

**THE RISE AND DECLINE OF HYBRID (METIS) SOCIETIES
ON THE FRONTIER OF WESTERN CANADA AND
SOUTHERN AFRICA**

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ABSTRACT/RESUME

A comparison of the development of the Metis in Canada and similar peoples in Southern Africa reveals some remarkable similarities between the two groups. The existence of these parallels suggests that a more extensive comparative study of peoples of mixed race throughout the world would be of value.

Une comparaison de l'évolution des Métis au Canada et de celle de certains peuples similaires dans le Sud africain révèle des ressemblances frappantes entre les deux groupes. Ce parallèle suggère qu'une étude comparative plus complète des peuples de race mixte dans le monde entier présenterait une valeur incontestable.

The comparative study of the "frontier" as a historical-geographical phenomenon appears to have, or have had, two main traditions: the first of these, the purpose of which is ultimately practical (i.e. applied geography) is found in the largely pre-World I pioneer settlement studies of Bowman and others (1937). The other tradition involves attempts to apply the "frontier thesis" of Frederick Jackson Turner to other historical settlement frontiers (c.f. Wyman and Kroeber, 1957). What both of these traditions have in common is that they focus almost entirely on the advancing, colonizing culture; the retreating, native groups that are being colonized, or - better - colonialized,¹ are hardly even mentioned.² Only relatively recently have scholars begun to give due recognition to the roles and contributions of native or aboriginal societies on the frontier.³

This paper will focus on a largely overlooked phenomenon which seems to be common to a number of frontiers of European colonial expansion, that is the emergence of distinctive Euro-aboriginal hybrid societies (Forbes, 1968: 217). These were societies whose members were not just hybrids in genealogy and culture but, what is more important, often were very conscious of their hybrid heritage and consequently tended to see themselves as "a people apart" - apart, that is, from both aboriginal and European societies.

The frontier situations chosen for comparison are those of Western Canada (the present Prairie Provinces) and Southern Africa (the former Cape Colony and South-West Africa).⁴ Some study of the histories of both areas made me aware of a number of similarities between the careers of the metis of Western Canada and similar hybrid societies in Southern Africa. Of course, further reading also made me increasingly aware of the many differences, of the ultimate uniqueness of the two situations. But this is to be expected, for, as Prince has stated: "The more fully and precisely the facts are known the more certain is the conclusion that no interpretation will exactly fit them" (1971:23).

The paper will proceed by delineating the careers of the Metis people in Western Canada and comparable frontier groups in Southern Africa, discussing both situations in tandem and pointing out their similarities.⁵ The conclusion will point out some fundamental differences between the two situations and speculate on the possible consequences of these differences.

The career of the Metis in Western Canada can be conveniently divided into four periods: (1) formation, (2) a "golden age", (3) defeat, dispersal and relative impoverization, and (4) a recent resurgence.⁶ This paper will attempt to show that the history of the frontier hybrid societies in Southern Africa can, with some qualifications, also be analyzed and periodized in this way.

Formation

It can be stated, as a valid generalization, that the Metis only emerged as a distinctive, separate people in Western Canada, although there were some precursors in Metis frontier settlements in the Great Lake region (Peterson, 1978); not that there was a lack of mixed-blood offspring in eastern Canada, but there such children would generally be absorbed by the Indian societies of their mothers and identify as Indians.⁷

In Southern Africa too the genesis of mixed-blood societies was limited to the western half of the country, where even today the overwhelming majority of the "Coloured" population lives. A major reason for such limitations to the Wests of both countries seems to be isolation. In Canada this isolation was provided by the Canadian Shield, which separated the arable land of southern Ontario from that of the west. In South Africa the extreme aridity of the Great Karroo deflected the European (Boer) settlement frontier towards the east and thus provided mixed-blood people the space (refuge areas) and time to coalesce into distinct ethnic groups (Guelke, 1976).

The Red River, where Alexander Henry already found a Metis settlement a decade before the settlement of the Selkirk settlers there (Stanley, 1963:3; Morton, 1957:62), is generally considered to be the cradle of the Metis as a distinct society. However Metis families could probably be found at just about every fur trade post when in 1821 (the year of the merger of the Northwest Company with the Hudson's Bay Company), Red River became a center to which HBC employees would retire with their mixed-blood families (Foster, 1975:37).

The Orange River played a similar role as the focus of mixed-blood settlements in the Cape Colony of South Africa, although this analogy cannot be taken too far. For one, only above the Aughrabies Falls (see map I) does the Orange River provide suitable sites for settlements, below these falls the Orange flows in a rocky and virtually uninhabitable canyon.

