

The first ‘white’ town north of the Vaal: inequality and apartheid in Potchefstroom

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Samevatting

Alhoewel die ‘gekleurde’ en ‘naturelle’-inwoners van Potchefstroom van die vroegste bewoners van hierdie dorp was, was hulle posisie as gevolg van segregasie en marginalisering altyd onseker. Verskillende opeenvolgende administrasies het hulle lewens drasties ingeperk en hulle slegs verdra as die diensknegte van wit belange. Die klem word geplaas op hulle besondere ervarings met betrekking tot hierdie beperkings, hulle gedwonge verwydering na ander gebiede, hulle sosiale en historiese onsigbaarheid en die ekstreme beheermaatreëls deur die plaaslike owerheid om hulle deel te maak van die grandiose stelsel van sosiale manipulasie (apartheid). Die stelsel van beheer was so totalitêr van aard dat selfs die plaaslike wit liberale uitings van andersdenkendheid uiters paternalisties was.

Living and leaving: subjects and inhabitants of Potchefstroom

Many stone ruins, especially in the region of the Vaal and Mooi Rivers, are associated with Later Iron Age communities who occupied these structures. These residents were cattle farmers and horticulturists who settled in the area not later than the fifteenth century and are considered to be the ancestors of the present Sotho-Tswana, probably now referred to as Bakwena, Bafokeng and Barolong. Oral tradition indicates that people of Bakwena stock lived in the area in the nineteenth century, whereas Batlokwa (hence Tlokwen, place of the Batlokwa) were some of the earliest residents who settled here in

the fifteenth century.¹ Although it is not simple to relate archaeological sites to historical known communities it is clear that the forbears of the present Sotho-Tswana people lived in the Potchefstroom region.

After 1820 the whole sub-continent was in turmoil because of a series of wars² and resultant migrations, often called the *Difaqana*, and the *Great Trek*. Apart from these, the Delagoa Bay based slave trade, the transformation by and penetration of mercantile and later industrial capitalism dramatically changed the whole sub-continent. Traumatic influences (wars, migrations and the slave trade) led eye-witnesses to report that by the second and third decades of the nineteenth century large parts of the Free State and North West provinces were depopulated. The direct influence of Mzilikazi and his *Matabele* followers on a vast area, including the later Potchefstroom district, is well documented. Only after the “Seven Days Battle” in November 1837, when Mzilikazi’s forces were vanquished by white and Barolong fighters, resettlement by Sotho-Tswana speakers and the first-time settlement by white Afrikaans-speakers was possible. This also made the establishment of the town Potchefstroom possible in 1839.³

During the first phase of the settlement history of Potchefstroom the servants of the Boers lived with them on their very spacious “civil rights stands” (*burgerreg erwe*). The existence of the segregated residential area later to be named Willem Klopperville (also known as the “native location”, the

1 These approximate dates were more commonly accepted in earlier publications. Later work still tend to have later approximate dates for settlement in this area. See: P Mitchell & G Whitelaw, “The archaeology of southernmost Africa from c 2000 BP to the early 1800s: a review of recent research”, *Journal of African History*, 2005, pp. 209-241. JC Vogel & A Fuls, “The spatial distribution of radiocarbon dates for the Iron Age in southern Africa”, in *The South African Archaeological Bulletin*, 1999, LIV(170), pp.97-101. T Huffman, “Regionality in the Iron Age: the case of the Sotho-Tswana”, *Southern African Humanities*, 2002, (14), pp.1-22. JCA Boeyens, “The Late Iron Age sequence in the Marico and early Tswana history”, in *SA Archaeological Bulletin*, 2003, 58(178), pp.63-78. JCA Boeyens & DT Cole, “Whence Tswenyane? The etymology of an age-old Tswana place name in the Marico”, *Nomina Africana*, 2005, 19(1):31-65. Booyens refers to older work: JH Booyens, “Potchefstroomomgewing in vroeghistoriese tye: ‘n historiese raamwerk”, *Iliso (The Eye)*, 6(1), 2002, pp. 16-23. (My appreciation to Jan Boeyens, who gave me these references and insight into the issue. The interpretation given above, is my own).

2 The contributing causes of these wars have been indicated as fundamental changes in the physical environment of “Zululand” which was particularly well suited to the needs of stock-farming, “but one that was also fragile and breaking down under pre-Shakan modes of exploitation”. J Guy, “Ecological factors in the rise of Shaka and the Zulu kingdom”, S Marks & A Atmore (Eds), *Economy and society in pre-industrial South Africa*, (London, Longman, 1980, p.117). In the same vein Marks (S Marks, “The rise and fall of the Zulu kingdom”, R Oliver (Ed), *Middle Age of African history* (London, Oxford, 1967), p.87 argued that because of population growth in the eastern parts of the sub-continent the probability of “a more co-ordinated form of social organization” [political centralisation] became a rewarding possibility.

3 JH Booyens, “Potchefstroomomgewing in vroeghistoriese tye...”, pp.16-23; See also, C Hamilton, (Ed). “The Mfecane aftermath: reconstructive debates in Southern African history” (Johannesburg, Witwatersrand University Press, 1995).

