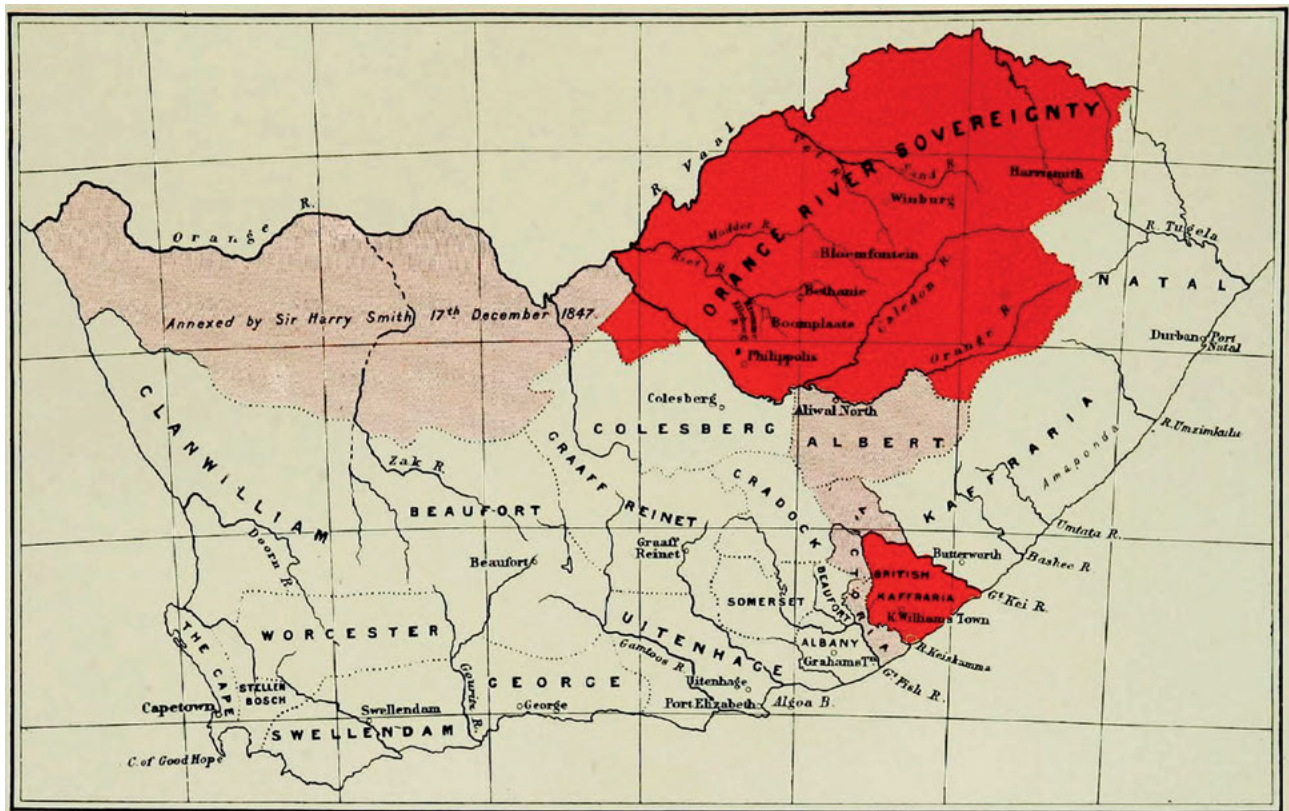


Figure 26.12: South Africa, 1847–54. Red-coloured districts annexed by Governor Sir Harry Smith, those lightly coloured becoming part of the Cape Colony (Moore Smith 1902, opp. p.236)

from them, these privileges are immediately taken from us, so that we may justly say that we do not even share equally with the coloured tribes; but that now, though all other creatures enjoy rights and liberties, we are constantly constrained to be in fetters ...

Now, we state to Your Excellency, and we state it to the world, we state it as men with clear hearts and much experience, that we white cattle farmers cannot, with any feeling of security, under Her Majesty's jurisdiction, reside in a country inhabited by so many coloured people, especially as they are left to their own laws, and we are placed under other laws. We repeat again, as well to Your Excellency as to the world, that had we perchance been coloured, it might perhaps be possible, but now we find it impossible, because we are white African Boers ...

And now we arrive at the great mirror of Natal ... How did we obtain possession of that country – unjustly or easily? No; we obtained it justly from a Sovereign power [see *Treaty*]; and subsequently it cost us the blood of dearest wives and children [see *Bloukrans*] ... And where is this country now? Still in the possession of the owners? ...

And now comes the great and weighty question! Did Government take possession of the country upon the majority and at the desire of the proprietors of the said country, or because it was right to do so? Oh, no! ... It took place with power alone. But where is the word of right? Can any one call that right which first deprived us of our liberty and country whilst we were living in peace and quietness ... ? ...

Where are then the former proprietors of the land? Here they are wandering in the wilderness of South Africa. ...

Oh, these hardships you will never eradicate from the heart of an African Boer, neither with promises nor with threats; you will cause a further flight and dissatisfaction, but never a silent submission. And thus we have severely suffered; ... for liberty, we sacrificed all! ...

But we wish to entreat Your Excellency to leave us unmolested and without further interference, on those grounds which we have justly obtained from the legal proprietors, and thus we shall exclaim to the world and our Creator ..., that we have not yet been totally extirpated.¹³²²

Pretorius' statement makes clear how Boer resentment entangled perceptions of British dominion with native privilege.

Coming back to *Return*, the scene reflects some of the emotions associated with the trekkers' retreat from Natal in Afrikaner memory. The drama and determination of pulling a heavily loaded ox wagon over the steep barrier of the Drakensberg cements the belief in the courageous determination of the Voortrekkers to achieve independence. The scene is given greater weight not so much because it refers to a particular event of history, but because it is prototypical. In contrast to Coetzer's lively drawing, the marble transformed the enormous struggle to return across the Drakensberg into a staged event that embodies the fullest awareness and appreciation of what Boers were able to achieve. The Boer family on the right watching the ongoing progress of their trek reinforce this impression: their calm demeanour suggests that they are captivated by a triumphant performance within the ideal setting of the Drakensberg amphitheatre and confident of its success. The wounded but otherwise immaculate male figure seems to personify the belief that the hardship and jeopardy of the past are manageable and will not cause lasting harm. And, despite the almost impassable terrain, the trek is gradually advancing because everybody is playing his or her appointed part perfectly, positioned correctly, even dressed with propriety. The message is clear: whatever the trekkers, young and old, may have faced, they kept together, stayed on course and overcame all obstacles.

In the *Official Guide* Moerdyk promotes a similar reading of *Return* in which the trekkers embody the principles of inexorable Afrikanerdom:

After the annexation of Natal by the British the die was cast and the decision taken: Back again across the Drakensberg to seek elsewhere in the interior for the independence which had been lost in Natal. The panel depicts the return across the mountains, with Mont-aux-Sources in the background. The wagons are heavily laden and long spans of oxen are necessary to pull them up the precipices.¹³²³

Within the frieze, the stout-heartedness of the Voortrekkers and the mountainous terrain in *Return* are similar to *Descent*, which shows a trekker family too, although here on their way into Natal after having surmounted the Drakensberg – indeed, it might be the same little family some years later. In *Return* the direction of their travel is reversed, but their indomitable will remains the same. This comparison is also manifest in the composition of the frieze as the scenes are placed diagonally opposite each other and in the same narrative position: *Descent* is the first scene of the south wall, *Return* the first of the north wall.

In the visual narrative, regardless of any challenge, the Voortrekkers never abandoned their ultimate goal, to strive at all costs for liberty and independence. They were ideal role models for contemporary Afrikaners.

¹³²² Du Toit and Giliomee 1983, 223–225; Giliomee 2003, 173.

¹³²³ *Official Guide* 1955, 51.