If we now look at the ethnic origins involved in the *metisage* in both areas some similarities can be detected.⁸ In Western Canada the Indian wives taken by the fur traders were mostly Cree or Saulteaux⁹, that is people who had served as "home guard" Indians (Brown, 1980b:19; Van Kirk, 1980:45-44) or as middlemen in the fur trade to tribes further west (e.g. Blackfoot, Stoneys) and were thus, presumably, relatively acculturated to European ways (Harris and Warkentin, 1974:251-252). In the Cape Colony the wives were also derived from relatively acculturated natives, the Khoikhoi clans living in proximity to the Boer settlers. On the paternal, European side, the Old World origin for both was Western Europe: north-western France and Britain (especially Scotland) for Canada, the Netherlands, Germany and France (for the few Huguenots) for South Africa.

In both Canada and South Africa the resultant frontier hybrids were ethnically diverse. In Canada the basic division was between the French-speaking, Roman Catholic metis proper and the English-speaking, Protestant "half breeds", otherwise also known as "country-born", who were mainly of Scottish origin (Pannekoek, 1976; Brown, 1980a:157). In the Cape Colony the Dutch, Germans and Huguenots had been fairly well amalgamated into an *Afrikaner* (Boer) nationality by the time individual trekboers became progenitors of the hybrid people who came to be historically known as Basters in the Cape Colony and are still known (to themselves and others) by this name in Rehoboth, South West Africa (Namibia).¹⁰ On the South African frontier the differentiation amongst the hybrids depended largely on fortuitous circumstances, including the activities of the German and British missionaries who tended to gather

there people about them at major watering places (Marais, 1939:74-79).

Another differentiation in Southern Africa is the degree of European admixture, according to which the various mixed bloods constituted a continuum rather than a clearly defined category. In this continuum the so-called Basters are, as their name implies, the ones who were most indubitably hybrid,¹¹ Another, historically well-known, hybrid group, the Griquas, were apparently Basters who only changed their name to "Griqua", derived from the name of a Khoikhoi clan, when in 1513 the missionary John Campbell "represented to the principal persons the offensiveness of the word [Baster or bastard] to an English or Dutch ear" (Wilson and Thompson, 1969:70; Marais, 1939:56; Ross, 1976:12). Another, more transitory group, the Bergenaars were again Griquas who had taken on a more predatory, marauding lifestyle beyond the European settlement frontier (Wilson and Thompson, 1969:37-S9; Ross, 1976:20-33, 37). A fourth historical people who are sometimes deemed hybrids are the Orlams (derived perhaps from "overlanders"). Thus Vedder claims that on the Cape frontier mixed-bloods, otherwise known as Basters, were called Orlams "if they stood in the service of Europeans (Vedder, 1934:188). Various groups of such Orlams became important in the history of South West Africa after they migrated there, for example Jonker Afrikaner's Orlams, Amraal's people (around Gobabis) and the Witboois (see Map 1).

The Golden Age

The Metis of Western Canada are seen to have enjoyed several decades of prominence and relative independence, which Sealey and Lussier call their "golden age", the beginning of which they set about 1820 (1975:51). The Red River Insurrection of 1869/70, during which the Metis at Red River organized themselves politically under the leadership of Louis Riel to form a "National Committee" and a provisional government, can be seen as the culmination but also the end of this period. Towards the end of this half-century long "golden age" (1820-1870), Metis or "half-breeds" made up the overwhelming majority of the population at Red River and also provided a substantial proportion of its elite. Hence in 1861, A.K. Isbister (himself a "country-born") could write that at Red River:

The half castes or mixed race, not only outnumber all the other races in the colony put together, hut engross nearly all the more important and intellectual offices furnishing from their numbers the sheriff, medical officer, the post master, all the teachers but one, a fair proportion of the magistrates and one of the electors and proprietors of the only newspaper in the Hudson's Bay territories (Morton, 1957:91).

It should be stated, however, that the French-speaking *metis* proper, although they were numerically in the majority, were less likely to be part of the elite at Red River than were their English-speaking counterparts

(Pannekoek, 1975:134-35). Instead they generally occupied the more menial jobs of the fur trade (*engagés, voyageurs*) or depended on the buffalo hunt for their livelihood (Morton, 1957:81-82; MacGregor, 1976:29).

During their "golden age" the Metis continued to depend on the fur trade, the large-scale, commercialized hunting of buffalo (for hides and pemmican) and, to a growing extent, on freighting (Morton, 1957:69-85). Indeed, the Metis had become so much associated with freighting, that the Red River cart has become a symbol of the Metis as a historical ethnicity.¹² Freighting seems to have grown out of the Metis' very large-scale buffalo hunts, which could involve the use of hundreds of carts for transporting the hides and pemmican back to the Red River settlements.