“coloured location”, the “old location”, or Makweteng) dates back to the late 1800s. As early as 1877, a decision was taken by the South African Republic (ZAR) that the subordinate class was to be excluded from the main residential area by creating a ‘location’ for ‘coloureds’ (actually then all those who were black and coloured). This alternative system of occupation allowed the servants certain restricted privileges regarding residence only. These servants were freed slaves, Xhosa-speakers and ‘coloureds’ who were Afrikaans-speaking and who had accompanied the white Afrikaans-speaking immigrants from the eastern Cape. The alternative system of occupation gradually also included more Sotho-Tswana speakers whose forebears⁴ had lived in the adjacent area of the immigrant-established Potchefstroom for centuries.

The servant class in the ZAR was seen as subjects, and not as citizens. The white settlers in the Transvaal had made it clear that there would be no equality between black and white (in the Thirty-Three Articles of 1844) and this was re-emphasised in the 1858 Constitution of the ZAR (article 9). The *Volksraad* (Parliament) furthermore made a decision in 1855 that all people of colour were to be excluded from citizenship. General measures for the administration of blacks had been adopted by 1871, which included the comprehensive ordinance of November 1864. This ordinance established guidelines on matters such as the provision of labour by blacks, a pass system, liability of blacks for taxation and the carrying of guns by blacks. These stipulations were expanded, consolidated and amended in 1866 and in 1870.⁵ On April 12 1877, Theophilus Shepstone annexed the Transvaal – this annexation had the consequence that the position of people of colour would not be much better under British rule. RL Cope refers to a confidential Colonial Office memorandum drafted by Edward Fairfield at Carnavon’s request, in which the emphasis is also on the “ ‘native danger’ in the Transvaal, and the necessity for unity to ‘break down the power of the Chiefs,’ disarm the Africans, and ensure white supremacy”. The memorandum also states that “Boer policy in this matter was ‘not unworthy’ of Britain’s ‘attentive consideration’; ‘undoubtedly a Kafir should be compelled, as the Dutch compel him, to work’ ”. Cope considers Carnavon’s language as being generally less direct than Fairfield’s,

4 Although this phenomenon has not been well researched for the Potchefstroom region, it can be assumed that ‘captive labour’ as described by Morton (F Morton, “Captive labour in the Western Transvaal after the Sand River Convention”, EA Eldredge & F Morton, (Eds) *Slavery in South Africa: Captive labour on the Dutch frontier* (Boulder, Westview, 1994), pp.167-185) was a significant section of the early servant population of what is today the North West Province.

5 JS Bergh & F Morton, “To make them serve...”, *The 1871 Transvaal Commission on African Labour* (Pretoria, Protea Book House, 2003), p.11.

but quite consistent with the memorandum (p.15).⁶ After the South African War the Treaty of Vereeniging made the enfranchisement of blacks dependent on the consent of white voters, and Milner's rejection of the desirability of the political equality for blacks had immense influence.⁷

Several approaches and policies were used by different administrations to make the position of 'black' and 'coloured' residents in 'white' towns precarious. One of these policies was that towns had been built by and for white people. In addition, residential rights were linked to the supply of labour for whites. The limited rights of the residents of the old location (Makweteng: 'place of sods' or 'place of the sod houses'), formally known as *Potchefstroom Native Location*, were emphasised by giving the 'natives' and coloureds right to water from the municipal canal only when surplus water was available; very limited rights in owning businesses; very few sports facilities; 'natives' and coloureds were not even allowed to use the pavements in the 'white' part of town from about 1896 and well into the 1940s. In 1920 a deputation of the residents of the location complained that the danger of "locomotive[s]" was increasing, but, according to the location superintendent, Fritz van der Hoff, changes in this regard would "create great dissatisfaction among the white population" and therefore it would not be possible.⁸ In addition to the above restrictions, certain circumstances such as possession of liquor and a vague definition of being 'undesirable' could sometimes, in an arbitrary manner, lead to the termination of residential rights for the subordinate class.⁹

In 1945 national legislation (the Native Urban Areas Act, No. 25 of 1945) was passed for the creation of separate residential areas specifically for blacks. The National Party came to power in 1948 and began putting its apartheid policies into practice. It identified as a priority the addressing of the 'threatening'

6 RL Cope, "Strategic and socio-economic explanations for Carnavon's confederation policy: historiography and the evidence", *History in Africa*, (13), 1986, pp.13-34.

7 The appointment of Lord Milner of the Native Affairs Commission (Lagden Commission) in 1903 formalised the segregation of black and white in a new way, because it also "envisaged the territorial separation of black and white as a permanent, mandatory principle of land ownership". See TRH Davenport, *South Africa: a modern history* (Bergville, Southern, 1988), p.229. The Commission's territorial and urban proposals were implemented in 1913 and 1923 respectively. Its proposals for political segregation, after rejection by the National Convention in 1909, were later carried out in modified form under Hertzog's legislation of 1936 TRH Davenport, *South Africa: a modern history...*, pp.229-230.

8 National Archives (NA), Pretoria, Municipal files, 1903-1972, Municipality of Potchefstroom, Traffic Bye-Laws, 1945, Article 19. File 532: Correspondence Assistant Colonial Secretary & Town Clerk, 22 April 1904; File 2031: Correspondence between Works and Electricity Committee & Provincial Secretary, on change of bye-laws, 6 October 1944; 9 January 1945; 17 February 1945; File 2905: October 1920 references to bucket system; walking on sidewalks, also 16 December 1926.

