# Master Servant Relationships in the Eastern Cape: the 1820 Settlement

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**Abstract:** This article is about the rebellious behavior of the servant class and the consequent threat it posed to the established social order in the 1820 settlement. There were deep anxieties amongst the higher echelons of the settlement about maintaining class distinctions. Upper and middle class settlers relied on informal and formal strategies in order to keep social hierarchies intact. The concept of social control is applied in this respect to study the troubled master-servant relationship, emphasize an obsessive preoccupation with social order, and uncover the limits of upper and middle class settlers' control. This focus on the troubled master servant relationship in the 1820 settlement and the failed attempts to control it is a helpful correction to the celebratory reverberations of early South African settler histories.

**Keywords:** 1820 settlers, class, social control, hierarchies, precariousness, servant

## Introduction

In an attempt to alleviate post-Napoleonic wars' economic distress and relieve political tensions at home, the British government sponsored a settlement scheme to the eastern frontier of the Cape Colony.[1] The idea of establishing a settlement there came from the colony's governor Lord Charles Somerset, who wrote several letters to the colonial office lobbying for the settlement of more people in the eastern Cape. He described the Cape in glowing terms, emphasizing the fertility of the soil. He claimed that wool, corn, tobacco, and cotton could be produced there for export. Moreover, he insisted that it was a land where men from a humble social background could certainly succeed. Briefly, the new land was portrayed by Somerset as a paradise of milk and honey. Settlement in the eastern Cape would also serve, according to the governor, to decrease the high cost of military presence as the settlers would defend themselves.[2] Moreover, they would also become suppliers of cheap meat to the British Establishment at the Cape as many farms had been abandoned.[3]

The British government appointed a committee to investigate the efficiency of Somerset's proposal. One of those people selected to appear before the committee was William Burchell who travelled through many areas of the eastern Cape and was favorable to the scheme.[4] He persuaded the committee of the suitability of the new area and emphasized its agricultural potential. Burchell's advice to establish a settlement in the eastern Cape found receptive ears. On 12 July 1819, parliament voted £50,000 for the Cape emigration scheme, which was mainly intended to serve "British rather than Cape interests."[5] The scheme "aimed to attract a microcosm of English society."[6]

Settlers were divided into three main parties. Proprietary parties were led by wealthy men of capital, their families, and a number of indentured servants tied by contract in their service for a certain number of years (often three).[7] Proprietary leaders such as Major Pigot, Thomas Philipps, and Miles Bowker wished to recreate the lifestyle of the gentry, which they were striving to maintain in post-Napoleonic Britain.

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The second type were joint stock parties. These were loose-knit voluntary organizations. The heads of these parties were purely nominal. Each of them paid his own £10 deposit.[8] They would receive land on the party's behalf but would divide it amongst the members of the party as soon as possible. The three largest parties were led by John Bailie, Hezekiah Sephtone, and Thomas Wilson. A quarter of Bailie's party were London tradesmen experiencing financial difficulties due to the stagnation of trade.[9] There were also four parish parties—the members poor, dependent on relief, and the costs of their passages raised through extra-parish donations.[10] They were not to be allocated land but instead would be hired as laborers for wealthy settlers.

The bulk of the 1820 settlers located to the eastern Cape district of Albany. Lured by the glittering opportunities that the region seemed to offer, they settled at the district capital of Grahamstown and in other frontier towns such as Bathurst and Salem.[11] Tempted by the opportunity to start a new life in stark contrast with the misery and poverty of early industrial Britain, the settlers' hopes for material prosperity were dashed away as soon as they arrived on the newly settled lands. The eastern Cape's marked soil infertility combined with the inexperience of settlers in farming led to the slow development of settlements for decades to come. Many wealthy settlers failed to establish themselves as prosperous landowners. John Tosh rightly noted that "the hopes vested in the Cape of Good Hope proved a chimera."[12] Most importantly, the settlement was marked by class conflicts. This aspect is commonly neglected by the so-called founding fathers of South African settler historiography, George McCall Theal and George Cory—non-professional historians who defended settlers' interests in South Africa.

Canadian George McCall Theal was born in 1837 and arrived in South Africa at the age of 24.[13] He spent his early years in the Eastern districts of the Cape Colony working as a journalist and teacher. It was in the 1870s, after his return to the eastern Cape, that Theal started to pursue his historical interests.[14] Theal published numerous histories of South Africa, including *South Africa* (1871), *A Compendium of South African History and Geography* (1874), three volumes of *Basutoland Records* (1883), and *The History of the Boers in South Africa* (1887). The British-born George Edward Cory followed in the steps of Theal and adhered to his conception of history. A professor of chemistry at Rhodes University College, he remained there until his retirement in 1925.[15] He was interested in the history of South Africa and spent his leisure hours in amateur research.[16] Cory is reputed for his six-volume history *The Rise of South Africa.*[17]

Both historians celebrated the heroic achievements of the 1820 settlers and emphasized their image as bearers of progress and civilization. In *The Rise of South Africa,* Cory devoted several chapters to the 1820 settlers, placing great emphasis on the terrible hardships and their success in overcoming adversities. Cory wrote that the settlers did "so much towards the development of the country" and that despite the early failures of their crops "out of these failures arose the success of the subsequent generations and now nearly a century left after the arrival of the transports in Algoa Bay, we enjoy the peace and prosperity, the foundations of which were laid by the 1820 pioneers."[18]