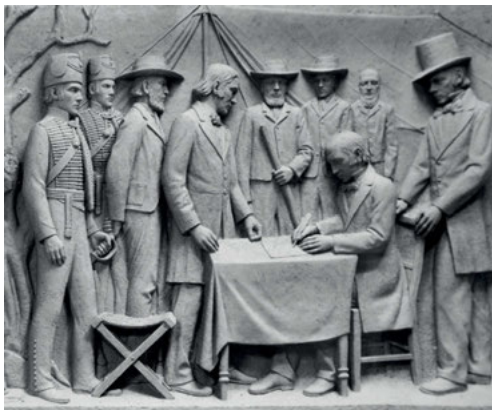
27 Sand River *Convention* (17 January 1852)



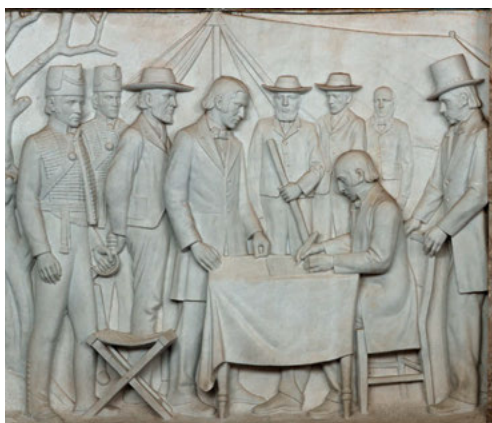
A2/A3



B2



C2/C3



D

27 Convention

West wall (panel 31/31)

h. 2.3 × w. 2.82 m

Restored fractures on the vertical edges

Sculptor of the clay maquette: Peter Kirchoff

STAGES OF PRODUCTION

A1 W.H. Coetzer, pencil drawing, retained only in A2 (April–June 1937)

A2 Reproduction of A1 (June 1937)

A3 W.H. Coetzer, revised pencil drawing A1, h. 13.4 × w. 15.3 cm
(after September 1937)

Annotation: 'Konvensies van Zand Rivier binne in 'n Tent' (Conventions of Sand River inside a tent)

B1 One-third-scale clay maquette, not extant but replicated in B2 (1942–43)

B2 One-third-scale plaster maquette, h. 79 × w. 87 × d. 9.5 cm (1942–43)

C1 Full-scale wooden armature, not extant (1943–45)

C2 Full-scale clay relief, not extant but recorded in photograph; replicated in C3 (1943–45)

C3 Full-scale plaster relief (1943–45), not extant but illustrated (*Die Vaderland*, 26.2.1945); copied in D (1948–49)

D Marble as installed in the Monument (1949)

EARLY RECORDS

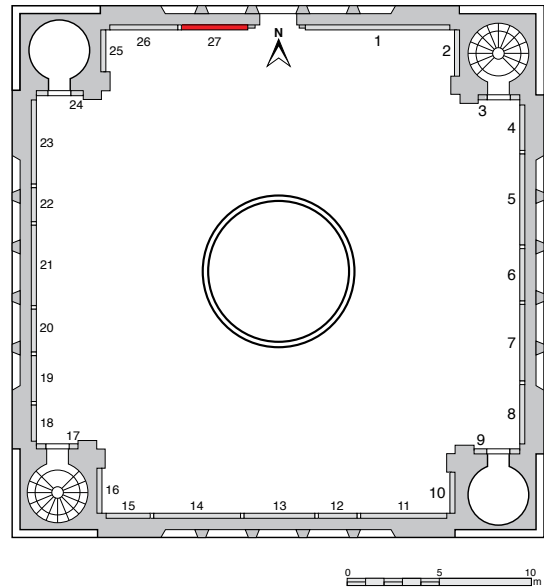
SVK minutes (4.9.1937) — item 4u (see below, 'Developing the design')

Panele (c. Dec 1934–36) — item 13 'Die erlanging v.d. vryheid (a) die konvensies 1852 en 1854' (The achievement of freedom (a) the conventions of 1852 and 1854)

Wenke (c. 1934–36) — item I. F.A. STEYTLER (a) 'Ondertekening van die Sandrivier-Traktaat' (Signing of the Sandriver Treaty)

Moerdyk Layout (5.10.1936–15.1.1937) — scene 23 on panel 30/31 'Konvensies 1852 [and] 1854' (Conventions 1852 [and] 1854)

Jansen Memorandum (19.1.1937) — item 7.23 'The Conventions of 1852 and 1854'



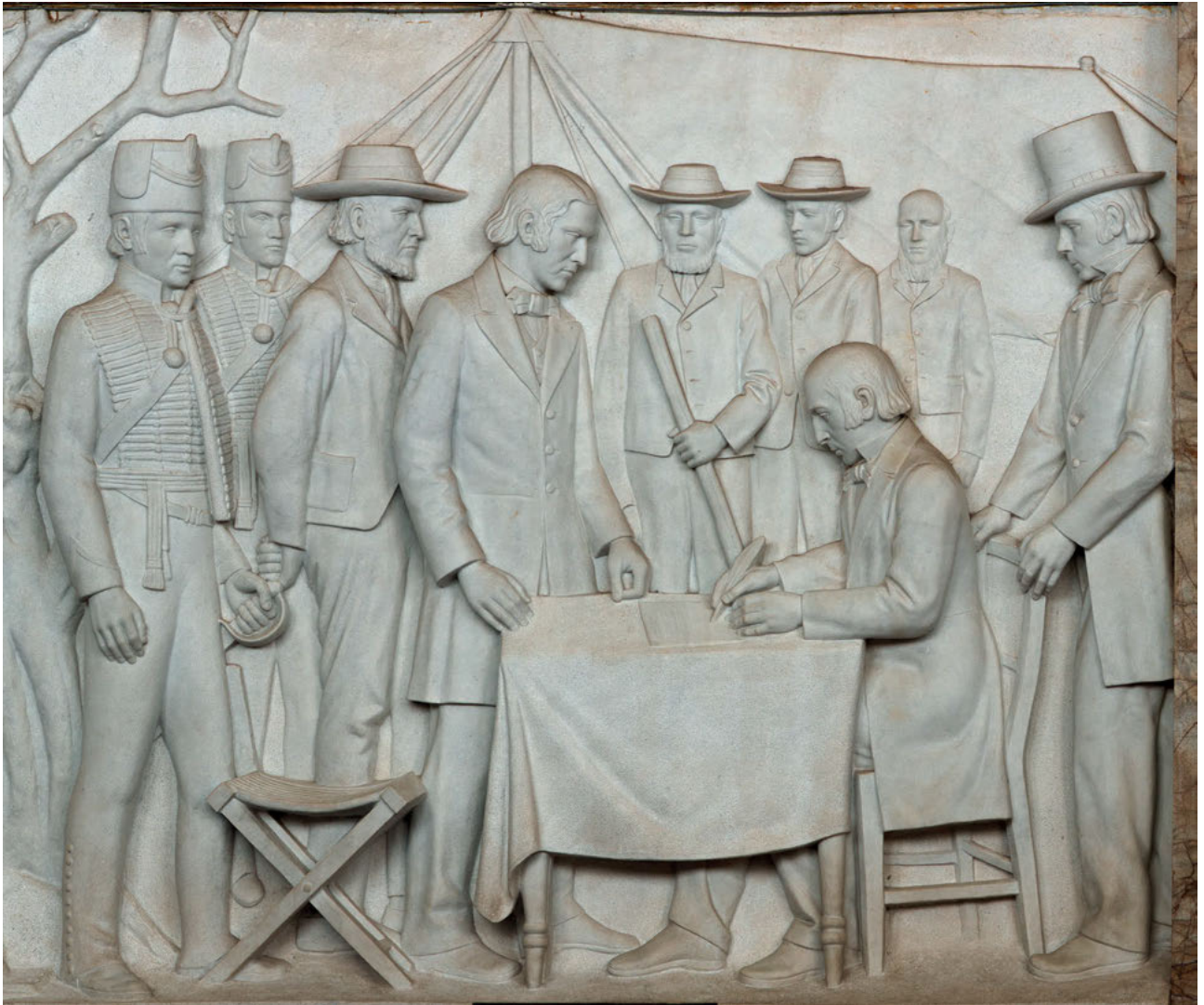


Figure 27.1: *D. Convention*. 1949. Marble, 2.3 × 2.82 m (courtesy of VTM; photo Russell Scott)

Description

Nine men are gathered around a small table covered with a plain cloth in front of a tent: four Voortrekkers and two British soldiers witness three dignitaries who attend to the convention, the central focus of the scene (fig. 27.1). These three are united in being clean-shaven and formally dressed with bow-tie, frock coat and long trousers. The balding dignitary, seated on a chair on the right of the table, one of the two British commissioners, signs the paper with a quill, while the two standing men look on intently. The tall second commissioner in a top hat stands behind the signatory's chair, resting his hands on its back. The third dignitary, on the opposite side of the table, is Andries Pretorius, expectantly awaiting the conclusion of the formalities. His central position stresses his importance, as does the apex of the tent opening behind his head.

Framing Pretorius are two Boers, one in support immediately behind him, with oddly depicted hands clasped behind his back, and another on his left, presented frontally with a muzzleloader like a formal guard. Both are bearded and wear Voortrekker dress and hats. Behind are two more Boers nearer the tent that fills the background – a young boy and an older bareheaded bald man with full beard, the latter carved in very low relief so that he appears to be in the distance. All look towards the table, reinforcing the importance of the act.