9 NS Jansen van Rensburg, *Etniese grense in Promosa, Potchefstroom*, (Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir CHO, Potchefstroom, 1985).

presence of blacks in South African towns. The removal of black people from Makweteng started in 1958 and was completed in 1963. The residential and business stands in Makweteng belonged to the white controlled Municipality of Potchefstroom and were only rented to the residents. A significant number of residents had built their own houses on these stands and the owners of the structures were to be compensated for these improvements upon removal from the location to the new area called Ikageng, eight kilometres to the west.¹⁰

Some sensitivity among officialdom led to the idea of a *troosvergoeding* (also *vertroosting* or consolation), which was an “additional amount payable as consolation for the demolition of the house and as compensation for the inconvenience and expenses linked to the removal”. It is quite clear, however, that the initial intention of “giving comfort” to the ‘natives’ was grossly manipulated, and only the impression remained that those in authority had added a certain percentage to the market value of the houses in Makweteng. Therefore, the offering of an amount called a ‘consolation’ made no difference in real terms to the amount paid to the residents. Although the pretence of the bureaucrats was to “satisfy the natives” and also to “console” them during the process of removals, the significant manipulation of the amounts paid to the residents of the old location indicate their lack of sincerity. Very few people have contested the valuation of their properties, because their weak structural position did not make this feasible.¹¹

In 1962 the City Council also decided to create the new residential areas of Promosa (for coloureds) and Mohadin (for “Asians”). The empowering legislation for these removals was the Group Areas Act of 1950. These removals started in 1965 and were completed in 1969. The most common reason given for the relocation of the coloured people was the political principle of residential segregation of ‘races’ or ‘population groups’. A councillor, Rev. MJP Olivier, argued that Potchefstroom had to be made a “white and beautiful town” but also that he was “not against anybody and that no one should be favoured at the cost of somebody else”. The Reverend also did not consider the financial costs of removal as being of utmost importance, because in his view segregation had to be undertaken, “with a view to our future, our people’s [*volk se*] future, for the

10 NS Jansen van Rensburg, “The representation of social meaning by bureaucrats: removal of the disempowered from Willem Klopperville (1958-1965)”, *Challenges for anthropology in the “African Renaissance”: a Southern African Contribution* (Eds) D Lebeau & R Gordon (Windhoek, Univ. of Namibia Press, 2002), pp.266-281.

11 NA, Potchefstroom, Municipal files, 1903-1972, File 2362, Deputy Town Clerk & MSC Owles regarding Lydia Seleke 6 October 1958; 28 April 1959-25 May 1959.

sake of our survival ...”. In their petitions to the City Council, white residents also complained about the “mixed interaction” (*gemengde verkeer*) because of the presence of the location and expressed their worries about the possibility of “social contact” between coloureds and “less privileged whites” (*minder gegoede Blankes*) because the whites of the lower economic classes were considered part of the Afrikaans people (“... *is en bly egter ’n deel van die Afrikaanse volk ...*”).¹²

The alleged poor quality of housing conditions in Makweteng was manipulated for political purposes. In 1959 the City Council still had the intention of retaining Makweteng specifically for coloured habitation. The Manager of Non-European Affairs (PJ Riekert) reported that this area still had 120 houses that could be useful for housing the remaining 1 000 coloureds. Only four years later, in 1963, the (National) Secretary for Community Development enquired about the number of houses fit for habitation by coloureds, to which question the City Clerk answered: “My view is that there is no house [in Makweteng] fit for coloureds.” During the period of only four years, 120 “useful houses” suddenly and opportunely became “unfit hovels”.¹³

Permission was granted by the Administrator of the Transvaal province for the payment of consolation (*troosvergoeding*) to 140 coloured families at R10,00 per family “as encouragement for relocation of the coloureds in the new Coloured Group Area Promosa”. Only R10,00 was added to the valuation to be paid to the occupants of stands of Makweteng owning their own houses. The amounts for rent then ranged between R5,80 and R6,66. The consolation did not even cover two months’ rent in the new residential area. The problems of residents were: racial discrimination, forced removal, petty amounts of consolation, the unacceptable location of the future Promosa, the unsatisfactory quality and size of the new houses, and residents not being informed about the procedure. For the municipal officials the relevant issues were: honesty, resettlement, order, justice, good planning, affordable amenities, and the possibility of creating an own (*ei*) happy future for the coloureds. For the officials, the problems aired by the authors in their petition, in its entire manner and drift, indicated “incitement”. Only vague references to the feelings of coloureds can be found in the speech of Councillor Rev. Olivier and the City Council, for instance: “As far as the coloureds are concerned, I live with them, I make contact with them, I believe that the coloureds will

12 NA, Potchefstroom, Municipal files, 1903-1972, File 2597, Minutes of Council, 29 November 1962; File 2828: Management Committee report accepted by Council 29 November 1963; 3196.

