

African reaction to white penetration: The Hananwa of Blouberg, ca. 1886-1894

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By the early 1870's the Government of the Transvaal also known as the *Zuid-Afrikaansche Republic (ZAR)* had become relatively successful in administering and controlling the African communities in the central regions of their Republic.¹ Although the legislation through which this was achieved applied to all Africans within the boundaries of the Transvaal State, several communities in the northern Soutpansberg Region hardly felt the effect of its enforcement until the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Among them were the subjects of Modjadji, Makgoba, Maupa and Tsolobolo on the North-Eastern Escarpment, the Hananwa of Blouberg and the Venda in the vicinity of the Soutpansberg itself. It seems therefore that communities closer to Pretoria succumbed to the pressures of subjugation sooner than communities further away from the seat of the Central Government, in areas not so densely populated by whites. As soon as the number of white inhabitants in the Soutpansberg Region started to increase, they too implored the central Government to take measures regarding the subservience of the Africans - exactly as the white settlers in the more densely populated Pretoria and Rustenburg Regions had done a few decades earlier. One major difference was that the increase in the white population of the Soutpansberg Region from the late 1880's was arranged by the Central Government itself as part of an active policy to

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establish firm control over the last region in its Republic where African chiefs still ruled their polities as virtual independent states. These chiefs were not prepared to voluntarily relinquish their *de facto* sovereignty by welcoming the newcomers on their doorstep. Nor were they willing to move to demarcated reserves and faithfully start paying taxes merely because the local Boer officials insisted upon it. In the 1890's the Pretoria Government eventually resorted to military force to coerce these communities into accepting its supremacy.

The focus of this article will be on one of these African communities of the Soutpansberg District, the Hananwa of Blouberg. Their reaction to the Pretoria Government's measures to turn them into Boer subjects through the appropriation of their land, labour and taxes, will be considered and compared with the reaction of the Africans in the central parts of the Transvaal almost a decade and a half previously. Chief Kgalusi Mmalebôhô had ascended to power over the majority of Africans in the Blouberg Region as early as 1879. This included not only his own Hananwa subjects, but also Tlokwa and Birwa communities. At about that time a smaller faction of the Hananwa under Mmalebôhô's half-brother Ramatho (Kibi) broke their allegiance to the main community. The two factions remained at loggerheads throughout the remaining days of the ZAR's existence.²

Hananwa reaction to white interference in their polity during the late 1880's and the 1890's has to be examined in terms of the ZAR policy embarked upon in 1886 to subjugate the Soutpansberg Region as a whole. Subjugating the Hananwa was not an end in itself, but one of the stepping-stones towards Boer supremacy over the greater region.³ Although the Government's overall purpose with the region was uniform, the particular circumstances within each community, whether pertaining to its geographical position or the personalities of the main characters, produced specific differences in the way each community responded. To mention one example: The communities on the North-Eastern Escarpment (the

2. For different explanations of the rift between Mmalebôhô and Kibi, see T.J. MAKHURA, *The Bagananwa polity in the north-western Transvaal and the South African Republic, c. 1836-1896*, (MA, UNW, 1993), pp. 114-116; J.A. VAN SCHALKWYK, *Ideologie en die konstruksie van 'n landelike samelewing: 'n Antropologiese studie van die Hananwa van Blouberg*, (D. Litt. et Phil., Unisa, 1995), pp. 70.

3. J.W.N. TEMPELHOFF, *Die okkupasiestelsel in die distrik Soutpansberg*, *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedenis* 60, 1997 (Government Printer, Pretoria, 1997), pp. 17-20.

Lobedu of Modjadji, among others) felt the encroachment of white farmers on their land much more severely than the Hananwa further towards the north-west.⁴ Despite differences like these, the demands made by the Government on the communities of the North-Eastern Escarpment and the Blouberg-Soutpansberg Belt were similar to the extent that, at least in broad terms, the reactions of these communities to white demands can be categorised as typical for the region under discussion. I will therefore concentrate on a comparison between the Hananwa and the African communities of Pretoria and Rustenberg with reference to the other northern communities where applicable.

