

A NOTE ON THE OPENING OF ZULULAND TO EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT

There existed an acute shortage of land for European settlement in Natal, south of the Tugela River after the South African War (1899-1902).¹ The colonization movement which had characterised the period from 1838 to 1900 had ended, and the Colonial Government was without suitable lands to offer colonists. If the momentum built up within Natal was to be maintained, new lands for European settlement would have to be found.

Zululand, which had been transferred from British Imperial control to that of the Colony of Natal in 1897, provided the solution.² The annexation was allowed by the British Government with reservations. These included some regulation of the course of European colonization. Section 18 of the Act provided that: "Untill other provisions shall have been made in that behalf, with the approval of Her Majesty, no grants or alienation of Crown Land within the Province of Zululand shall be made, nor till then shall the Natives be disturbed in the use and occupation of any lands occupied or used by them at the time of the taking effect of this Act." This section was elaborated by a Government Minute of the 18th November, 1898. The Secretary of State for the Colonies had agreed to annexation upon strict conditions which included: "The existing system of land tenure in Zululand to be maintained for five years and no grants of land to be made during that period. In the meantime a joint Imperial and Colonial Commission to be appointed to delimit sufficient land reserves for Native Locations, which Locations will be inalienable without the consent of the Secretary of State. At the end of the period of five years the Natal Government will be at liberty to deal with the unreserved lands".³

In 1902 a joint British-Natalian Commission was appointed to delimit the Native Reserves. The Commission completed its work in October 1904, and succeeded in partitioning Zululand into two sections, two-thirds (3 887 000 acres) being reserved for permanent Native occupation according to tribal custom and the remainder (2 613 000) unreserved and open to alienation by the Natal Government (Fig. 1). The unreserved area included Proviso B, which had been occupied by Europeans in 1884.⁴ Pressure for the wholesale opening of Zululand was resisted

1. Christopher, A. J. (1969) *Natal: A study in colonial land settlement*. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis University of Natal.

2. Zululand Annexation Act (Natal Act No. 37 of 1897).

3. *Natal (1905) Report of the Zululand Lands Delimitation Commission*, p. iv.

4. Proviso B was laid out for European settlement in 1884 when it was incorporated into the New Republic (later the Vryheid District of the Transvaal). However, under the New Republic-British Agreement of 1886, the area marked as Proviso B was excluded from the New Republic and reincorporated into Zululand. The European farmers, nevertheless, retained their lands, which were administered by the Natal Government.

by the Commissioners. They expressed their views through the statement: "We have been met on all side by residents and others, who appear to be labouring under the impression that all the Commission was required to do was to indiscriminately throw open the whole of the lands suitable for European occupation".⁵

The Commissioners, however, took what they thought they could, selecting lands which had comparatively sparse Native populations, for future European settlement. Nevertheless, much of the area which had been coveted by the intending European immigrants was densely populated and was consequently allotted to the Native area. Thus much of the European area was unsuited to settlement before human and animal diseases had been overcome and expensive communication systems constructed. Many claims to farms were received, some of considerable size, based on concessions made by the Zulu kings, but these were rejected as there had been no continuity of occupation since the date of the concessions.

Once the Zululand Lands Delimitation Commission had presented its report and its findings had been approved, a start was made on opening the Province to European settlement. Work commenced in 1904 and proceeded rapidly with the survey of the Native Reserves and the first of the settlement schemes. The initial settlements surveyed were mostly close to the coast and nearest to the Tugela River, across which the immigrants and their supplies would have to pass. Progress was rapid and survey took place in the strip of land from the Tugela to Eshowe and beyond, following the line of the proposed coastal railway. Separate surveys took place in the Nqutu and Qudeni settlement schemes in the interior of Zululand where land had been set aside for European settlement.

By the middle of 1905 sufficient lots had been surveyed to enable the Government to throw open the coastal lots, adjacent to the Tugela, to selection by European settlers. In 1906 the Amatikulu, Qudeni and Umhlatuzi Valley lots were ready while survey work proceeded on the Nqutu and Empangeni Lots. These surveys were mostly completed by the end of 1910. As a result of the rapid progress in the south, work commenced in August 1910 on the major Umfolosi settlement and in November 1910 on the Kwanbonambi settlement. As a result, by the end of 1910 a total of 501 lots had been surveyed covering 315 158 acres.⁶ (Table 1). In addition public services such as roads, the railway and town lots had been laid out from the start.