13 NA, Potchefstroom, Municipal files, 1903-1972, Files 2362 & 2828, Correspondence Department Community Development & Town Council, 31 October 1964.

welcome this ... The coloureds console themselves that they already have an own town with its own border, and I believe in my soul that they will welcome this,” and also: “Everything considered, the coloured community ought to be extremely happy and satisfied in the new area”.¹⁴

In Potchefstroom the removals put people with limited power in an even worse situation and marginalised them even further.¹⁵ Officialdom’s way of referring to ‘interests’ and to universalise or shift these interests is one of the important achievements of apartheid as an ideology. The social engineering of this period had the goal of reconstructing the mixed reality of people’s intertwined lives to what was considered an “original state of racial purity”, rooted in nature.

Social and historical invisibility

Makweteng was situated on the southern side of Potchefstroom and the eastern side of the main street. Apart from the main street separating them, there was a buffer strip of 100 metres between the native location and the white part of town. As all over Southern Africa, deliberate residential segregation of people who were not of European descent was also a device to make ‘them’ socially invisible and control their lives. Separate and rudimentary sports and recreational facilities for the residents of the location had also to be used in such a way that the presence or visibility of the black participants would be limited. In 1906 whites complained about the use of Church Street on Sundays, which led to the demise of the cycling club; whites protested about the presence of “coloureds” in the parks in 1908, and in 1920 the “Potchefstroom Cricketers” had to stop playing on the town common because of complaints from white residents, just as in 1940 the blacks were prohibited from playing golf on the town common. These sorts of actions were also applied to stifle a request for a “skating rink near the location – for natives only”, when the town clerk interpreted the bye-law in such a way as if it prohibited their use of **any** skating rink, because, he wrote: “No coloured person, the bona fide servant or servants of the licensee excepted, shall be admitted to any Skating Rink licensed under these Bye-laws.” Furthermore, cricket and football were

14 NA, Potchefstroom, Municipal files, 1903-1972, File 4588, Minutes of Council, 29 November 1962; Minutes of Council, 5 August 1969; 11 September 1969.

15 Since early 2001 significant payments of compensation are being made to 650 claimants living in Ikageng and Promosa, according to the national process of land restitution.

prohibited for blacks in 1944, and so was cycling in 1948.¹⁶ (From 1944-1952 some improvements were made to the sports facilities, although it was again reported in 1952 that there were “almost no” facilities.)¹⁷ The location superintendent followed the same general approach, and in 1951 asked the police to “clean the streets of young natives who wander around aimlessly and cause problems”.¹⁸

References to people who were not of European descent are very rare in secondary sources on Potchefstroom. Even modern books on Potchefstroom¹⁹ occasionally refer to marginalised people only in an indirect way, for instance by mentioning the Lutheran missionaries who started schools for the “natives” and the presence in town of missionaries of the Anglican Church. Although it is often not clear from earlier sources exactly who the “non-whites”, “natives” or “coloureds” had been, one sometimes does find population figures referring to them. Haasbroek²⁰ obtained an MA degree on the history of Potchefstroom, in which he referred to the existence of a school for “coloureds” and mentioned that the *landdros* (magistrate) was responsible for administration regarding residential stands, water, the pound, the market and the control of coloured servants in towns and in the streets. If not for these cursory remarks, one could easily make the error of thinking that only people of European descent stayed in the town. He also recounted that a certain person had to be hanged and because the *burgers*²¹ (citizens) did not consider it apposite to consign this task to an Englishman or a “native” they decided that this should be the responsibility of the *veldkornette* (lieutenants).

16 The Reverend Donald Bailey stepped into the breach and castigated the town council for not trying to “discover the underlying causes of the nuisance” of “natives who jostle and jabber” pointed out the bad conditions in the location, with reference to the condition of streets, the absence of street lights, poor housing, the dismal condition of the Springbok Hall and the fact that the town readily used the cheap labour offered by the natives and the location, while nobody really cared how they spent their free time (“Invitation to Councillors”, *The Potchefstroom Herald*, 17 November 1944). Although this criticism elicited discussions in the town council, in essence this only raised the same problems of “freeing the Location of the large number of vagrant natives, and the natives that did not behave themselves, who should be kept from the streets”.

17 In colonial times it was often the case that “The native town is a crouching village, a town on its knees, a town wallowing in the mire”. See F Fanon, *The wretched of the earth*, (New York, Grove Weidenfeld, 1963), p.39.

18 PJ Riekert, *Bantoe-Administrasie in Potchefstroom*, (Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir CHO, Potchefstroom, 1963), pp.201-2).

19 *Potchefstroom 1838-1938*, (Potchefstroom, Stadsraad, 1939), pp.151-152; 179-180; 222-303; WJ de V Prinsloo, *Potchefstroom 150: Grepe uit die geskiedenis van Potchefstroom, 150^e bestaansjaar* (Potchefstroom, Feeskomitee, 1988/9); EJ Smit, *Potchefstroom 1988* (Potchefstroom, Stadsraad, 1988); G Jenkins. *A Century of History* (Potchefstroom Herald, Potchefstroom 1988). Only very brief sections on black people and nearly no photographs including blacks can be found in these publications.

20 DJP Haasbroek, *Die geskiedenis van Potchefstroom 1838-1881* (Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir CHO, Potchefstroom, 1955), pp.58,70.

21 Some elderly Afrikaans-speakers (previously classified as coloureds) still refer to white people of 60 years back as *die burgers* (the citizens). See Interview, S Mosidi/NS Jansen van Rensburg, August 2003.