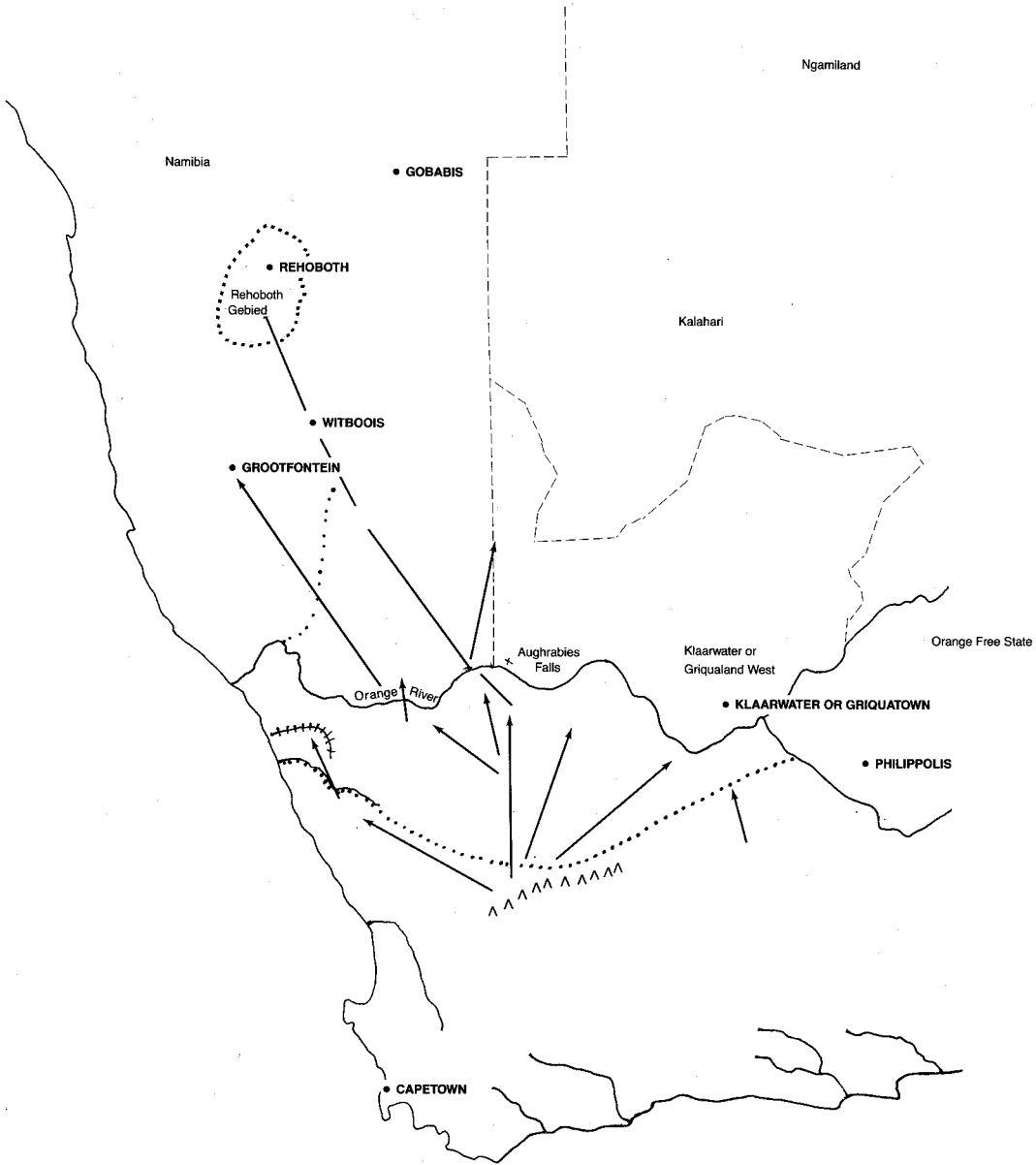
It is perhaps more difficult to say when the frontier hybrid societies of South Africa reached their respective "golden ages" of power and independence. For the various groups of Orlams the golden age must be seen to be the periods when they lorded it over the indigenous people, especially the cattle-rich Herero, of South West Africa; this could have their golden ages fall into the 1840's and 1850's for the Jonker Afrikaners (then at Windhoek) and Amraal's Orlams at Gobabis, but the 1880's and early 1890's for the Witboois, which was also the last Orlam group to have emigrated north into South West Africa (c.f. Kienetz, 1977:553-572). (See Map I).