As far as African land was concerned, the Central Government launched several drives in the Soutpansberg Region during the 1880's. The demarcation of reserves for all the large African communities (by the Location Commission appointed in 1881) went hand in hand with the passing of the Occupation Act in 1886, according to which land in the Soutpansberg District was made available free of charge to white aspirant farmers who could prove that they would physically occupy the farms. The Squatter Law of 1887 determined that no more than five African households would be allowed per farm outside the reserves. Still remembering their humiliating retreat from Schoemansdal in 1867 under Venda menace,⁵ the Boers realised that a more densely white populated region, achieved by restricting the Africans to reserves and relying on the population of white farmers to enforce this restriction, would be the most effective means of controlling the African communities. Collecting the African communities in reserves, would also enable the local Boer officials to collect taxes more effectively and place the whites in a position to procure African labour more easily.⁶

Appropriating African land in favour of white settlers was a key component of Boer policy for the Soutpansberg Region in the 1880's, but it was not the central issue in the mounting tension between Mmalebôh's Hananwa and the whites. In this respect Mmalebôh's situation was

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 257, 261. Also see J.S. BERGH (Ed.), *Geskiedenisatlas van Suid-Afrika – die vier noordelike provinsies* (JL van Schaik, Pretoria, 1999), pp. 201-213.

5. R. WAGNER, Zoutpansberg: the dynamics of a hunting frontier, in S. Marks & A. Atmore, *Economy and society in pre-industrial South Africa* (Longmans, London, 1980), pp. 313-349.

6. J.S. BERGH (Ed.), *Geskiedenisatlas van Suid-Afrika – die vier noordelike provinsies*, pp. 214-216; J.W.N. TEMPELHOFF, Die okkupasiestelsel in die distrik Soutpansberg, *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedenis* 60, 1997, pp. 241-242; 17-19.

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remarkably different from the communities on the North-Eastern Escarpment, where Africans experienced gross encroachment on their land and it became a matter of urgency for the Government to confine them to smaller reserves. Only the peripheries of Mmalebôhô's domain were invaded by white occupant farmers.⁷ Unlike on the North-Eastern Escarpment, the Hananwa were no direct threat to white settlers in the Soutpansberg and they themselves were not directly threatened either.⁸

On the occasions when the local commandant and commissioner, Barend Vorster, visited the Hananwa, they were informed of the Transvaal Government's intention to undertake a census of the community and eventually remove them from their mountain stronghold to a reserve.⁹ This was, however, not such an urgent concern for Vorster or the small white population in the Blouberg vicinity. If the Hananwa were to be forced off their land, it would not primarily be to make room for more white farms, but to dislodge them from their strategically "untouchable" position from where they had literally felt that governmental demands could not affect them. It rather seems that Mmalebôhô exploited the remoteness of his lands and the inaccessibility of his stronghold to evade paying taxes - *the* one resource of the Hananwa the local representative of the Government was very much interested in at that stage. From the successive ultimatums the Boers sent Mmalebôhô from April to June 1894,¹⁰ it seems that the Government only resorted to demanding Mmalebôhô's land when realising that it would be the only way of forcing him into a position of subservience where he would no longer be able to refuse payment of taxes. The tax issue will subsequently be discussed in more detail.

The confidence with which Mmalebôhô controlled his people's land and used his geographical position to confirm his sovereignty, stands in sharp contrast to the African communities in the Pretoria and Rustenburg Regions. Anthony Vlotman, one of Commissioner Vorster's aides, recalled