Two officers on the far left stand in front of the tree which divides *Convention* from *Return*. Their distinctive garb copies the officer's dress uniform of the Cape Mounted Rifles that served from 1827 to 1870 (fig. 27.12). The officers, the foreground one with his left hand on the hilt of his sword, wear a corded busby with bag and plume; a dragoon jacket with frogging, pointed cuffs and a pelisse over their left shoulders; a cross-belt; a barrelled sash; and fitted trousers buttoned at the ankle and strapped under the shoe. The careful depiction of the soldiers' uniforms is an excellent example of the sculptors' determination to endow their representations with historical veracity. The painstaking depiction of the folding stool, which rather unexpectedly appears in the foreground, provides Voortrekker detail.

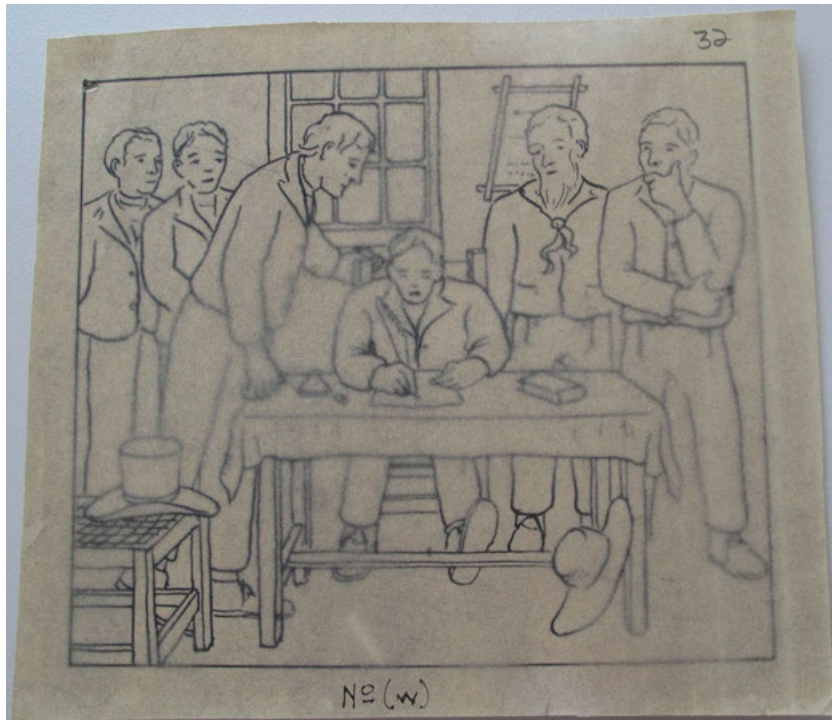


Figure 27.2: A2. W.H. Coetzer. Reproduction of first sketch for *Convention*. June 1937 (courtesy of ARCA PV94 1/75/5/1; photo the authors)

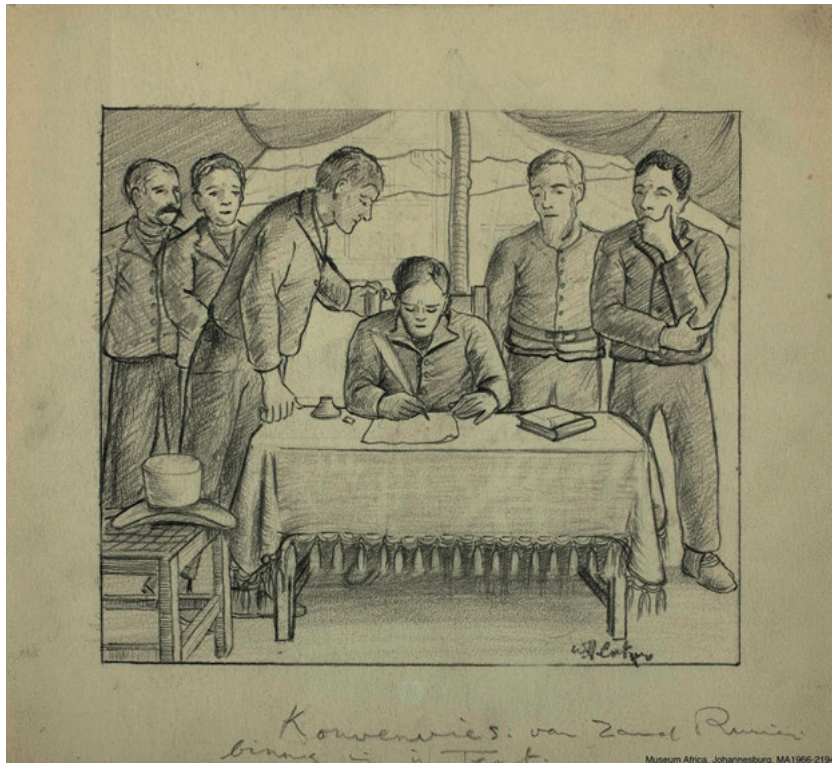


Figure 27.3: A3. W.H. Coetzer. 'Konvensies van Zand Rivier binne in 'n Tent'. After September 1937. Pencil, 13.4 x 15.3 cm. Revised first sketch (photo courtesy of Museum Africa, no. 66/2194L)

Developing the design

The reproduction (fig. 27.2) shows Coetzer's drawing in its original state, before it was later partly revised (fig. 27.3). The reproduction is dominated by a large rectangular table covered with a plain cloth, placed just right of centre and parallel to the picture plane, with six men grouped behind it. Two figures are the focus, one seated at the table writing and, the other, a tall man on the left, who bends over him observantly, his left hand on the writer's chair and the other on the table. They are both concerned with the paper that is being signed near the top, framed by an inkpot and book on the table. Coetzer includes other everyday details, such as the writer's foot resting on the table spar and a hat propped up against a table leg, visible beneath the short table cloth. There is also a top hat on a riempie chair in the foreground, partly cut off by the frame. The removed hats and the bare heads of all the participants may suggest the solemnity of the occasion. The four bystanders who watch the formal act probably represent the two groups involved. The two on the far right are definitely trekkers, recognisable by their buttoned-up flap trousers, and the beard and neckerchief of the one next to the writer. The dress of the two clean-shaven men in suits on the left is not distinctive, but they are presumably British. It is the only indoor event depicted by Coetzer in the sketches, indicated by a cottage pane window and, next to it, a document in a rustic frame hanging on the wall at a slant.

At the Historiese Komitee meeting on 4 September 1937 the following alterations were requested:

Signing of the contract. The man is signing too high on the document; the statute book of Van der Linde must also be shown here; study an authentic table cloth in the Africana museum; the signing took place in a tent in the veld; show many Boers including likenesses of the following A.W. and M.W. Pretorius, Paul Kruger, Schutte and Visagie (portraits can be obtained from Prof. Engelbrecht).¹³²⁴

Coetzer adjusted his drawing in response to the critique, and added modelling, hatching and tone which are further accentuated by new bold outlines (fig. 27.3). He kept the figure composition unchanged but erased the window and the picture frame (although both are still faintly visible) to set the scene inside a tent with supporting tent pole and a view through the open canvas to distant mountains. A longer fringed cloth on the table eliminates the view of men's legs and feet beneath it, and the Boer hat leaning against the table leg has disappeared. The writer's head is given more prominence, while his arms are further foreshortened so that he signs the paper at the bottom. However, Coetzer did not follow up the Historiese Komitee stipulation to introduce more Boers and the portrait features of important Voortrekkers, although he adjusted the dress of the men, and endowed one of the two British figures on the left with a moustache. The trekkers wear traditional short jackets with fewer buttons than the British ones. The man standing next to the signatory on the right is difficult to identify: while his short belted jacket has many buttons, more like the British ones, the form of his beard is in accord with a trekker. The other men on the right definitely seem to be Boers, and the tall one who leans over the table is most likely Pretorius. Perhaps the top hat that rests on the chair next to him was meant to identify him, as he wears it in *Arrival*, *Blood River* and *Mpande*, although ultimately he would not have a hat in *Convention*.

When Kirchhoff made the small clay maquette (fig. 27.4) to create a blueprint for the full-scale relief, he redesigned the figures in Coetzer's pencil drawings substantially, with only Pretorius' position maintained. This is a sole example of one of the sculptors apparently having access to Coetzer's revised drawing rather than the initial design, as Kirchhoff shows the event taking place in front of a tent, not inside a room, the modification required by the Historiese Komitee. Or perhaps Kirchhoff adopted the tent, together with stool and tree, from another Coetzer drawing,

¹³²⁴ 'Ondertekening van traktate. Die man teken te hoog op die dokument; die wetboek van v.d. Linde moet ook hier gewys word; bestudeer 'n behoorlike tafelkleedjies in die Africana museum; die ondertekening vind plaas in 'n tent in die veld; wys baie boere w.o. gelykenisse van die volgende A.W. en M.W. Pretorius, Paul Kruger, Schutte en Visagie (portrette is by prof. Engelbrecht verkrybaar)' (Historiese Komitee 4.9.1937: 4u).