For the Griquas such an age of relative power and autonomy began in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, with the founding of their settlements north of the Orange River (notably Klaarwater, later Griquatown) in what came to be known as Griqualand West. Here the Griquas formed a "republic" of their own with "code, law courts and coinage complete" (Walker, 1957: 151). Drought and internal strife led a segment of the Griqua to leave Griqualand West for Philippolis, in what is today the southwestern Orange Free State (see Map I), where a second Griqua "captaincy" came into existence in 1826-27. The aim of the Griqua making this move was apparently "to live in a settled, agricultural, respectable community," (Ross, 1976, 22 and ff; Marais, 1939: 40-42) and, indeed, the Griqua did have considerable success with wool-sheep farming while at Philippolis

Sheep and their wool . . . were established on the commanding heights of the economy of what duly became the Orange Free State.

The Griquas shared with their neighbours in the production and the benefits of his economic growth, so that the Griqua community of Philippolis had a short but conspicuous flowering during the 1850's (Ross, 1976:70).

Other Griquas, especially those of Griquatown, continued to depend more on the "annual hunt", that is hunting and trading expeditions northward to Ngamiland and beyond, with ivory being the main objective. These expeditions were often very large scale affairs, on one occasion consisting of about a hundred



wagons (Tabler, 1973:49, 60), not unlike the enormous buffalo hunting expeditions of the Metis at about the same time (Sealey and Lussier, 1975:51-52). And, as was the case with the Metis, these "annual hunts" conflicted to some extent with the settled agricultural way of life which especially the missionaries had in mind for the Griqua. Thus the following observation on the Griqua, made by the Missionary Solomon at mid-century, could just as well have been made by a missionary about the Metis at about the same time:

The hunting expeditions of our people are in many respects injurious to themselves - involving as they do their absence from the means of grace . . . - living at that time a rude and certainly not the most civilizing kind of life besides losing the best time of the year for agricultural labors, but I suppose they *will* pursue them as long as they fancy them profitable in a temporal point of view . . . However, as in all probability these hunts will become year by year less profitable, the evil is likely to work its own cure (Ross, 1976:71-72).

As with the Metis, decline came not only because of the disappearance of big game, notably the elephant, but due to the advance of European settlement. By 1860 the Griquas of both Griqualand West and Philippolis had come under considerable pressure from advancing frontier farmers, the trekboers. The Briquas' response was to retreat (in 1861/62), this time to beyond the Drakensberg, where they established Griqualand East, a third Griqua state, just east of modern Lesotho. Ross describes this "trek" as follows:

In the face of Boer pressure, the alienation of Griqua land and the absence of succour from the British, the Griquas could either cease as a community or they could trek. They chose to trek . . . Perhaps 2,000 people left Philippolis to establish themselves in Nomansland, over the Drakensberg. But the great caravan of ox-wagons and donkey carts, 300 in number, journeyed over a road which the Griquas cut themselves across the high ridge of the mountains, in one of the most remarkable engineering feats of South African history. The pass over Ongeluku's Nek, recently reopened as a jeep track, is a remarkable testimony to Griqua endurance and expertise (ibid:94).

Whatever land the Griquas continued to own in Griqualand West was mostly lost to white settlers in the 1870's when diamonds were discovered in that area.¹³ In Griqualand East the Griquas had a brief reprieve but subsequently also lost their autonomy and their land to advancing European colonization. Their undoing was the Griqualand East Rebellion of 1878 (Ross, 1976:130), just as the Northwest Rebellion of 1885 was the undoing of the Metis in Western Canada.

A "golden age" is perhaps most difficult to discern for the Basters of the

Cape Colony, although the years and decades between the first two decades of the nineteenth century, when Baster congregations were first gathered around a number of mission stations in the northwestern Cape Colony, and about 1870, by when they too had 'been encroached upon by the Boer settlement frontier can perhaps be considered to constitute a golden age in some respects. For much of this time the more northern Baster settlements were beyond the northern boundary of the Cape Colony which was only extended to the Orange River in 1847 (see Map I).

The Basters who moved to South West Africa (SWA) and settled in Rehoboth in 1870, can be considered to have had a "golden age" of sorts during the 1880's and 1890's when they achieved a high point in power and prestige under the then still, to a large extent, only nominal German administration. This was the time when, before the introduction of railways, many Basters in SWA also took up freighting, as had the Metis in the Canadian prairies (MacGregor, 1976: 46, 69-85). Freighting along the Bayway, as the route from Walfish Bay into the interior was called, was for a time almost a Baster monopoly.