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7. T.J. MAKHURA, *The Bagananwa polity in the north-western Transvaal and the South African Republic, c. 1836-1896*, pp. 142 & 147.
 8. J.W.N. TEMPELHOFF, *Die okkupasiestelsel in die distrik Soutpansberg, Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedenis* 60, 1997, p. 261.
 9. T.J. MAKHURA, *The Bagananwa polity in the north-western Transvaal and the South African Republic, c. 1836-1896*, p. 143; TA, SS. R. 4678/88, SR. 379/88: Vorster - Superintendent van Naturellen, 1888-05-14.
 10. CENTRAL ARCHIVES REPOSITORY, PRETORIA. *Transvaal Archives (Forthwith TA)*. SS. 4413, R. 8813/94, pp. 69 & 79-85: *Ultimatum of laatste waarschuwing aan kapitein Malebock en zijn volk, 1894-04-27; P. Joubert - B.J. Vorster, 1894-05-07.*

that when they visited Mmalebôhò in 1890 to urge him to pay taxes, he replied as follows:

I am baas upon this mountain and will not allow the census to be taken.¹¹

Whether the chief had actually uttered the words or whether it was added to the narrative in Vlotman's imagination, it still serves to illustrate that the Boers knew that they were not in control of Blouberg yet. Whereas communities closer to Pretoria, like the Kgafêla Kgatla and the Motsha Kgatla, had to rely on the goodwill of missionaries to buy land for them on their behalf, Mmalebôhò was so confident of his domination of the area that the Berlin missionaries stationed at the foot of his stronghold could not even have dared to remind him that their Society owned the farm the Blaiberg Station was built on. This was one of the reasons why missionary C.H.C. Stech was made to leave the Blouberg area in 1892.¹² His successor, Christoph Sonntag, clearly understood Mmalebôhò's message:

Whilst the land on which the station stood did legally belong to the Mission Society, it would be unwise to mention this fact. To insist on our right of ownership would lead us nowhere.¹³

Ironically, after the Boers had defeated the Hananwa in the military campaign of 1894, Mmalebôhò's followers did not move to the reserve earmarked for them. Almost five hundred of them, including the members of the Royal Family who took over the reign during Mmalebôhò's imprisonment in Pretoria, found refuge at Sonntag's, at the very mission station Stech had been expelled from.¹⁴ The War of 1894 was not successful in expelling the Hananwa from their strategic stronghold. During the twentieth century the royal *mosada* was rebuilt on the

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11. As quoted in C. RAE, *Malaboch* (Pretoria, 1898), p. xviii. Vlotman was mistaken with the date, the meeting did not take place in 1891, but on 19 December 1890. See TA, SS. 4140, R. 17552/90, pp. 77-80; B.J. Vorster - Supt. van Naturellen, 1890-12-19.
 12. T.J. MAKHURA, *The Bagananwa polity in the north-western Transvaal and the South African Republic, c. 1836-1896*, pp. 145-146; L. ZÖLLNER and H. HEESE, *The Berlin missionaries in South Africa and their descendants* (Pretoria, 1984), p. 442; TA, A. 1281, Sendeling Christoph Sonntag, 1886-1895, pp. 449-450. For an English translation of the diary, see: C. SONNTAG (Ed. K. SONNTAG), *My friend Maleboch, chief of the Blue Mountains* (Pretoria, 1983), pp. 1-2.
 13. C. SONNTAG (Ed. K. SONNTAG), *My friend Maleboch, chief of the Blue Mountains*, p. 2. See the original German inscription: TA, A. 1281, Sendeling Christoph Sonntag, 1886-1895, p. 449: "Obgleich der Platz auf dem die Station steht der Gesellschaft gehört, so darf man davon nichts verlauten lassen, sondern mit Güte beginnen. Was würde das helfen, auf unser Besitzrecht zu pochen?"
 14. TA, SS. 4681, R. 1581/95: Ch Sonntag Zendeling te Blauwberg schrijft een antwoord of BB10/1/95 re toestand van die Kaffers aldaar, 1895-01-26; SS. 4403, R. 8527/94, SR. 60/95: p. 106: C. Sonntag - B.J. Vorster, 1895-03-05.