Figure 27.4: B2. Peter Kirchoff. *Convention*. 1942–43. Plaster, 79 × 87 × 9.5 cm. Maquette (courtesy of VTM Museum VTM 2184/1–28; photo Russell Scott)

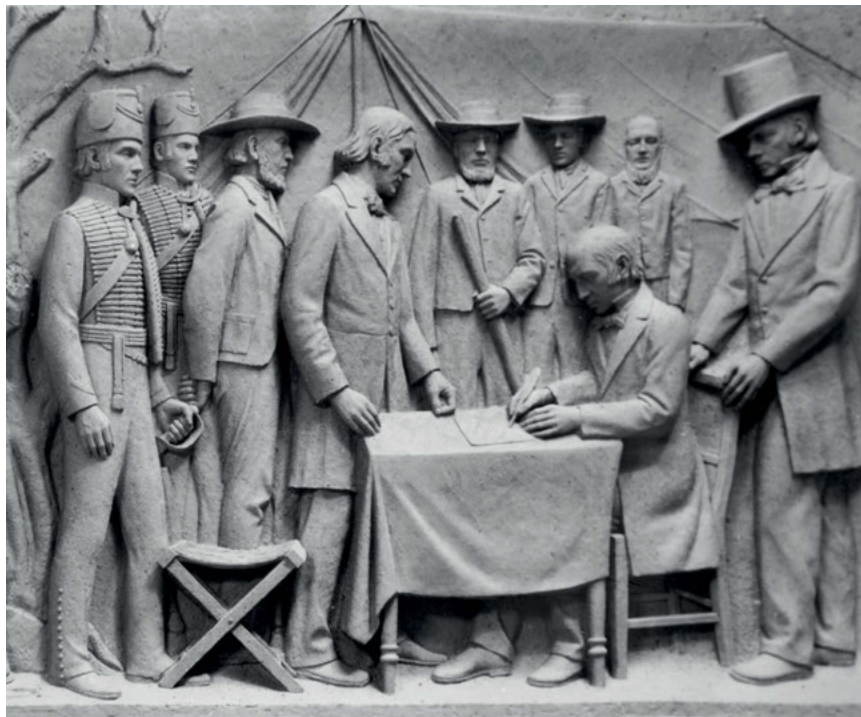


Figure 27.5: C2. *Convention*. 1943–45. Full-scale relief. Clay (courtesy of Kirchoff files; photo Alan Yates)

‘Reconciliation between Potgieter and Pretorius’, which Manfred Nathan had published in 1937 (fig. 27.8). The sculptor composes a rather stiff signing ceremony with three more onlookers than Coetzer’s drawing for *Convention* and, instead of being inside it, they are staged outside the curtain-like backdrop of an open ridge tent. The table, now with turned legs, is still centred but smaller, the cloth is long but without fringes, and the view, like Coetzer’s, is slightly from above so that the document is clearly visible. Now three men are directly involved in the act of signing and distinguished from the other figures as formal dignitaries by their bow ties and long buttoned-up coats, similar to those worn by Boer leaders in *Presentation* and *Inauguration*. Kirchhoff moved the signatory to the right side of the table and hence to profile view, and added a further figure behind him, who wears a top hat and has his hands on the chairback, taking account of the fact that there were two British assistant commissioners. The figure Hennie Potgieter identified as Pretorius (fig. 27.9) stands at the opposite side of the table and leans on it lightly with both hands.

While the dignitaries’ dress does not clarify who is Boer or British, the six bystanders are clearly marked by their different attire. Four of them are Boers: all bearded and wearing short Voortrekker jackets, they are grouped with Pretorius, one in profile behind him and the others in a receding row on his left. They are shown in frontal view, two with brimmed hats, and the foremost one with a gun. On the far left are two officers arrayed in the uniform of the Cape Mounted Rifles (see below). Depicted in three-quarter view and facing sternly to the centre, they overlap each other, and the one in front has his left hand on his sword. Behind the officers looms the left half of a tree whose other half occupies the far right of *Return*. Thus Kruger and Kirchhoff, when designing the narrative’s last two scenes, considered the continuity of adjacent panels, and employed this tree as a common boundary marker, a unique feature within the iconography of the frieze, and unusual evidence of planning for its continuity at the maquette stage.

There are surprisingly few changes from the maquette to the full-size clay (fig. 27.5). Apart from the general refinement of detail and some additional folds alongside the tent opening, the sculptors made only marginal adjustments: the document on the table is wider and signed lower down; the second Boer from the right is young and has no beard; the length of the muzzleloader is slightly reduced; the trousers of the British officers are buttoned; and the tree branches are more elaborate. Although Hennie Potgieter identified only one life model, for the Englishman on the far right, the figures have generally acquired more distinctive facial features. When the Florentine sculptors copied the scene into marble (fig. 27.1), the lively modelling of faces and fabric in clay was diminished in the formal hardness and micro-crystalline surface of the stone. When the final marble was being installed inside the Monument, the space for it proved to be too small: thus a considerable part of the back of the standing English dignitary had to be trimmed, which resulted in the loss of most of his right leg.



Figure 27.6: Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR) in 1881 (Cachet 1882, foldout map opp. p.330, photo Roy Hessing)

Reading the narrative

In early 1848 Pretorius had led a large group of trekkers from Pietermaritzburg beyond the borders of the new Orange River Sovereignty (fig. 26.12), established by Governor Sir Harry Smith in early February that year in an ad hoc response to the Boers' departure from Natal. In July a Boer commando led by Pretorius forced the British resident of that sovereignty, Major Warden, and his '57 men, including 16 recruits and 42 others, composed of civilians residing in the village, leaders, drivers, and eight deserters' to leave Bloemfontein, as discussed in *Return*.¹³²⁵ Smith 'at once offered a reward of £1,000 "for the apprehension of this treacherous rebel Pretorius"',¹³²⁶ and only a month later, at the end of August, a superior force of eight hundred British regulars under the governor's command defeated Pretorius and his men in the battle of Boomplaats, some eighty kilometres south of Bloemfontein.¹³²⁷ To secure British interests for the future, Smith instructed Warden, after he was reinstated as resident, now with a force of some 250 men, to build a new rampart called Queen's Fort.¹³²⁸ The Boers had to retreat and fled north over the Vaal River to the Magaliesberg area, near Hendrik Potgieter's sphere of influence. There Pretorius established his new headquarters, situated near modern Pretoria, where he continued to build a strong following.¹³²⁹ This domain was the forerunner of the future Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (fig. 27.6).

Pretorius' arrival added fuel to the fire of the old rivalry between the two Voortrekker leaders, Potgieter and Pretorius. Their contention became even more complicated when Potgieter claimed supreme authority over the whole of the Transvaal, although the ultimate power over all political, legal and constitutional affairs remained with the Volksraad or Burgerraad (citizens' council), which he and his people had instated in Potchefstroom four years previously in 1844.¹³³⁰ The arrival of Pretorius and his followers in the Highveld challenged the existing power structures and strained the relationship between Pretorius, Potgieter and the Volksraad. The majority of the Boers, however, favoured unity over a fragile co-existence of three or four small independent republics, which would only prolong discord. On 23 May 1849 a general meeting of the burghers at Derdepoort in the Magaliesberg resolved that the white inhabitants of the four Transvaal districts should unite, their affairs be administered by one government and the Volksraad be the supreme authority.¹³³¹ Subsequently, to avoid further personal conflict, in January 1851 the Volksraad appointed a commandant-general for each of the districts: Pretorius and Potgieter for their adherents in the central and southern regions respectively (the latter also for Soutpansberg in the north), Willem François Joubert (1824–91)¹³³² for Lydenburg in the east, and Johan Adam Enslin (1800–52)¹³³³ for Marico in the west – a distribution of power that did not, however, resolve the difficulties.¹³³⁴ First Potgieter and then, once he had withdrawn, Pretorius investigated the prospect of formal independence for the Boers residing north of the Vaal River with Warden and Smith. In October 1851 Pretorius informed Warden that he, with Frederik Gerhardus Wolmarans (1788–1872)¹³³⁵ and

¹³²⁵ Schoeman 1992, 30 (letter from Warden to Smith, 24.6.1848). Dalbiac (1902, 182), however, stated that Warden 'had but 57 men of the Cape Mounted Rifles under his command'.

¹³²⁶ Leyds 1906, 70 (quote), 78 (the reward was £1,000, not £2,000 as claimed by Nathan 1937, 338, 378).