At this time, during the two decades before the great native uprisings of 1904-07, the Basters still outnumbered the Europeans in SWA, and the German colonial administration still proclaimed them as trustworthy allies and intermediaries. Indicative of this early German reliance on the Basters is the fact that Heinrich Goering, Germany's first governor in SWA, initially chose Rehoboth as his seat of administration in 1885. And in 1889 Ernst Hermann, who later became a well-known farmer in SWA but was then the agent of the German concessionary company in the territory, actually proposed that German families should settle among the Basters and intermarry with them.¹⁴ The Basters seem, in general, to have made a very favorable impression on German visitors at that time, and both the botanist Schinz and the officer Hugo von Francois expressed the view, in their respective books on SWA, that the future of that territory belonged to the Basters (Schinz, 1891:305; von Francois, 1895: 238). The Rehoboth Basters asked for and received special status from the German administration, including considerable autonomy.

Much of this German colonial favoritism towards the Basters disappeared before the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, especially following the great uprisings of 1904-07, which apparently brought about a general hardening of German racial attitudes. German officials became alarmed by the number of illegitimate births caused by the presence of hundreds of German soldiers among the Basters during the years of the uprisings, the upshot of which was a law forbidding intermarriage between Europeans and Basters in SWA. (Intermarriage between Europeans and natives had been illegal for some time before this). The German colonial administration also impinged more and more on the Basters until much of their autonomy and special status remained only on paper (Fischer, 1913:232-34). At the same time the completion of an incipient railroad network in SWA (in 1910) put many Baster freighters out of business, all of which is reminiscent of what happened to the Metis in Western Canada some 30-40 years earlier (MacGregor, 1976:86).

Defeat and Dispersion

For the Metis the "golden age" culminated in the Red River Insurrection of 1869/70, which gave the Metis a short-lived government of their own but also brought this era to a rapid termination. For although the Riel insurrection can perhaps be deemed a success in that it won for the Metis (then over 80% of Manitoba's settled population) the right for Red River to enter Confederation as a bilingual province, it also was a hopeless "last stand" against the agricultural settlement frontier and its concomitant demographic swamping of the Metis by newcomers from Ontario and elsewhere.¹⁵ In the face of this onslaught of new settlers many Metis retreated from Red River, especially to the mesopotamia between the South and North Saskatchewan River where they made a second (and final) "last stand" in 1885.

According to Sealey "the most profound change after [the insurrection of] 1869-70 was the social humiliation of the Metis" (Sealey and Lussier, 1975:92). The Metis at Red River were persecuted by the victorious Canadians who were "openly contemptuous of anyone 'papist' or 'French' or a 'breed' " (ibid). The French Metis suffered the most persecution since they had all three of these stigmatized characteristics counting against them. As a result about half of the Red River Metis left Manitoba during the 1870's to seek a freer life elsewhere. Most moved westward to what is now Saskatchewan and Alberta where they often settled adjacent to already existing Metis settlements in the mesopotamia south of Prince Albert and around Fort Edmonton (Harris and Warkentin, 1973:249). Here the Metis settled on riverine long lots and also in other ways attempted to replicate much of what they had become accustomed to at Red River, including a lifestyle combining the buffalo hunt with limited farming (MacGregor, 1976:55, 59).

Many of the Metis who stayed in Manitoba were assimilated into the white, especially French population:

Intermarriage between Metis and the French-Canadian immigrants was extensive in these areas [southern Manitoba] and, within two generations, the Metis became absorbed almost wholly into the French culture (Sealey and Lussier, 1975:98).

Of those who migrated west some joined the Indian population and were often later registered as treaty Indians (ibid:100).

Following the Saskatchewan Rebellion of 1885 there was a second dispersion of the Metis, this time largely northwards.

Many of the Metis sought what pockets of emptiness remained: the still unsettled areas of the Western United States, the Peace River country and the wilds in the far north (ibid:133)

Some moved north of 60° latitude to the Mackenzie basin, where Slobodin was surprised by the vitality of "old traditions of Metis nationality and of the insurrections" among the "Red River" Metis living there (1966:12). Here, in

the Northwest Territories, "the status of the Metis is higher than in the provinces because," as Elliott points out in his introduction to Slobodin's article on the subject, "the frontier Metis is respected for his skill in coping with his natural environment" (Slobodin, 1971:150). Since in the Northwest Territories today whether a person identifies as a Metis or Indian is apparently as much a question of philosophy (pro or anti-development) as of genealogy (Drury, 1979:22), as there are hardly any racially unmixed Indians left, it seems that the Metis population there is growing by what one might call conversion, as well as by mixing and natural increase.

As the acculturation process in the North continues, many new Metis will be created. In the words of one Canadian in the North, "it looks like everyone is becoming Metis" (Slobodin, 1971:150).