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mountain. Only in 1980 did Colin Lebogo become the first chief to move his household to the foot of the mountain.¹⁵ The land allocated to the Hananwa and bought up by them in terms of the 1913 and 1936 land legislation, today includes the old mountain stronghold as well as the reserve initially demarcated for them by the Boers in 1888.¹⁶

As in the case with land, labour was not a major bone of contention between the Hananwa and the whites in the Soutpansberg Region. Also in this respect the Hananwa should be distinguished from other Soutpansberg Africans who were in closer proximity to the concentration of white-occupied farms. Similarly to the white farmers in the Pretoria and Rustenburg Districts in the 1870's, these occupant farmers who had moved to the Soutpansberg District after 1886, desperately required farm labourers, but they looked towards the communities in their immediate vicinity to provide in that need. The labour squabbles on the North-Eastern Escarpment involving the subjects of Modjadji, Makgoba and others, should not be confused with the situation in the Blouberg vicinity.

If Vorster can be believed, it seems as if amicable, voluntary labour arrangements between the Hananwa and whites date back to at least the 1850's and 1860's, when pioneers like Vorster himself regularly went on hunting expeditions in and around the Blouberg.¹⁷ Even when the economic emphasis started shifting away from hunting from the late 1860's,¹⁸ the number of white farmers looking towards Blouberg to fulfil their labour needs, did not seem to have caused Mmalebôhô alarm. In his letters to the Central Government written in January to March 1894, Commissioner Vorster confirmed that he had no trouble in procuring sufficient labourers for the white farming population under his jurisdiction. He did not even mention the Hananwa as a potential labour force:

As soon as any requests for labourers are received, I send some of the young men living outside Moletse's location to serve the burghers for a reasonable loan. Up to this stage I have succeeded in this very well, and

15. J.A. VAN SCHALKWYK, *Ideologie en die konstruksie van 'n landelike samelewing: 'n Antropologiese studie van die Hananwa van Blouberg*, p. 128.

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 159-165.

17. TA, W. 126, p. 46: Herinneringsboek van Barend Jacobus Vorster, 1913-08-20.

18. R. WAGNER, *Zoutpansberg: the dynamics of a hunting frontier...*, p. 334; J.W.N. TEMPELHOFF, *Die okkupasiestelsel in die distrik Soutpansberg*, *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedenis* 60, 1997, pp. 10-12.

general satisfaction prevails among the burghers in this regard.¹⁹

Vorster even went so far as letting the Central Government know that it would be impossible for him to implement the Squatter Act of 1887 in the area under his jurisdiction, which included Blouberg. This law, which was supposed to make more African labour available to white farmers by allowing only five black households on each farm and thereby distributing the labourers more evenly, was obviously designed for areas with a denser white farming population than around Blouberg. Vorster felt that he could not alienate the few Africans under his jurisdiction who were willing to pay taxes because they trespassed a law that served no purpose in the area.²⁰

From the previous paragraph it seems that a need for farm labourers could not have been a reason for the outbreak of the war between the ZAR and the Hananwa in 1894. It did, however, become a curious by-product of this war. After the Boer commandos had defeated the Hananwa, an unfortunate number of captives (women and children) were indentured to burghers who had served in the campaign but were actually farming in other districts, such as Rustenburg and Pretoria, where a need for African labour did exist.²¹

The Hananwa may not have been involved in farm labour on a significant

19. Free translation. TA, SN. 25, SR. 549/94: Nat. Koms. Kalkbank - Supt. v. Naturellen, 1894-03-15: "Zoodra eene aanvraag om werksvolk voorkomt zend ik van het jonge volk die buiten de locatie van Moletse woenen uit om bij de burgers dienst te doen tegen eene billijke belooning. Ik ben hierin tot nog toe zeer goed geslaagd, en heerscht er algemeene tevredeheid onder de burgers hierover."

The reserve of the Moletše-Kwêna was approximately 60km south of Blouberg and north-west of Pietersburg. See J.S. BERGH (Ed.), J.S. BERGH (Ed.), *Geskiedenisatlas van Suid-Afrika – die vier noordelike provinsies*, pp. 40 & 107.