Although the 'coloureds' (the servant class) of that time settled in Potchefstroom with the white immigrants from the eastern Cape, both Haasbroek and Van Coller,²² in their respective academic theses, do not refer to them, but only to the English, the total white population and also some *uitlanders* (foreigners). Van Coller could also not find any information on the *location* on the southern side of the town, but was satisfied to remark that, apart from labour relations, in 1880 there was no interaction between the (black) labourers and their masters.²³

The degree to which black servants were involved in the lives of their white masters, only about two decades later, was much more extensive than the generalised remark by Van Coller would indicate. On photos taken by the well-known photographer AFE D'Astre,²⁴ who probably settled in the town in 1902, blacks are well represented. Most of the photos are of individuals, but it is significant that the group photos of the Potchefstroom "Pospersoneel" and the "RE Officer's Mess Staff" include whites and blacks. Several other group photos show blacks and whites that could have been friends or colleagues. On the photos of white family groups, there are several black people. The planning of photo sessions with the professional photographer – probably the only person in town in possession of a camera – would definitely imply a conscious choice of who should be involved.

The Advisory Council for "controlling and uplifting them"

For purposes of "government", the township had a headman from 1904 to 1914.²⁵ From 1914 the first non-statutory body, the Native Advisory Council, was instituted, on request of the residents. This body consisted of twelve

22 DJP Haasbroek, *Die geskiedenis van Potchefstroom 1838-1881*; HM van Coller, *Die burgerlike lewe in Potchefstroom ten tye van die Eerste Vryheidsoorlog* (Potchefstroomse Universiteit, Potchefstroom, 1983).

23 HM van Coller, *Die burgerlike lewe in Potchefstroom...* Official documents of this period clearly indicate the separate social spheres created for these categories. In a register for burgers and even residents for the period 1882 to 1900, there is no reference to 'coloureds' or 'natives'. Specific documents which contained the names of the servant class were a tax register for "natives" (1882-1884); and an "apprentice" book (1852-1864); as well as books with service contracts (1859-1881) and a marriage register for "kleurlingen" (people of colour) of 1898-1900 (*Landdroste Transvaal*, 1852-1900) See NA, Pretoria Staats Sekretaris (SS), Documents, 17 no. 91-127; 132-136. SS767-SS769 The work of Morton (F Morton, *Captive labour in the Western Transvaal after the Sand River Convention*) indicates the significance of "apprentices" (captive labour/slaves) as part of the labour force in this region and the profound ignorance of scholars of the subjects of Boer rule in the 19th century.

24 Auguste Frederic Edouard D'Astre, born in 1872 in Bordeaux, France, may have established himself in Potchefstroom as a photographer in 1902 and passed away in 1955 See Potchefstroom Museum, File PO.9.3.n.d. (JV Coetzee).

25 PJ Riekert, *Bantoe-Administrasie in Potchefstroom*, 1963, p.31.

representatives of seven churches. (There are indications that this type of representation was still functioning in 1958, when blacks were removed from Makweteng.) This body did not outlast 1914, although it was useful because it provided more information about the “native point of view”, which could lead to “successfully controlling and uplifting them ... by allowing them, under competent supervision, some share in the management of their own affairs”. About five months after its inception the (black) secretary of this body sent a letter directly to the town clerk (“for fear that it may not reach the desired destination”) and complained about a number of issues. They also requested the dismissal of the location superintendent (F van der Hoff). In 1926 the Advisory Council started their work by discussing a series of complaints such as: the increased water tariff, “which water this location has no benefit of”, protest against using white labourers instead of ‘coloureds’ in the location, and the evening curfew for blacks which they saw as “unchristian and meant to degrade our people”. Nothing constructive can be found regarding many of these complaints in the Municipal files, but when no nominations were forthcoming for the election in 1928, the superintendent was of the opinion that: “... I do not think it is due to any lack of interest on the part of the natives, but is directly attributable to Communist influence”.²⁶

This acute tone of paternalism from the side of the white authorities and the bureaucrats persisted over the years. The members of the Advisory Council were active in taking up issues, discussing matters that came from the white council and adding their views to these. The white chairman of the Advisory Council regularly gave oral reports on matters decided upon by the town council. The suggestions of the Advisory Council, however, were never taken very seriously, and were not passed on in a formal way. Complaints about living conditions in the location sometimes had a limited effect for a very short period, after which the conditions (regarding commerce, roads, street lights, sanitation) deteriorated again. It was clear that the Advisory Council could not exert pressure on the town council. When they asked for a discussion of the location’s budget, the request first had to be sent “to Pretoria”, with the result that the budget could only be discussed two years later. The paternalism was undisguised when the intelligence and dignity of Advisory Council members were slighted in the following ways: In 1945 the Advisory Council requested that a trophy be given to sports teams in the location, but the town council argued that the time has not yet come for this and, it is “against the law”.

²⁶ NA, Potchefstroom, Municipal files, 1903-1972, File 1800, Annual Report of location superintendent, 28 November 1928; File 1800, Town Clerk on Communist influence, 19 November 1928.