By highlighting the struggles and hardships faced by the 1820 settlers, Theal and Cory reinforced the image of heroic pioneers. Both historians overlooked the class conflicts in the settlement. However, the so-called the "cult of settlers" began to wane from the 1970s onward. Subsequent histories turned to colonial identities in settler societies. Alan Lester argued that the 1820 settlers were far from being a homogenous group—they belonged to a variety of class, ethnic, and religious origins. These were a source of friction, creating

tensions between the servant class and the gentry and middle classes who hired them. Lester also pointed out that these differences did not disappear but from the 1840s onwards there emerged a collective identity of "British settler." This was spurred mainly by their shared anxieties of possible Khoikhoi and Xhosa rebellions, and feelings of abandonment by an apparently indifferent metropole.[19] Such insights into colonial identity moved away from traditional romantic views of the 1820 settlement.

This article builds on Lester's work and pays close attention to the rebellious behavior of the servant class and the failed attempts to control it. The terms 'indentured servant' and 'servant class' refer to those poor 1820 settlers who signed a contract of indenture binding them to work from three to six years for their masters.[20] In this respect, they were "similar to the many British indentured servants who came to America during the eighteenth century."[21] Although we have no evidence about their exact numbers, it is interesting to note that "the indentured servants found more lucrative employment as soon as their terms of servitude were over."[22] Others, as it will be shown in the following analysis, were tempted by higher wages and broke their contracts of indenture.[23] 'Masters,' on the other hand, refers those men of means who recruited indentured laborers and servants, paying their deposits in return for an agreed period of labor. [24]

A main objective is to offer a much more complex picture of the 1820 settlement by relying on some of the 1820 settlers' personal writing. Thomas Philipps, Geremiah Goldswain, Thomas Pringle, Hannah Dennison, Sophia Pigot, and others left interesting accounts of their experiences. A major limitation of these sources is that they are often much more illuminating of the everyday means by which masters sought to protect class boundaries and a deteriorating master-servant relationship. The concept of social control is utilized to study the troubled master-servant relationship, emphasize an obsessive preoccupation with social order, and uncover the limits of upper and middle class settlers' control.

American sociologist Edward A. Ross developed the concept of social control in the late nineteenth century. Ross underlined the main premises of the concept in a series of articles in the *American Journal of Sociology* starting from 1896. In 1901, he collected these articles in his popular book *Social Control: A Survey of the Foundations of Order*. Ross defined social control as:

> that ascendency over the aims and acts of the individual which is exercised on behalf of the group. It is a sway that is not casual or incidental, but is purposive and at its inception conscious. It is kept up partly by definite organs, formally constituted and supported by the will of society, and partly by informal spontaneous agencies that consciously or unconsciously serve the social interest and function under constant supervision from above.[25]

It is clear from this definition that there are two basic forms of social control, formal—such as law which Ross described as the "most specialized ad highly furnished engine of social control employed by society"—and informal means, such as religion. [26]

A.P. Donajgrodzki was the first to apply social control to the study of class relations in nineteenth century Britain. He explained that social control was maintained not only by legal systems, police forces, and prisons but mostly through social institutions such as religion, family life, leisure, recreation, education, charity and philanthropy, social work and poor relief.[27] Certainly, this implies that social order is not a natural process but the product of legal structures and social norms or practices.

In order to maintain the hierarchical social order and the obedience of the servant class, upper and middle class settlers relied on informal and every day means such as maintaining different spatial arrangements for masters and servants, exclusive social gatherings, and social calls. They contrived also a number of formal or official structures mainly labor laws, courts, and prisons to protect the rights of masters and maintain class hierarchies. While the concept of social control is useful in understanding upper and middle class settlers' obsessive preoccupation with order, its use might imply the existence of consensual settler societies. This is not the case of the 1820 settlement. The article reveals a conflict-ridden society, yet it demonstrates the limits of upper and middle class settlers' control over the behavior of the servant class.

**Stratified Settlements: Informal Social Control**

The 1820 settlers in the eastern Cape were highly conscious of class distinctions as they "came from a hierarchical, class conscious social order in which inequality was part of the natural order."[28] As a result, they sought to hold social hierarchies intact as they moved to new settlements. From the outset, settlers were divided: the dominant upper and middle class settlers and a subordinate class of indentured laborers and servants. The strict social divisions between these two groups were highly visible in the settlement. Settlers were divided into parties led by wealthy men who also needed indentured servants.[29] The system of indenture was expected to ensure stability and maintain social hierarchies.

The fact that the indenture system was highly exploitative cannot pass unnoticed. Most indentured servants received no pay at all or earned only meager wages and were not allowed to seek other sources of income. Yet many signed contracts of indenture in order to escape the unbearable amounts of poverty characterizing early nineteenth century Britain. Indentures were one of the only means of escape from poor wages, unemployment, and the injustices of the Poor Law. Unsurprisingly, many poor settlers had been enticed by exploitative indentures.