"Whatever their occupation," writes Slobodin, "the Metis have characteristically been a people of the frontier, and as the frontier has passed, the Metis way of life and identity has declined" (Slobodin, 1971:1951). This decline brought with it a relative impoverization which was sometimes extreme. The Metis became the poorest segment of the Canadian population, worse off than the Treaty Indians, who at least became wards of the federal government after their treaties were signed. The Metis were not eligible for the kinds of support the Indians got and had to fend for themselves, mostly as casual and seasonal laborers. Thus poverty has, as Lussier has pointed out, become one of the attributes of Metis ethnicity in the minds of ordinary Canadians.¹⁶ Yet Sealey doubts that a reserve system would have been appropriate for the Metis. He points out that Alberta's attempts with Metis reserves were not successful, although the Metis were purposely intermingled (in the late 1890's) with French-Canadian settlers as in Manitoba a generation earlier. However, what succeeded in Manitoba did not work out in Alberta.

By 1910, the legal problems had been resolved and resident Metis were given title to the land they occupied. [But] Friction, perhaps because the incoming French-Canadians lacked any understanding of the Metis or possibly because the Metis were relegated to minority status, marred the next few years [after 1910]. Most temporarily met the problem by selling the land to which they now held title, spending the money and either moving away or squatting on unoccupied land nearby. The destitution that developed was blamed on the missionaries who, the Metis felt, had manipulated the situation to benefit the French Canadian (Sealey and Lussier, 1975:157).

Such a process of Metis withdrawal, displacement and at least relative impoverization is quite similar to what happened to the Basters and Griquas in south Africa, as has already been indicated above. The geographer John Wellington (professor emeritus at Witwatersrand University) has described the process

as far as Griqualand East was concerned in the following, less sympathetic way:

Here each [Griqua] family was granted a farm, but by 1880 most of the Griquas had sold their farms to Europeans, and liquor, improvidence and sloth continued to undermine the well being of the community. In 1888, according to a chief magistrate, Griqua farms were sold for a case of gin - for a small debt due the local store - for a trifling some of money advanced for a few head of stock. By 1905 only about ten farms still belonged to Griqua families, and before the end of the first quarter of the present century most of the surviving Griqua had become poverty-stricken town dwellers in the municipal area of Kokstad. In spite of the faithful and ardent labour of the missionaries, the Griquas had succumbed to inherent weakness of character and the thrust of European settlement (Wellington, 1955:11:235).

Ross, in his modest and more profound analysis of the Griqua's failure to succeed in South Africa provides a similar but less obviously racist explanation, in which he blames the Griquas' failure on the weaknesses of individual members of that society.

Was this failure the consequence of a tragic flaw in their make-up? In other words, did the style of life that the Griquas had adopted contain within itself contradictions that precluded the realization of the Griquas' aims . . . ? A very strong case could be made out for this. Permeating Griqua history there was a deep paradox between their individuality and their need for community. They had developed an independent community of men committed to the furtherance of their own individual ends, as capitalist small farmers, and the commercialism of Griqua society meant that many Griquas were prepared to sell the land on which the community depended. In the 'lumping' society by which they were surrounded, the Griquas could not slough off those who failed to live up to the ideals of the community. They could not survive without them, but these men dragged the others down. In a very real sense, the Griquas were as weak as their weakest member (1976: 134).

White farmers (Boers) likewise displaced the Basters from the choice watering places in the north-western Cape Colony. Many Basters, including those who settled at Rehoboth in 1870, consequently decided to withdraw across the Orange River into South West Africa. Those who remained in the northwestern Cape Colony (Cape Province after 1910), and that was the majority, were generally reduced to a rural proletariat, a labor pool for the white settlers who had taken over their land.

Although "passing" into the white population was probably rare after the

eighteenth century,¹⁷ most Basters in the northwestern Cape mingled with and became indistinguishable from the remnants of the Khoikhoi population there. Indeed, the South African census no longer enumerates (since 1950) the Khoikhoi in South Africa as "Native" but as "Coloured". The Orlams, who migrated into South West Africa during the course of the nineteenth century, also became indistinguishable from the native Nama (Khoikhoi) there after a few generations (Kienetz, 1977:566). The same fate, assimilation into the local native population, apparently overtook a group of Basters who settled in the Amraal Orlams' territory on the western edge of the Kalahari (see Map I). Only in the Rehoboth Gebied have the Basters remained "a people apart", conscious of their own distinctive identity as Euro-African metis.¹⁸

A further parallel with the Metis of the Canadian West is that the Basters also rebelled against the colonial administrations in South West Africa. The first to do so were the Basters of Grootfontein (see Map I). Their 1901 uprising was suppressed and brought them the confiscation of their land at Grootfontein and their transfer to Rehoboth (Fischer, 191S:S0). The Rehoboth Basters themselves almost rose against the Germans at the start of the Nama uprising in 1904, but a more cautious faction (the more propertied elite) amongst them succeeded in swaying the population against such an adventure. However, in 1915, as the South African forces were moving in, the Rehoboth Basters did rise up against their German colonial masters and killed a number of German settlers in the vicinity (Abel, 1955). Ten years later the Rehoboth Basters were about to rise in rebellion against the South African administration, but this insurrection was crushed before it really began by a quick "show of force by the Administration, including three Union airoplanes" (Wellington, 1967:290).