¹³²⁷ Dalbiac 1902, 182–186; Nathan 1937, 370–377; Oberholster 1972, 214–215 no. 10 (site); Thompson 1975, 143.

¹³²⁸ Oberholster 1972, 212–213; Thompson 1975, 144; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queen%27s_Fort_Military_Museum.

¹³²⁹ Nathan 1937, 332–334. For the wider context, see Etherington 2001, 315–319; Giliomee 2003, 172–175.

¹³³⁰ For the rivalry between Potgieter, Pretorius and the Volksraad, see Nathan (1937, 333–340), Liebenberg (1977, 293–296) and Giliomee (2003, 170–171), while Etherington (2001, 295–299) analyses Potgieter's political, economic and strategic interests in the northern Transvaal.

¹³³¹ Nathan 1937, 333–336.

¹³³² Visagie 2011, 246.

¹³³³ *Ibid.*, 171.

¹³³⁴ Theal 1916, 374–375; Nathan 1937, 335–336; Giliomee 2003, 173.

¹³³⁵ Visagie 2011, 623.

Nicolaas Johannes Grobbelaar (1812–98),¹³³⁶ had been empowered by the Boer Council of War (Krygsraad) and the ‘people’ to proceed to sovereignty and to discuss this subject with the British.¹³³⁷

Rather unexpectedly, Pretorius’ negotiations of the Boers’ political requirements were supported by Lord Henry George Grey, the Colonial Secretary in London, who had become increasingly disturbed by Governor Smith’s politics in the north of the Colony.¹³³⁸ Smith’s annexation of the Orange River territory, for example, had encouraged both British and Boer to make huge land claims to the consternation of the black peoples who lived in the new sovereignty.¹³³⁹ Against his own intentions, the governor had also failed to win the trekkers as white allies ‘to settle border disputes with African chiefdoms, subjugate Africans into a labour force, and establish commercial relations with the British colonies’.¹³⁴⁰ After the bitter defeat of British forces by Chief Moshweshwe’s Basotho in the Battle of Viervoet,¹³⁴¹ and the outbreak of the Eighth Frontier War with the Xhosa, both in 1851, the English-language settler newspaper in Bloemfontein, *The Friend*, described the public resentment without reserve: ‘We see a war of races ... the declared aim and intention of the black man being to drive the white man into the sea.’¹³⁴²

The British Crown again stepped in. On 7 May 1851 it appointed two special assistant commissioners on behalf of Lord Grey: Major William Samuel Hogge (1812–52) and Charles Mostyn Owen (1818–94), both with considerable previous experience in South Africa.¹³⁴³ They were sent to the Colony as subordinates of Governor Sir Harry Smith to investigate the affairs in the Orange River Sovereignty, namely ‘the occupation of land’.¹³⁴⁴ In late November they arrived in Bloemfontein.¹³⁴⁵ Still en route from the Eastern Cape, Hogge wrote to his wife Nina (Helen Julia née Magniac) about the parties involved:

Land speculators, combatant missionaries, unreasonable, ignorant, disloyal Dutchmen, black savagism and not a little backyard Englishism are fine ingredients in the cauldron of confusion ... The whole state of affairs is going on his [Sir Harry Smith’s] personal conduct and mad, arrogant precipitancy.¹³⁴⁶

In late November Hogge and Owen arrived in Bloemfontein.¹³⁴⁷ Now things happened quickly. On 11 December Hogge and Owen received a letter from Pretorius asking how they could commence negotiations and where the delegations should meet.¹³⁴⁸ On 23 December the British commissioners consented to receive an authorised Boer delegation from the Transvaal to reach a formal agreement, and to facilitate this they published the proclamation cancelling the warrant of arrest for Pretorius and the reward of £1,000 offered for his capture after the battle of Boomplaats.¹³⁴⁹ The conference was set to take place on 16 January 1852 at the farm ‘Kromfontein, Midden-Zandrivier’, owned by Petrus Albertus Venter (1790–1858), near the junction of Koolspruit with the

1336 Ibid., 205.

1337 Nathan 1937, 336–338.

1338 Lord Grey confessed in his last letter to Hogge (7 July 1852), which he wrote to him without knowledge of his untimely death about a month earlier: ‘I made a great mistake in not recalling Sir H. Smith after the convict business [with Adam Kok, beginning as early as 1848], this might perhaps have averted the calamity which occurred’ (Tweed 2013, 105).

1339 On the land speculation, see Etherington 2001, 315–316; Giliomee 2003, 173–174.

1340 Ibid., 175.

1341 Thompson 1976, 152–155; for the topography see Raper, Möller and Du Plessis 2014, 332 (Modderpoort).

1342 Giliomee 2003, 174.

1343 For Hogge and Owen, see Tweed 2013.

1344 Ibid., 40–45 (quote, 40) see also Theal 1916, 324–327.

1345 Etherington 2001, 319; Tweed 2013, 77–81.

1346 Schoeman 1992, 105–106.

1347 Etherington 2001, 319.

1348 Theal 1916, 372–377.

1349 Ibid., 373–374; Nathan 1937, 338–339; Tweed 2013, 82–83.

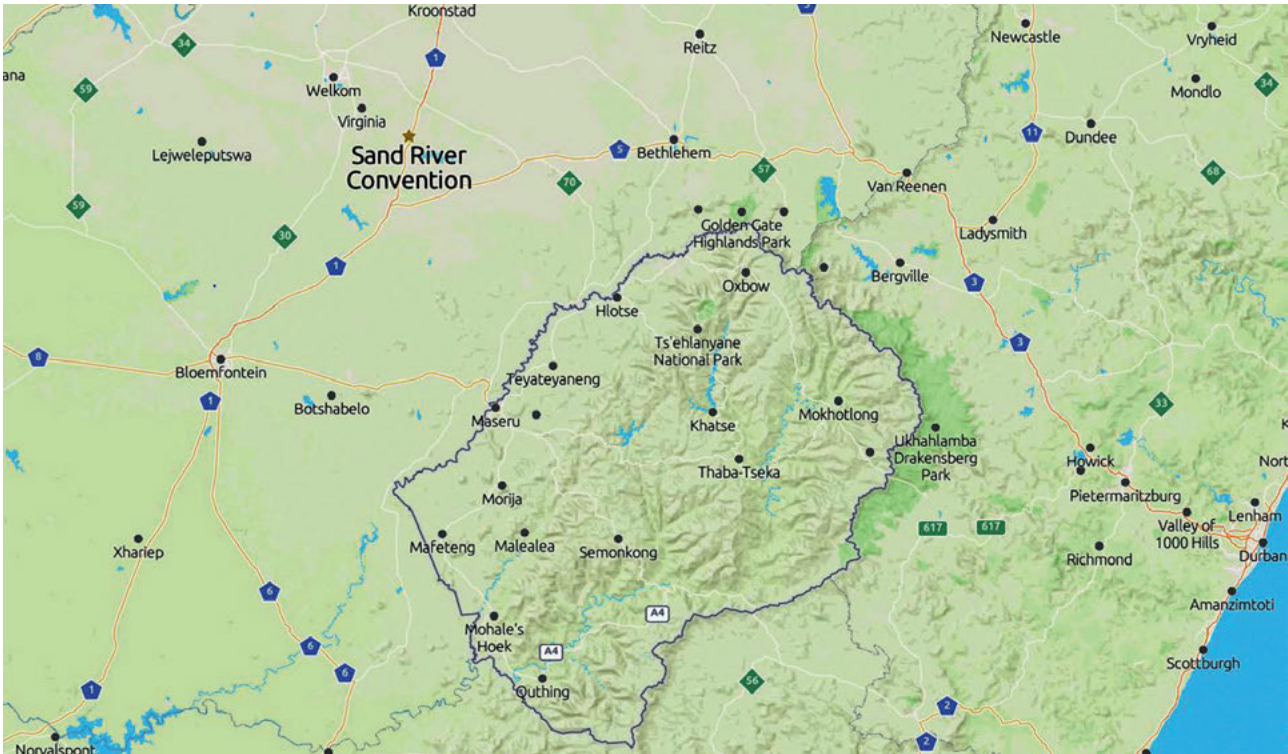


Figure 27.7: Map showing the site of the Sand River Convention in the Orange Free State (<https://mapcarta.com/14261228/Map>)

Sand River (fig. 27.7).¹³⁵⁰ Some days before the meeting Hogge gave his wife a graphic foretaste of the event, evidently more a festive celebration than a sober arbitration:

such a collection of *Mynheers* from all parts can seldom have been seen in south Africa. It is a pity we have nobody here that can draw as there will be some scenes worthy of the old Dutch masters – two wagons of brandy have already gone to the scene of action ...¹³⁵¹

The fifteen Boer delegates, led by Pretorius, arrived in the company of some four hundred trek-ers – yet without approval of the Volksraad and Potgieter, and no representative of his people among the delegates.¹³⁵² The British turned up with an impressive military entourage:

Major Hogge and Mr. Owen arrived at the place escorted by five lancers, with one hundred men of the 45th [1st Nottinghamshire Regiment] under Captain Parish, supported by thirty-five of the Cape Mounted Rifles and one field piece ...¹³⁵³

There were further visitors to witness the spectacle of this extraordinary conference. Chief Mosh-weshwe, for example, sent his principal councillor and some attendants, and many of the local traders showed up as well.¹³⁵⁴ In the end the two delegations needed no more than a day to come to a mutual agreement, formally recognising the independent Boer republic. The resolutions of the conference were signed on 17 January: for the British by ‘Major W. Hogge and C.M. Owen, Esq.,

¹³⁵⁰ Situated at the N1, some 140 kilometres north-east of Bloemfontein (Raper, Möller and Du Plessis 2014, 448). For Venter, see Visagie 2011, 590 (quote).