In his *Chronicle*, settler Jeremiah Goldswain wrote of twenty-six indentured laborers' enthusiasm, including him, who signed a contract of indenture binding them for a period of six years to William Wait.[30] Mr. Wait would pay the expenses of his laborers' voyage and after arrival at the new settlement, he must provide them with necessary provisions until the commencement of their daily wages.[31] As soon as they began to work for him, he should give them the value of half a bushel of wheat, suitable habitation, and half an acre of garden ground.[32] Goldswain and his mates would be subject to severe penalties if they broke their contract: they would be liable for one hundred pounds if they refused to work, or did not permit their wives and children to work for Mr. Wait, or hired themselves to another master.[33]

Yet Goldswain and his mates were excited by these prospects. Their hopes continued, even on socially stratified ships. From the moment of their departure, upper and middle class settlers were highly conscious of class hierarchies and sought to keep them unchallenged. Onboard the ships sailing for Cape Town, wealthy settlers enjoyed privileged accommodation and treatment. For example, on the twenty-one settler ships which set sail in December 1819, heads of parties enjoyed private cabins and dined on luxurious food. The Philips family breakfast consisted of coffee, chocolate, toasted cheese, and roasted ham.[34] This family enjoyed also "elegant dinners" consisting of beef and vegetables.[35] Their cabin abounded with oranges, "sweet and sour lemons," limes, banana, pineapples, eggs, gourds,

pumpkins, and cocoa nuts.[36] Aboard the three-decked ship Northampton, there were different accommodations for cabin and lower deck passengers. Sophia Pigot and her sister Catherine had a very comfortable cabin.[37] These cabins were often made with light wooden frames and panels and furnished with a table, a sofa, a washstand and bedding.[38] They enjoyed writing, reading, drawing, and walking on board of the Northampton.[39]

Intermediate cabin passengers enjoyed less privileged treatment. They had to provide their own sleeping berths, bedding towels, linen, knives, forks and all other necessities. The quantity of food such as sugar, tea, pork allowed to this class is carefully measured. They were allowed twice in each a week fresh meat.[40] These comforts were denied to working class settlers. Steerage passengers were obliged to take their own bedding on board. On board of the Zoroaster, Goldswain and his mates were ordered to form into messes, six in number. They were given three quarters of a pound of bisket for each man, some oatmeal, a little meat and a very little bit of butter. When they got it, they did not know what they were to do with or how to cook it.[41] Towards the end of the day, each of them had a blanket and a mattress, and six of them, who were single men, were to share one berth.[42]

These social distinctions were consequently carried to the new settlement. Jacklyn Cock notes that the "subordinate status of the servant was unquestioned and it was a matter of continuing concern to the employing classes to inculcate the correct attitudes of obedience and subservience."[43] As soon as they landed, wealthy settlers distanced themselves from the lower echelons of society. Arrangement of the settlers' tents reflected spatial segregation between the higher and the lower ranks of society. Thomas Pringle, a wealthy 1820 settler, gives a detailed description of the tents of the party leaders as set apart from the rest of the tent city and evincing "the taste of the occupants by the pleasant situations in which they were placed and by the neatness of everything about them."[44] On the other hand, the tents of the lower class of emigrants consisted of "several hundred tents pitched in parallel rows and streets."[45]

Connections between settlers of a similar background also proved essential to preserve social hierarchies. The settlers from the higher echelons befriended families of an equal social standing. George Pigot's younger daughter Sophia recorded her family's settler experience from December 1819 to December 1821. Sophia embarked in London to come to South Africa, with her father, her eldest sister Kate and her youthful stepmother, whom their father had only married only two days before departure.[46] Her journals show a vibrant social life based on a system of calling and receiving calls. Calls made and received were recorded meticulously. A day without calls is commented upon "saw no one."[47] The Philipps, the Pigots, the Bowkers, and the Campbells were close friends. The system of calling was a crucial part of their daily lives. It was a significant marker of class and status.

Informal measures such as exclusive social gatherings for leisure and entertainment were also very common. The upper classes enjoyed picnics with officers where Constantia wine was served.[48] Captain Mores had a large marquee, which served as a social center for leading settlers. He entertained them and hosted farewell events for some of the party leaders on the eve of their departure.[49] Captain Crause built also a marquee "in a round clump of bush" in order to entertain high status settlers. The sides of the marquee were covered with mats and the roof with canvas. The furniture was simple consisting of a long table and a rustic sofa but "at night the illuminated roof and the gentle rustling of the leaves around gave the appearance when viewed from the outside of a Vauxhall in miniature."[50]

In addition, dances or balls allowed settlers of a similar social standing to mingle. These were designed to reproduce a social environment similar to what upper and middle class settlers enjoyed in Britain. Mrs. Philipps described a ball hosted by the Cape camps in 1826:

> It went off extremely well, the rooms were large and handsome, and the building was illuminated with lamps and transparencies on the outside, on a guard on house back placed before it. It had an extremely pretty effect on approaching it. The ball room was very well lighted up with chandeliers (not of cut glass) but formed of wood and tin entirely concealed but beautiful shrubs and flowers, which with the numerous candles placed amongst them looked uncommonly pretty…It was really a most splendid affair for this part of the world and the Assemblage of really well dressed Females, many of them elegantly so, greater than ever had been seen here.[51]