Also see TA, SS. 4209, R. 3863, SR. 133/94: Nat. Koms. Kalkbank - Supt. v. Naturellen, 1894-01-15.

20. TA, SN. 25, SR. 549/94: Nat. Koms. Kalkbank - Supt. v. Naturellen, 1894-03-15: "...zodra de plakkerswet gehandhaafd wordt, zullen de naturellen die onder de wet zijn naar de wettelooze en vyandige Kaffers gedienend worden, en verliest de Gouvernement de belastinggelden en wordt den vijand daardoor versterkt."

Also see J.W.N. TEMPELHOFF, *Die okkupasiestelsel in die distrik Soutpansberg, Argiejaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedenis* 60, 1997, p. 250.

21. TA, SS. 4700, R. 2004/95: Verslag of algemeen overzicht van den Commandant-Generaal van den gevoerden krijg tegen de oproerige Kafferstammen van Malaboeh (te Blauwberg), Seleboel, Magoeba, Mahoepa en anderen, wonende in de Lage Velden van het district Zoutpansberg, pp. 8-9, 1894-10-24.

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scale, but already since the development of the diamond industry in Kimberly in the late 1860's, they had engaged in migrant labour. From the 1880's onwards, the Johannesburg gold mining industry attracted an ever increasing number of Hananwa migrant labourers. Mining labour ensured financial profit for individual as well as communal benefit.²² Unlike in the central districts of the Transvaal, where mining companies were in serious competition with the farmers to recruit African labourers, the mining agents in the Hananwa domain did not experience such opposition and they could approach the various chiefs and sub-chiefs directly to make labour arrangements. This may explain why mining agents visited the Hananwa domain so frequently during the 1890's.²³ It also explains why the press, representing urban white interests, welcomed the campaign against the Hananwa in 1894. A victory over Mmalebôhô would eliminate the Chief as "gatekeeper" when procuring mine labourers. The argument was that, as soon as the Hananwa were subjugated, they would also be forced to pay taxes, which by implication, would compel them to work in order to have something to pay with.²⁴

Up to the time of their military subjugation in 1894, the Hananwa experienced relatively little coercion to sell their labour to outsiders.²⁵ Those who participated in migrant labour, did so to the advantage of the polity itself. Since the Transvaal Government had neither the method nor the manpower to force them to pay some of this income as taxes, the Hananwa could not see any reason why they should have handed it over voluntarily. They rather used these funds to buy fire-arms and strengthen their position against the Transvaal Government even further.²⁶

Apart from generating a state income, another reason for the implementation of the 1866 and 1870 laws exacting tax payment by

22. T.J. MAKHURA, *The Bagananwa polity in the north-western Transvaal and the South African Republic, c. 1836-1896*, pp. 92, 120 & 148.

23. T.J. MAKHURA, *The Bagananwa polity in the north-western Transvaal and the South African Republic, c. 1836-1896*, p. 148.

24. Editorial in *The Press*, 1894-05-28; 1894-06-11.

25. Makhura emphasises the role of missionaries in promoting the "dignity" of wage labour, but also provides evidence which makes it questionable whether the missionary message could have had such a notable impact in the particular case of the Hananwa. See T.J. MAKHURA, *The Bagananwa polity in the north-western Transvaal and the South African Republic, c. 1836-1896*, pp. 101-102 & 119.

26. T.J. MAKHURA, *The Bagananwa polity in the north-western Transvaal and the South African Republic, c. 1836-1896*, p. 122.

