

II. Terms of Contest

The cool, clear streams of the Cedarberg nourish hardy plants that have sustained life in this region for longer than human memory. The arrival of European colonists in this landscape in the eighteenth century brought violently contested changes and particular forms of record keeping, so we know more about shifting land use and the social transformations in this period than we do for past ones. As a colonial frontier, the Cedarberg was the site of two major struggles, one for the control of land and another over the contours of identity. 1

These battles intertwined; land was crucial not only as a means of subsistence, but also as a component of identity for Khoisan and settler communities. Over the course of the eighteenth century, two parallel processes played out in the Cedarberg. Colonial land tenure practice was increasingly regularized and intensified, while fluid social categories became gradually reified. 2

Even as communities solidified, the social taxonomy created at the Cape was hardly monolithic. Slaves, indentured servants, land owners, and independent Khoisan formed variously permuted relationships with each other and with the natural environment. Identities proliferated, defying static categorization; people across the social spectrum challenged conventions, and many subordinated people worked their way through colonial structures. 3

The VOC's mania for lists flattened some of this variety. Property claims and *opgaaf* rolls, or census and taxation returns, must be coaxed to give up their stories. More texture emerges in narrative documents such as landdrost's correspondence and criminal records, but the Company's regular accounting of loan farms, settler agricultural production, and slave ownership do, in fact, reveal more than statistics. The chapters in Part II demonstrate the possibilities of social history reconstructed from ledgers. Loan farm claims preserved in the *Oud Wildschutte Boeke*, ongoing loan farm rent payments noted in the Stellenbosch landdrost's account books, and the annual *opgaaf* which recorded the settler population, their slaves, and their taxable agricultural production all document individual lives. The title to a farm and large flock of sheep cannot stand for an entire life; the tally mark next to a master's name is even less representative of a slave's existence. Nevertheless, read in conjunction with each other and in light of other sources, these lists produce remarkable stories about the terms of struggle in the Cedarberg. 4

Chapter 3 examines specific land-use patterns and links sites in the landscape to indigenous Khoisan identity, using lists compiled by twentieth-century archaeologists to contextualize colonial land claims. Chapter 4 explores colonial identities forged through interactions among various communities, and documents the basis of belonging to the dominant settler society. 5