There is a great emphasis on upper and middle class settlers not losing their sense of refinement and respectability as they settled in foreign lands. Accounts underscored a leisured lifestyle in order to gain the respect of their families at home. In August 1822, Philipps wrote: "our manners of living here continue the same as we have been accustomed to."[52] Such insistence on "civilized" manners and customs was certainly meant to highlight that wealthy settlers were still members of the social class they had belonged to at home. It is no surprise that upper and middle class settlers were obsessed with reproducing a similar social environment to their cherished home, and material paraphernalia was a crucial element in this process. Wealthy 1820 settler families took with them sofas, wash-hand stands, china glass, plate pictures, looking glasses, flutes, violins, paint boxes, and pearl card-counters.[53]

The most elitist object taken by wealthy settlers was the piano. A potent symbol of class status, countless settler families endured the "sacrifices and discomforts in bringing this cumbersome symbol of higher values to their chosen land in small unstable ships and on grinding bullock drays."[54] The piano defined not only the settlers' social standing but also their respectability and genteel mode of life. The skill of playing on this refined musical instrument was seen as a compulsory accomplishment of gentlewomen. In Victorian society, a lady's musical skills were widely admired as a display of genteel identity. Moreover, it was regarded as an essential means to attract a potential husband. For married women, it was a source of leisure. It was therefore very common that women played the piano on social occasions as few respectable families lacked it. In other words, the absence of the piano in a genteel home had several social ramifications. It implied that 'gentle' women were "deprived of the exercise of their special training, of any leading role in family recreation and of one of their few legitimate channels for self-expression."[55]

Although space on settler ships was limited to carry additional luggage and even though the transport of pianos was highly expensive, wealthy 1820 settler families such as the Philipps and the Pigots carried pianos with them. Sophia Pigot recorded her great attachment to music. As a daughter of a man of "means and influence," she spent much of her time playing piano. Four months after their arrival in the eastern Cape, the Pigots were still living in their temporary wooden house. It was necessary however to tune the piano. Mr. Dale came several times, "tuned the piano [and] left some music to copy."[56]

Such keenness and attachment to music were central to the busy life of calls to which the Pigots were accustomed. Sophia delighted in her first musical evening. There was "Music for the first time" since their arrival to the eastern Cape and she "liked it very much."[57] Settler

women's musical ability was highly appreciated. Philipps' daughter described an evening at Oatlands where Mrs. Somerset, the governor's wife, was highly proficient playing piano and harp. The Philipps enjoyed such musical evenings regularly as leisure was a defining characteristic of the settlers' social standing.[58]

The Pigots' daughters—Sophia and Kate—entertained themselves by practicing duets, playing at chess, and reading books such as *The Forbidden Marriage.* Charlotte Philipps delighted in painting African wildlife with other ladies who shared the same interest.[59] The preoccupations of upper class settler women were in stark contrast with those of the working-class women such as Hannah Dennison. The latter signed on under Thomas Calton in 1819 to immigrate to the Cape. Her letters were devoid of the leisured life of wealthy families such as the Pigots and the Philipps. They rather depict her preoccupation with daily survival, the payment of her debts, her separation from her children, and an unsupportive husband.[60]

Social stratification also continued through the organization of fashionable entertainments such as horseracing. The latter took place from the early 1820s at a track established just outside Grahamstown. Lord Charles Somerset, the Governor of the Cape was fond of horses and imported several to the colony.[61] Sorcerer was "the most beautiful and valuable" horse which up to that time had been seen in the colony.[62] The races reached their climax in 1825 when the governor himself attended, bedecked in a "blue coat, sash, veil and parasol" reminding Philipps of an old lady of seventy riding in Hyde Park.[63] Such social entertainment provided a visible sign of high status and certainly meant to solidify class hierarchies.

Dress remained another visual index of social class. 1820 settlers sought to keep their appearances in accordance with metropolitan fashions. "Gentle" women such as Sophia Pigot wore very light shoes despite their unsuitability to the locale.[64] She acquired clothing through family and friends in Britain. In one occasion, the Pigot daughters received cashmere shawls, gowns, tippets, muffs and other items from their aunts. The great importance attached to appearance and elegant dresses was most evident at the leisure events. In 1826, during races at Grahamstown, gentlewomen wore handsome gowns. Miss Emma Philipps in the new shade of violet of the woods, Miss Bowker a large hat of hyacinth-green lined with black velvet.[65]

Upper and middle class settlers constantly engaged in efforts to recreate a stratified social order characterized by strict distinctions between masters and servants. They showed their high social standing in many ways: spatial segregation, exclusive festivities and social gatherings, importation of symbolic material paraphernalia, association with settlers of a similar social standing, leisure, and fashion. These were informal means designed to uphold a similar social structure to the one they left at home. Nevertheless, this stratified social order was disrupted by the behavior of the subordinate servant class.