When in 1946 there was a dire shortage of food in the country, the Advisory Council requested that the residents of the location could use the surplus water in the furrow for growing vegetables, but the chairman (a white member of the town council) responded with "the Irrigation law forbids this".²⁷ The paternalistic and insensitive treatment of the Advisory Council actually was part and parcel of the social interaction between the dominant whites and the subservient blacks. A request by the Advisory Council that one of their members (L Makaku) should play a role in the ceremony for the removal (in 1950) of an old cemetery²⁸ was not granted, and when they made enquiries, the superintendent only wrote: "The programme was already drawn up and we did not want to change it."

In the extensive minutes of one meeting (1946), the Advisory Council protested that the location superintendent had too much power, because he could decide on whether a person could live in the location or declare him or her "unsuitable" and to be removed from the location. Council member Makhoere could not understand how it was possible that a person could live in the location, with everything going well, and then had to be relocated by the superintendent to his/her place of birth, even after 20 years,²⁹ because of a mistake. The only answer the superintendent offered for these actions was in *newspeak*: "I do not come to oppress but for cooperation; the advisory council does not exist to decide on who was good or bad; do you as advisory council not trust me, that I might say, after acceptance of the regulations: I've got you?; I come to build and not to oppress."³⁰

It is understandable that the white local authority, to whom all land in the location (Makweteng/Willem Klopperville) belonged, could expect church organisations to have a certain number of members before approving its

27 NA, Potchefstroom, Municipal files, 1903-1972, File 2040, 27 March 1946.

28 A prominent resident of Makweteng recalls this incident in the following way: "I was a coward. When they decided to move the dead, and put their remains in small casks, it should not have happened. I asked the people to cooperate when they moved the graves to the new site. I should have said no, don't ask me to ask my people to accept this. I was afraid they would do it in any case if we did not cooperate. There was no possibility to oppose them. But still, today, I am not happy about this and my role in it" See Interview, SMM Lekhela/NS Jansen van Rensburg 2004).

29 Although many inhabitants called on their being born in the location or their very long stay, they often lost their right of residence on the basis of a single transgression of laws such as the Liquor Law (possession of alcoholic beverages) or the Native Administration Law (21/1923), and were therefore declared as "not being a person fit" for the location or, "not being an example" for other residents, being an "idle and disorderly person", or even that "he is a polygamist" See Municipal files, 1903-1972, File 1793, Correspondence of location superintendent regarding SJN Tladi, 20 June 1940; File 1484, Correspondence of location superintendent regarding Willem Maruping, 1939-1940 & Jan Tsumane, 1940 & Johannes Afrika, 14 December 1944; File 2040, Cancellation of permits, 10 June 1952).

30 NA, Potchefstroom, Municipal files, 1903-1972, File 2040, Minutes of Advisory Board, 2 October 1946.

application of a building site, but in 1904 a further qualification was added, namely the control of a “responsible” white person.³¹ In 1941 the Department of Native Affairs also compiled a list of “recognised” churches, which guided the local authority in their allocation of stands and the access of religious ministers to the location. In 1945 a list of religious ministers, recognised by the central government and approved by the police, was also used in Makweteng. The Native Administration Committee felt that, even if the practice of baptism and immersion in the Mooi River was according to the beliefs of the natives, it should not take place, for it is “unhealthy”.³²

Enjoying the street lights before evening curfew

In general, the white residents and local authorities of Potchefstroom were more politically conservative and racist than was ‘expected’ from them, if their actions were compared with national policy guidelines on the treatment of blacks up to 1948.³³ In 1917 and 1918 extensive correspondence took place between the Secretary of Native Affairs and the local authority. The Secretary suggested that all revenue derived from the location should be expended on the location, but the Potchefstroom Town Council objected because there were many “municipal advantages and amenities of which natives have the full benefit and to which they should contribute”. When asked for more information, the town council explained that within the curfew regulations natives enjoyed this utility jointly with the whites (in the white part of town; the location had none) and when the Secretary of Native Affairs enquired how they could have this benefit, considering the evening curfew, they responded that “subject to curfew regulations the street [emphasis in the original] lighting benefit the native as much as the white, particularly in winter” (when lights were turned on earlier). They also indicated that natives pay nothing for road construction and maintenance, and “except in respect to the use of sidewalks

31 When this qualification was temporarily removed in 1914, leaders of the Church of the Province of SA, the Dutch Reformed Church and the Wesleyan Church protested because they were dissatisfied with the continuous split of churches and the deterioration of morals, and therefore “European supervision [should] be exercised over every Native Church” (Municipal file 23-680, European supervision of native churches, 30 November 1914).

32 Municipal files, 1903-1972, File 1799, Recognised religious ministers, 26 September 1945; File 2006, Recognised churches 1 June 1950; File 1794, Baptism in Mooi River, Native Administration Committee, 4 September 1945.

