

PREFACE

Research on this topic resulted from my interest in South African and United States history. As a college student, I heard much about race relations and apartheid in South Africa. Often, it seemed, journalists would bemoan the fact that South Africa could not achieve the same kind of equality for Blacks that the United States had already accomplished and was struggling to improve. After all, both nations had oppressed and enslaved black people, but the United States, through a long and difficult process, had corrected many of these problems. Why could not South Africa also restore Blacks their freedom and civil liberties? This natural comparison made sense in many ways and yet did not entirely sit right with me. Could one compare American and South African history? If so, what comparisons could be legitimately made? In other words, was the "black problem" in South Africa the same as the one in the United States? No, I concluded, at least not entirely—there were some obvious differences. My other historical interest at the time—in the American West and Native American history—indicated to me that it would be more accurate, and perhaps more useful, to compare relations and interactions between intruders and indigenous people in both countries. The ethnic group in American history which corresponded to the blacks of South Africa was not those of African birth or lineage who now resided in America, but Native Americans. Perhaps not a stunningly original thought, but it was one which inspired my pursuit of a comparative project in graduate school.

Although the comparative study that I had vague hopes of conducting as I began graduate studies never materialized, the current study nonetheless stems from my initial interests. In order to pursue such a project, I began studying South African history in addition to my reading in American history. A growing interest in colonial America and a personal interest in Dutch immigration to the United States led me to focus upon Dutch colonialism as the context in which to conduct a comparative study. To that end, I began to focus my reading on New Netherland and the Cape Colony, Dutch imperial outposts in North America and southern Africa. My reading naturally led me to frontier studies, which have played a prominent role in both American and South African historiog-

raphy. I soon discovered some intellectual cross-fertilization among South African and American historians of the frontier. Such interaction between scholars of both sides of the Atlantic has been rather limited, however, and I was pleasantly surprised to encounter some insightful ways of understanding the frontier offered by South African scholars. As I focused my own research on Dutch-indigenous relations in North America, the frontier methodology applied by some South African historians proved very useful.

In the end, I have not undertaken a detailed comparison between Dutch-native relations in North America and South Africa, but I have applied a South African frontier methodology, which grew out of studies of Dutch-native relations in South Africa, to a study of the Dutch-Indian frontier in colonial New York. This methodology—really a frontier framework—has provided a structure for this investigation of the Dutch-Munsee encounter. While I have not been able to conduct the sustained comparative analysis I once envisioned, I have not abandoned my comparative interests. With the encouragement of one of the series editors, Seymour Drescher, I have ended this volume with an Afterword which considers Dutch-indigenous relations in the Cape Colony in light of the Dutch-Munsee frontier. These thoughts are suggestive rather than thoroughly analytical. Yet I believe that this overview fairly demonstrates the common frontier pattern as native people in both regions experienced and responded to the extension of European sovereignty over themselves and their territory. It is my hope that my closing observations also encourage further and more detailed comparative analysis using the frontier as a framework.

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