## Precarious Class Hierarchies and the Limits of Social Control

### *A Rebellious Servant Class*

In her study of nineteenth century Melbourne, Penny Russell pointed out that servants were a powerful index of a genteel family's social status. She noted that servants "maintained by their labor, the house and furnishings which represented the gentry's wealth and taste and in their own presence they constitute a statement of their employers' means and good management."[66] John Tosh also pointed to the importance of keeping servants in nineteenth

century Britain as a badge of social status since their presence implied that the wife was relieved of domestic drudgery and could enjoy the idleness associated with their high social standing. As a result, despite its rising costs throughout the nineteenth century, servants remained a "universal middle class aspiration if not a universally accomplished fact."[67]

So unsurprisingly, wealthy 1820 settlers such as Major Pigot brought twenty servants including three maidservants.[68] Charles Dalgairns, a gentleman widower from London, took with him eleven men.[69] These large numbers of indentured servants and laborers were not only an index of social status but also a means of securing large tracts of land. Only men of sufficient means to sponsor and settle a workforce of ten or more laborers were granted land.[70] The indentured servant class was to be subservient and loyal to their masters as stipulated in their contracts. Yet the relationship between these two classes changed as soon as they reached the new settlement.

Several families complained bitterly about the behavior of their servants. Just three days after reaching the eastern Cape, Thomas Philipps quarreled with one of his maid servants, Mary Owen. She deserted him. Philipps reported that, "she was so worthless" that he did not stop her.[71] He learnt afterwards that she had found other employment. Thomas Pringle protested that servants "conducted themselves with much reprehensible idleness, improvidence and presumption."[72] Sophia Pigot also recorded her family's regular conflicts with domestic servants they brought to the Cape. An interesting case in point is the rebellious behavior of Lucy. Despite the fact that Pigot's comments on her servant are quite short, they are nevertheless very informative about the servant's behavior. Lucy was described by Pigot as "very saucy and impertinent."[73] On one occasion, she "put the silver teapot in the hot oven."[74]

Lucy became so disobedient that George Pigot rode to Grahamstown to take out summons against her.[75] She asked leave to marry an indentured servant—John Pankhurst—on 15 September 1821.[76] A few months after her marriage, Lucy gave birth to her first child, Ann. It is interesting to note that every time a baby was born to someone known by the Pigot family, Sophia and her sister would take themselves off to look at the child. Yet not one word of doing something like that with Lucy is found. As a servant and one who became pregnant on top of it, she was socially shunned by the Pigots. Lucy was not the only servant to rebel against the Pigot family. Mrs. Crowley and Mrs. Marshall went to Grahamstown without leave. On the morning of September 1821, Mrs. Marshall refused to make bread.[77] Sophia's mother and her sister Kate were compelled to make it instead.[78]

Several court cases attest to the acute tensions and conflicts between masters and servants. A court case dating to October 1820 refers to the quarrel of Mr. Sullivan with his master Mr. T. Mahoney. Sullivan wanted his pregnant wife to accompany him as his master sent him to work for Mr. Deitz. Mahoney refused Sullivan's request, as he could not afford to keep the laborer's wife without receiving her labor. The quarrel ended in physical and verbal violence. The master hit his laborer with a plough and called him a "baboon" and his wife "a bitch damned whore," a "big arsed bitch" and "told the Khoi soldier to take her into the woods where she not be heard."[79] These words reflect that masters "borrowed and adapted from discourses in Britain about the poor and working classes."[80] As already pointed out, the 1820 settlers brought their class prejudices much influenced by the discourse of idleness that originated in sixteenth century Britain.[81] It comes as no surprise, therefore, that pejorative descriptions of indentured servants were similar to those used to complain about African labor.[82]

Upper and middle class settlers blamed servants for their idleness and bad character. However, *The Chronicle of Jeremiah Goldswain* offers a rare look from an indentured laborer's point of view at the master-servant relationship. *The Chronicle* is an account of the years of settlement from 1819 to 1858. Its poor spelling and punctuation are quite revealing of Goldswain's working class background. Goldswain was an out of work sawyer aged seventeen when he joined the crowd of people attending a promotional meeting at the Greyhound Inn in Great Marlow. William Wait, a wine merchant from London, did his best to attract people to his indentured labor scheme. Those who signed up, he claimed, would be granted free passage and provisions, half an acre of land, and a generous allowance of wheat. They would work for only eight hours a day and at the end of six years could receive their freedom. Mr. Wait stressed that it would be their mistake if they did not make a little fortune in a very short time.[83]

Despite the objection of his parents, Goldswain was lured by what he saw as a bright prospect. Goldswain's conflict with his master arose as soon as they reached Algoa Bay. While a comfortable home was being built for Wait and his wife, Wait treated his indentured laborers badly. He withheld their wages and gave them less than the bare minimum of food:

> And when we saw Mr. and Mrs. Wait comfortably situated in their new house and everything was planted we now thought it quite time to ask for something for ourselves as we were gitting nothing more than three quarters of a pound of meal.. and two pounds of very poor meat… we asked our master if he could not pay us our wages or sum part of what was coming to us,…he informed us that he was not able to pay us any part of it…we then said would he Give us our discharge: he positively declared he would not: then we asked him if he would give us more food as the rations was not sufficient for us to live on and to work so hard as we had done and more so regarding those men that had wives and children for the children were crien for vittles. At this time his answer was: I cannot for the government do not low any more.[84]

As a result, Goldswain and his fellow mates decided to take action against Wait. They brought their complaints before Captain Trappes of the Seventy-second Regiment.[85] Mr. Wait was invited to discuss his men's grievances. He promised to give them their due rations and wages.