¹³⁵¹ Tweed 2013, 83.

¹³⁵² Dalbiac 1902, 192.

¹³⁵³ *Ibid.*; Tweed 2013, 83–84.

¹³⁵⁴ It is difficult to confirm whether Louis Henri Meurant, the founder of the *Grahamstown Journal* (see *Murder*), was present as one of the translators, as has been claimed (http://esat.sun.ac.za/index.php/Louis_Henri_Meurant).

Her Majesty's Assistant Commissioners for the settling and adjusting of the affairs of the eastern and north-eastern boundaries of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope'; and for the Boers 'the following deputation from the emigrant farmers residing north of the Vaal River: A.W.J. Pretorius (commandant-general), H.S. Lombard (landdrost [chief magistrate]), W.F. Joubert (commandant-general), G.J. Kruger (commandant), J.N. Grobbelaar (raadslid [council member]), P.E. Scholtz, F.G. Wolmarans (ouderling [elder]), J.A. van Aswegen (veld-cornet), F.J. Botes (do.), N.J.S. Basson (do.), J.P. Furstenburg (do.), J.P. Pretorius, J.H. Grobbelaar, J.M. Lehman, P. Schutte, J.C. Kloppers'.¹³⁵⁵ In signing, both parties affirmed that

- The Assistant Commissioners guarantee in the fullest manner, on the part of the British Government, to the emigrant farmers beyond the Vaal River the right to maintain their own affairs and to govern themselves according to their own laws, without any interference on the part of the British Government; and that no encroachment shall be made by the said Government on the territory beyond, to the north of the Vaal River with the further assurance that the warmest wish of the British Government is to promote peace, free trade and friendly intercourse with the emigrant farmers now inhabiting, or who thereafter may inhabit that country, it being understood that this system of non-interference is binding on both parties.
- Should any misunderstanding hereafter arise as to the true meaning of the words 'The Vaal River,' this question, in so far as regards the line from the source of that river over the Drakensberg, shall be settled and adjusted by commissioners by both parties.
- Her Majesty's Assistant Commissioners hereby disclaim all alliances ... with ... coloured nations ...
- It is agreed that no slavery is, or shall be, permitted or practised ...
- Mutual facilities and liberty shall be afforded to traders and travellers on both sides of the Vaal River; it being understood that every waggon containing ammunition and firearms coming from the south side of the Vaal River shall produce a certificate signed by a British Magistrate or other functionary duly authorised to grant such, and which shall state the quantities of such articles contained in said waggon, to the nearest magistrate north of the Vaal River, who shall act in the case as the regulations of the emigrant farmers direct. It is agreed that no objection shall be made by any British authority against the emigrant Boers purchasing their supplies of ammunition in any of the British Colonies and Possessions of South Africa, it being mutually understood that all trade in ammunition with the native tribes is prohibited both by the British Government and the emigrant farmers on both sides of the Vaal River.
- It is agreed that, so far as possible, all criminals and other guilty parties who may fly from justice either way across the Vaal River shall be mutually delivered up, if such should be required, and that the British courts, as well as those of the emigrant farmers, shall be mutually open to each other for legitimate processes [including the mutually approved exchange of witnesses] ...
- It is agreed that certificates of marriages issued by the proper authorities of the emigrant farmers shall be held valid and sufficient to entitle children of such marriages to receive portions accruing to them in any British Colony or Possession in South Africa.
- It is agreed that any and every person now in possession of land and residing in British territory, shall have free right and power to sell his said property and remove unmolested across the Vaal River, and *vice versa*; it being distinctly understood that this arrangement does not comprehend criminals or debtors without providing for the payment of their just and lawful debts.
- This done and signed at Sand River aforesaid, this 17th day of January 1852.¹³⁵⁶

Hogge unexpectedly died on 11 June 1852, just five months after having signed the convention.¹³⁵⁷ In the last letter to his wife Helen Julia (née Magniac) on 27 May, his outlook on South Africa's future was rather grim:

¹³⁵⁵ For the convention, see Theal 1916, 374–379; Nathan 1937, 336–342; Thompson 1975, 156; Etherington 2001, 319; Giliomee 2003, 175.

¹³⁵⁶ Eybers 1918, 357–359 no. 177; Tweed 2013, 85 fig. 15 (confidential copy of the convention, 'Printed for the use of the Cabinet, October 6, 1881'); https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Sand_River_Convention.

¹³⁵⁷ Tweed (2013, 102–112) provides a detailed narrative of Hogge's last months. The inscription of his 1852 memorial was copied in 2013, when family relatives commissioned a new granite slab in place of the old headstone. Hugh Tweed, who reports about the Anglican Church 'service of rededication of the grave' on 29 April, concluded (*ibid.*, 122):



Figure 27.8:
W.H. Coetzer.
'Reconciliation
between
Potgieter and
Pretorius' (Nathan
1937, opp. p.340)

That this wretched country composed of the heterogeneous material it is should ever become permanently quiet is impossible – but at least we will endeavour to come to a clear understanding about the inhabitants as to the share of the burden they will take upon their shoulders for poor John Bull cannot afford to be the Don Quixote of South Africa any longer.¹³⁵⁸

When Lord Grey lamented Hogge's untimely death in a letter reporting to the former prime minister, Lord John Russell, on the Cape Colony, he praised the assistant commissioner's 'public service [as being] of the very highest importance', and continued with a more positive prospect:

... the prevention of a new war in the Orange River Sovereignty, at a time when it must have led to the most calamitous consequences, is mainly owing to his exertions, and to the sound judgement he showed in circumstances of no ordinary difficulty; and I believe almost the last act of his life was to conclude an arrangement, calculated to secure the peace of that part of Africa.¹³⁵⁹

Although neither the Volksraad nor Potgieter had authorised Pretorius and the other delegates to sign such a convention, in the end there was hardly any opposition as the Boers, by now some twenty thousand, recognised how vital the Sand River Convention was for their future, in founding a co-operative and independent republic of Transvaal.¹³⁶⁰ Potgieter and Pretorius made their peace on 16 March 1852, a significant event originally intended for inclusion in the frieze, but ultimately excluded, although Coetzer made an independent sketch of the scene (fig. 27.8). On the same day the Volksraad ratified the convention, 'almost without a dissentient'.¹³⁶¹ On 24 June Sir John Pakington, the new British Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, signified 'his approval of the convention and of the proclamation giving effect to it'.¹³⁶² It is interesting to note that the longest paragraph of the convention specifies the regulations and restrictions related to trading ammunition and firearms, while other crucial issues, such as the prohibition of slavery and the annulment

'After 161 years, William Samuel's memory was rekindled and should, *Deo volente*, endure for at least another century and a half.'