The Government for the first time in many years had a greater number of good class farming lots available than were immediately needed. The disposal of Crown Land in Zululand was governed by the Natal

⁵. *Natal (1905) Report of the Zululand Lands Delimitation Commission*, p. 46.

⁶. Figures quoted are taken from the author's compilation of the records of the Deeds Office, Pietermaritzburg and the Natal Lands Department, part of which are housed in the Natal Depot of the National Archives.

Table 1

Lots laid out in Zululand 1910

<i>Area</i>	<i>No. of Lots</i>	<i>Acreage</i>	<i>Average size</i>
Coastal lots	99	69 297	700
Amatikulu and Empangeni	211	99 521	472
Nqutu	18	8 805	489
Qudeni	39	66 605	1 708
Umhlatuzi Valley	70	30 250	432
Kwanbonambi	16	29 797	1 862
Umfolosi	48	10 883	227
Total	501	315 158	629

Source: *Compiled by the author from the records of the Surveyor General's Office, Pietermaritzburg.*

Act 44 of 1904, which had been framed with the problems of Zululand in mind. One addition was, however, made. The Zululand coastal belt was intended to be planted to sugar cane, and as part of the sugar scheme special sugar leases were introduced for those who did not wish to purchase the land. These leases were divided into two classes, first and second class, according to the suitability of the land for cane. First class leases required that at least fifteen per cent of the land be planted to cane, and second class at least seven and a half per cent. Rents of 2s. per acre per annum were charged on First Class and 1s. on Second Class lands. Leases were to run for ninety-nine years at the end of which freehold title would be granted providing no breach of the lease had occurred.

Beneficial occupation, i.e. nine months' residence a year and the construction of a dwelling was insisted upon, while a special milling clause was inserted. The Government in attempting to attract a milling firm to Zululand stated that all the cane reaped on the farms had to be supplied to the millers, and failure to do so would be regarded as a breach of the lease itself. The leases proved to be popular and were taken out in large numbers, but were almost equally rapidly surrendered in favour of the twenty year purchase agreements or for settlement leases under the 1912 Union Act. However, some of the Natal Sugar Leases remain in force today. The remaining lands, which were unsuited to sugar cane, were available for lease as Third Class leases at 6d. per acre per annum. Thus a clear distinction was made between the lands for tropical agriculture and others suited only to pastoral activity. Land was available for purchase at prices ranging from 10s. to £1 per acre for Third Class lands and somewhat more for First and Second Class lands.