After just fourteen days, Wait did not live up to his promises. Wait's six laboring women, except one who stayed to look after the children, presented themselves before Mr. Somerset. They complained that their children "were crying for bread and that the men could not get their wages or some compensation for their labor."[86] Mr. Somerset gave these women ten rix dollars each to buy food for their children and sent a constable with a summons for Mr. Wait. After a long struggle, Goldswain and his mates won their case and were freed from their indentures.[87] Such accounts detail masters breaking their agreements, an aspect glossed over in upper and middle class narratives.

Servant resistance to the impositions of class hierarchies was also spurred by opportunities they found in the new settlement. The eastern Cape faced an acute shortage of labor. Indentured laborers and servants thus quickly became unwilling to work under the conditions stipulated by the contracts made in England. They deserted their masters and sought better wages. Within a few days of reaching their location, all Thomas Philipps men "mutinied and struck."[88] They demanded the payment of their wages from the day they were hired.[89] In July 1821, Philipps allowed his men to go out to work as they were able to earn

high wages in the town of Bathurst. Masons and carpenters earned 5 to 10 shillings a day and laborers three shillings a day.[90] Thanks to these increasing wages, some were eventually able to prosper. James Cawood, who arrived as an indentured servant, prospered through trade and farming.[91] By September 1825, even female servants could earn £6 a year plus rations.[92]

The rebellious behavior of servants presented as a serious threat to the class hierarchies upon which the settlement was founded. Commenting on the aftermath of the 1820 settlement, Thomas Pringle remarked: "the pyramid of civil society is…turned topsy-turvy, the classes who once occupied the upper grades… must necessarily sink… and will ere long… be degraded into the servants and dependents of the more fortunate mechanics and mendicants who came out under them."[93] Describing the behavior of indentured servants, one settler complained to Earl Bathurst that "combination and mutiny have changed the face of servitude, they have broken the bonds of indenture, servants have become bold plunderers! And masters have become mere slaves."[94]

Anxieties about the vulnerability of class hierarchies were intensely fed by the deteriorating material status of many upper and middle class settlers. Pringle offers a vivid account of the decline of some members of the so-called '1820 Albany gentry' who initially led the settlement. For example, he described the destitution of "Mr……." formerly a "merchant of some eminence and good manners." The merchant had been a regular guest in Thomas Philipps's home. He stopped these visits due to his deteriorating material status. He could no longer afford to wear the elegant clothing necessary for social calls. Philipps sent his son to search for the man. He was found living with a wife and three children in a hut composed of a thatched roof merely placed on the ground without walls.[95] Moreover, the merchant's wife gave birth to a child without medical or even female aid. She was in need of the bare necessities of life. Pringle recorded that many middle and upper class were in a state of utter poverty. They were without sufficient food or decent clothing. They were without shoes or stocking, ploughing with their milk cows and their daughters washing clothing and digging potatoes.[96]

While Pringle's account is exaggerated, there were indications that many 1820 settlers strove striving to maintain the decent lifestyle to which they were accustomed in Britain. The final entries of Sophia's journal reflect decline in the family's lifestyle. By December 1821, their home was still incomplete and the family was compelled to live in the leaky temporary wooden structure.[97] They were running short of food and had started on their last cask of flour. Sophia complained that she was "obliged to lay aside the accomplishments of the Drawing room, for these of the Kitchen and farm yard."[98] Amid these hard conditions, Sophia Pigot expressed a yearning for home as she immersed herself in music, literature, card games, and the social visits of families of a similar social background. That a considerable number of high-ranking settlers faced great privation in the early decades of the settlement was a serious threat to social hierarchies. As a result, upper and middle class settlers sought to buttress their status by adopting formal measures of social control.

*Formal Social Control and its Limits*

The vulnerability of class hierarchies was a source of deep anxieties for the higher echelons of society and colonial authorities. Wealthy settlers campaigned for punitive legal measures in order to gain greater control over their servants. As a result, a number of proclamations were issued in order to preserve social hierarchies, order, and peace. A proclamation on 15 September 1820 provided a court for petty cases at Grahamstown. Captain Trappes of the

Seventy-second Regiment was appointed as a provisional magistrate of Bathurst. Trappes' main duty was to settle disputes arising between masters and servants. Major George Pigot and Captain Duncan Campbell, two gentry settlers, were also appointed as *heemraad* (local judicial official) in Grahamstown. Thomas Philipps was a special *heemraad* for Bathurst.[99] There was no salary attached to these posts but they were considered as "gratifying" and "expressive of the governor's confidence in their ability and character" and would certainly pave the way for a higher office.[100]