33 MW Swanson, “The Durban system: roots of urban apartheid in colonial Natal”, *African Studies*, 35(3-4), 1976, p.162, points out that early in the 20th century it was common for the central government’s officials, with several motives, to express “... an emphatic concern for African welfare and urbanization which implied intervention and contrasted with the outlook of elected representatives”.

they are subject to no restrictions” and furthermore, the native location is “entitled to the surplus water supply, which except in times of drought, is not inconsiderable”.³⁴

In 1943 a national interdepartmental commission on the social, health and economic situation of urban blacks indicated some shortcomings regarding Potchefstroom location. The town council’s committee agreed with most findings, but on the recommendation of communal meals as a temporary relief measure “pending a really adequate rise in wage levels” the committee felt: “That communal meals would not be necessary for the purpose of avoiding malnutrition if natives were only more prepared to select proper work, for which, at present, adequate salaries are paid”.³⁵

Although there can be no doubt that black people were indispensable as labourers, white residents often complained about their mere presence. In 1957, after many of the black residents were already resettled in Ikageng, some whites still complained that the children moved through the ‘white part’ of town, between Makweteng/Willem Klopperville and the new township, Ikageng. These children then often would “... get into conflict with white children and fighting and stone throwing is common, white women and girls are molested and cursed”.³⁶ This imperative on social invisibility also had to apply to the location, because it had degenerated over many years. In 1940 the Health and Parks Committee of the Town Council decided to plant trees in Broad Street “in order to veil the location”, and in 1963, when only ‘coloureds’ were left in the location, the Reverend Mieder Olivier pointed out that since Potchefstroom would be having its 125 year celebrations soon, it would be good if “an amount can be set aside for the tidying up of the old Bantu residential area”.³⁷

34 NA, Potchefstroom, Municipal files, 1903-1972, File 1794, Correspondence between Secretary of Native Affairs and Town Clerk, 26 October 1917.

35 NA, Potchefstroom, Municipal files, 1903-1972, File 1799, Correspondence between Municipal Association of Transvaal and a Commission of Town Council, 11 May 1943 to May 1944.

36 NA, Potchefstroom, Municipal files, 1903-1972, File 2900, Whites complain, 22 March 1957.

37 NA, Potchefstroom, Municipal files, 1903-1972, File 3463. Even more drastic than the above were the plans of the District Agricultural Union, consisting of white farmers, who in 1953 proposed to the town council that the native location should be fenced in the same way as the military camp and that proper control had to be exerted at the gates. These measures were requested to combat crime and to ensure more safety for the (white) travelling public. The town council did not follow up this request (see Municipal files, 1903-1972, File 2006, Letter from Agricultural Union, 24 February 1953).

Under the influence of Dr HF Verwoerd's rigid views on 'ethnicity',³⁸ the 'coloured' social category who had been living with Tswana-speakers and Xhosa-speakers for 120 years and more, and had very good relations with them, had to be ethnically distinguished, "elevated" and placed in a separate urban area with "their own" (read: South African coloureds') education system, hospital service, businesses and development corporation. This should ideally lead to a form of self-government and give them the "opportunity, by means of the maintenance of its [coloureds'] own national identity, of developing with as little friction as possible". Locally, it was felt that the 'coloureds' had already been strongly influenced by blacks and that "apart from intermarriage, certain Bantu customs have been taken over without more ado, such as lobola-bogadi, the drinking of kafir beer and extra-marital relations".³⁹ These "problems" had to be rectified in several ways and: "In the period of transition he will especially have to be worked at (*bearbei*) to make him a coloured and to make him feel like one. [...] The cultivation can only be successful if it is done by trained⁴⁰ people, namely people who know him and are sincere with the aim." The aim was to save 'coloureds' from being assimilated by blacks and thereby "disappearing".

Afrikaans-speaking people ('coloureds') mainly lived in certain blocks (within the boundaries of Buite, Keerom and Broad Streets) in Makweteng, and had their education (in the Lutheran school) in Afrikaans. Sam Mosidi⁴¹ even remarks that "[we] did not have a mother tongue" (as the Tswana and Xhosa-speakers had). Although his parents were of Northern-Sotho stock, they spoke Afrikaans at home and:

This is how it came that we speak Afrikaans, because we were together and it was only the open space (*die vlak/vlakte*) that kept us apart from the citizens (*burgers/whites*). My father could speak Xhosa, Zulu, English, Afrikaans, Sotho. And now, suddenly, we had to move to Promosa. I asked, why to Promosa? Riekert said: Because you are Afrikaans-speaking, and no Afrikaans-speakers

38 A document of 1960 written by HF Verwoerd, with the telling title: "Positive Rehabilitation Programme of the Government Concerning the Coloured People. Information Service of Department of Coloured Affairs", Cape Town, 7 December 1960; NA, Potchefstroom, Municipal files, 1903-1972, File 2881.

39 Municipal files, 1903-1972, File 6673, Minutes of Town Council, 29 November 1961.

40 PJ Riekert obtained an MA degree in "Bantu Administration" in 1963, and a DPhil degree on "The marriage laws of the Bahurutshe in 1967", both from the Potchefstroom University. It is justified to see Riekert as one of "apartheid's anthropologists", as described and analysed by Robert Gordon, "Apartheid's Anthropologists: The Genealogy of Afrikaner Anthropology", *American Ethnologist*, 15(3), 1988, pp. 535-553.

41 Interview, S Mosidi/NS Jansen van Rensburg, August 2003.

are allowed here in Ikageng. You can demolish your house and carry it on your back.