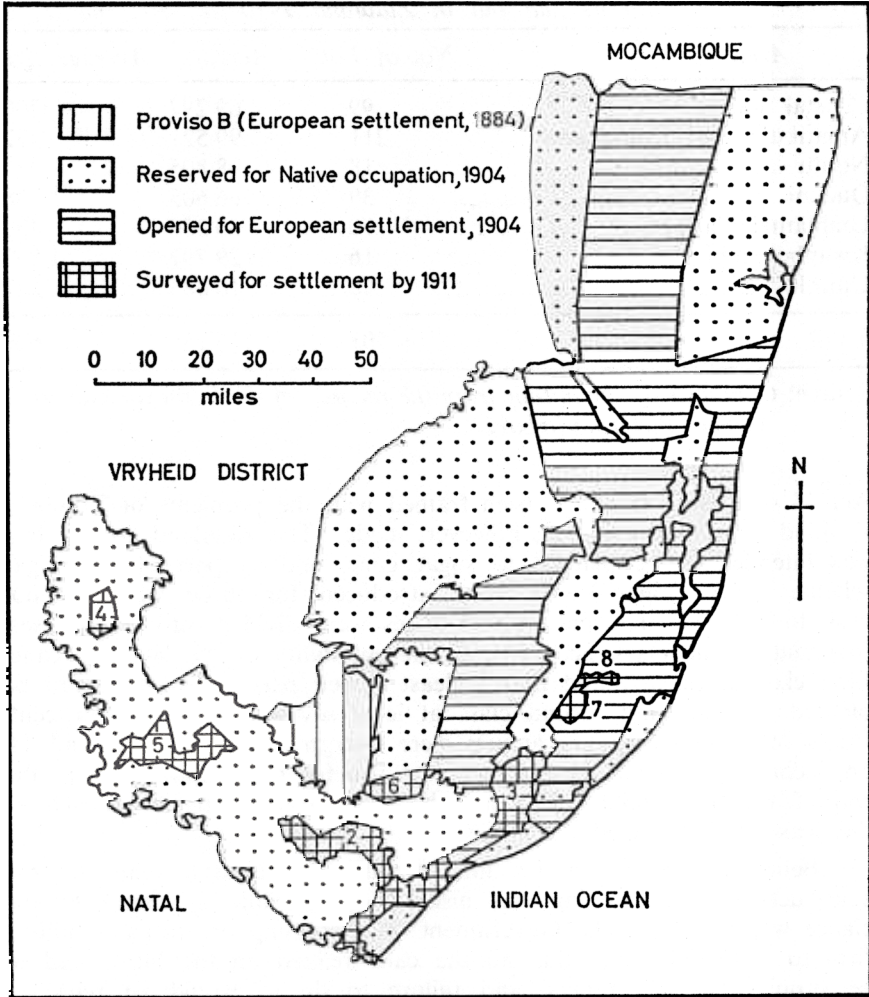
Diagram

Fig. 1. Settlement Schemes in Zululand, 1905-1910. Schemes undertaken by 1910: 1-Zululand Coast, 2-Amatikulu, 3-Empangeni, 4-Nqutu, 5-Qudeni, 6-Umhlatazi Valley, 7-Kwa-nbonambi, 8-Umfolosi.

The response to the Government scheme was rapid, and there was a steady purchase and lease of land from 1905 to 1910 (Table 2). The initial expansion of settlement slowed down however and only increased again in the years following Union particularly when the large tracts of land around the Umfolosi flats were thrown open for soldier settlement after the First World War. Even today (1971) the European settlement of the areas released for the purpose in 1904, has not been completed.

Table 2
Date of occupation of Zululand Lands

<i>Date of Occupation</i>	<i>No. of Lots</i>	<i>Area</i>
1905		
1906		
1907		
1908		
1909		
1910		
Total 1905-1910		

Source: *Compiled by the author from the records of the Deeds Office, Pietermaritzburg and the records of the Department of Lands, Pietermaritzburg.*

Survey had proceeded far ahead of allocation. In 1910 only 294 lots had been allocated covering 62,3 per cent of the surveyed area of Zululand. Large tracts remained unoccupied particularly in the Umhlatuzi Valley scheme where only ten per cent of the lots had been occupied in the five years since survey. The Nqutu scheme alone was fully occupied, while the other schemes were in varying stages of occupation. None of the Kwanbonambi and Umfolosi lots had been taken owing to the late start in surveying in those areas. (Table 3).

Table 3
Lots occupied and unoccupied in Zululand 1910

<i>Area</i>	OCCUPIED		UNOCCUPIED	
	<i>No. of Lots</i>	<i>Acreage</i>	<i>No. of Lots</i>	<i>Acreage</i>
Coastal	84	61 250	15	8 047
Amatikulu and Empangeni	155	72 598	56	26 923
Nqutu	18	8 805	—	15 426
Qudeni	30	51 179	9	15 426
Umhlatuzi Valley	7	2 472	63	27 778
Kwanbonambi			16	29 797
Umfolosi			48	10 883
	294	196 304		

Source: *Compiled from information in Tables 1 and 2.*

One of the basic problems confronting the Surveyor General in laying out the lots in Zululand was to estimate a suitable size of farm, taking into account the capabilities of the land. Throughout Natal's history the official approach to what constituted a viable size of a farm had erred on the side of meanness. The land grant system adopted in Zululand was a definite improvement compared with those of previous settlements, but still it was not completely satisfactory. This was probably because it was difficult to calculate the costs of production in a new environment, and so estimate what area of land would give a return sufficient to support a family. The lots as laid out in the Mamtilulu, Empangeni, Nqutu and Umhlatuzi Valley schemes were in general rather small with the result that the 294 lots taken up by 1910 were in the hands of 225 persons (Table 4).

Table 4
Farms in Zululand 1910

<i>Area</i>	<i>No. of Farms</i>	<i>Acreage</i>	<i>Average size</i>
Coastal	70*	61 250	875
Amatikulu and Empangeni	114	72 598	637
Nqutu	8	8 805	1 101
Qudeni	29	51 179	1 765
Umhlatuzi	4	2 472	618
Total	225	196 304	872

Source: *As Table 2.*

**Two farms overlap the boundary between the settlement areas.*

Unlike the previous periods of settlement, land speculators appear to have been absent from the Zululand Settlement scheme. The amalgamation of lots seems to have been due to the need to extend existing lots by purchasing a neighbouring one. In two cases four lots were amalgamated and in another two cases three lots, but in the remaining cases only two lots were joined together. As a result farm sizes are comparatively small and akin to those determined by the Government, with few exceeding 2000 acres in 1910, and these mostly in the Qudeni scheme where the initial lots approached 2000 acres.