Africans, was to make them liable to service for the whites.²⁷ Although there were no significant party of white occupants in the Blouberg Region eager to procure the services of the Hananwa, their resistance to the incessant tax collecting endeavours of Commissioner Barend Vorster, was cited by the Commandant General as the main reason why the Transvaal declared war against the Hananwa of Mmalebôh in 1894.²⁸ Does this imply that the loss in tax revenue caused by the defiant stance of an African community seemed significant enough for the Transvaal Government to wage a war over? Vorster told the Central Government early in 1894 that forfeited Hananwa taxes amounted to a loss of six thousand pounds a year²⁹ (at that time roughly the price of six farms). Moreover, Barend Vorster's reports on his fruitless tax collecting expeditions portrayed the Hananwa as defiant, recalcitrant and dangerous,³⁰ while the profile the Transvaal Government expected from an African community in the Transvaal by the mid-1890's, was one of obedience and subservience. The ZAR was as eager as the Hananwa to assert its sovereignty. Unlike the Hananwa, which was a regional power, the ZAR Government could draw upon the support of commandos consisting of white burghers and loyal African subjects from numerous districts already

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27. Act no. 9, 1870 as published in F. JEPPE (compiler), *Locale wetten en Volksraadsbesluiten der Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek*, (Pretoria, 1887), pp. 378-383. Also see J.S. BERGH (Ed.), J.S. BERGH (Ed.), *Geskiedenisatlas van Suid-Afrika – die vier noordelike provinsies*, pp. 170-174 for a discussion of the successive laws passed in this regard. Act no. 9 of 1870 was repealed by Act no. 4 of 1885 (To provide for the better government and better administration of justice among the native population of this republic), published in C. JEPPE and J.H. GEY VAN PITTIUS (Eds.), *Statute Law of the Transvaal 1839-1910 (in force on 31st May, 1910) I* (Pretoria, 1910), pp. 136-139. The taxation of Africans does not feature in the Act of 1885, as Act no.6 of 1880 had in the meantime made provision for regulations in this regard (published in F. JEPPE (compiler), *Locale wetten... 1849-1885...*, pp. 748-751).
28. TA, SS. 4700, R. 2004/95: Verslag of algemeen overzicht van den Commandant-Generaal..., pp. 1-2, 1894-10-24; TA, SS. 4413, R. 8813/94, pp. 69 & 79-85: Ultimatum of laatste waarschuwing aan kapitein Malebock en zijn volk. 1894-04-27.
29. TA, SS. 4209, R. 3863, SR. 133/94: Nat. Koms. Kalkbank - Supt. v. Naturellen, 1894-01-15.
30. T.A: SS. 4413, R. 8813/94, CR. 4823/94: Commdt. Generaal zendt in rapport onderzoek toestand naturellen Zpberg, 1894-05-10, pp. 78-80.

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under its control.³¹

Barend Vorster's role, as a local government official, in drawing the attention of the Central Government to an African community whose biggest offence was tax evasion (and encouraging other African communities to follow suit) is extraordinary. His dogged persistence in tax collecting could have been seen as a remarkable sense of duty had it not been for the fact that five percent of everything he collected, went into his own pocket.³² In this respect, Vorster resembles Abel Erasmus, who was Native Commissioner of the Eastern Transvaal District, Lydenburg, from 1881 to 1900. In his study of Erasmus, Peter Delius explained that the lack of effective monitoring of the activities of Native Commissioners enabled these individuals and their aides to enrich themselves in various clandestine ways.³³ Vorster was suspected of at least one practice Erasmus also engaged in: estimating the value of cattle much lower than the market price when collecting tax from Africans who could not pay in cash.³⁴ It has been suggested that the Hananwa's proximity to the "route to the north," which was giving white Transvalers through-fare to the Limpopo River, could also have been a minor factor in the Boer decision to take action against the Hananwa.³⁵ Vorster was, however, rather vague on this issue in his correspondence, which probably indicates that this was not foremost in his mind while he campaigned for military action against the Hananwa. If the Hananwa were subjugated and removed from their dwellings in the mountains to a reserve on the plain, Vorster's tax collecting endeavours would supposedly have been made much easier, and consequently his prospects of material gain, would also have improved.