1358 Schoeman 1992, 107.

1359 Grey 1853, 245–246; Tweed 2013, 111.

1360 For the number of burghers, see Giliomee 2003, 175.

1361 Nathan 1937, 339–340.

1362 Theal 1916, 379.

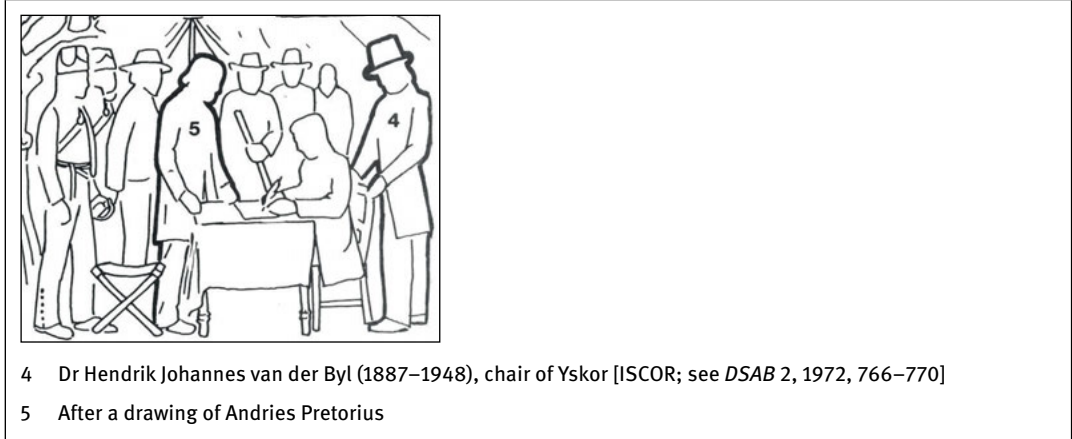


Figure 27.9: Models for portraits (Potgieter 1987, 39)

of all former treaties between the Colony and the ‘coloured nations’ north of the Vaal River, are brief and have no further subtext.

In 1853, shortly after the deaths of both Potgieter and Pretorius, the Volksraad decided to establish a new district, out of portions of Lydenburg and Rustenburg, with a new centre, to be called Pretoria in memory of Andries Pretorius.¹³⁶³ Later that year the Volksraad resolved that the name of the new Voortrekker republic should be ‘The South African Republic, north of the Vaal River’ (after 1857 Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek).¹³⁶⁴ And only a few months later, on 30 January 1854, by signing the Bloemfontein Convention, the British Crown also renounced all dominion and sovereignty over the territory between the Orange and Vaal rivers, by then the home of some fifteen thousand burghers.¹³⁶⁵ This paved the way for recognition of the second independent Boer republic, named the ‘Orange Free State’ (*Oranje-Vrijstaat*), in 1854, though Giliomee remarks that the ‘two new republics were states in little more than name’.¹³⁶⁶

As Moerdyk has it, by the signing of the Sand River Convention ‘the Great Trek had reached its logical conclusion’.¹³⁶⁷ This was only true for the Transvaal trekkers, however, not yet those south of the Vaal River, although early suggestions for topics for the frieze had included both the 1852 and the 1854 conventions.¹³⁶⁸ And, under the terms of both, black people remained utterly disadvantaged. Despite British uneasiness about the Boer treatment of Africans, Hogge showed that he shared some of their prejudices when he wrote to his wife in the same letter we quoted above:

... the Black gentlemen are fighting amongst themselves which is the best amusement for them, unluckily they take very good care not to hurt each other much ‘for hawks will not pick out hawks’ eyes’.¹³⁶⁹

In contrast to *Treaty*, the representation of the convention in the frieze is a rather dry affair, certainly not a rare ‘collection of *Mynheers*’ or a scene ‘worthy of the old Dutch masters’ as anticipated

¹³⁶³ Nathan 1937, 350–351.

¹³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 351.

¹³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 385–389; Giliomee 2003, 175 (numbers).

¹³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶⁷ *Official Guide* 1955, 53.

¹³⁶⁸ See above, ‘Early records’. Hennie Potgieter (1987, 38) mistakenly states that ‘in the Convention of 1852, England promised recognition of the sovereignty of the two Republics’ (In hierdie Konvensie van 1852 belowe Engeland om die soewereiniteit van de twee Republikeke te erken).

¹³⁶⁹ Tweed 2013, 105.



Figure 27.10: Portraits of Pretorius, Hogge and Owen in *Convention*. Marble, details of fig. 27.1 (photos Russell Scott)

by Hogge.¹³⁷⁰ The signing ceremony is staged in a remote area with a single tent as the backdrop and just nine participants standing as if rooted to the spot. The Voortrekkers, including the Boer with a gun, and the two British officers on the far left, are indication enough of the affiliations of the three dignitaries at either end of the table who sign the agreement. But without Hennie Potgieter's identification of Pretorius (fig. 27.9),¹³⁷¹ it would be difficult to discern which was which. Knowing that the figure on the left is Pretorius clarifies that the Boer leader and his compatriots occupy the centre of the scene, while the British commissioners, who are more difficult to identify individually, are set to the right and their supporting soldiers to the left, thus framing the Voortrekkers. As Major Hogge was the more experienced assistant commissioner and six years older than Owen, who was born in 1818, we might speculate that Hogge is the balding signatory while Owen as junior stands respectfully behind him (fig. 27.10). In terms of iconographic coherency it comes as a surprise that Pretorius, the only trekker in the frieze constantly distinguished by a top hat (*Arrival, Blood River, Mpande*), is here bareheaded, while Owen is not.

The uniform which Kirchhoff chose for the two British officers in the frieze (fig. 27.11) corresponds well with that of the Cape Mounted Rifles who escorted Hogge and Owen to Sand River. This is clarified by the 1847 watercolour of one of their number by C.C.P. Lawson (fig. 27.12)¹³⁷² and the bronze bust of Major Warden, who had led this contingent, made to honour him as founder of Bloemfontein (fig. 27.13),¹³⁷³ which was presented to the public in 2002 and then installed in the city's Queen's Fort Military Museum (fig. 27.14).¹³⁷⁴ Kirchhoff portrayed both officers in a dress

¹³⁷⁰ Ibid., 83.

¹³⁷¹ Potgieter 1987, 39. None of the Voortrekker Monument guidebooks clarify which of the three dignitaries is which.

¹³⁷² A Cape Mounted Rifleman portrayed by Richard Cannon in 1842 shows similar characteristics (Schoeman 1982, fig. 3 after p.48).

¹³⁷³ We gratefully acknowledge the help of Marina Nel, Hugh Tweed and Ernene Verster who provided us with photographs and first-hand details about the bust. Displayed nearby is another life-size bust in bronze, that of the Basotho chief Moshweshwe (email Hugh Tweed 5.3.2019).

¹³⁷⁴ A committee set up by the city's National Afrikaans Literary Museum and Research Centre (Die Nasionale Afrikaanse Letterkundige Museum en Navorsingsentrum) commissioned the sculptor Phil Minnaar to make the bust. We thank Ingrid Howard, who copied Warden's bust for the South African Armour Museum in Bloemfontein and provided us with the newspaper clipping illustrated in fig. 27.14. For the artist, see http://nhmsa.co.za/artist.html?tag=phil_minnaar.



Figure 27.11: English officers in *Convention*. Marble, detail of fig. 27.1 (photo Russell Scott)



Figure 27.12: C.C.P. Lawson. *Officer, Cape Mounted Rifles, 1847*. Watercolour (Tylden 1938, fig. opp. p.228)

jacket with frogging and a pelisse over the left shoulder. However, he omitted the typical moustache and the ‘large plume of black cock feathers’ in favour of clean-shaven faces and a corded shako without visor but a plain bag and a small cockade in front, as worn around the 1850s.¹³⁷⁵

After outlining the circumstances of the Sand River Convention, Moerdyk’s concluding paragraph in the *Official Guide* is filled with biblical rhetoric, recalling the arrival of the Israelites in the Promised Land, quite in contrast to the stiff formality of the representation:

The Voortrekker ideal had been realised; the sacrifice and the suffering had not been in vain and on this note of rejoicing the frieze reaches its end.¹³⁷⁶

Convention is unusual in the narrative of the frieze as being only the second scene showing the British. The other, *Presentation*, also shows them in accord with the Boers, as the English settlers of Grahamstown present a Dordrecht Bible to the trekkers as a Christian gesture of support as they leave the Cape. It seems remarkable that the British, abhorrence of whose rule was a key factor in the Boers’ decision to leave the Cape Colony, and then Natal, should only be represented in a positive light in the frieze. Perhaps this reflected the need for solidarity to bolster white supremacy in

¹³⁷⁵ Tylden 1938, 229 (quote); Barlow and Smith 1981, 4 figs 2 and 3 (‘Officer’s Shako, 1840–1856’).

¹³⁷⁶ *Official Guide* 1955, 53.



Figure 27.13: Phil Minnaar. Bust of Major Henry Douglas Warden (1800–56), in dress jacket with frogging of Cape Mounted Rifles. 2002. Bronze, h. 64 cm (courtesy of Queen’s Fort Military Museum, Bloemfontein; photos Ernene Verster)



Figure 27.14: Presentation of Major Warden’s bust in Bloemfontein, 31.10.2002 (courtesy of Ingrid Howard)

the face of the ever-increasing black majority, a fear that would drive the policies of the National Party, then in the ascendancy. It is a profound paradox in the visual rhetoric of the frieze that the Voortrekkers' exodus to escape British rule is adulated, yet it is also acknowledged that Boer and British in South Africa shared many values in terms of colour, religion and culture that differentiated them from the country's African inhabitants.