Recent Resurgence

There seems to have been a considerable renaissance among the Metis within the last two decades. In the vanguard of this resurgence are the various Metis federations, such as the Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF), one of whose major aims seems to be to instill a sense of pride and a more positive self image among the Metis, especially among Metis school children. To this end the Manitoba Metis Federation Press has published a number of books and booklets on Metis history, Metis biographies and Metis traditional culture and folklore, which are apparently widely used in Manitoba schools. Another important activity of the MMF involves land claims based on the principle of aboriginal - not treaty - rights. If these claims were recognized it would mean that there would yet be a pecuniary advantage to being Metis, as opposed to being French-Canadian or British in "ethnic origin". Such expectations may help to explain why more and more Canadians have rediscovered their Metis origins within the last decade or so. The result of the 1981 census which, for the first time since 1941, will again have "Metis" as a distinct ethnic origins category will indicate how many Canadians are, indeed, identifying themselves as Metis today.

Some writers have used the term "nationalism" to describe this resurgence of Metis identity and group consciousness (Lussier, 1973; Sealey and Lussier,

1975). However, the term is perhaps not quite appropriate, since it has come to mean an aspiration for political independence which would be quite unrealistic in the case of the Metis. The general aim of the MMF and other Metis organizations seems to be quite the opposite of separatism, which would be the logical aim of political nationalism: to uplift Metis people, as a group, from their generally depressed economic status so that they participate on par with the non-Native majority in all spheres of economic endeavour. This seems to be the majority view within Metis organizations, although individual Metis spokesmen have at times sounded much more militant or radical (c.f. Adams, 1979).

In Southern Africa the coloured (or mixed blood) population has also become more demanding and even militant of late. It thus probably came as a shock to many white South Africans that coloured students rioted in Cape Town a few years ago, closely on the heel of African (black) student riots against the imposition of Afrikaans (Cape Dutch) as a language of instruction. The recent conclusion, by a government commissioned report, that the franchise (now limited to whites) should be extended to Coloureds (as well as Asians) may well be a desperate attempt to divert the growing militancy among the Coloured population in South Africa.¹⁹

Dissatisfaction has also grown among the Rehoboth Basters in South West Africa (Namibia). In 1970, for instance, Rehobothers threatened the South African administration of Namibia with a "unilateral declaration of independence."²⁰ They have also already sent a number of petitions to the United Nations to intervene on their behalf. At the same time the Basters of Rehoboth have also, as have Metis in northern Canada, demanded that more of their people should be employed in the mining activities in their area.²⁰

Conclusion

I have here tried to highlight a number of parallels in the careers of Euro-aboriginal hybrid peoples in Western Canada and Southern Africa. In concluding I must also point out some fundamental differences between the two situations. This I will do in point form:

1. For climatic reasons the staples of the frontier economies were different - fur (and pemmican) in Canada; ivory, hides, ostrich feathers and sometimes cattle in South Africa.
2. The staples of South Africa were not as valuable; consequently no equivalent of the HBC, or even the Northwest Company, emerged.
5. Consequently in South Africa the missionary often preceded the trader; for example, it was the missionary David Livingstone who "discovered" Lake Ngami.
4. Native Africans kept livestock, except for the numerically insignificant San or Bushmen; this probably explains why South Africa's native popu-

lation density was higher at the time of the first European contact (Guelke, 1976).

5. White racism was more pronounced in Southern Africa, especially among the Afrikaners (Boers).
6. There was little Roman Catholic influence in Southern Africa. Instead the predestination doctrines of the Calvinist Dutch Reformed Church predominated, although the frontier mixed-bloods tended to be served by Lutheran, Congregationalist and Methodist missionaries.

That, in spite of these differences, the similarities discussed above did exist is perhaps all the more surprising.