Nevertheless, upper and middle class settlers often criticized magistrates for failing to support them in their disputes with recalcitrant servants. They complained that servants were "refractory and disobedient. Their labor was withheld, or ill-performed, and in place of correcting the evil and giving redress where redress was due, the local magistracy aggravated the evil, by cancelling articles, and setting aside engagement upon slight grounds."[101] Thomas Philipps commented also on the failure of the court at Grahamstown in settling disputes between masters and servants. He protested that "people were going home in disgust, their parties broke up and servants dismissed by [the magistrate's] hasty manner of deciding."[102] These complaints about magistrates overshadow the fact that many contracts were often couched in vague, ambiguous wordings and so could not be enforced legally. Not to mention that many masters violated their agreements.[103]

Even the selection of magistrates, who were expected to restore order and social harmony to the settlement, could create tensions. Thomas Philipps harbored strong resentment towards Captain Trappes and sought to take his post. He wrote to his sister in England:

> Use all your influence to get the seventy second Regt. removed, when perhaps Captain Trappes will be obliged to leave also and the fine government house he is now building at Bathurst for me to finish and inhabit. My acquaintance here are fully satisfied I shall succeed [to Captain Trappes' position] but I dread the arrival of Lord Charles Somerset, he is so fond of the army that he will put another military man in.[104]

Matters reached a climax when Philipps and some other settlers, following rumors of Trappes' promotion to the post of chief magistrate of Albany, signed a petition to the governor that attacked, although indirectly, the conduct of Trappes. Trappes was perplexed and outraged by the petition and wrote to Governor Donkin, "some designing person had been endeavoring to lead the minds of many of the settlers into error."[105] Certainly, these intense disagreements question the magistrate's role in settling disputes and keeping social order.

In addition to these formal measures and regulations, the imprisonment of rebellious servants was a common form of punishment. The 'tronk' or 'trunk' (prison), was used to lock up servants.[106] On one occasion, George Pigot rode after Mrs. Marshall, one of his domestic servants, to put her in the tronk but she ran away.[107] Nonetheless, these formal measures did not solve the problem and labor shortage continued to be a major problem. White indentured labor waned gradually and reliance on the employment of indigenous labor became increasingly common. Several 1820 settlers hired Khoikhoi servants. In 1825, Mrs. Philipps wrote:

> Our servants consist chiefly of Hottentots. The latter all live in a straw hut erected by themselves at a little distance but concealed from the house. For one family consisting of father, mother and three girls we pay 10 rix dollars and a

> month and feed them, they only require meat and milk and now and then a pumpkin or a little rice.[108]

In the same year, the wife John Ross had two African maidservants under her service. The older one made candles, salted meat, churned bake bread, cooked, knitted stockings and darned them well.[109] While Mrs. Philipps and Mrs. Ross were satisfied with the service of their African servants, they still preferred English ones. In 1833, the *Grahamstown Journal* described "the scarcity of labor" as "the cause of all our troubles." Yet "Kaffirs are not to be trusted as servants in the colony.[110] As a result, in 1840, there were growing calls for European immigration. According to John Chase, Cape Town needed 5000 laborers. There was a strong demand for agricultural laborers but "among the female immigrants a small number of governesses well qualified, neither extravagant in their demands, nor with too high flour notions of their importance and a large proportion of dairy and house servants would be highly acceptable."[111] Following such calls, the emigration of domestic workers from Britain and Europe became particularly popular in the 1840s.[112] These new arrivals were free and worked for wages.[113] Evidently, the reliance on indigenous labor was against the settlers' initial expectations of an obedient servant class. It displays also the limits of informal and formal measures of social control in enforcing the master-servant relationship.

**Conclusion**

Class hierarchies were precarious in the 1820 settlement, envisioned as a stratified social order characterized by strict divisions between upper and middle class settlers and a subordinate loyal servant class. Masters sought to keep their status unchallenged through various informal measures that were symbolic of their high social standing. Maintaining different spatial arrangements and exclusive social gatherings were significant in maintaining the established social order. These class hierarchies were, nevertheless, constantly subverted by a mutinous servant class. Desertion and breach of contracts were common. The presumed God-ordained relationship of master and servant was, therefore, jeopardized in the settlement.

This was the product of servants' aspirations for social advancement a ruling class who did not live up to their promises. Settler elites and colonial authorities countered with formal strategies to control disorder. The establishment of courts, appointment of magistrates, and imprisonment of recalcitrant servants represent some of the legal structures meant to maintain order and regulate labor relations. These attempts at social control did not yield the desired results. The shortage of labor continued to be endemic. Wealthy 1820 settlers were therefore compelled to rely on indigenous labor. This certainly reveals the limits and fragility of the settlement. It also questions the celebratory accounts of early South African settler history that emphasized inter-settler harmony and sheds light on another side of the 1820 settlement that has been largely neglected.

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**Notes**

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1 Peires 2014, p. 474.
2 Silva 1992, p. 6.
3 Silva 1992, p. 6.
4 William Burchell is a well-known explorer, naturalist and traveler. He travelled throughout South Africa and collected specimens of animals and plants. His book *Travels in the Interior of Southern Africa* contains a detailed description of his journey. See: http://www.sahistory.org.za/dated-event/william-j-burchell-71-botanist-and-explorer-south-african-interior-dies
5 Peires 2014, p. 474.
6 Tosh 2017, p. 481.
7 Bryer and Hunt 1984, p. 25.
8 Bryer and Hunt 1984, p. 25.

