

1. The Government, through its information services, educational authorities through the school textbooks they prescribe, and many private organizations, have consistently stressed an erroneous interpretation of the history of southern Africa. According to this point of view, the White settlers who entered the interior in the nineteenth century found the country empty. Only later did they encounter Black communities in the course of migration southwards across the Limpopo River. This interpretation, however, was originally developed as part of the intellectual justification for colonialism; the archaic argument is retained today as a justification for apartheid/separate development.
2. The facts, as they are known today, show a very different situation. The information from historical and archaeological research can be summarized as follows: -
  - a) The first Black communities crossed the Limpopo into what is today South Africa sometime before AD 300. They rapidly settled the lowlands of the eastern Transvaal and Mozambique and were established in Zululand and Natal by the late third century.
  - b) These people were farmers, living in permanent villages not unlike those of rural Black communities today, keeping cattle, sheep and goats and growing cereal crops.
  - c) They were of Negro physical type.
  - d) There is a direct historical link between these early communities and the present-day Black population of southern Africa.
3. Among the first areas to be settled in Natal were Weenen and other areas in the Tugela Basin. Numerous archaeological sites, with the distinctive pottery of these early farmers, attest to the location of these villages.
4. Thus by the time of the first tentative explorations of southern Africa by the European powers, Black communities were firmly established in south-eastern Africa. Vasco da Gama saw such people from his ship in 1497. The journals of the earliest shipwrecked sailors such as the crew of the *Good Hope* (Durban - AD 1685) and the *Stavenisse* (Umzimkulu River mouth - AD 1686), mention numerous encounters with these peoples.
5. In the early nineteenth century, many of the small chieftainships of Zululand were centralized under the aegis of the Zulu Kingdom. One of Shaka's policies was to create a belt of unpopulated land between his Kingdom and its neighbours and accordingly the occupants of Natal were either moved into Zululand or forced to flee southwards. As a result, the land appeared to be empty when the first White settlers arrived in Natal. Their journals describe the ruined villages and abandoned fields. Following the defeat of Dingane in 1839, many of the former occupants of Natal returned to their ancestral lands, only to find them occupied by colonists, for whom they now had to work as labourers.
6. The facts mentioned above show how ambiguous are claims that Weenen and similar areas are "White" and that there is some sort of historical justification for evicting all Black people from them.