But, as we have seen, Afrikanerdom was to prevail in the rise to power of the National Party during the 1940s, leading to their victory in the 1948 elections. And the significance of the Sand River Convention in early Afrikaner history was not forgotten. In 1958, not long before South Africa again rejected British affiliations and declared itself a republic, the South African Historical Monuments Commission had a stone cairn with a bronze commemorative plaque erected in the place where the agreement had been signed over a century before (fig. 27.15).¹³⁷⁷

¹³⁷⁷ Oberholster 1972, 223 no. 21 (see also Raper, Möller and Du Plessis 2014, 448). For the bilingual text (Afrikaans and English) of the bronze plaque (with the wrong date, 16th January 1852), see Tweed 2013, 85.



Figure 27.15: Memorial at the site of the signing of the Sand River Convention. 1958 (photo the authors)

Illustrations Part II

Frontispiece: Gerard Moerdyk. Voortrekker Monument, Hall of Heroes. 2012 (courtesy of VTM; photo Russell Scott)

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Figure 1.3: A3. W.H. Coetzer. 'Uittog uit Kaapland'. After September 1937. Pencil, 13.3 × 61.2 cm. Revised first sketch (photo courtesy of Museum Africa, no. 66/2194U)

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Figure 2.2: A2. W.H. Coetzer. Reproduction of first sketch for *Presentation*. June 1937 (courtesy of ARCA PV94 1/75/5/1; photo the authors)

Figure 2.3: A3. W.H. Coetzer. 'Oorhandiging van Bybel aan Uys'. After September 1937. Pencil, 13.3 × 15.3 cm. Revised first sketch (photo courtesy of Museum Africa, no. 66/2194F)

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- Figure 3.6: B2a. Hennie Potgieter. *Soutpansberg*. 1942–43. Plaster, 76.5 × 89.8 × 8.5 cm. Rejected maquette (courtesy of VTM Museum VTM 2184/1–28; photo Russell Scott)
- Figure 3.7: B2b. Hennie Potgieter. *Soutpansberg*. 1942–43. Plaster, 78.3 × 86.6 × 8 cm. New maquette (courtesy of VTM Museum VTM 2184/1–28; photo Russell Scott)
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Three-page foldout at the end with the frieze of the Voortrekker Monument (courtesy of VTM; photos Russell Scott)

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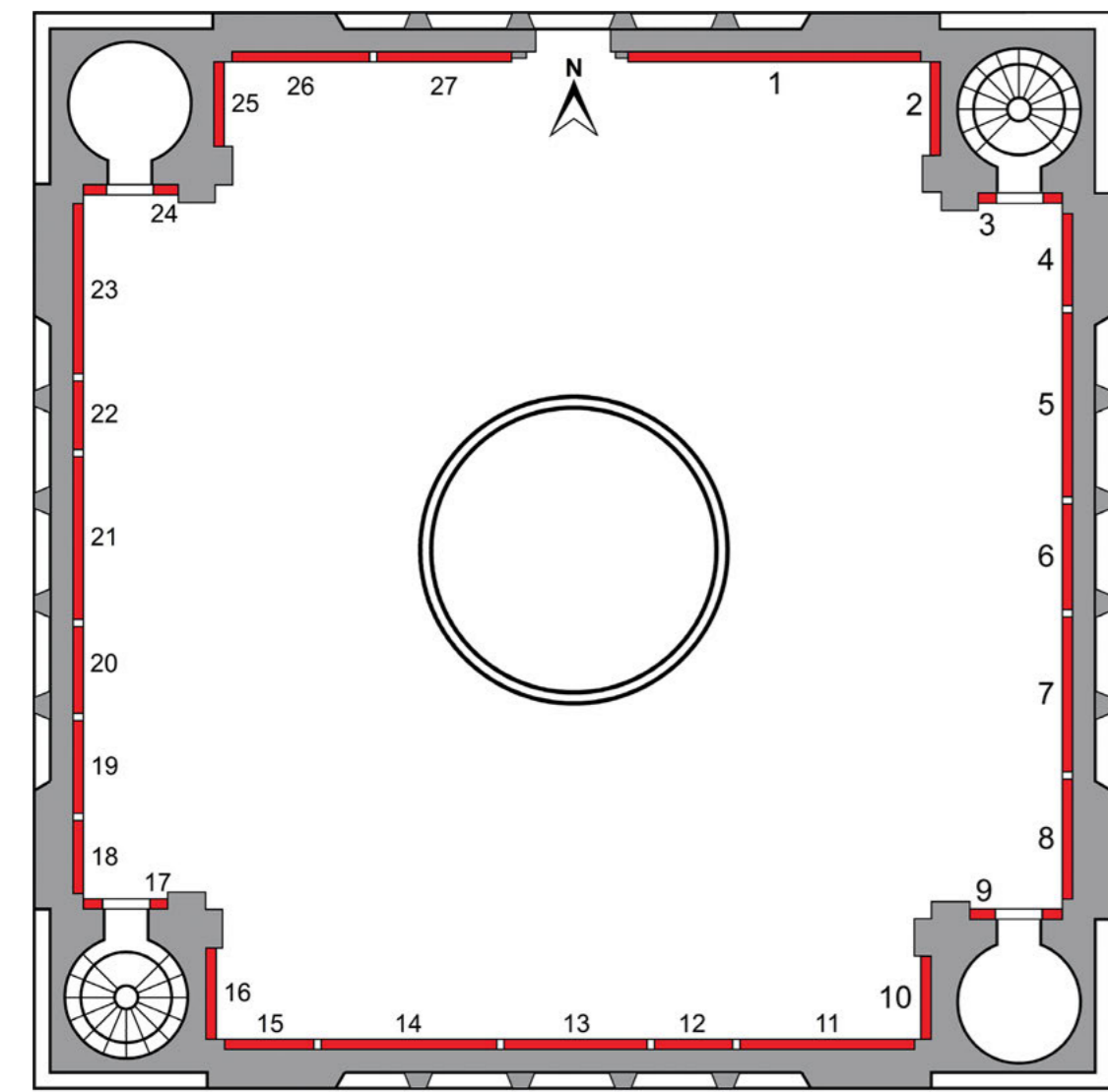
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▶ 26 Return ▶ 27 Convention ▶ 1 Departure



▶ 2 Presentation ▶ 3 Soutpansberg



▶ 4 Delagoa Bay ▶ 5 Vegkop ▶ 6 Inauguration ▶ 7 Kapain ▶ 8 Negotiation



▶ 9 Blydevooruitsig ▶ 10 Debora Retief



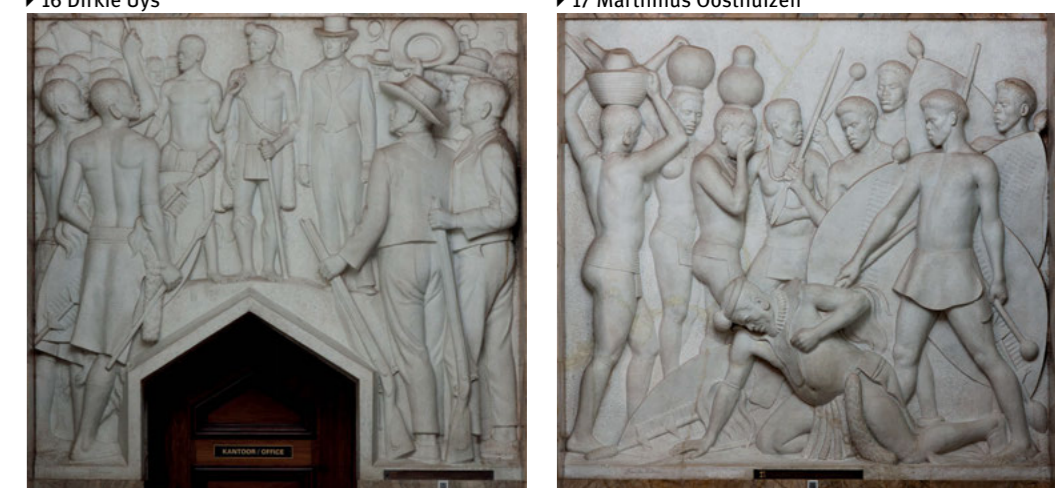
▶ 11 Descent ▶ 12 Treaty ▶ 13 Murder of Retief ▶ 14 Bloukrans ▶ 15 Teresa Viglione



▶ 16 Dirkie Uys ▶ 17 Marthinus Oosthuizen



▶ 18 Woman spur men on ▶ 19 Arrival ▶ 20 The Vow ▶ 21 Blood River ▶ 22 Church of the Vow ▶ 23 Saailaer



▶ 24 Mpande ▶ 25 Death of Dingane