9 Bryer and Hunt 1984, p. 25.
10 Bryer and Hunt 1984, p. 25.
11 Vernal 2012, p. 54.
12 Tosh 2017, p. 480.
13 Bank 1999, p. 465.
14 Bank 1999, p. 465.
15 Smith 1988, p. 44.
16 Smith 1988, p. 44.
17 Smith 1988, p. 44.
18 Cory 1965, p. 76.
19 Cory 1965, pp. 76, 515.
20 Tosh 2017, p. 489.
21 Van Vugt, and Cloete 2000, p. 23-24.
22 Ross, R. 1999, p. 61.
23 Ross, R. 1999, p. 61.
24 Nash 1981, p. 56.
25 Ross, E. 1896, p. 519.
26 Ross, E. 1901, p. 106.
27 Donajgrodzki 1977, p. 9.
28 Mugubane 2009, p. 127.
29 Nash 1981, p. 56.
30 Goldswain 2014, p. 48.
31 Goldswain 2014, p. 48.
32 Goldswain 2014, p. 48.
33 Goldswain 2014, p. 49.
34 Jones 1960, p. 22.
35 Jones 1960, p. 21.
36 Jones 1960, p. 27.
37 Rainier 1974, p. 135.
38 Rainier 1974, p. 135.
39 Rainier 1974, pp. 41- 53.
40 Rainier 1974, pp. 41- 53.
41 Goldswain 2014, p. 41.
42 Goldswain 2014, p. 41.
43 Cock 1980, p. 133.
44 Pringle 1824, p. 12.
45 Pringle 1824, p. 12.
46 Pringle 1824, p. 12.
47 Rainier 1974, p. 25.
48 Rainier 1974, p. 56.
49 Rainier 1974, pp. 50, 60-61.
50 Vauxhall was a famous pleasure garden in London from the mid 17th century to the mid 19th century. Keppel-Jones 1960, p. 166.
51 Keppel-Jones 1960, p. 303.
52 Keppel-Jones 1960, p. 129.
53 Rainier 1974, pp. 135-36.

54 McQueen 1970, p. 111.
55 Burgan 1986, p. 51.
56 A professional piano tuner who came out as an 1820 settler. Rainier 1974, p. 79.
57 Rainier 1974, p. 21.
58 Keppel-Jones 1960, p. 86.
59 Keppel-Jones 1960, p. 167.
60 Edgecombe 1968, pp. 131-32.
61 Cory 1965, p. 302.
62 Cory 1965, p. 302.
63 Keppel-Jones 1960, p. 226.
64 Rainier 1974, p. 105.
65 Rainier 1974, p. 95.
66 Russell 1994, p. 167.
67 Thompson 1988, p. 61.
68 King 2005. http://www.eggsa.org/1820-settlers/index.php/lists-of-settlers/doc_download/2-excel-sheet-of-1820-settler-data.
69 King 2005. http://www.eggsa.org/1820-settlers/index.php/lists-of-settlers/doc_download/2-excel-sheet-of-1820-settler-data.
70 Nash 1981, p. 2.
71 Keppel-Jones 1960, p. 54.
72 Pringle 1824, p. 33.
73 Rainier 1974, pp. 83-88.
74 Rainier 1974, p. 83.
75 Rainier 1974, p. 88.
76 Rainier 1974, p. 89.
77 Rainier 1974, p. 88.
78 Rainier 1974, p. 88.
79 *Cape Archives* C.O 2692.
80 Magubane 2009, p. 127.
81 Magubane 2009, p. 127.
82 Magubane 2009, p. 127.
83 Goldswain 2014, p. 36.
84 Goldswain 2014, p. 23.
85 Goldswain 2014, p. 55.
86 Goldswain 2014, p. 55.
87 Goldswain 2014, p. 61.
88 Keppel-Jones 1960, p. 54.
89 Keppel-Jones 1960, p. 54.
90 Keppel-Jones 1960, p. 54.
91 Le Cordeur 1960, p. 15.
92 Morse-Jones 1968, p. 96.
93 Butler1974, pp. 175-76.
94 Theal 1902, p. 212.
95 Keppel-Jones 1960, p. 80.
96 Keppel-Jones 1960, p. 105-06.
97 Rainier 1974, p. 93.
98 Rainier 1974, p. 93.

99 Keppel-Jones 1960, p. 83.
100 Keppel-Jones 1960, p. 72.
101 Bird 1823, p. 376.
102 Keppel-Jones 1960, p. 89.
103 Donkin 1970, p. 75.
104 Keppel-Jones 1960, p. 72.
105 Nash 1981, p. 89.
106 Rainier 1974, p. 146.
107 Rainier 1974, p. 162.
108 Keppel-Jones 1960, p. 248.
109 Walker 1990, p. 80.
110 *Graham's Town Journal,* 14 February 1833.
111 Chase 1843, p. 250.
112 Cock 1980, p. 133.
113 Swaisland 1993, p. 73.