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31. Commandos from the following districts participated in the campaign against Mmalebôhô: Pretoria, Middelburg, Rustenburg, Marico, Waterberg and Soutpansberg. As confirmed by Law no. 2 of 1883, published in F. JEPPE (Compiler), *Locale wetten...1849-1885...*, p. 1166, Africans could also be commandeered for military service. T.J. MAKHURA, *The Bagananwa polity in the north-western Transvaal and the South African Republic, c. 1836-1896*, pp. 162-163, estimates that almost one third of the six thousand men who fought against Mmalebôhô, were Africans. According to his calculations, the number of Hananwa who were on the mountain and eventually confronted by this force, could not have exceeded two thousand.
 32. Law no. 6, 1880, published in F. JEPPE (Compiler), *Locale wetten...1849-1885...*, p. 749.
 33. P. DELIUS, "Power and profit in the Eastern Transvaal" in W. BEINART, P. DELIUS and S. TRAPIDO (Eds.), *Putting a plough to the ground. Accumulation and dispossession in rural South Africa, 1850-1930* (Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1986), pp. 176-217.
 34. C. SONNTAG (Ed. K. SONNTAG), *My friend Maleboch ...*, p. 34.
 35. J.W.N. TEMPELHOFF, *Die okkupasiestelsel in die distrik Soutpansberg*, *Argiefjaarboek vir Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedenis* 60, 1997, pp. 261-262.

Having ascertained that taxation was the major issue over which the representative of the Transvaal Government had pressurised the Hananwa, it is significant to investigate the way this pressure was handled by Mmalebôhông, his sub-chiefs and his rivals in Blouberg. When comparing Mmalebôhông's warriors' aggressive display of force when approached by about twenty tax collectors in 1890, to the Chief's much more conciliatory gestures at the beginning of 1894, it seems that it must have dawned on him by then that the Boer threats had become serious. During the months preceding the War he resolved to the tactics of evasion and postponement. He made the excuse that his people were too poor to pay, he tried to appease the Commissioner (and upon his arrival early in June 1894, the Commandant-General) with gifts like oxen and an elephant tusk, pretending not to understand the difference between tribute and tax. He tried to use the local missionary to win him some time. Once the hostilities broke out and the Transvaal forces realised the high quality of the Hananwa's rifles, it was obvious to the Government that the Hananwa had been expecting and therefore preparing for a military confrontation for a considerable time. This is confirmed by the observations of missionary Christoph Sonntag, who had been stationed at the foot of Blouberg from 1892.³⁶

Mmalebôhông's rivals, Kibi and Mapene, evaded payment of taxes until 1894 by "saying that they were dependent on him [Mmalebôhông] and could not pay taxes without his express permission"³⁷ – according to missionary Sonntag. Vorster reported in 1891 that they had indicated their willingness to pay, but asked for help against Mmalebôhông.³⁸ On 28 April 1894, the day the Government announced that it would prevent any Hananwa from harvesting corn until they had paid their taxes, Kibi promised to subject himself to the Boers and offered to help the Government forces against Mmalebôhông if necessary. On 1 May of the same year, Mapene followed his

36. C. SONNTAG (Ed. K. SONNTAG), *My friend Maleboch...*, pp. 9, 23-26, 29.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

38. TA, SS. 4140, R. 17552/90, pp. 85-87; SR. 849/90: Commissaris Kalkbank bericht dat Kapt Kewe indien hij zijne belasting betaald heeft hulp aanvraagt bij de Regeering tegen Maleboch, 1890-12-23.

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example.³⁹

Sub-chief Manaka and his subjects also capitulated under the threat of losing their crops. Missionary Sonntag estimated that they must have represented one-third of Mmalebôhō's subjects. During May 1894, several clashes between Vorster's patrols (many of them Koni warriors of Matlala) and Hananwa harvesters followed. On 22 May Sub-Chief Khobe and the twenty households under his jurisdiction also yielded to Vorster. By then the Berlin and Wesleyan Christian converts had also paid their taxes. By the time the Siege of Blouberg was in full swing (mid-June 1894), it was estimated that Mmalebôhō had lost the support of half his subjects. His capital was taken by the Boer forces on 31 July 1894.⁴⁰

