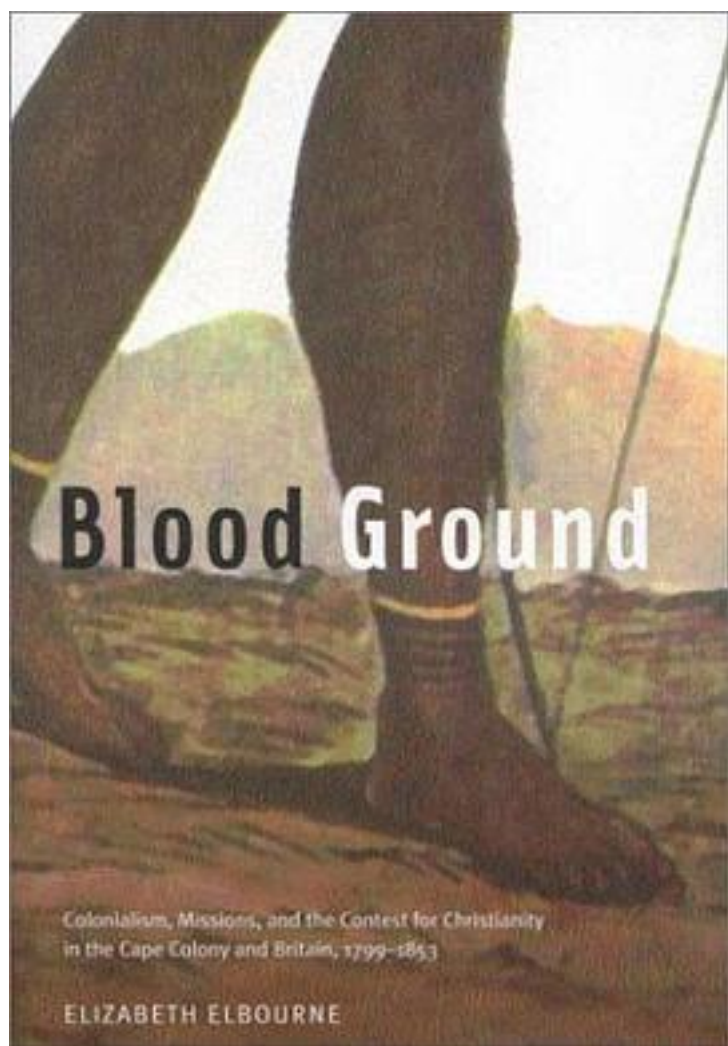


Blood Ground



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In "Blood Ground", Elizabeth Elbourne looks at the relationship between the Khoekhoe, the British empire, and the London Missionary Society in the early nineteenth century, a time of intense conflict in which different groups competed to mobilize Christianity for their own political ends. She explores the social history of the early missionary movement as well the political impact of British evangelicals, arguing that religious change in southern Africa can only be understood in the material context of ethnic conflict and bitter struggles over land and labour. In doing so, she reintegrates the history of religion into the mainstream historical narrative of South Africa, offering a view of Christianity not as a monolithic system but as a language subject to interpretation and highly politicized conflicts over meaning. "Blood Ground" traces the transition from religion to race as the basis for policing the boundaries of the "white" community. Elbourne suggests broader shifts in the relationship of missions to colonialism - as the British movement became less internationalist, more respectable, and more emblematic of the British imperial project - and shows that it is symptomatic that many Christian Khoekhoe ultimately rebelled against the colony. Missionaries across the white settler empire brokered bargains - rights in exchange for cultural change, for example - that brought Aboriginal peoples within the aegis of empire but, ultimately, were only partially and ambiguously fulfilled.

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目录:

[Blood Ground 下载链接1](#)

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