NOTES

1. The word "colonialize" is preferable to "colonize" when no significant settlement was involved, because whereas the latter implies and often is used to mean settlement, "colonialization" is simply defined as "subjugation by colonial politics" in *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* (1971 edition).
2. For example Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Plains*, New York, 1931. This lacuna is pointed out in Jack D. Forbes, "Frontiers in American History and the Role of the Frontier Historian," *Ethnohistory* 15 (1968): 203-235, p. 217.
3. An example of this new, less Euro-centric historiography is Allen F. Isaacman, *Mozambique: The Africanization of a European Institution*, Madison, 1972. See also Paul Bohannon and Fred Plog, eds., *Beyond the Frontier: Social Process and Cultural Change*, Garden City, N.Y., 1967, and especially Palmer Patterson, *The Canadian Indian: A History Since 1500*, Don Mills, Ontario, 1972.
4. I became relatively familiar with the literature pertaining to Southern Africa while doing research for my doctoral thesis on German South West Africa, and I now teach a course on Metis history at Margaret Barbour Collegiate in The Pas, northern Manitoba.
5. In this I am following the example of R. Cole Harris and Leonard Guelke, "Land and society in early Canada and South Africa," *Journal of Historical Geography* 3 (1977): 135-153.
6. I am here generally following the periodizations set off in D. Bruce Sealey and Antoine S. Lussier, *The Metis: Canada's Forgotten People*, Winnipeg,

1975.

7. Cornelius J. Jaenen, *Friend and Foe: Aspects of French-Amerindian Cultural Contact in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, Toronto, 1973. Indeed, Jaenen informs us (pp. 108, 161) that, according to some historians, the Malecite Indians in the Maritimes originated from St. Male fishermen and native women. As for New France (Quebec), Peter Kalm could already observe in the seventeenth century that "the Indian blood in Canada is very much mixed with European blood, and a large number of the Indians now living owe their origins to Europe." Quoted in Jaenen, *ibid*, p. 185.
8. The term metissage is here used in the sense Stanley used it (1963, p.5) to mean interbreeding between different races. Unfortunately Lussier has used the same term to mean "the interbreeding within their [the Metis] own group" (Sealey and Lussier, 1975, p. 51), for which purpose the word endogamy would perhaps have been more suitable.
9. Although both Van Kirk and Brown show that conjugal relationships were also entered into with women of the tribes further afield, for the purpose of cementing alliances and trade connections, there is no reason to doubt that most matriarchs of the metis population were Cree or Saulteaux. Sylvia Van Kirk, *"Many Tender Ties": Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870*, Winnipeg, 1980; Jennifer S.H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country*, Vancouver, 1980b.
10. The Windhoek Advertiser, June 17, 1970, p. h I also received the reply "Baster" when I asked people in Rehoboth (in March 1971) what their ethnicity was.
11. Fischer has compiled exhaustive genealogies of 28 Baster families at Rehoboth in 1910. Fischer, 1913, appendix.
12. The Red River cart appears, for instance, on the front cover of Sealey and Lussier's book (1975), which is published by the Manitoba Metis Federation Press, while the wheel of the cart, with a picture of a buffalo's head and two crossed rifles at its axle, appears to have become the insignia of the Manitoba Metis Federation. This insignia appears on the front cover of the booklets *Stories of the Metis* (1973) and *Famous Manitoba Metis* (1975), both of which are also published by the Manitoba Metis Federation Press.
13. Indeed, around 1870 the famous diamond called "The Star of South Africa" was found somewhere in Griqualand West. Walker, 1957. p. 333.
14. *Deutsche Kolonialzeitung* 6 (1889):215: quoted in context in my thesis. See Alvin Kienetz, "Nineteenth-Century South West Africa as a German

- Settlement Colony," (unpublished dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1976), p. 609.
15. This is essentially Stanley's thesis. Discussed in Pannekoek, 1976, p. 133, and Sealey and Lussier, 1975, p. 75.
 16. Antoine Lussier, "The Metis: Contemporary Problem of Identity," (address given at the Metis Historical Conference at Brandon University in May 1977), Lussier is here citing the results of a survey taken by Legasse in 1958. See Jean H. Legasse et al, *The People of Indian Ancestry in Manitoba*, Winnipeg, 1959. This notion of poverty being one of the attributes of Metis ethnicity also comes out in Maria Campbell, *Halfbreed*, Toronto, 1973.
 17. Interracial marriages were accepted during the first decades of Dutch East India Company rule at the Cape of Good Hope, and it is only later that racial attitudes hardened. Richard Elphick, *Kraal and Castle: Khoikhoi and the Founding of White South Africa*, New Haven, 1977.
 18. *Windhoek Advertiser*, June 17, 1970.
 19. *Winnipeg Free Press*, May 27, 1982, p. 33.
 20. Clive Cowley, "Rehoboth is defeating its own ends," *Windhoek Advertiser*, June 17, 1970.

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