With Mmalebôhō in jail and the Hananwa's independence and defiance seemingly broken, Vorster conducted a census and started collecting taxes in 1895. He reported that after the War, the Hananwa were too poor to pay taxes.⁴¹ The excuse the Chief had made prior to the war seems to have become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Throughout the history of nineteenth-century interaction between Africans and whites in the former Transvaal, land, labour and taxes were among the major sources of conflict. White farmers needed African land and labour and their Government designed legislation giving them access to both. The tax system was invented to provide the white Government with income but particularly also to coerce Africans into wage labour. This tax/labour equation which had worked so well to the double benefit of white farmers and the white Government in the central regions of the Transvaal from the 1870's, seemed impracticable among the Hananwa: in their region white needs for farming land and labourers scarcely amounted to a scale that could have justified the Boer's military campaign of 1894. The Hananwa were, however, enclosed in the boundaries of the Transvaal State and by the 1890's the national and international political situation within which

39. TA, SS. 4140, R. 5950/94, SR. 1115: Commissaris Naturellen Kalkbank nu te Blauwberg - Zendt in Rapport re ultimatum dd. 12.4.94 tegen Maleboch en zijn volk omtrent het invorderen van belasting en het opmaken van census, pp. 113-116.

40. C. SONNTAG (Ed. K. SONNTAG), *My friend Maleboch...*, pp. 25, 29, 34, 40, 118; TA, SS. 4268, R. 5489/94, pp. 70-73: Commdt. Generaal zendt telegram van Landdrost Zoutpansberg meldende dat volgens bericht van Commdt. Vorster d.d. 22 Mei, 2 Kapiteins en 20 onder Kapiteins van Malaboch zich hebben overgegeven en in locatie getrokken zijn; verder dat omtrent ½ van Malaboch's volk hem afvallig is geworden, 1894-05-26.

41. TA, SS. 4403, R. 8527/94, pp. 141-143: B.J. Vorster - P. Joubert, 1895-07-30.

the white Government was operating, had become such that they would no longer tolerate an independent African polity within their sovereign State.

Opsomming

Swart reaksie op wit indringing: die Hananwa van Blouberg, 1886-1894

Hierdie artikel fokus op die interaksie tussen 'n swart gemeenskap van die noordelike Soutpansbergdistrik en die amptenare van die Transvaalse regering gedurende die laaste dekade van die negentiende eeu. Die reaksie van die Hananwa van Blouberg op die Pretoria-regering se maatreëls om hulle in Boere-onderdane te omskep deur hulle grond en arbeid te bekom en hulle belastingpligtig te maak, word beredeneer en vergelyk met die reaksie van swart gemeenskappe in die sentrale dele van Transvaal 'n dekade en 'n half vantevore. Anders as in die digter (wit-) bevolkte sentrale dele van Transvaal, was wit aansprake op swart grond en arbeid nie die primêre oorsaak van konflik tussen die Boere en die Hananwa nie. Dit was eerder die Hananwa se traagheid om belasting te betaal en die wyse waarop die plaaslike Boerekommissaris, Barend Vorster, die belastingkwessie gemanipuleer het, wat uiteindelik tot die Boer-Hananwaoorlog van 1894 gelei het. Vroeg in 1894, toe dit duidelik begin word het dat Transvaal bereid was om die Hananwa met geweld te onderwerp, het Mmalebôhê sy selfversekerde houding van 1890 verruil vir 'n veel meer tegemoetkomende benadering van paaier, ontduiking en skyn-onkunde oor belastingkwessies. Sy teenstanders en 'n aansienlike aantal van sy onderdane het agter die voorwendsel dat hulle nie sonder sy toestemming belasting kon bestaal nie, geskuil totdat die Boere hulle begin verhoed het om te oes. Teen die tyd dat die beleg van Mmalebôhê se hoofsetel in die berge in volle gang was, was hy die ondersteuning van ongeveer die helfte van sy onderdane kwyt.