The large companies and the speculators were able to adopt a different approach in Zululand. The unpopularity of large estates in colonial society had reach its zenith in 1907-1909 and a few non-Natalian companies were willing to invest large sums in Natal when their returns might be subject to high taxation. Instead, as much of Zululand was specifically opened up for sugar growing, actual control was vested in the local sugar milling companies to whom the lessees had to sell

their produce, for forfeit their leases.⁷ Thus the companies did not have to own the land and run their own plantations to be sure of obtaining a financial return.

In the higher altitude zones of Zululand, such as the Qudeni scheme area, the land was unsuited to sugar cane owing to comparatively low temperatures in winter. These areas were intended for cattle and sheep farming, but in general, the lots laid out were too small, when compared with adjacent areas of Vryheid District and the portion of Zululand settled by Europeans in the 1880's where farms of over 4000 acres had been general. The Surveyor General's Office appears to have completely miscalculated the potential of the Nqutu and Umhlatuzi schemes, which were laid out in comparatively small lots. In both cases the availability of water had been overestimated and consequently irrigation was impractical. The two settlement areas were, at the time, unsuited to sugar cultivation and lots were not in demand unless they could be amalgamated. At Nqutu the lots were larger although the scheme proved to be unsuccessful in time, while in the Umhlatuzi Valley large scale amalgamations took place in the following decade to produce workable units, where cattle farming could be practised. Irrigation problems were only solved after the Second World War.

The northern part of Zululand, with its semi-tropical vegetation, animal diseases and poor communications with the rest of Natal, was clearly not attractive to normal agricultural settlement. The Government did however attempt to develop it by introducing rubber plantations. Two companies received concessions to plant rubber trees in the north of the Province. Extensive tracts of land were allocated to them at nominal rentals, related to the number of trees planted. The conditions attached to the leases, regarding the planting of rubber trees, proved to be unworkable and the scheme had to be abandoned even though no rent was charged on the first five years on one of the leases.⁸

The settlement of Zululand showed that lessons had been learnt from the mistakes of previous settlement schemes. Even in the short period 1905-1910 during the opening up of Zululand — as may be seen in the provision of special farms at Kwanbonambi and Umfolosi. Near the Umfolosi River land was divided into two types — for intensive agriculture under irrigation and extensive dry land farming for cattle. On these schemes it was realised that farmers did not have to produce a range of products but could specialise. Once specialist farming was recognised then the size of farm could be regulated to provide an area capable of producing a living for the owner.

⁷. Natal Income and Land Tax Act, 1908 aimed at disabling all non-Natalian company land owners and forcing them through high taxes to sell their land to local settlers.

⁸. One Company undertook to plant 25 000 trees a year from 1907, but could not plant any, owing to the inaccessibility of the site chosen. The area could only be approached by river from Portuguese territory.

The planning for the European colonization of Zululand in the years 1905-1910 exhibits a greater range of possibilities than any previous scheme. Close Government control over land tenure and cropping provided intending settlers with greater security, if greater restriction, than had been the case with farming in Natal before 1905. Active as opposed to passive Government policy in agricultural settlement had been advocated for seventy years beforehand, but Zululand was the first systematic settlement planned on a large scale with all aspects controlled.⁹ To a large extent such an approach had been forced upon the Natal Government as other colonies had embarked upon carefully planned and laid out settlement schemes as early as the 1880's. It was realised that a colonist needed services and technical assistance as well as land if he was to survive economically in a highly competitive world. In order to obtain and retain settlers the Government had to spend considerable sums of money, which would only show a return when the settlers were fully established. Land settlement was no longer a source of income for the Government but a necessary form of expenditure. In this realisation the land policy of the colonial period had advanced a great deal since the initial settlement of Natal, south of the Tugela in the 1840's.

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⁹. Smaller settlements planned by the Government had been undertaken in Natal to promote closer-settlement, but these had mostly been on smaller areas (2 000-31 000 acres). See Christopher, A. J. (1970) "The Close-settlement movement in Natal, 1875-1910," *Journal for Geography*, Vol. 3, pp. 569-578.