Liberals and paternalism

Complete reports of a location superintendent only covers the period of 1946 to 1952, when Mr Willem Klopper occupied this position. Mostly he reported that the behaviour of the location residents was good and that he had an excellent relationship with them and: "I am supported by all noteworthy Natives to uphold law and order and the Natives were very submissive" and they "have always shown absolute respect towards me, which is of great help in maintaining law and order with a firm yet kind and just hand." Even during the trying times of 1952 and the Defiance Campaign against the pass laws, careful and tactful handling prevented these 'problems' from "reaching" Potchefstroom.⁴² In defining 'problems' in terms of the Defiance Campaign only, namely endangering order, Klopper also disguised the real problem behind the black women's refusal to carry passes (which implied even more order/control), as was also done by some residents of Makweteng.

Even the kindly impression one sometimes gains regarding Klopper⁴³ could not be more than essential paternalistic benevolence and condescension.⁴⁴ This is illustrated by his reports that he, for instance, was successful with the assistance of the block men (ward representatives) in resolving all domestic problems satisfactorily and that he succeeded in keeping children under 16 years off the streets after 8:30 p.m.; stopping all excessive noise around houses and on the streets; encouraging residents of the location to attend church more regularly; and in encouraging youngsters (*jongvolk*) to marry rather than to live together unmarried.⁴⁵ He evinced the same imperious attitude in 1950 when the magistrate and native commissioner asked whether there was any accommodation for "prominent natives" in the location. Klopper responded that no accommodation was available, it has never been necessary

42 Municipal files, 1903-1972, File 1793, Annual Report of location superintendent, 29 November 1952. In stratified societies it is common that those who have been ascribed with inferior status are characterised as having many childlike attributes and may then conduct themselves in ways likely to elicit maximum returns. See T Shibutani, and KM Kwan, *Ethnic stratification; a comparative approach* (London, Macmillan, 1965), p.205.

43 SMM Lekhela (2004) described Willem Klopper as a "liberal nationalist". See Interview, SMM Lekhela/NS Jansen van Rensburg April 6 & 7, 2004.

44 See the generalised analysis of T Shibutani, and KM Kwan, *Ethnic stratification; a comparative approach*, p.258 on stratified societies.

45 NA, Potchefstroom, Municipal files, 1903-1972, File 1793, Annual Report of location superintendent, 29 November 1947.

and would only be an unnecessary expense.⁴⁶ Recent interviews with well-known residents indicated that they saw him as a kindly father figure and even as a closet liberal who did all he could to make life more bearable for the residents.⁴⁷

The Joint Council of Europeans and Natives, who started a local branch in Potchefstroom in 1931, did immense work in writing to several authorities, highlighting the plight of the residents of the location,⁴⁸ and in some cases even influencing the local authority to act positively. In 1942 they even went as far as requesting the town council to act according to general practice in the country by “extending to Africans in urban areas direct representation on municipal councils” and the town council could then: “take steps to create a seat to which Natives can elect a European citizen to represent them”.⁴⁹ The attitude of this Joint Council was informed by the social welfarist thinking of the late 1930s/early 1940s, which was ruptured in the apartheid era.⁵⁰ One exceptionally brave official was actually reported to his superiors in 1945 when he, as Commandant of Police in Potchefstroom, made progressive remarks that met with the approval of blacks attending a meeting, but not of Councillor F Scheepers. Lieutenant Visser said that for him there is no difference between black and white, because in heaven all are the same; and he felt that there should be clubs in the location for boxing, gymnastics and other sports. The police will collect and also help to collect money at white shops that were “morally obliged” to give; the big problem of the natives was based on “economic background”; there should be two or three cafés, places of rest or places of gathering, erected by the local authority, for servants who want to enjoy a cup of tea or only relax: “... If we do not permit the Native this, then they also are not good enough to work in the houses of whites.” He also asked that natives should not be prosecuted unnecessarily if they would possibly lose their passes.⁵¹

46 NA, Potchefstroom, Municipal files, 1903-1972, File 2006, Correspondence Magistrate, Native Commissioner & location superintendent, 1 July 1950.

47 Interview, SMM Lekhela/NS Jansen van Rensburg, 6-7 April, 2004.

48 NA, Potchefstroom, Municipal files, 1903-1972, File 3460, Potchefstroom Joint Council of Europeans and Natives : 5 November 1932; 2 December 1932; 10 May 1933; 15 April 1935, 27 June 1941.

49 NA, Potchefstroom, Municipal files, 1903-1972, File 1799, Potchefstroom Joint Council of Europeans and Natives, 20 August 1942.

50 D Posel, “The regulation of the urban African family in South Africa in the 1930s and 1940s: the case for a racialised welfare state”, *RAU Sociology*, (23), 2004, pp.1-19.

51 NA, Potchefstroom, Municipal files, 1903-1972, File 3462, Report by Councillor Scheepers : meeting of Lieutenant Visser with Native Advisory Board, 10 July 1945.

Conclusion

In a demeaning and increasingly totalitarian system many of the residents of Potchefstroom had to live in circumstances of segregation and apartheid to serve the interest of whites. Meaning was created by whites and imposed on blacks and coloureds. The various white administrations pretended that they consoled, satisfied, and uplifted the marginalised people. They admitted also, however, that they had to have the myriad of rules for their own survival, thereby actually controlling blacks and coloureds even to the point of making them socially and historically invisible. It can be indicated that the sentiments in Potchefstroom were sometimes more extremely racist than was 'necessary', seen in the broader South African set up.